



**TO:** City of Los Altos / Town of Los Altos Hills City Library  
Commission, Bryant Bao, Mary Jo Price

**FROM:** Library Commission Services Subcommittee

**SUBJECT:** Tech Lending: Noise-Cancelling Headphones

The Services Subcommittee proposes that the library launch a program to lend noise cancelling headphones. Complaints about excessive noise in our libraries are well-documented. As we consider infrastructure improvements to address noise and privacy concerns, we believe noise cancelling headphones are a cost-effective way for us to enhance learning and focus immediately.

As such, we move that the Commission move to recommend to Library Staff to 1) solicit funds for such a program, 2) implement the program as soon as practical, and 3) report back on its efficacy vis-à-vis architectural solutions.

### **Main Library**



Currently, because the doors to the children's area are not handicap accessible and are kept propped open to ensure that children and their parents can safely access this area. In addition, the entrance area is a hustle and bustle of various activities including hold pickups, book sales, checkout, and the reference desk (as well as a temporary location for the Friends of the Los Altos Library). The noise from these activities carries throughout the library.

## **Woodland Library**



The Woodland Library is relatively small at only 4,600 square feet. After school, (~3pm on weekdays) tables are crowded by schoolchildren studying or being tutored. Given the large single room format, we have received many complaints about noise.

## **How Do Noise-Canceling Devices Work?**

The technology behind noise-canceling headphones has been around since the 1970s. Simply, the noise canceling circuit senses outside noise with built-in microphones and sends an equal-but-opposite canceling signal to the headset. By producing this countersignal, the headphones block a large part of external sound

sources. This is called sound compensation. Some headphones allow the user to choose a silent option to cancel noise without using audio.

These headphones also qualify as an assistive device. For patrons with auditory sensitivities, this enables them to participate in potentially loud environments without being overstimulated by sounds around them.

Many colleges, universities and public libraries allow patrons to borrow noise-cancelling headphones.

### **Supported by Library Staff**

Library staff is supportive of managing the lending of noise cancelling headphones.

### **Low Cost**

The cost of purchasing noise cancelling headphones is relatively inexpensive, ranging from \$75 to \$379.

We anticipate that this service will enhance the experience of all patrons.

Thank you,

Pierre Bedard and Julie Crane  
Library Commission Services Subcommittee