

Memo

To: Montana State Library Commission

From: Sarah McHugh, Director Statewide Library Resources
Jennie Stapp, State Librarian

Date: November 22, 2013

Re: Montana Courier Efforts

I. Montana Courier Pilot

In 2007 fourteen Montana librarians and library users were appointed to a one-year MSL Fulfillment Task Force to engage in discussions and study of various fulfillment issues -- resource sharing, interlibrary loans, delivery systems, cooperative collection development and cooperative purchasing programs. This task force was asked to bring appropriate research and recommendations to the Network Advisory Council, the State Librarian and the State Library Commission.

Integral to their discussions was a statewide library courier system. The physical movement of library materials around the state was seen as an essential part of an overall discovery, request and retrieval system, which included delivery methods for e-content as well as physical materials.

Following lengthy discussions and investigations of other statewide courier systems, the Fulfillment Task Force defined a statewide courier as "a dependable, reliable and predictable delivery service that, with a desired level of frequency and security, physically moves library materials from one library to another or from a library to a library patron." This definition continues to guide us today.

In 2009 the Montana Legislature approved funding for a courier pilot at \$160,000 for the FY09-11 biennium. Planning for a possible pilot undertaken the previous fall shifted to high gear. The decision by MSL staff was to build a structure similar to the [Orbis Cascade Alliance Courier Program](#), with hubs or drop sites providing service to identified

participating libraries. The legislative funding covered the cost of a single courier that delivered and picked up materials from these drop sites. Libraries utilizing a drop site were expected to obtain a method of getting materials to and from their drop site. Based on expected volume, certain drop sites received courier service five days per week and others received service two days per week. In some areas, mail was expected to remain the primary option for moving materials, due to geographical challenges and low volume.

A major focus of the pilot was the creation and implementation of courier participant requirements. These requirements included:

Drop site:

- Provide space for the number of bins needed for each served library and at least one large outgoing bin
- Communication with served libraries about days open and closed
- Relate courier problems to the courier or MSL
- Recruit served libraries in their area
- Not responsible for finding a way for the served library to move materials to and from the drop site or for covering that cost
- Drop sites are participants as well

Served Libraries (All libraries participating):

- Find a way and budget for moving materials to and from their drop site
- Make use of the pilot's routing slip and pilot codes
- Make use of standardized totes/bins that protect materials
- Keep statistics (number of items sent via courier pilot)

Courier:

- Meet established delivery/pickup schedules within 1 hour
- Sort delivered material at drop site
- Initial number of totes per drop site to pickup, without additional charge: 2
- Initial amount of wait time per drop site to sort: 20 minutes
- Use Pilot's Routing slips, to include the created Courier Code (Town, Library Name)
- Keep trip statistics by library

Medical Logistics Solutions, a medical supply courier based in Denver with field offices in Montana, was awarded the contract through a Request for Proposal solicited by MSL and evaluated by the Network Advisory Council. The pilot launched in April, 2010.

These goals and desired outcomes steered the pilot during its duration, from April, 2010-June 2011:

- A courier system consisting of drop sites offering 5 and 2 day/week services covers the delivery of physical library material around the state;

- Staff workload is offset by increased use of automation locally and courier assistance at each drop site;
- Patrons and library staff easily identify the service and their library's participation in it as a statewide, cohesive project;
- Wherever possible, patrons receive the same lending policies;
- Wherever possible, patrons request materials via a direct, place hold function;
- Patrons can checkout and return material at any Montana library;
- Floating collections grow around the state;
- Patron ability to search across disparate local systems, federated search and central authentication services are realized as part of the pilot;
- Participation in a voluntary Statewide Library Access program increases as a direct result of the pilot.

During the course of the pilot, 12 libraries joined as drop sites and also received courier services. 23 libraries utilized the courier pilot through their assigned drop site. A total of 35 libraries participated in the pilot during its 15 months.

Libraries were asked to send monthly statistics to MSL of total items sent via the courier. 29,578 items were moved by the courier over the course of the pilot. To gain an understanding of the cost savings provided to libraries using the courier, participants and MSL agreed that the full cost of processing an Interlibrary Loan transaction (staff time required, mailing supplies and postage) was estimated to be \$10.00 per item. Cost savings to participating libraries grew as the pilot's participants and resulting volume increased during the pilot.

| Month | Total Items Reported Sent | Total Savings at \$10.00/item |
|---------------|----------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| April, 2010 | 110 | \$1,100.00 |
| May | 340 | \$3,400.00 |
| June | 472 | \$4,720.00 |
| July | 729 | \$7,290.00 |
| August | 877 | \$8,770.00 |
| September | 1647 | \$16,470.00 |
| October | 2103 | \$21,030.00 |
| November | 2244 | \$22,440.00 |
| December | 1967 | \$19,670.00 |
| January, 2011 | 2739 | \$27,390.00 |
| February | 3038 | \$30,380.00 |
| March | 3659 | \$36,590.00 |
| April | 3294 | \$32,940.00 |
| May | 3358 | \$33,580.00 |
| June | 2874 | \$28,740.00 |
| Totals | 29,578 | \$294,510.00 |

Total statewide savings: \$134,510

The MSL courier effort was unable to continue once the legislative funding was expended. A concerted effort was made by Montana libraries, MLA and MSL to renew the legislative funding during the 2011 session. Though individual legislators supported the courier effort, there was also the feeling on the part of some legislators that the money libraries saved by participating in the pilot could be spent on covering the costs of a courier. The conclusion of the courier as an MSL pilot was especially frustrating because the pilot had begun to reach a significant volume, which was crucial to its continued success.

II. Courier Effort "Phase Two"

In 2012, the directors of the Butte Silver Bow Public Library, the Lewis and Clark Public Library and the Great Falls Public Library initiated discussions to revitalize a courier group. The structure for this courier is similar to the pilot in the use of hubs and destination libraries. The Butte Silver Bow library director, Lee Miller, negotiated an agreement with [Critelli Couriers](#), a statewide courier based in Butte, to provide delivery and pickup services and for expansion of the project as new libraries joined. Starting with Butte, Helena, Great Falls and Livingston, the number of participating libraries grew significantly when the 30 Montana Shared Catalog Partner Libraries and their branches shifted from the Rimrock Stages bus service to Critelli and joined this courier effort. Missoula Public Library serves as a major hub for many of these libraries. The University of Montana Mansfield Library, the Montana State University Renne Library and the MSU-Billings library are now also participating in the courier.

The libraries of the Critelli Courier alliance have all signed agreements directly with Critelli, individually specifying their preferred frequency of service. Through coordinating efforts at Butte Silver-Bow Public Library, the alliance has negotiated a standard consortium rate for each requested pickup and drop off. All supplies and containers are provided by the participating libraries and must conform to consortium standards. The library must invest in a set of 10 Demco crates (\$185). Each scheduled stop costs \$20. A \$3 surcharge per crate is added when more than 5 crates are to be picked up at one stop. Critelli bills each participating library directly every 30 days.

Butte Silver Bow serves as the central provider of information and coordination, utilizing the MLA site to share details of the project (<http://mtlib.org/Courier/default.asp>). The alliance is currently forming an interim advisory council to assist with management and planning and the creation of by-laws.

Critelli maintains commercial insurance, including general liability to cover damages to materials for which the courier would be found at fault (though to date, there have been no reported incidents of damaged items). The Critelli Courier alliance meets the criteria for a courier program as defined by the Fulfillment Task Force.

MSL has assisted the Critelli Courier alliance by providing LSTA funds to six libraries as startup monies to join the courier. This investment allowed these libraries to generate the cost savings gained by participating in the program to fund their on-going

participation. MSL also helped to negotiate the overall arrangement with Critelli and facilitates meetings and presentations as requested.

Courier service in the northeast corner of the state is provided by a Job Services employee based out of Glasgow who travels between Glasgow and Wolf Point daily during the week, stopping by the libraries to pick up or drop off materials along the way. Job Services travels to Plentywood, Malta, and Scobey once a month. Library staff at those locations takes advantage of the opportunity to use the courier on that day if it can be used to fill interlibrary loan requests to the other libraries in a timely manner. Weekday service between Glasgow and Wolf Point is convenient and helpful; however, because the service to Malta, Plentywood, and Scobey is infrequent and dependent upon volunteer hours, overall regional service does not meet the criteria for an established courier program as defined by the Fulfillment Task Force.

III. MSL Assistance with the Courier

In response to requests from libraries, the Network Advisory Council presented a survey to the current courier participants last April and May, to help determine:

- The impact of the current effort
- The primary needs of the participants
- The level of interest in expanding the project both within Montana and regionally
- Whether libraries felt expansion to a more regional territory (surrounding states) would be beneficial
- In what ways MSL's increased participation would be beneficial to the project
- What role they saw MSL playing in the future of the effort

The survey results were discussed with the Commission at its June 12, 2013 meeting and recommendations from the Network Advisory Council regarding MSL's role in the current courier effort were shared. At the Network Advisory Council's November 12 meeting, the consensus was that, based on recent communication from the courier alliance, there continues to be a wish to have MSL assist with the current courier effort in the ways shared with the Commission in June. These ways are:

- Facilitate and provide centralized communication tools
- Collect consistent and standardized statistics
- Provide support to libraries in troubleshooting issues with the current service provider
- Participate in contract discussions between individual participating libraries and the current service provider to ensure standardization of service for all participants
- Provide standards for labeling, turn-around time, reporting closed days and changes to delivery schedules
- Investigate and develop, formalize, or strengthen regional partnerships within Montana in order to expand the reach of the current project

- Investigate and develop the opportunities for a courier effort that includes the two flagship academic institutions in Montana and their satellite campuses
- Investigate and develop the possibilities for joining regional courier consortia efforts in order to expand the reach of the current project

Should MSL become engaged in supporting the current courier effort in the ways listed above, the single most significant potential cost may be associated with bringing about an opportunity for the group to join a regional courier consortia effort. This cost would be based on what a regional courier consortia would charge Montana libraries to link into their system. This would be affected by the courier supplier currently under contract with the other consortia, that supplier's rates to expand and possible membership fees.

IV. Statewide situation

The map included with this memo represents, to the best of our abilities, the current movement of materials around the state, in various ways that is not via the post office.

In addition to the Critelli courier network, this map identifies libraries in the northeast corner of the state that rely on a Job Services courier to share materials. The Job Services courier group is completely separate from the Critelli group at this time.

The map suggests possibilities for connecting Hi Line libraries with the Critelli courier via Havre, or possibly Glendive. Development of a courier corridor in the northeast corner of the state may also strengthen potential for joining in an interstate courier system, Minitex (<http://www.minitex.umn.edu/delivery/libraries/>), from the east. Minitex serves public, academic, and special libraries in North Dakota, South Dakota, Minnesota, and Wisconsin, and delivers via UPS and USPS as far west as Williston, North Dakota, a location that is also served by Critelli.

Critelli serves additional Montana cities north of Great Falls that are not currently part of this library courier network. Development of courier service to libraries in this region, particularly near the intersection of I-15 and Highway 2, may be worth investigating to determine whether additional nearby drop sites would improve volume moving through Great Falls or Havre.

On the west side of the state, Missoula serves as the hub and sorting facility for MSC Partners courier activity, and also serves Critelli libraries outside of Partners. The most apparent possibility to investigate for interstate resource sharing, from the west, would be the [Orbis Cascade Alliance Courier System](#), which serves 87 primarily academic libraries in Oregon, Washington, and Idaho, and which delivers by courier every week day as far east as Coeur d'Alene, Idaho.