



AGENDA REPORT

Library and Community Services

DATE:	May 20, 2025
TO:	Mayor Martinez and Members of the City Council
FROM:	LaShonda White, Deputy City Manager of Community Services Kate Eppler, Deputy Director of Community Services-Library
Subject:	Contract with Daniel McMahon for Sierra Integrated Library System Software Support
FINANCIAL IMPACT:	The proposed \$38,000 expenditure is included in Library's operating Fiscal Year (FY) 2024-25 budget (\$8,000) and will be included in the FY 2025-26 (\$15,000), FY 2026-27 (\$15,000) budget respectively. (Account String: 10545055-400201-24125).
PREVIOUS COUNCIL ACTION:	None.
STATEMENT OF THE ISSUE:	The Library's internal operations run on an 'integrated library system' database, known as Sierra, provided under contract with the Library by Innovative Interfaces. The Library proposes to enter into a sole source consulting contract with an expert on the Sierra database to enable us to do in-depth work to troubleshoot, edit, and improve the operations supported by the Sierra database

RECOMMENDED ACTION:	APPROVE a sole-source contract with Daniel McMahon, for a term beginning May 1, 2025, and ending April 30, 2028, to provide consulting and operations support for the Sierra Integrated Library System Software, for a total payment limit of \$38,000 – Community Services Department (Kate Eppler 510-620-5452).
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DISCUSSION:

As a matter of standard practice, public libraries in the United States rely on an 'integrated library system' software databases to control their inventory and manage patron borrowing. Since the 1990s, Richmond Public Library has used one of the major vendors in this field, Innovative Interfaces, starting with Innovative's 'Millennium' database and migrating to the updated 'Sierra' database.

Integrated library system databases are sophisticated and robust, capable of securely storing confidential patron information, automatically generating circulation notices, and collecting comprehensive circulation and usage statistics for all library holdings. These systems seamlessly interface with book vendors' ordering systems, support the library's online catalog, and communicate with the Link+ consortium book lending system, enabling resource sharing among libraries throughout California. The integrated library system is truly the backbone of library operations.

Innovative Interfaces provides the database and customer support for basic functionality, as well as basic staff training. However, after decades of use by different groups of Richmond Library staff, with practices, procedures and technology all changing over time, the Library requires detailed assistance repairing the database and aligning it to current needs. Troubleshooting work on the Sierra database is extremely time-consuming for library managers and staff, who are experts in Sierra's day-to-day use but do not have the knowledge required to solve systemic problems.

Detailed, hands-on assistance repairing integrated library systems is not a service generally offered on the library market. However, the Library has an opportunity to engage expert help with Daniel McMahon, who recently retired from the Marin Automated Resources and Information Network (MARINet) system, a consortium of nine libraries in Marin County which all use the Sierra database. McMahon served as MARINet's systems administrator, ensuring functionality for the shared catalog and smooth operations with the Link+ cooperative lending system. McMahon's expertise in diagnosing, troubleshooting, and implementing the Sierra database will save staff time, ensure effective solutions to existing problems, and help the Library improve operations (Attachment 1).

The timing for the contract is especially critical, as the library prepares to relocate large portions of the collection to the Civic Center temporary library, re-launch bookmobile service, and assign a collection to the new bookmobile – all functions that rely on a functional and orderly integrated library system. In addition, the Library continues to roll

out its new Bibliocommons catalog, a user-friendly online catalog product that provides a public-facing overlay to the Sierra database. With assistance from this contract, we can ensure that the Sierra database is ready for these important tasks (Attachment 2).

SYNERGISTIC POLICIES:

The contract aligns with City Council Strategic Goal 5, to strengthen the City's internal infrastructure and processes. Repair and tune-up of this fundamental library system will ease strain on Library staff, improving retention and reducing vacancies.

DOCUMENTS ATTACHED:

Attachment 1 – Sole Source Justification

Attachment 2 – Original Contract