

# Libraries not accessible to some

*A meeting tonight will examine the expansion of local library services*

By Laura Cadiz  
Oregon Daily Emerald

About 90,000 Lane County residents have not had free access to a public library since 1988. For the first time in more than a decade, the county is now taking steps to tackle that problem.

A public meeting today at 5:30 p.m. at the Irvington Grange, 1011 Irvington Dr., will be a forum to discuss how to improve library access throughout the county. The public can voice their concerns and hear the results of a project that analyzed the problem.

The project, funded by a \$20,000 grant from the Oregon State Library, was designed to identify and examine options for people who do not have access to one of the county's seven public libraries.

The library system allows people to use a city's library only if they live within the city's boundaries. That means that people who live in Eugene cannot use the Springfield Public Library without paying a \$55 annual fee.

That leaves people who live in cities with no libraries, such as Coburg, Pleasant Hill and Marcola, with the only option of paying an annual fee — which varies at each library but can be as high as \$75 — to use another city's library.

"Everyone should have access

to resources that libraries provide to the community," said Karen Gaffney, assistant director for project services at the county's health and human services department. She also oversees the library assessment project for the county.

Project consultant Dallas Young Shaffer will present information at the meeting about library capacity, unserved county residents and the way other communities have dealt with expanding library services.

Gaffney said the options considered to improve access include: creating a countywide library system in which everyone who lives in the county can have access to all of its public libraries; forming a library district for those outside library boundaries; or expanding library districts to include more people.

The project was the first step to identify such options, Gaffney said. The next step is to get input from community members who don't have library access and discover how to meet their needs. The study has not identified specific costs for each option because the county does not plan to put such detailed research into each option until the public expresses its specific needs, she said.

The last time the county had a library system was in 1988, when voters did not pass levies to continue funding the library. Since then, a Fern Ridge library district has opened to help service more people. But that still leaves 90,000 of more than 313,000 county residents without public

library access.

Gaffney said there had been some discussion about providing access to more people, but no concrete steps were taken until the Oregon State Library in 1998 made it a goal to provide more access to people.

Bill Sullivan, Eugene Public Library Foundation president, said the library system doesn't allow library access for people who need the services the most — students and young families. He said the real tragedy is seeing parents who are unable to check out books for their young children because they can't afford to pay an annual fee.

"I can just see [the parent's] face fall," he said. "And what do the kids do? They watch TV. They don't have books."

Sullivan pointed out that Lane County is one of the few Oregon counties that does not have a countywide library system. For example, Douglas County and Multnomah County both have library systems where county residents can use any of the county's libraries for free. In fact, 70 percent of the people in the state who don't have access to a public library live in Lane County.

Sullivan said he is confident in Shaffer's ability to help discover practical options to solve the problem because she helped merge 15 eastern Oregon counties into one library system.

"If she can do that, we hope she can get seven Lane County libraries to work together," he said.

# Hope for liberal arts grads

*A variety of jobs await those with liberal arts degrees, advisers say*

By Tricia Schwennesen  
for the Emerald

Parents need not worry. Students can do just about anything with a degree from this University, traditionally deemed a liberal arts institution.

The job opportunities may not be as obvious as a newspaper reporter with a degree in journalism or a bank executive with a degree in business, but a liberal arts degree can lead to a variety of careers.

"I picked U of O because it had a reputation for being more of a liberal arts college," said Travis Boeh, a senior English major. "My philosophy is you have to study something that'll keep your attention, and I don't think everyone wants to be engineers even if that's where the money is."

Boeh said he plans to be a high school English teacher, but the skills he's learned could be applied to other professions, such as technical writing.

"It's easier to teach the technology to someone who already knows how to write vs. teaching someone to write who knows the technology," Boeh said.

Teaching isn't the only career for a student with an English degree; it could lead to a career in medicine, law or even business, said Richard Stevenson, an associate professor of English.

"I see an English major as an ideal major for critical thinking and communicating — anything that involves using the

mind in an organized way," Stevenson said.

For many students, a bachelor's degree of any kind is the prize at the end of their college career. They may never return for a master's degree or a Ph.D.

A student with a degree in psychology could work for a group home, the mentally disabled or an organization that works with children and families.

"There are quite a few options, though none of them pay well," said Pamela Birrell, undergraduate adviser in psychology. "You're kind of starting at the bottom of the ladder."

Some students combine a major in a liberal arts discipline with a major in a foreign language.

"They do just about anything," said Luis Verano, undergraduate adviser in romance languages. "Essentially, they are doing whatever they would be doing in English but in another language."

Being able to communicate in another language opens more doors, Verano said.

"It just adds a whole other dimension to what they can do," Verano said. "With the language, the whole world is open to you."

Acquiring another language could lead to diplomatic jobs with the United Nations or at an embassy abroad, he said. Language can also enhance a career in international studies, business, anthropology or sociology.



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