



CITY OF NEWPORT BEACH BOARD OF LIBRARY TRUSTEES STAFF REPORT

August 17, 2026
Agenda Item No. 6

TO: BOARD OF LIBRARY TRUSTEES

FROM: Library Services Department
Melissa Hartson, Library Services Director
(949) 717-3801, mhartson@newportbeachca.gov

PREPARED BY: Andrew Kachaturian, Adult Services Coordinator

TITLE: Adult and Reference Services Update

OVERVIEW:

Reference services are an essential component of library services. Patrons approach the service desks throughout the library system to have their questions answered. Reference staff ask clarifying questions, determine the most suitable resources, and provide the best information possible in answering patron inquiries. Common reference interactions range from reader's advisory, locating items within the Newport Beach Public Library (Library), its subscription databases, information online, and the use of other library resources such as public computers, the Media Lab, and in operating other equipment. Reference staff are available in person, over the telephone, or by email. Customer service is a key component of reference work, and staff take pride in recognizing that each first experience with a patron is a building block for positive experiences that culminate in a life-long appreciation for all that the Library offers.

Senior staffing in the Central Library (Central) Reference department has been steady this year with Andrew Kachaturian remaining Adult Services Coordinator, Jeremy Rodriguez as the department Librarian II, and Mary-Kay Lutgen, Laurie Sanders, and Danielle Yang each continuing to excel in their Librarian roles. Erik Gunderson, Chris Hennigan, Greg Johnson, and Melinda Moss round out the full-time staff as Library Assistants. The newest part-time staff to join the department this year as Library Assistants are Sully Jacome, Olivia Peasley, and Lucero Tamayo joining more veteran staff Cristina Belardi, Anthony Duhamel, and Terry Sanchez.

Branch staff consists of Alex Johnkins as Mariners Branch Librarian along with Librarians Christine Chapel and Leah Duffy. Bernadette Gilliam is the Mariners Branch (Mariners) full-time Library Assistant and Cece Villa is their part-time Library Assistant. Nadia Dallstream is the Corona del Mar Branch Librarian along with part-time Library Assistant Carly Quijano. Balboa Branch Librarian Evelyn Rogers is currently working at Mariners and Sara Bert, the Balboa Branch (Balboa) part-time Library Assistant is currently assigned to Central.

Programming and Outreach

In the last year, Adult Services staff have held successful outreach events in the community. In August, Librarian Rodriguez led staff to attend the Employee Health and Wellness Fair at the Newport Beach Country Club. Staff answered questions from 41 attendees about library services, signed people up for library cards, and received many compliments about library services.

In September, Adult Services Coordinator Kachaturian and Librarian Lutgen presented information about the Library to 25 members of a local women's group interested in services such as downloadable content, databases, homebound services, and volunteering. The group was very enthusiastic about everything that the Library offers.

In October, Librarian Rodriguez gave a tour to five health science librarians from the Southern California area. They discussed the Library Foundation of Newport Beach's (Foundation) *Medicine in our Backyard* series and other programming, Children's and Reference health science collections, meeting spaces, the Media Lab and more. They were quite impressed with the resources at the Library.

Also in October, Library Assistant Johnson led the NMUSD College and Career Night at the fairgrounds in Costa Mesa. Staff interacted with 133 people and gave out information about joining the Library and all of its offerings.

In April, Librarians Rodriguez and Lutgen gave a presentation about library services and the Homebound program to 15 members of a book discussion group at the Vivante Senior Home in Newport Beach. The residents were thrilled with the Library's eBook catalog, the Kanopy database, and other lifelong learning tools such as Rosetta Stone, and the Ckbk cooking database.

Stand out events this last year included the return of *Genealogy Uncovered* and *Storytellers Writing Workshop*, which included an extended session due to its popularity. Both groups continue to fill up almost immediately once available. Patron demand remains extremely strong, and we thank the Friends of the Library for their financial support.

On April 29, author Nicola Harrison returned to speak about her new book *The Island Club*, which had 173 people in attendance, reaching near capacity for the Community Room where the event was held due to occupancy constraints in the Friends Room as a result of the ongoing Witte Hall construction.

And of course we saw Witte Hall open in July to big crowds. Over 500 people participated in the general grand opening on the afternoon of July 11. Opening night with surf legend, Shaun Tomson had 280 people filling Witte Hall, and the first Sunday Musicale on July 12, brought in 346 people to enjoy a cello quartet. We are very encouraged by the interest in Witte Hall.

Training and Professional Development

The Library is strongly committed to providing training and professional development opportunities to empower staff to grow in their skills. In May and June 2026, the City of Newport Beach provided a course in customer service training to all full-time staff, which is also anticipated to be offered to part-time staff in late 2026. This training brought fresh perspectives on how staff commitment to providing platinum-level customer service can shape the patron experience and transform interactions positively. It also reinforced many aspects of how we strive to set a culture of excellence.

As the landscape for Artificial Intelligence (AI) continues to evolve, staff have begun attending webinars and training sessions with an aim towards identifying the strengths and weaknesses of AI in the Library environment. As with other informational transformations, patrons will surely seek assistance from the Library in helping to demystify and understand how AI can be used to access information and skilled guidance on how to reliably validate the authenticity of the information gleaned from this tremendous resource.

Traditional resources have also been a focus of training in this last year. Staff continue to attend training on the subscription databases to stay current in the resources we offer to the public. One of the more successful training courses was with the Reference Solutions database, which added job-seeking content as well as refinements to their platform. Staff have also attended training on OverDrive, the eBook vendor, Brodart, the physical materials vendor, and CollectionHQ, for collection development maintenance throughout the year.

Services

Physical Collections

In the July 20 meeting, the Board of Library Trustees accepted a grant from the Foundation, designating \$10,000 towards the Tech Toy collection, which will help to support this extremely popular collection which had 815 circulations in the last fiscal year, up from 466 last year. A new cabinet was installed this year to allow for an expanding collection, and staff are researching new and exciting items to add to the Tech Toy collection with the additional funds.

Other collections that have seen an increase in circulation over the last fiscal year are the California State Park Passes with 3,994 circulations in the last year, the 4K Blu-ray collection with 2,180 circulations, the Seed Library with 2,464 checkouts, and the Video Game collection, with 9,760 circulations. There appears to be some resilience to the physical media collections as patrons continue to make use of the music CD collection and remaining film collections. The biggest drops in circulation compared to last year are with Magazines and Books on CD.

Seating Areas

Over the last year, staff have noticed patterns emerging with the use of seating areas throughout Central and have experimented with new furniture layouts in response to patron demand. Individual study tables have been combined in several areas to provide much sought-after group work areas while soft seating has been moved closer to the service desk to provide closer proximity to assistance from Reference staff. Dialogues have started with design companies to provide more long-term ideas on keeping up with trends such as group study areas that can tolerate some conversation, quiet individual study areas, and the need for more power in particular areas. As some collections age out and more open areas can be created, staff is working to reimagine the spaces for patrons to enjoy.

Sound Lab Enhancements

In the August 18, 2025, meeting, the Board of Library Trustees accepted another grant from the Foundation, which provided \$1,640 towards podcasting equipment to be added to the Sound Lab. Patrons have shared favorable feedback about the addition of the new table, microphones, and video camera that are now available in the room. The Sound Lab is consistently booked out in advance several days and in constant use. Library Assistant Johnson shared a great story: "I recently had a patron tell me that they completed a song for their wedding ceremony. How incredible is that? Right in our lab." Patrons continue to prize this unique resource.

NOTICING:

This agenda item . been noticed according to the Brown Act (72 hours in advance of the meeting at which the Board of Library Trustees considers the item).