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August 8, 2017

Escondido City Council Members  
City Hall, City of Escondido  
201 North Broadway  
Escondido, CA 92025

Dear Council Members:

As Executive Director of the Shasta Library Foundation, I would like to share our experience in Shasta County with Library Systems and Services (LS&S) over the past ten years.

In the late 1980s, Shasta County made national news with the closure of its public library system as a result of Proposition 13 local property tax redistribution and the subsequent reopening with severely reduced facilities and services. For twenty years, citizens worked tirelessly to bring a full complement of services to our county-owned library which was plagued by lack of consistent library funding and an inadequate tax base.

By the early 2000s, Shasta County was second from the bottom in state-wide per capita funding (approximately \$5 per person), had a collection about half the size it should for the community's population, had closed parts of a woefully inadequate headquarters due to ADA compliance issues, and had inconsistent open hours as low as 20 per week.

In 2002, thanks to an unprecedented collaboration between citizens, business, and city and county local government, Shasta County successfully raised \$9 million to qualify for a state grant to build a new \$21 million state-of-the-art library headquarters in Redding. The new building was the catalyst to explore ways to improve governance, funding and services as well. Thanks again to public/private collaborative efforts, in 2007 Shasta County celebrated a milestone in the history of its public library: the creation of a joint city/county library system with the City of Redding owning the new library headquarters and the County of Shasta retaining ownership of the branch libraries. In order to maintain the integrity of the system, the County also contracted with the City to operate the branch libraries as part of the Shasta Public Libraries. A contractual designated library fund increased per capita funding to \$11 – an improvement but still far short of the state mean of \$32.

An important goal for our library continued to be convenient, consistent open hours and services focused on and responsive to patrons needs. Research on successful libraries elsewhere in California indicated that many had overcome local and state-wide funding constraints by embracing innovative methods to enhance library services.

In an effort to stretch existing resources and provide services that would allow the Redding Library to become a community entertainment and information destination, the City of Redding contracted with LS&S in 2006 to staff and manage the new library system. Local control is retained: The Redding City Council operates as the library governing board, with a five-member citizen library advisory committee appointed to provide local input.

Ownership of all the library's assets remain with the public and all policy and procedural decisions ultimately lie with the City of Redding. The contract with LS&S calls for specified services provided for a specified cost; the company cannot cut services or resources to increase profits.

The leadership of the Shasta Library Foundation and three Friends of the Libraries have unanimously supported the contract with LS&S for several reasons:

- The LS&S contract represents a wise investment of tax dollars – Our goal has always been to provide the best service to the most people at the lowest possible cost. The fact that LS&S can operate the Redding Library at 60+ hours for less than the City could provide 40 hours can't be ignored.
- LS&S has provided access to professional expertise which has allowed us to run our library more effectively and efficiently than we have been able to in the past. Not only did we retain every librarian from the old County system, morale has improved tremendously with the opportunity to work in a successful local enterprise. LS&S corporate expertise in library management, collection development, technology, grantsmanship, marketing, and outreach has strengthened services that we have not been able to provide on a consistent or reliable basis. LS&S's capabilities allowed us to quickly turn around our library system and provide the quality services we wanted and needed by the opening of the new library in March 2007.
- LS&S has brought innovation with ideas that have been proven successful in other libraries and their focus on patron satisfaction and services addressed a priority for our community. Our library usage has skyrocketed: in a city with a population of 90,000, we consistently have had an average of 2 MILLION visits to the Redding Library for the past few years! We have added a number of services including a literacy center, Hot Off the Press, a revised web site with easy access to new online services such as Help Now!, Zinio, Enki and Overdrive's digital library, new maker-space technology, and have experienced a significant increase in youth and adult programs. Volunteerism at the library has increased with the support of a volunteer coordinator on staff.
- Library responsiveness to local needs has been strengthened. With LS&S assistance, our library has completed and implemented several strategic plans with identified service priorities that will further improve patron satisfaction. From a community perspective, the relationship with library management has improved. Procedural issues are brought to the Library Advisory Committee for input. The important working relationships the library has had with its support groups have been retained and strengthened. With LS&S assistance, we have enhanced local public and private funding with grant resources to improve vital services for our community.

We have a modern, state-of-the-art public library thanks to the collaborative efforts of local government and corporate and private donors in Shasta County and the opportunity to leverage our local resources with a state grant. The Redding Library has been overwhelmingly and enthusiastically embraced by our community. As with any public service that is provided well, as the demand for library services continues to grow our ability to provide will be challenged, and I believe we are proactively operating our library system with fiscal responsibility through the contract with LS&S. I don't believe that our community, or any community struggling with library funding, should dismiss any option – including private management – that will allow it to maintain and improve a community resource that is vital to the educational, health, safety, and economic well-being of its citizens. Please feel free to contact me at 530-246-0146 or [info@shastalibraryfoundation.org](mailto:info@shastalibraryfoundation.org) if you have questions or would like more information about our experience with LS&S.

Sincerely,



Peggy O'Lea, Executive Director