

## *North Country Library System*

### *The advantages of using an automated circulation system (SIRSI)*

#### *Patrons will:*

- **Know what the library has:**

The library will have a web-based catalog. The catalog will display what the library owns and will indicate the availability of items. Patrons can access the catalog from their home and students can use it while at school.

- **Be able to check their “accounts”:**

While at the library, or from home, people can enter the barcode on their library card and a PIN and see the items they have checked out, items they have requested, items that are overdue, and can renew items.

- **Be able to place and manage their holds:**

People may place requests, or holds, on a book that their library owns but is currently checked out. When the book is returned, the computer system gives an alert that there is a hold waiting and prints a slip with the person’s phone number.

The SIRSI system can automatically send emails to let patrons know when requested items become available. Patrons also enjoy the convenience of having the SIRSI system notify them about items before they become overdue, and receiving overdue notices via email.

Requests may be placed on the materials owned by the other 31 automated libraries in the North Country Library System, and people have the advantage of seeing if the items are available. Holds on items owned by other libraries may be placed at your library or from home.

#### *Your library will:*

- **Have improved inventory control:**

An automated system tracks the status (checked out, lost, etc.) of all the materials in the library. By contrast, using a manual card system, there is no way to answer people’s questions about items that are not on the shelf, such as: When can I have that book? When is that movie due to be returned?

- **Be able to efficiently manage overdue items:**

The library can print reports of overdue items and have the ability to create pull-apart mailing forms similar to those used for bank statements. Reminder emails can be automatically sent two days before an item becomes overdue and another email can be sent when the item becomes overdue. The emails are sent automatically, with no time spent or involvement required by staff.

- **Be able to easily gather statistics and get reports:**

Statistics are automatically compiled as the library uses the system. The library will not just have numbers, they will have reports. Through these, the library will be able to see how the collection is being used and which sections are not being used. Use by age-group may also be tracked. This will help the library be more responsive to the patrons it serves.

- **Become part of a shared regional service:**

The servers, software updates, and daily backups are all taken care of by the North Country Library System. This relieves the library of tedious and technical “backroom” functions. In this way, library staff can give more attention to providing quality library service to their patrons.

All training is provided at no additional charge. Assistance is always available as questions arise.

## ***Automating Circulation: Considerations and Procedures***

A Board that is planning to automate the daily routines of the library should begin by considering this as part of a larger library development process. These steps should be followed before committing to an automation plan:

1. Conduct a community survey. This will give the Board an overview of the community's perception of the library, and will provide justification for needed changes and improvements. Your NCLS Consultant will be happy to discuss this project with you and can supply examples of community surveys.
2. Long-range plan. Based on the results of the survey, the Board should construct a three to five year plan of action to improve the library. Improving the library's efficiency and services through automation can be a part of this plan. A long range plan does not need to be an arduous task: the plan is a guideline to the future and as such may be brief.
3. Secure adequate funding for your plans. Automation should enhance a library's services and should never take-away from existing services. Providing PC's for public use, access to an accurate catalog and updating the library's daily routines are an integral part of overall library service and should not be considered as "additional" or "extra" services. The need for change and improvements should be explained to your municipality and/or presented to the voters as part of a school-ballot referendum item.

### **When the Board has indicated an interest in automating, the following steps will begin:**

***PLEASE NOTE: The order of these steps may vary from library to library, and libraries will differ in the amount of time taken to complete certain steps and tasks. This process is an ongoing conversation until both the Library and NCLS sign the agreement. At that point, the Library is put on a schedule to automate.***

1. Your NCLS Consultant will visit the library to discuss the barcoding project and the library's obligations, review the library's policies, and explain the agreement that the Board will be asked to sign.
2. A member of the Technical Services Dept. will visit the library to gauge the computer skills of the staff and perhaps suggest additional training.
3. A member of the Information Technology Dept. may visit the library to review the equipment, equipment placement, and Internet capacity.
4. The Consultant advises about weeding, collection organization, and continues the discussion about policy revisions, if necessary.
5. The library may be asked to conduct a shelflist check in order to assure that the library's holdings are accurately reflected in the catalog before beginning the barcoding process.
6. If necessary, as some time may have passed since initial discussions, the Consultant will review the agreement to be signed and confirm that the necessary policies, personnel and computer skill-sets are in place.
7. The Library and NCLS sign the agreement:
  - The Business Office submits an invoice to the library.
  - IT orders the necessary equipment.
  - A person from the Technical Services Dept is assigned to help the library through the barcoding process.
  - Equipment is installed.
  - Training and the barcoding project commences.