

January 18, 2017

Douglas County Commissioners  
1036 SE Douglas Ave.  
Roseburg, OR 97470

Commissioners Boice, Freeman, and Leif:

We here at the Oregon Library Association were deeply saddened to hear that Douglas County will be closing its libraries by the end of May. With your County's budget challenges, we understand that difficult decisions have to be made.

While OLA considers this closure a tragedy for the citizens of Douglas County and Oregon generally, we are hopeful. We were especially heartened to hear Commissioner Boice's comment that the County does not want to discuss closing the libraries but rather how to keep them open. The creation of the Library Futures committee is a fantastic step in that direction.

While you and the Douglas County community seek solutions, we encourage you to look to other counties that have faced similar situations. Alas, you are not the only Oregon county to have closed their libraries: the libraries in Hood River, Jackson, and Josephine Counties all closed in the near past. The Jackson and Hood River County libraries both reopened and now have stable funding through library districts, and Josephine County is on a path to having a library district for most of its citizens as well. With ingenuity, Douglas County's citizens will find a way to establish library service with stable funding just as other counties have.

A large reason for the successes in Josephine, Jackson, and Hood River Counties was that the commissioners gave their communities a chance to save their libraries. In all three counties, the libraries were left completely intact as they were the day they closed; all of the buildings, furnishings, equipment and collections were retained to ensure that the citizens had something to come back to once their libraries reopened.

Speaking personally, I directed the newly-formed Hood River County Library District during its first five years, which followed a year of closure. Assistance from the County was essential. In addition to leaving the buildings and property as-is, Hood River County offered expertise, IT, finance, and maintenance support without which the library district would not have become the success story it is now. I am deeply grateful to the Hood River County Commissioners' support as the community worked to reopen their beloved libraries.

The Oregon Library Association has several individuals like me who worked through library closures and came out on the other side. We are eager to help you and your residents find a solution that works for Douglas County. It is our hope that you will help the library supporters in the county just as Commissioners from other Oregon counties helped theirs.

Thank you for all of the important work that you do on behalf of the citizens of Douglas County. If OLA can be of any assistance in your efforts to keep your libraries open, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in purple ink, appearing to read "Buzzy Nielsen". The signature is stylized and cursive.

Buzzy Nielsen  
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