Subject: Woodland Branch Self-Service Proposal

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Attachment: Woodland Self Service Study

Initiated by: Los Altos Library Commission

Information for Council Consideration:

The Los Altos Library Commission and Santa Clara County Library District is exploring whether self-service technology should be employed at the Woodland Branch to extend library service hours and to provide a better experience for library patrons

Background:

The Los Altos Woodland Branch Library is a smaller facility that serves a diverse community—ranging from children going to school nearby to senior citizens. In the 2019 SCCLD Patron Survey, 42% of Woodland participants surveyed indicated an interest in self-service hours.

Self-Service Technology has been employed mostly in Europe and Asia. There is a range of technologies that may be considered "self-service"—from allowing patrons to check out materials by themselves to automated kiosks to allowing access to the library through the use of key cards or other secure means.

For our project, we are interested in the latter—whether this technology could allow patrons to make use of the Woodland branch after normal operating hours. Woodland is currently operating on a six day, 1pm-6pm schedule. Extending service hours would greatly benefit patrons such as commuters, older residents who prefer a quieter environment, and parents of young children. The goal of this project is to increase the number of hours library service is available for the community and not to supplant staffing.

Bibliotheca is the leader with dominant marketshare and proven technology with their Open+ solution. The initial implementations started in Scandanavia in 2008 and then expanded into the U.K. There are now ~900 libraries with Open+, with about 100 in the United States.

Summary of Findings:

1. The small footprint of Woodland makes it ideal for self-service

2. The Santa Clara County Library District (SCCLD) is interested in self-service and sees a good fit with Woodland. The District is looking into how funds may be made available before any discussions can begin with Bibliotheca.

3. The Santa Clara County Library District (SCCLD) applied in May 2020 for a grant through the State of California (Califa) for a self-service pilot of Bibliotheca's Open+ technology for Woodland. However, grants were prioritized toward low-income communities.

4. The San Jose Library is now in the process of implementing Bibliotheca's Open+ self-service technology. We plan to discuss their project once Bibliotheca connects us to the San Jose Library team.

5. The costs of this technology appear to be modest, with a $1,000 monthly subscription that covers both implementation and support of cameras, servers and software.

Library Commission Recommendations:

1. Begin initial discussions with Bibliotheca, while due diligence continues
2. Plan for implementation so that Woodland may be fully prepared once funding is found. SCCLD has actively taken the lead and is now looking at the details of library policies and technical details.

Potential Implications:

Positive: Higher levels of resident satisfaction with the Woodland Branch
              Be the leader for self-service in the Santa Clara County Library District

Negative: Some City Staff time may be needed to coordinate and plan for implementation—
              e.g., Legal for review of policy changes, Emergency Services for policies on
              supporting after-hours self-service, Facilities for any work to be done on the
              exterior of the building such as cameras.

Subject: Woodland Library Branch Self-Service Study

Purpose

To better understand how self-service technologies are employed today to extend library hours, the experience of libraries in the U.S that have implemented self-service, and whether these technologies can be cost-effectively employed at the Los Altos Woodland branch.

Background and Project Approach

The Los Altos Woodland Branch library is a 4,600 sq. ft. single room facility serving South Los Altos. Funds to build this branch were part of a bond measure passed in the 1970's. The bond covered both a 4,000 sq. ft. expansion of the Main Branch and to build Woodland.

The Library Commission is aware that self-service technology is employed in Europe and Asia, in various forms. As Los Altos has grown considerably (30% from 1970 to 2010, according to the U.S. Census), one concern of the Commission is how can the Los Altos Library better serve its patrons in an economic manner, without physical expansion. Self-service is one option to consider.

"Self-service" covers a spectrum of offerings—from allowing patrons to check out materials, to automated kiosks, to providing access to a part of or an entire library after normal operating hours. Our project is focused on the latter. The Woodland branch now operates on a six day, 1pm-6pm schedule. Having the technology to extend those hours would greatly benefit the residents of South Los Altos. The residents who would benefit the most would include commuters, older residents who prefer a quieter environment, and mothers with young children who can stop by for some quality reading time.

The goal of this project is to understand how this technology can be used to add Woodland service hours for the community, not to supplant library staff.

The Futures Subcommittee of the Los Altos Library Commission investigated self-service technology through a combination of primary and secondary research. Specifically, we interviewed two head librarians who have gone through the implementation of self-service technology to understand their experiences and the costs of this technology. We also interviewed representatives of the leading provider of self-service technology, Bibliotheca, which has the majority share of this particular technology and service market. Present for these interviews were Library Commissioners Crane, Gee and Liu, and Rose Baiza, Community Librarian for Los Altos.

Our findings were then presented to the full Library Commission for review and discussion of next steps.

<u>**Key Findings**</u>

1. The librarians we interviewed with experience with self-service technology for extending library hours have been happy with the results
   a. Ventura County initially implemented at their Hill Road facility to extend hours by 30%. Their experience has informed their future plans. Specifically, their next library renovation at their Fillmore branch is designed with self-service in mind
   b. Initially, 115 patrons opted in for self-service hours. Now, they have more than 2,000.
   c. No security issues have been noted.

2. The small footprint of Woodland makes it ideal for self-service

3. The Santa Clara County Library District (SCCLD) applied in May 2020 for a grant through the State of California (Califa) for a self-service pilot of Bibliotheca's Open+ technology for Woodland. However, grants were prioritized toward low-income communities.

4. Bibliotheca is the leader with dominant marketshare and proven technology with their Open+ solution.
   a. Initial implementations started in Scandanavia in 2008 and then expanded into the U.K.
   b. There are now ~900 libraries with Open+, with about 100 in the United States.

5. The San Jose Library is now in the process of implementing Bibliotheca's Open+ self-service technology. We plan to discuss their project once Bibliotheca connects us to the San Jose team.

6. SCCLD continues to be interested in self-service and sees the fit with Woodland. The District is now looking into how funds may be made available before any discussions can begin with Bibliotheca.

7. Costs and timeline for implementation (from our interviews):
   a. $1,000 per month for the installation, equipment subscription—with a 3-year commitment
   b. 10-12 weeks required to install and turn-on. This may vary depending on the design and integration with other library systems.

8. In addition to the technology, there is a lot of planning and pre-work that the SCCLD has taken the lead on:
   a. Socialize and gather input from library staff—emphasizing that self-service does not supplant current staffing (being planned)
   b. Review Library policies regarding privacy, security camera footage retention and access privileges, patron requirements for opting in (such as age), and support after-hours (actively in work)
   c. Develop training materials for patrons wishing to opt-in (TBD)
   d. Coordinate with key constituencies within City Government who may need to be consulted for assistance, e.g., Legal on policies, Facilities where cameras will be installed outside of Woodside, etc. (TBD)

Futures Subcommittee Recommendations:

1. Begin initial discussions with Bibliotheca while due diligence proceeds

2. Conduct further due diligence
   a. Obtain terms of standard agreement and review whether those terms are acceptable for Los Altos and SCCLD
   b. Refine cost estimates—one time vs. operating/annual
   c. Interview San Jose project team and other libraries for lessons learned and the benefits and potential negatives of this technology and how to mitigate

3. Plan for implementation so that Woodland may be fully prepared once funding is found, with SCCLD taking lead and is actively working
   a. Review policies and training materials for self-service provided by Ventura County and Scott County libraries to determine applicability for Los Altos
   b. Socialize and gather input of library staff
   c. Determine if any changes are needed for the interior of Woodland. For example, Ventura's Hill Road branch has only 4' tall shelving to allow cameras good line of sight.
   d. Determine which City Staff may be needed to plan for and coordinate with on the design, implementation and operation of self-service.
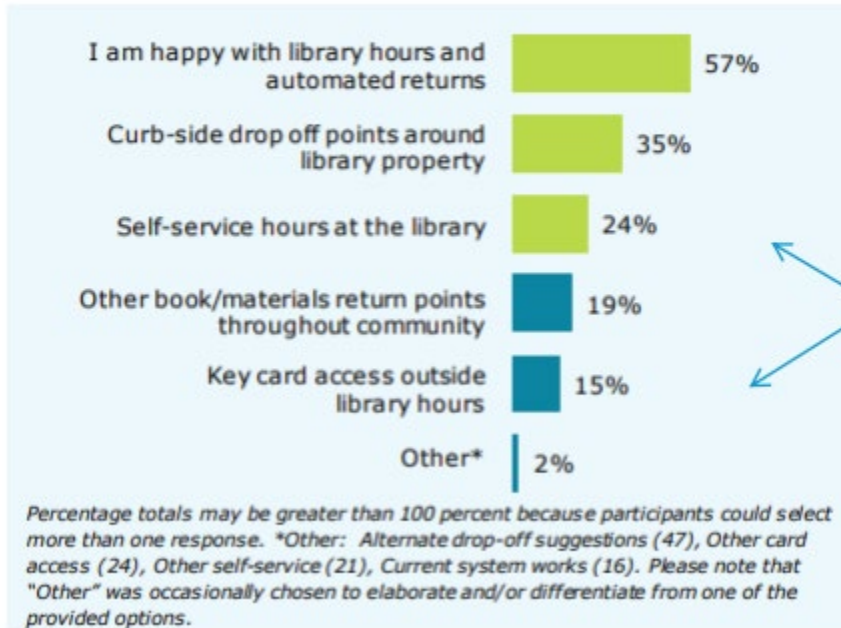
Technology Elements

- Note that 24/7 surveillance monitoring is a key element of this technology package

- A means of securing and allowing access is needed, such as a system actuated door lock/unlock mechanism or automated door

- A phone line or some other means of reaching emergency services may be needed. At minimum, signage of number to call should be posted.

- For some libraries, there is a level of integration between security mechanisms such as RFID reader and the material check-out system to track and post which materials accompanied which patron upon exiting library

An Example View of Self-Service Access

- In this example, an access panel unlocks the front door for patrons who have opted into self-service and have met the necessary requirements

- In the case of Ventura County Hill Road branch, they found that this kind of locking mechanism was not sufficiently reliable. They invested $10,000 on a new sliding glass door instead.

Input on Expanding Access

Category	Percentage
I am happy with library hours and automated returns	57%
Curb-side drop off points around library property	35%
Self-service hours at the library	24%
Other book/materials return points throughout community	19%
Key card access outside library hours	15%
Other*	2%

39% of SCCLD patrons named either self-service or key card access to library

Percentage totals may be greater than 100 percent because participants could select more than one response. *Other: Alternate drop-off suggestions (47), Other card access (24), Other self-service (21), Current system works (16). Please note that "Other" was occasionally chosen to elaborate and/or differentiate from one of the provided options.

- Woodland participants indicated a slightly higher interest in self-service at 42%

Ventura County Hill Road Branch with Focus on Self-Service Access

[Ventura County Hill Road Video](#)