



Lee Hoisington, a program manager at the Burlington County Library in Westampton, prepares an order made through the new Library in a Bag program last week.

A new chapter on how to check out books

Library system now mailing orders

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WESTAMPTON — Are you eager to read a bestseller but don't feel like driving to the library?

Not a problem. With the Burlington County Library System's new Library in a Bag program, patrons can have books, DVDs and other library materials delivered to their mailboxes.

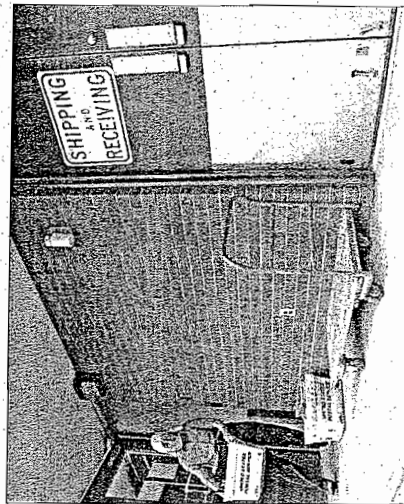
Library cardholders can place orders on the county library's Web site. Instead of selecting a library branch pick-up site from a drop-down menu, patrons can opt to have their orders mailed.

Library in a Bag also accepts orders via e-mail and fax.

"Since it began June 6 we've literally mailed out hundreds of packages to very happy county residents," said Gail Sweet, the library's director. "We assumed that most people would request DVDs and have been surprised that most are requesting books."

The library is using a \$50,000 grant from the South Jersey Regional Library Cooperative, which is funded by the New Jersey State Library, to cover the cost of packing material and postage.

Burlington and Gloucester counties both received grants for the program, which is modeled after one operated by the Fort Vancouver, Wash., library system. The Fort Vancouver system encompasses four counties.



Sarah Thompson carries a container of orders that are ready to be shipped under the new program. The library sent out more than 300 orders in June, the first month of the program, and more than 1,000



BCT staff photo/NANCY ROKOS
At the Burlington County Library in Westampton, Lee Hoisington prepares the packaging for a book to be shipped to a customer using the Library in a Bag program.

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with the books.

The grant covers shipping one way, so patrons must pay for return shipping or take the item to a county library drop-off location.

The library sent out more than 300 packages in the first month of the program, and more than 1,000 in July.

Sweet said library usage has increased because of this new program, but also because of the state of the economy.

"We are experiencing an unbelievable increase in purchased reusable use, she said. "We have dis-appointing toddlers on waiting lists for programs. There aren't enough computers for job seekers. Lines to check out material have been 10 feet deep. The American dream is shaky. County residents are turning to us for help."

Thompson said the library purchased 500 reusable nylon bags to ship items. The library also uses disposable packaging when necessary. If a book is mailed in one of the reusable bags, the book and bag are both checked out to help ensure that the bags are returned.

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