

Honorable Mayor and Members
of the City Council
City Hall
Torrance, California

Members of the Council:

SUBJECT: Community Services – Accept and appropriate a \$32,000 donation from the Friends of the Torrance Library to purchase and install Microsoft Office software for selected public access computers for the Torrance Library System

RECOMMENDATION

Recommendation of the Community Services Director that City Council accept and appropriate a \$32,000 donation from the Friends of the Torrance Library to purchase and install Microsoft Office software for selected public access computers for the Torrance Library System.

Funding

Funding is available from the donation from the Friends of the Torrance Library

BACKGROUND

Since the advent of the personal computer in the 1980s, the Torrance Public Library has supported the technological needs of its patrons by offering a variety of computer services. In addition to Internet access, WiFi, and full-text databases available from home and office, the Library has also added adaptive technology for individuals with disabilities.

In 2004, the Friends of the Torrance Library generously donated funds to establish a Homework Center located in the Katy Geissert Civic Center Library Youth Services Department that had Microsoft Office installed on it. By making Microsoft Office software, Internet access, and free networked printing service available, the Homework Center assists young patrons of all economic backgrounds to complete their school assignments.

Until this time, there has been no comparable resource available for adults. The Library's previous printing and copying vendor, CMS, provided microcomputers with Microsoft Office products for public use at a cost of \$3.00 per hour; the computers furnished were over ten years old and never upgraded. As of the end of 2009, these machines became inoperable and were removed from the Library. Adult patrons now have no access to word processing software that is compatible with Microsoft Office. Installing Microsoft Word, Excel, Publisher and PowerPoint on all public Internet terminals by Fall 2010 will enable the Library to provide a vital and daily-requested public service for patrons that, in the past, was only available on a limited, for cost basis.

Library staff investigated free or other low cost alternatives. These options included using Open Office, Google Docs, and ThinkFree.org. While these applications and/or websites are free to use or download, they incur unintended costs and present challenges that Microsoft Office does not. For example, Open Office would require installation on each of the Library's public PCs an extremely labor-intensive alternative. Google Docs and ThinkFree.org are unique products that require learning new keystrokes, protocols, and macros to facilitate their use. Unfortunately, the majority of Library patrons are not familiar with these programs, nor have they created and

saved documents using them, making them incompatible with documents or data they bring to the Library to use. Moreover, with reduced Library staffing levels, we do not have time to instruct individuals on how to use new software.

ANALYSIS

Adding Microsoft Office products to the Library's public access terminals would be the most viable alternative and meet the expressed needs of patrons. Personal computers are still expensive purchases for most individuals. Many users rely on the Library as their sole source of computer access, whether that access is for job searching, educational attainment, the running of a small business, research, or simply communicating with others.

Purchase and installation of office software on the Library's computers will provide a means for people in the community to search for and obtain jobs. According to the Employment Development Department's Labor Market Information Division, the jobless rate in Torrance increased by 1.9% in the last year. The unemployment rate in our immediate service area is 4.3%, with the surrounding area rate now up to 6.5%. In September 2009, all 34 metropolitan divisions recorded over-the-year jobless rate increases with the Los Angeles-Long Beach-Glendale area experiencing the largest unemployment rate increase (+2.6 percentage points). Library staff has experienced a significant increase in patron demand for services that can help with their job search and application process.

The provision of MS Office software products will also help satisfy one of the Library's chief goals, to *facilitate and support lifelong learning*. Torrance has one community college and two major state universities nearby. In addition, many colleges now support "Distance Learning" education programs so that someone in Torrance could be virtually enrolled in a college course anywhere in the world. Though the exact number of students enrolled in online courses is unknown, "knowledgeable estimates" put the figure at one million, according to the North American Council for Online Learning, NACOL. Students in these programs run the gamut from advanced students wanting to accelerate to those struggling academically or socially, or those that need flexible schedules. Supporting educational endeavors with the use of the Library's computers would assist the Library in fulfilling its mission to *satisfy the educational needs of our diverse community*.

The presence of Microsoft Office products on the Library's existing computer terminals will provide patrons the added value of being able to open attachments from their e-mail, type resumes, create spreadsheets and presentations, and save and transport all their work using current small-storage standards (USB flash drives).

Several local library systems offer similar services: Palos Verdes Library District provides Microsoft Office 2007 products free of charge on their public access terminals. These terminals are hooked into time reservation software similar to that used by Torrance, limiting the amount of time individual patrons may use a terminal in a given day. Redondo Beach Public Library provides Microsoft Office 2003 products on their public access terminals for up to one hour.

Torrance Public Library's public computers are slated for replacement beginning in July 2010; thus, this is an optimal time to add MS Office software to the replacement package and expedite the installation and availability of such products for the public. Communications and Technology Department (CIT) staff has advised the Library on this project and with acceptance, appropriation, and transfer of necessary funds, they will purchase and install the Office software. In order to complete the project in a timely and effective manner, the Library will need an additional server and software licenses, a one-time cost included in the Friends' donation. The proposed computers and software will be placed on the City's newly-adopted seven-year replacement plan. Installation of Microsoft Office products will not include Homework Center

computers, catalog-only terminals, or ASSIST computers. The Homework Center and ASSIST computers currently have MS Office software, and the catalog-only PCs are restricted to use of the Library's online catalog only.

These costs for the installation are detailed below:

ITEM	Quantity	Cost
PC Replacements (including MS Office and memory)	66	\$ 14,130.00
Windows Terminal Services for Office 2007 (Server)	1	\$ 16,010.87
Total		\$ 30,140.87

NOTE: The Friends' donation total, \$32,000, is slightly more than the estimated cost for the MS Office software and needed hardware as the group wanted to insure there were sufficient funds to cover any unanticipated expenses associated with the project.

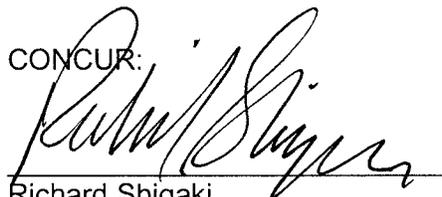
The Torrance Public Library has a unique opportunity to meet the economic, informational, educational, and recreational needs of the community. Adding Microsoft Office products to public access computers will help the Library provide essential services. Staff reports that access to MS Office products is requested daily and through acceptance of this donation, the Library will be able to offer much needed computer services at all library locations for patrons of all ages.

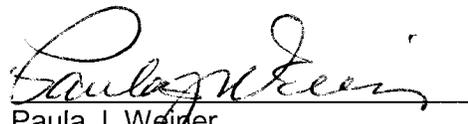
Respectfully submitted,

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