

## Van Service Reaps Benefits at the Nichols Library

At the Nichols Library, not having a book on hand is not the end of the world. More often than not, the library can satisfy reader's special interests through our interlibrary loan service. By searching the state wide catalog, the Nichols Staff can often find that special book. Once found, books are shipped by the state library's interlibrary van delivery service. Delivery can come within a week; seldom more than two. As a member of the library staff notes, "our patrons have all kinds of interests that we could never hope to keep with. For them, interlibrary loan is a godsend."

By searching the state wide catalog, the Nichols Staff can often find that special book. Once found, books are shipped by the state library's interlibrary van delivery service. Delivery can come within a week; seldom more than two. Users of the service include school kids and adult education students seeking help with assignments, and general readers engaged in self-directed study. The later group includes patrons studying up on history (the Scottish Jacobite rebellion and the Italian Risorgimento are two recent topics), science (space travel, radiation, animal studies), and religion (everything from Biblical exegesis to Mahayana Buddhism). The library has also brought in books offering information on child rearing, education and health matters. In addition, the library is also able to seek out rare works of fiction, films on DVD and musical recordings for patrons in search of enriching experiences.

When patrons cannot find an item at the library, the Nichols Staff looks up available copies in the statewide catalog, or NHU-PAC. A product of the digital age, the NHU-PAC allows libraries to upload their holdings into one union statewide catalog system. Want to find out which library's have a copy of *A Viable Service*, the centennial history of the Nichols Library? It's in the NHU-PAC. Patrons can do their own searching on NHU-PAC. There is a link on the Nichols webpage, [jnml.wordpress.com](http://jnml.wordpress.com). Patrons can then bring their requests to the library in person or send them via email.

Once a copy is found, the Nichols staff sends an electronic request. When the request is filled (more often than not), it is shipped on of the State Library's delivery vans. The service is crucial to a small library like the Nichols Library. Says librarian Jon Kinnaman, "our library was built in 1910 and inherited a collection of 2,500 volumes. It now holds 15,000 items. There is very little room for growth." While borrowers generally express their satisfaction with the materials on hand at the library, Kinnaman notes that "there is not enough money in the budget to provide for all the special interests. And there would be no room to store them if we could."

Kinnaman also points out that the interlibrary service is a two-way street. Once Center Harbor patrons have had a chance to peruse new materials, the items become available for lending. "We have a number of titles in our collection that virtually live on the road." A case in point is Friedrich Hayek's *Road to Serfdom*. This 1944 academic critique of Keynesian economics enjoyed modest interest until 2010, when an unexpected shout-out on Glen Beck's show made it a must-read. "At that point," says Kinnaman, "there were less than ten copies statewide. Ours was in constant demand." Other road warriors include *The Spirit Catches You and You Fall Down*, *March, Tortilla Curtain*, and *Spiritual Midwifery*. Exceptions are titles that "local readers just can't put

down.” A recent case in point is *The Help* by Katherine Stockett, still on the reserve list a year and a half after it came out.

The state delivery van arrives once a week in Center Harbor. Sometimes materials can be acquired within a week, particularly if the library can find a lender who shares the same van route. Requests to the seacoast, the North Country and the western part of the state take a little longer. “When we can’t find a local lender,” says Kinnaman, then it’s pot-luck.” The extra wait “can be discouraging to students, book group members and other readers on a deadline.” On the whole, however, the Nichols Staff and the patrons who use it find it to be an excellent service. Says Kinnaman, “here we are, a little library in a small town of around 1,200 that has access to materials from a collection numbering in the millions. All available in two weeks time.”