



## **NATIONAL CITY PUBLIC LIBRARY**

### **LIBRARY BOARD OF TRUSTEES**

### **REGULAR MEETING AGENDA**

**October 2, 2019 5:30 PM**

Literacy Meeting Room

1401 National City Blvd., 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor

National City, CA 91950

#### **Call to Order**

#### **Roll Call**

#### **Consent Agenda**

1. Approval of Agenda
2. Approval of the Minutes of September 4, 2019 Meeting
3. Approval of a grant from the California Library Literacy Services (CLLS) in the baseline amount of \$18,000 to fund the Fiscal Year 2019-20 Literacy Program.
4. Approval of Library Warrants

#### **New and Unfinished Business**

5. Newspapers Digitization Project - Update
6. Children's Librarian Recruitment Update
7. Review of the Library Rules of Conduct – Food and Drink
8. Review of the Local History Room Preservation Needs Assessment Report
9. December Board Meeting Date Change Request
10. Library Board Regular Monthly Meeting Date Change Request - Update
11. Discussion - Bringing Drag Queen Story Hour to National City Library

#### **City Librarian's Report**

#### **Other Reports**

1. Friends of the Library Report

#### **Public Comments and Communications**

#### **Board Member Comments**

**Adjournment:** Next meeting November 6, 2019, 5:30 PM.

Upon request, this agenda can be made available in appropriate alternative formats to persons with a disability in compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act. Please contact Minh Duong, City Librarian at (619) 470-5800 or by email at [minh.duong@nationalcitylibrary.org](mailto:minh.duong@nationalcitylibrary.org) to request a disability-related modification or accommodation. Notification 24 hours prior to the meeting will enable the City to make reasonable arrangement to ensure accessibility to this meeting.

**Balance Sheet Board Meeting 10.2.19**

Vendor Name	Description	Account	Sub-Acct.	Check#	CheckDate	Gen. Fund	Acct. 108	Lit Services	Donation	Total	Tax	Total incl tax
Allstate Security	Security Guard Svcs					\$ 3,128.25				\$ 3,128.25		\$ 3,128.25
Amazon	Books	104-431-056	304			\$ 3,361.74				\$ 3,078.18	\$ 283.56	\$ 3,361.74
Baker & Taylor	Books	104-431-056	304			\$ 144.65				\$ 131.79	\$ 12.86	\$ 144.65
Brodart Co.	Books	104-431-056	304			\$ 264.41				\$ 243.16	\$ 21.25	\$ 264.41
Midwest Tape	DVDs AudioBooks	108-431-056 104-431-056	304 304			\$ 496.99	\$ 719.09			\$ 663.74	\$ 55.35	\$ 719.09
SCRRA CoOp	Membership Renewal	320-431-339	222					\$ 3,368.00		\$ 3,368.00		\$ 3,368.00
Smart & Final	Program Supplies Literacy Supplies	104-431-056 320-431-339	399 399			\$ 50.80		\$ 84.58		\$ 50.80		\$ 50.80
Staples	Office Supplies	104-431-056	399			\$ 443.71				\$ 408.01	\$ 35.70	\$ 443.71
PENDING WAITING FOR PURCHASE ORDER						\$ 7,890.55	\$ 719.09	\$ 3,452.58		\$ 11,614.60	\$ 447.62	\$ 12,062.22
Vendor Name						\$ -	\$ -	\$ -		\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Description										Total	Tax	Total incl tax
										\$ -		\$ -
										\$ -		\$ -

**CITY OF NATIONAL CITY, CALIFORNIA  
LIBRARY BOARD OF TRUSTEES AGENDA STATEMENT**

**MEETING DATE:** 10/02/2019

**AGENDA ITEM NO.:** 3

**ITEM TITLE:**

Approval of a grant from the California Library Literacy Services (CLLS) in the baseline amount of \$18,000 to fund Fiscal Year 2019-20 Literacy Program.

**PREPARED BY:** Minh Duong, City Librarian

**DEPARTMENT:** Library

**PHONE:** (619) 470-5800

**APPROVED BY:** \_\_\_\_\_

**EXPLANATION:**

The CLLS grant is designed to support the Library's literacy services program to adult learners who seek to improve their reading, writing, math, and computer skills.

The grant is awarded in two payments each year:

- The base payment of \$18,000 was intended to provide the library with the funding needed to deliver a minimum level of local literacy staffing and services to start the program for FY2019-20.
- The second payment will be awarded later in the year after the State Library reviewed all the previous final reports from participating literacy programs.

**FINANCIAL STATEMENT:**

**APPROVED:** \_\_\_\_\_ **FINANCE**

**ACCOUNT NO.**

**APPROVED:** \_\_\_\_\_ **MIS**

**ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW:**

**ORDINANCE:** INTRODUCTION  FINAL ADOPTION

**STAFF RECOMMENDATION:**

Approved by City Council on September 17, 2019. Library Board's approval recommended.

**BOARD / COMMISSION RECOMMENDATION:**

**ATTACHMENTS:**

**CITY OF NATIONAL CITY, CALIFORNIA  
LIBRARY BOARD OF TRUSTEES AGENDA STATEMENT**

**MEETING DATE:** 10/02/2019

**AGENDA ITEM NO.:** 7

**ITEM TITLE:**

Review of the Library Rules of Conduct.

**PREPARED BY:** Minh Duong, City Librarian

**DEPARTMENT:** Library

**PHONE:**

**APPROVED BY:** \_\_\_\_\_

**EXPLANATION:**

Regular review of the rules of conduct to assess and make adjustments as necessary.

**FINANCIAL STATEMENT:**

**APPROVED:** \_\_\_\_\_ **FINANCE**

**ACCOUNT NO.**

**APPROVED:** \_\_\_\_\_ **MIS**

**ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW:**

**ORDINANCE:** INTRODUCTION  FINAL ADOPTION

**STAFF RECOMMENDATION:**

**BOARD / COMMISSION RECOMMENDATION:**

**ATTACHMENTS:**

1. National City Public Library Rules of Conduct
- 2.



## RULES OF CONDUCT FOR LIBRARY PATRONS

The National City Public Library shall keep the following rules posted at the entrance and elsewhere as deemed necessary.

Please consider your fellow library users and staff and refrain from the following:

1. Smoking, eating, drinking, or bringing food or drink into the building.
2. Sleeping or loitering. Lying on the floor or furniture is prohibited. Feet must remain on the floor and not on the furniture or wall.
3. Soliciting or panhandling on Library property. Distributing handbills or flyers, soliciting signatures for petitions, selling merchandise, or other similar activities that may disrupt patrons' use and enjoyment of the Library.
4. Any activity or condition that unreasonably interferes with library patrons and staff's comfort, safety, use or quiet and peaceful enjoyment of the Library, including but not limited to:
  - 4a. Obstructing, disturbing, intentionally interfering with, or intimidating other library patrons or library staff (California Penal Code Section 602.1(b)).
  - 4b. Making loud or unreasonable noise or other disturbance such as running or talking loudly.
  - 4c. Use of cell phones and/or similar personal communications or entertainment devices such as headphones, radios or portable devices. Cell phone ringer volumes should be set to vibrate and use should be restricted to the lobby or outside the building.
  - 4d. Offensive body odor due to poor personal hygiene, overpowering perfume/cologne.
  - 4e. Excessive public displays of affection.
5. Bringing any containers, packages, briefcases, parcels, or bundles into the library which singly or collectively exceed 24" x 18" x 6". All items not prohibited are subject to inspection.
6. Bringing shopping carts or wheeled conveyances into the building, with the exception of wheelchairs and baby strollers/carriages used for the actual transport of a person or child or wheeled backpacks and book carriers not exceeding 24"x15"x12" (excluding handles); and leaving wheeled conveyances in front of doorway, impeding ingress or egress to/from the library, or creating safety hazards. "Wheeled conveyances" include but are not limited to bicycles, skateboards, roller skaters, and scooters.
7. Bringing animals or pets into the building, with the exception of service animals or properly licensed guide dogs; and leaving animals unattended on library premises. A "service animal" is any dog that is individually trained to do work or perform tasks for the benefits of an individual with a disability, including a physical, sensory, psychiatric, intellectual, or other mental disability. Americans with Disabilities Act, 28 C.F.R. § 36.104 and 28 C.F.R. § 35.104.

8. Bringing sleeping bags, bedrolls, or blankets into the building (blankets for small children are acceptable.)
9. Entering the Library without wearing shoes and/or shirt.
10. Blocking library entrance areas, aisles, doorways, stairways or elevators, or interfering with the free flow of pedestrian traffic in such areas.
11. Using basins or restrooms for purposes other than washing hands and face.

Patrons who violate the Rules of Conduct may be asked to leave the library premises, may be issued a barring notice which revokes or suspends their library privileges at the National City Public Library, and/or may be subject to arrest and prosecution. The notice is effective upon receipt, but may be appealed to the Library Board of Trustees within ten (10) calendar days of issuance by filing a written notice of appeal with the City Librarian. Except for violations of Rule 4a, enforcement of the barring order will be held in abeyance pending the appeal. Violation of Rule 4a will bar the patron until an appeal is determined in the patron's favor.

Approved by the Library Board of Trustees this 11<sup>th</sup> day of July 2016.

City Librarian

Approved as to form and legality:

Claudia G. Silva  
City Attorney

**CITY OF NATIONAL CITY, CALIFORNIA  
LIBRARY BOARD OF TRUSTEES AGENDA STATEMENT**

**MEETING DATE:** 10/02/2019

**AGENDA ITEM NO.:** 8

**ITEM TITLE:**

Review of the Morgan Local History Room's Preservation Needs Assessment Report.

**PREPARED BY:** Minh Duong, City Librarian

**DEPARTMENT:** Library

**PHONE:** (619) 470-5800

**APPROVED BY:** \_\_\_\_\_

**EXPLANATION:**

A Preservation Needs Assessment Report of the National City Public Library's Morgan Local History Room was completed by the California Preservation Program in January 2019. This assessment was supported in part by the U.S. Institute of Museum and Library Services under the provisions of the Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA), administered in California by the State Librarian.

**FINANCIAL STATEMENT:**

**APPROVED:** \_\_\_\_\_ **FINANCE**

**ACCOUNT NO.**

**APPROVED:** \_\_\_\_\_ **MIS**

**ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW:**

**ORDINANCE:** INTRODUCTION  FINAL ADOPTION

**STAFF RECOMMENDATION:**

**BOARD / COMMISSION RECOMMENDATION:**

**ATTACHMENTS:**

1. Preservation Needs Assessment of the National City Public Library Morgan Local History Room.

**Preservation Needs Assessment  
of the National City Public Library  
Morgan Local History Room**

Julie A. Page  
California Preservation Program

January 14, 2019

This assessment was supported in part by the U.S. Institute of Museum and Library Services under the provisions of the Library Services and Technology Act, administered in California by the State Librarian. The opinions expressed herein do not necessarily reflect the position or policy of the U.S. Institute of Museum and Library Services or the California State Library, and no official endorsement by the U.S. Institute of Museum and Library Services or the California State Library should be inferred.



On January 31, 2018, a consultant from the California Preservation Program (CPP) conducted a preservation needs assessment of the Morgan Local History Room of the National City Public Library to assess risks to the long-term survival of the collection and to recommend actions for their mitigation or elimination. This assessment was occasioned by the Library participation in the CPP's California Preservation Assessment Project to address the Library's concerns that it is taking appropriate actions to preserve its local history and archival collections and to ensure that these materials continue to be able to be used by current and future researchers.

The National City Public Library was established in 1895, with the Local History Room starting in 1978 at the previous Library location. It became the Morgan Local History Room with the move to the new building in 2005. The collection includes books, journals, photographs, maps, microfilm, A/V, archives, reference materials, and digital resources. All materials are non-circulating and accessible during the open hours of 1:00-5:00 p.m. on Monday-Thursday. The research room and archives are housed on the second floor of the Library. The rest of the Library building was not assessed. The Local History Room consists of the reading room and attached workroom, as well as a storage "vault" housing primarily archives. The spaces are clean and well maintained with fire detection and automatic suppression. The Library building has a perimeter security system; in the Local History Room all doors, glassed cabinets, and metal files are kept locked. The Morgan Local History Room and Library staff are to be complimented for their concern for the well-being of the collections and their interest in measures to improve collections care.

The process used for the preservation needs assessment consisted of an inspection of the collection areas to review the buildings' ability to protect the collections from damage and interviews with the Library Director, Local History Librarian, and Facilities staff to identify collection needs not able to be identified by an inspection.

This report addresses issues and problems that currently put the Local History Room collections at risk of damage or loss and offers recommendations for use of limited resources. It was evident that the best use of the consultant's time, and organization of the report, was to focus recommendations on strategic issues facing the Library and Local History Room. A major recommendation that applies to the Library as a whole is listed first - disaster preparedness; collection, staffing, and facility issues focused on the Local History Room follow.

## Findings and Recommendations

Findings and recommendations are informed by the principle of maximizing benefits for the collection while minimizing costs, thus ensuring the greatest possible protection of the Morgan Local History Room (LHR) assets with available resources. Some recommended actions can be accomplished with few resources; others require significant resource commitments and involvement of the city. The next logical step, a review of the feasibility of taking the recommended actions, could lead to implementing first those recommendations requiring only resources currently available to the Library, and to leave to special funding opportunities those recommended actions requiring additional resources. Recommendations included here can help to shape and support grant proposals and funding requests.

### Library-wide Disaster Preparedness

#### 1. **The Library does not have current procedures in place for response to salvage of collections in a disaster.**

Importantly, the Library has an emergency plan for people and actions to take. The Library should build on these to protect collections in water emergencies, fire, or earthquake, including priorities for salvage and response to the varied material types in the Library and LHR collections. After the emergency plan is updated, a coordinated training program, including collections response needs, should be implemented for the staff with the cooperation of appropriate city services such as facilities, risk management and the fire department. The vigilance of staff is needed to supplement the city efforts, as the city first responders are most likely to be in a responsive mode due to the many demands on their time, whereas the Library staff should work in a preventative mode.

With fire detection and fire suppression sprinklers, the LHR and Library are well-protected against a catastrophic fire. However, every effort should be made to lessen the likelihood of any fire through elimination of as much vulnerability as possible and mandatory staff training. Fire is the greatest threat to the building and collections. Nationally, a fire happens in a library every 1 ½ days. Of those fires, 70% are arson-related. The library literature records instances of people, unhappy with the institution or desiring to make a political statement, setting fire to library materials or hurling incendiary devices through windows. Recently, the El Sobrante Public Library in Contra Costa County suffered a possible arson fire started immediately outside the library causing building and smoke damage.

#### ***Recommendations:***

**1a. Complete an emergency response and salvage plan** for the collections, a very low cost measure to reduce the risk of major disruption of library services following a disaster. A plan was developed by a previous LHR Librarian in 2007, but never officially adopted. The LHR librarian participated in a disaster workshop in December 2017. A high priority should be to implement what he learned and share it with appropriate library administration and staff to involve the whole Library and its collections. Use the Pocket Response Plan (PReP) to

include your communication plan and immediate response steps to move you from event to action. Supplement the PReP with appropriate Appendices, and very importantly, establish priority collections, art work, equipment, etc. for evacuation or salvage. Following a disaster, it is very difficult to remain calm and rational. The plan should be kept short and very directive with regard to key actions, and the time and cost to keep a short plan current are much reduced. The plan should include: immediate response procedures; salvage priorities among materials in the LHR collections and in the Library building; procedures for undertaking the salvage activities; and sources of local assistance in the event the Library staff and city resources are insufficient. (Contact the CPP toll-free, 24/7 emergency number: 888-905-7737). Assemble several staff members with expertise in facilities, public services, administrative services, and library collections to develop the plan with input from other members of the staff and city services. Make it a goal to complete the PReP and appropriate appendices before the end of 2018. Assign maintenance of the plan to a staff member to ensure it stays current.

**1b. Establish a library-wide emergency team**, a group of 4-6 people from around the Library and the LHR librarian. The team should be responsible for keeping the plan up-to-date and preparing a combination of drills (evacuation, fire extinguisher, disaster) and tabletop exercises to train the staff and volunteers in response to the most likely emergencies – water leaks, flooding, fires and earthquakes. Since only the LHR librarian has attended a disaster workshop, it may be beneficial for other members of the library-wide emergency team to take advantage of archived webinars to help deepen their knowledge of disaster preparedness. Consider using the archived webinar series “Protecting Your Collections: Writing a Disaster Response Plan”

<https://www.connectingtocollections.org/archiveresponseplan/#julie> For staff training ideas, watch the archived webinar “Exercising Your Disaster Response Plan: Techniques for testing your plan and training staff”

<https://www.connectingtocollections.org/exercisingyourplan>

Engage the Library emergency team with the San Diego/Imperial County Disaster Response Network (SILDRN), joining the listserv and communicating with other San Diego County library members.

<https://sites.google.com/site/sildrnupdate/home> The National City Public Library is a member of SILDRN through the Serra Cooperative Library System.

**1c. Purchase a basic cache of immediate response supplies** (e.g., plastic sheeting, duct tape, bucket, nitrile gloves). Store supplies in a rolling covered plastic can or bin, clearly marked and readily available, for easy transport and accessibility. The LHR librarian has a list of appropriate supplies from the workshop he attended.

**1d. Locate water-bearing pipes, including HVAC condensate lines**, especially in the LHR. If not possible to move collections, use protective housing that provides an additional barrier to water incursion. If necessary, use plastic sheeting over the top of ranges near any suspect pipes, if there has been leaking, when the cause has not been mitigated.

**1e. Keep collections off the floor in all areas**, especially in the vault and workroom. Water travels quickly and it doesn’t take much to soak boxes, artwork, or other items directly on the floor. If you have any future water incursions in the vault,

consider installation of a water alarm for earliest possible notification of water. The alarm needs to be connected to the security system for 24 hour monitoring. There are a number water sensors commercially available, e.g., Dorlen water alerts <https://www.waternalert.com>

- 1f. Practice by responding to all events**, even small water leaks. Debriefing every event will build staff confidence and help to refine your emergency preparedness and response. Remind all staff to immediately report any dripping sounds and discolored ceiling tiles that would indicate new leaks. Stay vigilant to plugged exterior drains and downspouts.
- 1g. Conduct a fire review of all building spaces** and implement a small appliance (e.g., space heaters, toaster ovens) ban if possible. At the least, make sure they are *unplugged* when the building is unoccupied.
- 1h. Review insurance coverage** for both the Library and LHR collections every several years or more frequently if collections of value are added. Keep in mind that you may need to conserve items with damage if they are not replaceable, a more costly process.

## **Morgan Local History Room Collections, Staffing, and Facility**

The Local History Room is faced with a number of important decisions to make regarding collections, staffing and the facility:

- Providing improved access and intellectual control to the collections to connect with the community through important historical collections.
- Establishing and maintaining an adequate staffing level to provide services and process collections.
- Improving the environment and making the best use of the reading room, workroom, and storage vault.
- Developing policies including scope, use and donations

The following recommendations attempt to provide input for making these decisions as the LHR strives to be the primary historical research center and informational resource for the city of National City. The case needs to be made to the city that the LHR is part of the core services that the Library offers and is of significant importance to current and future generations. The Library desires to be the best resource for National City history, both through its access and preservation of the city's documentary history. These recommendations are made from an outside perspective and some may not be feasible given your other Library priorities and funding.

### **Collections**

- 2. The LHR provides protective housing for the majority of the collections.**  
The photographs, microfilm, and maps are appropriately stored in locked cabinets. The flat files housing maps, blueprints, and oversized flat materials are not crowded, though organization of the files is not easily understood nor well labeled. Approximately 40% of the boxes used for storage of archival collections are acidic.

***Recommendations:***

- 2a. Review utilization of flat files and lateral files for protective storage of collections in the reading room.** A number of file drawers are filled with items that could easily be boxed and stored (e.g., plaques) if retained.
- 2b. As collections are inventoried and reviewed for processing or retention, rehouse them in archival storage containers.** Add supplies for archival housing materials as part of the Library's budget.
- 3. Audio/visual and photographic formats accompany some of the archival collections.** In addition, there is an oral history collection on audio cassettes. Some of the oral histories have been transcribed and some have been digitized. VHS cassettes of city meetings/conferences, the Maytime Band Review, and Library programming are in danger of being inaccessible. There may be other older A/V formats that have not been accessed nor can the content be confirmed. The photograph collections are some of the most heavily used, and there are potentially more photographs and slides throughout the archival collections.

***Recommendations:***

- 3a. Evaluate and digitize any A/V format materials that are deemed worthy of retention.** Submit these to the California Revealed project as a high priority. Also submit priority photographs to the project in the future.
- 3b. Utilize your collection inventory to identify A/V and photographic materials** in collections that are important to help "tell the story" of National City history and warrant extra preservation and/or improved access. House all historical A/V materials in the vault with its better environmental conditions.
- 3c. House photo albums and scrapbooks in archival boxes to help better preserve them.**
- 4. Collection development and digitization for the LHR is a high priority.** With the desire to build the documentary and research materials related to National City history, it is important to focus the collections' policy to address the mission of the LHR. Current archival collections will benefit from review and prioritization for better access as needed. The Library is participating in the California Revealed project through the California State Library. This is an excellent project for improving access and preservation through digitization with minimal effort by the Library and at no cost. Digitization of the photograph collection has started, and yearbooks were sent this in 2018, and personal diaries of city founders will be sent in 2019. Newspapers and city directories are other collections that will benefit from digitization. Using established vendors for these projects is recommended, rather than undertaking any specialized digitization projects in-house. Digitization is not just about preserving rare and unique collections to make them broadly available, but also about bridging collection gaps and providing the public with more comprehensive resources and tools for their use.

***Recommendations:***

- 4a. Review the collection develop policy every 3-5 years to keep it reflective of the Library's goals.** Your mission and collection development policy for the LHR will define your collecting versus that of the National City and South Bay Historical Societies. It would be more appropriate to not be part museum, part library/archive.
- 4b. Investigate if there are historical city records being held by the city clerk or city offices.** These appropriately belong in the LHR where they can be better preserved and accessed.
- 4c. Inventory both processed and unprocessed collections as a high priority.** An inventory will provide an important overview for determining holes within the archival collections as well as out-of-scope materials. It will also provide the opportunity to identify media and photographs which may be buried within collections and should be reformatted or digitized. For example, the in-house finding aid for the Kile Morgan collection lists a box of 16 mm film and VHS cassettes as well as a box of photographs with the annotation "Needs Processing".
- 4d. Determine what you hold that is unique and focus processing and preservation on those items deemed important.** Determine which collections should be prioritized for improved access or processing. Consider making higher priority, those where the donor or a relative is still living and can provide important context and information. With new acquisitions, ask for funding to archivally house materials and/or to process. Request assistance from donors who may be interested in volunteering.
- 4e. Proceed with digitization of National City newspaper and other titles as appropriate.** Team up with South Bay libraries and historical societies to augment holdings. Providing better access to the historical newspapers, yearbooks, and city directories will be very beneficial for the public. Keeping online access as open as possible, will drive those interested in seeing originals and related materials to the National City Public Library. The city directories would make an excellent digitization project as they are heavily used. Limit your holdings of city directories specifically to those covering National City and offer the others to appropriate libraries or historical societies. Even duplicate copies of older directories are often appreciated.

## **Staffing**

- 5. Staffing and restricted public hours of the LHR affects the ability to provide public service, processing and preservation of LHR collections.** Currently the LHR is open four days a week (1-5PM) for a total of 16 hours. Previously, the LHR was unstaffed for about 4 years until the LHR librarian was hired in June 2017. Requests during that period were handled through the general reference desk, and there were no public hours for the LHR. The LHR staffing now is the librarian position at 16 hrs./week, leaving little time for tackling unprocessed collections, developing relationships to build new collections, or improving overall organization and access to collections. He is assisted by one volunteer (6 hrs./week) who is dedicated but requires direction and supervision. It will be very difficult to hold onto the level of expertise needed to service the LHR collection with this level of staffing. The librarian is doing a great job "holding down the fort" after less than a year on the job. He has real interest in the

collections and ideas for organizing the local history materials and processing of the backlog if provided the hours to do so. It will be hard to promote the collections and to connect with the community without more resources provided for the frontline LHR staff. In fact, many of the recommendations in this report will be difficult, even impossible to implement, without increased staffing.

***Recommendations:***

- 5a. Increase staff time of LHR librarian to full time.** If needed, a small portion of his time could be used on the Library reference desk which could also help with community outreach for the LHR collections. The Library will be more likely to draw and retain qualified staff. It will be hard to promote the collections and to connect with the community without more resources provided for the LHR staff. Allow the LHR librarian time off the desk to work on collection processing and access.
- 5b. Investigate increasing open hours to include at least part of a weekend day and possibly an evening during the week.** Look for ways to reach students and the working public who may not know of or be able to take advantage of your important historical resources during current public hours.
- 5c. Work with the Library Literacy Program to promote the need for volunteers to help with the LHR collections,** looking for those who have an interest in history and National City. New volunteers will also provide community engagement and outreach and could lead to new relationships for developing collection donations.
- 5d. Identify collections that would benefit by improved processing and access that are projects for volunteers and/or archival interns.** Contact Lori Lindberg [lori.lindberg@sjsu.edu](mailto:lori.lindberg@sjsu.edu), the archives internship supervisor, SJSU SLIS program with a brief description of possible projects for student interns as increased staffing allows for supervision.
- 6. Improve access and intellectual control to the LHR collections.**  
*A brief review was undertaken of current processing of collections. Comments here are only meant to point out potential areas that should be studied and addressed.*

An effort has been made to provide access to primarily books and some archival collections and objects through the Library's online catalog. In-house finding aids have been compiled in a number of binders kept at the LHR reference desk. In a quick search online for several large collections, the records had minimal access points and only one subject heading – National City (Calif.) – History. The entries are only the name of the collection such as “Centennial” or “Kile Morgan” with no additional subject access. Doing a title search “Kile Morgan” in the catalog comes up with three entries including one for three boxes in the LHR. There is an extensive contents list for the three boxes in the notes of the online record with no access points to lead to discovery. Searching the subject “Morgan, Kile” retrieves only one book and nothing about the LHR's holdings. In fact, the LHR has at least 27 more boxes related to Kile Morgan, including a box of A/V, photographs, and about 5 boxes of artifacts. One only knows this when turning to the Inventory binders that are kept at the LHR reference desk. There are a number of binders: 3

Inventory, 2 Processing Records, 3 Transfer of Ownership, and 3 Photographs. Given the number of hand written additions and notes, there is no way of knowing how complete these aids are. They are sometimes color coded and have notes that relate to the card files that are also in the reading room. Of great concern is that these binders and cards are the *unique* complete records of the LHR holdings. In addition to the risk of being out in a public area, if there were a fire or extensive water damage, the *only* complete record of the majority of the collection could be severely damaged or lost.

***Recommendations:***

- 6a. As soon as possible, scan ALL the binders at the reference desk and look for ways to utilize an electronic file to control these records.** [Note: The Local History librarian has started this process since the assessment visit.]
- 6b. Use the subject heading “National City (Calif.) – History” with Location “Local History Room” to start an inventory of the LHR collections.** Using this search turns up 218 entries of primarily books, plus some archives and artifacts. Utilize any other access points that can be gleaned from the online records. Use this opportunity to also review appropriateness. For example, there is an online record for a Kodak camera from Jane Weaver, with no apparent connection to a collection. Is this appropriate to be retained by the Library? An inventory will provide an important overview of processing and determining holes within the archival collections as well as out-of-scope materials. Make sure that all the books and periodicals in the LHR are cataloged online.
- 6c. Expand Library of Congress subject access by topic (e.g., Agriculture) and personal names.** A *minimum* considered appropriate for archival records is 5 subject headings per collection level record (in fact the number often goes to many more). A thesaurus of subject headings and names could be developed by the LHR librarian, and trained volunteers could be used to make appropriate selections.
- 6d. Consider developing online finding aids and/or augmenting the current online catalog records to provide better access to the LHR collections.** These will also provide an important electronic backup to the inventory lists and cards that currently provide the only detailed access. Submit online finding aids to the Online Archive of California as appropriate. Increased online presence will drive more use of both the digital and original copies.

**Facility**

- 7. Make more appropriate use of the workroom shelving and vault storage.** The workroom appears to be used as a catch all for miscellaneous stuff. The vault, though crowded, has a basic organization and makes relatively good use of the odd-sized space. Some of the shelving units appear loose and poorly anchored. Rehousing of collections into preservation quality supplies is underway as they are processed. Some collections are stored on or too close to the floor; some fragile collections (e.g., glass plate negatives) are stored high on shelving.

***Recommendations:***



- 7a. Conduct a complete evaluation of what collections are in the reading room versus the vault.** What collections need the better security and environmental conditions that the vault can offer? What collections benefit from more public display to engage the community? What collections are more heavily used and are more easily accessed in the reading room? Since the LHR librarian was not a part of the location decision making, it would be beneficial to do a complete review.
- 7b. Make better use of the workroom as a workstation for processing collections and for controlled storage of newly acquired collections.** Using the workroom to isolate new collections before they are unpacked and processed, ensures that any pests or mold do not contaminate other collections or materials. A stop gap measure is to put a box in a large plastic trash bag until reviewed. If there is any sign of moisture in the materials, be careful of mold.
- 7c. Make space utilization in the reading room and vault a priority** in order to take in new archival collections. Unprocessed or minimally processed collections are more vulnerable to loss. Remove all items from the floor as this makes them highly susceptible to water damage. If unavoidable, take extra precautions, storing materials at least 4 inches off the ground even for short periods of time; small pallets/risers can be used for temporary storage. Improve the storage of artwork and oversize materials. Keep archival boxes and storage supplies in the workroom; don't allow them to take up valuable space in the vault.
- 7d. Securely anchor all vault shelving and assess what might fall off shelves in an earthquake.** Use earthquake strapping to secure boxes and move more fragile collections to lower shelves.

**8. Reconfigure the LHR entry area to allow for new ways to connect with the library visitors and community.**

The Library would like to attract new collections relevant to National City, enhancing the overall experience by the public as they are exposed to historical collections and resources. Local schools and businesses are natural partners for strengthening relationships and fundraising. Currently several pieces of furniture occupy the entry area which is visible from outside the LHR reading room. There is also a non-functioning photocopier and temporary dehumidifier in the space. The glass enclosed cases where the majority of the collections in the reading room are shelved, are aesthetically pleasing but are a barrier to the patrons. They provide protection of the collections, especially the small objects that are displayed, while discouraging interaction – this is a difficult balancing act. Look for ways to make books and objects of interest more relatable to the public. Are there ways you could make the first range facing the work table more appealing, such as moving the display boards as they block the visual appeal of the rest of the room. The work table had a number of items displayed or being processed.

***Recommendations:***

- 8a. Develop a plan for the front exhibit space to keep it engaging and current** so the public is more likely to stop in to see what is new. Also consider using a display case that highlights a new collection, an interesting aspect of National City history, etc. in the more heavily trafficked first floor. Maybe engage the schools annually to participate in an exhibit. Keep it lively! Add signage on the first floor to draw the public upstairs.

- 8b. Keep the reading room work table clear and shift processing into the workroom.**
- 8c. Encourage the Friends of the Library group to look for fundraising opportunities** that arise from the LHR's increased community outreach such as "Save a Scrapbook" or "Digitize a Video."
- 8d. Develop a "wish list" and look for opportunities to engage the public** who have special interests such as in the Maytime Band Review, local theater, etc. Develop partnerships with local businesses.
- 8e. Highlight a collection for a period of time and put it out on a table.** Maybe use a theme or event in the history of a person. Engage the community in the collection. Send invitations to selected people. Maybe call it "Saturday with the collection." Get creative if you want to recruit volunteers and encourage collection donations.

**9. Environmental conditions in the LHR and vault are generally appropriate for mixed use and storage spaces, however mold outbreaks have occurred over a number of years.**

The recommendation for mixed use (collections and people) is **68-72 degrees** and **65-68 degrees** for storage spaces, and that it is maintained 24/7. Relative humidity (RH) should be maintained **under 60%** whenever possible. Since LHR collections have suffered mold outbreaks in the past, they are more likely to mold again at a lower temp and RH. A/V materials especially benefit from lower temp and humidity. The LHR librarian monitors conditions with a Hobo unit by the reference desk as well as takes regular manual readings from small temp/RH monitors throughout the spaces. Facilities staff indicated that there is one HVAC unit on the roof that operates for the reading room/workroom. There was uncertainty as to the temperature set point; it appears the system is running 24/7. The vault is on a separate HVAC unit and is set for a lower temperature. Arturo Gonzalez, Facilities Maintenance Supervisor voiced a strong desire to know exactly what the recommendations are for temperature and RH settings as there are plans to add new controllers on the two HVAC units with alarms to automatically report out of range readings. There are also plans to add dehumidifiers to the units to eliminate mold outbreaks that have occurred on materials in the reading room. He clearly cares about the effect of any system failure on the collections. For the interim, portable dehumidifiers are in the reading room and workroom which can be used during high humidity periods.

***Recommendation:***

- 9a. Work closely with Facilities staff and the HVAC contractor to provide better environmental control for the LHR collections.** Utilize the electronic datalogger readings to determine 24/7 environmental conditions. The PEM (Preservation Environmental Monitors) are on 1-year loan from the California Preservation Program and have recently been placed in the reading room and vault. Verify 24/7 HVAC operation within specifications. Provide PEM data to Facilities on a regular basis, especially over the next year as the temperature and RH stabilize. Consider purchasing a newer Hobo for the reading room that can be placed centrally in the space and add a Hobo to the vault. When placed, discontinue the use of the small temp/RH monitors as they tend to be less reliable.

**9b. Request set points for the LHR** to include: 68-70 degrees for the reading room/workroom and 65-67 degrees for the vault. If dehumidifiers are added, request a setting around 50% in the reading room/workroom and 40-45% in the vault.

**9c. Ask Facilities to advise you where exactly the HVAC units are located over your collection areas.** Consider adding a wireless water sensor near the units to detect any water discharge, which can be a problem with HVAC units. Keep in mind that water travels out and down and evaluate where important collections might be vulnerable from leaks.

**10. Ultraviolet (UV) light levels are within acceptable limits for library materials.**

The reading room, workroom, and vault are well designed for protection of collections from the damaging effects of light including ultraviolet radiation – fading and deterioration. Measurement of the UV in these areas was within range for preservation of collections. Vault lights are kept off except when occupied. There is a high UV reading at the standup display unit at the LHR entrance door, affected by strong light coming in the window. Light damage is directly proportional to exposure; more exposure yields more damage. Light sensitive fabrics and artworks especially will suffer from intense UV light.

***Recommendation:***

**10a. Use only disposable collections and copies for any paper items displayed in the display standup unit near the front door.** If the plan is to continue to use this space for displays of original materials, install UV filtering film on the glass to cut down the UV.

**11. Collection cleaning procedures are not in place.**

General housekeeping for the LHR public space is good. There is no food or drink allowed. There is no process or schedule for cleaning of the reading room, workroom or vault. No particular pest problems were noticed at the time of the survey though there were sticky traps in all three spaces. There was no indication of the traps being surveyed for bugs (e.g., silverfish). Silverfish have been observed in the building in the past. Silverfish desiccant packets were noted in some of the boxes of materials.

***Recommendations:***

**11a. Encourage the use of vacuums (preferably with HEPA filtration)** throughout the LHR for regular floor and stacks cleaning; do not dry mop or dust in order to permanently remove small particulate matter.

**11b. Institute a cleaning program** whereby collection materials are removed from the open shelves and vacuumed with shelves vacuumed and damp wiped (if necessary) every 1-2 years depending on dust accumulation.

**11c. Set up a schedule for regularly checking the sticky traps for bugs.** Writing a date on the paper traps and noting any bugs will let you know if there is an increasing problem. Be especially careful with incoming collections that may have been stored in poor conditions. Utilizing the Dekko Silverfish Paks inside

boxes, but not touching the collection materials is a proactive measure that is highly effective.

### **Recommended resources for LHR staff and volunteer development**

The LHR librarian and volunteer are highly motivated to use best practices for preservation of and access to the collections. Provide professional development opportunities for the librarian and volunteers. Encourage them to take advantage of free education resources that are available through the *Connecting to Collections Care* <https://www.connectingtocollections.org> including archived Courses (e.g., Collections Care Basics, Caring for Photographs, Fundraising for Collections Care); Topics (e.g., Care of Photographs); Webinar Archives (e.g., Creative Solutions for Collections Care, Involving the Public in Your Preservation Efforts). He will benefit from participating in discussion lists with other collections managers and conservators, as well as to hear about educational opportunities and resources.

Archival-related discussion lists:

Western Archives [http://www.calarchivists.org/West\\_Arch\\_Listserv](http://www.calarchivists.org/West_Arch_Listserv)

California Preservation Program

[http://calpreservation.org/information\\_resources/discussion-list](http://calpreservation.org/information_resources/discussion-list)

Organizations: Society of California Archivists and Society of American Archivists

If the librarian's time is increased, consider applying for the Western Archives

Institute held each summer: <http://www2.archivists.org/assoc-orgs/western-archives-institute>

The consultant wishes to thank Minh Duong, Library Director, for the opportunity to conduct this assessment of the Morgan Local History Room. My thanks to Arturo Gonzalez, Facilities Maintenance Supervisor, and the contractor for Countywide Mechanical, for their knowledge, and interest in making improvements to the LHR/Vault HVAC units. My special thanks to Matt Ferrill, Local History Librarian, who after just a short time in the position, provided considerable insight about the LHR collections and their use. His 2018 Goals document was well thought out, and his vision for the LHR services provides an excellent framework going forward. I am especially impressed by how the Library is preserving and presenting the important historical materials for the benefit of the people of National City.

Julie A. Page

Consultant, California Preservation Program

[jpage@calpreservation.org](mailto:jpage@calpreservation.org)

760-224-0419

**CITY OF NATIONAL CITY, CALIFORNIA  
LIBRARY BOARD OF TRUSTEES AGENDA STATEMENT**

**MEETING DATE:** 10/02/2019

**AGENDA ITEM NO.:** 9

**ITEM TITLE:**

Approval to change the date of the December monthly regular meeting from December 4, 2019 to December 11, 2019.

**PREPARED BY:** Minh Duong, City Librarian

**DEPARTMENT:** Library

**PHONE:** (619) 470-5800

**APPROVED BY:** \_\_\_\_\_

**EXPLANATION:**

Due to a scheduling conflict, City Librarian is requesting to change the December monthly regular board meeting from the first Wednesday December 4<sup>th</sup> to the second Wednesday of the month, December 11<sup>th</sup>.

**FINANCIAL STATEMENT:**

**APPROVED:** \_\_\_\_\_ **FINANCE**

**ACCOUNT NO.**

**APPROVED:** \_\_\_\_\_ **MIS**

**ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW:**

**ORDINANCE:** INTRODUCTION  FINAL ADOPTION

**STAFF RECOMMENDATION:**

**BOARD / COMMISSION RECOMMENDATION:**

**ATTACHMENTS:**

**CITY OF NATIONAL CITY, CALIFORNIA  
LIBRARY BOARD OF TRUSTEES AGENDA STATEMENT**

**MEETING DATE:** 10/02/2019

**AGENDA ITEM NO.:** 11

**ITEM TITLE:**

Develop and create a chapter/partnership with Drag Queen Story Hour to host regular presentations with drag queens reading stories to children.

**PREPARED BY:** Bradley Bang, Library Trustee

**DEPARTMENT:** Library

**PHONE:**

**APPROVED BY:** \_\_\_\_\_

**EXPLANATION:**

The purpose of the presentations is to create a fun and fabulous literary experience encouraging kids to celebrate gender diversity and all kinds of other differences while building confidence in expressing themselves. The program is designed to create an atmosphere of tolerance and acceptance of all people in our community

**FINANCIAL STATEMENT:**

**APPROVED:** \_\_\_\_\_ **FINANCE**

**ACCOUNT NO.**

**APPROVED:** \_\_\_\_\_ **MIS**

**ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW:**

**ORDINANCE:** INTRODUCTION  FINAL ADOPTION

**STAFF RECOMMENDATION:**

**BOARD / COMMISSION RECOMMENDATION:**

**ATTACHMENTS:**

1. Drag Queen Story Hour Is an Open Book
2. Drag Queen Story Hour Engages Kids with Reading
3. Are You a Boy or a Girl?
4. Frequently Asked Questions



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# Drag Queen Story Hour is an open book

Local drag performers hope to encourage community, inclusion and compassion

by Torrey Bailey



Print



*Photo by Stacy Keck*

*Miss Oona Upland reads during Drag Queen Story Hour*

"I'm 6'1" out of drag," says Miss Oona, who's towering but graceful even in the added height of her stilettos. She sports a shoulder-length blonde wig, full lashes and a floral jumpsuit.

"As I've been doing drag, [Miss Oona] has fully taken on this very housewife, almost



PTA mom, kind of persona,” she says.

Her character is a natural fit for Drag Queen Story Hour (DQSH), a national organization where volunteers in drag read books to a group of children and parents. San Diego’s branch launched in June, and has since hosted two sold-out story hours at [You Belong Here](#), a communal workspace in City Heights that also hosts art shows and events.

Across the country, DQSH has been met with both controversy and positivity. In February, CBS San Diego shared “[An Imperfect Union](#)” episode on Facebook about DQSH for children, and asked whether such events are harmful or educational. The comments ranged from passionate support to religious protest and every opinion in between.

“It’s been incredible. It has sold out every time,” says Alexandria Ott, a founder of DQSH San Diego. “Families, whether they are an LGBTQ family or not, want to raise their children to know otherness.”

After living in Chicago for seven years, Ott

reached out to DQSH to start a local branch when she moved back to her hometown of San Diego.

“It became a necessity for the life of myself and my child to be around different voices, different people and different backgrounds,” says Ott.

During the second San Diego DQSH on July 28, Ott’s son, Henry, sat front row before Miss Oona, helping her pick between books such as Nancy *Tillman’s I’d Know You Anywhere, My Love* and Peter H. Reynolds’ *Say Something!* Where he was once shy around Miss Oona, Henry now says he’s her biggest fan. The rest of the audience, made up of roughly 60 kids and parents, are a semi-chaotic cluster of giggles and chatter, which Miss Oona intermittently regroups with her witty commentary and questions about the book she’s reading.

“Sometimes you might catch the kids staring at you, trying to figure it out, and most of the time they just chalk it up to me being a funny-looking woman or a really tall woman,” says Miss Oona. “Most

of the time when they're really young, [drag] is not even on their radar, which I think a lot of conservatives are concerned about... But there's just this pretty person, Miss Oona, there to read, and the children accept it."

Throughout the story hour, neither Miss Oona or the organizers bring up the topic of drag. The events are largely about creating a sense of community, acceptance and belonging, more than about who specifically is reading. Instead of announcing Miss Oona's differences, the event works to introduce kids to the unfamiliar and act as a conduit for conversation between parent and child.

"We're not making the reader feel different by announcing it. Instead we're inviting kids into a situation that they're used to doing all the time, which is reading," says Ott.

One uphill battle for DQSH San Diego is working against many adults' perception of drag.

"I never thought I'd be doing drag with

children ever because so many parents are like ‘Oh I have nothing against it, but I don’t want it around my children. They’re not ready for that,’” says Miss Oona. “But it’s no different than having a clown coming in.”

Most recently, an anti-LGBTQ hate group called MassResistance circulated flyers demanding that the Chula Vista Library cancel a DQSH reading on Sept. 10. The flyer contained dubious and false claims about homosexuality and drag queen culture.

“These fliers, and the so called ‘facts’ they share, are nothing but propaganda,” Miss Oona said in an email when asked for comment. “They utilize fear mongering and misinformation to depict a false view of these events. These story readings are not only safe, but also valuable when it comes to an ongoing dialogue on diversity, self-acceptance and self-love.”

Miss Oona says she embodies a more maternal persona so that people feel more comfortable asking her questions about drag and gender, as if she’s a cool aunt or

a friend's mom. The opportunity allows a younger generation to engage with her and familiarize themselves with the LGBTQ culture in real life, rather than just observing it on TV.

“There are singers that are not for children, there are dancers that are not for children and there are actors whose work is not for children,” she says. “Drag, at the end of the day, is an art form.”

The impact of these events reaches beyond the kids being read to. DQSH also creates a safe space for parents looking for a progressive, family-friendly community.

“There are a lot of alternative parents who don't feel comfortable doing the traditional stuff, and they feel like they're different as a parent, whether they're part of the LGBTQ community or not,” says Ott. “I'm an alternative parent, I'm a single mom, I raised [Henry] by myself, I have tattoos... There are different types of parents. For some, I feel like traditional acts, like going to the library, may actually cause a bit of anxiety. So being somewhere that's a little untraditional, a little bit

progressive, it makes you feel safe as a parent as well.”

Similar events are popping up elsewhere, too. Sisters Pizza in Hillcrest will host its second story hour with Miss Oona on [Saturday, Sept. 7](#), which will offer pizza specials and mimosas for purchase. It will also serve as a fundraiser for local drag queens and community allies. Miss Oona also reads at children’s birthday parties and other private events. Looking ahead, DQSH San Diego plans to host at least one story time every other month. The next reading at You Belong Here will take place on Sept. 8 from 10 to 11 a.m.

“I am here just to read to the kids,” says Miss Oona. “To talk to them and to engage with them, just to be another figure in their life.”

## [SEPTEMBER 4, 2019 ISSUE](#)

by Torrey Bailey

September 4, 2019 10:23 AM

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THE CALIFORNIA REPORT

# Drag Queen Story Hour Engages Kids With Reading, Gender Creativity



LISTEN

By [Bianca Taylor](#)



Jul 7, 2017



Black Benatar reads aloud to children at Dimond Recreation Center in Oakland as part of Drag Queen Story Hour. *(Lacy Roberts/KQED)*

A drag queen and a 4-year-old walk into a public library. It's not the setup to a joke -- it's Saturday morning in Oakland at the Drag Queen Story Hour.

Hundreds of parents and kids crowded into the Dimond Recreation Center on a recent Saturday to hear drag queen Black Benatar read Pride-themed storybooks.

According to its website, **Drag Queen Story Hour** is "just what it sounds like -- drag queens reading stories to children in libraries, schools and bookstores." The program started in San Francisco and has spread to cities across the United States.

Miriam Meadow first heard about Drag Queen Story Hour when



it was held at the San Francisco Public Library two years ago. She immediately knew she wanted to bring it to the East Bay. Meadow is the children's librarian at the Dimond Branch Library.

She expected 100 people to attend when Drag Queen Story Hour came to Dimond earlier this summer. "We had 300 people come here today," she exclaimed, unable to contain a huge smile.

Sponsored



Dressed to the nines wearing glittery makeup, sky-high curls and a green polka-dot dress, Black Benatar could hardly contain her own excitement.

"I'm Black Benatar and I love reading to children!" she announced, right after teaching the audience to introduce themselves like a drag queen (it's not "hello", but more like "HAAAAAY.")

Black Benatar led the audience in traditional children's songs like "Old MacDonald" and "Twinkle Twinkle Little Star," and read some not-so-traditional children's books whose themes included gay marriage and being transgender. The overwhelming crowd favorite was "**My Princess Boy**," a tale about a young boy who likes to dress like a girl and is still loved by his family.

As Black Benatar read aloud (with voices and sound effects, of course), the kids in the crowd were eager participants. They even provided their own commentary. After Black Benatar read a line about people bullying the Princess Boy when he shops for girl's clothes, a young girl shouted out, "That's not nice!"

"That's not nice!" Black Benatar echoed emphatically. "It hurts."

Meadow calls Black Benatar a role model and hopes Drag Queen Story Hour will be offered at more libraries in the Oakland Public Library system next summer.

"Having gender creativity modeled in this way is so important for young kids," she says. "And to have that incorporated with the joy of sharing books fits right in with the library."



## 'Are you a boy or a girl'? Drag Queen Story Hour riles the right, but delights kids

Across the country drag queens are reading stories, and teaching tolerance, to kids - but the events have come under fire from some conservatives

**Erin McCormick** in *San Francisco*

Tue 13 Jun 2017 18.26 EDT

It was the Drag Queen Story Hour at the San Francisco public library and six-year-old James Mendenhall intended to get right to the bottom of things.

"Are you a boy or a girl?" he asked the 6ft 2in story reader, who was wearing a maroon satin gown, a hot pink frock, silver high-heeled pumps and false

eyelashes. The drag queen, who goes by the name Honey Mahogany, leaned her delicately-braided blond wig towards him and paused for effect.

“Well, I guess I was born a boy,” she replied. “But I like to dress like a girl. It’s for fun.”

For the 175 or so children and parents who turned out for the event last weekend at San Francisco’s main library, the program - which also runs regularly at libraries in New York City and sporadically in bookstores and classrooms around the country - offers a mix of gay pride and kid-friendly entertainment.

“It’s really fun for the kids to see a princess, dressed up and in makeup,” said library spokeswoman Katherine Jardine, who added the program is a way for children to learn about the city’s diversity.



Honey Mahogany at Drag Queen Story Hour in San Francisco. Photograph: Erin McCormick/The Guardian

The story hours have come under fire recently by conservative publications for allegedly using public resources to indoctrinate children with leftist

views.

“Apparently, people around the country are interested in having their tax dollars spent paying for drag queens to read to their children,” wrote education blogger Amelia Hamilton in the National Review last month.

“While this story time is ostensibly meant to introduce children to new ideas and open their minds, it is clear that the events skew in a particular political direction. What sort of outcry would there be if there were a children’s event promoting American exceptionalism or traditional values? An event with books about gun rights or the value of life in the womb? No, that would never do.”

Attacks have turned up in places such as Breitbart News and as a discussion item in the ultra-religious Rapture Forum. The rightwing Daily Wire ran an article entitled “Leftists push ‘Drag Queen Story Hour’ for public schools, libraries.”

But San Francisco’s librarians emphasized that the program, founded in 2015 in San Francisco by writer Michelle Tea, does not use any taxpayer dollars. For each Drag Queen Story Hour, the nonprofit Friends of the Library group - a privately run organization - pays a \$250 stipend to the production company that created the event, Radar Productions. Jardine said she believes much of that is passed onto the drag queens.

Virgie Tolvar, managing director of Radar Productions, said that aside from the backlash in the conservative press, reception has been largely positive. “We get emails every day from places like Australia and Sweden. We’re definitely thinking of doing a Drag Queen Story Hour tour.”

Lyn Davidson, who manages the main San Francisco children’s library, said that the library “is about giving everybody equal access to books, to stories, to ideas. It’s about opening our doors so that every single member of our community is included. Our drag queen community has something special to share too”.

Honey Mahogany started on Saturday by reading Families, Families, Families, a book about how families can have a mom and a dad or just one mom or two dads.

“How many of you recognize your own families in here right now?” she asked, gesturing around the room with her shimmering silver bracelet glinting in the light. “Because families can come in all shapes, sizes and forms, right?”

After leading a rendition of Heads, Shoulders, Knees and Toes, Honey Mahogany settled in to read a second book, about a dog who didn’t want to do normal dog stuff, but wanted to do ballet instead. Every once in a while a toddler would dart toward her, reaching out to touch her layers of puffy pink tulle and then run back into the audience.

After the reading, a long line of children waited for a chance to talk to Honey Mahogany.



Honey Mahogany with one-year-old Oscar Morales and his mom Sarah Morales. Photograph: Erin McCormick/The Guardian

Heather Bird not only brought her own two sons, but she organized other families from her children’s school to come to the event as well.

“It was a lot more interesting than anything going on at our house this morning,” she said. “I don’t know why people have time to criticize people who are being kind to each other and coming together as a community.”

Fourteen-year-old CJ, a San Francisco middle school student who asked not to use his last name, came because he had seen Honey Mahogany on Rupaul’s Drag Race, a TV show in which contestants in drag compete for who will be “queen”.

“It was great for me, because I got to meet someone I saw on TV,” he said, adding that it is a great program for little kids as well. “It introduces kids to the idea that there could be more than two genders, so when they get older, maybe they won’t be so mean. The world needs less trans-phobia right now.”

Honey Mahogany, who co-owns a business and also works as a social worker, said it was ridiculous to think that introducing children to gender issues would somehow turn them gay. But for those youth who do question their gender identities, having a role model could be a life-saver.

“I grew up with no LGBT role models and I still turned out gay,” she said. “Families need to support and accept their children, because it is the difference between having a happy, healthy family and having kids who are much more likely to commit suicide.”

Panda Dulce is another drag queen who regularly reads for story hour, sometimes showing up in a bright teal wig wearing blue lipstick and swirling eye shadow. With a day job as a social worker, Dulce is attuned to the hardships of being different.



Panda Dulce and Persia (right) are two other 'core queens' on the Drag Queen Story Hour circuit.

Photograph: Courtesy of Panda Dulce

“When I came out in the seventh grade, I lost all of my friends,” said Dulce, whose legal name is Kyle Casey Chu. “I thought the closet was the loneliest place, but I was wrong. It was being out in the open, vulnerable and alone. Drag Queen Story Hour is so important to me, and for our youth, because it converts our differences from shame into power.”

Panda Dulce recalled one story time when a child in blue glitter eye shadow came running up to proclaim, “Did you know I’m a boy?”

Near the end of the greeting line on Saturday, six-year-old Mendenhall was waiting with another question brash enough to make even a drag queen blush.

“How did you get your breasts?” he asked Honey Mahogany. She gazed down at her modest bosom and decided to stick with the truth.

“I told him they were fake and I put them on under my bra,” she said. “What else was I going to say?”

## **Since you’re here...**

... we have a small favour to ask. As the climate crisis escalates, The Guardian is standing alongside those taking part in this week’s global climate strike. The climate emergency is the defining issue of our times, and we are committed to being truthful, resolute and undeterred in pursuing our journalism.

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## Frequently Asked Questions

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### **What is Drag Queen Story Hour?**

Drag Queen Story Hour (DQSH) is just what it sounds like—drag queens reading stories to children in libraries, schools, and other community spaces. Most events are 45 minutes and designed for children ages 3-8, though this may vary by location or event. A drag queen generally reads 3-4 children's books, sings children's songs, and leads children in a craft activity such as making crowns, wands, or paper bag puppets, or sometimes other activities like face painting or dress-up time. Through a fun and fabulous literary experience, DQSH celebrates learning and play, encouraging kids to celebrate gender diversity and all kinds of difference, while building confidence in expressing themselves. Some cities also offer other kinds of DQSH programming for kids and teens of all ages.

### **What is a drag queen?**

Drag is an artistic way of expressing yourself and showing the world who you are or who you want to be. Drag queens often express their feminine sides or different aspects of their gender or personality through dressing up, performing, marching in parades, and

volunteering in their communities. There are drag queens, drag kings, drag princes, and drag princesses—anyone can be any of the above, regardless of how they identify in everyday life! All that matters is that, when you dress up, you feel comfortable and creative.

### **Should I call the drag queen “he,” “she,” “they,” or something else?**

You can ask! It’s always OK to ask someone what their pronouns are. Examples of pronouns are “she,” “he,” and “they.” Some people have different pronouns at different times, like when they are in drag and out of drag. Others have the same pronouns all the time.

### **Does DQSH promote an agenda?**

Our agenda is simple: we believe that people of all ages should be free to express themselves however they want, free from the constraints of prescribed gender roles. In other words, there’s no such thing as “girl clothes” and “boy clothes,” or “girl toys” and “boy toys.” DQSH teaches children that there are many ways to express themselves and their gender, and they are all OK. Of course, drag is an art form that is rooted in diverse LGBTQ communities, and we support equality, justice, and respect for all people—for us, that’s just a given. Given that LGBTQ people are present in every community, we believe that children deserve to be exposed to these aspects of our shared history and culture, in age appropriate ways. Any insinuation that we have an agenda to indoctrinate children misunderstands LGBTQ experiences and is rooted in homophobia and transphobia.

### **Why is DQSH necessary?**

DQSH helps children develop empathy, learn about gender diversity and difference, and tap into their own creativity. DQSH can also be life-changing and ultimately life-saving for LGBTQ kids and teens, kids with LGBTQ parents or family members, and anyone who feels different because of their identity or interests or who may not otherwise see themselves reflected in the broader culture.

### **Should children be exposed to issues like gender fluidity?**

Most children naturally explore gender identity and norms through

imaginative play. However, too often gender norms are socially enforced at all ages, from the colors or clothes we're supposed to wear to the toys kids are allowed to play with to the kinds of jobs we're trained for. DQSH teaches children to follow their passions and embrace gender diversity in themselves and others. This helps to curb bullying of LGBTQ kids and kids who may be perceived as different in all kinds of ways.

### **Isn't this confusing for children? What if my children have questions and I don't know the answers?**

Adults don't always have the answers, but we can ask questions and learn together. We created The Dragtivity Book to help adults and kids explore drag, gender, and identity together. There are also a number of organizations that provide resources for talking to kids about gender and other topics. [Resources coming soon.]

### **Why do you only have drag queens? What about drag kings?**

DQSH started off as a drag queen-focused program, but many of our chapters now offer programming led by drag performers of all gender presentations, expressions, and identities!

### **Is DQSH a national organization?**

No, each local DQSH chapter is independently operated and funded. Our website, calendar, and social media are managed by the New York City chapter.

### **Why do kids love drag queens so much?**

Children and drag queens have a lot in common. They love to dress up and use their imaginations to create awesome looks and express different sides of themselves. It's no wonder they get along so well!

### **I'm a drag performer and I want to join DQSH!**

Reach out to your nearest DQSH chapter! In regions that already have a DQSH chapter, we ask all potential performers and venues to work with existing chapters so we're collaborating rather than competing. If you don't have a chapter near you, contact

jonathan@dragqueenstoryhour.org to receive info about setting up your own event.

## **I'm a book author or publisher. Can you read my book at DQSH?**

Send a PDF of the book to your local chapter. We'll get back to you to request copies if it's a good fit.

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