

M E M O

Date: July 27, 2012

To: Chair Steve Albers and members of the Board of Trustees

From: Keith Knutsen, Branch Manager, Parkland/Spanaway

Subject: Skype station for the public

It is my pleasure to inform you of a recent addition to the services that we are offering here at the Parkland/Spanaway branch. On June 5 we opened the branch with a new method for our customers to connect with people throughout the world – a Skype station. Skype is primarily a video calling service, allowing people to communicate with each other with video and audio.

Sharon Nichols was the lead in this project, and was inspired by her experience of being able to connect with her family in England. Sharon thought that the residents of the Parkland/Spanaway area in particular would benefit from having this service available due to the large number of residents that have friends or family in the military who are deployed overseas, as well as being able to benefit the general population at large.

In order to offer this service we worked with the IT department to procure the necessary hardware and software – essentially an internet-connected computer, monitor with a built-in webcam and microphone, and the necessary software. Cost for these items was approximately \$1020. IT staff configured the computer so that its sole functionality is as a video conference machine. We installed this equipment into one of our study rooms, and make it available in one hour timeslots, with reservations available one time per week. Signups can be made for the current and the following week.

Publicity for this service has been carried out in multiple ways. Mary Getchell and her team have created posters and have sent us several to display in the community, much as we have done in the past with PC Reads. Additionally, she has sent targeted email messages to residents of the local area. We also have had the service featured in a blog post on our Job + Business Center page (<http://jbc.mypcls.org/>).

With the service still being relatively new, we are still assessing demand. We are averaging three or four users per week, and while those numbers themselves aren't impressive, we anticipate the use will grow. Some highlights of our initial 6 weeks include a patron who has become a weekly user. She comes in after arranging a mutually convenient time with her husband (who is deployed overseas) and they are able to see each other as they talk. She has told us how much she appreciates the service. Another noteworthy interaction was with a person who was able to interview for a distant job without having to incur travel expenses.

It is exciting to be able to offer this service, and I appreciate the team effort that was involved in making it happen – incorporating talent from the Branches, IT and Communications.