

## ***“Librarian’s Shelf” by Jill Owens***

New check-out options coming to the library

Last week reference librarian, Heather St. Clair, highlighted some rearranging taking place at the library. This week I'd like to tell you about new check-out features you will see before another month passes.

Staff has considered the self-check option for patrons for a few years as a way to decrease patron wait time at the circulation desk and boost circulation, but decided that the public access computer lab upgrade should be the priority project. Once that was completed, staff turned attention to investigating the patron self-check idea and requested it as a capital improvement item for the current fiscal year.

Early last winter staff sent an email inquiry to directors whose libraries are in the consortium or in the Public Resource Library Group.

A staff committee came up with many follow-up inquiries about what the self-checks were able to do, concentrating heavily on user-friendliness, and capabilities for add-ons should we choose those in the future.

After investigating our options with other libraries' experiences as well as issues such as software compatibility, we went through the quote process during which we asked more follow-up questions of the vendors. Finally we put in our order for a self-check kiosk.

We believe a self-check option will improve customer service for those on-the-go patrons who are trying to get in and out over lunch hours or other demanding times of their day. The circulation (a.k.a. check-out) desk lines can sometimes be slowed with time-consuming (but necessary) patron services or transactions such as making new cards, sorting out overdues, damaged materials, fines, and other processes.

With the new kiosk, the patron who just wants to get his book and leave can go to the self-check rather than waiting in line. This check-out “express” alternative is a great fit with the way our society lives now, while still leaving the option that people who prefer may go to the circulation desk for check-out with a staff member.

Patrons will also be able to use the kiosk to renew eligible items with only a library card.

One other patron convenience staff will be starting before the Summer Reading Program kicks off is the ability to check out at the youth room desk upstairs. While not self-serve such as the new kiosk will be, there will still be another check-out choice for patrons whose selections are completed upstairs.

These two new check-out opportunities will not only serve the people who use them, but will also make waits shorter for the people who will stick with the traditional stop at the circulation desk.

Library staff is constantly on the lookout for workable ways to improve patron access to materials, customer service, and ease of use of the library. Some ideas take a while to investigate and budget, and others show themselves not to be viable, but keep the ideas coming via suggestion box or staff and we'll be sure to give them due consideration. Stop in often this summer and keep an eye on the progress of our current projects.