In May 2017, voters approved a measure to form a library district serving 39,000 residents in the non-contiguous areas surrounding the branch libraries in Grants Pass, Illinois Valley, Williams, and Wolf Creek.

The newly elected, five-member Board of Directors first convened on June 4, 2017. For the next six months, the board met weekly to set up the new library district. Members worked closely with Josephine Community Libraries, Inc., the nonprofit organization which had been operating the library since 2009.

Our new library system grew exponentially in its first year, embracing its role as a municipal corporation committed to maintaining the trust of the community it serves. During the first six months, the board established policies, set up an accounting system, hired staff, and developed a strategic plan. On January 1, 2018, the nonprofit handed over day-to-day operations to the district.
The library of today is much more than “books on a shelf.” It is a fundamental part of the community, developing and shifting as fast as the public it serves. In one week at Josephine Community Library District, more than 1,000 patrons use the 48 Internet access computers at the four branch libraries in Grants Pass, Illinois Valley, Williams, and Wolf Creek. In a month, an average of 3,000 patrons check out 21,500 items.

In December 2017, the district increased the books and materials budget from $90,000 to $175,000 annually as part of its promise to purchase more and better books for patrons.

Most importantly, by February 2018, the district expanded hours at all four library branches. Overall, the library system nearly doubled its hours from 59.5 hours per week to 100 hours per week.

Programs and services

In just one week, over 1,000 patrons used 48 branch computers.

Hours per week nearly doubled, from 59.5 to 100.

Each month, 3,000 patrons checked out 21,500 items.
Volunteers and staff

Volunteers are the heart of our library and serve patrons through outreach, customer service, fundraising, and so much more. The district started 2018 with 348 volunteers. By the end of the fiscal year, that number had increased to 393, with 46 new volunteers having joined the team. Meanwhile, total volunteer hours increased by 1,135 hours in the first five months.

With an increase in hours, services, and volunteerism at all four branches, more staff time was also needed. In January 2018, paid staff increased from nine full-time equivalencies (FTE) to 13.5 FTE. Most part-time staff positions became full-time positions, with the exception of the Williams and Wolf Creek branch managers remaining part time.

In June 2018, the district administered the Gallup Q12 Employee Engagement survey to determine employee satisfaction. The library received high scores in all areas with special recognition as “an extremely well-engaged organization, outpacing most organizations in terms of employee engagement.”
Sharing our story

The library system in Josephine County has a unique story, one of inspiring community engagement and resilience. Since the libraries closed in 2007 due to lack of funding, each year from 2009 until 2017 more than 2,000 local community members made financial contributions and more than 360 volunteers invested their time to keep the libraries open. Many of these same donors and volunteers also worked hard on three separate campaigns—the 2017 campaign finally reaching success—to achieve permanent and stable funding through the formation of a library district.

Because of the library system’s special story and unique community commitment with many of the same people involved in both organizations, the district wanted its communications and branding to reflect the metamorphosis of the nonprofit Josephine Community Libraries, Inc. into Josephine Community Library District.

In January 2018, the district engaged in the Library Brand Transition Project to assess the branding elements used for the past several years and update the logo, tagline, and other elements to reflect the library’s new name and leadership transition.
The district’s first set of tax revenues was received in November 2017, five months after formation. Because of this funding delay, the nonprofit agreed to continue managing the libraries until the end of 2017 to preserve continuity of service for patrons. This generous support allowed the newly formed district to build the infrastructure required to assume the day-to-day responsibility of running the library system.

In its inaugural fiscal year of 2017-18, the board formed its first Budget Committee, to develop and approve a budget. This budget was developed within the guidelines of the strategic plan and set the stage for strong fiscal stewardship of taxpayer funds.

The final budget for FY2017–18 was $1,514,205 with an unappropriated ending fund balance of $265,307. For the district’s first full year of operations, the Budget Committee approved the FY2018–19 budget for $2,318,848 with a cash carryover. The cash carryover will allow the library to operate prior to receipt of tax revenues in November each year. The budget and minutes from Budget Committee meetings are available on the library’s website at josephinelibrary.org.
With a stable source of funding, Josephine Community Library District has been able to focus its energy and creativity on innovative ways of serving our community. As a strategic imperative, the district is committed to nurturing healthy and impactful relationships with current and new partners. In the past year, the district has increased partnerships, both in quality and quantity, to support community initiatives.

For example, the district committed to a three-year partnership with the Grants Pass Rotary Foundation for Dolly Parton’s Imagination Library, a book-gifting program which mails free books to children every month from birth to age five throughout Josephine County. The district manages the mailing database and helps residents sign up for the program. From May 1 through June 30, 2018, the library registered 900 children for the program.

**FY 2017-2018 Service Partners (* denotes new partner)**

- Applegate Poets*
- Blue Zones Project*
- Gilbert Creek Development Center
- Grants Pass Rotary Foundation*
- Grants Pass School District
- Hearts with a Mission*
- Josephine County Food Bank*
- Josephine County Public Health
- Kiwanis Club of Grants Pass
- Oregon Poetry Association*
- OSU Master Gardeners
- Southern Oregon Aspire
- Southern Oregon Early Learning Service Hub
- Sunny Wolf Charter School
- Therapy Dogs International, Inc.
- Three Rivers School District
Josephine Community Library District benefited from strong fundraising support through the Josephine County Library Foundation. By the end of FY2017–18, the foundation raised $36,000 to support capital improvements and scholarships for library cards for out-of-district residents, and $34,000 to support Dolly Parton’s Imagination Library.

In January 2018, the foundation contracted with a facilities consultant to complete a Facilities Master Plan. A Facilities Oversight Task Force was formed to include two board members each from the foundation and the district along with the library director. The next step is to complete work with an architectural firm to finalize costs for renovation and building projects and recommend sites for new facilities. With this Facilities Master Plan in place, likely by January 2019, the foundation will launch a capital campaign to raise funds for new and improved facilities.
Thank you

The newly formed Josephine Community Library District would like to thank the many partners who have helped form the library district in its inaugural year FY2017–18. Much of this work could not have been accomplished without the leadership of the nonprofit Josephine Community Libraries, Inc., which granted financial support to the library district. Special thanks to Josephine County Library Foundation and Josephine County government, the cities of Grants Pass and Cave Junction, and the generous volunteers, donors, and staff members who successfully transitioned public library operations to the district.

You have led the community to work and build together in a way that demonstrates Josephine County has the resilience, strength, and fortitude to build a brighter future for its residents.