

Date: April 22, 2025

To: Honorable Mayor and City Council

From: Councilwoman Megan Kerr, Fifth Council District
Councilwoman Mary Zendejas, First Council District
Councilwoman Cindy Allen, Second Council District

Subject: **Recommendation to evaluate options to expand the Long Beach Public Library's Libby services nationwide**

RECOMMENDATION

Recommendation to request the City Manager to collaborate with the Long Beach Public Library and other appropriate departments to evaluate options to expand the Long Beach Public Library's Libby services nationwide and report back to the Council within 90 days.

DISCUSSION

The State of California and the United States are experiencing an unsettling increase in threats to public literature, both in local schools and public libraries.¹ More specifically, book ban challenges have become an especially prevalent method of removing "controversial literature." In many instances, books that focus on challenging topics surrounding race and sexuality are overwhelmingly targeted.

This trend is a direct result of the current administration's dedication towards weakening America's public libraries. Aside from the persistent rise in attempts to censor library materials and services, the current administration has also declared to eliminate the Institute of Museum and Library Services, the nation's only federal agency for America's libraries.²

Many individual public libraries across the nation have combatted these actions by forming respective partnerships with Libby, a popular online library application that grants access to e-books, audiobooks, and digital magazines to those with affiliated library cards.³ Currently, in addition to Long Beach residents, the Long Beach Public Library offers library cards to California residents, and with it, access to over 42,000 digital titles through Libby.⁴

¹ *Censorship by the numbers*. American Library Association. (n.d.). <https://www.ala.org/bbooks/censorship-numbers>

² The United States Government. (2025, March 15). *Continuing the reduction of the federal bureaucracy*. The White House. <https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/2025/03/continuing-the-reduction-of-the-federal-bureaucracy/>

³ Collier, S. (2025, January 16). *Collier's weekly: The free app that makes school book bans pointless*. Pittsburgh Magazine. <https://www.pittsburghmagazine.com/colliers-weekly-libby-app-school-book-bans/>

⁴ *Get a library card*. Get a Library Card. (n.d.). <https://www.longbeach.gov/library/borrow/get-a-library-card/>

Furthermore, numerous public libraries across the United States have expanded their services nationwide by offering digital library cards to non-residents.⁵ Here, Libby acts as the bridge between users and access to all public literature offered by the chosen library, including books that may be banned in their respective state.

The City of Long Beach has a strong history of defending its public libraries against book bans and censorship. In addition to the emergence of the Friends of the Long Beach Public Library in the early 1960s, City Council proved its commitment to protecting public literature by voting with the Long Beach Public Library on numerous occasions. Furthermore, between 2008 and 2021, there have been only three book ban challenges filed with the Long Beach library system to which none were successful.⁶

Therefore, in accordance with the City's values and historical dedication to protecting public literature and library services, as well as the impulsive nature of the current administration, the City has a responsibility to explore options to expand its current agreement between the Long Beach Public Library and Libby, with the purpose of allowing non-residents to access Long Beach Public Library digital materials and services.

As noted, the Long Beach Public Library already offers library cards to California residents outside of Long Beach, and evidence suggests that the City's Libby software can sustain an expansion of these services to further promote and establish our commitment to maintaining a well-read, well-informed public across the nation.

This matter has been reviewed by Rebecca Bernstorff on April 14, 2025.

FISCAL IMPACT

This recommendation requests the City Manager to collaborate with the Long Beach Public Library and other appropriate departments to evaluate options to expand the Long Beach Public Library's Libby services nationwide and report back to the Council within 90 days. This recommendation is anticipated to have a minimal impact on staff hours beyond the budgeted scope of duties and is expected to have a minimal impact on existing City Council priorities. There is no local job impact associated with this recommendation.

SUGGESTED ACTION

Approve recommendation.

Respectfully submitted,



Megan Kerr, Councilwoman, Fifth District

⁵ *EBook lending libraries*. MobileRead Wiki - EBook Lending Libraries.

(n.d.). https://wiki.mobileread.com/wiki/EBook_Lending_Libraries#Libraries_that_offer_cards_online_or_by_mail.2C_to_non-residents

⁶ Pignataro, A. (2022, August 12). *Here are the books people have tried to get banned in Long Beach*. Long Beach Post News. <https://lbpost.com/news/long-beach-banned-books-library-challenges/>

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Mary Zendejas, Councilwoman, First District

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Cindy Allen". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Cindy Allen, Councilwoman, Second District