

North Country Library System

Stephen B. Bolton, Director

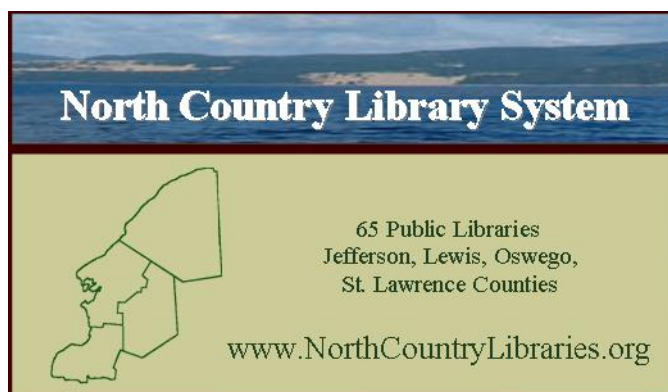
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To: Board Presidents and Directors
From: Steve Bolton
Date: December 7, 2006
Re: The Universal Library Card

I have talked about the concept of a system-wide or universal library card at meetings of the Directors Organization, at the last two NCLS Annual Meetings, and at various member library Board meetings. We are now ready to move from concept to reality.



NCLS has purchased a supply of the cards. I believe that this is a good opportunity to emphasize one of the facts that makes our area's libraries unique public institutions: we readily share and exchange our materials. This sharing of resources strengthens all libraries. The Universal Card can help to highlight the fact that all of our libraries can offer more than the collections contained in their buildings. The use of the Universal Card may in the future also have the advantage of providing easier access to electronic databases.

While the sharing of resources is not new, the formalized sharing of patrons is new. Presently this happens only occasionally and when it does, each library issues its own card to the wandering patron. The Universal Card will make this duplication unnecessary. However, the sharing of patrons will require some obligation on the part each library. So, here is how I envision this working:

Recipient of the



2005 Community Spirit Award

The NCLS Universal Card will work for libraries that have joined our SIRSI circulation system and those that have not.

- The twenty-seven libraries that use the shared SIRSI circulation system may gradually replace their present cards and issue the Universal Card as they register new patrons or reregister existing patrons. The only thing that will change for most of these libraries is the physical card.
- The libraries that do not use the SIRSI circulation system may send in patron information to NCLS on registration cards that we will supply. NCLS will enter the patron information into the SIRSI system. NCLS will attach a barcode to a Universal Card and send it to the library. Early next year we will have a form on our web site to make this process easier and faster. This could be the first step towards going online with the circulation system! Your patron database will be ready when you are!
- Libraries that do not use the SIRSI circulation system will have access to the SIRSI patron database by logging onto the NCLS web site. In this way, the “status” (too many overdues, unpaid fines at a library using the SIRSI circulation system) of a patron can be easily determined.

Standardized patron information, just like a standardized method of shelving books, benefits all libraries.

- The libraries now using the SIRSI circulation system have agreed upon certain standards for collecting patron information. NCLS is responsible for the bibliographic and the patron databases, so we must meet these criteria. The standards are commonplace (verifying a person’s identification, etc.) and are procedural. Borrowing activities will always be governed by each individual library’s circulation policy.

I realize there will be many questions and details to smooth out over the coming months, but I firmly believe that this important project will have a long term impact on library service in our area. It hopefully will raise the visibility of public libraries, which will help you continue to have positive impact on your community.

Please see the attached agreement form. The agreement confirms the principle of “free direct access” that is part of the NCLS Plan of Service as approved by a vote of the Member Libraries and the NCLS Board of Trustees. If your library uses the SIRSI circulation system, we’ll send a supply of cards as soon as the agreement is received. Libraries that do not use the SIRSI system will be scheduled for inputting patron information when the agreement is received.

Please return the attached agreement and we’ll get started!