

## Quantification of Benefits

We are able to assign a dollar value to a small portion of the many benefits that SFPL provides to the San Francisco community. These quantifiable benefits are related to the library's direct services, for which the library tracks usage data and for which a defensible methodology can be employed to determine their value. Quantifiable benefits include the circulation of library collections and the use of a wide range of library services, including computers, trainings, programming, and other specialized services. The value of most of these services was estimated by determining the market cost of a comparable service or other means of acquiring the same benefit. This market value was then multiplied by the number of uses by SFPL patrons in the 2005-06 fiscal year. The total value of these benefits for the 2005-06 fiscal year ranges from **\$87 million to \$207 million**.

The actual value of benefits provided by SFPL is a number is substantially larger than this conservative value as many of the benefits provided by the library cannot reasonably be quantified. For example, the following very significant categories of benefits are not captured due to a lack of information about the number of people receiving the benefit or the value of the benefit to each recipient:

- Any indirect benefits of the information provided by library collections, programming, and trainings. These externalities may include the many benefits associated with a more highly-educated population and the economic and social benefits generated by enhanced performance of the city's businesses
- Any indirect benefits created through SFPL's partnership with the San Francisco Unified School District and the library's early literacy and school readiness initiatives, including all of the personal, social, and economic benefits associated with better educated youth who are more likely to be successful in their chosen careers.
- The library's contributions to civil society and an active and informed citizenry.
- SFPL's contributions to the character of San Francisco and its neighborhoods, including the library's function as a gathering place or "Third Place."
- Avoided social costs associated with successful job seekers who no longer require unemployment benefits or other public assistance.
- Avoided social costs and enhanced economic and social contributions associated with connecting vulnerable populations with needed social services.
- The increased earnings associated with job seekers and entrepreneurs (and their employees) who receive support from SFPL.
- Contributions to San Francisco's image and identity, attracting residents, employees, and employers to the city.

**Exhibit 1 – Benefit/Cost Ratio for San Francisco Public Library**

	Low	High
<b>TOTAL ESTIMATED BENEFITS FOR FY05-06:</b>	<b>\$ 87,210,554</b>	<b>\$ 207,464,792</b>
Total 05-06 SFPL Budget:	\$ 62,108,717	\$ 62,108,717
Benefit/Cost ratio	<b>1.40</b>	<b>3.34</b>

In fiscal year 2005-06, SFPL had operating expenditures of \$62 million. When the benefit value described above is divided by this operating budget, the result is a benefit/cost ratio for SFPL. As shown in Exhibit 1, **for every dollar spent supporting SFPL, the citizens of San Francisco see a return in the range of \$1.40 to \$3.34.**

Nearly 75% of SFPL's operating budget is directly related to staff wages, and so the library's costs are heavily impacted by San Francisco's high cost of living which is the second highest in the United States. Exhibit 2 shows the impact to SFPL's benefit/cost ratio when the cost of living in various comparable metropolitan areas is applied in place of San Francisco's. The resulting adjusted benefit/cost ratios range from \$1.66 to \$4.83.

**Exhibit 2  
SFPL Benefit/Cost Ratio Adjusted for  
Cost of Living in Comparable Cities**

	Adjusted Benefit/Cost	
	Low	High
Boston, MA	1.66	3.95
Portland, OR	1.78	4.24
Chicago, IL	1.84	4.37
Seattle, WA	1.87	4.45
Denver, CO	1.97	4.68
Austin, TX	2.03	4.83

## Providing for Knowledge, Growth, and Prosperity

### A Benefit Study of the San Francisco Public Library



San Francisco is a city rich with legend and history, whose beloved icons, including the Golden Gate Bridge, cable cars, steep hills, and colorful homes, are imprinted on our national consciousness. This city in the mind's eye is inhabited by a diverse population including the bohemians of the 1960s cultural revolution; recent immigrants creating a new future for themselves; members of the gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender population asserting and celebrating their rights and culture; and the knowledge workers of the high-tech economy.

Embedded in this brew of postcard images and cast of imaginary characters is a true sense of San Francisco's identity. This is a dynamic and forward-looking city of dense urbanism and vibrant neighborhoods, populated by residents who value diversity, democracy, equality of access and opportunity, and an active intellectual life.

The San Francisco Public Library (SFPL) is both a symbol of San Francisco and a direct contributor to what makes San Francisco the place that it is. SFPL has evolved to be a characteristically San Franciscan institution uniquely suited to serve this city and its inhabitants. This is most evidenced in SFPL's specialized services for entrepreneurs and job seekers; the library's exceptional partnering with the San Francisco Unified School District and the early literacy community; the support and resources the institution provides for the city's most vulnerable populations; and the library's role in helping define and celebrate San Francisco's diverse populations and distinct neighborhoods



This report describes and — when possible — quantifies the value which the library system provides to the San Francisco community. We approach this task with a broad perspective and consider the many different roles the library plays, attempting to describe community benefits stemming from the direct provision of services, including the circulation of materials, the availability of public access computing, meeting room space, and other functions, and the library's more indirect impacts on the San Francisco community.

*The San Francisco Public Library's contributions to the health and vitality of our city are essential and vast. SFPL is an extraordinary civic institution, unique in its consistent ability to reach and serve diverse populations with great impact and longevity.*

*The library not only perfectly represents the principles of our community, it answers the needs of each and every San Francisco citizen. It is public in the very best sense of the word: of and for all people.*

Mayor Gavin Newsom, City of San Francisco

# SFPL Provides a Diverse Array of Benefits

## Enriching Personal Learning & Recreation

Along with its coffee shops, book shops, and institutions of higher learning, San Francisco Public Library plays a key role in contributing to the intellectual vitality of the city. The library provides free and open access to more than 7.5 million printed and multi-media items, with more than 7 million items circulating annually, as well as a wealth of non-circulating reference materials, special collections, and more than 80 data-rich on-line databases.

To help patrons find the answers they need in this ever-growing and ever more complicated sea of information, SFPL employs more than 200 reference librarians who respond to questions in-person, over the phone, and by email—with some reference services now available 24 hours a day. Many librarians hold specialized and expert knowledge not only of the resources they provide, but of the subject matter itself.

SFPL provides free patron access to an array of technologies, including a total of 407 Internet computers; word processing terminals; children's computers; and computers equipped with enabling technology for people with disabilities, as well as DVD and CD viewing and listening stations. While the free availability of these tools may be of value to anyone, this benefit is of greatest importance to those members of the San Francisco community who might not otherwise be able to access these costly resources across the digital divide.

SFPL contributes to San Francisco's image as a diverse community and a knowledge-oriented and ecologically-minded city. These attributes enhance its attractiveness to potential residents, workers, and employers.

While the city is home to more than three quarters of a million people in only about 50 square miles, this dense population is dispersed into smaller scale neighborhoods and districts, each with its own personality and neighborhood feel. Twenty-seven of these neighborhoods have their own branch of the San Francisco Public Library, providing easy access to library resources and helping to define and reflect the unique character and identity of each neighborhood. Through specialized collections and tailored programming, each branch library caters to the specific needs and interests of the population that lives around it.

## Enhancing Image & Identity for San Francisco & its Neighborhoods

SFPL serves a vital San Francisco cultural destination providing many diverse cultural programs and exhibits. The library also actively records local history, being one of the few libraries in the country with on-staff archivists.

## Fostering Economic & Workforce Development

San Francisco is home to a wide range of entrepreneurs and job seekers, from individuals seeking baseline employment to the founder of Silicon Valley's next hot technology start-up. These individuals benefit in particular from the library's specialized centers, such as the Business, Science, and Technology Center; the Small Business Center; and the Jobs and Careers Center. The expert staff support and specialized resources of these centers are sought out by entrepreneurs researching patents and conducting market research to develop business plans and attract investors; small business owners seeking San Francisco-specific market and competitive information; investors analyzing market opportunities; and job seekers needing help with resume development or access to on-line job postings.

SFPL's Government Information Center has served as a government documents depository since the 1800s, housing more than 2 million documents worth over \$20 million.

SFPL's strong partnership with the San Francisco Unified School District (SFUSD) is a defining characteristic of the library system, with SFPL serving as an extension of the district's resource-constrained libraries. SFPL's print collections and on-line databases augment SFUSD resources and library staff provide important support for students, both in the library and in the classroom.

SFPL plays both direct and supporting roles in encouraging early literacy and school readiness among San Francisco's youth. Recognizing the importance of these skills for individuals, families, and communities, SFPL has dedicated staff who actively partner with parents, caregivers, and other early literacy and early education professionals. The library provides a wide range of stimulating programming encouraging youth to read outside the classroom, explore cultural interests, and become lifelong learners. This programming includes book talks, storytelling, summer reading programs, art courses, and practical classes such as SAT preparation. SFPL also provides free on-line homework assistance in math, science, and English, and serves as a safe, supervised place for children to gather after school and on weekends.

## Partnering for Education & Early Literacy

SFPL is a critical piece of San Francisco's vibrant cultural fabric, helping to make the city a dynamic and livable place. SFPL plays an important role supporting and enriching the ethnically and economically diverse populations that call San Francisco home. Neighbors frequent the libraries as a familiar "Third Place" that is neither home nor work. They attend book readings, film screenings, and discussion groups and use the library's meeting rooms for gatherings of political, civic, and social groups. For families with children – many of whom face severe economic challenges to stay in San Francisco – SFPL is a valued free resource and frequent destination.

For the city's most vulnerable, SFPL is a place of refuge and connection. With the implementation of a database and dedicated training, library staff connect the city's neediest with appropriate social service agencies. For San Francisco's large immigrant population the library is a connection to their home cultures and lands, as well as an important resource in being successful in their new home. The library carries items in more than 30 languages and library staff members speak a total of more than 20 languages.

SFPL's Affinity Centers celebrate and serve as a focal point for many of the city's sub-cultures, including various ethnic groups and San Francisco's gay and lesbian communities.

## Creating & Strengthening Communities

