



SUBMISSION FORM

All submission forms must include the following information. Separate submission forms must be turned in for each eligible program. **Deadline: July 1, 2021.** Please include this submission form with the electronic entry. If you do not receive an email confirming receipt of your entry within 3 days of submission, please contact Gage Harter.

PROGRAM INFORMATION

County: Franklin County

Program Title: 24 Hour Library at Summit View

Program Category: Community & Economic Development

CONTACT INFORMATION

Name: Alison Barry

Title: Director

Department: Franklin County Public Library

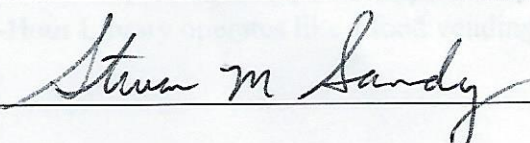
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SIGNATURE OF COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR OR DEPUTY/ASSISTANT COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR

Name: Steve Sandy

Title: Assistant County Administrator

Signature: 

Executive Summary

The Franklin County Public Library (FCPL) serves more than 56,000 residents, 30% of whom lack internet service. COVID-19 closures and restrictions hampered—and sometimes prevented—residents in accessing library materials. Households without internet service were particularly impacted. And yet demand for physical and electronic materials increased during the pandemic. The FCPL needed to innovate to provide books and other materials safely and continuously for the digitally disconnected and the public at large.

In September 2020, the Franklin County Board of Supervisors allocated \$150,000 from the County's CARES Act funds toward acquiring and installing an automated 24-Hour Library. Located at the Summit View Business Park in Rocky Mount, the self-service, Wi-Fi enabled kiosk became operational in December. Available 24/7/365, it functions like a vending machine, dispensing items from a rotating inventory of 235 books, audiobooks and DVDs. Users can also download items from a collection of thousands of e-books, audiobooks and periodicals.

The 24-Hour Library would not have been possible without technical, logistical and leadership support from the Franklin County departments of economic development, information technology, and parks and recreation. As of June 1, 2021, it was averaging 15 daily check-outs of materials. It has attracted robust media attention and inquiries from localities across Virginia on how to bring 24-hour libraries to their communities. It has put Franklin County on the map for implementing state-of-the-art technology, serving its residents outside of traditional business hours and locations, and providing a public library amenity at a business park. We hope to never again experience a pandemic or a natural disaster that affects our ability to deliver services to the public; however, the 24-Hour Library is now in place to provide safe, uninterrupted access to materials that entertain, educate and enrich. ■

Problem Statement

The Franklin County Public Library (FCPL) serves more than 56,000 residents. It has locations in downtown Rocky Mount and Westlake Corner, and it operates a bookmobile that travels primarily to Franklin County schools and a delivery service for homebound patrons. Franklin County's residents are geographically dispersed across 690 square miles, and more than 30% of them lack residential internet service.

The COVID-19 pandemic hampered—and in some cases prevented—county residents in accessing free informational, educational, cultural, and recreational materials. Stay-at-home mandates coupled with outright closures or reduced operations at the FCPL affected county residents as a whole and particularly impacted households without internet service. Individuals and families without internet service had no choice but to find alternatives for accessing the FCPL's e-books and other digital offerings. And yet demand for physical and electronic materials increased during the pandemic. A longstanding mission of public libraries is to get books and other materials into the hands of the public and to ensure unfettered access to them. The pandemic meant that the FCPL needed to innovate to provide library materials safely and continually for the digitally disconnected and the public at large.

How the FCPL Addressed the Problem

In September 2020, the FCPL was awarded funding to acquire and install an automated 24-Hour Library kiosk to provide the public with library materials 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Located at the Summit View Business Park on U.S. Route 220 in Rocky Mount, the self-service kiosk became operational in December 2020.

The 24-Hour Library operates like a food vending machine except the items are free and the

machine is Wi-Fi-enabled. Users can visually browse and select from 235 books, audiobooks and DVDs, then scan their library card to dispense items. Users can also dispense a free kit containing a face mask, gloves and hand sanitizing wipe. Materials borrowed from any FCPL location may be returned to the kiosk as well.

The kiosk's free Wi-Fi service allows users to borrow and download e-books, audiobooks and periodicals to their personal e-readers, smartphones or computers. Users may choose from thousands of fiction and nonfiction titles. In addition, users can use apps to pull up their library accounts, store personal reading lists, and participate in FCPL reading challenges.

The Summit View Business Park is located along a heavily trafficked section of US 220 that connects Rocky Mount to Roanoke County to the north and Henry County to the south. The 24-Hour Library is situated in a prominent spot near public picnic tables, walking trails and ball fields. It is sheltered, wheelchair accessible, equipped with security cameras, illuminated at night, and it has dedicated parking.

Financing, Partnerships, and Staffing

An allocation from Franklin County's receipt of CARES Act funding made the 24-Hour Library possible. Although the FCPL boasts a generous donor base through its nonprofit Friends of the Library, its coffers were insufficient to acquire and install the kiosk. The FCPL and Franklin County Office of Economic Development, which oversees the Summit View Business Park, presented a proposal to the County's Board of Supervisors to earmark \$150,000 from the CARES Act funds for the 24-Hour Library. Eager to advance innovative initiatives to support the public during the pandemic and to establish ones that would be sustainable and relevant beyond the pandemic, the Board approved the allocation.

Site selection and installation of the 24-Hour Library would have been impossible without

intergovernmental cooperation including partnerships with the Franklin County departments of information technology and parks and recreation. The County's IT experts provided technical assistance on how to sync the kiosk with the FCPL's materials management system and establish reliable Wi-Fi service. The Parks and Recreation Department, which manages the site where the kiosk is located, coordinated construction of parking spaces, installation of light poles and other site preparation tasks.

The kiosk's rotating inventory includes books and other materials for children and adults. The FCPL's mobile media services manager regularly changes the inventory and oversees any needed technical troubleshooting on-site or remotely. For users, the kiosk is truly self-service and entails three easy steps—"Scan, Select, and Scoot!"—that are explained in signs and voice prompts. The FCPL also created an instructional video on YouTube:

<https://youtu.be/LnKjLG0rgog>

Innovation and Results

Word travels fast in Franklin County. Members of the public discovered and began using the 24-Hour Library even before the FCPL officially announced it. As of June 1, 2021, it was averaging 15 daily check-outs of materials. It has attracted robust media attention—summarized below—and inquiries from members of the Virginia Public Library Directors Association of the Virginia Library Association. The FCPL director regularly shares lessons learned and fields questions from her peers throughout Virginia on how to bring 24-hour libraries to their communities, including how to identify sites, integrate technologies, train staff, and promote public usage.

Automated 24-hour libraries are few and far between in Virginia. The 24-Hour Library at Summit View has put Franklin County on the map as a model for other localities in how to

implement state-of-the-art technology and serve residents outside of traditional business hours and locations. In addition, business parks do not typically have a public library presence. By being located at the Summit View Business Park, the 24-Hour Library attracts members of the public to Summit View and serves as an amenity for the businesses located there.

Thinking Ahead

Public libraries must demonstrate their worth to taxpayers, and some members of the public have wondered if library vending machines are too costly or if they will make bricks-and-mortar libraries obsolete. The FCPL never envisioned its 24-Hour Library as a substitute for its traditional services and resources; in fact, research from the fields of health, mental health, literacy, education, and community development has documented the importance of bricks-and-mortar libraries as community hubs and as vital to the in-person engagement and social connection that many people seek. The 24-Hour Library at Summit View augments the services and resources available at the FCPL's traditional locations and extends its operating hours to fulltime service. In addition, the 24-Hour Library provides a safe outdoor location for library events. To that aim, the FCPL has partnered with Franklin County Animal Control to host, on July 10, 2021, a "Tails & Tales" reading celebration and dog adoption event at the kiosk.

A Final Word

"Americans' love affair with libraries has only grown during the pandemic," wrote *National Geographic* journalist Melanie D.G. Kaplan. The pandemic reinforced the FCPL's responsibility to provide books and other materials safely and continuously and to serve the digitally disconnected and the public at large. We hope to never again experience a pandemic or face a natural or other disaster that affects Franklin County's ability to deliver services to the public;

however, the 24-Hour Library at Summit View is now in place to ensure safe, uninterrupted access to materials that entertain, educate and enrich. And perhaps our customers say it best:

Thank you so much for an additional opportunity to access the library.

It is cool. It is a beautiful setting too.

WOW!!! Franklin County has a 24-hour library!

It's so exciting to see new places for people that love books and other materials to have a place to visit.

I decided to get a book, to test the system, and found what seemed like a short book. And lo and behold, out it popped!

Love love love it!

Media Coverage

The FCPL's Facebook announcement of the 24-Hour Library reached 1,349 people. Two follow-up posts reached 1,491 and 1,835 people, respectively. Coverage by external media included:

WFXRTV – "Franklin County brings first Envisionware 24 hour library kiosk to Virginia"

<https://www.wfxrtv.com/community/franklin-county-library-brings-the-first-envisionware-24-hour-library-kiosk-to-virginia/>

WDBJ7 TV – "New Library Kiosk Opens in Franklin County"

<https://www.wdbj7.com/2021/03/24/new-library-kiosk-opens-in-franklin-county/>

The Franklin-News Post – "24-hour library opens at Summit View Business Park"

https://thefranklinnewspost.com/news/24-hour-library-opens-at-summit-view-business-park/article_da8aec2e-8cba-11eb-b69f-3785dc30b8d2.html#tncms-source=login

The Roanoke Times – "Franklin County's 24-hour library kiosk is up and running"

https://roanoke.com/news/local/franklin-countys-24-hour-library-kiosk-is-up-and-running/article_516e97f0-93f0-11eb-b670-9fa96f90150d.html

24-HOUR LIBRARY AT SUMMIT VIEW
FRANKLIN COUNTY PUBLIC LIBRARY
FRANKLIN COUNTY, VA



24-HOUR LIBRARY FRANKLIN COUNTY Public Library System

3-Easy-Steps

- 1. SCAN**
Scan your Franklin County Library Card. Remember your PIN is the last 4-digits of Library card number.
- 2. SELECT**
Select the item you want to checkout and use the 4-digit number identifying the slot of the item.
- 3. SCOOT**
Success! Time to take your items home and enjoy.

Use your smartphone to scan QR code and view a brief introduction video.

LIBRARY.FRANKLINCOUNTYVA.GOV

A cartoon illustration of a woman with pink hair, wearing a purple shirt and skirt, carrying a large stack of books.



Overview for VACo Press Releases

The Franklin County Public Library (FCPL) in Franklin County, Va. has installed a self-service 24-Hour Library kiosk where the public can access library materials 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. The FCPL conceived of the kiosk when the COVID-19 pandemic restricted access to the library's physical and digital materials. Individuals without internet service—who comprise more than 30% of Franklin County's population—were particularly impacted. Because the demand for books and other library materials increased during the pandemic, the FCPL needed an innovative way to provide materials safely and continuously for both the digitally disconnected and the public at large.

Located at the Summit View Business Park on Route U.S. 220 in Rocky Mount, the 24-Hour Library operates like a food vending machine except the items are free and the machine is Wi-Fi-enabled. Users can visually browse and select from 235 books, audiobooks and DVDs, then scan their library card to dispense items.

The kiosk's free Wi-Fi service allows users to borrow and download e-books, audiobooks and periodicals to their personal e-readers or smartphones. Users may choose from thousands of fiction and nonfiction titles. In addition, users can use apps to pull up their library accounts, store personal reading lists, and participate in FCPL reading challenges. A video demonstration of the 24-Hour Library is posted at <https://youtu.be/LnKjLG0rgog>

Said Alison Barry, Director of the Franklin County Public Library, "The COVID-19 pandemic reinforced our responsibility to continue to serve county residents who don't have internet service or are unable to access our physical buildings. Now the public has self-service access to

library materials around the clock.”

The Summit View Business Park is located along a heavily trafficked section of US 220 that connects Rocky Mount to Roanoke County to the north and Henry County to the south. The 24-Hour Library is situated in a prominent spot near picnic tables, walking trails and ball fields. It is sheltered, wheelchair accessible, equipped with security cameras, illuminated at night, and it has dedicated parking.

A \$150,000 allocation from Franklin County’s receipt of CARES Act funds paid for the 24-Hour Library. In addition, the 24-Hour Library received technical, logistical and leadership support from the Franklin County departments of economic development, information technology, and parks and recreation and from the Franklin County Board of Supervisors.

The Franklin County Public Library (FCPL) serves more than 56,000 residents across 690 square miles. For more information about the FCPL, see <https://www.franklincountyva.gov> and <https://www.facebook.com/Franklin.County.Public.Library.Main>