**Explanation of Economic Need to Expand Library**

It has been mentioned that it has been over thirty years since any physical expansion of the library has taken place. These last thirty-plus years (1985-2017) have seen phenomenal changes in the ways in which our populace receives and exchanges information, learns new technology, and enjoys communication and appreciation of the arts and history, as well as the Nez Perce culture within this geographical region. While this community has not experienced much growth in population, the needs of both young and old residing in this library’s service area has increased.

**Highest Unemployment Rate in the State**

Due to a drastic economic decline, the county has witnessed an out-migration of young families, resulting in a higher proportion of senior citizens and a lower proportion of youth. The trend of out-migration is likely to increase due to the latest closure of a cedar mill (December 2016) which left fifty-five employees without work. Clearwater County has the highest unemployment rate (percent of labor force as of November 2016 **8%**) in the state of Idaho. (Percentage of unemployed in State of Idaho, November, 2016 **3.8%**) (See “Clearwater County Workforce Trends,” December 2016, by Samuel Walkenhauer, Idaho Dept. of Labor.)

Out of the population of school-age children, over 55% are on free or reduced price lunches, (Jt. School District 171 School Lunch Program) and about 350 or one fourth of this population lives under the poverty level. What do these figures have to do with the need for a more adequate and future-oriented library?

**Lack of space and programs during non-school hours**

Clearwater Memorial Public Library (CMPL) has found itself an unwitting “babysitter” during after-school hours as well as during summers over the last few years, with school-age children stopping by and staying at the library until their parents can come and get them after work. There have not been any actual provisions for after-school programs for these children, although there is a definite need, such as a working computer lab with an aide who could help with homework, or just a part-time staff member who could help with other types of study or literacy enrichment programs.

Besides being available for after- school help, the present Summer Reading Program could certainly benefit in many ways as CMPL operates its program within a very cramped space, with little or no access to hands-on materials or facilities for crafts and special activities. (One 12-year-old expressed a desire for a LEGO Station when asked what he would like to see in the library.) Expansion plans call for additional floor space, more bookshelves, as well as accommodations for art projects and physical activities. Year-round programs can be developed and enhanced for infants through pre-school and their parents, to teach literacy skills.

**Lack of space and programs for aging population**

The community’s growing aging population is well above the national percent of population in age groups from 60 to 75 and over, (almost 10% above,) and has shown an increase in numbers from 1,364 in 2000 to 2,055 in 2015. (See **“The Economy of Clearwater County, the Year 2016 in Review”)** These senior citizens would benefit from a conference or gathering room where they can attend enrichment programs, book clubs, pursue genealogy, learn computer skills, or have small group meetings. Younger adult patrons would benefit as well, using this space for networking and discussion groups. This room would have a small refreshment area, its own restroom and separate entrance for meetings outside of library hours. At present there appears to be no such free facility available to everyone.

**Lack of computers and programs**

Another great need for CMPL is space and an adequate supply of computers to allow more than a few patrons to use. At present there are computer booths or tables scattered around the library for five adults and two children, and these may be used for one hour only. The library would greatly benefit from having enough computers to allow classes to be held or enable online courses and research for small groups all in one place. With unemployment rates what they are in the county, computer access would enable job-seekers to do online searches, as well as receive some online training in employable skills.

**Too Tall Bookshelves**

Due to crowded space, bookshelves in the adult section of the library are 7 ½ feet high, making it impossible for most patrons to reach the top shelf, let alone be able to read titles and authors of the books there. Besides that, the aisles between the shelves allow only for one person at a time to pass through.

**Need for Administrative Space**

There is no lunchroom or meeting space for the staff within the library, so provision needs to be made for small kitchen access and staff meeting room.

For other deficiencies, please see**” Library Needs,”** compiled by the CMPL Board of Trustees.