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Sarasota County libraries 'float' to success

The Sarasota County library system was recognized for its trend setting floating collection by the Public Library Association at its annual conference in Portland, Ore.

The industry publication [Library Journal](#) singled out the Sarasota County library system and its "savvy staff" for successfully implementing a floating collection process and documenting the road to its success on their Web site, <http://sclibs.net/floating.aspx>.

"It was a great honor to be selected to present information about our successful floating collection at the conference," said Sarabeth Kalajian, general manager, Sarasota County libraries. "To be recognized on a national level as a leader in the field of library services is a real testament to the dedication, imagination and hard work of the staff in the Sarasota County library system."

With its budget reduced by almost \$1 million, Sarasota County's eight libraries needed to find ways to reduce costs and maintain services, even though it's experiencing more than 2.7 million visits per year. Balancing branch hours for consistency, and examining operations and procedures was a good start, but creating a floating collection produced efficiencies and noticeable improvements.

Previously, if an item was returned to a library different from the one where it was borrowed, the item would be shipped back to its original library. The process required staff time to collect items and separate them for transfer. The floating collection eliminates this process. Items borrowed from one library can be returned to any library and quickly placed on shelves.

The change in statistics was dramatic and brought immediate relief to staff and volunteers, who were accustomed to unpacking 20 or more bins of items each day that were returned from other libraries. This also enabled libraries to reduce the number of delivery trucks and drivers.

The new system means more items will be on shelves for customers who want them. If an item isn't available at one library, a customer can request that item is held for them when it's returned, or they can request the item is sent to their local library for pick-up.

"The floating collection is one of many ways libraries have been able to gain efficiencies and continue to provide the level of service our customers expect," Kalajian said. "The

local library is even more popular during tough economic times because we offer so many free services people need. Finding ways to save money is critical.”

For more information on Sarasota County libraries, contact the Sarasota County Call Center at 941-861-5000 or visit the library Web site at www.sclibs.net.

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