

# **Broward County Library**

## **Circulation**

### **Returning Library Materials Process Improvement Project**

#### **Results and Recommendations**

## Process Improvement Team Results Executive Summary

1. Clean up and organize back circulation workrooms. Make sure each work area is fully stocked on a continual basis with necessary supplies (stapler, tape, pens, holds slips, etc.).
2. Appoint a small team of staff to evaluate the back circulation workroom of each branch and determine if it can be rearranged for better workflow. Rearrange workrooms as determined.
3. Supply more than one bin for each drop box for those branches that can accommodate them. Remove full bin (leaving an empty bin in its place) from book drop and discharge directly from the bin. Do not unload from the bin onto a cart before discharging.
4. Ensure all items have a usable pocket for the date due card at all times.
5. Ensure that each AV item has a case in good condition at all times.
6. Ensure AV items with multiple parts have the number of parts prominently displayed, in a common location.
7. Do not reuse used holds slips.
8. Choose two branches to do a pilot project to determine the cost effectiveness of eliminating date due cards. (Receipts would be printed listing each item checked out then given to the customer instead of date due cards.) Conduct a local inventory before, during and after with one branch using date due cards and the other not using date due cards but printing out receipt for customers. Determine if the loss in materials outweighs the cost of staff time used on date due cards.
9. Supply at least one portable barcode scanner for each branch.

Worth note: We discovered that 3 people working together in assembly line style could complete this entire process, from start to finish, in 25 minutes. This shaves off over 50% of the time this process takes using any other method. The problem with this concept is that it has to be done when the library is closed. That would mean for every book drop you empty this way, you need to have 3 library staff available for 25 minutes during the library's closed hours.

## Process Improvement Project Report

Among the many processes that take place at the library on a daily basis, the process of returning items, from the book drop to the shelf is one of the most time consuming. This task force set out to determine ways to shorten this process. Throughout our work we determined that there are many factors that make it impossible to put down in writing one perfect way to do this process. Each library is unique and has their own issues to deal with that make some of our suggestions work and others not work. Some of the factors that may make some suggestions impossible at some branches are listed here:

- Layout of library workspace
- Amount of space
- Time constraints
- Number of staff
- Lack of equipment

We looked at improvements to the process as it exists. While we understand that using products such as RFID may make the process much quicker, we also realize that there are problems with those products that make it unfeasible to put them into place in Broward County Library at this time. RFID has issues that have yet to be resolved in the pilot project at Stirling Road. Aside from those issues, the biggest drawback with converting to RFID at this point is budgetary in nature. For that reason we have not considered RFID as a solution in our project. Our goal was to work within certain constraints. I list those constraints here:

- No additional staff
- No additional funds
- During open hours

The team consisted of a wide cross section of pertinent staff. Deerfield Beach spent two weeks timing every aspect of this process and trying new ways to do things. Each team member took ideas back to their library and experimented with them for two weeks to test feasibility. **For each suggestion, measured times and time saved figures can be supplied. Any cost involved in any suggestion can be further documented as needed.** The team consisted of the following members:

- Sally Clark, Library Specialist II, Hollywood Circulation Supervisor
- Laura Dellapenta, Library Specialist III, West Regional Circulation Supervisor
- June Fleischmann, Library Specialist III, Northwest Regional Circulation Supervisor
- Rachel Griswold, Library Aide, West Regional Circulation
- April Lowrey, Library Specialist II, Stirling Road Circulation Supervisor
- Lisa Manners, Library Branch Manager II, Deerfield Beach
- Bill Mooney, Senior Information Technology Specialist, LIT
- Lynn Petrucci, Library Aide, North Regional Circulation
- Lena Putzer, Systems Network Analyst II, LIT

- Nancy Richardson, Library Specialist III, North Regional Circulation Supervisor
- Paul Wells, Library Specialist II, Deerfield Beach Circulation Supervisor

What follows is a list of the ideas we came up with, our thoughts on their benefits, drawbacks and our recommendations regarding those ideas. Some of these suggestions may already be done at some libraries. The suggestion in those cases calls for us to put a procedure in place that makes it happen regularly at every branch.

- I. **Clean up and organize workrooms. Make sure each work area is fully stocked on a continual basis with all necessary supplies (stapler, tape, pens, date due pockets, holds slips, etc.). At the very least workrooms need to be kept orderly and well stocked.**
  - A Benefits: Benefits of this suggestion are obvious. The process will run much smoother and quicker.
  - B Drawbacks:
    - 1 It will take time to clean up and organize workrooms. Time that could be spent doing other seemingly more important tasks.
    - 2 Once cleaned and organized, attention needs to be paid to keeping it that way.
  - C Solutions: It was decided that any time and effort given to this suggestion would be well worth it in the long run. Organizing the workspace will make this process run much more efficiently, cut time out of the process and make the staff's job much easier.
  - D Recommendation: This idea should be instituted at each library.
- II **Rearrange workrooms for better workflow. Most workrooms would benefit greatly by being organized so that each process takes fewer steps. If the book drop is on one corner of the workroom and the area where discharging takes place is in the opposite corner, any bins or carts must be transported from one end of the workroom to the other then back again once each item has been discharged. Each workroom should be evaluated individually to determine what set up is best for workflow and minimization of steps then evaluated as to how that reorganization can best take place. Attention should be paid to these workflow types of details in designing and building new branches.**
  - A Benefits: Returning library materials a process that happens constantly at every library. It is extremely time consuming. Any time fewer steps can be taken greatly decreases the time spent on this process on a daily basis.
  - B Drawbacks:
    - 1 It would take a small team of people to look at the workroom of each library and determine set up. At a time when each staff is already stretched to complete daily tasks on a timely basis, this would stretch them further. Sparing even a few staff from any given branch would cause a hardship to that branch.

- 2 It would take a good amount of time to complete this suggestion. Again, time is a luxury most branches do not have at this point in time.
  - 3 Rearranging each workspace would have to use only materials, equipment and furniture that already exist. That would put some constraints on how much could be accomplished in instituting this idea.
- C Solutions: Any time and effort given to this task would save much more time in this process on a daily basis and consequently make all circulation staff's work life easier.
- D Recommendations: Put together a small team to go to each library and evaluate the layout of circulation workspace for efficiency. Determine how best to rearrange (if any rearranging is necessary) and allocate staff to rearrange as needed.
- III Supply more than one bin for each book drop. Remove the full bin from the book drop and replace it with an empty one. Discharge items directly from the bin rather than unloading it onto a cart then discharging.
- A Benefits: Anytime we can cut one step from the process we save time. Removing items from the book drop and loading them onto a cart takes approximately 15 minutes to complete. If we can cut this step from the process, we save 15 minutes for each full book drop emptied.
- B Drawbacks:
- 1 There would be an added expense of purchasing more than one bin for each book drop at those libraries that do not already have more than one.
  - 2 Many workrooms are small and do not allow space for an extra bin.
  - 3 Many work areas where discharging is done do not accommodate a bin but do accommodate a cart.
- C Solutions:
- 1 Evaluate each library to determine feasibility.
  - 2 Purchase bins for those libraries that can accommodate.
  - 3 Some libraries can do this partially; some cannot do this at all.
  - 4 Bins should have a bottom that rises as it is emptied to avoid health issues that may arise from bending down into it to retrieve library materials.
- D Recommendation: Evaluate each library and purchase bins for those libraries that can accommodate. Make this a part of the process when at all feasible. Some libraries cannot accommodate and thus will need to continue unloading a book drop onto a cart.
- IV Ensure all items have a usable pocket for the date due card. When an AV item does not have a usable pocket, the date due card gets put in any spot convenient for the staff member charging the item to the customer. Once that item is returned, the staff member has to search the item to find the card. Many times the card is placed inside the clear plastic cover of an AV item. When that happens, the staff member has to completely open the item and pull the card out. This slows the process down a great deal.

- A Benefits: This will cut time off the process and allow it to run smoother.
  - B Drawbacks: It will take a little extra time to replace each damaged pocket.
  - C Solutions: Any time used to replace a damaged pocket now, will save much more time each time the item is returned and a date due card is removed. This makes this suggestion a necessity.
  - D Recommendation: Each library should ensure that there is a process in place to replace damaged, unusable pockets at the time of discovery.
- V Ensure that each AV item has a case in good condition. When AV cases are broken, they tend to fall apart when they are opened. That means the staff member checking it will have to put it all back together before they can continue the process.
- A Benefits: Cases will be much easier to handle and will make the process run more efficiently.
  - B Drawbacks: It will take some extra time to replace damaged cases.
  - C Solution: Each case would be replaced once. This time used replacing a case will save much more time for each time the item with a working case is returned.
  - D Recommendation: Each library should ensure that there is a process in place to replaced damaged AV cases at the point of discovery.
- VI Ensure that AV items with multiple parts have the number of parts prominently displayed, in a common location.
- A Benefits: Many times, when there is not a number prominently displayed which lists the number of parts, a staff member has to search for that number. Sometimes it is in very small print somewhere on the back of the item. Sometimes it is not on the item at all. This suggestion will make it unnecessary for a staff member to waste time searching for that number.
  - B Drawbacks: It will take time to add that number to each item in the collection and to insure that it is added to each new item purchased.
  - C Solutions: A small amount of time used in advance will eliminate a large amount of time in this process on a daily basis.
  - D Recommendation: Each AV item with multiple parts should have the number of parts prominently displayed in a common location.
- VII Do not reuse used hold in transit slips.
- A Benefits: This will eliminate confusion in the long run. Used holds slips can be recycled and used as scrap paper elsewhere in the library.
  - B Drawbacks: No drawbacks identified.
  - C Solutions: These used hold in transit slips make excellent scrap paper for public use and staff use.
  - D Recommendation: Holds slips should not be reused.
- VIII Do not use date due cards, use one printed receipt that has the title and date due of each item checked out.
- A Benefits:

- 1 Approximately 1 hour and 15 minutes is spent each day on stamping date due cards. This eliminates that time from the process.
- 2 Time spent by staff and volunteers for this 1 hour and 15 minutes could be well used elsewhere.
- 3 Time spent checking out materials at the circulation desk could be cut at least in half for each customer.
- 4 This will eliminate 15 minutes from the process for each cart of books discharged and returned to the shelf.

B Drawbacks:

- 1 This will eliminate the usefulness of the Checkpoint security system.

C Solutions:

- 1 Checkpoint gates in many libraries are in a location that makes it very difficult for staff to monitor. This compromises the security system to some extent already.
- 2 Most staff are unsure as to how to determine if an item is being stolen or if a date due card was just dislodged.
- 3 Most staff feel quite uncomfortable approaching a customer who set the gate alarm off to ask to go through their possessions.

D Recommendation: Choose two branches to do a pilot project.

Inventory before, during and after at both libraries one with date due cards and one without. Then determine if the loss in materials outweighs the cost of staff time used on date due cards. (DB would be willing to volunteer to test by not using date due cards.)

IX Supply at least one portable barcode scanner for use at each branch. (This is a scanner that can be taken with you into the stacks or to wherever you may need to use it.)

A Benefits:

- 1 Would be a distinct advantage in doing inventory locally. Branches can keep much closer track of their collections.
- 2 This would also make the job of doing the router run much more smoothly. If the staff can scan the item at the shelf, they only need take those items captured for holds back with them. In the process as it exists now, more than half the books pulled for router get taken back to be reshelfed as they are not trapped for a hold.
- 3 The process of unpacking deliveries could benefit greatly from this as well.

B Drawbacks:

- 1 There would be the added expense of purchasing portable scanners for each branch.
- 2 There is some noise associated with the use of these scanners.

C Solutions:

- 1 Time saved by using these scanners would be well worth the price paid to purchase them for each branch.

- 2 The noise associated with their use is not enough to distract customers.
- D Recommendations: Purchase at least one portable barcode scanner for each branch to be used with local inventory, router process, and deliveries as well as other potential uses.

One experiment tried is well worth noting here. Deerfield Beach tried an assembly line method to work completely through this process. As the process is now, it takes approximately 183 minutes to complete (3 hours, 3 minutes). In the assembly line, one person stood in the book drop, removed the item from the drop and removed the card then handed it to the second person who checked for parts then handed it to a third person who discharged then sorted onto 3 carts. One cart held adult materials, the second held juvenile materials and the third held items to go to other locations. Once everything was discharged, each of the 3 participating staff members took a cart to shelve. The entire process took less than 25 minutes. With 3 staff members that translates to a total of 75 minutes of staff time used. That cut the time used for this process by more than 50%. This was done during closed hours at DB. If it were done during open hours it would negate time saved as staff attention is always drawn away from the task at hand to provide unsational service to all. The team discussed this idea for improving the process and found there to be 2 insurmountable problems with it. 1. There is almost never a time when a branch can afford 3 staff members to be dedicated to this task for 25 minutes. 2. We found it difficult to justify having any given 3 staff members in the building during closed hours for 25 minutes per full book drop per day. Many libraries' book drops fill up multiple times in a day.