

Council Meeting of  
September 21, 2010

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

Members of the Council:

**SUBJECT: Community Services – Accept and file the Library Commission’s  
2009-10 Annual Report**

**RECOMMENDATION**

Recommendation of the Library Commission and the Community Services Director that City Council accept and file the Library Commission 2009-10 annual report.

**Funding**

Not applicable

**BACKGROUND/ANALYSIS**

The Library Commission annual report for the period July 2009 through June 2010 as prepared by the Library Commission is attached for the Council’s information and review. The Commission approved the report at its September 13, 2010 regularly-scheduled meeting.

Respectfully submitted,

LIBRARY COMMISSION

By Judith B. Gerber  
Judith Gerber, Chair

JOHN JONES  
COMMUNITY SERVICES DIRECTOR

By Paula J. Weiner  
Paula J. Weiner, City Librarian

CONCUR:

John Jones  
John Jones, Community Services Director

NOTED:

LeRoy J. Jackson  
LeRoy J. Jackson, City Manager

Attachment: A. 2009-10 Library Commission Annual Report

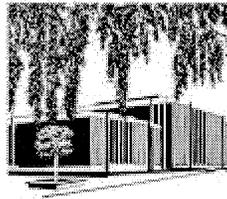


## **CITY OF TORRANCE LIBRARY COMMISSION**

### **ANNUAL REPORT**

**Fiscal Year July 1, 2009 – June 30, 2010**

*Prepared by Gavin Hachiya Wasserman, Library Commissioner*



#### **Torrance Library Commission**

Judith Gerber, Chair

Flo Stapleton, Vice Chair

Allen Ravine

Harry Ross

Toni Sargent

Jim Sheldon

Gavin Hachiya Wasserman

The Library Commission makes recommendations to the City Council regarding the operation of the library system by keeping in touch with the patrons; establishes strong lines of communication with the schools; supports the Historical Society and the Friends of the Torrance Library; promotes the use of the library; gives information on its activities and encourages public support as well as legislative support. (<http://www.TorranceCA.Gov/8752.htm>)

### **Authority**

The Library Commission operates pursuant to Torrance Municipal Code (TMC), Division 1, Chapter 3, Article 3, Sections 13.3.1 13.3.8 (Added by O-935; Amended by O-1035; O-1097; O-1628; O-1830).

The powers and duties are set forth in TMC 13.3.7:

- a) The Commission may make recommendations to the City Council on 1) the acquisition of land, buildings, equipment and facilities for public library purposes; 2) the improvement of the operation and administration of the library; 3) any other matters concerning public libraries.
- b) The Commission shall make an annual report to the City Council of its activities for the previous year and shall make such other reports as it may deem necessary or proper.
- c) The Commission shall advise the City Council on any matters concerning public libraries when so requested by the Council.

### **Vision Statement**

The vision of the Torrance Library Commission is that all Torrance residents have access to quality library services in order to:

- Achieve their greatest potential,
- Participate in a global society, and
- Enrich their daily lives.

### **Mission Statement**

The Torrance Library Commission is committed, through leadership, advocacy and service to the Torrance Public Library system, to ensure that this community has a place to access information, to pursue lifelong learning, and to experience cultural heritage and enrichment.

### Membership

One of the challenges faced by the Commission during the 2009-2010 fiscal year was the turnover among Commissioners; the following persons served as members of the Torrance Library Commission:

<b>Office</b>	<b>Name</b>	<b>Term Begins</b>	<b>Term Expires</b>	<b>Appointed</b>
Chair	Judith Gerber	1-16-2007	1-15-2011	1-09-2007
Vice Chair	Flo Stapleton	1-16-2009	1-15-2013	1-16-2009
Member	Jerome Haig*	1-16-2006	1-15-2010	
Member	Clarence Chappell*	1-16-2008	1-15-2012	
Member	Harry Ross	1-16-2009	1-15-2013	1-16-2009
Member	Jim Sheldon	1-16-2009	1-15-2013	1-16-2009
Member	Michael Wermers*	1-16-2009	1-15-2011	1-13-2009
Member	Allen Ravine	1-16-2010	1-15-2014	2-23-2010
Member	Toni Sargent	1-16-2010	1-15-2012	2-23-2010
Member	Gavin Hachiya Wasserman	1-16-2010	1-15-2011	2-23-2010

(\*Denotes members who departed from the Commission during FY 2009-2010)

In FY 2009-2010, three vacancies were created by the departure of Commissioners Chappell, Haig, and Wermers:

- a) Commissioner Chappell, who served as Chair of the Commission in FY 2007-2008, relocated outside of the City of Torrance and consequently resigned from the Commission.
- b) Commissioner Haig, who served as Chair of the Commission in FY 2008-2009, did not seek reappointment. Commissioner Haig had been appointed to fill an unexpired vacancy on the Commission and subsequently was appointed to a full term, totaling five and a half years on the Commission.
- c) Commissioner Wermers was elected as a member of the Torrance Unified School District Board of Trustees and thereafter resigned from the Commission.

The aforementioned vacancies were filled by three new members - Commissioners Ravine, Sargent, and Wasserman - all appointed by the City Council on February 23, 2010 for terms commencing January 16, 2010. All three commissioners completed a library orientation.

During FY 2009-2010, Commissioners Gerber and Stapleton served as Chair and Vice Chair of the Commission, respectively. At the May 10, 2010 Commission meeting, both Chair Gerber and Vice Chair Stapleton were unanimously re-elected to their respective leadership positions by their Commission colleagues

### Meetings

The Commission meets on the second Monday of each month at 7:00 p.m.

It is the custom of the Commission to hold one meeting each fiscal year at each of the branch libraries, with the remainder of Commission meetings held at the Katy Geissert Civic Center Library. With the completion of the branch refurbishment projects, the Commission was able to return to the branch libraries and held the following meetings at those sites:

August 10, 2009      Southeast Branch Library  
 September 14, 2009    El Retiro Branch Library  
 January 11, 2010      Henderson Branch Library  
 March 8, 2010        WALTERIA Branch Library  
 June 14, 2010        North Torrance Branch Library

City Librarian Paula Weiner and Principal Librarian Hillary Theyer were regular attendees at Commission meetings. Frequent attendees were representatives from the Friends of the Torrance Library and the Torrance Youth Council.

At each Branch Library meeting, the Commission heard directly from on-site staff about facilities, programs, circulation, and "wish-lists" to improve library service.

The Commission did not schedule a joint meeting with the City Council in FY 2009-2010. Although the Library Commission was the first city commission to conduct such joint meetings and the Commission valued the tradition and utility of the joint meeting, it was felt that because the two bodies met on March 24, 2009, it would be appropriate to wait until later in 2010 to conduct another such meeting.

### **Subcommittees**

Commissioners served on the following subcommittees during FY 2009-2010:

- a) Part-time Library Employee Recognition Event: Stapleton (Chair), Gerber, Ross, Sargent.
- b) Joint Council/Commission: Sheldon (Chair), Gerber, Wasserman

### **Budget Modifications**

For FY 2009-2010, the City Council voted to reduce the Library's materials budget in the amount of \$96,782, however, the City Council determined not to reduce Sunday library service.

In June 2010, the Council eliminated a Library Assistant I position from the City budget, and approved raising fees and fines at the Library.

### **Capital Infrastructure - Library Refurbishment**

In prior years, the Katy Geissert Civic Center Library and the Southeast Branch Library underwent major refurbishment and enhancement. During FY 2009-2010, the remaining four library branches all received upgrades including earthquake-safe shelving, energy-efficient lighting, enhanced electrical and data capacity, new paint and carpeting.

Each branch underwent a temporary closure, which was preceded by a meeting with the surrounding community to inform and educate residents about the closures, refurbishment, and schedule for reopening of libraries.

The branch library refurbishments occurred under close supervision by library staff, with Principal Librarian Hilary Theyer taking an active role in overseeing the progress. Extensive work was done in preparing the branches for closure and reopening, and library staff took the opportunity to review the branch collections and make adjustments before and during the removal process. The refurbishment schedule was closely adhered to, minimizing interruption of service for library patrons.

While additions were not made to the actual building footprint of each branch library, the reconfiguring of each branch, along with better lighting and use of space, has led library patrons to frequently remark at how much larger each branch library seems. In addition to the readily-visible upgrades, the branch libraries now have the electrical and data infrastructure to support the increasing digital demands of Torrance library patrons.

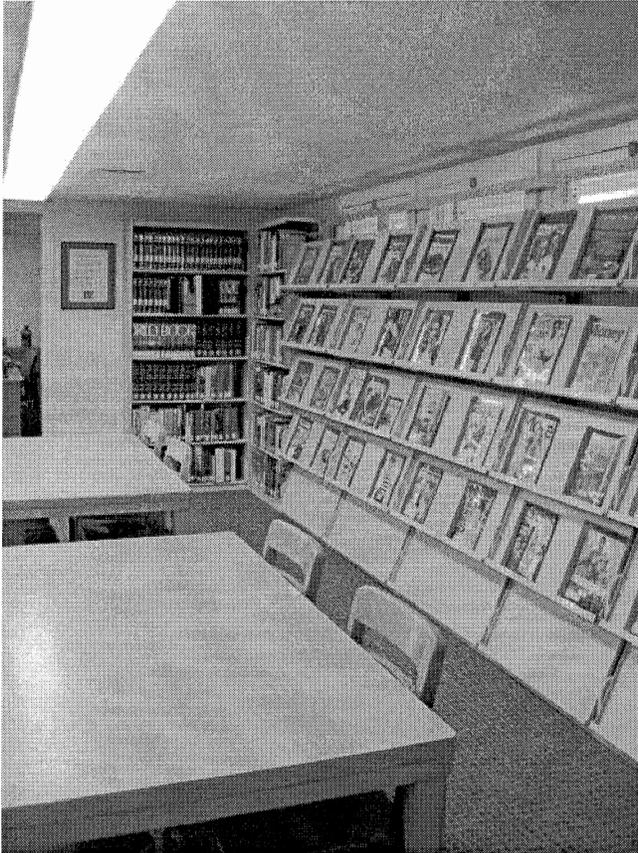
Overall, the refurbishments benefited from generous support from donors, including the Friends of the Torrance Library, who provided the funds to purchase new circulation desks at the branches. In honor of its 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary, Exxon Mobil donated \$80,000 to the North Torrance Library for a dedicated Homework Center. The Riveria Garden Club donated and installed plants for various planters at both El Retiro and Walteria branches.

The coming year will see work done at the branches related to compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). The tentative plan is to begin ADA work on the branches in reverse order to the completed refurbishment process, with North Torrance branch library starting first. The North Torrance branch may also see an exciting development in enclosing the patio section and creating more usable space for its patrons.

### El Retiro Branch Library, 120 Vista Del Parque

The El Retiro Branch Library was closed for refurbishment on November 10, 2009. A community meeting was held in advance of the branch closure. El Retiro re-opened on July 20, 2009, with an Open House held on July 23, 2009.

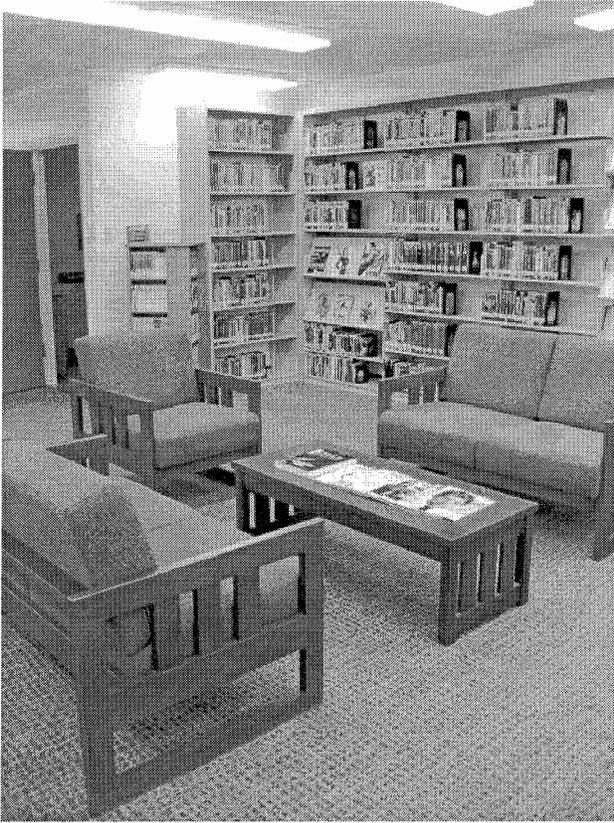
Refurbishment photos (courtesy of Hillary Theyer)



#### **After:**

At each branch library, new magazine shelving was installed.

Not only did the branch libraries receive new and safer shelving, but the layout of each branch was thoughtfully considered to enhance the experience of library patrons and improve the efficiency of library staff.

**After:**

The new lounge area is located near the new books and newspapers, and is within sight of both the front door and the circulation desk.

Layout, lighting, and placement make for an inviting and comfortable experience, while making it easy for library staff to respond to patrons needs.

Henderson Branch Library, 4805 Emerald Street

The Henderson Branch Library was closed for refurbishment on August 2, 2009. A community meeting was held in advance of the branch closure. Henderson reopened on to the public on schedule, October 21, 2009. The Open House was held November 12, 2009.



**Before:**

Youth fiction before refurbishment

The upgrades will make this space a brighter, safer, and more inviting place for reading.



**During:**

Various conduits, insulation, and electrical upgrades lie bare for now, but they will end up hidden by the new ceiling.

**After:**

The Large Print collection is now located in a very bright spot right next to a comfortable area to enjoy a good book.

**After:**

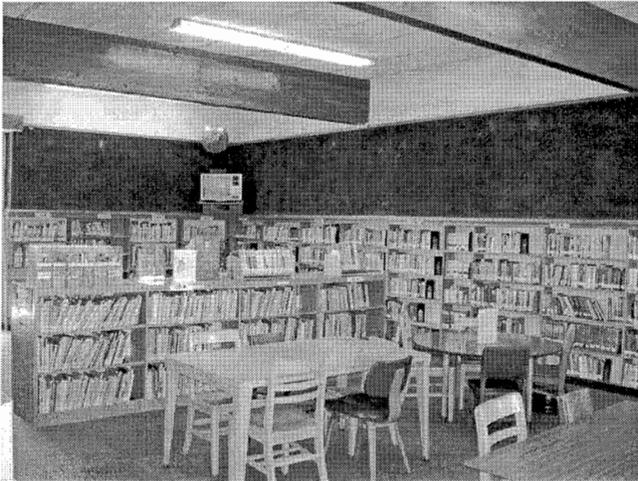
The top row of these earthquake-safe shelves is bare for a reason: planning for future growth of the library collection.

North Torrance Branch Library, 3604 Artesia Boulevard

The North Torrance Branch Library closed for refurbishment March 1, 2010. A community meeting in advance of the branch closure was held on January 19, 2010. North Torrance reopened on May 24, 2010,

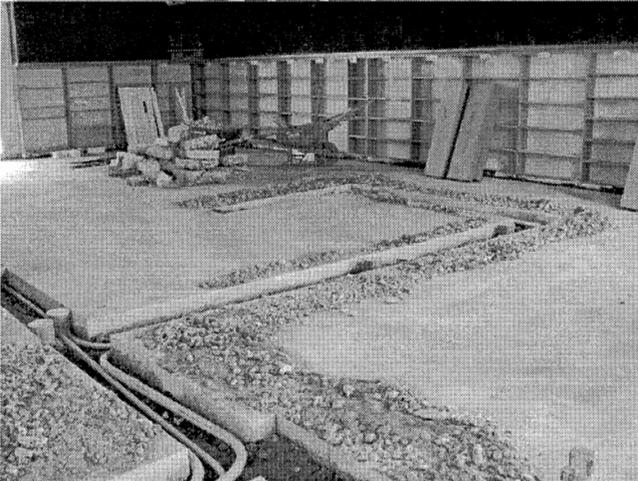
In addition, ExxonMobil donated \$80,000 to the North Torrance Branch Library in celebration of the Torrance Refinery's 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary. Competitive bids were sought for provision of new furniture that is anticipated to arrive this Fall. The Open House for the North Torrance Library Branch is scheduled for September 16.

Refurbishment photos (courtesy of Hillary Theyer)



**Before:**

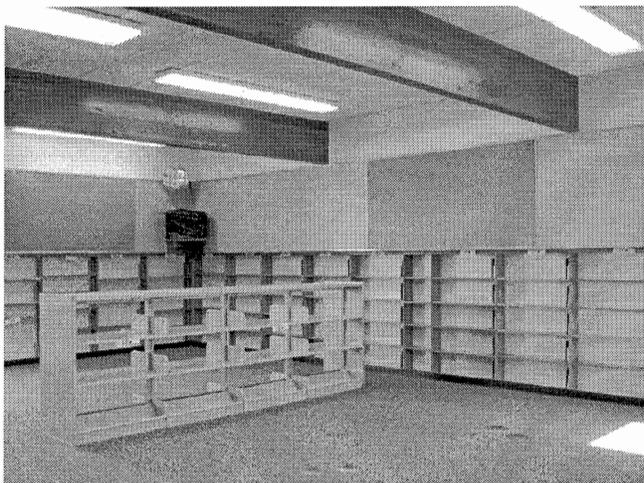
The youth section of the branch, after the decorations were removed. Say goodbye to the dark walls and the freestanding shelf in the middle of the room.



**During:**

Some changes will not immediately meet the eye, but are critical modernization steps.

Extensive electrical refurbishments, including additional power outlets and data ports, will allow more patrons to access electronic resources.

**After:**

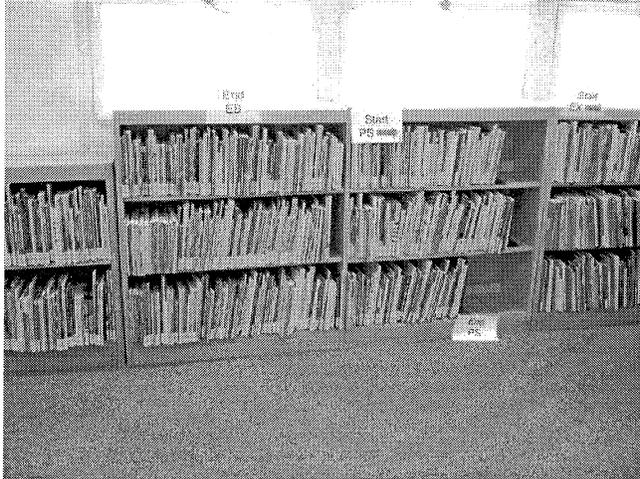
Improved lighting, brighter spaces, and a new seismic-secure bookshelf await the return of books, decorations, and of course ... children.

New furniture funded by Exxon Mobil will arrive in FY 2010-2011.

Walteria Branch Library, 3815 W. 242<sup>nd</sup> Street

The Walteria Branch Library was closed for refurbishment on November 10, 2009. A community meeting was held in advance of the closure on October 27, 2009. Walteria reopened on February 16, 2010, with an Open House held in April.

Refurbishment photos (courtesy of Hillary Theyer)



**Before:**

The children's picture book section stood in a dissimilar collection of shelves.



**During:**

These brand new shelves are secured following rigorous seismic safety standards.



**After:**

Children's picture books await readers in a safe, bright and welcoming environment.



**Helping Hands:**

Walteria also enjoys newly-landscaped planters, courtesy of the Riviera Garden Club and the Friends of the Torrance Library.

### **Significant Commission Actions**

On August 10, 2009, the Commission approved the 2009-2010 schedule of library service for 32 Sundays from September 13, 2009, through June 13, 2010.

On November 9, 2009, the Commission approved a revision to the Group Visit Guidelines for the Youth Services Department, reflecting a change in policy to allow the librarian in charge to determine the frequency of visits and the numbers allowed in a group visit.

The Commission submitted input to the Ad Hoc Committee on Commission Review for the Committee's November 16, 2009 meeting.

On January 10, 2010, the Commission approved renewing Commissioner's memberships in the California Association of Library Trustees and Commissioners (CALTAC), and approved Commissioner attendance at the 2010 CALTAC workshop on Library Leadership in San Marino, California.

On February 8, 2010, the Commission approved a revised Teacher Loan Library Card policy. The Card allows educators to keep materials borrowed for classroom use separate from their personal library account. The changes included adding parents/caregivers who home-school their children, adding adult materials and audiovisual items, and allowing items to be returned one at a time at any Torrance library location. The Commission discussed how other library systems are dropping this support to educators due to budget cuts, but the Commission unanimously approved adopting the revised policy.

On March 8, 2010, the Commission approved continuing to hold the annual Part-Time Library Staff Recognition event.

In April 2010, Commissioners participated in the California Library Association (CLA) Legislative Day. Because of statewide budget issues, a Sacramento visit was not set up by CLA, but rather library systems were encouraged to visit their legislators' local district offices.

On May 10, 2010, the Commission re-elected Chairperson Gerber and Vice Chair Stapleton to continue their service in those roles for FY 2010-2011.

The Commission approved beginning a process of analysis and self-evaluation of the Commission's purpose and goals in order to enhance the operation of the Commission and its positive impact on the Torrance library system.

### **Challenges and Concerns**

The Commission received ongoing updates regarding the operations of the Torrance library system. Of particular concern is the impact of the dire economic circumstances on library patrons and library operations.

Professional library staff gave the Commission updates on the increasing demands on public libraries by patrons, including nationwide information indicating that library usage is on the rise. Data provided included the fact that public libraries lend more DVDs than all of the major commercial entities combined. The Commission was also informed that, while the demand continues to grow for more digital media and Internet access, demand is also growing for access to traditional hardcopy library materials.

The Commission discussed various areas of concern, including learning opportunities for seniors, the overwhelming popularity of children's story time programs, and literacy issues.

### **Grants and Donations**

The Friends of the Torrance Library and the Torrance Public Library Foundation provided immense support to the Torrance libraries during FY 2009-2010.

The Friends of the Torrance Library donated

- a) an adult programming grant of \$28,420
- b) a grant for Microsoft Office products for selected public access computers throughout the Library system - \$32,000;
- c) a 2010 Summer Reading Program grant for Youth Services Division - \$16,500;
- d) a Youth Services general programming and support grant of \$19,200
- e) \$10,500 to fund the transition of the Youth Services read-along collection from cassette format to CD format; and
- f) \$6,000 for promotional materials to support the Library's outreach efforts, e.g. magnifier bookmarks, pencils, and canvas bags.

Exxon Mobil donated \$80,000 to the North Torrance Branch Library in celebration of the Torrance refinery's 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary. The gift was presented at the October 20, 2009 Torrance City Council meeting. The gift will be used for a mobile homework center that can be set up in the afternoons.

Providence Little Company of Mary Medical Center donated \$35,000 to the Library to pay for the Live Homework Help subscription.

The California State Library awarded a "Dia de Los Ninos" grant to the Southeast Branch Library to raise and promote literacy among Latino and Hispanic families. The grant paid for books, crafts, a dance/music program, and a special bi-lingual story time.

Los Angeles County Supervisor Don Knabe awarded an Arts Education Partnership Grant to support the Stories in Art program presented jointly by the Library and the Cultural Services Division. The program, aimed at children ages 7-11, includes storytelling at the Library, a tour of the Torrance Art Museum, and an art workshop.

The Riviera Garden Club donated and installed drought-resistant plants for the landscaping at El Retiro and Walteria Branch Libraries.

State Farm Insurance awarded the Library a \$1,000 grant to purchase Korean language books.

The Torrance Certified Farmers Market donated flowers for the annual Part-Time Library Staff Recognition event.

### **Community Relations and Outreach**

Commissioner Wermers attended the July 20 and August 17, 2009 meetings of the Torrance Public Library Foundation.

Commissioners Ross and Wermers conducted outreach at the Library's booth in the "Kid Zone" at the August 30, 2009 "Block Party" in Old Torrance.

In October, Chairperson Gerber reported on her informal meetings with Helen Ball, President of the Friends of the Torrance Library, and with Keri Gilbert, President of the Torrance Public Library Foundation.

Commissioner Wasserman met with Torrance Unified School District Trustee and former Commissioner Michael Wermers to discuss communication between the Library and Torrance public schools.

With the concurrence of the Commission, Commissioner Wasserman published an article in the May 2010 issue of the West Torrance Homeowners Association newsletter. The article pointed out specific library services of particular interest to several segments of the community, including seniors, students, and families with small children.

Commissioner Wasserman conducted outreach about the library to families with small children at the Torrance Historical Society's "Rock around the Block" event on July 15, 2010

### **Events, Honors and Memberships**

Commissioner Sheldon continued to represent the Commission as a delegate to the Metropolitan Cooperative Library System (MCLS) Advisory Board, which became the Southern California Library Cooperative. (SCLC) effective July 1, 2009. As part of SCLC, the Library gained on-line access for patrons to the "Career Transitions" program when SCLC purchased that subscription.

The Commission members each joined or renewed membership in CALTAC.

### **Commissioner Activities for the Benefit of the Library**

Throughout FY 2009-2010, Commissioner Sheldon was a volunteer for the Library's "Words on Wheels" program (delivering library materials to home bound individuals).

Commissioner Stapleton attended various Library programs throughout the year, including a discussion by Pulitzer Prize winner Bill Boyarsky, a discussion by the author *Route 66*, an inspirational program by a triathlete, authors Connie Dial and Lisa See, and *Daily Breeze* columnist John Bogert.

In July 2009, Commissioners Gerber and Stapleton attended Commission Chair training conducted by the City of Torrance.

In July 2009, Commissioner Ross attended a library program related to culinary history.

Chairperson Gerber attended the annual California Library Association Conference and Exhibition October 30 - November 2, 2009 at the Pasadena Convention Center. She viewed exhibits, networked with other professionals and volunteers, and attended workshops on *Friends, Trustees, and Foundations Working Together*, and *Private Philanthropy*.

Throughout FY 2009-2010, Commissioner Sheldon represented the City of Torrance at meetings of the Southern California Library Cooperative (SCLC), formerly MCLS.

Commissioner Stapleton contacted United States Representative Jane Harman and sent e-mails to California's United States Senators to advocate for the Library.

Chairperson Gerber attended the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation "Opportunity Online Broadband" grant program in December 2010 in Sacramento to gather information about the grants and application criteria.

Commissioner Sheldon attended the Library programs "Wild About Jane Austen!" and "End the Clutter."

Commissioner Stapleton attended the CALTAC board meeting Palos Verdes on January 30, 2010.

Commissioner Wasserman attended the March 24, 2010 program featuring *Daily Breeze* columnist John Bogert at the Katy Geissert Civic Center Library.

Commissioners Gerber, Sheldon, and Stapleton accepted the National Library Week (April 11-17, 2010) proclamation at the April 6, 2010 City Council meeting.

On April 16, 2010, Commissioners Ross and Stapleton met with Sharon Weissman, Chief of Staff for State Senator Jenny Oropeza, to discuss library issues.

On April 23, 2010, Chairperson Gerber and Commissioner Sheldon met with Melissa Reynoso, Field Representative for Assemblymember Ted Lieu, to discuss library issues.

Commissioner Ross attended the May 6, 2010 "Beat the Odds" scholarship ceremony.

At its May 10, 2010 meeting, the Commission welcomed Community Services Director John Jones, who engaged the Commission in discussion about the City budget and encouraged the Commissioners to be informed advocates for the Library in the budget process.

On May 20, Commissioner Ravine attended the SCLC meeting in person, with Commissioner Sheldon participating via conference call. They reported that SCLC membership is expected to reach 47 library systems by the summer.

On June 9, 2010, the Commission hosted the annual Part-Time Staff Recognition event. City officials, Commissioners, and senior Library management honored six Library part-time employees achieving 5-year, 10-year, and 15-year increments of service.

At the June 7, 2010 City Budget Workshop, Commissioner Wasserman addressed the City Council regarding the importance of the library and advocated on behalf of the Commission in favor of retaining Sunday library service. The Commission did not present a position on the elimination of a Library Assistant I or the proposed increase in fees and fines.

On June 16 and 17, 2010, Commissioner Ross served on the Torrance Youth Council Selection Committee.

### **Partnerships**

In challenging economic times, the Torrance Library Commission is more committed than ever to strengthening its partnerships in the community. The Commission has endeavored to help the Friends of the Torrance Library sustain the generous support and underwriting of programming and equipment. The Commission is also working to provide additional support to the Torrance Public Library Foundation, which has provided critical funding over the years.

Near the conclusion of FY 2009-2010, Vice Chair Stapleton proposed that the Commission undertake a thoughtful analysis and evaluation of its purpose and goals. As a part of this process, the Commission will examine its partnerships, current and past, to determine where stronger and more effective ties can be built, i.e., the long-standing ties between the Library and partners like the Torrance Unified School District, Friends of the Torrance Library, the Torrance Public Library Foundation, and the Torrance Historical Society

The Commission will also consider whether new partnerships are possible given the incredible competition for resources. One avenue which the Commission began investigating this year was cooperation with the homeowners associations to provide another avenue for disseminating information about library programs and services. This arrangement is of mutual benefit, as the Library Commission provides content for association newsletters and the associations provide valuable information for Torrance residents.

### **Library Staff**

The Torrance Library Commission wishes to thank the dedicated staff at all Library locations for the insight and assistance given it during the past fiscal year. Staff at all levels and at all

locations were significantly impacted by the rotating branch refurbishment closures. The staff approached the challenges with a sense of pride and professionalism that resulted in continued excellence across a wide array of quality programs and services to the public.