Serving Branch Campuses: Are Bookmobiles a Solution?

Kathryn Seidel
Baton Rouge CC Library

Charlotte Trosclair
Vermilion Parish Library

Chaundra Carroccio

and

Tameka Roby
East Baton Rouge Parish Library

Robert Bremer
Nicholls University Library

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Introduction:

- A few years ago, a metropolitan university library noted it was having difficulty serving a branch campus 20 miles away.

A visiting academic librarian suggested a bookmobile be used.

The suggestion was summarily dismissed.

- When asked during the 2014 ALA Annual Conference, two bookmobile vendors and a board member of the Association of Bookmobile & Outreach Services said they were not aware of any academic library use of bookmobiles.
Many Louisiana universities and colleges have branch campuses.

More than one Louisiana community college library has considered if it might better serve branch campuses with bookmobile(s) ... rather than having a librarian visit a different minimally equipped branch library each day.

What can academic libraries learn from the bookmobile experiences of public libraries?
Bookmobiles: Vermilion Parish Library

- **Outreach** ... Bringing/Supplying materials to those not able to visit their library.

- **Outreach to**  ...  Schools  
  Homeschoolers  
  Head Starts  
  Rural Areas  
  Daycares  
  Nursing Homes  
  Community events.

- **Outreach** ... Providing the same services as a regular library just on a smaller scope.
Items Circulated thru Bookmobile

January 1 to September 20, 2014

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Checked In</th>
<th>Checked Out</th>
<th>Renewed</th>
<th>In-House Use</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9445</td>
<td>8987</td>
<td>2569</td>
<td>2194</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Bookmobiles: Vermilion Parish (cont. 3)

- **Collection** … a variety of materials for all ages/needs
  - Including, Adult fiction
    - Adult Non-fiction
    - Biographies
    - Louisiana collection
    - YA fiction
    - YA Non-fiction
    - Children’s fiction
    - Children’s Non-fiction
    - Books on CD
    - DVDs
    - Magazines
  
  - Using mobile book carts for some schools to add to their collections.
Bookmobiles: Vermilion Parish (cont. 4)

- **Construction …** Know your bookmobile needs –
  - Size
  - Generator
  - Budget
  - Internet Access … satellite or hotspot

  To view neat video on the construction of a bookmobile, see
  [http://www.obsinc.net/blog/2013/06/an-obs-bookmobile-is-born/](http://www.obsinc.net/blog/2013/06/an-obs-bookmobile-is-born/)

- **Maintenance …** Necessary but often costly –
  - Tires
  - Oil & Filter changes
  - Converter
  - Generator … have 50 amp outlet for refrigerator, air conditioner, microwave, computers
  - Other regular maintenance expenses for normal wear & tear.
Bookmobiles: Vermilion Parish (cont. 5)

- **Improvements ...** Beyond the basics –
  - More Space
  - Additional Desk ... in rear for/with OPAC, when possible
  - Kitchenette Area
  - Magazine Rack
  - Closet for Technical Equipment
  - Laptop Area.
Create Your Budget ...

- Understand that you must have administrative & stakeholder by-in & support ...
  Is your bookmobile a workhorse or a show piece?
- Have clear lines of communication between service providers (people that do the work), administrators (decision makers) & financial officers (people that cut the check).
- Create a Wish List for your bookmobile ...
  • Start there
  • Know your library’s RFQ & RFP process.
- Plan your budget accordingly.
Know Your Needs ... 

- Body Construction
- New or Used
- Exterior Identification/Markings/Design
- Being Environmentally Conscious
  - Powering your Bookmobile
  - Cooling System
  - Electrical System
- Technological Services
- Accessibility
- Staffing
- Parking/Garaging.
Satisfying Your Wants …

- RV shell? Bluebird based? School bus look? Winnebago? Large bus, sprinter van or shuttle?

- Used units are cheaper but don’t have warranties. Retrofitting may be less expensive.

- Logo? Heat wrap? Body paint? Decals? Exterior design for EBRPL’s new bus was $7,000 … Sponsorships may be available to cover these costs.

- Gasoline v. diesel v. electric v. solar power … a $15,000-to-$50,000 spread,

And there are environmental factors to consider.
On Satisfying Your Wants ...

- The more environmentally friendly, The more expensive!

  • Will your bookmobile be air-conditioned?  
    Have a sun roof? Will outside air flow thru unit?
  
  • Interior power ... Solar, battery, generator, hybrid?

- Internet service ... Wi-Fi v. Wired?

- Wheel chair accessible?

- Staff, full-time or part-time? Driver? Student workers?

- Need a garage? Pay for campus parking slots?  
  Are personal safety or security of property concerns?
Questions:
From Academic Libraries To Public Libraries

- From the Academic Librarians on the Panel.
- From the Audience.
Show and Tell ...

- East Baton Rouge Parish Library and Vermilion Parish Library have brought bookmobiles for viewing.

- Just before, during or just after lunch, view the bookmobiles in the parking lot and ask questions of the library representatives there.
Summary:

- ‘In the history of public education in this country, no two social institutions have had a closer working relationship than schools and libraries ... including bookmobile service that consists only of scheduled stops at schools where students use the bookmobile as their school library.’ Henne & Spain (1955).

- ‘The bookmobile is still a vibrant part of many societies today. Reasons for discontinuing bookmobiles include high costs, advanced technology, impracticality, and ineffectiveness. But it can actually be more cost-efficient to run bookmobiles than to build more branch libraries.’ Diane Bashaw (2010).
Literature Review … Selected


  “In the history of public education … in this country, probably no two social institutions have had a closer working relationship than the school & the public library. *** Such practices include … depending entirely on bookmobile service that consists only of scheduled stops at schools.”


  “One of the more historic conveniences in the library world – the bookmobile – is still a vibrant part of may societies today. *** Reasons for discontinuing bookmobiles include high costs, advanced technology, impracticality, & ineffectiveness. But it can actually be more cost-efficient to run bookmobiles than to build more branch libraries.”


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Baton Rouge Community College Library

Chaundra Carroccio
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Charlotte Trosclair
Vermilion Parish Library

Robert Bremer
Nicholls State University Library