

“The Devil is in the Details”: A History of Past and Present Attempts to Form

a County-wide Library System in Cache County, Utah

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Spring 2008

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PREFACE

In the spring of 2008, while speaking to the manager of a small public library in Cache County, Utah, our conversation turned to a subject with which I, as a newcomer to the area, was unfamiliar: an attempt in the recent past to create a county-wide library system in Cache County. The manager suddenly became very serious as she related to me how her library had been ready and willing to participate in such a system, but that she and others from her town were outraged when it was discovered that plans for a library system also included the future closing of her library to facilitate the building of another branch in a neighboring town. She told me that the representatives for her town immediately pulled out of the discussions and others soon followed their example. The proposed plan was dead. Such has been the experience at trying to create a library system in the close knit community that exists in Cache County.

A few weeks later, I had the privilege of sitting in on the library board meeting of the small Cache County Library as an invited guest. The subject of a county-wide system was again raised when a visiting member of the Cache County government mentioned that a petition in favor of a proposed system was circulating around the county government's offices. The question of whether they would allow the petition to be placed on the County Library's website was put before the board. This was discussed with little progress, until I suggested that placing the petition on the website would imply an official acceptance of the petition writer's goal. This was quickly agreed upon by all board members present and the idea was defeated. Despite having inadvertently become part of the history of the movement, I became interested in the idea. Why had there never been a county-wide library system in Cache County? Why had movements to establish one crumbled in the past? Why was the issue coming up again and what might be the future of Cache County's libraries if a system was created?

PART I: CACHE COUNTY & ITS LIBRARIES

Cache County, Utah is a medium-sized rural county in northern Utah on the border with Idaho (see Appendix A). The county is dominated by a large open valley (known locally as “Cache Valley”) between two north-south mountain ranges and a large mountainous area to the east of the valley which is part of the Wasatch National Forest. The mountains to the west of the valley are called the Wellsville Range and those to the east are called the Bear River Range. Four rivers flow from the mountains into the valley. More than twenty communities are spread out along the valley floor, with the largest being the county seat, Logan City. Cache County was named for the nineteenth century mountain man practice of hiding a “cache” of goods and property in the area.

Population in Cache County is almost completely concentrated along the Cache Valley area and its jobs and culture are centered around two main institutions: the practice of farming and Utah State University located in Logan. Based on 2000 census information provided by the Cache Valley Chamber of Commerce (2007b), Cache County had an estimated population of 132,122 in 2006. Logan City has an estimated population of 44,295. Cache County citizens are 93 percent white with the next largest ethnic group being those of Hispanic descent. The population is young with the largest age groups being 25-34 (19.9%) and 5-14 (16.7%). 58.2 percent of residents are married and 29.8 percent have never been married. Most households (29.0%) have two residents (Cache Valley Chamber of Commerce, 2007a). The average annual household income among Cache citizens is \$55,730 and there is a 95.6 percent employment rate with just over half (54.9%) of all employees working in “white-collar” jobs. Most Cache citizens have some college education, but no degree (29.2%), while many others have just a high

school diploma (25.5%) and another large group hold Bachelor's degrees (19.1%). The relatively high college attendance statistics are no doubt due to the proximity to Utah State University.

The history of Cache County is much like that of the rest of Utah. As recently as 175 years ago, Cache Valley was home to only the Shoshone tribe of American Indians. In the early nineteenth century, several groups of explorers and fur traders came through the valley including William Ashley and Peter Skeen Ogden. Modern history of Cache County begins in earnest with the entrance by members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (also known as Mormons or LDS) into the south end of the valley while expanding their settlements from Salt Lake City in July, 1855 (Godfrey, 2006, p. 5).

The history of libraries in Cache Valley is almost as old as its recorded history. The earliest library service was provided to residents by small collections in the hands of private citizens and organizations. It is known that many immigrants to Utah, Mormon and otherwise, brought books with them and valued libraries (Evans, 1971, pp. 2, 5). In 1886, the Logan Literary and Debating Society set up a reading room with furnishings and books donated by local citizens who were then thanked in the newspaper, "The Utah Journal." In 1891, another reading room was established, this time by the president of the local LDS Stake (congregation) in his New Tithing Office Building. A reading room was also begun by St. John's Episcopal Church in Logan in 1906. Ten years later, the collection at St. John's totaled over 1200 books (Record, 2006, p. 1).

Tuesday, April 18, 1916 was a very important day in the history of libraries in Cache County. On that day, three citizens formally requested that the Logan City Board of Commissioners create a library and reading room. Mayor P.A. Thatcher and two commissioners

approved the request. Representatives from the LDS Stake and St. John's then turned over both their collections to the newly formed library. The materials were accepted and then deposited in the LDS meetinghouse until another building could be found (Record, 2006, p. 1). The first money to purchase items for the library was appropriated in March, 1917. That same year the first permanent librarian was hired at \$25.00 per month (Hatch, 1973, p. 2).

A few years after this, Logan City would begin its first library relationship with Cache County. In July, 1919, Utah House Bill 97 established a county library in Cache and many other counties in the state. Logan City agreed to transfer its new library and collection to the county to establish the Cache County Library in October, 1920. The new county library was moved to a rental property, later called "The Dungeon," and remained in that location until a new building was finished in 1932. Sometime during this period, questions arose as to whether the city or the county should pay for the building and its operating expenses. After much legal wrangling, it was decided that city and county would enter into a twenty-five-year agreement to split all the costs 50-50 (Hatch, 1973, p.11).

The 25 years were ones of growth and expansion for the Cache County Library. As with any new library, it took a while before the large space was filled with materials and other furnishings. Local business and individual members of the community were especially generous in their donations. Some gave cash, some expensive books, and some donated furniture like a piano, a fireplace grate, and a set of chairs. The library had a large and popular genealogy collection, a space used as headquarters for the local Boy Scouts, and hosted art shows and concerts. The building and its contents became a source of pride for Cache County citizens. Unfortunately, after a few years, problems with the structure itself were evident: the roof leaked, there were issues with the boiler, and the lighting was considered inadequate. Most of these

problems were handled in temporary fashion until funds could be procured for more permanent solutions (Hatch, 1973, pp. 11-19).

The decade of the 1960s seems to be a low point for the Cache County Library. Hatch (1973) reports that the library board met infrequently, calls for expanded service to County citizens in the form of a bookmobile were rejected, arguments erupted among the many groups using the library building including the ever more powerful genealogy librarian, the need for building improvements was recognized but little action was taken, individual monetary gifts to the library began to decrease, and for several years, the library recorded budget deficits (pp. 22, 25-8).

In 1976, an event occurred which has had repercussions for libraries in Cache County to this day. The current (2008) situation in Cache County wherein no county-wide library service is available was initiated when the county decided to sever its ties to the library and agreed to sell their half of the library property and resources to Logan City in exchange for seven years of free service for the citizens of Cache County outside the boundaries of Logan. Because service continued as before, it seems that many county residents were unaware of the change and its consequences. The library once again was named the Logan Library and was funded by taxing Logan City residents.

In 1981, Mr. Ronald Jenkins became the director and began a new era of the Logan Library. Jenkins told me that at that time there were two years left in the contract with the county and that he began warning members of Cache County government that a new arrangement was needed for their citizens (including the idea of a county-wide system) but to no avail. By 1985, two years passed the deadline, the Logan Library was serving 10,000 Cache County residents who did not pay into the library's budget. Obviously, this was a financial

burden on the library and the issue was taken to the board and the city council who agreed that services to the 10,000 must be cut off. This was done and a public outcry ensued from Cache citizens who felt deprived. The library then offered library cards to county residents for \$25.00, but these privileges were abused when patrons sometimes checked out 300-400 items for all their friends and neighbors. When this was discovered, library service was again cut off and Cache residents again complained. Some called for a county-wide system once again which was denied by county government. Later, Logan Library again allowed county citizens to purchase cards, but for a much higher price. This contentious relationship between Cache County residents and the Logan Library has continued to this day (R. Jenkins, personal communication, April 9, 2008).

As of 2008, Cache County has nine public libraries, two academic libraries (one large, well established library and one fledgling library), one bookmobile, and thirty-five schools (elementary, middle, high, charter, etc.), most of which have libraries (SchoolTree.org, 2008). Since public libraries are the subject of this work, only they will be described. Each of the following are funded by their respective cities: Hyrum Library, Lewiston Library, Logan Library, Mendon Library, Newton Library, North Logan Library, Richmond Library, and Smithfield Library. The Providence-River Heights Branch of the Cache County Library System is funded by Cache County and the cities of Providence and River Heights. The bookmobile that operates out of this library is funded by the same two cities plus the State Library of Utah (not to be confused with the library at Utah State University!). Each of these libraries is fully independent but a few of them grant borrowing privileges to citizens of other towns. For example: Logan allows others to use their library for a large yearly fee. North Logan recently agreed to provided services to the citizens of nearby Hyde Park through a generous financial gift

from a Hyde Park resident. Hyrum's library allows users from three surrounding communities as a thank-you for their donations towards its construction. The Cache County Library in Providence accepts all county residents and the Lewiston and Richmond libraries allow patrons from anywhere to obtain cards.

The histories of the other libraries in Cache County are varied: some are as old as Logan and some are brand new. The Richmond and Smithfield libraries have a similar history: both originated with local collections of materials from old residents of the area (Hatch, 1973, p. 30-1). Both buildings were mostly paid for by the Carnegie Foundation in the early twentieth century (Smithfield's in December, 1922 [Godfrey, 2006, p. 58]). Both buildings are still in use today, assisted by modern technology such as on-line catalogs, but Smithfield is currently considering how to expand and possibly build a new library. The Lewiston Library has been in the same building on Main Street since the mid-1930s and proudly provides its services to residents of this small town near the Idaho border (Godfrey, 2006, p. 72). Hyrum Library was started by retired school teacher Bessie Brown in 1970 and operated out of the basement of the city's offices until 2007 when a new \$5,000,000 library/museum was completed. Residents in the surrounding cities of Nibley, Paradise and Wellsville can use the Hyrum Library through an agreement between the cities (G. Tremayne, personal communication, April 10, 2008). Around 1995, North Logan City organized a library which, like Hyrum, operated out of the city's offices. In 1997, North Logan residents approved a \$2 million dollar bond for a new library which was completed in 1999. As stated above, citizens of the small town of Hyde Park also have borrowing privileges at the North Logan Library (North Logan City Library website, n.d.). Also in the early-to-mid 1990s, the Cache County Library System's only branch was opened in an old post office in Providence City. This branch is also home-base for the Cache County Bookmobile

(M. Herron, personal communication, February 26, 2008). This one small “branch” of the system is currently (2008) open to all county residents but is understandably frequented most often by citizens of Providence and nearby River Heights and the materials collection is tailored to fit their needs. As part of the system, the bookmobile makes stops around the county but only in unincorporated areas and towns which do not have a library of their own. The Newton Library opened in February of 1999 in an old school- the library is in the gymnasium. They have a collection of 26,000 items and also seven computers and wireless Internet (C. Griffin, personal communication, April 25, 2008). The Mendon Library opened in October, 2005 in an empty home across from the community center after a successful book drive. They are currently (2008) considering the establishment of a joint-use library with a new elementary school (P. Watkins, personal communication, April 29, 2008).

PART II: PREVIOUS ATTEMPTS TO FORM A COUNTY-WIDE LIBRARY SYSTEM

Over the years, many attempts have been made at adjusting library services in Cache County including calls to form a county-wide system. Time and again when issues with the library have been raised, the prospect of a change of services has also reared its head (around twelve times in the last 35 years, according to an estimate by Logan City Library Director Ronald Jenkins [personal communication, March 25, 2008]). Many committees have been formed and many surveys have been conducted to investigate options. This section will examine some of the more well-documented events in this long struggle and process.

In November, 1972, a local newspaper, the Cache Citizen, printed an editorial entitled, “The County Library – A White Elephant?” The article began by reminding readers that the

Cache County Public Library (as it was called for many years) was at that time owned by the county and Logan City equally. The editorial quoted County Commissioner Todd Weston as saying that the future of the library has been in question for about a year. The article stated that the county felt its library service needs could be filled by a bookmobile and that Logan had offered to buy the County's half but an agreement had not yet been worked out. The editor's opinion was that the county should probably not “[trade] a county library for a bookmobile” (no page number) and that if Logan was allowed to buy the county's portion and eventually build a new building, that Logan citizens would not want to pay for county residents to use it. This early article's prophesy would later come true when Logan, having taken over the entire library, discontinued service to county residents on the basis of increased cost and inadequate facilities.

In April, 1974, the Cache County League of Women Voters, chaired by Alexa West, presented a “Library Study for Cache County.” After reviewing the history of each library in Cache Valley and describing their current status, the study analyzed “Library Finance.” According to the League (1974),

In looking at library service in Cache County, one must first deal with the question of organization. Should all five libraries remain independent public libraries raising their own funds or should they form a system of one main library with branches? The idea of branch and satellite libraries is the trend today and will be that of the future. In terms of services, collections, personnel, and financing, having many independent libraries is a costly thing. Libraries working together, sharing their services and materials can more readily meet the needs of their users. (p. 29)

This is one of three options the League proposed in their study for increasing the funds available to make library service better in the area.

As noted above, in 1976 the issue of library service in Cache County flared and the resulting decisions continue to affect the area today. In October, 1975, a “Committee of Fifty” appointed a “Committee of Nine” to examine the issue and decide what to do with the Cache County Library which the county no longer wished to support (by this time, Logan City had taken over 100% of the the financial responsibilities of the library but the building was still owned 50-50).

In a document dated March, 1976, entitled “Report to Committee of Nine Concerning Possible County Library System for Cache County,” several ideas were put forward to improve the libraries. The first suggestion had nine parts:

1- A county-wide levy to equalize the amount provided to each participating library, 2- Standards that a city's library must meet to participate including a building with study areas, shelf space, standard equipment such as card catalogs, a certain number of titles in the classifications, and updated financial records for all expenditures, 3- The citizens of the area would determine the amount of funds, 4- A County Library Board of Directors would be organized, 5- A bookmobile would be used as needed, 6- Existing library boards may continue and may raise additional funds for their libraries, 7- Some materials may be rotated among the libraries, 8- The county may organize trainings and workshops which may be then required for continued county funds, 9- Duplication is bound to happen, but may actually be desirable. (p. 1-2)

The document stated that these nine provisions might satisfy even the officials from Smithfield City who had sent a letter explaining their reservations about participating in a system. In addition to the above suggestion, six “areas of cooperation” were outlined:

1- A patron would be allowed to check out items from any of the libraries in the system, 2- A patron would be able to return items at any of the libraries in the system (which, it notes, would require a vehicle and driver), 3- An inter-library loan system could be organized to bring requested items from other libraries to the patron, 4- The communities could share pre-school and story hours, 5- The communities could share art exhibits, displays, cultural programs, etc., 6- Depository sites containing paperback books could be set up at locations around the county as determined by the communities. (p. 3)

These areas are some of the obvious benefits of a county system. Schmitt (1990) has shown that “interlibrary loan of books, consultation/idea exchange, and interlibrary loan of non-book materials are the most engaged-in cooperative activities among members of cooperatives” [e.g. systems, networks, consortia] (p. 17).

The final section of the report to the Committee of Nine proposed a “Demonstration Project” as a trial system which would mainly test the feasibility of the proposed inter-library loan system and depository paperback racks. One of the stated goals was to move requested books between libraries with only a two-day wait. 10,000 “high interest volumes” (p. 4) were to be purchased for the project and 200 titles and display units were to be purchased for the depository sites in communities without a library building. Also during the trial period, a story hour was to be held once per week in each library and family movie nights were to be held once per month. For implementation, the document notes that they need “a small station wagon” (p. 4) for inter-library loans, 600 books for story hour, a 16mm projector and screen for family movie night, and that the total cost for the trial would be \$100,335.00 (p. 4-5). Unfortunately, I can find no record of whether the Demonstration Project was attempted and, if so, whether it was successful or not.

In September of the same year, Carter (1976a), a staff writer for the Herald Journal, reported that the Logan Municipal Council and Cache County Commission debated the future of their library but decided not to make a decision until a public meeting was held. The 50-50 contract between the city and county had expired a week earlier so a decision was needed quickly. According to the article, “Several of Logan's city council members said although they would prefer a countywide library system, financed by the county, they will vote to take over the library if the commission votes to abandon library ownership” (p. 1). Cache County Commissioner Robert Chambers had put forth four solutions:

1- Continue the 50-50 partnership, 2- The county would transfer its half to Logan City in exchange for a continuation of services for county residents, 3- The county could organize a county-wide system funded by a property tax mill levy, or 4- The county could organize a different county-wide system like the one suggested by the Committee of Nine above where each library would maintain local control but share some services.

The two other county commissioners vocalized their support for solution #2, which would outweigh Mr. Chambers. Two officials from Logan stated that they would prefer a county-wide system, but saw it as “almost out of reach” (p. 2).

Four days later, the Herald Journal weighed in with an editorial:

The time has come to decide the future of the Cache Public Library. The time is apparently not right, however, to choose the best possible library services for Cache County residences. What should happen, in our opinion, is the establishment of a consolidated countywide library system.... But it won't happen. The library board would be willing. The mayor and city council of Logan would be willing. But two of the three

county commissioners obviously want the library problem to just go away. The mayor and council, as well as the library board, now recognize that their efforts... are futile at this time. The second-best alternative is a city library, open to all county residents. A countywide system will have to wait for some time in the future. (Just a city library..., 1976, 26 September)

At the public meeting two weeks later, no consensus was reached. Carter (1976b) reported that county councilman Chambers still wanted a county-wide system, but “if county commissioners Marion Olsen and Ted Karren vote as they indicated they will, the Cache Public Library will likely become the Logan Public Library in a few weeks” (p. 1). A few citizens from local towns with established libraries were vocal in their opposition to a county-wide system because of the increase in taxes and the loss of local authority. Mayor Harrison of Lewiston said, “We don't want to lose what we've got” (p. 2).

Findlay (1976) reported in December that an agreement had been reached wherein Logan City would take over the county's half of the library ownership and would continue to provide library service to county residents for seven years, after which all county residents would be cut off from the services (p. 1). The deal was made official in January, 1977.

By 1980, over half of the time agreed upon by city and county for library services had past and a Committee to Study Library Use was organized. In its Committee Report (1980) drafted in September, the committee recognized that, “At the expiration of our current agreement... in 1983, it will be necessary... to have a solution to this problem ready to implement” (§3). From the outset, they considered that after the expiration, citizens of the county would need to somehow pay for their services at the Logan Library and also considered

that county residents were one-third of all patrons at the library. The committee looked at five possible solutions:

1- Join into a system “funded equitably by Logan City and Cache County”, 2- Ask the county to pay for their citizen's use, 3- Ask each community within the county to pay for their citizen's use, 4- Charge every county user for their use, or 5- Find some way to incorporate parts of the above options to make a suitable solution. (§2)

The committee recommended that a new committee be organized of library supporters to begin talks with the county and to “plan and sponsor meetings throughout the community to educate and generate support for a county-wide library system” (§4).

By early 1983, the effort to make a new arrangement for county citizens had once again produced another committee and another list of options. The Cache Study Committee on Libraries was organized in February and asked to report to the Cache Valley Mayors Association on April 9. In a letter to the committee members, Chairman John Stewart (1983) laid out five solutions to be considered:

1- Leave things as they were with each community supporting its own library, 2- A “confederation” of Cache public libraries wherein each town retained control over its library, but the confederation could be used for inter-library loans and purchasing power, 3- A confederation of all public libraries plus the addition of local school libraries, 4- “Combined community libraries” wherein several libraries in close proximity to each other might be joined, or 5- A county-wide library system. (p. 2)

(“Combined community libraries,” sometimes called “clustering,” has been tried with mixed success. See Richardson [2006] and Thomas [2006]). The deadline for the expiration of the

agreement came and went on December 15, 1983, according to Logan Library's director, Ronald Jenkins (personal communication, April 9, 2008). Mr. Jenkins also mentioned that nothing happened to fix the issue for two more years.

By 1986, leaders in Logan City were fed up with paying for the 10,000 county residents who used its library but paid no tax for it as Logan citizens did. Sometime that year, the library policy was changed to allow only citizens of Logan to receive library cards. On September 2, Logan Library began selling library use cards for \$25.00 to county residents (and anyone else) who wished to use its services.

Later in September, a survey was conducted to discover the feelings of Cache Valley citizens regarding the recent changes. Not surprisingly, when asked whether they had purchased one of the new \$25 cards, most responded that they had not. When asked whether they planned to purchase one in the future, most responded that they did not. When asked how they felt the users' fee would affect their family, most responded that it would affected them negatively. When asked how library services should be handled in the county, many indicated that the county should be responsible while others felt that the bookmobile was enough. Hardly anyone chose option C (each town should be responsible for library services in their area), and yet that is precisely what they received.

In the spring of 1987, Cache County Executive Bruce King organized an “ad hoc committee” to find how to fund library service to all citizens of the county. From the committee's minutes of March 19 (1987a), it is apparent that they met several times and discussed items such as how libraries could legally be funded in Utah (a dedicated property tax or from a general fund), how the bookmobile was funded (a portion by the county, the balance paid by the State Library), and they examined the results of a survey (may be the one from 1986

above) (p. 1). They also stated that the objectives of their committee were to discover: 1- How much Logan might be paid to allow county residents to use the Logan Library, 2- If the county were to pay Logan for its citizens, might other libraries also be paid for citizens who use their libraries?, and 3- How to best assess and collect money for library costs (p. 2).

In their next meeting on March 26, the Ad Hoc Committee (1987b) discussed how to “correct misinformation and bad feelings. People have difficulty in seeing Logan City as part of Cache County and a rightful recipient of funding. Thought of as two separate entities” (p. 1). Despite the urgency for finding a solution which is found in the minutes, nothing apparently became of the committee's findings. According to the Chairman of the Cache County Library at the time, “the local communities didn't have the interest” (T. Jensen, personal communication, April 27, 2008).

The Cache Mayor's Association appointed a Library Study Committee in 1990 with a charge similar to the many before: find a way to improve library services. In their final report (1991), the committee said:

[That they] found early in their review that the public library issue in Cache County is a very emotional issue. They had discovered that there is a great deal of misinformation circulating among the public that has compounded and confused the issue. The committee also found among the general public a strong desire and support for public library service. The public library issue has been and will continue to be a significant issue to the majority of Cache County residents until a resolution is achieved. Solutions need to be implemented that will eliminate the misinformation and that will improve as well as provide public library service to every citizen of Cache County. (Preface, ¶6)

Later in the report, the committee officially recommended that all the libraries in Cache County join into a system. The committee presented the benefits of such a system as being:

1- More books available each year and a better leverage when purchasing, 2- More diversified collection available to all from smaller libraries, 3- Extended hours for all libraries, 4- Better staff training and employment benefits, 5- More special materials and services available, 6- Computer access between all libraries and, therefore, a better inter-library loan system, and 7- Access to Utah State University's library archives. (§10)

This recommendation did not lead to any changes.

1993 was another big year for the library issue. The Logan Library once again cut off service to those living outside the city, due to the fact that some were paying the \$25.00 fee to get a card and then proceeding to check out many items at a time for friends and family. To stop this from happening, the Logan Library's policy regarding simultaneous circulation limits was changed from unlimited to 25. This caused an uproar in the community once again, and it was decided in the City of Logan Resolution 93-94 to discontinue the fee cards and the access for non-Logan residents altogether (R. Jenkins, personal communication, April 9, 2008).

Another committee was formed around the middle of 1993, this time called the Cache County Library Committee, and chaired by Ms. Lynn Watkins. Throughout June, July, and August, the committee held their meetings in various library facilities around the county and heard presentations from representatives of many of them. The committee reviewed much of the same information and considered many of the same options as most of the previous committees, although this committee seemed to have had a more thorough approach than most: they met often, documented their meetings and many other pieces of information, and drafted a final

report from the start and then altered it during the process. In September and October, the committee also traveled to meet with nearly every city council in the county to present their findings.

The Cache County Library Committee's Final Report (1993) was finished by November 15, and it appears that it was presented to the Cache County Council on Tuesday, December 14. In the report, the committee again recommended a county library system (and recognized that it was the fifth committee to do so [p. 39]). It also recommended that an “organizing library board” (p. 41) be formed to have “the authority and temporary operating budget to make decisions concerning structure, funding and policy” (p. 41).

It appears that, for once, the county council accepted a committee's recommendation and formed the Cache Organizing Library Board in early 1994. In an open letter to all citizens of Cache County, the board (1994c) wrote that that they were formed to, “determine which municipalities want to participate in a county administered system and then organize a system that can be agreed upon by those communities” (§1). To that end, the board (1994b) drafted a document which outlined the basic structure of the county-wide system as they envisioned it and asked each city to sign and thereby indicate their intent to participate in such a system. The document including the following minimums:

- 1- System-wide library service equal or greater to Logan Library's,
- 2- Equal access for all participants including “representative governance, and equitable funding” (p. 1),
- 3- Probable continued service by both fixed-site libraries and the bookmobile,
- 4- Compensation for established library's collections,
- 5- Each city would have the right to pull out of the system if they wished,
- 6- A funding level of .0009 of taxable value of

taxable property, and 7- Funds would come from either a dedicated tax or from a general fund- whichever each city decided. (pp. 1-2)

The work of the board was beginning to pay off. The board minutes from April 20 indicate that Richmond and North Logan had already signed the intent document and that Logan, Providence, Paradise, and Hyde Park would soon sign. This represented a major coup for the board to have so many cities in Cache Valley agreeing (even if tentatively) to work together for the sake of improved library services for their citizens.

The board (1994a) continued to work for a system from spring and into summer and fall of 1994. In May, they presented a Cache County Library Development Plan proposal to the Cache County Council which outlined specific details of what the system would look like and how it would function. The proposal covered such items as the system structure, governance, the rights and duties of a Cache County Library Board, the management and personnel structure including proposed job titles and descriptions, collections management, financing, and an implementation schedule. They also drew up a draft agreement for a lease of Logan's current library facilities to Cache County for the proposed system.

Having now completed several crucial steps in the process, the board now faced the last big hurdle- securing funding for the library system. In September, a resolution was successfully passed by the Cache County Council to allow a bond election. The council (1994) produced a voter information document which outlined and discussed the issue. At the end of the sheet, the council explained that if the bond passed on the November 8 election, "The county will form the system and assess the tax excluding those cities that elect not to participate by providing alternative service. A representative of Library Board will then be appointed by the County Executive with approval of the County Council. The Board will in turn govern the establishment

of the new system” (p. 7). Unfortunately, the council removed the bond resolution before the election and the system as designed was never created (R. Jenkins, personal communication, April 29, 2008). By the middle of November there were talks opening with just Logan and River Heights and North Logan to arrange inter-local agreements between the cities for library services.

Alternately, a Cache County Library System was created around 1995 with Cache County Resolution 95, but it did not resemble the plan discussed for so many years. The “system” was based in Providence, Utah and was also home to the Cache County bookmobile. Organizers of the system were hopeful of eventually bringing other libraries into it, including Logan, but that never occurred.

Logan and North Logan (1996) continued to negotiate an agreement for library services for the next few years after the failed bond election and a committee was organized to study the issue of an agreement. An inter-local arrangement between the two cities was preferred by Logan at that time because the newly formed County Library System was not seen as being ready (financially and otherwise) to include others. North Logan had started its own library in 1995. Throughout 1996, the Interlocal Co-operation Agreement was drafted and revised. This agreement would have created a new legal entity, the “Cache Metropolitan Library”, and a new library board, and it would have outlined liability, finances, and terms for future withdrawal if necessary. The proposed library would be composed of the collections of both libraries and would take over the entire building in which the Logan library resided which had also housed the Logan City offices. In the end, it was decided that “Logan should not enter into the agreement” because of a rise in cost, a loss of the benefits of being part of Logan City, and because “the

proposal does not enhance or improve the collections or the services currently provided by the library” (Logan/North Logan interlocal agreement issue paper, p. 3).

There have been other committees and movements to form systems or agreements since 1997, including between Hyde Park and Logan in 2002 and between Providence and Logan in 2006, but I have found little documentation regarding their failed attempts.

PART III: A CURRENT ATTEMPT TO FORM A COUNTY-WIDE LIBRARY SYSTEM

On January 29, 2008, Logan City Councilman Jay Monson brought up the question of a county-wide library system in a joint meeting of the Logan City and Cache County councils. The council members felt that this was a worthwhile issue and named Mr. Monson as Chair of a new Countywide Library System Committee charged to “investigate this issue and get the latest information available and then come up with a proposal to present” back to the councils (J. Monson, personal communication, April 25, 2008). The rest of the committee was made up of one other city council member and three county council members. Most of these members have a long history of participating in the library issue in Cache Valley.

On February 1, Emilie H. Wheeler (2008a) reported in the Herald Journal on the committee's plans. Monson was quoted as saying, “I think it could be a whole countywide system, or it could be a hybrid with the county and the cities that want to do it, or it could be nothing” (p. A1, A10). The article also mentioned that Logan City was attempting to secure a bond election to pay for a new building to house the Logan Library. Logan Mayor Randy Watts explained that the two issues (a county-wide system and a new building for Logan) were separate but that they affected each other. Watts said that the bond would be voted on sometime in 2008

despite county-wide library talks. County councilman and committee member Craig Petersen said,

I've been involved in a number of committees that have tried to make some progress over the last dozen years, and we haven't been very successful. I'm not overly optimistic, but I'm open to talking about it. The first thing to do is bring people together. Maybe that could evolve into something more. But money's always been the problem. (p. A10)

The committee began to meet regularly and consider how best to approach this difficult issue once again. Logan Library Director Ronald Jenkins was invited to attend council meetings and assist the committee where needed. It was decided that a survey to city mayors and council members would be beneficial and one was drawn up and mailed out. Committee chair Monson contacted the Utah State Library and undertook excursions to Washington County, Salt Lake City, and Davis County, Utah to examine how county-wide systems function. He also used his personal blog to bring attention to the issue.

During this time, others were picking up on the news that the county-wide library system idea was floating around again. The Herald Journal continued to cover the topic in articles and editorials. It was spoken of on local radio station AM 610 KVNU. A North Logan resident and library system supporter named Steve Francis began an online petition available for county residents to sign and also began a blog to post items relating to the movement.

In the Sunday Spotlight of the Herald Journal for February 17, Wheeler (2008b) examined the chances for a library system to be adopted. She began by noting that there was great optimism among supporters:

A countywide library system is back on the agenda, but this time proponents say there may be more reason to believe it's closer to fruition. Reasons on that list include a larger population base outside Logan that would better spread the burden of a property tax, a recent spur of changes at libraries throughout the valley and new energy from advocates of a countywide system. Some are even saying that after more than a decade of the idea floating around, it might be a matter of now or never. (p. A1)

Wheeler also interviewed many local civic leaders and librarians about the issue. Most were neutral to positive with all wanting more specific information and all watching closely to see whether it would happen this time or not.

The Herald Journal published a letter to the editor by Committee Chair Monson (2008) on March 18 in which he attempted to answer some questions that had been asked of him. First, he made it clear that the county-wide library system issue is not linked to funding for a new library for Logan. He advised concerned citizens to contact their local public officials and express their feelings. Lastly, Monson addressed the issue of local control in a library system by stating that elected officials in other Utah counties that have systems would say that there is no real problem.

I personally attended a meeting of the committee on March 28, 2008 in the Logan Library's Archive Room. All committee members were present as well as Director Jenkins and a visitor from the Utah State Library. They discussed whether to put a question on the ballot (“should the county council levy a property tax to establish a county-wide library system?”). Craig Petersen called the system, “A huge uphill battle.” Logan Councilwoman and committee member Tami Pyfer thought that if the system were established, the Logan Library should expect many more patrons. The idea was proposed of possibly bringing the unincorporated areas of the

county into an agreement with Logan first and that maybe other cities would follow. It was also mentioned that more than fifty surveys had been returned.

The committee's survey was meant to assist them in discovering the feelings of political leaders in the community. Participants were asked only four questions (see Appendix B1, B2):

- 1- What would be the benefits of a countywide library system to you and to the members of your city?,
- 2- Under what conditions would you support a countywide library system?,
- 3- What are your major concerns about a countywide library system?, and
- 4- What else would you like to share with us regarding libraries?

As might be expected, the responses were mixed. Eleven were outright in favor of a system while eight were outright against it. Fifteen indicated that they would support a system only under certain conditions.

Many different issues were raised by the participants. The number one issue was the cost of a county-wide library system (37 participants). These included worries about new taxes, high tax rates, and costs associated with establishing the proposed system. The second-most mentioned issue was loss of autonomy (18 participants). Officials were worried that with the necessary shift in control to the county that a system would require, their library would lose its identity and all their hard work through the years to support and shape library services in their community would have been for naught. Survey responders were also worried about the distance to a county library system (8 participants). The committee was baffled by these responses and had to assume that the responders were uninformed about how the proposed system would work by incorporating the existing library buildings and not by building one central county library that everyone in the county would have to travel to. Six participants each

were concerned about needing more information about the proposed system, dealing with Logan and whether Logan would bully the smaller cities, and whether libraries were outdated due to the Internet, thus making it a waste of money and time to attempt the system.

Other issues that were raised included whether every public library would be required to participate, how the period of changing to a system would affect services, whether the county-wide library system idea was being raised solely for the purpose of funding a new library for Logan, whether or not the bookmobile would continue to operate, whether local materials and library programs would be maintained, and whether the Merrill-Cazier Library at Utah State University would be included in the system. Some specific issues had support on both sides: one person was worried about the duplication of materials as waste and another was hoping for duplication to provide more materials to more people. Most of the participants were in favor of retaining as much local control as possible while one expressed that they would support participating if control was taken from the cities and given to the county. Specific quotations included, “The citizens I have talked to definitely do not want to join in a countywide library system,” “If it ain't broke, don't fix it!,” “Please start by taking over [our] library,” “The devil is in the details,” and “I think it's embarrassing for a county as large and progressive as Cache County not to have a county-wide library system” (to use these I was required to keep them anonymous).

I next attended the committee meeting on April 7. It was stated that some members felt that several philanthropies would be willing to financially support a county-wide library system. At this meeting, questions arose about the validity of the Providence-River Heights library's claim that it is the single branch of an already established Cache County Library System. Between discussions among committee members and a phone call to the State Library, it was

discovered that the library had been founded on Cache County Resolution 95 (see above) but that it had taken no further steps to be recognized as a county library system approved by the State Library. A document containing facts and figures about a proposed system was drawn up by Committee Chair Monson and given to each member of the committee for comment. Mr. Monson also mentioned that a member of the River Heights city council had requested an informational meeting with the committee. But before that happened, the committee would present its findings twice in April: first to the Cache Valley Regional Council on April 21 and also at a joint council meeting of Logan City and Cache County officials on April 29 (J. Monson, personal communication, April 17, 2008).

Wheeler (2008c) reported in the Herald Journal on April 11 that the committee had begun to draw up a model of what a successful system might look like. She quoted one member of the committee who had examined the survey results and who said that she felt most of the negative comments came from misunderstandings.

On April 16, I met with Steve Francis, the author of the online petition supporting a library system. He told me that he wanted a system to bring library equality for the citizens of the valley and that, if it succeeded, it would be an improvement for almost everyone. Mr. Francis moved to Cache County after living within the bounds of Utah's Weber County Library where he experienced the benefits of efficient library cooperation. He heard that Jay Monson had initiated another try and was ready to help. In the past, Mr. Francis had supported library system efforts by posting information on his website but this year he supplemented that effort with the petition which, as of April 28, 2008, had over 530 signatures. Because of this, he had been interviewed by reporters from the Herald Journal and AM 610 KVNU. He believed that to actually get a system approved it would take a leap of faith in overcoming distrust between

various municipal and county governments. Mr. Francis gave the current proposal a 50-50 chance of being implemented (S. Francis, personal communication, April 16, 2008).

I was present at the April 21 Regional Council meeting. Mayors and council members from the area were in attendance as well as Steve Francis, Ronald Jenkins and Tom Jensen (who participated in the effort of 1987-8). Mr. Francis passed out copies of the petition to council members. Committee Chair Monson was given a few minutes to explain what his committee had found regarding the possibility of a system. He handed out a sheet which contained a sampling of responses from the survey. These were grouped by topic and included both positive and negative comments such as, “A fair system is needed to distribute funds between branches of the system,” “Creating a countywide system would remove barriers which prevent citizens of the county having access to the range of library services they desire and deserve,” “Emotional issues are sometimes more difficult to get over than financial ones,” and “If you want the support of the northern communities you are going to have to come to the people and sell the idea.”

Mr. Monson also presented the final draft of his Countywide Library System Committee's (2008) *Facts and Figures about a Countywide Library System* which outlined six areas of information:

- 1- The committee had discovered that the county council had the authority to create a county library system and did not need the approval of its citizens under Utah law. It also stated that “the county cannot impose a tax levy upon a city with a current library tax levy with out approval from that city.”
- 2- A Cache County Library Board would be organized with seven people chosen from around the area by the county executive. Each library could keep a committee to assist that local branch.
- 3- A library tax would be assessed which could not exceed .001 of taxable property value. The committee felt that

a tax of only .000575 would be enough to cover the total combined annual operating costs of the nine current libraries which was estimated to be \$2,257,972.00. This rate would equal about \$4.60 per month for every property owner to fund the system. It was hoped that money from the School Trust/Mineral Lease could be used to assist in paying for start-up costs. 4- All county citizens would have access to all libraries and their collections with one library card (combined collection would be nearly 401,000).

Libraries would be linked by computer and materials could be returned to any branch. A courier service would move items between branches daily. 5- For cities that participate, tax funds previously used for city libraries could be used to pay for buildings (especially in the case of the North Logan and Hyrum libraries) or returned to the citizens. Debt-free libraries could be retained and maintained by the city or given to the county to to maintain. 6- Libraries would continue to be a gathering place for the community besides the regular circulation and reference functions. (no page number)

This information was met with some mild hostility from mayors who said they would be hesitant to allow another tax on their citizens, especially the elderly and low-income families. A concern for loss of local control was also raised. One Logan City council member gave her opinion that libraries are on the way out and will be completely replaced by electronic books. Wheeler (2008d) in the Herald Journal, reported a mixed reaction. She quoted Mr. Monson as saying, “I was both pleased and disappointed. A few of the elected officials, they sounded as though they already had their minds made up. Like- 'Don't confuse me with any more facts’” (p. A3). I thought it did not go very well.

The final committee meeting I attended was held on April 25. At this meeting, the Regional Council Meeting was discussed and a draft letter was passed around which would be

sent to city councils. This letter explained that the committee would be happy to make individual presentations as requested. A set of tax figures were discussed which seemed to show that for a majority of Cache County cities, a new library tax of .000575 would be less than what they were paying already. It was decided not to present these figures to the public until they could be verified by the cities.

On Tuesday, April 29, I attended the joint council meeting of Logan City and Cache County. This meeting seemed to be crucial for the future of the proposed system because, as the committee had discovered, it is the county council that will make the ultimate decision regarding the county-wide library system issue. Ronald Jenkins attended, Steve Francis sent someone in his place, and the room was packed with spectators. Mr. Monson again made a presentation using the same facts and figures that he used at the Regional Council meeting but was better received this time around. At the end of the meeting Mr. Jenkins told me that he felt Mr. Monson was just what was needed to make the proposal happen and that he hadn't seen a climate this good for the county library system idea in years (R. Jenkins, personal communication, April 29, 2008).

CONCLUSION

The use of, and need for library services in Cache County are increasing annually. Sometime after the 1993 ban on non-Logan residents using the Logan Library, the policy was changed and they began allowing others to buy a library card for a fee again (originally \$157.00, but now \$163.00). More than a few people have taken advantage of this but many others are resentful and bitter. From the support generated to build the North Logan and Hyrum libraries, it

can be seen that some populations value library services and hope they will continue long into the future. On the other hand, the residents of Smithfield voted down a measure in 2007 which would have provided funds for a new library to replace or enhance their small Carnegie building still in use on Main Street. Several older libraries are barely adequate for the services increasingly demanded by their users. Many challenges and changes lie ahead for libraries in Cache County.

County library systems are a smart thing to do for many reasons. Long (2005) picked ten things systems do that are beneficial:

1- Improve the skills and capabilities and broaden the horizons of staff in member libraries, 2- Lead advocacy initiatives to increase funding for libraries, 3- Enable the easy consulting with staff in member libraries, 4- Facilitate the delivery of materials between members, 5- Facilitate (digital and analog) resource sharing, 6- Facilitate member networking, 7- Aggregate member power for such things as materials purchasing, 8- Model and promote multitype cooperation, 9- Promote relevant standards, and 10- Serve as a catalyst for new ways to provide library services.

Lee Logan (2005), Continuing Education Director of the Alliance Library System in Illinois, believes that county library systems increase the quality of life for citizens of the state in which they are organized.

I believe a county-wide library system would be a very good move for Cache County. Nearly all of Utah's most populous counties have organized library systems. Of the 29 counties in the state, 11 have library systems which cover two-thirds of the state's population (J. Monson, personal communication, April 29, 2008). Despite this trend, Cache County continues to hold

out. There is no doubt that the library issue has deeply split this community. Proponents of change have argued that library services here are fractured, exclusionary, and old-fashioned and thus, are in urgent need of a fix. Those against change have argued that a system would remove local library authority, raise taxes needlessly, and deny local pride. I recognize that these are deeply held concerns but I also recognize that the tangible benefits outlined so many times previously outweigh the potential emotional injuries. All of the issues against a library system can be resolved with true cooperation and the spread of accurate information. Sometimes what is generally recognized by citizens and professionals as being the best option just needs to be established for the good of the community. I call upon all Cache County council members to rise above the failed attempts of their predecessors, examine the issue with the good of the public in mind, and to move into the future by creating a new Cache County Library System that can be the pride of all Cache Valley citizens and which will provide excellent services to the same.

I think it best to conclude with a quote from long-time local library supporter Anne C. Hatch (1973), from the introduction of her manuscript, *A History of the Library Serving Cache County, Utah*:

It is remarkable to me that Cache County has library services at all, considering the local dissension, diversity of interests and idealism on what constitutes a library, lack of funds and in the past a general lack of support from many local public officials. It is my hope we can now effectively join to bridge these philosophical and financial differences and help provide Cache County the library we so desperately need (p. ii).

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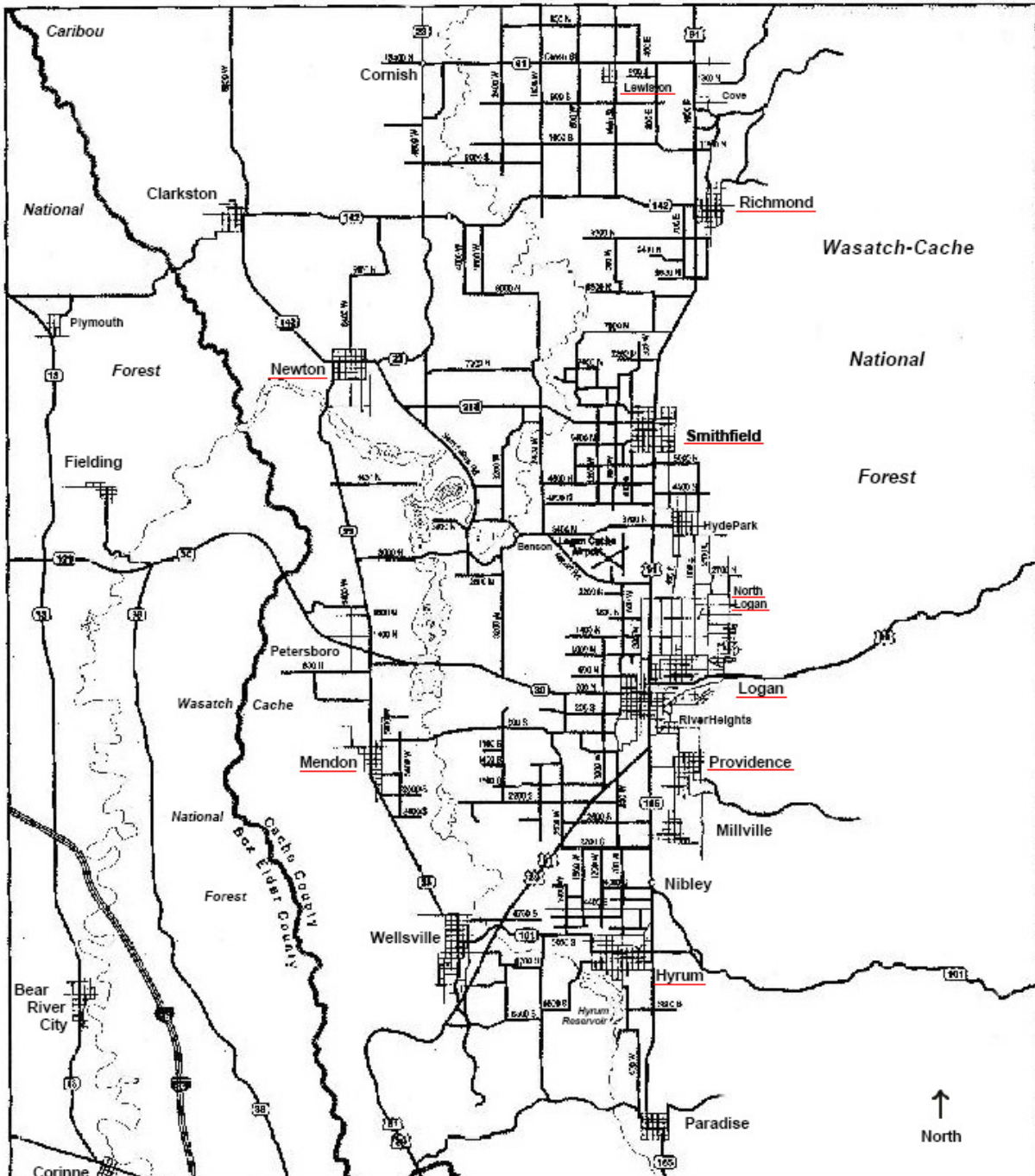
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Appendix A

Cache County Map

Cities underlined in red have public libraries

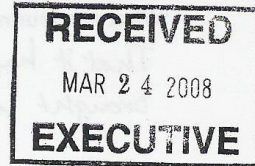


Appendix B1

COUNTYWIDE LIBRARY SURVEY

Your Name _____

Your City _____



Please provide your thoughts on the following four questions. Attach additional pages if necessary.

What would be the benefits of a countywide library system to you and to the members of your city? Access ^{now} & consistent access ^{in the future} within the City & environs. Access to Library services goes beyond any City. County residents need access to. It builds a better sense of community.

Under what conditions would you support a countywide library system?

- 1) County library, not agglomeration of City libraries. Cities should not maintain control
- 2) Equally distributed ^{distributed} ~~satellite~~ libraries (No central "master" library); size should be based on geographic dist. of population

(Two more questions on the other side of this sheet)

Appendix B2

What are your major concerns about a countywide library system?

That it happens. We can work thru anything that I've brought up in Q1 + 2, but I think this is very important

What else would you like to share with us regarding libraries?

Thanks for initiating the process. I hope it works out this time.

Thanks for your help. Please return the survey in the stamped, self-addressed envelope by March 14.