

de la Guerra, Sheila

# Public Comment - Community Services

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**From:** R. Michael Gros <rmgros@sbcc.edu>  
**Sent:** Sunday, April 10, 2022 4:58 PM  
**To:** sbcob  
**Subject:** Opposition to Library funding reduction

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Dear Supervisors,

I am writing in opposition to the proposed budget cuts to the Santa Barbara Library system. While our libraries are often perceived as only buildings with books, over the past decades they have transformed into community centers, information hubs, and sanctuaries from the tensions of everyday life.

A budget cut to the public library system is, as the saying goes, "penny wise and pound foolish." Libraries, and the services they provide, are a balm in troubling times and a center of community life at all times. As a recently retired professor from Santa Barbara City College, I know that many of my former students were as likely to use the Santa Barbara Main Library as that of the college.

Libraries provide internet connections for those, without access, as they apply for jobs. Reference librarians provide support to patrons of all ages whether working on a school project or a genealogy research task. Families, trying to save money, are able to provide their members with access to free books. Much research demonstrates the long-term value to a society that is literate and engaged in reading. School retention and persistence rates are higher for those who read at or above grade level. The library, in one of its many community center functions, provides a safe environment for children and teens who participate in library programs, such as literacy efforts, and are significantly less likely to engage in risky or illegal behaviors.

I have engaged in literature-based free public Readings in the library of new theatrical work on two occasions. And I am currently preparing for a third, through the non-profit theatre company, PlayFest Santa Barbara. PlayFest is dedicated to supporting the development of new plays and playwrights through the script development process known as Readings. PlayFest, in partnership with the library has also presented, free to the public, multiple playwriting workshops for both teens and adults.

I sincerely hope that even facing difficult budgetary decisions, the Supervisors recognize that libraries, especially during these still-troubled economic times, provide a significant return on the county's "investment" and contribute to the health of our community.

Sincerely,

R. Michael Gros  
Professor Emeritus, SBCC  
Artistic Director, PlayFest Santa Barbara