

DIRECTOR'S REPORT

November 2005

Director's Report and Highlights
November 15, 2005
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More changes!

Our goals in 2005 for designing improved service include:

1. increase customer satisfaction by reducing time waiting in line
2. provide a welcoming atmosphere
3. consider ergonomics associated with materials handling

The physical changes apparent on the first floor of the Central Library represent ways we hope to serve our customers more effectively, be more welcoming, and work more efficiently.

Added to the *Self Pickup of Holds* which began in October are these two new changes:

Self-Sorting

Instead of returning your materials into the slots at the desk, you will now return them into slots which drop the materials directly into the workroom where they are handled by staff. This will help staff return library materials to the shelves more quickly – for you to check out! This simple, yet effective change should increase our efficiency and improve customer satisfaction.

Express Checkout

Our “express” software is set up and we are experimenting with new Touch Screens that will be available for the public in the next couple of weeks. From experiences in other libraries, and the excitement this technology has generated, we know that these stations will be used extensively. If you have been to any of the Seattle or King County public libraries, you have seen Express Checkout.

With your use of these Express Checkout stations, staff will be able to have a greater presence in handling materials return, to serve you more immediately as you look for your library materials, search websites, and have other questions. The Children's Department and Fairhaven Branch will also offer the Express Checkout option.

For those of you who appreciate assistance as you checkout, we will have a staff member stationed at the “assisted” checkout station. This person is also the first one you will encounter when you enter the library. Staff at this station will greet you, and new library cards will be issued here.

These changes are about *materials handling* as well as customer service and efficiencies. We check in and out over one million items to the Bellingham community on an annual basis. Because Bellingham is one of the nation's top circulating libraries in its population category, we regularly review how we handle those materials.

Our goal is to improve turnaround time so that library materials are available for you as quickly as possible. While our staff has not increased, our business has. We budgeted \$29,000 to make critical improvements in handling incoming and outgoing materials. Combining those funds and

funds from the Friends of the Bellingham Public Library, we are able to address all of the 2005 goals for better customer service.

These changes represent a kind of “pilot” for the new season of library usage. This new season brings with it: a trend of self-sufficiency, a move to improve customer service, and an effort to increase efficiencies.

We would like very much to hear from you. What do you think? How is your library use affected by the changes? Are the changes helping you?

Interlocal Agreement

This annual agreement between the Bellingham Public Library and the Whatcom County Library System needs the Library Board’s approval at the November meeting. Although approval is quite standard (and the Board has been approving it for years), it is symbolic of the “mutual extension of borrowing privileges and services” that we have achieved. It is good to review and affirm this relationship on an annual basis.

An attachment to the agreement states our continued intention to outsource our mailing services for our holds and overdue notices to the County system. In turn, they will bill us for those services on a quarterly basis. This arrangement has been in place since our Horizon migration in September 2004, and we have incorporated those costs into our 2006 budget.

2006 Library Board meetings

While Library Board agendas follow a fairly predictable pattern, items of importance are placed on the agenda as they arise. Still, there is room for topics to help inform and educate the Board about issues that affect the public library. Please let me or President Tim Douglas know if there is a topic you think should be placed on the Board’s agenda. I’ve included a preliminary calendar in your packet.

Happy Thanksgiving!