**Why isn't the Long Branch Library a member of the County Library System?**

Long Branch Public Library conducted a library needs assessment in 1998. The consultant report recommended that Long Branch Public Library join a consortium, automate the library, and renovate/expand the libraries. We adopted this plan and accomplished these three goals. Monmouth County was not a candidate for consortium membership in 1998 because it was not yet automated.

We joined Libraries of Middlesex Automation Consortium in 1998. LMxAC membership has been good for Long Branch Public Library and our patrons.  LMxAC provides us with many of the same resources as Monmouth County Library System, but allows us to customize our services to meet the local patron demand for books, music, movies, audio-books, eBooks and various programs for children, teens and adults. Being an independent municipal library that is a member of LMxAC provides Long Branch Free Public Library with many valuable resources and shared services. The 2010 value of shared services savings provided by LMxAC to Long Branch Public Library was $342,841. Moreover, we were able to use the library staff to provide programs and services targeted to meet local demand for library programs and services.

If we joined Monmouth County System, we would become a branch of service. Based on the Monmouth County model of service, our staff size would probably be reduced to the minimum level required to support book and materials delivery. Our library would no longer have the staffing level required to support many of the services and programs we now provide. Yes, the county would probably send us one children’s librarian for one day a week, but that is far different than our staffing the children’s room every hour the library is open and offering up to 10 children’s programs each week at our libraries. Patrons with a car would have to drive themselves a considerable distance to attend a program held at Shrewsbury or Manalapan. Patrons without a car would not be able to attend library programs that are not at a walking distance. We could expect that the number of public computers would be reduced and computer lab services eliminated. Patron access to public computers with high speed internet would be reduced, widening the existing digital divide and further limiting opportunities to disadvantaged residents. We would no longer have the staff or funds to offer English classes for basic literacy or back to work assistance to the unemployed, under employed and those recently released from jail seeking a job and a new start. Our patron profile as an urban library with a high degree of poverty, low educational attainment, large senior population, large number of non-English speakers is dissimilar and far more diverse than that of the average patron served by the county system. As a member of the county, we would no longer be governed by a library board empowered to direct the library to provide those local programs and services that respond to the diverse needs of Long Branch residents.

Monmouth County System would have the option to provide a branch of service in Long Branch or no branch of service in Long Branch and redirect our residents to a local county branch such as Eastern Branch. No branch in the system has two libraries, so we have to ask whether the county would close Elberon Branch. Elberon Branch is a popular library providing a community anchor that Long Branch residents would sorely miss.

**LMxAC consortium membership provides our library and staff:**

* Membership in a library consortium with 27 libraries across four counties with a total population of 727,958. LMxAC has a statewide reputation for service excellence established over 20 years. The average library cost to participate is 2.5% of its operating budget
* Automation system updated to the latest version within six months of release
* Staff and patrons are permitted to place holds 24/7 on 2.5 million books and materials owned by 27 LMxAC libraries
* Discounted subscription to online ordering system that facilitates patron placed holds on books and materials as soon as they are ordered
* LMxAC has additional reciprocal borrowing agreements with libraries outside the consortium providing us with borrowing privileges to 10 million books and materials from 50% of the libraries in New Jersey
* Free access to match cataloging and professional cataloging
* Online library card registration service
* Wiki maintained on LMxAC website with backup and technical information for technical services and circulation staff
* Management of patron use of the library’s public computers. We receive a discounted consortium subscription to SAM software that provides print and time management on 35 public computers and reduces staff time required to monitor public internet service
* Management of staff email list
* LMxAC negotiated a favorable contract with local cable companies to increase member library bandwidth at the lowest possible cost. We achieved significant cost savings and adequate bandwidth without having to purchase three T-1 lines or move to switched Ethernet for internet service
* Canned management reports for management and staff to access
* Free subscription to Director’s Station that facilitates running custom reports to inform management decisions
* Voice Notification and email notification service. VNS/email notifies patrons that materials requested arrived or materials are overdue. VNS/patron email notification eliminates or significantly reduces staff time to make phone calls and saves money on phone service and postage for mailers
* Mailers generated by LMxAC are sent to our patrons, saving staff time and telephone expense
* Free technical support by LMxAC technicians that make library house calls
* Free Help Desk service available every hour the library is open
* LMxAC keeps us abreast of changing technology so we can take advantage of these to constantly change technologies and improve library service
* Free subscription to ListenNJ (online downloadable audio and eBooks)
* Share talents and initiatives through participation in LMxAC Committees
* Free subscription to ChilFresh for online book reviews linked to the catalog

**LMxAC consortium membership provides our patrons:**

* Customized, patron friendly online catalog available 24/7
* Patrons can borrow 2.5 million items from LMxAC member libraries
* Patrons can borrow 10 million items from libraries outside the consortium.
* Patron can place their own loan requests on the books and materials they want to borrow. The loans are delivered directly to their library of choice for pickup.
* Patrons have access to their own library account information
* Patrons can renew their own books
* Patrons can sign up for a library card online
* Patrons can borrow book kits for their book clubs
* Patrons can write and post a book review to the LMxAC catalog through Chilifresh

**If we joined the County System, we probably could expect:**

* Eliminate the cost of consortium membership
* Eliminate the cost of outreach and marketing library services
* Eliminate the cost of in-house book processing
* But city residents would have a new tax to pay - County Library Tax
* Eliminate the cost of the library staff’s salary and fringe from the city budget
* Eliminate the cost of library books and materials from the city budget
* But the City would still have to pay for all library building maintenance and operational expenses
* The county system is not required by law to provide a library in Long Branch
* Even if the county agrees to operate a library in Long Branch, they may not accept the Main Library building because it is a three story structure requiring staff presence on all floors for public safety
* Were Monmouth County not to accept the Main Library building, the City of Long Branch would have to repay the cost of the Construction Bond Fund grant in the amount of $230,977.50 to the State of New Jersey for reneging on the agreement to operate the renovated building as a library for at least 25 years. The city invested 1.2 Million to renovate Main Library in 2004
* Were Monmouth County not to accept the Main Library building but agree to operate a branch library in Long Branch, the city would be responsible to provide a library building and pay for the cost of maintenance and operation
* Close Elberon Branch Library. The deed requires that Elberon Branch be operated as a library or branch ownership reverts to the former owner. Closing Elberon would result in a loss to the city in the amount of $500,000 for the cost of renovation and expansion of Elberon Branch in 2003
* Eliminate placing interlibrary loans for delivery to the library in Long Branch. In 2010, patrons would not have been able to borrow about 22,000 titles that were received from loans made to our patrons by LMxAC and other libraries

**Some expected losses of library service include the following:**

* Close Elberon Branch
* Reduce the number of staff
* Reduce public service hours
* Reduce the book and materials budget
* Eliminate purchasing of books and materials to meet local demand
* Reduce number of programs for patrons of all ages
* Reduce the number of library book clubs from five or entirely eliminate
* Eliminate full-time library service targeting children from birth to age 11
* Eliminate after school library service for teens and associated teen programming such as Club 328 on Saturday evenings, Homework help, and Teen Tech Time
* Close the Technology and Career Center and cease to provide a staffed computer lab for job search help, self paced learning and technology classes
* Eliminate literacy/diversity programming such as ESL Classes, FreshStart, and language classes such as Learn to Speak Spanish
* Eliminate the library’s local website with online access to local information such as the library’s Virtual Career Center for job search help, school and other reading lists, program information, unique pathfinders to select virtual information resources
* Eliminate our library’s unique database subscriptions such as LearnATest, Wilson Biographies, NetLibrary for reference ebooks, TellMeMore to learn languages, Road Warrior for travel and country information
* Significantly reduce the number of public computers
* Possible elimination of WiFi
* Lower internet speed and bandwidth
* Close the Local History Room
* Close the Literacy Classroom

**Long Branch Free Public Library customers can search the library webpage anytime-anywhere at** [**www.lmxac.org/longbranch**](http://www.lmxac.org/longbranch)**. You can check holdings in the online catalog, reserve books online, check your account status and renew your books.   If you don’t find what you want, call the library at 732-222-3900 to ask for assistance. Or you can always visit the Main Library or Elberon Branch during library hours. The staff will be glad to guide you through the process of borrowing books and materials from other libraries.**