

Proposed FY 2026/27 Budget – Humboldt County Public Library
PUBLIC COMMENT - June 15, 2026

Good afternoon, Chair and Board. My name is Elizabeth Murguia, and I am here today representing the Humboldt Library Foundation.

The Foundation was formed in 1996 to enhance the services at each of our library branches. Since then, we have donated well over \$3 million dollars to ensure our library system is vibrant, modern, and welcoming to our neighbors.

We were pleased, and bit surprised, to see official recognition of our unique partnership with county, as reflected under the Library Department Summary, Program Discussion. The budget before you reflects our \$265,000 commitment for 2026/27 FY – and by default, accounts for the \$284,500 we raised last year specifically to replace the county Bookmobile.

We wish to continue this partnership with the County, and we have every intention of continuing to raise funds in our community to support library services.

However, we have been frustrated to learn that moving forward there will be a reduction in hours at the Trinidad, McKinleyville, Arcata, Fortuna, Ferndale, and Garberville branches, plus a full day closure at the Eureka main branch – down from 31 open hours to 24.

I know that you are each aware of the importance of libraries to a healthy and thriving community. In times of economic uncertainty, the library becomes an even more vital service hub. And with over 79,000 active library card holders in the county, our libraries are busier than ever. During challenging economic times and as belts tighten usage will increase.

Libraries provide primary source documents, books and resources of all kinds, plus being one of the few free community gathering spaces.

Humboldt's libraries also serve as a lifeline for families without internet service, providing a welcoming space for school children to complete homework assignments.

Job seekers are found daily at the library's computers.

The library is also a resource during public emergencies, in fact just this past weekend Humboldt's libraries served as needed cooling centers, as they will throughout the summer months, and they have provided critical respite from smoky air during wildfires in past fire seasons.

You and your staff have completed a lengthy and thorough budget process. Everyone is having to make difficult decisions and choices.

Moving forward the Humboldt Library Foundation encourages you to prioritize restoring the hours we will lose this year. In fact, we'd like to see hours increased system wide, but at the very least, please let's work together to keep this vital community infrastructure healthy and available to Humboldt County residents.

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