



Donald W. Reynolds  
**LIBRARY**  
Serving Baxter County

# **The Gassville Library Branch Research Findings**

**March 22, 2017**

# STUDY HIGHLIGHTS

## Background

The Baxter County Library operates a Main Location facility in Mountain Home, Arkansas in addition to a branch library located in Gassville, Arkansas. The Gassville library branch has been historically under-utilized; the Baxter County Library Director and Board Members have requested a market research project to better understand if resources are being used in the most efficient and productive manner.

The Baxter County Library and the City of Gassville are jointly supporting the market research project. The research methodology includes a series of one-on-one interviews with community leaders, discussions with staff members, and focus groups of community members. Karen Montgomery of Brooks Erixon Consultancy is conducting the research.

## *I. The Gassville branch is under-utilized with an average of 6 patrons per day*

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The Gassville Branch is under-utilized with an average of 6 patrons per day.

- A. Typical key metrics (visitors, circulation, program attendance) are very low
- B. Past experiments with programs and marketing yield little to no increase in market demand
- C. In its current form, the product (Gassville branch) is not meeting the needs of the market (Gassville/Cotter citizens)
  - a. Market demographics may not be conducive to some library services
  - b. Some community needs are met by other agency program/commercial/outdoor offerings
  - c. Library services meet certain community needs
- D. Possible factors contributing to low demand
  - a. Location
  - b. Hours
  - c. Services provided/not provided
- E. The expense to operate the Gassville branch is not in line with the number of patrons who use the services
  - a. City of Gassville operating expenses
  - b. Library operating expenses

A. Typical key metrics (visitors, circulation, program attendance) are very low



**Visitors**

- Since May 2016, average daily visitors is 6 patrons
- 3 of the 6 are laptop/internet patrons only



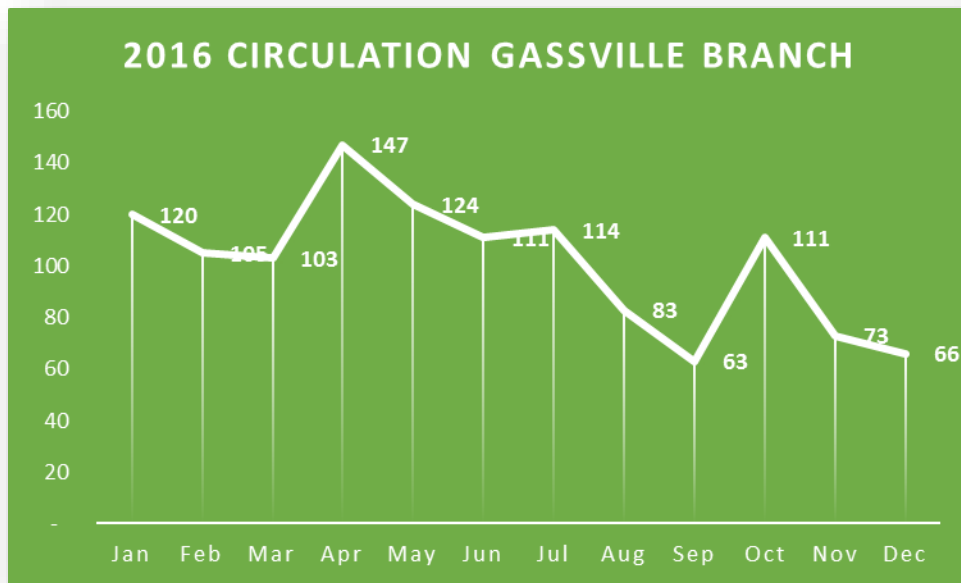
**Circulation**

- Circulation includes both books and movies
- Represents .5% of total Baxter County Library circulation
- Movies represent 21% of total Gassville branch circulation



**Programs**

- Extremely low turn-out for a wide variety of programs
- Marketing efforts yield no increase



## A Sampling of Gassville Branch Programs

Participation for most programs offered at the Gassville Branch is low to non-existent. Programs that draw higher attendance present significant logistical challenges due to space/equipment limitations.

Plant Swap	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•30+ participants</li> <li>•Held on pavillion</li> </ul>
Computer Classes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•6 classes offered with only 2 participants total</li> <li>•In 2015, 6 classes yielded a total of 33 participants</li> </ul>
Family Movie Night	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•One time event with Mayor Braim as hot dog chef</li> <li>•Approximately 15 participants</li> </ul>
Story Time	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Alternates between 1 or 2 families</li> <li>•In 2016, averaged 6 participants (adults/children) per Saturday</li> </ul>
Community Meetings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Community groups such as Chamber, Friends of Norfolk, Cotter Saturday Club, etc. yield 0 meetings currently</li> </ul>
Historical Programs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•None held in 2016</li> <li>•In 2015, 100+ participants; setting up meeting space, technology, inadequate parking is a significant logistical challenge</li> </ul>
Summer Science Activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Offered in 2015 with 0 participants</li> </ul>
After School Story Time	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Offered Fall 2016</li> <li>•Direct marketing yielded 0 participants</li> </ul>

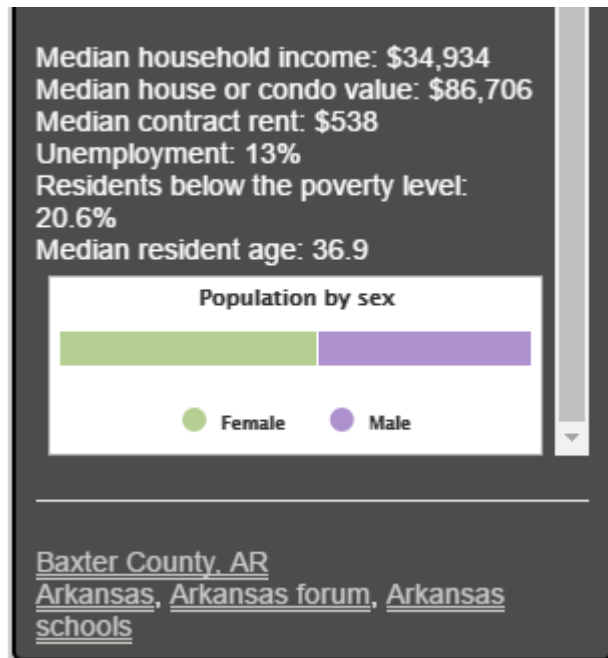
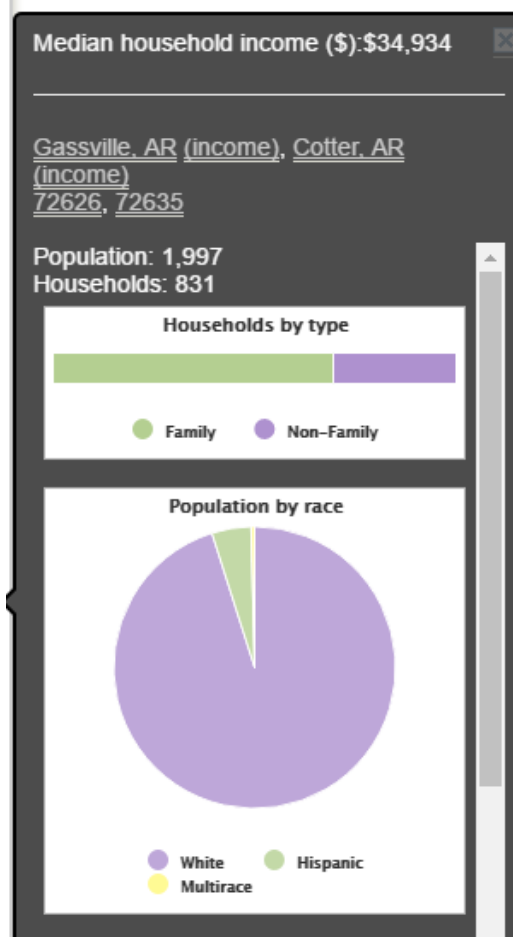
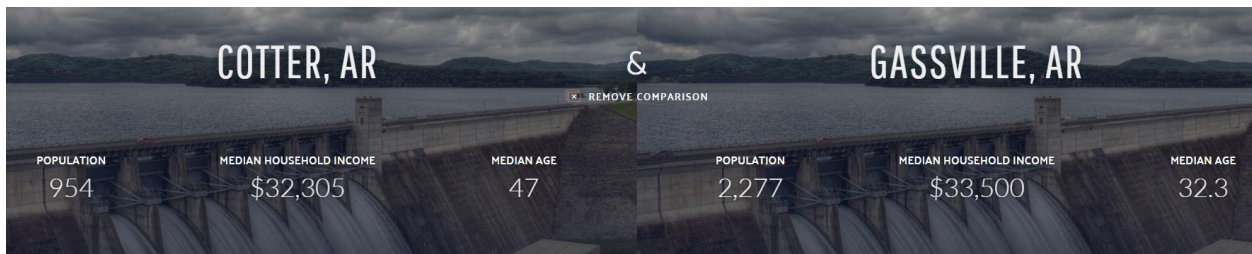
## B. Past experiments with programs and marketing yield little to no increase in market demand

Renovated Gassville Branch	Targeted Program Mailings	Marquee Advertising
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Marketing effort to publicize the newly renovated branch</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mailings to Gassville and Cotter zip codes for upcoming programs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 14,000 drive bys per day can see sign</li> </ul>

C. In its current form, the product (Gassville branch) is not meeting the needs of the market (Gassville/Cotter citizens)

A. Market demographics may not be conducive to some library services at Gassville branch

The Gassville and Cotter markets have two primary groups of customer segments: Working Families and Retirees. The median household income is about \$35,000 with 20% of residents living below the poverty level.



*A. Market demographics may not be conducive to some library services at Gassville branch, (con't)*

Both spouses of working families are more likely to have full-time jobs; the time pressure of maintaining a home and family leaves little time for extracurricular activities outside of school programs and homework. Students within these households have access to school libraries and either Chromebooks or iPads (including internet connectivity during school hours). High school students indicate their preference for the Main Library for study groups and teen programs.

Retirees may prefer to use the Main Library for social and computer/internet needs. About 5% of Gassville residents and 20% of Cotter residents have a library card. The six visitors per day are typically in the retiree segment.

*B. Some community needs are met by other agency program/commercial/outdoor offerings*

A key point of focus in the research project was to identify the various community needs in Gassville and Cotter and likely agencies who serve those needs. The following chart reports the findings.

Customer Segment	Needs	Library	Schools	Agencies, Commercial	Churches
<b>Working Families</b>					
<b>Parents</b>	Internet connection, computer, printer, copier to check email, do research, print/copy documents	<b>Branch:</b> 4 laptops, printer, copier and free wireless internet <b>Main:</b> laptops, printer, copier, free wireless internet	Cotter Schools provide mobile devices and wireless internet (see Student customer segment)	McDonalds (and possibly A&W and Subway) provide free wireless internet	For members
	Parenting and daily living advice	<b>Branch:</b> books <b>Main:</b> Money Smart program; reference books	ASU-MH (in partner with Food Bank) provides programs Cotter Schools provide programs for students	DHS requires classes for WIC participants; Threshold may provide programs	Happy Hearts mentoring program
	Job Training/Resume Assistance	<b>Main:</b> Excel and Word training in partnership with ASU-MH	ASU-MH's Pipeline to Manufacturing	Threshold	Christian Women's Job Corp
	Family entertainment:				
	Movies	<b>Branch:</b> Movie check-out <b>Main:</b> Movie check-out		McDonald's Red Box	
	Family Programs (e.g., crafts)	<b>Branch:</b> Story Time <b>Main:</b> Maker Space	Cotter Schools sport programs, band, lego league	Big Spring walking trail, Parks, lakes, rivers	Happy Hearts
	Food & assistance programs, housing	<b>Main:</b> Summer Feeding program with Food Bank	Backpack program	Threshold Serenity & Gamma	Summer Feeding program
	Drug/Alcohol Rehabilitation			Omart, A/A, BRMC,	

Customer Segment	Needs	Library	Schools	Agencies, Commercial	Churches
<b>Small Children</b>	Day Care		ABC and Headstart	Day Care centers (are limited in Gassville/Cotter)	Mother's Day Out in MH
	Reading programs	<b>Branch:</b> Story Time <b>Main:</b> 1K Books Before Kindergarten, Story Time, Children's programs			
	Summer & Weekend Programs	<b>Branch:</b> Story Time <b>Main:</b> 1K Books Before Kindergarten, Story Time, Children's programs			
	Transportation				
<b>Elementary 1-6</b>	After school programs		\$5 'stay until 5' Sports and Extracurricular programs		
	After school homework time & space	<b>Main:</b> homework spaces			
	Tutoring		Monday/Wednesday teachers available		
	Computer and internet connection	<b>Branch:</b> 4 laptops, printer, copier and free wireless internet <b>Main:</b> laptops, printer, copier, free wireless internet	Cotter Schools provide mobile devices (Chromebook, iPads remain in classroom) wireless internet		



Customer Segment	Needs	Library	Schools	Agencies, Commercial	Churches	
	Summer & Weekend Programs	<b>Branch:</b> Story Time <b>Main:</b> 1K Books Before Kindergarten, Story Time, Children's programs	8-12 Summer School	Cotter Youth Center	Church Camps	
	Transportation					
<b>Junior High 7-9</b>	After school programs		\$5 'stay until 5' Sports and Extracurricular programs			
	After school homework time & space	<b>Main:</b> homework spaces				
	Tutoring & enrichment programs		Monday/Wednesday teachers available			
	Computer and internet connection		Cotter Schools provide mobile devices (Chromebook, iPads that may be taken home) and wireless internet			
	Research materials; books; online data bases	<b>Branch:</b> books may be requested if not in current collection <b>Main:</b> Research materials both physical and online		Cotter School library		
	Teen after hours' entertainment	<b>Main:</b> Teen After Hours (one time/month)		Sports and Extracurricular programs	Gassville Park fishing, Youth Center basketball	Youth programs
	Transportation					
	After school programs					

Customer Segment	Needs	Library	Schools	Agencies, Commercial	Churches
<b>High School 10-12</b>	After school homework time & space	<b>Main:</b> homework spaces	\$5 'stay until 5'		
	Tutoring & enrichment programs		Job training programs Monday/Wednesday teachers available		
	Computer and internet connection		Cotter Schools provide mobile devices (Chromebook, iPads that may be taken home) and wireless internet		
	Research materials; books; online d/b	<b>Branch:</b> books may be requested if not in current collection <b>Main:</b> Research materials both physical and online	Cotter School library		
	Teen after hours' entertainment	<b>Main:</b> Teen After Hours (one time/month)	Sports and Extracurricular programs	Gassville Park fishing, Youth Center basketball	Youth programs
	Transportation				

Customer Segment	Needs	Library	Schools	Agencies, Commercial	Churches
Retirees	Internet connection, computer, printer, copier to check email, do research, print/copy documents	<b>Branch:</b> 4 laptops, printer, copier and free wireless internet <b>Main:</b> laptops, printer, copier, free wireless internet		McDonalds (and possibly A&W and Subway) provide free wireless internet	For members
	Entertainment:				
	Movies	<b>Branch:</b> Movie check-out <b>Main:</b> Movie check-out		McDonald's Red Box	
	Programs (e.g., crafts) & Exercise	<b>Main:</b> Maker Space and Yoga classes	ASU-MH yoga classes	AARP, Yoga, Zumba, Silver Sneakers, Youth Center tennis courts	Happy Hearts
	Hobbies & Social	<b>Branch:</b> Plant swap in Pavilion		Cotter Saturday Club, Chamber of Commerce, AARP, Master Gardeners, Fly Fishing, Boating, Music on the Square	Happy Hearts
	Food & assistance programs, housing, transportation			Threshold, Meals on Wheels	
	Classes	<b>Main:</b> Adult classes	ASU-MH continuing education	AARP	
	Books	<b>Branch:</b> books may be requested if not in current collection <b>Main:</b> Research materials both physical and online			

C. Library services meet certain community needs

As the previous chart indicates, the Baxter County Library meets certain community needs. It is important to note that most of these services occur at the Main Library as well.

Internet connection, computer, printer, copier to check email, do research, print/copy documents	<b>Branch: 4 laptops, printer, copier and free wireless internet</b> <b>Main: laptops, printer, copier, free wireless internet</b>
Parenting and daily living advice	<b>Branch:</b> books <b>Main:</b> Money Smart program; reference books
Job Training/Resume Assistance	<b>Main:</b> Excel and Word training in partnership with ASU-MH
Family entertainment:	
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Food & assistance programs, housing	<b>Main:</b> Summer Feeding program with Food Bank
Reading programs	<b>Branch:</b> Story Time <b>Main:</b> 1K Books Before Kindergarten, Story Time, Children's programs
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Hobbies & Social	<b>Branch:</b> Plant swap in Pavilion
Classes	<b>Main:</b> Adult classes
Books	<b>Branch:</b> books may be requested if not in current collection <b>Main:</b> Research materials both physical and online

#### D. Other possible factors contributing to low demand

##### A. Location/Space Limitations

A common theme expressed during our research was about the location. The Gassville branch is about 5 miles from the Main Library and 2 miles from City Hall in Gassville. Some of these comments include:

- *(from high school student) "We drive right by the Gassville branch and go to the Main Library. There are study rooms and coffee and lots of people at the Main Library."*
- *"The Gassville branch is too far away from the people in Gassville. If I drive that far, I'm going to drive a little further to the Main Library."*
- *(from former library employee) "I don't think the issue is location; when the Gassville branch was in town, kids still would not walk to the library."*
- *(from City Council Alderman) "I work in Mountain Home; I order a book in the morning at the Main Library and pick it up on my way home. If I do that at the Gassville Branch, there is a delay in getting the book."*

##### B. Hours

The current library hours are Tuesday through Friday from 1 to 5 and Saturday from 10 to 2 (20 hours per week).

Another theme we heard concerned the hours the Gassville branch is open. Suggestions included staying open in the evening hours to accommodate working families. As is detailed in Section II, The Volunteer-only Model, the current pool of volunteers is not comfortable working in the evening hours. Some focus group members pointed out that working families are most likely attending after school sporting events or using free Wi-Fi at fast food restaurants in the evening hours.

##### C. Services provided/not provided

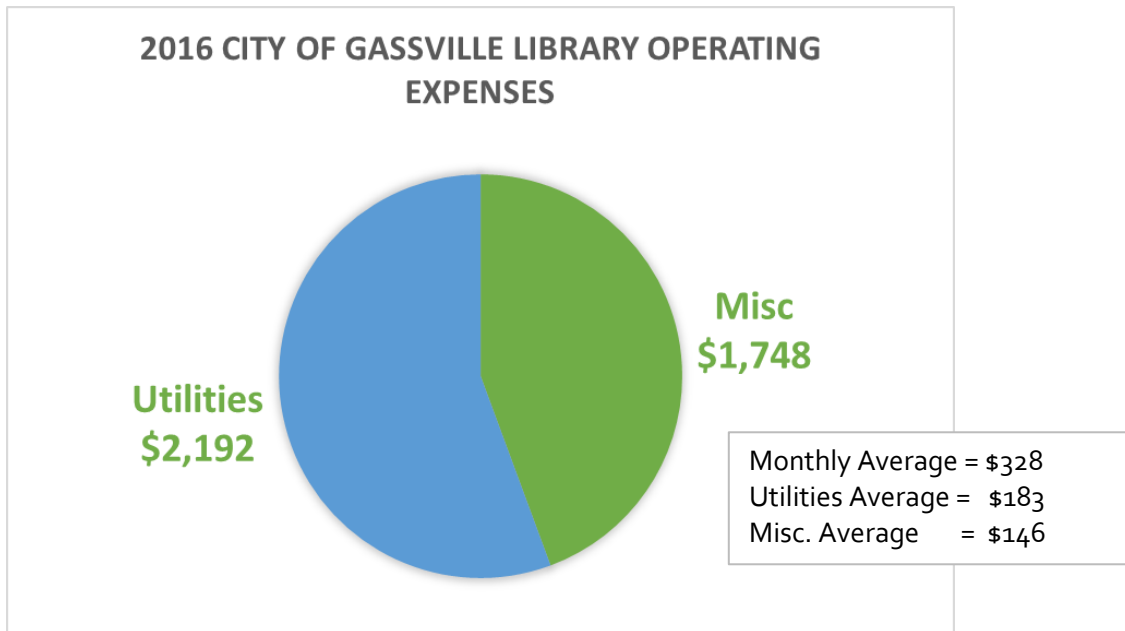
Certain services such as private study rooms and coffee shops exist in the Main Library and are widely used. Focus group members suggested providing coffee at the Gassville branch.

**E. The expense to operate the Gassville branch is not in line with the number of patrons who use the services**

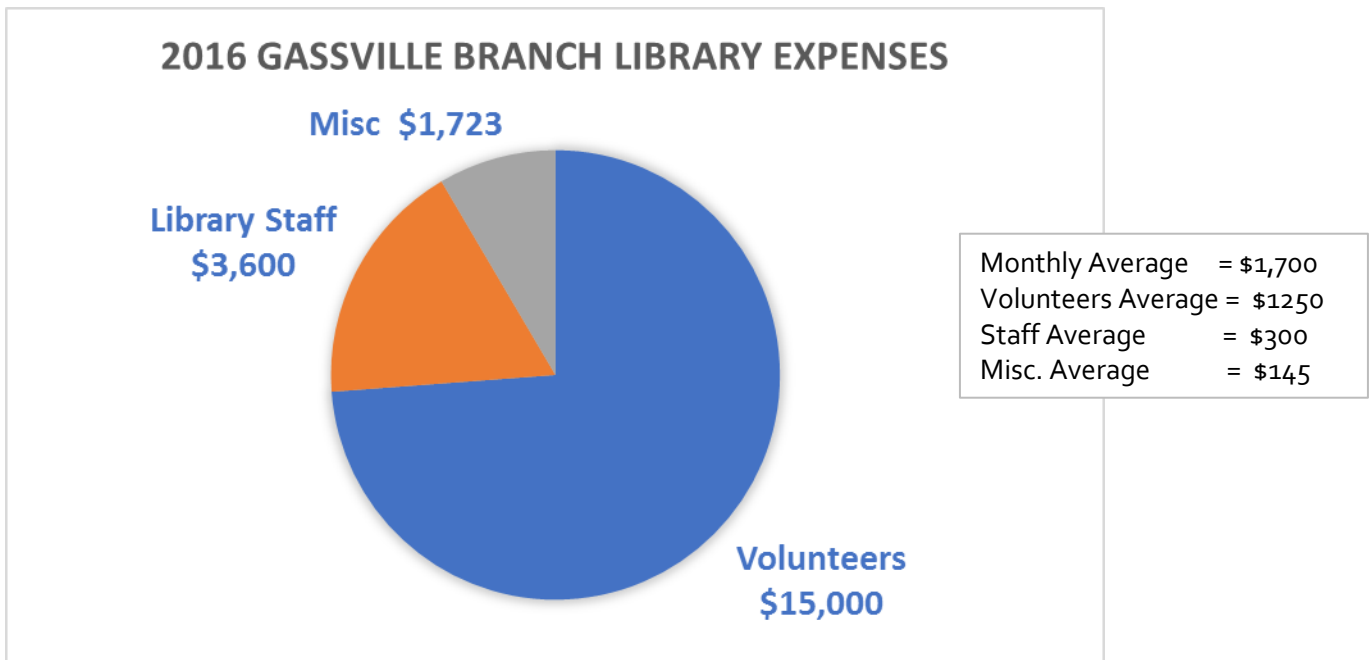
The total annual cost to operate the Gassville branch is approximately \$24,000. These costs (and some market value assumptions) are detailed in the chart below.

Expense Item	Annual Cost	Assumptions/Comments	Entity
<b>Utilities</b>	\$ 2,192		City of Gassville
<b>Misc. Expenses</b>	\$ 1,748	Includes Municipal League, Repairs, Termite, Research	City of Gassville
<b>Volunteers</b>	\$15,000	Note: The \$15,000 is an estimate of the salary the Library would have to pay an employee; however, the Volunteer Market Value rate of \$19.14 x 992 hours yields a <b>value estimate</b> of \$18,987	Library
<b>Staff (Back-up)</b>	\$ 3,600	Average rate of \$20 x 180 hours	Library
<b>Misc. Expenses</b>	\$ 1,600	Includes Internet and Supplies	Library
<b>Insurance</b>	\$ 123	Liability and Personal Property	Library
<b>Total</b>	\$24,263		

A. City of Gassville operating expenses



B. Baxter County Library operating expenses



## **II. The volunteer-only model conflicts with security and volunteer best practices**

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The volunteer-only model conflicts with security and volunteer best practices.

- A. Security best practices require at least two workers in branch
  - a. The Gassville branch volunteers face a potential security risk when working alone
- B. The Gassville branch volunteer pool is dwindling and routinely requires staff from the Main Library to fill in
- C. The Gassville branch training effort is extensive; and once in place, volunteers have limited opportunity to practice these skills

### **A. Security best practices require at least two workers in branch**

- a. The Gassville branch volunteers may face a potential security risk when working alone

Based upon a survey of volunteers, the Volunteer Coordinator, and security best practices, the procedure of scheduling only one volunteer per shift poses a potential security risk in the Gassville branch. Because the volunteer pool is dwindling, scheduling two volunteers per shift is not feasible.

### **B. The Gassville branch volunteer pool is dwindling and routinely requires staff from the Main Library to fill in**

The shortage of volunteers in the Gassville branch creates a difficult volunteer scheduling problem. When the Volunteer Coordinator cannot locate a volunteer, Main Library staff members fill in.

### **C. The Gassville branch training effort is extensive; and once in place, volunteers have limited opportunity to practice these skills**

The training requirements for utilizing sophisticated circulation software and other duties is extensive. With only six visitors per day (three of which only use the laptops/internet), the volunteer does not have an opportunity to practice the skills learned during training.



## GASSVILLE BRANCH CHRONOLOGY

Year	Event
1993	Gassville Branch opens in the old City Hall building close to city center
1996	Evening hours stop; only 1.1 visitors in evening during 1996
May 1998	<p>The Gassville City Council gives the Baxter County Library until end of year to move into the Mother's Cupboard building (bequeathed in will for library or municipal services)</p> <p>The City Council wants to use the space for a concession stand</p> <p>The Baxter County Library Board expresses concern about the proposed location indicating that the 'primary goal for the Gassville Branch Library is to serve the less mobile segment of the population, namely children and elderly who are not able to use the Mountain Home facility. A lot of volunteers are retired and it (the original location) is a convenient location for them. Some said they can't and won't go out to the new location.'</p>
April 1999	Gassville Branch moves to the Highway 62 location
October 2010	The Donald W. Reynolds Library Serving Baxter County opens in Mountain Home