Project Name: Self-service library kiosks for serving people living in remote and isolated communities

Library, group, or person submitting proposal:
Joint proposal of the Pierce County Library System, Sno-Isle Libraries, Fort Vancouver Regional Library District and Spokane County Library System, submitted by Sally Porter Smith, Pierce County Library System

1. Briefly describe your idea for the use of LSTA funding (limit your response to approximately ½ page):

LSTA funding would provide the opportunity for Washington State libraries to implement a kiosk model of service in remote and isolated communities, or in high growth areas that lack the infrastructure of a city or town. A kiosk would be a turnkey product with multiple options and features that could be selected to meet the specific needs of different communities.

Currently, there are turnkey kiosk products that can be configured to enable users to:

- access the Library’s catalog and place holds,
- pick up holds that are stored and accessed from a secure, confidential locker system,
- return library materials,
- pay fines and manage their library account,
- access the Library’s web page and resources, including online databases and web links
- receive direct reference service from library staff via email and/or instant messaging,
- receive direct circulation and card services from library staff via telephone, email and/or instant messaging service,
- print receipts and other documents, including information and reference materials,
- download e-books, movies and music,
- utilize homework help and products such as Tutor.com,
- surf the web,
- establish and utilize free email accounts.

The library, by choosing from the available options, provides library patrons the ability to complete multiple tasks at the kiosk. The library would also have the ability to select the vendor, model and configuration of the kiosk that best meets space specifications. Kiosks have been used in many settings, including inside and outside buildings.

Please note that the kiosk described above and the costs associated with that kiosk are not a recommendation that this is the kiosk that should be selected for this proposal. Instead, it is used as an example of what is possible and what that would cost and what would be covered by that cost.
Given that caveat, the initial cost for purchasing, installing and implementing a kiosk model such as the one described above is estimated at approximately $52,000 and includes the first year of maintenance (estimate and specifications are available). Ongoing maintenance of hardware and software for the above model was estimated at $6,000 per year depending upon the features chosen. This information is provided as a way to consider what type of commitment of funds would be necessary to offer this proposal to Washington State libraries. LSTA funds related to kiosks and e-branches have been used in thirteen other states. From the information available, it appears that LSTA grants have been structured in a variety of ways, including asking for matched funding from participating libraries, to partial funding to full funding of the equipment, installation, and implementation. In Washington State there are libraries that could afford to participate in matching funds, but for other libraries, the ongoing maintenance costs could be managed, but not the initial outlay of funds. We would hope that if this proposal was accepted, the affordability issue would be considered so all libraries would have the opportunity to participate.

The $52,000 price included above would provide for the equipment and software, including the customized implementation and installation of the kiosk, locker system, returned materials mechanism, and the first year maintenance contract. Implementation would include the customized design of menus, creation of links to websites, integration of kiosk software with the library’s web-based online catalog and databases, production of monthly and year-to-date statistical use reports, and maintenance of the kiosk’s hardware and software. It would also cover the cost to install telecommunications lines. It is important to note that telecommunications will play an important role in whether this service could be offered in all locations and the fact that the telecommunication cost may vary widely depending upon the area to be served.

2. Briefly describe why funding of this idea is important to the Washington library community (limit your response to approximately ½ page):

18% of Washington state residents* live in rural communities and many lack convenient access to their public libraries. As a group representing four Washington State public library systems, we know the challenges of providing library service to people living in multiple remote areas within our service district. We also have experience in serving isolated areas that are surrounded by different government jurisdictions but dependent upon our library systems for service. In addition, there may be applications in high growth areas, often areas that were once considered rural, but without the infrastructure of towns and cities to support the growth. We cannot build libraries in each of these communities and we know the limitations of bookmobiles and materials by mail. The kiosk service model may be the alternative that could significantly increase library services to people living in these communities. This project could allow Washington libraries to adapt and test this model and provide invaluable information for other Washington State libraries considering service models for remote and isolated communities.

In addition to offering a way to expand service in rural, isolated communities, kiosks also represent a new way of serving populations where they congregate, such as on state ferries or shopping malls located on state routes or major arterials connecting rural commuters with their jobs. This could attract a new group of library users, people who today don’t feel a special trip to a library building is worthwhile. A tool that enables libraries to reach out to users, rather than expecting users to come to them, is worth investigating. (We are not advocating for kiosks to replace library buildings, but rather to augment them.)

*P2. URBAN AND RURAL [6] - Universe: Total population, Data Set: Census 2000 Summary File 1 (SF 1) 100-Percent Data
3. Briefly describe the outcome that is expected should the idea be funded. In other words, how will we know if the project has been successful and has achieved its goals? (limit your response to approximately ½ page):

The desired outcome of this project is that public libraries will learn whether kiosks are a viable service model for the future. Through kiosks, new users will have convenient access to their library's collections and basic services. Libraries will understand the costs and effort needed to place and maintain kiosks, and will gather statistics to help gauge whether the cost/use is attractive compared to alternative methods of reaching underserved populations.

To some degree, measuring success will be looking at how the kiosks are used. If successful, the numbers should reflect increased use over time. Specifically, we could look at the following indicators:

1. Number of new library cards requested through kiosk
2. Number of current library card holders using the kiosk
3. Number of users accessing the online catalog at the kiosk
4. Number of users accessing the Internet at the kiosk
5. Number of users accessing the online databases at the kiosk
6. Number of users requesting online reference service at the kiosk
7. Number of users placing reserves on library materials at the kiosk
8. Number of users consulting the library's telephone service and type of service request, i.e. card services, reference services, questions about programs and services
9. Number of patrons requesting holds to be delivered to the kiosk for pickup
10. Number of items circulated via the kiosk
11. Number of materials returned to the kiosk

In addition, user satisfaction surveys should be conducted to determine the more qualitative aspect of evaluation. A number of strategies could be used to determine if the service is responsive to users' needs and interests. We would also want to know if we reach new users reached via a kiosk and whether their use of a kiosk would lead to other uses of the library.
General Information

Which library types are intended as the primary beneficiaries of this project? (check all that apply)

- [x] Academic (private and public two-year and four-year academic institutions)
- [x] Public (libraries organized under RCW 27.12)
- School (private and public K-12 schools)
- Special (business and industry, law, medical, other government, tribal, other)
- If other, specify: ____________________________________________________

The intended beneficiaries of the project? (check the primary beneficiary)

- [ ] Library staff
- [ ] Library users or potential library users
- [x] A specific group of staff or users, or a potential user group. Name the targeted beneficiaries(s):

  - People living in remote and geographically isolated communities
  - People who don’t visit libraries today

The activities needed to implement this project are envisioned to include (check all that apply):

- [x] User training
- [x] Staff training
- [ ] Grants
- [ ] Development of best practices
- [ ] Demonstration of emerging technology or practices
- [x] Other, please explain:

  This project will require the coordinated work of the library system, including staff working in the following areas: information technology, facilities, public services, marketing, and business.

Considering the outcome desired, how long should the project continue?  4 years
(Note that most projects are from one year to four years in length.)

Which Library Council priorities support the idea you are submitting (check all that apply)

- [x] Increase information access for the people of Washington
- [ ] Advance literacy in the state of Washington
- [x] Demonstrate how libraries educate, empower and elevate people, communities, and democratic society by providing free and equitable access to all types of information.
- [x] Serve underserved, unserved, and culturally diverse communities and populations
- [ ] Enhance the skills and knowledge of library staff