

Public Libraries in Whitman County, WA
A Study by the Pullman League of Women Voters
June 2021-December, 2022

Legislation

Basic Legislation

Article IX of the Washington State Constitution made education of all children residing in the state a “Paramount duty of the state”. In 1935 a state policy on libraries was established as part of its concern for public education. “It is hereby declared to be the policy of the state, as a part of its provision for public education, to promote the establishment and development of public library service throughout its various subdivisions.” (RCW 27.12.020). Most of the laws currently governing the establishment of libraries were set out at this time (RCW 27.12). These include allowing any governmental unit -- county, city or town, to establish a library. Also, a petition of 100 taxpayers in any unit requires the governmental unit to put the question of establishing a library on the ballot for the next election. A majority vote requires the establishment of a free public library, annexation to an adjoining library district, if the population of the town is less than 300,000, or contracting for such services from an existing library. The existing library may include a privately run library if it meets the qualifications of a free public library.

Once a library is approved, Washington State Law requires the appointment of 5 trustees (In a few cases, 7 trustees, RCW 27.12.192) by the Mayor and City Council or by the County Commissioners. The use of the library must be free to everyone living in its district, although charges for certain services are permitted and rules and regulations to “assure the greatest benefit to the greatest number” may be established (RCW 27.12.270). The Trustees are responsible for all aspects of the library including custody of all property, controlling all finances, hiring the librarian(s) and submitting a budget to the City or Town or the County Commissioners. In the case of a rural library district, the Commissioners then make the tax levies for the district with a limit of 50 cents per \$1,000 of the assessed value of the taxable property in the district (RCW 27.12.150). Although each library board has wide powers, it must act in accordance with a variety of other state laws, which define such things as qualifications for librarians, anti-discrimination, minimum wages, reports to the city or county, free use of public libraries, etc. (See RCW 27.12).

The law also requires that any full time library professional employed by a public library must have a librarian’s certificate issued by the state librarian. This certificate usually requires graduation from an accredited library education program (RCW 27.04.055). Thus, the main responsibility of The Trustees is to hire a highly qualified professional who can oversee all aspects of running the library. The Trustees depend on their professional director to hire employees, develop budgets and decide on appropriate services and serve mainly in an advisory and supervisory role. They are also responsible for developing and setting policies. The Trustees are also the connection between the public, which owns the library, and the library staff.

They are central in bringing to the library the public's concerns and ideas for the library and considering how best the library can serve its patrons.

Library Trustees Role in Whitman County

The policies manual for the Whitman County Rural Library District states the role of library Trustees very well: *“The purpose of the Whitman County Rural Library District Board is to represent the library both to the people and to the governing officials. It is the trustee's obligation to see that adequate funds are obtained for good library service, to promote the best possible use of all library resources in the area, to improve existing libraries, and extend library service to those not previously served.”*

Both the Whitman County and Neill Public Library Boards of Trustees hold monthly meetings to approve expenditures, hear from the library director and take care of reports etc. They are responsible for a yearly evaluation of the director which involves input from staff. In many ways they serve as a sounding board for the director.

There are differences between a rural library district and a city library in the library Trustees' role. In the Whitman County Rural Library district, the Trustees are responsible for approving and submitting the yearly budget to the County Commissioners. The budget is used to determine the property tax rate that supports the library. The commissioners cannot modify it. The Trustees also submit bond issue requests to the voters. The only other role of the County Commissioners is to appoint the library Trustees. County departments do not provide help to the library staff.

In Neill Public Library, a city library, the Trustees are responsible for approving the yearly budget and submitting it to the City Council where it becomes part of the city budget. The City Council can modify the budget. The director must be hired in co-operation with the City Council. A member of the City Council is an ex-officio member of the Board of Trustees. City departments help the library in a number of ways and part of the library budget (under Interfund) pays for this.

History of Public Libraries in Whitman County

Neill Public Library

In June 2017, local historian, John Anderson provided a summary of the history of Neill Public library entitled “The Little Library that Could: The Origins and Development of Neill Public Library in Pullman”. This informative paper is available under History on the Neill Public Library website and archived in the Heritage collection. A shortened version is available in [The Bunchgrass Historian](#) (published by the Whitman County Historical Society) Vol 42, #3, 2016. The following is a summary of John Anderson's article. For original references please see Mr. Anderson's paper.

One hundred years ago, in June 1922, what became Neill Public Library had its beginnings as a children's summer library. This effort, which involved many women's organizations in Pullman, was organized by the Pullman chapter of the American Association of University Women. The initial library of about 700 books, many on loan for the summer from the school district, was in the basement of the Presbyterian Church (now the Greystone Building). The hours were limited, 3:00 to 5:00 on Tuesday and Friday afternoons, with a story time at 4:00 on Fridays. By the second summer the number of children coming each session had increased from 26 to 58, and by the fall of 1925 the AAUW was working to find a way to keep the library open year around. They mounted a fund and book drive that garnered 831 books to add to the 100 the AAUW already owned and around \$171 in cash. The year round library opened on April 22, 1926. It was in two new rooms managed by the Chamber of Commerce in Pullman's city hall which was then on the NW corner of Olson and Kamiaken Streets. The City of Pullman became involved in 1927 when "the women of the city", according to the Pullman Herald, asked the City Council for \$500 to cover employment of a part time librarian, buy new books and cover the costs of maintaining equipment and space. The library was still open only two afternoons a week and was loaning 25-50 of its 800 books each afternoon. In September, 1927 the City Council approved a sum of \$300/year. The library was growing and moved in January 1928 to the Emerson Building on the SE corner of Kamiaken and Main. In this and subsequent moves volunteers provided most of the labor, especially the Boy Scouts and, later, various fraternities. A paid, part time librarian was employed although volunteers still provided much of the staffing for the library,.

In 1929 the state auditor questioned City support of the library when it was not part of the City government. He suggested the Mayor appoint a Board of Trustees. Four active members of AAUW and one City Council member were appointed. AAUW offered the library as a gift to the city at this time but, apparently by some oversight, it was not accepted then. The library continued to grow and moved back in 1934 to the second floor of city hall on the NW corner of Olson and Kamiaken. In 1940, in response to state insistence that the City Council must have full control of the library in order to support it, the City Council belatedly formally accepted AAUW's gift and took on ownership of the library. By this time, it was referred to as the public library and was clearly not just a children's library.

With the help of many volunteer organizations, the library continued to grow. By 1957 the library had 15,000 volumes, was open weekdays from 2:00 to 5:30 and again from 7:00 to 9:30 and on Saturdays from 10:00 to noon and 2:00 to 5:00. 2,500 to 3,000 books were being checked out each month. Some 3,300 or, about ½ of Pullman's residents, had library cards and efforts to obtain a new building were being made. In March of 1958 the library was able to move to a larger space in a vacant store front on Grand Ave and in November, the voters approved a bond to pay for a new or remodeled library. As the city searched for property the library grew. Comparing the 1958 and 1960 budgets shows a doubling of the budget from \$7,478 to \$15,208. The increase in funds went mostly to hire a full time librarian and to lease the new space. By 1962, in a series of complicated land transfers, the city obtained most of the property where the current library stands. The building on the property, then occupied by the Bestway Building Center, was remodeled with the bond issue funds and funds from the estate of Robert Neill. The library moved once again. This time the new site was so close to the current one that the books were moved by a human chain formed by members of three fraternities from

Washington State University. The name was changed to Neill Public Library in honor of the endowment funded by the Neill estate. Neill's grandson, Scott Neill, had the honor of placing the first book on the new shelves. Modern technology was also being introduced. The Librarian hoped to include a recording center with record player, tape recorder and record collection if some group would donate the equipment.

In 1980 Dodie Wagner, a local journalist, established an art collection for the City of Pullman. She contacted local artists, asked them to choose one of their creations to give to the collection, donating half its purchase price. She then asked local residents and businesses to contribute the other half of the price because she wanted to be sure artists were paid for their work. She decided the collection should be permanently housed in Neill Public Library, where it would be seen by more residents than in any other office of the City. (Provided by Karen Kiessling, Mayor at the time.)

This was also the time when the Friends of Neill Public Library organized, with the first records dated July, 1980. In 1988 a computerized system was installed to manage materials. Once again, the library was outgrowing its space.

In 1985 the Friends of Neill Public Library recommended that the library be expanded. The Board of Trustees agreed, as did the City Council, which initiated a Capital Improvement Fund. An architect was hired in 1989 to develop a preliminary plan. Unfortunately, contractors' bids were about 50% over the estimated budget. After much discussion by all involved, including the public, and suggestions for other possible sites, in May 1991 the City Council voted to build a new building on the Grand and Olson property using the floor plan developed for the proposed remodeling and expansion. The City had applied for and received a grant of \$96,788 for the remodeling project from the Washington State Library Commission which dispensed funds from the federal government. The Commission was impressed by the overall support of the community, from the involvement of the Friends of NPL to the City Council's willingness to allocate funds. In March, 1992 the library moved to temporary quarters in the bank building on the NW corner of Main and Kamiaken. Ground breaking for the new library was April 2, 1992. The library was able to move back to the new library on November 30, 1992. The total budget as shown in the city's budget for 1993 was:

96,778 Grant proceeds,
615,806 General fund,
472,450 Capital improvement fund,
166,020 Private donations,
9,855 Interest.
Total: \$1,360,909.

Within a year, the new building saw an increase in usage of 50%. It also brought an increase in demand for new technology with new computers, dial up service from home computers and interaction with the local school district. With a grant of \$138,000, the state supported the cost of the new computers, their maintenance and phone costs. The library was a welcome addition to the appearance of downtown Pullman with its substantial style and brick artwork. The Hecht

room in the new library also was designed with an outside entrance which allows the library to host community groups holding various public meetings even when the main Library is closed.

Only 18 months after moving to the new building, the library received a large donation from Ivan Shirrod to finance an expansion. He had been born in Uniontown and grown up in Pullman and Spokane. He received his degree from WSU, worked at Boeing and IBM in Seattle and retired to Pullman, where his parents were living. The expansion was to highlight the library's collections in Pacific Northwest history, much of which was from Shirrod's private collection. (Obituary in the Pullman/Moscow Daily News, week of December 10, 2003). It also provided a larger space for public talks and such activities as voter forums. Plans proceeded slowly for some years and by 2001 the cost was expected to be \$150,000 more than Shirrod's donation of \$600,000. But, the Friends of NPL were able to raise most of this money. Construction finally began in March of 2004 and was completed in October. Of the \$762,000 final cost, only \$10,000 was city tax money. True to its origin and history, Neill Public Library continued to be a community effort.

Since 2004 Neill Public Library has continued to grow in services, especially technology. It has weathered significant downturns in funds in the recession of 2008 and the COVID pandemic of 2019-2022. During the COVID pandemic the state did not consider libraries to be an essential service and the city, concerned about a large loss in revenue, froze the library budget when the library was closed for in-person service on March 19, 2020. There had been 30 employees, 15 full time. All but two were furloughed without pay. The library showed its strong connection and important place in the community with its response. The library immediately started a home delivery service and had 2 employees work from home to support online service, which greatly expanded throughout the pandemic. In the week after the library closed, Mayor Glenn Johnson recorded 7 online weekly story times. By May, the library was able to accept returned materials. And was also able to make Wi-Fi accessible in the parking lot. The library started curbside pickups on June 15 and staff were gradually called back. By October 2020, with funding from the Friends of NLP, portable "Grab and Go" activity programs began for all ages (Neill Public Library, 2020 Annual Report, presented to Pullman City Council, Feb. 15, 2022).

Whitman County Libraries

The Palouse Library

The Pullman library, now Neill Public Library, was not the first library in Whitman County. (This information is from "History of the Palouse Branch" on the website of the Whitman County Rural Library district, whitcolib.org.) On March 8, 1920 a women's social club, The Xenodican Club of Palouse, became a member of the State Federation of Women's Clubs. It chose building a public library for Palouse as its service to the community. Starting with about 20 books from the Palouse Episcopal parish and a room in the old parish house, the members asked the City Council for permission to solicit donations of books and money. The response was generous and late in 1920 the City Council offered the use of the city hall, then a block north

of Main Street, for a library location. Volunteers moved the books, purchased lumber and built shelves and each member of the Xenodican Club donated for the cost of curtains. Members of the Xenodican Club initially staffed the library, starting first with one afternoon a week and moving to two afternoons and evenings after moving to the city hall. By 1925 demand for services had grown and the club asked the City Council for support as well as assessing \$3.00/member for a librarian's salary. The City appropriated \$100 for the library which increased through the years. During the depression the City assumed the librarian's salary and the per member assessment was dropped. Volunteers continued to be the backbone of the library, providing not only books but a great deal of maintenance and improvements such as painting, furniture and landscaping.

In July 1947, the Palouse Library contracted with the new Whitman County Rural Library District. At that time, the library had 3,000 books. As part of the County system the County Library Director now selects books and employs the librarian. However, the Palouse librarian is still a member of the Xenodican Club and members of the club and others continue to provide much needed physical and monetary support.

The Whitman County Rural Library District

The Whitman County Rural Library District was a relative latecomer. In August 1944, using the 1935 law on establishing libraries, a petition with 300 signatures was filed with the Whitman County Commissioners to form a rural library district. As required by law, the measure was placed on the November ballot. The new district was approved by a vote of 1,743 to 1,462. The Commissioners appointed the required five member Board of Trustees and the library began in the county courthouse until the rental of a former tavern on Main Street could be arranged. The building furniture was war surplus and the former tavern space was rough, but the library grew in popularity and service. By 1948 it had 44,000 books and 25 branches. Hay had the honor of being the first branch outside of Colfax. Efforts to abolish the district—remember it is permitted to tax up to 50 cents per \$1000 of property--were defeated in 1946 and 1948. Through the following years several of the incorporated towns contracted with the library for services, usually providing space for the library branch. (Information for this section is from "History of the Whitman County Library" by former director, Kristie Kirkpatrick and "Past to the Present" by Sabrina Jones. Both are on the Whitman County Library website: whitcolib.org, under Our Story.)

In 1951, librarian, Florence Biller, who had been the children's librarian, saw the need for a bookmobile to provide better service to the outlying areas. Service to children was and has continued to be a priority of the library. A bookmobile was obtained in February, 1952. This allowed service to most of the schools and allowed several of the smaller branches to close. After many years of dedicated service, the bookmobile was replaced in 1964 and again in 1985.

By 1955 plans for a new building that could house the expanding library were being made. When the building at the corner of Maine and Spring in Colfax burned in early 1959, the library district purchased the site and work began. The total cost of construction was \$99,630.96. Volunteers, including the Colfax Jaycees formed a book brigade to move the materials to the new building. In 1966 the unfinished basement was finished to provide a large meeting room,

office, kitchen, storeroom and restrooms. In 1968 air conditioning was added and modern technology started to creep in with the acquisition of large print and tape recorded books.

The 1980's were a busy decade for the Whitman County Library. The towns with branches provided space and contracted for the library services. In 1982 library director, Gail Warner began assembling the information necessary to include the towns in the library taxing district. Several towns joined. In 1983 the Friends of Whitman County Library was organized and became an important source of additional funds, once again emphasizing the importance of volunteers for libraries. In 1984, Director Warner looked into lifting the lid on levies and placing a special levy on the September ballot. The measures were approved and plans began for remodeling the Colfax Library and computerizing the catalogue. Remodeling began in July 1985, while library functions moved to the basement. A computer service was chosen and entering the catalogue in the system began. A new bookmobile began service and a packet radio system to link the branches to the Colfax branch was developed. By 1988 the computer system connected to all the branches via radio.

After a series of short term directors, long time staff member Kristie Kirkpatrick was appointed director in 1999. By that year the library had 6,303 registered patrons and 14 branches. It had an inventory of 73,370 books, videos and other materials and 127,879 items were circulated that year. Throughout the history of the library, children's services have been a main priority but, there were also book deliveries to nursing homes and mail services for shut-ins. More large print books and books on tape and CD were added.

By 2006 (From "Past to the Present" by Sabrina Jones, on the Whitman County Library website, whitcolib.org, in an interview with director Kristie Kirkpatrick.) the library was deeply into technology. The computer system was upgraded, allowing easier searches. There was a 24/7 reference service known as Ask Us. Partnering with 10 Whitman County schools, the library received an Institute of Museum and Library Services grant to offer an online curriculum program called "Building Bridges" to help students improve skills and discover their interests. The library now was serving nearly 11,000 card holders. In 2004 it was designated the Best Rural Library in the State by the Washington State Library Commission. Since 2006, a large variety of web resources have been added. Many are available on line from patrons' computers. In 2010. The Colfax building was remodeled to become ADA accessible and to expand public computing. Although the WCL has a stable source of funding from property taxes, remodeling buildings and innovative projects depend upon funding from grants, bond issues and donors. The very active Friends of the Whitman County Library have been instrumental.

Director Kristie Kirkpatrick retired in the fall of 2020. A new director, Kylie Fullmer served until October 2021 when long time library employee, Sheri Miller took over as interim director. The current director, Cody Allen, arrived in July 2022.

COVID did not severely affect the finances of the Whitman County Libraries. However, the closings and safety precautions required by the state prevented in-person services and use of the buildings. The library responded by expanding wifi service to building parking lots, acquiring and checking out laptop computers and wifi hot spots and developing improved sanitation

measures. They also developed educational and fun grab and go bags for families and children and increased internet offerings available for patrons to access from home.

Throughout its history, the Whitman County Library has focused on providing education and community service. According to the Institute of Museum and Library Services in its Library profile of Whitman County Rural Library District, 2019 survey, a fundamental mission of the Whitman County Library is to promote “residents’ wellbeing by connecting remote, rural towns to the county’s public health, nonprofit, and government infrastructure.” As one of the few, or even the only, public gathering spaces available in many of the small towns, the libraries work not only, to help patrons access information on services and help them fill out paperwork, but also to host many services such as flu shot clinics, vision screenings, training and exercise programs provided by local hospitals and other agencies. They work with government and non-profit agencies to hold outreach programs to connect community members to such programs as the Community Action Center energy assistance programs and the department of health WIC program.

In providing these services the Whitman County Library District fulfills an important mission, as stated by recently retired Library director, Kristie Kirkpatrick in an article called “WLC Today” (Whitman County Library webpage, witcolib.org). *“The mission of Whitman County Library is to be our community’s #1 resource for education, recreation and discovery. To fulfill our mission, WCL is committed to serving people in the towns where they live. In an age where many agencies and businesses have pulled out of small towns, Whitman County Library is determined to stay put!”*

At this writing, December 2022, the Whitman County Library serves all of Whitman County except Pullman. That is approximately 15,700 people scattered over an area of 2,159 square miles. In contrast, Pullman has an area of 10.7 square miles with 33,000 residents, including many university students. Whitman County has 15 incorporated towns besides Pullman. Thanks to the Whitman County Rural Library district, all but Lamont have a library, even tiny (125 people) Farmington. Many have annexed to the rural library district, while others contract for services. The main branch in Colfax is the only building owned by the library district. In each case, the towns with branches provide the facilities, maintenance and utilities while the district provides materials and staff. Several towns have been able to renovate their building or, in the case of St. John, build a dedicated library building via donations or bond issues. Many events are held at the branch libraries and the library also reaches out with “Little Free Libraries”. The St. John’s branch has even provided books to grain elevators to make it easier for farm workers to get books during their busiest season.

Library Funding

Base Funding

Neill Public Library

As a city library, Neill Public Library receives its funding from the City of Pullman. This support recently has been about 7.29% of the part of the city budget supported by general funds. (General funds also support police and fire, much of parks and recreation activities and administration. Many dedicated funds such as the cemetery district and utility fees support other city expenses.) General funds are about 40% of the total City of Pullman budget. City funding provided 97% of the library's budget of \$1,909,0000 in 2022. The library does apply for grants but selects them carefully as, some require more staff time to fill out applications and reports than the sum of money provided. The library also receives federal IMLS (Institute of Museum and Library Services) funds. Approximately \$25,000 was received in 2021. The city of Pullman owns the library building and Library employees are city employees. The City of Pullman also provides general maintenance and a number of city services including Human Resources help in hiring, IT services and accounting services. The cost of the services is part of the library budget under Interfund. Some of the maintenance cost is also provided by an annual payment from the Shirrod Fund. (Pullman 2021-2022 preliminary budget, Pullman-wa.gov. Minutes of Nov.17, 2020 City Council Meeting and Dan Owens, April 9, 2022 LWV presentation and September 14, 2022 interview.)

Whitman County Rural Library District

As a rural library district, the Whitman County library district is directly funded by a levy on all taxable property in the county outside of the Pullman City boundaries and the boundaries of those towns that contract for library service. The district can levy up to 50 cents per \$1000 of assessed value. Cities that contract for Library service are billed by the library on the basis of the property tax that would have been collected if they were part of the district (listed in the budget as Intergovernment Service Revenues). The library also receives a state payment in lieu of property tax on state owned land in the district (Leasehold Excise Taxes in the budget). This amount can vary widely each year.

The Colfax library is owned and maintained by the library district. However, the towns housing the 13 branch libraries provide and maintain their library space and pay for the utilities. The library district pays for staff salaries and materials, including computers and software, for all branches. Several towns have been able to use donations, bond issues or city funds to remodel their libraries.

Property Tax funding only provides about 86% (\$1,120,000 in 2022) of the \$1,295,600 budget of the library. (Sources: Interview with Shirley Cornelius, business manager and Sheri Miller, interim director, spring 2022. Whitman County Library 2022 budget, August 2022). A substantial amount of the remaining funds of \$130,000, come from the money paid by the state in lieu of taxes (\$20,000 in 2022) and by the contracting cities (\$50,000). Together they are \$70,000 (5.4%). Much of the remainder comes from federal or state grants, many of which are

administered through or provided by the Washington State Library. (Interlocal Service Revenues in the budget). These include a long running Digital Heritage Grant to digitize Whitman County photos and other historical documents and IMLS and American Library Association grants. The Washington State Library also provides access to such information services as LinkedIn Learning at a reduced price. Friends of the Library apply for grants that require a non-profit organization to apply. There is a small endowment which directs profits from a farming operation to the library. These funds are, of course, variable, providing anywhere from \$5,000 in 2021 to an expected \$20,000 in 2022. Currently they are used to pay off the loan taken out for remodeling in 2010. Some small contributions, interest on property tax moneys, which are deposited in interest bearing accounts until use, library fines and fees provide the rest. (Source: Whitman County Library Budget, August 2022; Interlocal agreements, WA. Sec. State.)

Discussion

The fact that the primary funding for the two libraries is different is important. The city of Pullman can provide more funds for a library because it can generate income from several types of taxes, while the county library district must rely on property taxes. In times of economic downturn, property taxes are relatively stable but other taxes are not. Since over 60% of Pullman's general fund budget goes to the police and fire departments, in economic downturns such as the 2007-8 recession or during COVID in 2020-2, the library funds are lowered or frozen. Conversely, the Whitman County Library sees little reduction, although revenues from contracting cities and the state can be lowered or received late. In 2020 40% of the Neill library budget was returned to the city. In 2021 the library was able to use 80% of its budget. (Dan Owens, *ibid.*)

Grants and Donations

Friends of the Library

Grants and donations are an important part of the library budgets. Each library has an active Friends of the Library group.

The Friends are non-profit groups that support library staff and programing primarily by fund raising (memberships, selling books, soliciting endowments) and writing grants, especially those that require that a non-profit organization apply. The website of the Friends of Neill Public Library (friendsofnpl.com) states the mission of Friends groups very succinctly. "The purpose of Friends of Neill Public Library is to supplement Neill Public Library's materials, programs, professional development and special needs not covered by the library's regular budget."

The Friends of Neill Public library (FNPL) was organized in 1980 and incorporated in 1984. The Friends have been involved in major projects including the Heritage Addition and recently constructing the Sarah M. Moore memorial nook overlooking the river. They support many programs such as story times and summer reading prizes. Depending on the project, The Friends may pay for materials directly and give them to the library, or, in the case of building projects where a city department is involved in carrying out the project, they may make a restricted donation to the city, which must be approved by the City Council.

The Friends of Neill Public Library provided \$157,539 in 2021. These funds come from a variety of sources. The Friends have an endowment fund that has provided \$5000-6000 in interest in recent years. The Bertramson Endowment managed by the Meter Company (formerly, Decagon) has given a similar amount. A grant of \$7500 from the Lewis-Clark Valley Healthcare Foundation supported the Mobile Hotspot pilot program. A large part of the funds, about \$25,000, come from donations made by members. Anyone who donates to the Friends is a member, receives the newsletter and is invited to actively participate, as well. Most donations are between \$25 and \$100 but during COVID several donors saw the need and provided much more. Such activities as the book sale shelves and members signing up for Amazon Smile also provide some funds. As noted above, a major source of funds is grants. The Friends work with the librarians to find and apply for funds for specific needs not supported by the regular budget. The grants come to the Friends who manage the paperwork and, usually, directly pay for the supplies, software or performer's stipends or reimburse individuals for travel costs, etc. During COVID when the library could not hold in-house activities, the Friends were instrumental in providing funds for programs that served patrons at home. These include paying for the software license for Kanopy, a movie streaming service, wifi hotspots and grab and go bag materials. They also provided all new materials that were purchased during this time, including books. Recently they have been able to give the library new furniture for the children's area and the two new offices. Friends members also provide in-person help for some activities such as maintaining the book sale shelves, staffing the summer reading table and some special summer activities. They work with groups that want to work with the library and, perhaps most important, they promote the library at public events such as the Lentil Festival and on social media. (Information from Megan Welling, president, Friends of Neill Public Library, interview September 19, 2022).

The Friends of Whitman County Library were organized in 1983. In 2021 the Friends were able to raise about \$ 80,000 for the library. The funds were used to furnish the outdoor patio at the Colfax library and provide office air filters, finance such activities as the Beanstack program, engineering kits for checkout and grab and go STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) activity bags. This amount was unusually large due to the availability of COVID funds for which the Friends applied. Most years the amount is closer to \$15,000. The Friends have established a foundation, (Whitman County Library Foundation) to receive bequests and gifts to the library. Working with the library staff, the Friends of Whitman County Library seek grants from the Innovia Foundation and other sources, especially those that require the recipient to be nonprofit. (From Friends of Whitman County web page and minutes for Sept. 2021 and January 2022.)

Endowments

Neill Public library also has endowments. The Shirrod endowment provides general maintenance for the Shirrod addition. The Robert and Anna Neill fund is the oldest and is invested with the Innovia Foundation. Its monies can be used for building enhancements. Distributions from the endowments are small enough that they are not taken each year.

As noted under base funding, Whitman County Library District does have an endowment of profits from some farm land.

Contribution of other Volunteers

Neill Public Library has not used other volunteers recently, partially due to COVID. However, they have been used for special projects in the past and that is likely to happen again.

The Whitman County Library District uses many volunteers. From June to September 2022 volunteer hours ranged from 50 to 70 each month. Volunteers are used in a variety of ways, from specific projects (like digitizing items), to cleaning, to helping with programs, to leading programs. The interests, skills and location of the volunteer are important in maximizing their help.

Other Resources

The Washington State Library

Although each public library or library district is independent, there are many resources for libraries and librarians. In Washington, the Washington State Library, funded by the State and by the federal government's Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS), is responsible for certifying Librarians. It also provides ongoing training for librarians, some grants, such as the Digital Heritage Grant for the Whitman County Library District, professional development grants, and free or reduced cost access to a number of digital resources for patrons. These digital resources include Imagine Academy and LinkedIn Learning. Both of these programs enable patrons to learn technology and computing skills. The State Library manages applications and grants for other agencies such as the American Library Association. The Whitman County Library has been quite successful in obtaining these grants. The State Library also maintains an online catalogue of the holdings of most of the state's libraries, accessible via the internet to anyone (www.sos.wa.gov).

Librarian and Library Associations

There are also many associations for libraries and librarians. The American Library Association has a number of sub groups and is also affiliated with such groups as the Association for Rural and Small Libraries. These groups provide resources for professional development, learning and developing new ideas for library services, developing policies, especially for common problems, etc. Both the Neill and Whitman County Libraries work to get funds, usually grants, for the librarians to attend conferences each year. The Washington Library Association (WLA) is also vitally important. They put on an annual conference for library professionals in the state that members of WCL both attend and present at, and they provide many grants and scholarship opportunities for the library and library staff.

Other Resources

Both Neill Public Library and the Whitman County Library can get materials for patrons through interlibrary loan. Whitman County Library, Neill Public Library and Latah County Library in Moscow, Idaho have a reciprocal agreement with each other such that anyone who resides in one of these service areas can get a card at any of the other libraries for free. Sheri Miller, April 14, 2022 presentation and Cody Allen, December, 2022.

Distribution of Funds

Neill Public Library

With a budget of 1,909,000 in 2022 (Nov. 17, 2022 City Council meeting, preliminary budget attachment.) Neill Public Library serves a Pullman population of about 33,000 including 19,000 University students. In 2021 there were 18,538 card holders with 16,242 being Pullman residents (Neill Public Library 2021 Annual Report to the Pullman City Council, May 24, 2022). Thus, Neill Public Library has about \$103/user to spend. As expected for a service organization, out of a total budget of \$1,909,000, \$1,380,276, or 72.3% went to salaries and benefits to support 13 full time positions and 13-15 part time positions. After many years and concern on the part of the Pullman League of Women Voters, library salaries are now on par with similar libraries (Dan Owens, director Neill Public Library, interview, Sept. 14, 2022.) The Board of Trustees is actively working with the director to convert several of the part time positions to full time by combining them in order to attract and retain qualified staff. Insurance also takes a big bite at 3.25% of the budget as does the contribution to the city Interfund of 10.5%. This leaves about 13.4% of the budget or \$266,500 in 2022 available for supplies. This includes administrative supplies and costs, activity supplies, materials owned by the library, digital materials and support for librarians to learn to use them. About \$19,500 goes to administrative supplies. The remainder is split almost evenly between Public Service, which includes program supplies and software dues and licenses, and Activity Expenditures, which include books, audios and some downloadable or other non-print materials.

Whitman County Library

With a budget of \$1,295,600 in 2022, Whitman County Library District serves a population of about 15,000 or has about \$86/person to spend (Whitman County Library, September, 2022 Board of Trustee's meeting). Out of the total budget \$865,181 or 66.8% went to salaries and benefits. This supports 8 full time staff and 12-15 part time positions. This staff has to include staff who do accounting, HR, and building maintenance as well as many specific library jobs such as cataloguing and tracking materials and providing programs and other help to patrons. Fixed costs for Library facilities such as insurance, utilities, upkeep, maintenance and repair of facilities and administrative supplies use another \$120,000 or 9% of the budget. This leaves 24% of the budget, or about \$310,400 in 2022, for all other costs. Providing computers and software and software links costs approximately \$61,000, while activity supplies and purchase of materials owned by the library accounts for \$99,500. Two categories use much of the remaining funds. Communications, including phone, internet and advertising accounts for \$38,000. Staff

travel, both between branches and to conference and training opportunities, consumes \$10,000.. About \$90,000 is held in reserve for capital expenses, both emergency repairs and new projects.

Current Services

Neill Public Library

By spring of 2022 Neill Public Library was once again open 56 hours a week and supported by 13 full time staff and 13-15 part time staff. Check out levels for all materials were approaching the 2019 (pre-pandemic) levels of 30,000/per month but in person visits at around 12,500 were only about one half of those in 2019. The collections, materials the library owns, are about 119,000 (Under “About your Library” on the Neill Public Library web site, November 2022.)

Online resources continued to be heavily used. (Director’s Reports for March 2022 and April 13, 2022). Storytimes, make and take events and educational lectures were back. The library also is continuing the very popular Grab and Go Activity Bags developed during the pandemic. Online resources for fun and education that were expanded during the pandemic continue and are popular. Loanable wifi hotspots are among the most popular resources. By August check out levels continued at pre-pandemic levels and visits had steadily increased (Director’s report for September, 2022).

The library provides a great variety of other educational and fun programs. In summer 2022 the usual summer programs were back and well attended. Once again there are many in person events with programs for elementary and middle school aged children. Neill Public Library also hosts club meetings such as Good Yarns, a knitting group, and the Grand Avenue Book Club. Groups can sign up to use the Hecht room. There is a new in-person program of Dungeons and Dragons for middle and high schoolers and reading challenges for all ages. The library is part of the “Everybody Reads” program and hosted the author of “The Beadworkers” in early November for a talk and discussion of the book. Digital resources allow Pullman patrons to attend the Seattle Arts & Lectures programs. The English as a Second Language program is now digital.

Once again at the Feb. 15, 2022 City Council meeting, the library proposed remodeling. The city council approved using \$47,639 from the Robert and Anna Neill library endowment fund plus donations from Friends of Neill Public Library for the construction of two offices in the Heritage Addition. The offices will allow staff to isolate in situations like pandemics, give them quiet working space when needed and free up the conference room space now being used. Remodeling was finished in July, 2022 and Friends of the Library were able to buy the needed furniture. A capital improvement proposal as part of a facilities and services master plan for the City is now being developed (Dan Owens, April 7, 2022 LWV libraries public meeting).

In June 2022 Neill Public Library celebrated its 100th anniversary with historical displays and several community activities. Also in this month long time Library Services Director, Joanna Bailey resigned. After a two month search, Dan Owens, Adult Services Librarian, was chosen and accepted the position starting August 1, 2022.

Whitman County Library

In the spring of 2022 Whitman County Library was again fully open with 8 full time staff and 12-15 part time staff. The main library in Colfax was open 44 hours a week. Hours for the 13 branch libraries varied from 6 to 16 and all had open hours at least 2 days a week. Several had open hours three days a week. Many in person activities are back. The April, 2022 calendar shows the usual story times and other reading events but also art exhibits, lectures, opportunities to paint or do crafts at the library or at home, science based events and family game nights. (WCL calendar for April, 2022.) Many of the innovations made during COVID continue, especially checking out laptops, allowing curb side use of laptops and providing STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Mathematics) activity grab and go bags.

From April to September monthly visitor numbers averaged 3-4,000. Items checked out were 5,000-6,000 per month. The most activity was in the largest town, Colfax, which usually had at least half the total usage. (Whitman County Library director's reports from April-September, 2022 provided by Catalina Flores, Circulation and Branch Coordinator, WCL)

There is concern that the Colfax library will need substantial repairs in the near future. Current state funds require a 20% match. Legislation which may eliminate the matching funds requirement for rural libraries may be proposed in the 2023 session. (Interview with Shirley Cornelius, budget director, WCL, October, 21, 2022.)

On July 12, 2022 Cody Allen was appointed as executive director. Mr. Allen is moving from Billings, Montana where he has been at the Billings library for several years ending up as the library systems administrator. He is excited to be in Colfax where he has family ties (Pullman/Moscow Daily News, Weekend, August 6-7, 2022.)

In November, 2022 the Whitman County Rural Library District received a \$500,000 Digital Navigator grant from the Washington State Broadband Office and the Washington State Department of Commerce. It begins immediately and runs through June 2023. The grant provides monies to help staff and the partnering organization, Pullman Marketing, to develop, host and teach residents digital skills at all 14 branches. Qualifying households may receive laptop computers and subsidized internet subscriptions. The grant also provides for extended library hours at all branches through June 30, 2023.

Opportunities for Advocacy

Funding for facilities is a problem especially for rural library districts, where many patrons might not be able to visit the main library often and many are relatively poor compared to city residents. The Washington State legislature is considering bills to provide facilities funding for libraries. However, most proposals require 20% or more in matching funds. Rural library districts do not have funds for this from the tax receipts and have less opportunity to get donations from residents. Dropping the matching requirement for rural library districts would be very important for Whitman County Libraries.

It is clear that rural library districts need more support for their libraries. Legislation directing other revenue to these libraries is needed.

Legislation is needed to recognize that libraries are essential services. This is especially true during times of economic disruption, when libraries see more use, especially of computers and internet services (Cody Allen, December, 2022).

Conclusions

Both Whitman County Libraries and Neill Public Library in Pullman provide many educational services, especially to children, as specified in the Washington State original legislation encouraging the establishment of public libraries. Both provide help to the public in connecting residents to information, especially governmental information and services. They also provide many entertainment opportunities in the form of books and video and digital materials. Both have incorporated digital technology from its first appearance and now support access to the internet via available computers and wifi, including computers and wifi hot spots that can be checked out. The libraries serve similar sized populations. While Neill checks out many more items and sees more monthly visitors, Whitman County Libraries offer many more whole family programs.

Their primary differences are in the basis and amount of financial support and in their roles as community activity centers. The financial base for Whitman County Rural Library District is property taxes. As a city library, Neill Public Library's funds come from a broader tax base. But, those funds also must support other city functions. This means that Whitman County Library is not as affected by economic disruption such as COVID 19 and recessions. However, in most years it has less money to spend per patron. Its staff must also perform many of the services provided by the city of Pullman for Neill library. Neill Public Library can request capitol funds from the city to improve facilities. Whitman County Library must generate its own funds to maintain the Colfax library from donations or a direct request for a bond to the taxpayers.

Both library systems provide a place for community groups to meet and host a variety of educational speakers and events from Voter Forums to speakers of general interest. However, the city has many venues for public events and services. In Whitman County, the Libraries are often the most accessible or only public gathering places. Thus, with the active direction of the library administration and trustees, they have made it their mission to connect the public with governmental services from flu shot clinics to outreach programs from such groups as the Community Action Center. They also work to provide, not only educational activities, but also family friendly fun activities for the widely dispersed population they serve. (Institute of Museum and Library Services in its Library profile of Whitman County Rural Library District, 2019 survey.)

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Authors

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