

South Central Library System – Madison, Wisconsin Delivery Service Report



Jan Ison and Pat Boze travelled to the SCLS Delivery facility on March 5 and spent four hours with the head of delivery, Bruce Smith. Here are some highlights of what we observed:

- SCLS runs both a system (7 counties) and the statewide delivery service. The system service is funded at a rate of 35% from counties and 65% from SCLS and includes 64 locations. The statewide delivery service (academics and other systems) is a contractual service between SCLS and the state and includes an additional 120 locations.
- SCLS delivers more than 11 million items per year, with 33 different routes and 24 vehicles. Madison Public and UW - and their branches - receive multiple deliveries per day because of volume, with delivery 6 days per week. No library gets less than 3 deliveries per week. Vehicles are used more than once a day for short routes. Madison Public alone accounts for 4.5 million items per year; the statewide delivery system is 1.2 million items.
- SCLS is a public library system and the counties subsidize the public library delivery cost. Schools and other types of libraries may pay a monthly fee for delivery.
- SCLS uses only one size of rectangular plastic tote (22x12) with attached fold/over lids which last upwards of 20 years. The average count per tote is 35 items/40 pounds. SCLS also minimizes any lifting of totes by loading totes directly onto carts and using lift-gates to load into trucks (a few trucks are hand-loaded).
- All libraries are required to sort materials for Madison Public (separate tote), A-M libraries, and K-Z libraries (if volume warrants). SCLS uses 3-letter codes but the codes resemble the name of the library (ex: Madison Public is MPL). Libraries put a 'sticky-note' with the TO: CODE when an item is going to a library to fill a hold. If the item is just going home, no note is put on the item. This was done to ensure some staff efficiencies at the libraries – it's easier to identify what items should be processed for holds vs. what items should be shelved. All libraries place barcodes on the front of the book so its home is easily identified. SCLS staff sort 800-900 totes per day, operating from 6:30 am to 6:30 pm.
- SCLS buys 3 types of trucks – cargo vans, sprinter-type vans, and two types of larger trucks. The larger trucks have lift-gates. SCLS also employs a full-time mechanic and has a huge garage to house most of the fleet. Two vehicles are replaced every year. SCLS buys pre-leased vehicles with about 100,000 miles per vehicle and drives them as long as possible. Bruce commented that the sprinter-type vans are very fuel-efficient (23 mpg) but have high repair costs.
- All drivers for SCLS are also sorters. Drivers/sorters include 7 managers (who also provide backup for routes), 15 full-time drivers, and 20 part-time/substitute drivers. SCLS's interview process includes a driving test as part of interview, a self-assessment of physical capabilities, and bondability. Two days of training is provided for any new hire. Many part-time/substitutes are UW students.
- SCLS is responsible for managing contracts, assessing and analyzing billing costs, and billing participating libraries.
- SCLS carries a variety of materials and will ship furniture/shelving/etc. for libraries if pre-approved, sometimes for an additional cost. The delivery hub also houses the system's 'story-kits' and these are managed and sent out from the hub.

What did we learn?

LTLS will be looking at much of what we learned to incorporate the efficiencies observed at SCLS into our service. We are examining the LTLS delivery area and vehicles to transition to totes. This will require additional shelving space. We will also examine the codes of our library locations to make them more easily-understood, investigate hold vs. shelf-ready status to determine how that can be easily-flagged, and investigate how libraries can efficiently pre-sort materials so sorting can be streamlined.

We are also planning to visit the Metropolitan Library System delivery program on March 18.