



case study

Toledo Lucas County Public Library: remoteLocker™ solution helps speed recession recovery



The Toledo Lucas County Public Library system operates twenty facilities and four mobile outreach vehicles in and around Toledo, OH. The library system serves 265,000 patrons with a collection size of 2 million and an annual circulation of more than 6 million.



Jason Kucsma
Deputy Director

In 2009, as the national economy declined, the Toledo Lucas County Public Library system was facing a situation familiar to other libraries across the country. Budget reductions forced the system to cut library staff by 27% and reduce all branch hours to only one shift. The library began looking for innovative solutions that would allow them to restore service to patrons, but there was nothing available on the market that served their needs.



In 2012, as the economy improved, the passage of a new levy coincided with the release of bibliotheca's remoteLocker solution. The levy allowed the Toledo Lucas system to extend hours at some locations and undertake renovations to one of their branches. The Oregon branch renovation offered an opportunity to take advantage of the new remoteLocker technology. The branch was closed for renovations for a year. Once it reopened, it included a 24/7 lobby with a remoteLocker that allowed patrons to access materials at any time of the day.



remoteLockers require only shelter, electricity, and an Internet connection, so they can be deployed not only in library lobbies, but in community centers, fire stations, and even grocery stores – expanding the reach of libraries far beyond their physical branches. The lockers can be configured to fit any space, and their modular design offers opportunities to expand as need increases. Unlike expensive vending machine products, remoteLockers are streamlined and easy to use. There are no robotics to break, and the simple design ensures dependability year after year.

“Improving library hours was one of the commitments we made during the last levy campaign. remoteLocker™ offers a way to bridge the gap as the library system works toward fully restored service.”

Furthering the Commitment to the Community

“Improving library hours was one of the commitments we made during the last levy campaign. We have not been able to restore all hours at all branches yet, but the remoteLockers offer a way to bridge the gap as the library system works toward fully restored service,” says Jason Kucsma, Deputy Director of TLCPL. “We actually see our highest use during the hour before the library opens or an hour or so after we close.”



Toledo Lucas County Public Library has also installed remoteLockers in branches that lack Sunday hours, thereby increasing access to the libraries during peak weekend hours.

Becca Mate, a circulation clerk at the Oregon branch, says, “We have a lot of shift workers in this area. People who work in refineries and hospitals may not be able to get to the library during normal operating hours. The remoteLocker offers them the chance to use the library whenever they want. They are very well used – so well used that we often have no empty lockers.”

Plug and Play

Implementing any new system or service always involves a learning curve, but training staff on the remoteLocker has been remarkably hassle-free for TLCPL.



“We were really surprised with how easy it was to roll out the remoteLockers. We trained a small team who then trained the rest of the staff. We had a lot of support from bibliotheca, but really, the system is just plug and play,” says Kucsma.

The remoteLocker solution utilizes intuitive patron-facing software to offer the same familiar experience patrons have come to expect from bibliotheca's self-service library range. The interface provides touch-screen access to collect holds, making using the lockers a breeze for patrons.

Kucsma continues, “From the patron's standpoint, they just chose another location to pick up their materials. They're already used to that – they're just using a locker instead of a holds shelf. We have had zero negative customer responses; people love them.”

Unexpected Benefits

“The remoteLockers have been tremendously popular with our patrons. They are so popular, in fact, that we have installed them in branches where we did not plan to have remoteLockers. The lockers replace some DVD dispensing machines that had been challenging to keep in service. When we removed those machines, we added in the remoteLockers as an alternative pick-up method for our customers. By going this route, we



improved the user experience and eliminated the technical difficulties our staff were dealing with on a daily basis. In addition to planning locker services in all of our newly renovated branches, we are also looking at possibilities for using the remoteLocker in locations outside of the library, with a few community partners," says Kucsma.

Though TLCPL began using remoteLockers as a way to increase access to the library, they've noticed some unintended benefits, chiefly, patron privacy.

"One thing we didn't anticipate when rolling out these lockers is the additional customer privacy. Typically, people put things on hold, and items sit on the holds shelf where anybody can walk by and see what you've put on hold. With the remoteLockers, people can put something on hold and know that it's secured behind

a door without the ability for all to see. It's been a nice added feature that we didn't anticipate," says Kucsma.

Next Steps

Toledo Lucas County Public Library has already installed remoteLockers at four of its branches, and they plan to install more lockers as additional branches are renovated.

Kucsma says, "Improving access to library resources (through improved hours and other initiatives) was a key promise in our last levy campaign. remoteLockers will be part of that solution. The only problem we're having with them now is that they are so popular we can't add lockers fast enough to keep up with demand."