

**Jacksonville Public Library  
Hours of Operation**

**February 21, 2007**

**Special Report # 619**

**Released on : March 9, 2007**

**OFFICE OF THE COUNCIL AUDITOR**  
Suite 200, St. James Building



February 21, 2007

Special Report # 619

Honorable Members of the City Council  
City of Jacksonville

Re: Jacksonville Public Library (JPL) Audit

During 2005/2006, the previous Council Auditor began an audit of the Jacksonville Public Library. The two objectives were 1) to determine the effect of the reduced operating hours on the users of the public library system, and 2) to determine if staff and other resources could be used more efficiently to extend current hours of operation. Upon the completion of the audit, I determined that a conclusion could not be drawn for the first objective and the JPL was in general agreement with our findings and recommendations for the second objective. Therefore, I made the decision not to issue the report.

For the first objective, there were many variables that affected the gate count and circulation in the JPL system. These variables included, but were not limited to, whether school was in session, number of days in a month, holidays, the opening of new branches, weather and major events. Therefore; we were unable to determine the effect of the reduced operating hours.

We did have some recommendations regarding the second objective and are communicating those recommendations with the issuance of this Special Report. This special report does not represent an audit or attestation conducted pursuant to Government Auditing Standards due to the decision not to issue the original audit report as stated in the first paragraph. JPL's July 13, 2006 responses, as well as updated responses received on March 5, 2007, have been incorporated below. The Administration has requested a release of our draft to assist them in a review of the JPL. In a spirit of cooperation, we are issuing this Special Report.

**1. Maximum Number of Items Reserved**

The maximum number of books and videos that a patron is allowed to reserve is excessive. A total of 50 items may be reserved at any one time for books and videos. The number of items to be checked out / reserved in other counties was also reviewed in order to compare to Duval County. A total of nine counties was reviewed and four of the nine counties allowed a maximum of 30 items or less for reserves. Additionally, some counties further limited the maximum number allowed to be reserved for non-printed materials. See Attachment A for the comparison of the other counties.

### **Recommendation**

The maximum number of items that a patron is allowed to reserve at any one time should be decreased to significantly less than 50 items; unless the patron is employed as a teacher. This would also decrease the risk of loss and/or theft.

### **Auditee's Response**

*We concur with the recommendation to significantly reduce the number of items that a customer is allowed to reserve at any one time to less than 50 items. Effective July 1, we reduced the number of reserves allowed at any one time to 20 items. We do not plan to make exceptions to this limit but would be willing to reconsider based on customer demand.*

### **Updated Auditee's Response**

*No change.*

## **2. Location of Reserved Items**

The branches are inconsistent concerning the placement of reserves for pick-up by the patron. Some branches place the reserves on a shelf outside of the Circulation Desk and some place the reserves behind the Circulation Desk. The reserves that are placed outside of the Circulation Desk eliminate a step that is required of the Circulation staff.

### **Recommendation**

When space allows, the reserves or "holds" should be placed outside of the Circulation Desk in order for the patron to pick up their own reserved item. It should be noted that the Department has been aware of this necessity and the Library Director is working to ensure this service in all locations.

### **Auditee's Response**

*We concur and will continue to implement this recommendation where feasible.*

### **Updated Auditee's Response**

*To date, seventeen of twenty one libraries have placed their reserved items outside of the Circulation Desk in order for the customers to pick up their own reserved items. We will continue to implement this recommendation where the physical layout of the library permits.*

### **3. Donated Items**

Donated materials may be donated at any branch and in any condition. The library staff has to determine whether donated materials should be retained by the library, sold at the book sale, or recycled. Many of the items are recycled due to their poor condition. This process is time consuming and the donated materials appear burdensome and excessive in some of the branches. Recycle items are carried by the Distribution Department directly to the recycling plant. Once they are sorted and boxed other items have to be transported to the Distribution Department at University Park. The Friends of the Library process the donated materials for their annual book sale.

### **Recommendation**

The public should be encouraged to donate items only if they are in reasonably good condition. The Library should implement a policy that they do not accept paper back books. These types of books are usually worn and they cost more to process than they are worth.

### **Auditee's Response**

*Book donations are a source of significant revenue for the Friends of Library which is used to fund new materials, services and special projects for the JPL. We will certainly encourage the public to donate hardback books in reasonably good condition. However, because paperback books are frequently donated, the positive public relations benefits of accepting these items must be considered. Therefore, we do not plan to stop accepting paperback books. Staff have been directed to spend significantly less time handling gift books overall.*

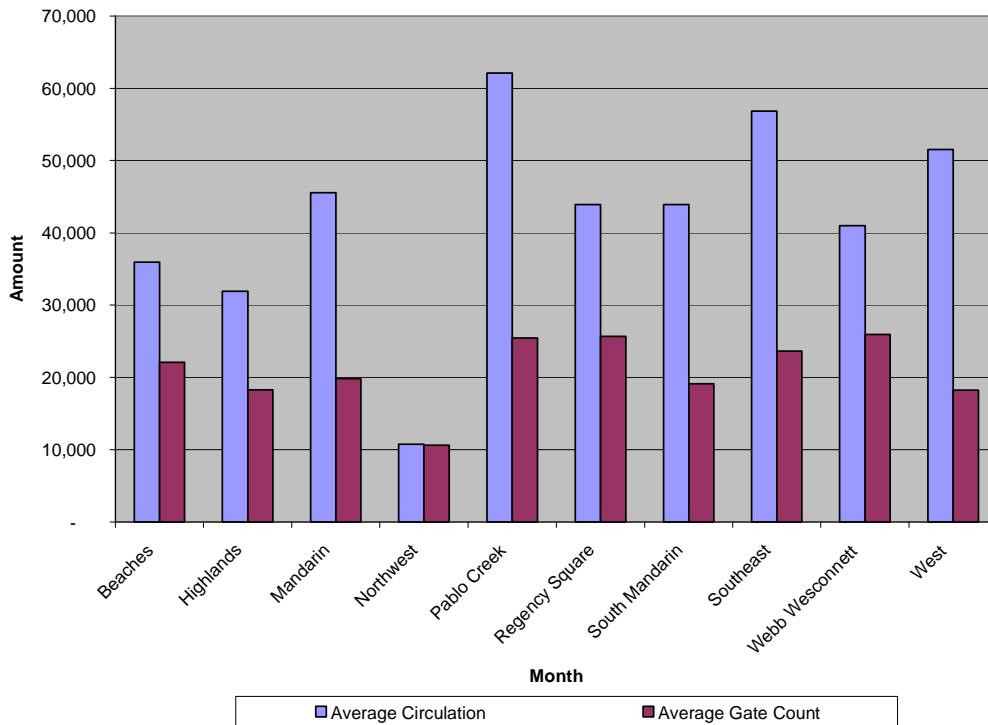
### **Updated Auditee's Response**

*In addition, staff is directed to spend significantly less time handling gift books in terms of placing them in our collection. The majority of the materials are sent to the Friends of the JPL.*

### **4. Northwest Regional Branch**

The Bradham Brooks Northwest Regional Branch has the operating hours and staff of a regional branch; but, the gate count and circulation of a community branch. We analyzed personnel salaries and circulation for all regional branches in order to compare personnel costs associated with each item checked out. The personnel cost for this branch was \$2.48 per item based on the daily circulation statistics for Friday, October 7, 2005 and the personnel cost per item for the other regional branches was in the range of \$.76 to \$1.13 based on the circulation statistics for the same day. The gate count and circulation for the Northwest Regional Branch was significantly less than the other regional branches. In addition, the Northwest Regional Branch is less than five miles away from the Highlands Regional Branch. A summary of the average gate count and circulation for all regional branches is presented below:

Regional Branches Monthly Average from Nov 2005 - April 2006



**Recommendation**

The operating hours and staff at the Northwest Regional Branch should be reduced to reflect the operation of a Community Branch based on their Gate Count and Circulation statistics. The hours and staff could be restored when the gate count and circulation reflected that of a regional branch.

**Auditee’s Response**

*We concur with the recommendation and will restructure the staff and hours to operate the Bradham Brooks Northwest Branch as a Community Branch effective October 1. The hours will be finalized based on activity levels at the branch.*

**Updated Auditee’s Response**

*As of August 2006, Sunday hours at Northwest were discontinued.*

## **5. Improved Signage**

Overall, the signage at branches could be improved. The Information Desk for the Main Library and 20 branches answered an average of 241,860 questions a month during August 2005 through January 2006 and 143,139, or 59%, were related to Directional/Other questions and 98,721, or 41%, related to Reference. The directional questions asked of the library staff at the Information Desk could be decreased if signage was improved throughout the branches.

The particular instances are as follows:

- In some instances, the signage is inadequate or non-existent.
- The signage is inconsistent from one branch to the next.
- At the Northwest Regional Branch, the signage for the Customer Service and Reference Desk were located somewhere other than the location of the desks. The desks were moved upon renovation; however, the signs were not moved.
- The Teen Area and/or Teen Computer Area at Argyle Branch do not have adequate signage to distinctly identify the area from the adult computer area.
- Many of the branches have wireless internet capability; however, they do not have any signs in the window or on the tables to make patrons aware that the library has this option available.
- Some branches do not have adequate signage for seasonal items available (i.e. tax forms).
- There are also no signs stating that children should not be left unattended by a parent or guardian while at the library.
- Signage for the signing on to a computer could be improved.
- There is no signage to instruct the user about where to pay for copies that are printed from the computer.
- Signage for the Self Check-Out Machine is not self-explanatory for checking out media related items.

## **Recommendation**

Overall, signage should be adequate and standardized throughout all the branches. Signage should exist to assist the public with service points as much as possible with the least amount of questions for library staff.

## **Auditee's Response**

*We concur with this recommendation. Although a sign package was prepared for the JPL as part of the Better Jacksonville Plan, implementation of the sign package was not fully funded. Currently, the two staff members in JPL Facilities Planning are evaluating the signage needs at each of our branch locations and preparing a comprehensive report. Implementing the recommendations of this report will depend on the availability of funding. In addition, they are working on a sign package for the Main Library to be funded with private money when it*

*becomes available later in the 2006 calendar year. We agree that new signage must be standardized, but it must also be flexible enough to accommodate changes in operations.*

### **Updated Auditee's Response**

*Facilities has ordered and had installed \$25,000 of additional signage for the Main Library. The sign holders for the Conference Level are back ordered and should arrive soon. The additional signage has helped the customers find the elevators and restrooms without staff assistance. We are working on a list of absolutely needed signs at the branches and each location will receive one or two. Brown Enterprises is working on pricing, but funding continues to be a concern. In the next month we will survey Southeast Branch for a complete sign package.*

## **6. Better Utilization of Equipment**

The scanning equipment that is used to check out materials is supposed to desensitize the materials at the same time; however the equipment is not always reliable. The book must be desensitized on another device to ensure that the alarm is not triggered when the person is walking through the alarm. Some of the staff ignores the alarm due to the unreliability of the scanner.

### **Recommendation**

The JPL Administration should address the issue with the scanner. The scanners at the new branches may still be under warranty if repair is necessary or additional training may be needed. The resolution of this should decrease the number of times the alarm is activated for the security system; but in any case the alarm should not be ignored.

### **Auditee's Response**

*We concur with the recommendation. The Assistant Director of Support Services has assembled a Circulation Review Team (CRT) to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the circulation process, to improve the quality of JPL customers' experience at the library, to lessen time spent waiting in line for service, and to enable the library to absorb increased circulation without additional full time staff and without detriment to the customer experience. We will ask the CRT to address the scanner and alarm response issues. That report is due August 31, 2006.*

### **Updated Auditee's Response**

*The Circulation Review Team recommended procedural changes, exams to identify training needs, and training to improve circulation accuracy and accountability. Managers and their staff will be asked to take a look at their check out and check in procedures to ensure that staff are focused on the process and not distracted. Voice systems have been installed as part of the materials security system at three branches. Managers will be asked to review proper response to the materials security alarm with their staff. Security guard procedures for responding to the material security system alarm are already in place for those libraries with guards.*

## **7. Professional Staff Reshelving Materials**

The number of part-time hours was reduced in the 2005/06 budget from 238,975 hours to 197,375 hours as of October 1, 2005. The effective number of part-time hours is less than budgeted hours due to the Library paying a higher hourly wage than the hourly wage budgeted. The hours available based on the hourly wage paid of \$8.28 for FY 2004/05 was 193,720 and the hours available based on the hourly wage paid of \$8.51 for FY 2005/06 was 153,068, a decrease of 40,562 part-time hours, or 20.1%. The part-time hours were used to fund the part-time position of a Page, who is used to re-shelve materials (books and media). As a result of the reduction in the number of Pages available to shelve books, all library personnel, including Branch Managers, are re-shelving materials. The hourly rate of a Branch Manager is approximately three times as much as the hourly rate paid to a Page; and therefore, we do not consider it cost beneficial to utilize a Branch Manager or other library professionals to re-shelve materials.

### **Recommendation**

The circulation staff should have more time to serve the public and possibly reshelve materials if the recommendations stated below are implemented.

- The improvement of the reliability of the scanning equipment.
- A desensitizer and a resensitizer should be located next to each scanner unless the scanner has an “all-in-one” capability.
- The reserves/holds should be located outside the Circulation Desk, as space allows.
- The number of materials reserves should be decreased to a maximum number significantly less than 50 items, unless the patron is employed as a school teacher.
- The public should be encouraged to donate items only if they are in reasonably good condition and the library will not accept paper back books.

Please note that the implementation of these recommendations will not solve the issue of the backlog of unshelved materials at some of the branches; however, we anticipate that it will be a small step in that direction.

### **Auditee's Response**

*We concur that circulation staff should have more time to serve the public and reshelve materials. We are already evaluating and realigning our staffing to better meet current business patterns. Our responses to the bulleted items have been addressed above as follows:*

*Bullets 1 and 2: See response 6.*

*Bullet 3: See response 2.*

*Bullet 4: See response 1.*

*Bullet 5: See response 3.*

### **Updated Auditee's Response**

*Managers have been given responsibility for managing their own part-time budgets in order respond more efficiently to changing business patterns. As a result, branch managers now have the ability more effectively staff their operations with the appropriate level of part-time staff, whether pages for shelving, clerical staff for Circulation Services or professional staff for Information Services.*

### **8. Improved Facility Maintenance**

JPL facilities are not adequately maintained and not all are handicap accessible.

- The Northwest Branch had several leaks from the ceiling that was causing water damage. The water damage was evident throughout the branch.
- All branches are not handicap accessible. At the Argyle Branch, the first set of double doors was handicap accessible; however, the second set of double doors (the actual entrance to the branch) was not.
- The branches are not receiving custodial items (toilet tissue, paper towels, etc.) on a timely basis. The process of ordering and delivery of supplies from Public Buildings needs to be improved.

### **Recommendation**

The JPL system has 21 facilities and they should receive adequate service from the Public Buildings Division.

- Branches should be repaired, if necessary, and maintained.
- The process of ordering and delivery of supplies from Public Buildings needs to be improved to ensure that the branches receive the necessary items on a timely basis. The supplies should be delivered directly to the Branch from the vendor to decrease the amount of deliveries made by University Park support services staff.
- Measures should be taken to ensure that all branches are handicap accessible.

### **Auditee's Response**

*We agree that the 21 Public Library facilities should receive adequate service and maintenance from the Public Buildings Division. We will continue to work closely with Public Buildings to resolve service and maintenance issues. We appreciate Lloyd Fountain's responding to a recent JPL facilities priority by replacing the roof of the Mandarin Branch Library. We have already begun having custodial supplies delivered directly from the vendor to the branches. Although we have been assured by the Public Works Department that all branches meet requirements for handicap access, we will refer this issue to Public Works for further review.*

### **Updated Auditee's Response**

*No change.*

## **9. Programming Opportunities not Utilized**

The JPL offers various types of programs (Mother Goose Story Time, Getting Into College, Introduction to the Internet, etc.) for patrons each month. One of the goals of the programs is to bring in patrons who do not currently use the library. Some of the opportunities for improvement are as follows:

- Program Guides are bid out each time they are printed instead of annually with renewals like other City publications. The bidding of the Program Guide each time it is printed is due to the fact that the number of pages is not consistent from time to time. This process requirement adds an additional two weeks to the process, in addition to consuming unnecessary staff time.
- The Program Guide which advertises the programs offered by each branch is only available in the branches. If the guide is only distributed to the library, the patrons who do not use the library are not receiving the guide.
- The “Application for a Library Borrower’s Card” has a space for the applicant’s email address with a sentence that states “*Please give us your e-mail address. It will be used only for library notices and announcements. Email is the best and quickest way to receive overdue and holds notification*”. The library patron’s e-mail address is used to notify of “holds” but not for the notification of upcoming programs.

### **Recommendation**

- The printing of the Program Guide should be bid on an annual basis, with options for renewal. The number of pages should remain consistent in order to be allowed to bid annually.
- The Program Guide should be distributed to other locations, in addition to the branches. The Neighborhoods Magazine has a wide distribution. The JPL Program Guide should have some type of similar distribution to other organizations (i.e. churches, community centers, etc.).
- The e-mail address of library patrons, if available, should be used to notify patrons of upcoming library programs.

### **Auditee’s Response**

*We agree that the Program Guide should be bid on an annual basis. This will be implemented October 1. In addition to distribution at our branches, the Program Guide is available online for easy accessibility. We will investigate the possibility of utilizing the distribution network employed by the Neighborhoods Magazine to improve distribution. We are in the process of implementing NextReads, an electronic newsletter, to provide timely and engaging lists of books, Library programming and other resources via e-mail.*

### **Updated Auditee’s Response**

*The Program Guide has been standardized, saving approximately \$0.12 per copy. Bidding the program guide on a year long contract is not advisable according to Dan Shannon in*

*Purchasing. NextReads, an electronic newsletter to provide book recommendations, Library programming and other Library information via e-mail was launched in January 2007.*

## **10. Staff Serving on Committees**

There is multiple staff from one branch serving on centralized committees which causes unnecessary stress on the staff that remains to serve patrons.

### **Recommendation**

The number of staff assigned to various committees should be allocated between various branches instead of having several members serve from the same branch.

### **Auditee's Response**

*We concur with the recommendation and will strive to comply. Centralizing the appointment and assignment of library committees is under consideration. Having more than one committee member from the same branch may occur as a result of personnel transfers.*

### **Updated Auditee's Response**

*Appointment and assignment to committees has been centralized. The names of all committees and their membership are posted on the staff website, along with a form to complete for those who are interested in joining a particular committee.*

## **11. Elimination of Unnecessary Personal Information**

The application for a library card requests a patron's social security number; however, it is optional. We question the necessity for the number. The fact that this inclusion of the social security number is optional supports the removal because it does not appear necessary for the processing of a library card.

### **Recommendation**

The "Application for a Library Borrower's Card" should be revised to eliminate the need for an applicant's social security number, even though the inclusion is optional. Social Security numbers that presently exist in the JPL's computer system should be purged.

### **Auditee's Response**

*We concur with the recommendation and have ordered revised library card applications which eliminate the social security number field. The library card forms available online have already had the social security field removed. Social security numbers that currently exist in the Library's computer system are now being purged during library card renewal.*

### **Updated Auditee's Response**

*No change.*

## **12. Increased Security**

Security appears inadequate at many of the branches.

- The Main Library and 10 of the 20 branches have security during some periods during the day. Some of the branches only have security during the latter part of the day. The other 10 of the 20 branches have no security at all.
- The JPL staff strives to be aware of suspicious patrons without children who are loitering in the Children's Area or the Teen Area; however, during busy times and limited staff this may be difficult.

### **Recommendation**

All branches should have security guards during peak times, when budgetary constraints allow.

### **Auditee's Response**

*Although we agree with this recommendation, budgetary constraints do not allow us to hire security guards for all locations. We receive no funds from the General Fund to pay for security guards and must allocate funds from State Aid. Allocations from the General Fund to provide security guards during peak times would help us better address this recommendation.*

### **Updated Auditee's Response**

*No change.*

## **13. Surplus Furniture and Recycled Items**

There was an abundance of surplus furniture and recycled items stored at University Park. University Park houses the Distribution Department which administers the daily deliveries/pick-up of materials from each branch. The Distribution Department has two trucks and one van to make deliveries five days a week for the Main Library and 20 branches. The impact on the branches when a delivery is not made to drop off/pick up materials on a daily basis is significant. The next delivery day will have two days of work and will cause more work for the branches. It also causes patrons to wait longer than necessary for reserved materials. The limited number of trucks and the necessity of making the daily deliveries to the branches make it difficult to deliver the surplus items and the recycled items to the appropriate location.

## **Recommendation**

The volume of materials delivered on a daily basis to and from each branch would probably decrease if the number of Interlibrary Loans/Reserves per patron (Recommendation 1) were limited to a number significantly less than the current amount of 50 for most items. This decrease in volume could possibly allow the drivers to have more time and space to deliver the surplus furniture/equipment and the recycled items to their appropriate location.

## **Auditee's Response**

*We have addressed the reduction of reserves issue in the response to 1. In order to improve efficiency in Distribution and Supply departments, we have requested a time and motion study to be conducted by UNF's Transportation and Logistics Program to begin in the fall. The high volume of surplus furniture/equipment has been a result of renovations, closing the old Main Library and opening new branches. We anticipate that the amount of surplus will decrease significantly in the new FY.*

## **Updated Auditee's Response**

*UNF was unable to complete the study, causing a delay. However, a nationally known consultant was engaged to complete a time and motion study to improve efficiency in the Distribution department. The consultant has been to Jacksonville to gather data and observe current operations. He will provide final results and recommendations in March 2007.*

Respectfully submitted,

*Kirk A. Sherman*

Kirk A. Sherman, CPA  
Council Auditor

Attachment A: Comparison of Other Counties

xc: Alan Mosley, Chief Operating Officer  
Pam Markham, Deputy Chief Operating Officer  
Barbara Gubbin, JPL Director

**Council Auditor's Office  
Jacksonville Public Library  
Comparison of Other Counties**

**Attachment A**

City/County	Population (a)	Sq Miles in Service Legal Area (a)	Total Locations	Number of Items Allowed to be Checked Out
<b>City of Jacksonville/ Duval County</b>	<b>808,911</b>	<b>840.0</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>A total of 50 items may be checked out at any one time for books and videos and a limit of 5 items for DVD's and Traveling Tales</b>
Baltimore County (MD)	764,600	612.0	16	not listed
Charolette/Mecklenburg County (NC)	801,137	526.0	23	patrons may have up to 20 items on hold at any one time, limit of 2 CD-ROM products
Memphis / Shelby County (TN)	906,178	755.0	23	max of 25 items may be checked out at any one time
Nashville (TN)	507,785	502.3	21	Up to 25 items including max of 10 DVD's and/or videos
Orange County (FL)	964,751	1,000.0	14	Up to 50 items at a time with individual limits up to 10 for new books, cd's, videos, DVD's, etc.
Ottawa (ON, CA)	800,600	1,072.0	33	unlimited except 10 item limit for Videos, CDs, CD-ROMs, DVDs
Palm Beach County (FL)	808,596	not listed	15	Up to 50 items at a time with individual limits up to 10 for new books, cd's, videos, DVD's, etc.
Salt Lake County (UT)	744,353	701.0	19	Limit of 30 items for printed materials and 10 items for non-printed except CD-ROMS and DVDs (limit 5)
Tampa/Hillsborough County (FL)	1,079,587	1,072.0	24 + 1 under construction	Max of 25 of each item type (audio cassettes & CD's-inc books and music, video cassettes, DVDs, videotapes & CD Roms
Notes:				
(a) Source: American Library Association, Statistical Report 2005 and Cities/Counties respective websites.				