

GIVE ME A HOME WHERE THE BOOKMOBILE ROAMS

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In 1982 all I knew about Bookmobiles was how to spell the word, and that was "iffy". I knew it was a large bus-like vehicle that I occasionally passed in my travels up and down the road. It was nothing more to me, nothing to warrant anything but a passing thought. In late 1982 I packed it in with the State of Nevada after working for them for 14 years and found myself at loose ends back home in Winnemucca again. The Humboldt County Library advertised for a Bookmobile driver. I figured I could drive the thing and I knew what a library was, so I applied. Shortly thereafter I was hired and my education began in earnest.

The Bookmobile, now in use, was bought with federal and state funds for \$16,000 in March of 1969. When I came on the scene, its first 100,000 miles were in the past and the second 100,000 were passing underneath its wheels. It was old and tired but still able to get up and down the road.

I was born in this part of Nevada so I was familiar with the country in the county. The area served by the Bookmobile encompasses about 10,000 square miles in Humboldt County and Pershing County in Northern Nevada. The land ranges from broad river valley bottom land to high desert to open expanses of alkali plains where the rivers and streams sink into the Black Rock Desert. The solemn beauty of the region is lost to the many tourists who travel along Interstate 80 and guarded jealously by the few who are native to the area.

The areas the Bookmobile serves area alive with the creatures from the kingdom of the wild. On every run to Unionville we see at least 10 head of deer grazing in the fields and orchards that are nestled beneath the steep walls of Buena Vista Canyon. Less than 200 yards from the Jackson Mountain School stop, I have had to wait for a herd of 38 pronghorn antelope to cross the road before I could pass. After opening up for business at the school, I watched them slowly grazing, completely secure in their surroundings. The most abundant members of the animal kingdom that we encounter are the rabbits: jackrabbits and cottontails everywhere and domestic rabbits of varying colors up in Buena Vista Canyon. Eagles and hawks sit astride the power poles and fence lines everywhere we go and contemplate the Bookmobile's noisy passing. This last spring we checked out books less than 100 feet from a den of foxes who would come out and play while we went about our routine. The abundance of wildlife along the routes is a bonus few employers can match, but comes without mention with our Bookmobile routes.

The Bookmobile travels an average of 1,200 miles a month. The longest run is 185 miles round trip and the shortest route is 10 miles. From January 1983 to November 1983 we circulated 17,844 books to 4,785 patrons at 175 stops. During that period we averaged 1.1 books checked out per mile traveled. The average circulation cost per book is \$1.17. Forty one percent of our circulation over this time period were adult titles and 59% were juvenile titles. Circulation for calendar 1983 was up 140% over calendar 1982.

We have, at present, 6 runs with a total of 11 stops. All but 2 of our runs have service every two weeks. Of the other two, one has monthly service and one has weekly service. We serve 6 rural schools with the number of students ranging from 5 at Leonard Creek Ranch to 62 at Orovada. Each school

stop also serves the surrounding communities. The diversity of our patrons is great. In Kings River Valley and Orovada the people are mainly farmers, in Jackson Mountain and Leonard Creek the patrons are ranchers, in Imlay there are quite a few miners and retired people, Buena Vista Valley and Unionville are populated by ranchers and retired people. During this calendar year we have added two runs: Star City, which is a bedroom community five miles south of Winnemucca, and Leonard Creek, a large ranch and small school in the northwestern part of Humboldt County.

As a cost-cutting measure, the Bookmobile staff was reduced and the driver runs the whole circus except on the two high circulation runs to Orovada and Imlay. In most cases the driver opens up the Bookmobile, checks the books in and out, shelves, and keeps up the overdues, statistics, and paperwork. On the runs where there is a librarian, the driver checks out the books and helps with the shelving chores, as well as helping check in the books. The librarian takes care of checking in the books, provides help to the patrons and takes care of the majority of the paperwork. Because of the lack of wide open spaces on the Bookmobile, all of the shelving is done between the waves of patrons. All books are shelved between stops to give our patrons the full advantage of the limited collection on the Bookmobile. The operation runs very smoothly this way and keeps the patrons happy.

Our patrons are important to us and they have made us look good. Some travel 10 to 15 miles to avail themselves of our services. Some come on only to see if we have anything on one particular subject, and if they don't find what they are looking for we try to have it for them on our next run to their area. Others come on and spend half an hour browsing, visiting, and looking for whatever literary gems we have hiding on our shelves. Some people get two

books to last them over the two weeks between runs while others check out 20 or 30 at a time to make sure they don't run out.

I have encouraged the younger patrons to be themselves on the Bookmobile. When I was young, the library here in Winnemucca was run by an old lady in black who ruled with an iron hand. Children's visits without an accompanying adult was discouraged, and because of this, it took me many years to discover the wonders held within the walls of the library. Happy children are naturally boisterous but there are no BE QUIET signs to be found in our Bookmobile. Most of our young patrons we know by name and what their special interests are so we try to keep them supplied with books on compatible subjects. We also show them how one subject relates to another so they can branch out - read, learn and not get caught in a rut. I tell them that reading is like eating - you have to have the promise of dessert to make the vegetables taste good. We feel that the relaxed atmosphere on the Bookmobile has encouraged the kids to read. On the Bookmobile they are treated as short people, not as children.

At most of our stops we have made friends with the pets of the patrons. In Unionville, a beautiful Newfoundland named Leroy greets us as we come up the canyon, then comes on for a snack and a snooze. He curls up behind the desk in the Bookmobile and stays with us until it's time to hit the road. On the Coyote Creek Ranch in Buena Vista Valley, two black kittens, Skunk and Tuffy, almost always rush down to be the first on the Bookmobile where they supply the staff with the warmth and affection only a kitten can impart. In Paradise Valley, the Justice of the Peace's dog hops on to wait for his mistress to come and pick up the kids. All the animals are welcome as long as they stay out of the way and are friendly. There is no greater way to raise a

person's hackles in the West than kicking their dog or throwing their cat around.

We have one patron whose family checks out so many books that when we pull up she loads the books in a wheelbarrow to get them back onto the Bookmobile. Another lady on one of our runs has been crippled somewhat by arthritis and can't get around too well. She pulls up to the window on the driver's side and passes her books through in baskets. We select the books for her and load her baskets and pass them back out. We may have the only mobile drive-up library service in the United States.

Earlier this year the Bookmobile staff was presented with two very unique research problems. Mrs. Noble, of Imlay, comes from one of this area's pioneer families dating back to the 1860's. She had obtained a picture of a rural funeral taken in the early part of this century which she and her family had been in attendance. She wanted to know how old she was in the picture. She knew that the man being buried was a prospector and she knew his nickname. We went to our microfilmed newspaper files of the Humboldt Star and with the clues provided and 30 hours of research were able to come up with the small article detailing the funeral. Staff had to look through 5 years of newspapers to find it.

The Bookmobile took on another extensive research project for Mrs. Hesterlee. She is Imlay's local historian and was doing a history of the small railroad town for its 75th anniversary. Many hours were expended getting much information from the newspaper microfilms dating from the 1860's to the 1930's.

Bookmobile service in Humboldt County and Pershing County continues at present, in spite of money problems, which constantly plague the program. In

the not too distant future outside money sources for the program will run dry. Instead of looking for ways to continue the Bookmobile service, the people who come up with the ideas are looking for service ideas to replace it. Computers are being treated as the panacea for extending library services to rural area customers. This may be viable in some places, but out here in the West the selling point is in the personal, personable service the Bookmobile provides. The people we serve expect to deal with people, not computers with flashing cursors and green letters.

The cost per book is almost a dollar cheaper by Bookmobile than in a library but unfortunately the outlay for new equipment is great. Library buildings last forever but Bookmobiles wear down and wear out.

HUMBOLDT COUNTY BOOKMOBILE TOTALS 1980-1981

MONTH	YEAR	ADULT	CHILDREN	TOTAL	PATRONS	MILES	# OF STOPS	BOOKS PER MILES
January	1980	102	87	189	57	265.9	5	0.7
February	1980	194	496	690	275	996.7	11	0.7
March	1980	210	504	714	165	764.4	12	0.9
April	1980	232	394	626	224	930.4	14	0.7
May	1980	301	386	687	239	1,187.0	13	0.6
June	1980	175	152	327	101	1,016.0	12	0.3
July	1980	177	121	298	97	1,077.4	13	0.3
August	1980	110	71	181	36	351.5	6	0.5
September	1980	214	670	884	228	664.5	9	1.3
October	1980	Bookmobile not in operation this month						
November	1980	210	598	808	235	845.0	11	1.0
December	1980	<u>212</u>	<u>505</u>	<u>717</u>	<u>227</u>	<u>759.6</u>	<u>9</u>	<u>0.9</u>
TOTALS		<u>2,137</u>	<u>3,984</u>	<u>6,121</u>	<u>1,884</u>	<u>8,858.4</u>	<u>115</u>	<u>0.7 av</u>
January	1981	191	521	712	226	930.6	10	0.8
February	1981	309	528	837	245	1,016.0	12	0.8
March	1981	329	550	879	275	1,016.0	12	0.9
April	1981	164	261	425	141	764.4	9	0.6
May	1981	204	305	509	171	845.2	8	0.6
June	1981	69	44	113	35	344.2	4	0.3
July	1981	Bookmobile not in operation this month						
August	1981	Bookmobile not in operation this month						
September	1981	Bookmobile not in operation this month						
October	1981	Bookmobile not in operation this month						
November	1981	Bookmobile not in operation this month						
December	1981	<u>10</u>	<u>14</u>	<u>24</u>	<u>16</u>	<u>188.0</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>0.1</u>
TOTALS		<u>1,276</u>	<u>2,223</u>	<u>3,499</u>	<u>1,109</u>	<u>5,104.4</u>	<u>56</u>	<u>0.7 av</u>

HUMBOLDT COUNTY BOOKMOBILE TOTALS 1982-1983

MONTH	YEAR	ADULT	CHILDREN	TOTAL	PATRONS	MILES	# OF STOPS	BOOKS PER MILES
January	1982	263	530	793	278	468.2	8	1.7
February	1982	255	745	1,000	314	952.8	8	1.0
March	1982	324	562	886	278	904.0	10	1.0
April	1982	274	551	825	326	1,354.5	14	0.6
May	1982	140	325	465	190	637.2	7	0.7
June	1982	Bookmobile not in operation this month						
July	1982	96	33	129	40	480.1	6	0.3
August	1982	118	79	197	89	639.2	6	0.3
September	1982	369	843	1,212	367	1,360.7	14	0.9
October	1982	393	834	1,227	383	1,041.2	15	1.2
November	1982	66	294	360	148	283.1	4	1.3
December	1982	<u>144</u>	<u>299</u>	<u>443</u>	<u>151</u>	<u>489.5</u>	<u>5</u>	<u>0.9</u>
TOTALS		<u>2,442</u>	<u>5,095</u>	<u>7,537</u>	<u>2,564</u>	<u>8,610.5</u>	<u>97</u>	<u>0.9 av</u>
January	1983	367	678	1,045	269	1,171.2	12	0.9
February	1983	506	900	1,406	409	1,269.0	17	1.1
March	1983	722	864	1,586	473	1,384.3	17	1.1
April	1983	823	1,026	1,849	464	1,387.9	18	1.3
May	1983	532	795	1,327	465	1,253.2	16	1.1
June	1983	836	1,062	1,898	361	998.0	15	1.9
July	1983	641	726	1,367	363	813.7	13	1.7
August	1983	517	714	1,231	352	707.7	13	1.7
September	1983	825	1,236	2,061	596	1,545.5	19	1.3
October	1983	742	1,262	2,004	544	1,433.2	17	1.4
November	1983	<u>818</u>	<u>1,292</u>	<u>2,110</u>	<u>462</u>	<u>1,086.9</u>	<u>18</u>	<u>1.9</u>
TOTALS		<u>7,329</u>	<u>10,555</u>	<u>17,844</u>	<u>4,785</u>	<u>13,050.6</u>	<u>175</u>	<u>1.1 av</u>