

Show: Tech Bytes

Host: Todd Miller

Guest: Georgia Pichinos-Anderson

Overview: Tech Bytes is a technology podcast, produced by the Digital Services department at Niles-Maine District Library about technology news and useful technology tips.

Episode: Tech Bytes #41 - The Journey of a Book (Part 3)

Episode Description: In this episode, the last part of a mini series on the Journey of a Library book, we talk to Georgia, Patron Services Assistant Supervisor at Niles-Maine District Library about the role that her department plays in getting the book into a reader's hands.

[Music - Tech Bytes theme]

Hi, and welcome back to Tech Bytes. I'm your host, Todd, and today, we're finishing up our mini series on the journey of a library book.

If you missed the two episodes, now is your chance to pause, go back and listen.

Today we're joined by Georgia, who is the Patron Services Assistant Supervisor at Niles-Maine District Library. Georgia is going to tell us about the important role that her department plays in getting the book into a reader's hands.

She'll also tell us a little bit about some of the strange things that come back with returned books and why you should *never* reshelve library books.

We'll be right back.

[Music - Tech Bytes theme]

Todd: Like I mentioned before the break, we're here with Georgia, who is the Patron Services Assistant Supervisor. Georgia is going to talk to us about what happens to a book after Materials Services finishes processing it, and it moves on to Patron Services. So thanks for being here, Georgia.

Georgia: Thank you for having me. So Materials Services brings a cart of completed items to our department, and sometimes it's a big cart, sometimes it's a little cart. If it's a little cart, we will go through and check them in by hand. We trap the holds right away, get them prepared for patrons to come pick them up. If it's a larger cart, we will put them through our sorter, and it does the work for us. It traps the holds, sends it to a bin where we empty out by hand, and then we prepare the hold. Or if there are no holds on it, it puts them into a bin for the corresponding department. So then we would empty out the bins, put them on the carts in order, ready to go, so they can go be shelved in their new homes wherever that be in the library.

Todd: Perfect. So the library has self-checkout stations, as well as a staff member from Patron Services who's always at the desk who's able to help them. Why is it important to have both options available to patrons?

Georgia: It's a very good question. It is important because technology can't solve all the problems that might arise. Okay, so maybe all someone wants to do is check out a book, and that's great. They could use the self-checkout. But say maybe an item is still on their account that maybe didn't get checked in correctly, or that there's an item that they forgot on their account, and it has been billed, and they don't know what is going on. So in order to correct this, they would have to come to the Patron Services desk, talk with one of our amazing associates, and they can then take the correct steps to correct the issue.

Todd: That's kind of like when your child takes out a book, decides that they love it so much that they're going to keep it, and then there's a charge on the account. There needs to be somebody to talk to once you bring that book back to get that charge taken off.

Georgia: Exactly. Plus, it adds the human element to the conversation that maybe the patron is a little concerned and very worried, and we can talk them down, and it is okay. We can correct this.

Todd: The library recently upgraded and replaced the automatic return machines. Can you tell me about the new system and how that new technology is helping the department?

Georgia: So it's interesting because with this sorter, it's very similar, right? It does the same job basically as the old sorter, but there are a couple key differences. One is it is much quieter, which we love if you have to work next to it day in and day out, so that's lovely. But the other thing is that it has more space, so it has more room for more items to come through that we can get more items returned to us, sorted quickly, and move them back on to their home base.

Todd: I will also say the beep when it scans is a pretty satisfying tone for some reason.

Georgia: It's very interesting because this one makes so many new sound effects that the other one did not. This one has like a police siren if something gets jammed, which was a very interesting learning curve for us to learn. And then if you pull a bin out, everything lights up red, and it sounds like aliens are coming to attack. It is actually pretty funny. So we put the bin back, and it's silent and happy again. So this one definitely is more user-friendly in the sense that you can actually look away for a few seconds, and it'll let you know if there's a problem. But so far, it has been wonderful and very nice.

Todd: Great. So you're in patron services. People will use just about anything for a bookmark. We know that. What are some of the stranger things that you have found returned in a book?

Georgia: Well, when you work in public libraries for over 20 years, nothing is really considered strange anymore. But we've seen quite a variety of things. Probably the more stranger things,

although I don't know if it's considered strange. I mean, a piece of toilet paper. Okay, we know where that book's been. But that's okay. Otherwise, I mean, the popular culprits either could be bills, photos, sometimes even money. There was one time a patron put a \$100 bill as a bookmark. Why you would use a \$100 bill, I couldn't even begin to tell you. But they did. And they were so concerned about it because they totally forgot. We called them. We let them know. They came in and got it. And everybody was very happy. But yeah, I mean, you see everything when you work with the public. So yeah.

Todd: All right. Last, every library has signage that discourages patrons from reshelving library books. Why is that? And what happens if a book gets put on the shelf in the wrong location?

Georgia: So, okay. If a book gets taken off the shelf by a patron, they're looking at it. Oh, I don't know if I want it. But, you know, everything kind of becomes one big blur. And they maybe put it back in the wrong place. Even though it's with good intentions. We ask that they don't because if it's put in the wrong place, it can be a little bit of time before we find it to correct it. Otherwise, if it's a popular title, so say one of the Game of Thrones books, and a patron comes in and really wants this title. And we go to look for it, and we can't find it. Now that patron has to wait, even though it shows available in the system. So now they have to put the hold, we have to wait for the item to come from another library, which can add a week or so to the time. Whereas if it was just put in the right place to begin with, just to let the staff do it. They could have taken it right then and there on the spot. So that's why we very much appreciate good intentions and all, but we want the professionals to do their work.

Todd: Perfect. Thank you so much for joining us, Georgia. This has been great.

Georgia: Thank you so much for having me.

[Music - Tech Bytes theme]

Thanks again to Georgia for joining us, and thanks again to all of the guests who joined us on this journey.

Tech Bytes is recorded in Studio A on the lower level of the Niles-Maine District Library, where Niles-Maine cardholders have access to the recording equipment and software that were used to produce this episode.

Thank you for listening, and if you have any technology questions, you can find us on the lower level, at the Library's technology desk. You can also email us at digitalservices@nileslibrary.org.

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[Music - Tech Bytes theme]