

https://www.eastoregonian.com/opinion/columnists/libraries-provide-countywide-just-what-is-the-special-library-district/article_bd812162-be69-11eb-9bb8-5b4b8c9926a1.html

Libraries provide – countywide: Just what is the special library district?

By ERIN MCCUSKER

May 29, 2021



McCusker

I am often asked questions like this: Are you the library on Dorion? The one that's at the Pendleton City Hall? No? Well then, what library are you? Do you check out books? Do you have computer access or wi-fi? What exactly is the Umatilla County Special Library District?

I admit that I had to do some asking around when I applied for the district director position several years ago — what is the UCSLD?

To answer this question, let's take a little trip back in history. In the early 1980s in Umatilla County, there were several city public libraries and a county library. In the mid-1980s, the county library was closing, and a community group investigated the possibility of a special

library district to provide stable funding, ensuring that people living outside the city limits could access public library service through the established local libraries.

This dedicated community group utilized several public library studies, met with and heard from residents and, with help from the State Library of Oregon, asked the people to vote on the establishment of the Umatilla County Special Library District. It passed in 1986, and the levy vote was passed the next year.

The district boundaries include all of Umatilla County except for the area within the Hermiston city limits. Hermiston chose not to be included in the district.

From the original ballot and order establishing the district, “The purpose of the Umatilla County Special Library District shall be to provide library and information services to persons within the district.” Being a special district, a five-member voter-elected board of directors governs the district, which is an independent, special taxing district that receives tax revenue with the specific purpose to provide public library services.

When the district was established, the cities within the district boundaries were providing library service. These libraries became member libraries. Today, the district encompasses libraries in Adams, Athena, Echo, Helix, Milton-Freewater, Pendleton, Pilot Rock, Stanfield, Ukiah School District, Umatilla and Weston.

Even though Hermiston city is not within the district boundaries, the UCSLD works in partnership with Hermiston to ensure the people living outside the city limits who are part of the district have access to library service at a convenient location.

Today, the Umatilla County Special Library District works in partnership with our libraries to advance and make available excellent library services, programs and continuing education opportunities for all. This is our mission and purpose. It is why the district was voted into existence and it continues to guide the valuable work we do.

Thanks for taking a trip into the past. I'll provide more information in future columns. For more information, link to www.ucslid.org.

Erin McCusker is the district director of the Umatilla County Special Library District. Reach her at 541-276-6449 or director@ucslid.org.