Some FAQs About the San Juan Island Library

**The Library in the Community**

Why do we need a library in the age of the Internet? *The SJIL continues to be a popular and busy center, meeting learning, information gathering, and leisure needs for all ages. It provides collections of books, magazines, audio recordings, DVDs, and other media for borrowing, a meeting place for community sharing of interests and concerns, and skilled staff to assist in researching questions and using personal digital devices as well as library materials and technology. The library website provides access to databases for online searching and to the Library’s catalog. It facilitates identifying and requesting materials from other libraries. Public computers and other technology are heavily used. Programs for adults, children, seniors, teens, and families are well attended.*

Why is the Library a sound investment of taxpayer money? *The Library is the hub of the community for access to information, education, and recreation materials and services. Services are free, seven days a week, without discrimination, to users of all ages, interests, ethnic and religious backgrounds, political persuasions, and economic conditions. When communities are evaluated for livability and appeal, a library is considered to be a valuable key resource. In 2015 SJIL received the American Library Association’s national award of Excellence in Small Public Library Service.*

Why do we need to have so many materials for kids? Can’t they just use the school libraries? *School libraries offer materials closely tied to the school curricula, and are open only when schools are in session. SJIL provides diverse resources for preschoolers, elementary and middle schoolers, teens, and families, and the Library is open seven days a week year-round. Materials and programming for children are among the Library’s most popular offerings.*

Why should I pay for the Library if I don’t even use it? *Investment in the Library is an investment in the community. This essential education and information resource offers a breadth of services on which many islanders heavily depend. A good Library is indicative of an involved, educated community and is considered a positive factor in the determination of community and property valuation.*

**The Building and Site**

How old is the current building? *The SJIL building was originally opened as a restaurant in the 1970s. It was purchased by the Library in 1983, underwent a major renovation in 1988, was expanded and remodeled in 1994, and reopened in 1995.*

Didn’t the library undergo a renovation not too long ago? *A small renovation was undertaken in 2005. Some flooring and furniture, worn from constant use, have been replaced in recent years.*

The parking lot is cramped and often full. Why can’t the public use the county lot next door? *Library patrons may use the county parking lot only after normal county work hours. The Library is not a county agency nor is it entitled to use county facilities except as authorized.*

The Library seems to be getting more and more crowded. Why do we need such a big book collection when everyone uses the Internet and e-books? *While digital resources are increasingly popular, many people still prefer using traditional books, and SJIL receives numerous requests annually to purchase additional titles. Space is increasingly scarce, and selected materials must frequently be removed from the library to make way for new offerings.*

If the Library is too crowded, why not just cut services? *The Library provides services based on community needs and use. Library staff continually evaluate use of various services by the community and listen to users’ comments when determining which services should be maintained or added or eliminated. Cutting services alone will not make available more space for study, computer use, small meetings, comfortable reading areas, collection shelving or much-needed staff work space.*

What are the most acute library building problems? *The aging building is being used to capacity; requires increasing, expensive repairs and replacement of outdated and poorly functioning infrastructure; does not have technical capacity to meet user and staff needs; is noisy and has limited user seating and work areas; has no space for new services or resources; has inadequate meeting space for library programming or to meet community requests; cannot accommodate diverse, essential staff activities.*

If more space is needed, couldn’t a second story be added to the Library? *This building was not originally constructed to accommodate a second story; framing and foundation structure are not strong enough to support the weight of an additional level and all of the necessary shelving, furnishings, equipment, etc. A two-story building would also require additional staff to supervise both floors, and the operating budget has no funds for additional personnel.*

What kinds of major repairs or renovations does the building need? *A heat pump recently failed and needed replacement, roof leaks have increased, and basement flooding issues have rendered the area unusable. Some ceiling areas have little or no insulation which affects heating efficiency; storm water drainage is a continuing problem; much of the flooring in the public areas needs replacement, the parking lot is buckling from tree roots and will need an extensive rework with probable expensive tree removal, lighting throughout the building is varied and in some places inadequate, so a major electrical project is needed; the library does not have an automatic sprinkler system, a growing fire safety issue. This is not a complete list, and the building needs a thorough professional evaluation to develop a plan for finding funding to address these issues and other issues in the near future.*

What would be gained by having a new facility? *The building and infrastructure would meet current standards and future needs. More space would be available for collections and services, quiet reading and study areas, expanded children's and teen areas more separated from the busy general public spaces, small meeting areas and a larger meeting room for library and community programs. Expanded facilities and support for computer use, both Library and personal, and more comfortable soft seating for reading would be available. Adequate staff workspaces would result in better efficiency and productivity. Sufficient and less cramped parking would be available.*

Would more staff be needed for service in a new building? *A new facility would continue to be operated with the current staff positions as funded through the annual operating budget.*

**Financing Current Library Building Maintenance**

How does the Library pay for major building replacement and repairs? *Included in each year’s operating budget is funding for anticipated maintenance expenses. Unfortunately, the building is of an age that systems are failing without warning (such as the heat pump) and must be addressed immediately. The Library is on a tight budget with a mandated no-more-than 1% increase each year; If more money is needed for building maintenance, then funds for collections, technology, and services must be reduced.*

Still, wouldn’t costs for repair of the current Library would be much less than for constructing a new building? *Repairs to the aging building will be ongoing even after major infrastructure replacements are done. The impact on the budget will be substantial and affect all aspects of the Library’ service. And current major problems of space inadequacy and parking will continue to become more acute as community use increases.*

**Financing a New Building**

How would the community pay for a new building? *Some funds will come from grants. The Library would undertake a major funding campaign encouraging support of the library with appropriate recognition of each contribution. But building a new library would require the community to pass a bond issue to cover a major portion of the construction and equipment costs.*

Can a new building be paid for out of the annual budget? *No; the annual budget covers the cost of one year's operation of the Library including purchases of books and digital materials and other media, personnel costs, building and grounds upkeep and maintenance, computer equipment, insurance, etc. It does not include major capital projects funding.*

Will the operating budget have to increase in a new building? *Whether in the current or a new building,* *the annual operating budget, is limited by law to no more than a 1% increase per year.*

How much would a new building cost?

How much would our taxes go up?