

Delivery Report for SCLS Board of Trustees
February, 2023
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Staffing Update:

SCLS Delivery has had some difficult staffing issues since late in 2022. This was due to a full-time staff member moving to part time and then resigning to pursue other opportunities. Another staff member was on a relatively long personal leave. Fortunately, we have welcomed back that staff member recently and that is going a long way to restoring some of our flexibility. However, sick days taken appear to be elevated due to a number of different reasons and we have challenges virtually every day.

We look forward to introducing a new part time staff member in the next week that will also help in alleviating some of the strain. With new staff comes hands-on training which can also be difficult to afford on busy days.

Staff pay scale remains a priority to resolve. It needs to be an incentive to draw attention to our posting that we are competitive with our introductory pay. At this time, we are not. Similar job options have starting pay near \$18 an hour. That figure is our top tier after two years of service. I continue to work with our team to model a grid that meets the current market in the Madison area.

Sorting Efficiency Initiative:

With all of our staffing challenges, it was noted that we may have an opportunity to address our sorting process as an area to improve.

I have taken time to work with our current process and establish a sorting rate that I believe is appropriate for our current practice (tracking my own sort rates in 3 primary sort zones). I have benchmark rates ranging from 22 bins sorted on up to 27.

With those established, I mocked up modified sort zones to test the rates of areas if problem spots are resolved. Those efforts are made to:

- Reduce walking between sorting destinations (library bins)
- Reduce redundant lifting

- Keep the sorter moving materials out of bins and into library separations with less walking about the floor to complete other tasks
- Sorting into carted materials to avoid lifts and have finished bins already staged for truck loading.
- Reduce sorter conflict by having sorters share bin destinations from opposite sides. This eliminates crossing in and around each other, which causes less efficiency.

The initial experiment took place on our “purple” zone which has SCLS libraries from “Nekoosa to “Wyocena.” This zone yielded a 22 bin production using the current sorting method.

The following efforts were made to modify the zone for more advantageous sorting:

- The 7 largest-volume locations with carts (Sun Prairie, Verona, Waunakee, Stoughton, Oregon, Sauk City, Prairie du Sac, and Spring Green) were placed in close proximity to allow for greater flow into the busiest containers on carts.
- Stevens Point and Portage were staged on flatbed carts for staging nearby as well.
- Libraries that were not immediately nearby had a small bin to catch these smaller scale “exceptions” for handoff to the neighboring zone.

The results of this very quick and imperfect initial effort was very encouraging. I recorded an 8% faster rate of sorting, which would account for about 12 minutes per hour when applies across to other staff members.

With further modifications that I would like to introduce, I believe we could double the improvement in at least one other zone and a modest improvement in our most efficient current sorting zone.

Further modifications would require some modest investment:

- More flexible and modular shelving units
- Clear labeling with directions for each library
- Dedicated spaces for supplies and trash receptacles.

Going forward, I am enlisting a select number of staff members to contribute further thoughts on this effort and help add their own suggestions. We will mock up a sorting zone at the Pankratz building to show these staff members and have them beta-test it and look for more time saving ideas. Shelving will be purchased soon and erected at the Pankratz building within the next 3 weeks.

I will update with our progress each month on this project.

Statewide Delivery Collaboration:

There is also an effort to investigate better and more efficient service to our partners along the western edge of Wisconsin.

With our new pattern of delivery that we began in 2022, we ran into some snags of service as we employed a courier to make some long-distance connections to advance some PLSR initiatives.

We noted some concerning examples of lost materials, routes not completed, inconsistent timing of deliveries, and rapidly increasing cost of service fees.

To address these issues, I am in the process of working with partners at Minitex (Minnesota library exchange connection that we facilitate), IFLS (formerly the “Indianhead” Library System), the UW System Libraries, and Winding Rivers Library System. We will be convening soon to address these issues and work to provide alternative solutions that SCLS can play a significant role in providing better stability of the service.

Initially, it feels like we have a good collective motivation to seek solutions to all of these issues while still engaging in collaboration with other service providers.