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*Smoky Valley Library District, Round Mountain, Nevada*

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## **Case Study of the Round Mountain Public Library**

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### **A Brief Introduction**

In choosing my topic I wanted to do something that would serve more than my own interest in getting a grade. I chose this topic in order to put together information that could be shared, information that would serve not just my library but my community as a whole. This paper could not have been done without the cooperation of the community. I would like to thank the Board Members and the Library Director who helped me choose my topic and supplied me with the information I needed; also the residents of Smoky Valley with their fierce independence, who make this frontier community not a place to be taken lightly.

I will do my best not to bore you. I see no reason why term papers cannot be eloquent, readable, and informative.

### **A Brief History of the Community**

I will probably take the greatest pleasure in writing this first section of this paper. This is the only place it will be appropriate for me to use a descriptive voice, rather than simple, unadorned facts. It is the duty of any writer to speak for those who can not speak for themselves, and then to present that information to the reader in a way that will, hopefully, make them see what the writer has seen, feel what the writer feels; to present the information as three dimensional as possible. It is writing that employs all five senses. I feel I can personalize this brief history of this community, and this valley in which it resides, because I myself live here.

First, I will tell you plainly that in many ways this place is difficult to describe, and it is not a matter to be taken lightly. It is one of the most isolated communities in the lower forty-eight states. When people have come out from California for a visit, I notice almost at once a detectable change in them. A peculiar effect the desert has on people is that it immediately gives one the feeling of exposure. It lays bare the mind; and can bring out the best and the worst in an individual. This transformation begins when they have left the city of Fallon behind, going east on Highway 50, and travel into the empty landscape of salt flats and ever higher and higher mountain ranges and the age old ruins of those who have come before. Those who have left behind the foundations of Pony Express stations, and the lonely stone chimneys signifying where a ranch house sheltered

a family, a dwelling place no more. And all the while there is the relentless glare of the sun, a most grand inquisitor, smiling on the land.

They pass through Austin with its picturesque old buildings, perhaps not even stopping but following the lonely, winding mountain road over the passes to where it will come out in our valley. The dominant feature in the landscape here is the mountains. We are blessed with two magnificent mountain ranges in Smoky Valley; the first snowfall of the season changes the upturned keel of the mountains to white. Having whole mountain ranges all to themselves will daunt some and the very loneliness of the place embodies the casting off of earthly attachments, which is the essence of any journey. Upon arriving at my house they will usually say one of two things. Either, “how can you stand it here?” Or, “I bet you really love it here.” I laugh and say, “If you ever find that you have come to the edge of the world, just look around, my house is close by.”

When you have come to the junction of highway 376 and head south down the Big Smoky Valley, you will drive for about sixty miles when you will notice a community. That would be Carver’s, and further on is Round Mountain and the subdivision of Hadley, the subject of our profile and the location of the library. If you look to the eastern mountain range you will see the mine. The tailings are very neatly groomed and resemble the Pharaoh’s half-finished pyramids, although more rudely formed. In the subdivision on the valley floor the wind is a predominant feature. It blows most days. However, it is not a gentle breeze. It attacks the town like a personal enemy, stressing buildings past their limits as it meticulously counts out every tumbleweed and grain of sand.

### **Terrain That Gave Us Gold**

I hope you have a clear picture in your mind’s eye of what the landscape is like in Smoky Valley. And now we will go on to the terrain. It has been said that gold is where you find it, it has also been said that if the earth were made of gold men would dig for dirt. Probably, both phrases carry their own truths. Geology is what this terrain is all about, and it is exactly for this reason that the community of Round Mountain is here. It is the geology of gold.

About 850 million years ago, heat rising from the interior caused the North American continent containing what is now the state of Nevada to split on a north-south line somewhere near the middle of the state, along a line roughly connecting Tonopah and Elko. The western part of the continent was sheared off and moved west-northwest, and the remaining western part eventually ended up, although there is some debate about this, in Siberia. A new continental margin lay on a line that stretched approximately from Wells, through Tonopah. (1) All this activity over the eons created a period of volcanism during which the terrain was formed that allowed the process for the formation of gold deposits. In the Round Mountain region the deposits were formed in a process that depends upon hot water to concentrate gold. The presence of a hydrothermal (hot water) cell, a geological condition that enables a mineral to be concentrated, is essential for depositing gold in rock in the earth’s crust. The evidence of these ancient periods is not only in the gold itself but in the now extinct volcanoes that line the valley.

## **Paleolithic Inhabitation**

Many will argue that what happened to this region millions and millions of years ago is irrelevant because no human was a present witness. What happened then is the reason why we are here now. But others came before us, and they had no interest in gold.

At the north end of the valley in the eastern Toquima Range Mountains is Toquima Cave. At the junction of US 50 and 376 is a dirt road heading east. Red, black, blue, white, and yellow aboriginal drawings, or pictographs, decorate the walls. These drawings are very primitive and look as though they are the finger paintings of little children to modern eyes. They are most certainly the ritual devices employed by hunter-gatherers. Smoky Valley was almost certainly a migration route for prehistoric reindeer or caribou as these animals are depicted on the cave walls and was undoubtedly the food animal for these hunters. Authorities ascertain that there are no known specific meanings attached to the particular design elements, claiming that they possess no particular message and are not a conscious art form (2) It is true that these cave paintings were not produced by a master artist on a par with Lascaux or Trois Frères, but the implications of their being there at all deserve further investigation and research. And if they are given to a mythologist rather than an archaeologist the symbolic meanings appear. These too, though more crudely formed, are temple caves, and should not be dismissed as irrelevant. As the renowned mythologist, Joseph Campbell, wrote, “A ritual act is a recognition of your dependency on the voluntary giving of this food to you by the animal who has given its life.” (3)

To say the pictures have no meaning is a crass misinterpretation and underestimation of the people who put them there. I would invite any scholar of myth and prehistory who is laboring over her dissertation to come to Smoky Valley (boy, have we got something for you), and give Toquima Cave the time and research it deserves.

## **The Arrival of the Europeans**

It is claimed that Big Smoky Valley (and yes, it is spelled that way) was named by John C. Fremont because of the haze seen in the distance. Fremont and group of about ten of his men, including Kit Carson, that had divided from the main group of his expedition in order to extend their exploration, were the first European-Americans to traverse the length of the Valley from north to south. This was late in 1844. They set up a camp at Darrough Hot Springs, which is just north of Carver's.

The real settlement of this Valley did not take place until the gold and silver discoveries of the 1860s. Up until that time, Nevada was simply a place you passed through as quickly as possible on your way to California. The people coming here came from the west rather than the east. The gold in California was beginning to play out by 1859 and people were moving into western Nevada including Smoky Valley, Kingston, Millet, and Twin River in 1863. Round Mountain and Belmont in 1865. Jefferson and Northumberland in 1866. Manhattan in 1867. Tonopah to the south in 1900. And there were many more.

Ranching began around the same time, 1863. By 1867 there were a dozen in the Valley. It was mining that brought in populations, however, not agriculture or ranching. The ranches were a support system for the mines. In the present the tables have turned, the mine is the support system for the town—no mine, no town. This constitutes a major threat to the community.

## **Tools**

The goal of any community profile is to determine whether or not an institution, in this case a rural library, is successfully achieving its goals within that community. The objective of the profile is to put together a detailed report of the attitudes, beliefs, and behavior patterns of the “average” community member, increased understanding of the community issues, and increased confidence in decision-making and strategic planning, as plans are based on actual, factual information. It will also provide the necessary information for the creation of new activities and the dissolution of existing activities that have ceased to be effective. Crucial to the success of the project is the tools designed to collect the data.

Difficulty in collecting data arose almost immediately when interviewing individuals was the object. People in this community work rotating shifts; they do not have time to spare, and when they do it is given to family and travel, not telephone surveys and students asking questions. Survey forms left at the circulation desk yielded four returns. Yes, I said four. All positive. Obviously surveys were not the route to take in this library. I turned to circulation itself and reviewed the library annual report, which was very helpful and informative. Then, I turned to demographic research mostly done over the Internet, to round out the profile and the summary analysis. Attending library board meetings and organizing community assessment meetings were also valuable tools in collecting data for this profile.

## **Round Mountain Public Library**

The Round Mountain Public Library is governed by an appointed board of five trustees, consisting of a chairperson, a vice-chair, a secretary, and two other members, who in turn answer to the Nye County Board of Commissioners (there are five).

I have found the library’s policies to be very forward-looking and future-oriented with an eye to the Library Bill of Right and the Right to Read, and the Nevada Open Meeting Laws. The Library even retains its own attorney. Circulation has completed entering all data into the statewide Polaris system, but retains a card catalog as a backup. Nearly everything else is automated.

The library building itself was originally constructed in 1990 with approximately 5,000 square feet of space. Our new expansion will double the overall size to accommodate a director’s office, computer rooms, a story corner and a “Friend’s” room. This is a children’s wing so it will house our children’s collection of books.

The original Round Mountain Library was begun over thirty years ago when someone left a box of used books outside the sheriff’s office in old Round Mountain. The library now houses nearly 40,000 volumes, this is self-evident success.

Circulation Data for the Year 2000-2001

Circulation	32,638
Average per month	2,720
Patron visits	51,341
Average per month	4,278
Meeting Room usage	256
Average per month	21
Number of materials	35,807
Annual budget	\$90,488.00
Number of staff	5
Usage by Material Types	
Fiction	1,713
Fiction PB	696
Non-fiction	1,511
J fiction	1,546
J fiction PB	581
Easy	4,529
Easy PB	731
Video Tapes	2,651
Computer usage	2,142
Materials lost	59

**Demographic Research (4, 5, 6, 7)**

	Number	Percent
Population	1,825	100%
number of adult males	982	53.8%
number of adult females	843	46.2%
number of adults over 60	106	5.8%
number of children	655	35.9%
people with disabilities (unknown)		
school population with learning disabilities		30%
geography; high desert		
geographic location:	117W. 39N.	
Nearest town with a population over 25,000	Fallon, NV, 190 miles away	
prominent physical features	Two mountain Ranges over 12,000 ft.	
economy: largest employer	Round Mountain Gold Corporation	90%
types of industry present	Mining and ranching	
unemployment rate	Low	
communication facilities	Phone lines Microwave T1	
radio and TV	High speed wireless	
Newspapers	None local, cable is available	
Schools	Mine bimonthly	
Colleges	One Elementary and One Jr./Sr.	
Social Institutions	High	
Number of churches (too many)	None	
Predominant religion	None	
Social organizations	6	
Dominant political party	Mormon	
Organizations for children	None	
	Republican	
	Scouts	

## **Round Mountain Public Library's 5 Year Plan**

### *GOAL #1 Growth in Services to the Smoky Valley Library District*

**Objective:** Maintain or exceed Minimum Public Library Standards for Nevada.

**Objective:** Continue to give quality services to library patrons.

**Objective:** Keep libraries current materials and services.

**Objective:** Improve computer references services.

**Objective:** Upgrade Internet services as it becomes available.

**Objective:** Increase community involvement.

### *GOAL #2: Apply for Grant Monies to Enhance Library Programs*

**Objective:** Building expansion at Round Mountain Public Library.

a. Serve more students and customers

b. Quality of service will improve.

c. More efficient staff

d. A quiet and comfortable library atmosphere.

**Objective:** Network computers.

**Objective:** Repair and maintain library buildings.

a. Lower energy costs.

### *GOAL #3: Support Friends of the Smoky Valley Libraries*

**Objective:** Increase numbers of children's programs and events.

**Objective:** Bring in special speakers and programs (authors, historians)

**Objective:** Junior Friends of Smoky Valley Libraries.

### *GOAL #4 Be Aware of Customer and Community Needs*

**Objective:** Visit local organizations and faculty meetings.

**Objective:** Circulate surveys to customers and school officials.

**Objective:** Advertise library services.

a. Include services information in book pocket

b. Special events on radio, fliers, and newsletters.

c. Install electronic marquee to post special events

d. Advertise at local sporting events.

### *GOAL #5 Continuing Education*

**Objective:** Promote local college courses.

**Objective:** Encourage staff members to enroll in library courses.

**Objective:** Continue to support adult literacy programs.

**Objective:** Make available a local GED testing center.

**Objective:** support new programs instituted by the Nevada State Library.

*GOAL #6 Encourage Employee Activities*

**Objective:** Encourage staff participation in special programs.

a. Seasonal events

b. Special children's events (PJ parties, etc.)

**Objective:** Mentoring throughout the library programs.

**Analysis: Needs Assessments**

**Library**

**Strengths**

Good physical plant with expansion completed  
Have 2 MB connectivity via wireless to local ISP  
Good staff

Good collection

Good reference collection  
Branch library  
PCs in good condition  
Online with state Polaris system  
Have EBSCO subscription service

**Weaknesses**

Staff not adequately trained on technology  
Budget is insufficient

Does not currently offer distance learning but should by next fall  
Also serves as the public school library

**Schools****Strengths**

Have T-1 connectivity through UCCSN (unused)  
 Excellent principal  
 Strong parent involvement  
 New computer lab at elementary school

**Weaknesses**

No on-campus library  
 High turnover among teachers  
 Buildings too small  
 No Head Start program—limited pre-school  
 No foreign language offered  
 Poor math and science program  
 Outdated technology  
 No technology support person  
 No video broadcast capability

**Medical****Strengths**

Physician available 4 days per week  
 Clinic is in a reasonably well maintained facility  
 There is the possibility of grant funding for better equipment  
 Clinic can take emergencies  
 Have 'life flight' to Reno  
 Good ambulance support  
 Mine will cover ambulance when other service is unavailable

**Weaknesses**

Physician only available 4 days per week  
 Mine has many injuries  
 Not able to dispense prescriptions locally, no pharmacy  
 No mental health professional  
 No family planning counseling  
 No RN backup for clinic  
 Very limited lab services  
 No radiology

**Other services available to this community****Strengths**

T-1 available through private carrier  
 Fiber from Austin to Hadley  
 T-1 is available to school through UCCSN  
 High per capita income  
 Good public/private facilities

**Weaknesses**

Limited technology expertise  
 No global community understanding of how technology should be structured or used  
 No banking facility  
 No senior services  
 No social support services  
 No women's or youth services  
 Poor infrastructure – sidewalks, etc.  
 Limited radio and television reception  
 No local newspaper

**Opportunities**

Continuing education for all community groups  
 Higher level of health and health screening services  
 Access to social services  
 Access to local, county, state and federal records  
 Assist in research  
 Permits on-line  
 Help provide broader range of school coursework-group and individualized  
 Better access to library related information

**Threats**

Limited local technology skills  
 Danger that mine might close  
 Limited additional funding  
 Some fractionalization of the community  
 County is too large to be sustainable  
 Hostile Board Members

## **Conclusion**

In concluding, I would like to present some personal notes about the community targeted for this profile, and then some suggestions to help establish where to go from here. First, one of the most pronounced problems in this community is lack of communication (no local newspaper, etc.) and fractionalization: in trying to put this study together I was really hard pressed to get the information I needed. When I could corner someone to ask them questions and opinions they had the attitude of not really being interested because they consider this community a mining camp that is only temporary. They expect to move on at anytime even though they may have already lived here for ten years or more. This attitude changed somewhat five years ago when the mine sold the residents the lots of land they lived on. Ownership can sometimes make a difference. In addition to this “mining camp” mentality, there is also the tired old script the local troublemakers read from again and again. Without going into too many weary details they oppose expansion and progress on certain levels and do their best to generally disrupt operations. This particular group cost the community nearly \$200,000 and four years, and effectively divided the community. There is no way to make that sound like an achievement.

A second major problem for this rural community is the large size of the county in which it is located. Nye County is huge, over 18,000 square miles. Our valley alone is larger than the state of Rhode Island. The large and rapidly growing cities, like Parump to the south of us, bleed the county dry, so little funding is left for the outlying communities. Things like school district funding are simply not available because the county is too large to be sustainable.

The chain of authority for our rural library goes to a Board of Trustees who in turn answer to the County Commissioner (Nye County has five commissioners because the county is so large.) The local County Commissioner is seldom if ever at the library board meeting so is generally uninformed about what is going on there. This nearly led to disaster at one point in the past. Things are simply spread too thin.

To its credit, and the credit of the staff, the Round Mountain Public Library is probably the finest public facility in the town of Round Mountain, and one of the finest rural libraries in the country. Evaluating the results of the community profile clearly suggests that the library has met its goals above the minimum standard for the state library requirements and in meeting the communities’ needs. And for that very reason is in the best position to assist the rest of the community in progressing to a higher level of services and facilities.

## **Recommendations for Round Mountain, Nevada**

I would like to recommend to Round Mountain to develop a detailed vision of what they would like this community to be like ten years from now. And to help them do that I would like to suggest the following:

- Establish a community-based technology-planning group.

- Review the community vision, strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats with community medical and school services providers for accuracy and inclusion.
- Develop alternative funding sources for the prioritized listing of services based upon the needs assessment process. (Hire a grant writer, community coordinator. This is very time- consuming.)
- Develop a short-term and long-term acquisition and support plan and implementation strategy.
- Develop a funding strategy for project sustainability during the ensuing three years. (The library is already working towards endowments.)

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8. The URL technology inventory ([www.governet/NV/LEC](http://www.governet/NV/LEC))
9. Nevada Small Business Association ([www.nsbdc.org/](http://www.nsbdc.org/))
10. Nevada ‘Bridging the Digital Divide’ website ([www.nddproject.org/](http://www.nddproject.org/))
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