

June 9, 2016

TO: Library Advisory Commission

FROM: RuthAnn Garcia, Library Services Manager

RE: Noise at Mitchell Park Library

Library staff have spent time discussing the ways in which to address the noise issues at the Mitchell Park Library (MP). With daily visits from 1500-2000 each day, MP is a popular destination place for Palo Altans. The high circulation (1600 items per day), visits and programs (1-5 each day), illustrates the activity that MP sees each day. Staff does their best to address very loud noise issues as they occur, with the understanding that MP will never be a completely quiet library, but is intended to be an active community and learning center.

We discussed the ongoing (though small) number of comments and complaints about the noise at MP and identified three areas to address:

- **Structural:** We have met with the original architects to help us mitigate noise in the open (to 2nd floor) areas (lobby, CIRC desk and stairwell, Kids Place). They have suggested source-control and source-isolation methods for capturing the noise created in these spaces and trapping it, so that it doesn't travel up to the second floor. They suggested acoustic wall paneling throughout these areas and will work with the Public Works Department for a manufacture quote.
- **Customer (and Staff) Behavior & Etiquette:** We need to be consistent in addressing the behaviors that cause this noise - running, talking loudly, loud playing/climbing on furniture, etc. We have to also be mindful of ourselves and how much we contribute, especially at the Circulation desk. Other procedures include:
  - Moving loud and/or talking groups out of the lobby, stairwell (open areas) and away from the front doors. Staff this area appropriately after program events to move people through to other areas of the Library.

- Address the noise as customers complain. Be empathetic and helpful when addressing and offer solutions—showing them our peak hours on Google to let them see what times might be quieter, other branches and hours, working in 2nd floor study area, offering earplugs.
- **Need for Quite Study Area.** We have created an official “Quiet Zone” on the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor, east side of the Library - no talking, cell phones, or group work. That doesn’t mean complete silence, but will require certain behaviors and guidelines, which we’ll need to address and enforce when roaming/shelving/etc. The area isn’t enclosed, but has become a self-imposed quiet area by customers since opening MP.

Following some of these changes, we will monitor to see how or whether the issue improves. There are other, much larger and more expensive architectural solutions that could be implemented, however, these are less desirable as they have the cost factor and may interfere with other building systems, i.e. HVAC. We will look into other solutions if we feel that they are necessary in the future.