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ABSTRACT

Papers on two projects are presented that deal with the effective use of volunteers in rural public libraries. The first paper on simplifying manual circulation techniques, explains a circulation system that volunteers in a rural library can use easily and efficiently. Setting only four due dates a month and filing all materials alphabetically in only adult and juvenile files makes it possible for volunteers to easily locate, check in, and renew materials. All four due dates are stamped on circulation cards, and the date that is uppermost is the due date for the material. Renewal simply means turning the card to the appropriate new date. The second paper describes the effective use of volunteers in the Chino Valley Public Library (Arizona), where volunteers perform services in a variety of ways, for an average of 200 volunteer hours a month. The volunteer presence is vital to the continued operation of this library. (Contains 11 references.) (SLD)

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SIMPLIFYING MANUAL CIRCULATION TECHNIQUES
FOR VOLUNTEERS IN RURAL PUBLIC LIBRARY SETTINGS
FOR GREATER EFFICIENCY

by

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SIMPLIFYING MANUAL CIRCULATION TECHNIQUES
FOR VOLUNTEERS IN RURAL PUBLIC LIBRARY SETTINGS
FOR GREATER EFFICIENCY

The Chino Valley Public Library is a small public library serving a rapidly growing area in North Central Arizona. The 1990 estimated population is 5,295, with the population having doubled within the last ten years. Chino Valley is part of a tri-city area which includes Prescott and Prescott Valley. It is the second fastest growing area in the state of Arizona, with a significant retirement population.

The Chino Valley Public Library has a large corps of volunteer workers. One of the most significant and important functions of the volunteers is the circulation of library materials. Volunteers assist in checking out materials, checking in materials, filing circulation records, preparing overdue notices, and shelving library materials. Although the library is being automated, this is a slow process and will take approximately 14 months to complete.

In order to keep confusion and errors to a minimum, a very efficient circulation system has been devised. This system has also proven to be quite advantageous to library patrons who wish to renew materials by telephone.

The library has four due dates per month. Materials are due on the 7th, the 14th, the 21st, or the 28th. Circulation cards have been printed with these due dates. If the due date falls on a date when the library is closed, the material is due the following work day. When a patron renews a book by telephone, the patron is instructed to change the date card which is already in the pocket of the book to reflect the new due date. The library patron can do this immediately, because the new due date is already on the card. The library staff does not have to rely on the patron to write a due date on the card.

Instead of filing the circulation cards by each date that material is due, all cards are filed in one alphabetic or numerical sequence for adult materials and another alphabetic or numerical sequence for young adult and juvenile materials.

The numerical sequence used is that of the Dewey Decimal Classification system for non-fiction materials. The alphabetical sequence used is that of the last name of the author for fictional materials. The advantage of this approach is best when the material is returned. The circulation volunteer has only two places to look for material--in the juvenile card file for juvenile materials and the adult card file for adult materials. Overdue materials are filed together in a numeric or alphabetic sequence in special overdue files. The circulation volunteer can be trained in record time, because it is not necessary to remember a wide variety of different circulation files. This is extremely important when the volunteer only works from two to four hours per week. When volunteer tasks are extremely complex and the volunteer works a limited amount of hours per week, it is extremely difficult for most volunteers to latch on to complex and complicated library tasks.

This simplified approach to manual library circulation has greatly reduced the incidence of circulation card snags, or library circulation cards that cannot be found when the materials are returned. Library patrons like it too, because it is very easy for them to change a given circulation card in a book. They do not have to hunt around for something to write with, to write a new date due on a particular date card. Should they forget to change the date in their book, the book card is still easy to retrieve for volunteer library staff members because all of the cards that are in circulation are comingled in an appropriate file--one for adult materials, another for juvenile and young adult materials, and a third for overdue materials.

If your circulation area is staffed largely by volunteers working limited hours per week, and you are experiencing a large ratio of unretrievable circulation cards when your books and materials are returned, you might try this approach to circulation in your public library setting. It is simple, it is innovative, and most importantly, it works! The volunteers are pleased because they have

a high success rate when checking in materials, and the library patrons who renew materials by telephone are pleased because their renewal experiences are hassle free--as they renew their books by telephone, and as they return materials that have been renewed.

DUE THE 7TH

CHINO VALLEY PUBLIC LIBRARY
1020 W. Palamino
Chino Valley, AZ. 86323
636-2687

Sample circulation
date due cards
used at the
Chino Valley
Public Library
Chino Valley, AZ
86323

PLEASE LEAVE CARD AS PLACED IN THE BOOK
FOR THE CORRECT DATE DUE.

For people who like that kind of a book,
this is the kind of book they will like.

Abraham Lincoln

PLEASE DO NOT REMOVE THIS CARD FROM POCKET
LEAVE CARD AS PLACED IN THE BOOK

IF THE LIBRARY IS CLOSED ON THE DUE
DATE, BOOKS ARE DUE THE NEXT WORKING
DAY.

YOUR BOOKS MAY BE RENEWED BY PHONE
OR IN PERSON.

PLEASE LEAVE CARD AS PLACED IN THE BOOK
FOR THE CORRECT DUE DATE.

CHINO VALLEY PUBLIC LIBRARY

DUE THE 14TH

DATE DUE

DUE THE 28TH

CHINO VALLEY PUBLIC LIBRARY

PLEASE LEAVE CARD AS PLACED IN THE BOOK
FOR THE CORRECT DUE DATE.

Today's opportunities erase yesterday's
failures. Gene Brown

Books are more than books. They are the
life, the very heart and core of ages
past, the reason why men lived and worked
and died, the essence and quintessence of
their lives. Amy Lowell

PLEASE LEAVE CARD AS PLACED IN THE BOOK
FOR CORRECT DUE DATE.

CHINO VALLEY PUBLIC LIBRARY

DUE THE 21ST

DATE DUE

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EMANCIPATING VOLUNTEER LIBRARY APPEAL:
A RURAL ARIZONA PUBLIC LIBRARY EXPERIENCE

by

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May 10, 1993



ENHANCING VOLUNTEER LIBRARY APPEAL:
A RURAL ARIZONA PUBLIC LIBRARY EXPERIENCE

Are you working in a small, rural public library? Are you faced with dwindling financial resources and rising costs? Don't despair. Help may be on the way. You might consider implementing or expanding an existing volunteer program in your library setting.

Volunteers can be trained to do a wide variety of library tasks, including but not limited to:

circulation

reference

technical services

public relations

fund raising

training and recruitment

The possibilities are endless, and what is done in any particular library is completely up to the individual in charge.

Arizona's Chino Valley Public Library uses volunteers in a wide variety of ways. The library recently moved into a 4,000 sq. ft. addition. Volunteers were used to do most of the moving, working side by side with paid library staff. Volunteers are regularly used for shelving materials, filing catalog cards, repairing books, filing circulation cards, public relations tasks, children's programming, display and sign preparation, material processing, and fund raising. An active Friends of the Library works hand in hand with the library staff to accomplish many goals and tasks. Volunteers regularly contribute 200 hours per month performing a variety of library tasks. Each volunteer is interviewed and screened carefully, so that the tasks that are preferred by the volunteer can be assigned to that volunteer whenever possible.

Before recruiting volunteers, the library staff conducts careful research into what is specifically needed at the library. When a volunteer is interested

in becoming part of the volunteer staff, several different tasks, each of which has come out of this research, are suggested during the application process. As services in the library are continually evolving, volunteers often make suggestions as to other tasks that they might perform. All of these suggestions are taken seriously. According to an organization called PROVOL (Professional Volunteer Management Training and Development), the research aspect of volunteerism is frequently overlooked. Individuals and organizations frequently start recruiting before they have accomplished the necessary research to know why they need the volunteer and what they want the volunteer to do. PROVOL presents seminars on the four R's of volunteer management, which they state as research, recruiting, retention, and recognition. The Chino Valley Public Library is working hard to adapt these suggestions into its volunteer library program.

The Chino Valley Public Library experience may be unique in rural America. Chino Valley is located in a rapidly growing area in North Central Arizona. The town's population has doubled in less than ten years. Although the library is only ten years old, growth has been so steady that the library has already had two additions that have more than tripled its size. Although a significant priority for town funding sources, funding has not kept up with the demand for services due to tremendous growth. This is why the Chino Valley Public Library volunteer program is vital to the survival of the library and the people that it serves. More than twenty volunteers help keep the library open thirty hours a week. Without a volunteer presence, the library could not offer many of its programs and services. Other rural libraries faced with scenarios similar to that of Chino Valley could well follow its example.

Volunteers are often recruited by other volunteers. Because the library is a pleasant place to work, volunteers are eager to work there. They come from all walks of life--from the retired professional anxious to remain active to the recent college graduate anxious to record valuable local work experience on

a resume with the hope of securing or upgrading present employment. They come from all walks of life and represent all socio-economic stratas. In an effort to share a positive library experience with prospective volunteers, the library uses public service announcements and feature articles in the local news media. Recruitment is an on going process which is never ending.

Volunteer retention is always in the forefront. A concerted effort is made to thank each volunteer each time they work for the efforts they have made on behalf of the library. Birthdays are recognized, and each positive aspect of the volunteer experience while in the library is emphasized. Whenever possible, the volunteer efforts are placed center stage, so that the library patrons can know and recognize the efforts which are put forth in their behalf. The end result of these efforts is that the volunteer is made to feel wanted and needed, and the retention rate is extremely high. Many volunteers have worked in the library setting for many years, and some have been with the library since it opened.

Each volunteer is recognized for all that they have done. During National Volunteer Week, April 18th through April 24th, 1993, an advertisement was placed in the local news media recognizing the library volunteers for their collective efforts. In addition, each volunteer received a letter from the library director thanking them for their library volunteer efforts. This letter was mailed out during National Volunteer Week, which in 1993 was the same as National Library Week. This gave the library two reasons to celebrate.

In an effort to become more involved with volunteer activities in the local area, the library director serves on an advisory board for the Yavapai Volunteer Center, which is making a concerted effort to network agencies using volunteers. He has also joined the local chapter of DOVIA (Directors of Volunteers in Agencies). Extremely constructive feedback has emerged from his involvement with these agencies. The Yavapai Volunteer Center has supplied the Chino Valley Public Library with two excellent volunteers in the last few months. These volunteers have adopted seriously

the library's motto of service to its community, and have rarely missed assigned working times for any reason.

The volunteer horizon at the Chino Valley Public Library seems endless. Volunteers in this library setting do make a difference! Volunteers can make a difference in your library too!

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