

The Bruce County Public Library (BCPL) Bookmobile Campaign

Bringing resources to residents through travelling library services

Libraries have been an essential part of our society for generations and are one of the last institutions where you can comfortably exist without expectation. For some, Libraries are inaccessible, with many barriers in the way.

Barriers to Accessibility

While Bruce County continues to grow into a robust and diverse community, it faces significant challenges in supporting the population that represents that growth.

Geographically remote communities are one challenge faced in Bruce County. Citizens living in these areas may not have physical library branches within walking or short driving distance from their homes, nor do they have public transportation options to take them to the nearest branch location. Rural residents often face the added challenge of having limited or no access to a reliable internet connection.

Additionally, senior members of our population often face safety and mobility challenges. Many have no convenient way of leaving their personal or long-term care home, and if they can walk or drive to the library, doing so in the winter and during crises like that we just witnessed during COVID-19 can create safety risks. This further isolates our senior communities and reduces their ability to access essential library services. Such isolation reduces their opportunity to develop the digital literacy skills critical to staying connected to their families in a supportive learning environment.

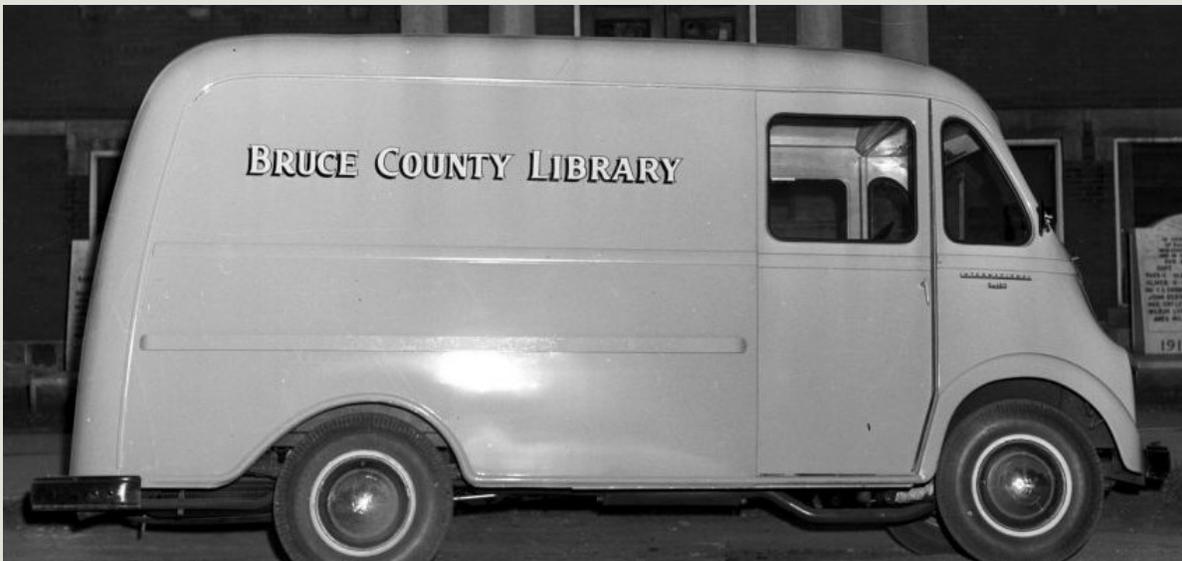


The Guelph Public Library Bookmobile setting up to provide services to residents in the park.

The challenge of affordable high-speed internet and technology devices is also a barrier for many people. As a result, the digital divide between those who have access to and are comfortably using technology, and those who do not, is increasing.

Finally, the library also plays a key role in enhancing school readiness and supporting the literacy and information needs of our population. Considering the disrupted schooling during the pandemic, education experts expect learning loss will have lasting effects. **The library must increase its role in fulfilling reading needs alongside schools to address this challenge.**

"THE ONLY THING THAT YOU ABSOLUTELY HAVE TO KNOW, IS THE LOCATION OF THE LIBRARY"
-ALBERT EINSTEIN



THE HISTORY OF BCPL

BCPL has a history of success in bringing innovative initiatives to life!

Focused on growing our presence across the country, we enhance digital and reading literacy while reducing barriers for people who struggle to access information, social engagement, and entertainment in our region.

Serving 21,280 library card holders and their families in 2022, on average we facilitate the borrowing of nearly 500,000 items, and enable 21,745 people to attend over 1600 in-person and digital library programs each year.

We are constantly expanding our collections, including technology kits centred around STEAM activities, park passes, snowshoes, fishing equipment, binoculars, and so much more. We have recently released an impressive collection of Playaways – all-in-one audiobooks that are battery-powered and do not require access to wifi or additional technology to operate.

2022 saw the return of in-person programming and events. We had our most successful Summer Reading Club yet, with a total of 217,570 minutes read! We have also launched our Tech Coach program, an opportunity for patrons to receive one-on-one guidance on how to use online resources and services.

The team of 70 across 17 branches and Library Headquarters is led by Director Brooke McLean, who has a Master of Library and Information Studies degree and over fifteen years of service in library leadership roles.

Successfully pivoting to delivering electronic services to county residents in response to COVID-19 pandemic restrictions, showcased how the team has demonstrated further success in change management and innovation.

To continue increasing the number of community members who can meaningfully engage with staff and services, the team is eager to expand opportunities to learn, play, and connect in new and innovative ways.

OPEN ROAD OPPORTUNITIES FOR LIBRARY SERVICES



Mapping out Potential Bookmobile Stops

Literacy, remote communities, senior isolation and mobility, and financial barriers to library and internet access can all be tackled through a mobile library service serving Bruce County. Services to smaller and remote communities continue to be a significant need, and the idea for a bookmobile was born.

By securing and modifying a vehicle that will deliver scheduled visits and programs across the county, BCPL will provide connectivity (both digital and social!) to those under-served community members. Modeled on other bookmobile services in communities like Guelph, by visiting strategic locations and events, users will have a meeting place that enables them to develop relationships, build on common interests, and enhance their literacy and lives. Imagine senior home residents outside in the sunshine learning how to talk with their grandchildren on an iPad while local children sit next to them participating in storytelling programming! Bookmobiles foster friendships and create connections through experiences like these, and your financial support can make these experiences possible.

Bookmobile Project Details

We will bring the Bookmobile to where people are! Seniors' homes like Trillium Court in Kincardine, events like Lucknow's Music in the Fields, daycares, arenas, campgrounds, and sports fields are only a few of the locations we will visit. Needs-based stops will reach underserved people, such as newcomers or those with language or literacy barriers. The Bookmobile can also present programming at community events, festivals, and other outdoor public gatherings.

Route

As we actively move into the planning stages in preparation for the Bookmobiles launch, our team has been out around Bruce County identifying the perfect places that meet our safety requirements and electrical needs, include washroom facilities, and are based on their proximity to existing Branches. The route will be regularly assessed and changed based on priority locations and usage metrics gathered during the project's initial phases, ensuring that the Bookmobile is reaching patrons and not sitting in underutilized sites.

SERVICES

Mobile library service will allow residents to register for a library card, check out and return materials, and participate in programming. As well, the Bookmobile will provide:

- A wi-fi enabled hub
- On-board technology including lendable tech
- Visits to community events
- Partnering with community organizations

FINANCIALS

It is our goal to launch the Bookmobile in 2023. Due to situations out of our control, the Bookmobiles original launch goal has been adjusted. There have been significant supply chain issues from the manufacturer that have, unfortunately, impacted our ability to launch. Through this hold-up, our team has continued to work so that once received, Bruce County Public Library will be ready to move through the remaining stages quickly and efficiently.

All Canadians have felt the steep incline of costs in the past year due to inflation. We are not immune to this rise in costs. Since our original cost estimations and initial fundraising efforts, we have been affected by an increase in our originally projected costs associated with the Bookmobile. To continue with the goal of bringing the Bookmobile to life, we must continue our fundraising efforts. The estimated cost to purchase, modify, and operate the Bookmobile for the first year is \$186,000+. There will be ongoing sponsorship opportunities annually to pay for future operating costs of the vehicle, and any funds raised not used in the first year will be used towards future operational costs of the Bookmobile program.

Community Impact

The Bookmobile will reach hundreds of people whose lives will significantly benefit from access to books, entertainment, information, and interaction with their communities. These are people who could otherwise fall through the cracks of library service, internet connection, early literacy, and lifelong learning. We will measure our impact based on how the lives of the new people we serve are enhanced, specific ways the service has helped them, and what they can do because of our mobile services that they couldn't do before. This will be monitored via regular surveying of people accessing our mobile services.

Celebrating our Donors

Equally as exciting as the impact on community members is the role of donors who come together to make it possible. **To celebrate our donors, we will have a donor listing displayed on our Bookmobile as it travels throughout the county, and donors will be recognized according to their levels of giving.** We will continue recognizing donors and donations through photo ops, press releases, and newsletter and social media acknowledgments. We will also have opportunities to sponsor various components of the Bookmobile and provide ride-along tours to top donors so they can see their donations at work! We would be thrilled to discuss how your philanthropic support could make a difference in the lives and literacy of Bruce County residents, and we look forward to discussing this project with you.

ESTIMATED BOOKMOBILE BUDGET

CAPITAL

Vehicle
(including customization, vehicle wrap, winter tires) - \$164,000
Technology - \$8,000

OPERATING

Vehicle - fuel, maintenance, insurance - \$12,000
Internet - \$2,000

TOTAL **\$186,000**

"We donate to Bruce County Public Library to support this access to materials, bringing information and entertainment to residents throughout the County. This proposed 'Bookmobile' undertaking will embellish library services."

Sirkka and Brodie Hart