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Library

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SPECIAL BOARD MEETING MINUTES

June 29, 2022

5:00 p.m.

Howell Branch

ATTENDEES

BOARD MEMBERS: Kimberly Young (Chair), Diana Risavi (Vice Chair), Martha Hutzel (Secretary-Treasurer), Meg Bohmke, Kerry Devine, Lori Hayes, Cheryl Miller, Xavier Richardson

LIBRARY ADMINISTRATION: Adriana Puckett, Rebecca Purdy, Anita Reynolds

Kimberly Young called the meeting to order at 5:02 p.m.

Kimberly Young thanked the Board members and the public for attending the Special Meeting. Young mentioned the discussion will be on the app that CRRL customers use to check out materials from the Library. This discussion is carried over from the June 15th meeting.

Young thanked the Board for submitting their questions in advance of the meeting and asked Martha Hutzel to respond.

Hutzel greeted the Board members and guests and thanked them for attending the meeting. Hutzel stated she will detail steps CRRL has already taken and will be addressing the concerns expressed in the Public Comment session at the June 15th board meeting.

Hutzel informed the Board that CRRL started working with the company BiblioCommons in 2012, when CRRL subscribed to its online catalog software. In 2017, CRRL started using the BiblioCommons mobile app; the latest version of which was launched a year ago, in June 2021.



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Hutzel stated the mobile app was selected because it offers excellent searching and account maintenance functionality, it was the most economical option, and it works well with the BiblioCommons online catalog.

Hutzel mentioned CRRL subscribes to the mobile app with an annual contract that is based on the population of CRRL's service area. There is no discount for increased participation in the app. Because the library subscribes to a few different products from BiblioCommons, different departments at CRRL are involved in working with them. Hutzel stated the online catalog and mobile app are managed by the Collection Services department because they interface and provide access to the catalog and the Suggest a Purchase functionality. The website software is managed by CRRL's Community Engagement department.

Hutzel expressed CRRL has a wonderful working relationship with BiblioCommons, especially the Vice President of Customer Success. The company is very responsive to member libraries' requests and interests. BiblioCommons also solicits feedback on a regular basis. Hutzel also stated that over the last three years, CRRL staff have attended BiblioCommons conferences, synchronous virtual meetings, and webinars. There is a robust helpdesk ticketing system when assistance is required as well.

Hutzel mentioned BiblioCommons has a focus on accessibility for all of its products, which aligns with CRRL's goals of making the library accessible to all customers. In fact, BiblioCommons has prioritized this so much that it partners with an outside company called Level Access that specializes in accessibility to guide its development.

Hutzel stated the purpose of the mobile app is to provide streamlined access to search the library's catalog, place holds, renew materials, browse events, and see the library's locations and hours. The mobile app also provides a digital library card and self-check-out functionality. There are three places where titles are suggested to CRRL mobile users: the home screen under "New at the Library;" on staff lists; and on the page for an individual title.

Hutzel explained, in the app, customers can filter for adults, teens, or children. It is not tied to the customer's library card account as a customer would experience with a Netflix profile personalization.

Hutzel stated CRRL's Staff Lists are created by staff in Adult Services, Youth Services, Community Engagement, and Collection Services departments. Lists are approved by Coordinators and Community Engagement. All staff lists are reviewed to ensure there are diverse titles represented and by a staff editor. Hutzel also stated this is important because CRRL strives to create a balanced collection representing a diverse range of ideas, issues, and lifestyles in a neutral, unbiased manner.

Hutzel mentioned there are protections in place in CRRL Mobile for children under the age of 13, in compliance with the Children's Online Privacy Protection Act. This restricts children from creating accounts in the app with their names or entering comments. Hutzel also mentioned there are settings customers can apply to customize their experience in the app that will hide comments that have been flagged as offensive. Parents and caregivers can use the search filters to limit items to intended audiences or formats.

Hutzel informed the Board that the CRRL app does not list the book [You Know, Sex: Gender, Puberty, and Other Things](#) by Cory Silverburg as recommended for a 10+ year old. That is Amazon's age recommendation which CRRL does not follow. CRRL has the title in the teen collection; CRRL's Collection Services staff intentionally categorized this book as Young Adult, based on knowledge of CRRL's customers and the communities we serve. This title was written for a middle-school audience, specifically ages 10-14. It features four middle school characters and its description says it is a "modern sex ed book for every body navigating puberty and adolescence".

Hutzel mentioned parents' information is collected when a child receives a library card and a parent has access to their child's library account. The paper application and the application on librarypoint both have a parental signature field. In person, a minor who can provide their name, address, and phone number will have a library card mailed to their residence; a parent or guardian's name is recorded in the account. Hutzel also mentioned, per Virginia Code, a parent can access their child's account at any time and can do this at CRRL by entering their child's library card and PIN numbers into the catalog or the app. They would need to do this for each one of their children that has a library card. Some families opt to have one card that their entire family uses.

Hutzel explained the CRRL Mobile app does not have technology that limits customers of any age group from searching for materials, placing them on hold, or using self-checkout. A child would need their library card and PIN in order to access the app. Hutzel also mentioned the self-check-out functionality that the app provides is especially important post-COVID, as some customers prefer to check out their items on their own device, rather than waiting in line or using the Express Checkout. Additionally, it addresses staffing gaps in Customer Services.

Hutzel stated customers have expressed appreciation for the digital library card the app provides, which is useful at the Express Checkout machines and relieves customers from having to keep track of a physical library card. The app utilizes BiblioCommons' search technology to return the most relevant results. This saves customers time searching. Customers can quickly look up a book they see in a bookstore or online to find out if the library has it for them to borrow, therefore also saving them money. Hutzel also stated the App usage at CRRL continues to increase, an indication that customers find it valuable.

Hutzel mentioned immediately following the June 15th Board meeting, a blog on tips for browsing, filtering and searching was written on the website and the article was shared in our Customer News and promoted on our social media sites. The CRRL Mobile bookmark distributed in the branches was also updated to provide additional guidance on how the new titles section works.

Hutzel stated CRRL staff have also met with BiblioCommons several times regarding the concerns raised at the June 15th Board meeting. They listened to CRRL's feedback and plan to take the following steps to improve customers' personalized browsing and discovery experience:

- 1.) Reprioritize and focus on changing the app's landing page for their next phase in the app's development.
- 2.) Conduct testing to evaluate how the order of the items on the home screen helps to provide a better experience for patrons.
- 3.) Run a design sprint to envision the next iteration of the app's landing experience; BiblioCommons has invited CRRL staff to participate in this process.

Hutzel mentioned that a copy of a letter from Bibliocommons commitment has been provided to each Board member.

Hutzel stated since the app is unable to limit what is shown by age level, CRRL will also work to update the age rating for the mobile app in the iOS and Android stores. Hutzel stated she has answered all of the questions the Board submitted, and would be happy to answer any additional questions the Board might have concerning the mobile app.

Kimberly Young thanked Martha Hutzel for answering the questions the Board had submitted in advance of the meeting and opened the floor for additional questions.

Meg Bohmke asked if Hutzel's answers meant that the app did not have parental controls.

Adriana Puckett stated parents can put on controls to provide a safer online experience and demonstrated how to apply searching limits on the app. The filter needs to be applied every time and will not save.

Kimberly Young stated CRRL made a decision to put the book in the teen collection and asked how a parent will know how to enact the filters.

Bohmke stated YouTube is very explicit on how to apply parental controls.

Hutzel replied that staff have posted an article on the website providing step-by-step instructions for applying filters and suggested staff could also make an instructional video to demonstrate how they could be applied.

Kerry Devine asked if there is a way to tie an app profile to a device. Puckett stated there is not. Diana Risavi stated there is a filtering option and asked if there was a cost associated with the changes BiblioCommons is planning for the app. Hutzel stated there are no additional costs.

Lori Hayes asked how much the app would cost the library.

Hutzel informed the Board the initial subscribing price in 2017 was \$4000 per year and \$1000 per implementation fee. This was substantially less than the more than \$14,554.40 the library was paying to another app vendor (Boopsie) at the time. Hutzel mentioned the price of CRRL's mobile app has increased due to population growth. For FY23, CRRL will pay \$9,035.00 a year for the app and \$3,614 for the self-checkout functionality.

CRRL has looked into other app solutions that work with the Library's catalog system. One app, BlueCloud Mobile for Kids by SirsiDynix, limits searching to children's material and requires a subscription to the full BlueCloud mobile app. The total for both apps is approximately \$41,000 annually, with additional set-up fees. Also, full integration with BiblioCommons has not occurred yet with that vendor.

Hutzel stated CRRL has inquiries with two other vendors, CapiraMobile and Solus (used to be Boopsie), but have not received pricing information. At the time that CRRL went to BiblioCommons' app, Capira did not work with CRRL's catalog, and Boopsie was the app CRRL was using, which was more expensive and offered less integration with CRRL's technology. Staff have also looked into what it would cost to develop an app. Hutzel also stated the price greatly varies depending on the complexity of the app. According to one source, prices can vary from \$40,000 to \$300,000, and that does not include maintenance or a new staff position.

A member of the public stated that the new books are not filtered. Puckett stated the new books are on the landing page and the filter must be applied from the landing page. That is part of what BiblioCommons is planning to address.

Meg Bohmke stated there are gay pride books on a list for zero to three year olds and we have not done a good job helping the constituents keep their children safe. We let the community down and need to take a bigger stance. The bookmark doesn't tell how to filter.

Kimberly Young stated this is an opportunity to develop and a chance to take action. BiblioCommons has been responsive and has stated they will begin work in Quarter 3 which starts July 1. The library has several options on what actions can be taken now.

Lori Hayes stated this is not about censorship. Parents should decide what their child is exposed to. She is concerned that BiblioCommons did not notify the library this was a problem.

Meg Bohmke stated we need to protect families and children by refraining from offering the app and a disclosure message should be put at the top of the website. She stated we need to educate people and to alert the public that the app doesn't have parental controls.

Bohmke made a motion to protect families and children to make sure staff refrain from pushing the bookmark unless it has a disclaimer and put out a message about the lack of parental controls. Lori Hayes seconded. Xavier Richardson stated this was brought to BiblioCommons attention and they are working to correct the filters. He proposed a friendly amendment that the motion states that the library will inform the public about the lack of parental controls and that they are in the process of addressing the issue. Bohmke accepted the amendment and the motion passed unanimously.

Lori Hayes stated we are informed now and are working to fix something that may be harmful; not to take away anyone's rights. We need to inform the public about parental controls.

Kimberly Young stated the options that have surfaced through discussion. Parents have the option to delete the app and consider using the library catalog. The library can continue to explore other app providers and evaluate them based on features and cost, and can work with app stores to adjust recommended age ratings for the app. There can be more education around all library apps and an instructional video created to assist parents in applying filters in the app. Parents could be invited to be part of the process in working with library staff and BiblioCommons on app improvements. The library could provide additional information on safe searching in general.

Meg Bohmke suggested a press release be written about the lack of parental controls in the app; and stated the book Growing up Trans can be downloaded by kids. Xavier Richardson asked if the library had a more direct method of reaching possible app users to share information about how to use the app. Martha Hutzler stated that the information could be shared in the library's customer newsletter.

Kimberly Young thanked the Board for their discussion.

Meg Bohmke made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Lori Hayes seconded and it passed unanimously. The meeting was adjourned at 6:18 p.m.