

# Sebastopol Library 2015 Needs Assessment

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LANTERN is a non-profit, volunteer organization dedicated to raising money for a new library building for Sebastopol and the West County. Our current building was built in 1974 and renovated to meet seismic standards in 2012. The space remains too inflexible to meet the community's needs.

## ***WHY DO WE NEED A NEW LIBRARY?***

### **1. LIBRARY SIZE**

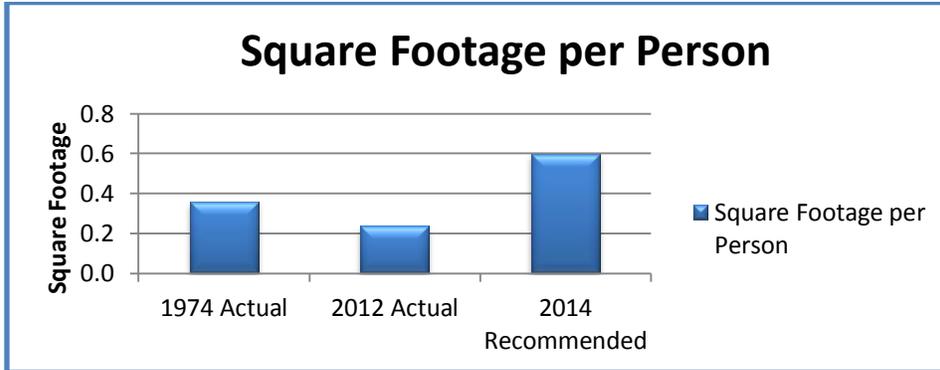
The original library in Sebastopol, a Carnegie library, was built in 1916. It was just 3,500 square feet, but the population of Sebastopol then was just 1,350.



When the current library was being planned in 1974, the population of Sebastopol was around 4,300. The current population of Sebastopol is 7,335. But the library serves more than just the City of Sebastopol. The current service area population, from Sebastopol to Bodega Bay and almost the entire West County is 41,978. Our library averages 243,000 visitors per year.

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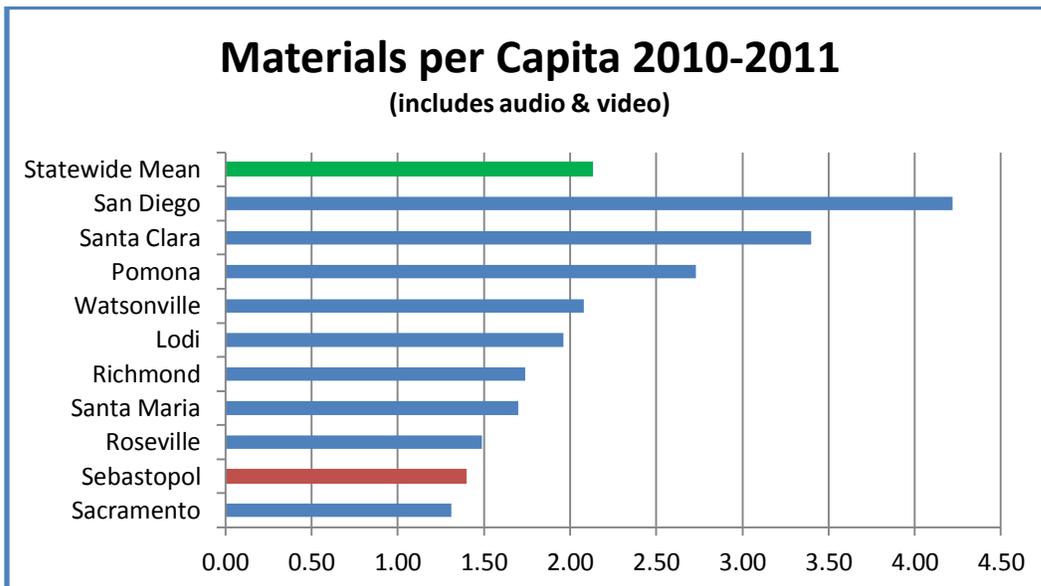
The current size of our library is 10,000 square feet. As you can see from the chart below, the square footage per capita has diminished as the population has grown. Our specific needs assessment conducted in 2014 indicates that we need approximately .6 square feet per person rather than the .24 we now have.



The remodel did not increase the square footage. It was undertaken to upgrade the interior and to replace old shelving to meet seismic standards. The new shelves are reduced in height and do not provide as much space as the old ones; many books had to be removed to accommodate this change.

## 2. COLLECTION AND SERVICE

The Sebastopol Library is too small to house an average sized collection. The current library houses a collection that is 44% smaller than the average for our population. There are 59,000 books and other materials crammed into the library now. The shelves are packed and the library staff must operate on a "one in one out" model. For every book added to the collection, another book has to be discarded. As a result of the limited space, we are unable to have a deep and robust collection.



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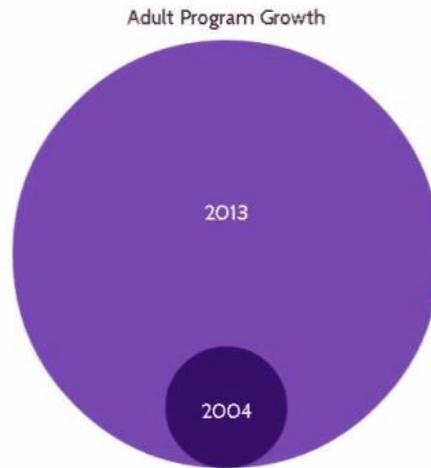
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Service Comparisons 2009						
	Solano County	Camarillo	Los Angeles County	Long Beach	Oakland	Sebastopol Regional Library
Square feet per capita	0.76	0.69	0.5	NA	.7-.9	0.2
Collections per capita	2	3.57	1.84	1.73	3.84	1.4
Seating	3.1/1000	3/1000	5/1000	3/1000	3.5/1000	.6/1000
Public computers	1.3/1000	1/1000	1/1000	1/1000	1.5/1000	1/3500

The Sebastopol Regional Library circulates over 400,000 items per year, which works out to an average of 9.5 items per person in our service area. Nearly 100,000 of those items are borrowed from other libraries in the system. If we had a bigger building and a larger collection, wait times for circulation would be lower, staff workload would be lower, and energy and environmental impact from moving materials around the County would be lower.

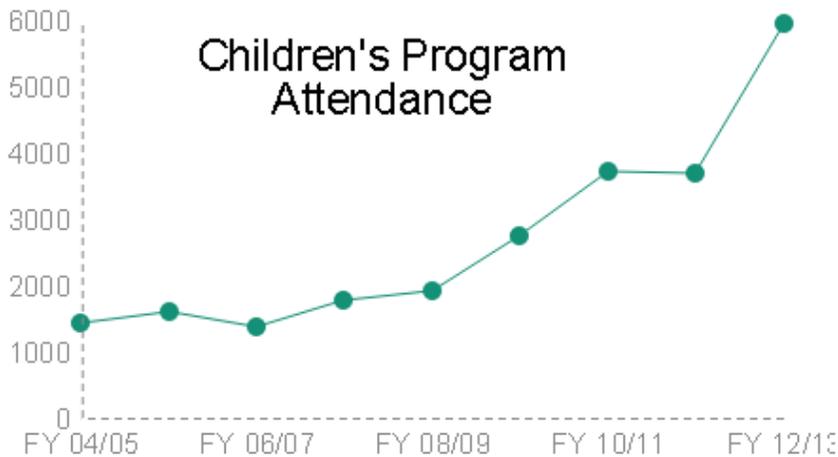
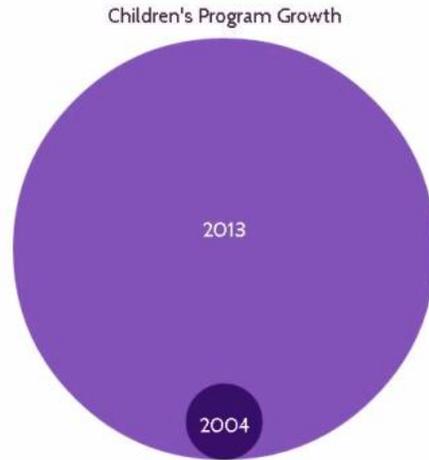
### 3. PROGRAM GROWTH

**Adult programs:** The current library building is too small to meet the demand for programs. The number of programs, classes, and events for adults has tripled in the past ten years, from 12 per year in 2004 to over 36 in 2013. Attendance at these events for adults grew from 300 in 2004 to 900 in 2013. These programs are educational, provide lifelong learning opportunities, provide valuable social connections, build community networks, and are entertaining and fun. The programs include lectures, book club discussions, musical performances, gardening classes, technology workshops, and more.



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**Children's programs:** The number of children's programs, classes, events, and performances have grown by 300% in the past ten years. Attendance has also increased from 1410 children in programs at the library in 2004 to over 5000 in programs in 2013. Children's programs provide vital services to families, teach early literacy skills, build parenting groups, reinforce lessons taught in schools, and provide safe gathering places for children to learn and grow.



Due to the small-sized configuration of the library building, the only meeting room available for library programs is the library's Forum Room. When it is unavailable, meetings are held in the main library space. The Forum Room is scheduled for programs much of the time, which means it is unavailable for quiet study time, tutoring, art shows, or regular meetings for library and community groups. An expanded library building could provide additional smaller gathering spaces that could accommodate numerous uses.

## 4. COMPUTERS

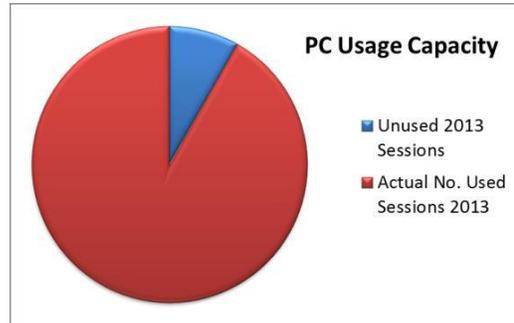
Today's libraries are not simple repositories of books. Modern libraries provide a full range of audio-visual and online resources, including computers with access to sophisticated research tools that the typical computer user or small business owner

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cannot access without paying high fees. Our limited space allows for only 14 computers, with high demand for their use. Increasing the number of computers will enhance access to the world of information. For many in our service area, internet access at their homes is slow or even unavailable. The number of internet sessions increased by 4,000 between 2007 and 2013, growing from 22,631 to 26,743. The computers were used for 26,743 sessions and our wireless access was used for 11,424 hours in 2013.

The current building was not designed with modern electricity access needs nor with modern computer use in mind. The library provided an average of 952 hours per month of active wireless access, but only has three laptop friendly tables. The library also lacks capability to allow for the full range of tools for wireless computers. With a new library, technology needs could be planned into the design. Wireless printing could be offered. More laptop friendly furniture and electrical outlet accessibility could be provided.



## ***RESPONSIBILITY FOR FUNDING THE LIBRARY***

The Sonoma County Library System is governed by a Joint Powers agreement between the County and the cities where libraries exist. County funds pay for the collections at each library and all the staffing. Each city is responsible for the building and its maintenance. So, the City of Sebastopol is responsible for our building. But we all realize that the City does not have the money to afford a new building, no matter how great the need. So LANTERN has been formed to raise money for this project through private donations, grants, and other fund-raising efforts.

## ***CONCLUSION***

Our community loves our library. It is one of the smallest libraries in the County, yet one of the busiest. In addition to an expanded collection of books, research materials, and electronic resources, a new library will provide educational facilities for all ages, including group study or meeting rooms, an improved children's area, and more efficient staff workspace. Our community's expectations of what a library should be are evolving. The design of the new library will be a dynamic community process where the needs of all will be considered.

A free public library has been a landmark of civic, democratic, and educational life. A new public library building will be an investment that will serve as our community's cultural and intellectual focus. It will be a cornerstone of the Sebastopol vision for the 21st century and a benefit to the whole community.