



# King County Library System Director's Report November 2015

---

The annual **Sorting SmackDown** between KCLS and New York Public Library (NYPL) took place on Tuesday, November 10. KCLS and NYPL are the only libraries in the country using the amazing Automated Materials Handling system we have out at Preston. Each year, a date and hour is chosen during which time each library system sorts as many items as they can to see which team is the fastest. During the allotted hour, KCLS staff sorted 12,572, beating NYPL by just over 200. While staff gears up to test their speed during the competition, our team regularly sorts tens of thousands of items every single day. The challenge is mostly for bragging rights, but it is also a great opportunity to recognize the amazing work of our staff at Preston and their counterparts in New York. This year we had an unprecedented level of media coverage—The New York Times, The Seattle Times, NPR, Boston Globe, Issaquah Press and NBC Nightly News with Lester Holt—which was unexpected and exciting. The friendly competition is now in its fifth year and KCLS reigns supreme with a 3-2 record over NYPL. A big shout out to Tony Miranda, Steve Albert and their hard-working team. If you haven't seen it already, check out the video that shows the staff in action. It features our very own Timatha Weber who can process up to 80 totes per hour (our benchmark standard is 35-40!) <http://bcove.me/3ht14347>.



KCLS has installed 10 new **bike repair stations** at the Renton, Newcastle, Bellevue, Redmond, Kirkland, Bothell, Kenmore, Federal Way and Burien Libraries, and the Issaquah Service Center. These simple stations have a small footprint and include an air pump, a rack to hold the bike at eye level and a set of cabled tools to complete minor fixes. This will provide a great new service that will help to encourage more patrons to ride their bikes, not just to the library but throughout their community. Each station costs \$1,026 and we will add additional stations in the near future.

Recently, we were asked to research the KCLS **Trustee appointment process** with regard to whether a Trustee is able to continue to serve beyond the end of their term until a replacement is appointed. I met with KCLS legal counsel who reviewed the overall appointment process. Library Trustees are authorized and governed by State law, not County law. While there is a County ordinance that allows citizens to serve on King County boards and

commissions beyond the end of their term until a replacement is appointed, this ordinance does not apply to the KCLS Board of Trustees, which is independent of the County. State law requires that library Trustees must vacate their seat on the day their term expires, with no provision to extend that time. State law gives the County the authority to appoint a Trustee, but the County can pass no laws or policies that further govern or direct board policies or procedures. There have been attempts to amend the state law to provide an exception clause, but none have ever moved forward. An important distinction is when a Trustee has been reappointed for a second term but not yet confirmed by the Council. In those instances, the Trustee can continue to serve as a full voting member of the Board while awaiting confirmation.

KCLS continues to build a successful partnership with **AARP**, offering 17 workshops in the past month that served close to 200 participants. Of those attending, 73 noted that this was their first time coming to a library program. AARP's national office recognized Older Adult Programs Specialist Wendy Pender with a GOLD award for innovation and collaboration for her work with local AARP affiliates.

KCLS has launched a new online resource called **BiblioBoard**. The platform provides access to self-published digital books and offers a vehicle for local authors to present their own works, which are then immediately accessible to KCLS patrons. The submissions can also be considered for distribution to other libraries using this service to develop an even broader audience. Books being considered at a national level are vetted by a panel of reviewers through Library Journal.

In early December KCLS will launch a new digital streaming service called **Hoopla**, an online resource providing access to video, music and digital comics. Content can be streamed through a web browser or downloaded through iOS or Android apps. All Hoopla content is available simultaneously; there's no limit to the number of patrons who can borrow a particular title at a time. It works on a pay-per-circulated item model, which means that KCLS pays a small fee each time a title is checked out. In order to manage the KCLS collection budget, patrons will be limited in their monthly checkouts.

KCLS held three **public Budget Hearings** November 3, 4 and 5 at the Redmond, Renton and Federal Way Libraries. Holding the first two sessions immediately following a Library Advisory Board forum proved successful, as most of them stayed for the Budget Hearing as well. Approximately 70 participants had an opportunity to ask questions and offer feedback regarding 2016 budget priorities, goals and strategies. There were also 177 views of the Preliminary Budget online (89 unique views). Questions/comments from the audience included:

- Does KCLS plan to put forward another bond for new capital projects?
  - *Not at this time.*
- Now that the capital projects are winding down, how does that affect the budget?
  - *KCLS expects all remaining capital projects to be completed in 2016, but will continue to make payments on the current bond through 2024.*
- Where does the money go that comes from property sales? Are there additional properties available to sell at this time?
  - *Funds received from the sale of properties go into the general fund and can be used to cover capital projects costs that may exceed the original cost forecast. At this time, the Duvall Library property is listed for sale, and the Foster Library property will be listed next year.*
- How are decisions made about how much to spend on what? How does the collections budget get divided among different categories?
  - *We start each budget year with a rough estimate of revenue projections. For 2016, the projections are low—only a 2.4% increase is anticipated. We use our budget strategy document to help guide overall decisions so that we are meeting our stated goals and try to allocate funds so that there is a baseline of stable funding for all priority areas. But we have very little room for new programs and services so we look at demand and try to allocate additional funds where there is significant use of services and resources.*
- Why is the substitute budget being cut by \$100,000?
  - *Over the past few years, the budget for substitute wages has increased significantly. However, each year we have underspent that line item by several hundred thousand dollars. Our projected budget for 2016 is based on what was actually spent in 2014 and 2015, as opposed to what was budgeted.*
- Is there a way to manage DVDs differently in locations where they are frequently stolen?
  - *We can look into this as an operational solution, but not as part of the budget process.*

Denise Siers' recent retirement as Director of Services Strategies presented us with an unexpected opportunity to think about how Public Services can best move forward in 2016. Toward this end, I have two changes in our **senior management team** to announce. After careful consideration, we have decided to bring Services Strategies and Mobile Services together again in one department. Our Mobile Services staff do an amazing job delivering services to the community and while the method of delivery is different, the work is closely aligned to the work of the Services Strategies department. Having both teams more closely connected will strengthen our ability to serve our communities and provide greater support for our staff. Effective immediately, Mobile Services Director **Tess Mayer** will be the Director of this new department.

During my first year, I have been listening to feedback from staff and community members about the things they value at KCLS, as well as the challenges we face. One "theme" that has come up repeatedly is the practice of continually launching new initiatives without a clear vision for what we want to accomplish. While trying out new ideas is a great thing, there has been a feeling that KCLS has been chasing after every shiny object that has caught our eye. Various new programs and services fell short of their mark and some seemed to disappear as quickly as they launched. Many expressed "to what end?" when thinking about some of the things we've tried in the past that clearly were not tied to an overall strategy for leading KCLS into the future. These concerns are quite common in large organizations and stem from the need to have very clear thinking and communication around the development of new ideas, services and programs. To achieve this, I am creating a Department of Strategy and Planning to ensure that KCLS' efforts are more focused and intentional in the future. **Holly Koelling** will be the Director of this new department and Jennifer Wiseman will move with her to continue her critical work in research, planning and evaluation. We will launch a search for a new Director of Library Operations in the coming weeks and Holly will continue to serve in that position until we have found her replacement.