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### Wait for new Encinitas library is over

By: COLLEEN MENSCHING - Staff Writer  
More than 2,000 attend opening day

ENCINITAS ---- The doors of the Encinitas Community Library swung open to the public Saturday, starting a new chapter for a collection more than 20 years in the making.

"It's not every day we get this opportunity. In fact, it's not every decade we get this opportunity," Mayor Jerome Stocks told the crowd that had gathered at 9 a.m. for the opening ceremonies.

The \$20 million, 27,000-square-foot building on Cornish Avenue is home to more than 70,000 titles, including movies and music, free wireless Internet access and a wide view over downtown to the Pacific Ocean.

The view, admired Saturday by so many visitors, almost never came to be.

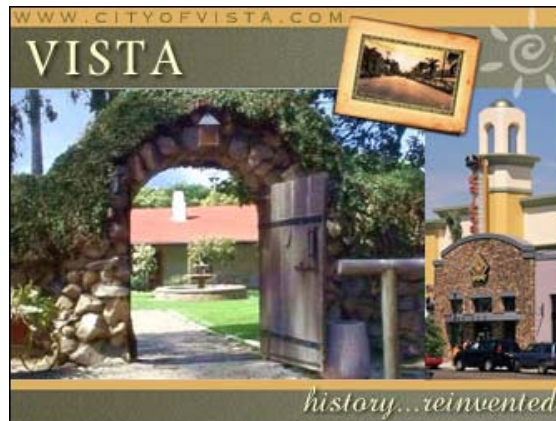
In 2002, a ballot initiative asked Encinitas voters whether they preferred a library location closer to the majority of residents than to downtown. Voters rejected that suggestion at the ballot box, preferring the ocean-view area the City Council had chosen two years earlier.

The story of the library starts further back than that, with the 1986 incorporation of Encinitas and the swift realization that its 1966 library, built to serve 7,000 people, would not be adequate for the new city, which now has 63,000 residents.

Finding a site for the new library ---- the 1966 building, at the same Cornish Avenue location, was closed and razed in 2004 ---- was just one of the political and financial hurdles planners faced.

By the 2006 groundbreaking, then-mayor Christy Guerin noted that it had already taken "four special task forces, two library-needs assessments, five site evaluations, one public opinion

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poll, one special election and a bid way over budget" to get the project going.

The library, built by the city and being operated by the San Diego County Library system, was expected to cost \$8.2 million in 2004. When rising construction costs pushed the price millions of dollars higher, the city opted to reach deeper into its coffers and finance the difference rather than curtail the community's vision for the site.

The consensus Saturday was that Encinitas has gotten its money's worth.

By noon, Wynne Weiss, principal librarian of the county library system's northern region, had counted more than 1,800 visitors.

"And that's just through this door," she said.

Among them were Encinitas residents Delaney Hulshof, 9, and Hadley Sbrega, 8.

"It's really cool," Delaney said, "but kind of big. I don't know where everything is."

Still, the girls eschewed help from the many library employees on hand, doing their own detective work to find Nancy Drew chapter books instead.

Sitting on the library's 3,000 square feet of ocean-view deck, Charlotte Tubis of Carlsbad perused a flier about the San Diego County Big Read program celebrating Harper Lee's novel "To Kill a Mockingbird."

"It's a fabulous library; the seating, the windows, the view," Tubis said. "It's wonderful that so many people are interested and excited about what's happening here."

Inside, the Sanchez family collected books about Hawaii and, for 3-year-old Isaiah, a pop-up title about tractors.

David Sanchez said his son repeatedly asked to drive by the library as it was being built.

"We probably drove by 50 times ---- and it was out of our way," he said.

Eileen Sanchez said the family, including 8-month-old daughter Lilianna, lives within walking distance of the library and will spend plenty of time there.

"It's going to change our lives."

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