

DIRECTOR'S REPORT

October 2005

Director's Report and Highlights
October 18, 2005
Submitted by Pam Kiesner

A couple of "landmark" happenings this month:

Margaret Ziegler announced her retirement after thirty-five years at Bellingham Public Library. We are sad to be losing Margaret's institutional memory, her attention to detail, her outspokenness, sense of humor, and her expertise on all things related to information, reference, and space planning. She has truly been a leader in all these areas, as well as in her role as a union leader. We wish her well in her retirement at the end of this year, and feel lucky that we have benefited from her varied roles on this staff. Thank you, and best wishes, Margaret!

Judith Wiseman is retiring this month from her role on the Library Board of Trustees. Judith has been an active member of the Library Board for ten years. She was a member of the Site Evaluation Committee, and has been a faithful and diligent trustee of this great community resource. Judith is such a library supporter, and we appreciate all the time and effort she has expended on behalf of the Bellingham Public Library. Thank you, Judith!

Self Pick-Up of Holds has caused quite a stir – in a positive way! We are pleased with the way this has been received by our customers, and handled by the staff. All are to be congratulated for handling change in such a gracious and accepting manner.

While this process does not sound like a huge thing, it deviates from the way libraries have historically handled holds. I'm including information for you below to explain what our decision was based upon, and how we are implementing and evaluating this change.

"Self pick-up of holds" is a process that **many libraries across the nation** are implementing, usually in tandem with "express checkout" – also coming soon to Bellingham Public Library.

The **goals** are to:

1. Address long lines at checkout counters;
2. Increase customer service;
3. Improve staff efficiency;
4. Take advantage of the nationwide trend of self-service, which many people like and expect.

Before implementing the service, we:

1. Researched how other libraries are doing it;
2. Piloted the service at our Fairhaven branch library;
3. Checked with our city's legal department;
4. Built in many safeguards for customer privacy.

After reviewing our procedures with the city's legal department, they were found to be within federal and state privacy laws.

Some of the **privacy safeguards** that we built into our system include:

1. Turning the spine down so titles are not visible;
2. Blocking the "first in row" so the cover isn't visible;
3. Truncating last and first names on the hold slip so the name is not obvious (coming soon);
4. Volunteers and staff available to help customers locate their materials and to discourage casual browsing of the holds shelves;
5. CDs/DVDs packaged in brown accordion files;
6. Customer and staff training about the purpose and procedures of this service;
7. Providing to customers who do not want their materials on open shelves the option of holding them behind the desk.

Some of the many libraries that have successfully implemented this service are right here in Washington: **Seattle Public Library** and **King County Library System**. **Pierce County** also offers self pick-up of holds.

We **always evaluate** how systems work for our customers and staff, and appreciate and make note of feedback.

We are committed to improving our customer service. Staff is being encouraged to ask questions, seek feedback, and inform our patrons about all our services. Reports from our customers indicate that they appreciate this new service, making their visit to the library more efficient.

Please always feel free to express your opinions and share your comments and questions. There is a "Suggestions" notebook on the main desk for just this purpose, and you are invited to use it.

Happy Fall!