

Libraries Everywhere:

A proposal for onboard train library services for ALA 2012

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Thesis

The contributions of libraries and librarians to communities have almost always been undervalued, and with increasing availability of digital resources, many have asked “Why do we need libraries at all? What do they have for me that I can’t get on Google or my Kindle?”

Libraries Everywhere seeks to inform and educate citizens of the contemporary value of libraries and librarians. Community outreach is a has always been standard librarian task but in these times of decimating library budget reductions and staff layoffs, even more must be done to connect with the public. We, as librarians, need to accomplish more as a profession to inform the world who we are, what we do, and what vast resources available in libraries today. The days of librarians being seen as shelvers and shushers must be removed from the collective consciousness.

Much as academic settings have benefited from embedded librarians in class rooms, **Libraries Everywhere** seeks to embed librarians into public settings. By utilizing state of the art, highly mobile technologies, a fully resourced temporary library location can be established almost anywhere. In this endeavor, **Libraries Everywhere** will be conducting a pilot project of embedded public librarianship aboard a transcontinental passenger train. More specifically, our team of information professionals, Lisa Rabey, Kristin LaLonde, Steve Teeri, and Julie Jurgens will turn the Southwest Chief, the Amtrak route from Chicago to Los Angeles, into a premier mobile library during the cross country trip to the 2012 American Library Association Annual Conference in Anaheim, CA.

“Guerrilla library” movements such as Occupy Wall Street’s People’s Library¹, phone booth² and street corner libraries³, and even libraries by bike⁴ have already proved successful. **Libraries Everywhere** strives to take the level of service of temporary, autonomous portable libraries to the next level. With backing and support of leading companies and organizations in the library field, we will offer to the public, information services on par with a traditional library. Our services will include reader advisory, reference, database access, and eBook reader check out. Additionally, we will broadcast our adventures during this campaign to the world via social media, print marketing, and web promotion including video, audio, and print blogging.

Why perform library outreach on a train? The parallels between library service and train travel are striking: trains, like libraries, are an iconic part of American history that are also going through troubled times; traveling by train allows for time to explore and browse the country in a leisurely fashion, just as one explores and browses materials the library; and both train travel and library use can have startling impact on the environment and the communities served with adequate funding and support. Specifically for this project, long

¹ <http://peopleslibrary.wordpress.com/>

² http://www.libraryjournal.com/lj/home/891988-264/town_of_clinton_ny_opens.html.csp

³ <http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424053111903461104576458750406784300.html>

⁴ <http://www.avclub.com/chicago/articles/the-book-bike.222/>

distance rail travel has a built in user-base (rail passengers) that is in need of library services. The train environment is also ideal for this campaign as it allows the library to come to the patron at their point of need. The unique setting of a train will also attract attention from media outlets, amplifying our message of how libraries are a force of good to those outside the library echo-chamber.

In conducting our pilot project during the journey to the ALA Annual Conference, we hope to bring unique and positive attention to libraries, librarians, and the American Library Association, and our supporting sponsors.

The core message of **Libraries Everywhere** is that libraries and librarians truly are everywhere and available in many forms and locations many people may not realize. Not only can libraries be in places people have never considered before, but library content and resources are evolving into new territories: expanded databases; enriching and entertaining programming; eBooks and eReaders; content creation, curation, and preservation; and improved online search. We hope to pleasantly surprise people by embedding ourselves into a common scenario (cross-country passenger train travel) and exhibiting the amazing resources of contemporary libraries and librarians.

Tactical Plan

During the project, the **Libraries Everywhere** team will be responsible for providing service to our patrons (rail passengers) and performing outreach about the project itself, libraries in general, and the American Library Association. These tasks will be performed on the Southwest Chief while traveling between Chicago and Los Angeles. Additionally, outreach will be performed through various online and traditional media channels, and promotion and discussion of the project will happen at the ALA Annual Conference itself.

Libraries Everywhere visions our operations to be located within the observation car of the Southwest Chief, the central meeting point on the train. The observation car is where people naturally go to congregate and enjoy leisure time. For this reason, the observation car is the ideal place for the **Libraries Everywhere** team to interact with our patrons. Inside the Observation car is a small desk area in the middle of the car. We could use this as our reference desk and main point of contact. A laptop would be set up, along with the digital and physical resources that would be made available. This approach mimics the centralized location of reference and information desks in libraries. Additionally, the set-up of equipment here can be done without interfering with the normal operations of the train or requiring any additional space or configuration of the car. A similar use of the observation car is already in place, with volunteer US Park Rangers providing historical information on some routes. The **Libraries Everywhere** team will make every effort to minimize our footprint within the observation car.

The resources and services **Libraries Everywhere** provide for the duration of the campaign will mimic the services of traditional libraries. These resources and services will be themed to match the environment and uniqueness of the campaign to capitalize on the

marketing potential. Internet connectivity will be needed for part of the services offered. Amtrak does not currently provide Wi-Fi service aboard the Southwest Chief at the time of writing this proposal. The **Libraries Everywhere** team plans to obtain mobile Wi-Fi hot-spots for this campaign to meet our internet connectivity requirements.

The resources and services during the **Libraries Everywhere** campaign will include but are not limited to:

Lending

The **Libraries Everywhere** team plans to lend materials to rail passengers during their time aboard the Southwest Chief. To track circulation and usage, a database will be created. In addition, unique library cards will be issued to passengers who request them, to check materials out. These cards will also be a memento of the campaign the passengers can take home as their trip ends.

Our database will model a traditional ILS, but on a much smaller scale. The loan periods and patron information will be based on Amtrak ticket information instead of residency or student status. The collection will be searchable via LibraryThing, which will be helpful for the **Libraries Everywhere** team and the passengers as well as online marketing and outreach. Using LibraryThing will also demonstrate the “Libraries Everywhere” ethos by utilizing this free service available to everyone.

The lending collection will include but not be limited to:

- A small, deliberately curated lending collection of books and graphic novels themed around train travel and the stops made on the Southwest Chief. For example, this will include authors from the cities of Chicago, Kansas City, Albuquerque, Los Angeles, etc. Additionally, travel books about each of these places and books about train travel will be available for circulation
- An audio/visual collection with the same general theme: train travel and the cities along the route of the Southwest Chief
- eReaders, digital devices, and physical copies of popular titles may also be available

Reference/ Informational Services

- A fully resourced reference desk including:
 - Reader’s Advisory for the lending collection and eReaders
 - General information queries
 - Online database searches
 - Engagement with libraries and organizations along the Southwest Chief’s route to obtain information about those communities
 - Providing historical information about the Southwest Chief, and the route it follows

Programming

In addition to lending services, the **Libraries Everywhere** team will periodically schedule group activities for the passengers that will be led by the **Libraries Everywhere** librarians. These programs will include but are not limited to:

- The youth librarian, Julie Jurgens, will perform children’s story time in the observation car at scheduled intervals during the trip
- Scheduled games for adult patrons that can be facilitated within the confines of the observation car; i.e. tabletop gaming, “Pub Quiz” style trivia games, and more

Content Creation/ Preservation

During the trip, the **Libraries Everywhere** team will also create original content – which is considered one of the new frontier for libraries. This will advertise the fact that libraries are not just places to lend or archive material and get information, but that libraries are also creators of new and unique content. The content **Libraries Everywhere** plans to produce will include but is not limited to:

- Recording train stories from the conductors and train crew, which will be interesting for the viewers as well as act as primary resources for those interested in modern rail
- Recording personal histories from seasoned rail fans and new train travelers
- Ask kids about their favorite part of traveling by rail
- Record the story time sessions with youth librarian, Julie Jurgens, as well as recording adult programming sessions as well to illustrate an excellent example of going where our patrons are

Outcomes

While the services and resources provided on the train by **Libraries Everywhere** are a core element of the campaign; the essential element of the venture is the broadcasting and marketing of our message. Leading up to, during, and after the campaign, the **Libraries Everywhere** team will be documenting all of the events described above and updating content onto the web. The goal of this will be for librarians and the general public to follow the campaign virtually, thus, spreading awareness of library services not only domestically, but also globally. This campaign will help illustrate the benefits of supporting the idea that libraries are still vital and relevant, and that librarians are still a valuable asset in our digitized society.

Online tools and resources the **Libraries Everywhere** team will be engaged with throughout this campaign:

- Use of social media such as Tumblr, Twitter, Google+, YouTube, and Facebook to share frequent updates, pictures, and content.
 - To protect brand identity, accounts have already been created on the following services:
 - Group Email: librarieseverywhere@gmail.com
 - Blog: <http://librarieseverywhere.com> (Uses Tumblr)
 - Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/pages/Libraries-Everywhere/208921375843297> (Currently under 25 likes)
 - Twitter: @libeverywhere
 - YouTube: <http://www.youtube.com/user/librarieseverywhere>
 - Vimeo: <http://vimeo.com/user9702957>
 - Flickr: <http://www.flickr.com/photos/librarieseverywhere/>

- LibraryThing:
<http://www.librarything.com/home/librarieseverywhere>
- Uploading the original videos created by **Libraries Everywhere** to YouTube and Vimeo
- Archiving pictures through Flickr, encouraging social tagging and sharing.
- Blogging of the trip by the **Libraries Everywhere** team. This will allow rail passengers to tag, comment, and share their experiences, if desired. Furthermore, it creates an archive of the oral and social histories created and curated by the **Libraries Everywhere** team.
- A web portal (<http://librarieseverywhere.com>) will be created to centralize all of the content that is generated from **Libraries Everywhere**, across all of the various platforms used. This serves to make it easier for our audience to follow the campaign and it will assist in the curation and archiving.

In addition to online marketing tools, the **Libraries Everywhere** team will be reaching out to traditional media outlets, in order to draw a spotlight upon our efforts. Due to the unique nature of the campaign and the positive message being extolled, **Libraries Everywhere** expects that the campaign will be extremely well received by traditional media outlets and other entities that report on the campaign, and thus, spread the message of **Libraries Everywhere** virally.

To meet this end, **Libraries Everywhere** will:

- Develop press releases about the campaign to be distributed amongst major traditional media outlets, particularly news organizations that do human interest stories as well as to professional publications, websites, and organizations.
- Contact the local news outlets in the cities that the Southwest Chief will stop in. Since **Libraries Everywhere** will be providing reference about those cities and lending books from local authors, this story should appeal to them.
- Contact the local libraries in the aforementioned towns to advertise that they are a “Libraries Everywhere Local Library” which indicates that **Libraries Everywhere** worked with them to gather information about their town and local authors.

The **Libraries Everywhere** campaign will consist of all of the resources and tasks described above, which we believe will fulfill the goals of the campaign, and the mission of **Libraries Everywhere**.

Benefits

The **Libraries Everywhere** campaign benefits not only our patrons, the passengers of the Southwest Chief, but also benefits:

- Good Librarianship. Good librarianship means getting out of the library. **Libraries Everywhere** is an excellent example of going where our patrons are. (in this case, passengers on a long distance train)
- Amtrak. By providing a tremendous information service benefit to their passengers

- Supporting organizations and companies. By public and highly visible use of their products and resources. This also ties-in with contributing to the high level of service the **Libraries Everywhere** team intends to deliver in this campaign.
- The public. By being pleasantly surprised in having information professionals available where they traditionally do not expect to see them. It also helps to reaffirm the value of libraries and librarians, by showing how much service information professionals can provide in an efficient mobile package.
- Librarians. By practicing the profession in an innovative, dynamic, and highly visible manner.

Requirements

In order to make the **Libraries Everywhere** campaign a successful endeavor, we will require the cooperation of a number of organizations. These include but are not limited to:

Amtrak

- **Libraries Everywhere** will need to acquire the permission of Amtrak to undergo this campaign on their train. Not only as a courtesy but because **Libraries Everywhere** will need the cooperation of Amtrak staff on the train to make many of the resources and programming options possible.
- Since the **Libraries Everywhere** campaign has such a positive message, we predict Amtrak will receive abundant positive publicity from this venture. Therefore, in addition to providing permission and space in the observation car for the **Libraries Everywhere** campaign to take place on the Southwest Chief during the lead-up to, and return from, 2012 ALA Annual, it is also requested that Amtrak donate two roomettes (for a total of four adults) on the Southwest Chief for the entirety of the trip.
- Amtrak already partners with the National Park Service to provide similar on-board programming such as educational talks on select routes; hence, a program such as this is not unheard of for the company.

American Library Association

- The **Libraries Everywhere** campaign is deliberately taking place during the lead-up to the 2012 Annual Conference. To serve an highly visible, innovative, and viral campaign that will display the American Library Association in a positive light. The definition of libraries is changing in society. Librarians must be proactive in defining our role within society, before others define it for us.
- In lieu of these benefits for ALA, the **Libraries Everywhere** team would ask for support from ALA in several key areas:
 - We would ask ALA to assist in our partnering with Amtrak and other organizations, as ALA is a well-known and respected organization. The backing of ALA would provide us a greater influence in speaking to prospective partners about their potential role in the campaign.
 - Additionally, we would ask ALA to help us secure funding for the project with interested divisions or vendors that it believes would have an affinity to the campaign

- Finally, we would ask ALA to cover all conference registrations fees for each member of the **Librarians Everywhere** team (four team members) to alleviate costs

Vendors and Publishers

Libraries Everywhere will pursue relationships with various vendors and publishers to donate either financially or relevant materials to add to the lending collection and resources.

- Sponsor monies would cover materials needed for the campaign as outlined by the attached budget.
- Donated relevant materials for the lending collection would be accepted for inclusion to the **Libraries Everywhere** temporary collection for the duration of the trip. After the trip has come to a conclusion, the materials would be donated to an in-need library or non-profit organization, which will also receive free advertising during the campaign.
- Specific vendors and publishers have not yet been determined, pending research and discussions.

Please see Appendix A for the proposed budget.

Conclusion

Libraries Everywhere believes that librarians need to get out of the library and be visible in society. By creating a premier modular portable library, we hope to positively influence members of the public, by demonstrating the abilities of contemporary librarians. The Southwestern Chief journey is a single campaign that will take place over the course of a few days. The blueprint, however, will be repeatable for partnerships in the future with organizations that seek to partner with, promote, and benefit from **Libraries Everywhere**. We foresee every organization that engages with us realizing a wide variety of returns from our mission.

The goal of the **Libraries Everywhere** is to advertise the portability and flexibility of libraries as well as raise awareness about what libraries can offer. From the unique position of a mobile train library, we have the potential to reach thousands of people on the route and all over the world with our message and service. Ranging from our local patron base on the train, the towns visited on our route, to the worldwide attention received via the Internet and in traditional media, the message of **Libraries Everywhere** will be heard as loud and clear as a train whistle.

Appendix A: Proposed Budget

Retreat #1

Travel/ Accommodations/ Registration		
	Cost	Comments
Amtrak Accommodations		
<i>-Chicago to Los Angeles/ Los Angeles to Chicago</i>	\$3,500.00	Four Adult Passengers with 2 Super Roomettes, Round Trip (Southwest Chief)
<i>- Los Angeles to Anaheim/ Anaheim to Los Angeles</i>	\$150.00	Four Adult Passengers with Unreserved Coach Seats, Round Trip (Pacific Surfliner)
Conference Hotel	\$2500.00	4 Adults, two hotel rooms. Estimate \$250 per night for 5 nights.
2012 ALA Annual Registration	\$560.00	4 Regular registrations, estimate \$135 per person
Food Expenses	\$2,400.00	\$50 per day, for 12 days per person for 4 adults
Total for Retreat #1	\$9110.00	
Retreat #2		
On-Board Resources		
Mobile Hot-Spot	\$400.00	Two Virgin Mobile Mi-Fi devices (\$150 per device) and Two Unlimited Data packages (\$50 per package) to cover 10 devices onboard.
Lending Print Material	\$2,000.00	Estimate \$20 per item, 100 items.
Lending AV Material	\$2,000.00	Estimate \$20 per item, 100 items.
Digital Equipment Costs	\$1,000.00	Point & Shoot Camera for documenting & marketing (\$200), Digital Video camera for oral histories and documentation (\$300) & Netbook for hosting Library collection & Reference (\$500)
Public Programming Supplies	\$1,000.00	Storytime Puppets, Tabletop games, Pub Quiz prizes, Library Cards
Total for Retreat #2	\$6400.00	
Retreat #3		
Marketing		
Print Materials	\$300.00	Flyers, Handouts, Brochures, Business cards
Logo	\$300.00	Development of Libraries Everywhere logo and brand
Total for Retreat #3	\$600.00	
GRAND TOTAL	\$16,110.00	