

Books on Bikes

Deliver Great Reads



As part of a new trend of delivering books and services without stepping foot inside of a library, librarians are finding agile, innovative ways to get books and materials into the hands of the community. Thanks to bikes and books programs being organized across the country, patrons can pick up a new read at the park or playground and instantly sign up for a library card while shopping at their local farmer's market or enjoying an outdoor festival.

Librarian Jared Mills of the Montlake branch of the Seattle Public Library in Seattle, WA, created the "Books on Bikes" program, keeping around 100 books (out of the program's 400 titles) in an aluminum trailer the size of a steamer trunk attached to his bike. "Seattle has a very strong and rich bike culture, and I wanted to find a way to tap into that while thinking about a way to make library services more nimble," stated Jared Mills in an American Libraries magazine article titled "Custom Library Book Bikes Roll Out Across US."

His trunk, made to carry his precious literary cargo to popular community events around the area, can hold up to 500 pounds and is equipped with custom-made bookshelves and even an umbrella holder. "It's a really great way to tap into communities that feel they're not being served," Mills said in an NPR article titled "Books On Bikes' Helps Seattle Librarians Pedal To The Masses." "[It also serves] A lot of millennials that traditionally may not be coming into branches."

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The Denver Public library has also devised a bike-centric way to facilitate library outreach; they've turned bicycles and tricycles into unique book displays filled with library materials. Their mobile libraries even come with a wi-fi hotspot so patrons can download ebooks on the spot. Reference librarian Zac Laugheed with the Denver Public Library in Denver, CO, developed the idea for a mobile, bike-based bookmobile at this library after speaking with a college professor who was researching mobile library services. The entire bike-powered program is run by Laugheed and includes a wireless hotspot, book circulation, instant library card sign-ups and research assistance.

Librarians of the Cleveland Heights-University Heights Public Library in Cleveland, OH, ride their library's book bike to playgrounds and parks to actually give away free copies of books to kids. The dedication of these volunteers is something to be admired, since many have ridden in temperatures well below freezing. "We [are] lucky with the weather, [usually]," Eric Litschel, adult services associate at Cleveland Heights-University Heights Public Library (CHUHPL), tells American Libraries in the article mentioned previously. "The worst day I rode was probably a little over 10 degrees."

The Cleveland Heights-University Heights Public Library's Book Bike started in the spring of 2013 with the initial plan to run for the spring, summer and fall seasons. However, CHUHPL special project coordinator Sam Lapidés claims that the enthusiasm of the participants like Litschel made the program successful all yearlong, and the Book Bike is now turning into an extension of the circulation desk. The library now has plans to turn the Book Bike's tablet that currently showcases library services into a full-fledged circulation device complete with the book and materials borrowing service, OverDrive.

The "Bookbike" program at the Prima County Public Library (PCPL), in Prima, AZ, started in 2012 and also gives away free books to interested patrons. "We just kind of jumped into it," said Karen Greene, adult services librarian and Bookbike coordinator at PCPL to American Libraries. Greene says the library did not have a trial run or pilot program before launching, and donations from individuals and a local bookstore have helped their Bookbike give away more than 12,000 books in 2013 alone.

When school is out for the summer, the popularity of book bikes rise dramatically along with the temperature. This summer, the Charlottesville City School librarians in Charlottesville, VA, even started a Kickstarter campaign to help get books into the hands of students while the school's library was closed. Thanks to a partnership with the Jefferson Madison Regional Library and the JMRL Friends of the Library program, the Charlottesville City School raised more than \$5,000 to upgrade their little red wagon book delivery program into a full book bike program with three cargo bikes.

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