



Date: July 30, 2012

To: Pierce County Library System Board of Trustees, Neel Parikh, Executive Director

From: Sally Porter Smith, Customer Experience Director and Judy T. Nelson,
Customer Experience Manager

Subject: Restructuring Pierce County Library System Bookmobile Services

Pierce County Library System currently serves about 22 locations through three bookmobile vehicles. These locations have been identified as being low-income, geographically isolated neighborhoods. This service is in keeping with the Library's mission to serve all residents throughout its service area with up-to-date offerings.

The Customer Experience Department proposes to stop using bookmobiles to provide service to children and families in these locations and move to providing service in a new manner. The new delivery would involve using a van for delivery with carts of materials. This is similar to how we deliver service at care facilities and ESL locations. We recommend using the Explorer Kids' Bookmobile for special events as an outreach and marketing tool throughout the year.

This recommendation came after careful and thoughtful research and analysis of the existing services and service delivery model. The results of the research and analysis found that the service being provided is in keeping with the Library's mission, but the amount of service has always been limited due to the delivery mechanism used. At the time it was the right way to deliver service, but is now the wrong delivery mechanism. Bookmobiles are expensive to operate and maintain, and have a limited area of service in which they can operate. By switching to a van delivery system, the program becomes more flexible and is able to serve additional sites and more children that were not accessible in the past. Community Outreach Services will use the Multnomah School Corps model to continue and expand service to these at-risk youth particularly in the Clover Park, Bethel, and Franklin Pierce School Districts currently being served, and possibly adding service to children in low-income areas in Sumner, Fife, and Peninsula.

Data reviewed included: geographical maps showing areas of poverty throughout Pierce County, detailed breakdowns of each stop including checkouts per stop, number of unique card holders per stop, number of active card holders per stop, and number of bookmobile card holders per stop who also use a library. We also considered whether a Pierce Transit bus stop with service to a Pierce County Library is currently located near the served bookmobile location. Bookmobile staff surveyed people who used the service, including students, school staff, and after school personnel, to learn about their perceived value of the service. The overwhelming response to the surveys was that the service was excellent and the ability to access materials at these locations was highly valued by all. Please see the attached data, map, and survey responses.

Providing library service to low-income, geographically isolated neighborhoods is an important part of meeting Pierce County Library System's mission of bringing the world of information and imagination to all people of our community, especially for those youth who do not have a tradition of using a public library. This was the basis of the Explorer Bookmobile Initiative and it remains true today.

In order to continue to make our vision come true we must find a more flexible, sustainable method of delivering this important service. We believe these changes will make that possible.

The recommended change in service delivery impacts people served through both the Explorer bookmobile and the six sites served by the Saturday family bookmobile stops. The change also impacts staff, the annual operating budget, and future capital budgets. Those impacts are detailed below. Outreach Services will continue to serve Anderson Island, Care Facilities and Homebound customers.

Based upon 16 months of data, spanning January 1, 2011-April 30, 2012, 702 people on average every month receive service through Explorer and family bookmobiles. A significant number of these customers also get service in Pierce County Libraries. Based on this data, we estimate that approximately 380 people currently only use bookmobiles. We also know that of the 2012 bookmobile customers, 19% are adults and 81% are children and teens. We are confident we will be able to reach many of the children and teens currently served through our bookmobiles using this new service model. We also recognize that for some adults, the loss of bookmobile service may mean loss of library service. We will evaluate these bookmobile customers for eligibility for homebound service. We will work with people to identify alternate means of accessing library services, both in our libraries and online. A recent survey by the Franklin Pierce School District found that 90% of their families have some level of home Internet service.

The change in the delivery model will eliminate three part-time bookmobile operator positions (1.43 FTEs). The change will also eliminate two additional positions that are currently filled temporarily (1.50 FTEs). The end result is a reduction of 2.93 FTEs.

The proposed change of service will reduce the operating budget by \$180,000 for staff, fuel, and vehicle maintenance. In addition, by changing how service is delivered, future capital expenditures will be reduced as the aging fleet of three bookmobiles will not be replaced. Explorer, the newest bookmobile, cost \$221,000 in 2002. The Library is investigating the sale of the two oldest bookmobiles and will set these funds aside to offset a possible future purchase of a van to assist in providing outreach to schools. The Library has included in the capital budget \$35,000 per year for bookmobile repairs in 2012 through 2016.