

March 24, 2017

To the Oregon library community and the residents impacted by the closure of the Douglas County Libraries:

As you are no doubt aware, we are approaching the date of closure for eleven public libraries in the state of Oregon. On April 1, 2017, the libraries that serve the cities and towns of Canyonville, Drain, Glendale, Myrtle Creek, Oakland, Reedsport, Riddle, Sutherlin, Winston and Yoncalla will close their doors. The main library in Roseburg will close on May 30.

On behalf of the Oregon Library Association (OLA), I would like to express my sadness for the loss of the services and community support that these libraries provide. Local libraries are a vital presence for the public. They exist to support early learning and literacy for children, places for young adults to explore their interests; and they provide collections and services for adults to expand their skills and broaden their knowledge. A library is more than a building with books in it, it stands for service and democracy, equitable access to information, and a safe forum for ideas and community gathering.

OLA is aware of funding issues in Douglas county, which resulted in the complete defunding of the libraries. In November, Measure 10-145 that would have created a special tax district was rejected. The voters had to make some very difficult financial decisions, and unfortunately, the library is without a stable source of funding at this time. OLA leaders have been in contact with the county commissioners, the Oregon State Library, and the American Library Association about the situation so we are informed. We have done our best to make our members aware of the issue via posts in the OLA Hotline, on our Facebook page, and through listserv posts on Libs-OR. Our members have been present at support rallies and public hearings. We support the libraries of Douglas County and hope to offer any advice and guidance that we possibly can going forward.

Oregonians love their libraries. Funding them can be a challenge, we understand. We also know that in the past twenty years, four of our county library systems have faced similar situations and have revived thanks to the work of dedicated library champions--library workers, residents, elected officials, and local activists. We remain optimistic that Douglas County will find a way forward, but that it will take time and hard work. OLA reaffirms its mission which is to provide advocacy, education, leadership, and collaboration to continually strengthen Oregon's libraries and the communities we serve; and we hope to help in any way we can.



Elsa Loftis  
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