



AT THE LIBRARY

By Julie Winkelstein
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“Reference librarians in the nation’s public and academic libraries answer more than seven million questions weekly. Standing single file, the line of questioners would stretch from Boston to San Francisco.”

-From “Quotable facts about library funding” in Eberhart’s *The Whole Library Handbook 3*

In June, Albany voters passed a library tax measure that not only restores staff hours, it also makes it possible for the library to be open on Sundays for the first time. And that first time is coming up very soon – September 17, in fact. The Friends of the Albany Library are sponsoring a celebration, which will include a ribbon cutting at 1 p.m., and a harp trio and homemade cookies from 1 to 3 p.m. That day, and from then on, the library will be open from 1 to 5 on Sundays.

How common are Sunday hours? Well, in the Alameda County Library system, there are five other branches open that day: Castro Valley, Newark, Dublin, Union City and San Lorenzo. Looking at other bay area library systems, Contra Costa County has five branches which are open on Sunday, Berkeley’s central branch is open that day, as is Oakland’s main one.

I like the idea of a library being available on a Sunday, es-

pecially during the cold and wet days of winter. What could be more appealing than going to a warm and dry building full of books? In Albany we will be taking advantage of these new hours to host some extra programs, such as a monthly adult sing-along, starting October 15 and continuing every third Sunday of the month.

It is a good feeling to live in a community that so enthusiastically supports and uses its library, and it made me wonder about other communities. In particular, I wondered how library measures fare – do they usually pass? Usually fail? I did some searching to see what information I could find. One article I read was a December 2005 *Library Journal* piece called “Good News for Salinas & Colorado: Election Results Mixed in Other Jurisdictions.” In it, the authors give an overview of several successful library measures, including Salinas; DeKalb County, Georgia (three bond measures passed); and Marin

County. Some of these, like the Salinas and Marin County ones, will restore or maintain hours and services. Other measures, like the DeKalb ones, “will construct three new facilities to address unserved populations, expand four existing buildings, replace five libraries, and upgrade one to improve visibility and vehicular access.” They report a few losses, too. These included San Bernardino, California and a vote for the Fulton Public Library, Ohio – which lost by 19 votes.

Another *Library Journal* piece is Anne Marie Gold’s “The Good Fight – Library Referenda 2004” (March 15, 2004). Gold gives a general idea of the different kinds of library referenda – some for buildings and some for library operations. She points out that, in general, operations referenda were more successful than building ones. The dollar amounts she gives for these are notable; as she says, “A total of \$122.6 million

was put before voters for approval, and 87% of that sum, or nearly \$106.5 million found it.”

But what impressed me the most were the libraries that went back to the voters after a failed campaign – for example, the King County Library system, in the Seattle, Washington area. A look at their website (kcls.org) gives an idea of how they succeeded. The background information gives a thorough description of the process used, how a bond measure works, why parking is important, if there will be more computers and more. It is a heartfelt approach to keeping the community informed and involved, and their success is a testament to yet another community that appreciates and values their local library.