

EXCERPT FROM SURVEY RESPONSE

OF

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The Library has not had a Friends group; however, after the start of the LSSI contract a group of women in one area of the city banded together to lobby for a renovation and overhaul of one of our four regional branches. During the planning and construction phase this group, "The Friends of the Zabriskie Street Library", had many meetings with the LSSI staff, and are, I believe, very much in favor of the LSSI involvement with the Library.

12. Was any concern about private contributions to the library being lessened if management was contracted out ever expressed prior to the decision to contract out to the private sector?

The amount of private contributions to the Library has been negligible for decades.

13. What, if anything, has been accomplished through your contract with the vendor?

- NJ State Library approval of the Library's Technology Plan and subsequent eligibility for e-rate discounts. This plan was devised by a library employee and reviewed by LSSI staff prior to its submission to the State Librarian.
- Integrated library automation vendor (Sirsi) selected and automation implemented for the first time.
- Introduction of email and extensive expansion of staff computers with standard office applications.
- Formal staff training in Windows, email, Internet, Sirsi, and Microsoft office products.
- Formal staff training in Customer Service
- Formal administrative staff training in Communications.
- Introduction of regular meetings by library managers, both at the branch and at the administrative levels.
- Expansion of staff participation in the NJ Regional Library network and in professional organizations such as NJLA & ALA.
- Introduction of a library web page (www.jclibrary.org).
- Introduction of online electronic resources such as Electric Library and Ebscohost.
- Introduction of public Internet access computers at each library location.

- Through guided employee conferences development of a mission statement, goals and objectives, and a Long Range Service Plan, all of which were adopted by the Board.
- Extension of circulating videos to other branches; previously only one unit circulated videos, a byproduct of a decision made many years ago when videocassettes in libraries were new. Also secured Board approval to eliminate the video-borrowing fee that had been instituted, again many years ago.
- Extension and increase of hours of library service. By assigning part time personnel to small branches that used to close for an hour in midday LSSI increased the service hours. It also changed the service hours system-wide so that branches and units that formerly closed at 5 pm now close at 6 pm and are open one night a week until 8 pm. It kept the main library open all day on Saturdays during the summer of 2001 by assigning branch personnel to work in the main library. In the past the main library was open from 10 am to 2 pm on Saturdays during the summer, and employees who worked those four hours were paid overtime.
- Expansion of Summer Reading Program including introductory class visits to over 16,000 students.
- Conducted a telephone survey of residents in the summer of 2000 to determine what the public wanted from its library system. George D'Elia, Ph.D., conducted this survey for LSSI.
- Preparation of policies and procedures on issues that had not been dealt with previously, such as the federal Family Medical Leave Act and a similar NJ law and employee performance planning.
- Review and revision of standing orders.
- **BOOK ORDERING:** LSSI streamlined and automated our cumbersome process of book ordering by introducing a software package that provides a record of books on order and a fund accounting feature that allocates expenses to each library unit and branch. It reduced the processing time, i.e., the time between the arrival of a book in the library and its distribution to its home unit or branch, from months to less than two weeks, thus making the Library competitive with bookstores for new best sellers. It also reduced the cost of this processing by contracting with the book wholesaler, B&T, to provide more services. In so doing it was able to reassign some employees formerly involved in book processing to public service duties. Additionally it reviewed our contract with Palinet, the vendor from which we have obtained OCLC copy-cataloging since 1983. This review resulted in the elimination of products that the Library did not use but for which it had been paying routinely for many years.

- **RENOVATION OF FACILITIES**

MAIN LIBRARY: The New Jersey Room, which had been in dismal physical condition for many years, was painted, carpeted, and decorated. The lobby in the main library was also upgraded and now serves as the central circulation point for the entire main library. Displays of new books have also been established in the lobby.

NEIGHBORHOOD BRANCHES: Two branches were painted and refurbished with new carpeting, furniture, and equipment.

REGIONAL BRANCHES: The Five Corners branch was upgraded with painting, new shelving, creation of a technology training room, and reconfiguration of the service area to provide self-service access to the video collection on the second floor

The most significant building improvement took place at The Heights branch on Zabriskie Street, built in 1917 and the oldest branch in the library system. This structure was gutted and rebuilt with innovations such as a lift and ramp for the disabled, a story-time theater, a community meeting room, eight public access computers, and a video and audio book collection. This was a major project, involving bidding and rebidding. LSSI worked very closely with the architect in designing this branch, in dealing with the legal and financial concerns including negotiations with the adjoining bank to secure an easement, and in selecting furnishings. LSSI also consulted frequently with the group of Friends of the Zabriskie Street Library whose lobbying of board members and public officials created the impetus to renovate. LSSI was also involved in the relocation of the branch to temporary quarters during the fourteen months that the Zabriskie Street library was closed. The renovated branch reopened on April 23, 2001, and has been so well received by its community that the branch catapulted to second in the system in circulation, surpassing the main library.

- **Marketing of library:** LSSI and library employees began to appear on the local cable TV company's "Newsmakers" programs. A brochure about library services was devised and mailed to each taxpayer in the city. Donations of banners for each branch were successfully elicited from a local bank. Several other firms paid for the repair and refurbishing of the library's bookmobile.

14. What have been your findings/reactions regarding using a private vendor for the public library? Pros? Cons? Are there any formal evaluations that have been done? If so, would you please send me a copy.

Two formal reports have been submitted to the prior Board President by the Contract Monitors, but these have not been released by the Board of Trustees

