



## Bookmobile History

Updated from 1972-2021

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The history of the Utah State Library (USL) Bookmobile Program has a storied past that has evolved with the program and continues to thrive under the leadership at the Utah State Library.



This updated history continues on from the end point of a <sup>1</sup> *Utah/Northern Juab County Bookmobile in Mapleton* research paper written by Val Ball on the “History of Bookmobile Library Service in the State of Utah”, April, 1971 submitted to the Graduate Department of Information and Science, Brigham Young University, Provo Utah.

The purpose of the Bookmobile Program was and still is to serve the population mainly in outlying rural areas, with library service that might not be easily accessible to them or might

be cost prohibited for some who would otherwise need to purchase library cards for the nearest available library, which might be in a city or town closest to them. In some cases the Bookmobile is a needed addition to existing libraries and even school libraries to give patrons an additional source of books for them to checkout.



*2 Sanpete/Southern Juab County Bookmobile - Manti stop on a snowy day*

Fifteen Bookmobiles were operating under the USL in partnership with Counties in 1972. The Counties being served at that time were: Box Elder (Started service 1961), Millard (1966), Rich (1959, with an Oneida Idaho stop), Washington (1966), Iron (1959), Piute (1959), Kane (1959), Garfield (1959), Tooele (1959), Weber (1959, two Bookmobiles), Sanpete (1966), Sevier (1959), Wayne (1959), Davis (1966, two Bookmobiles), Duchesne (1959), Daggett (1964), Uintah (1961), and San Juan (1959). The Utah County Bookmobile came into being later in the fall of 1975, operating two Bookmobiles (they now have one) to serve the county. Carbon County Bookmobile started operating around 1977. The Summit/Rich County Bookmobile started operations in the mid 1970's. Later that year Summit/Rich separated services and Summit County continued the

Bookmobile as one entity.

In 2007 Summit wanted to run the Bookmobile by themselves and the State of Utah sold the Bookmobile to them. In 2009 they replaced the current Bookmobile with



*3 Tri-County Bookmobile near Hanksville*

a new one and they

continue to operate Bookmobile services to this date. At some point after the separation Rich County began Bookmobile service themselves until 2008 when they began being serviced with the Cache County Bookmobile. Box Elder County Bookmobile which started Bookmobile service in 1961 were under the direction of the Utah State Library (USL) until 2008 when they split off from the USL and decided to run the two Bookmobiles themselves to service the large area they cover. As of this, writing Box Elder County is facing unprecedented population growth, as most of the State is, and their Bookmobiles are struggling to keep up with the demand.

The historic Bookmobile program has lost quite a few counties participating in the past years since 1972. In 2002 Weber County discontinued Bookmobile service. Davis County

operated two bookmobiles until the late 1980's when State of Utah budget cuts forced them to operate one Bookmobile and finally discontinued services in 2002.

Washington County was being served by Iron County Bookmobile and discontinued Bookmobile services in 2004. Duchesne with Daggett County combined Bookmobile services in 1968 and added Uintah County in 1969. Bookmobile services were discontinued in 2007.

San Juan County decided to go to satellite libraries and discontinue Bookmobile services because of “escalating costs” in 2009. Tooele County had



*4 MultiCounty Bookmobile on the Scenic Byway 12 in Red Canyon*

unprecedented budget problems in 2012 and scraped the Bookmobile program altogether. Cache County commissioners decided to discontinue Bookmobile services in 2017, which in turn cut out Rich County also who could not afford to run their own Bookmobile. In 2019 Carbon County suspended Bookmobile services due to budgetary problems, even though the USL picked up the cost of the budget for the last 6 months they operated. 2020 brought the demise of another Bookmobile program, Millard County.

Over the years as the population of Utah has grown, the larger metro cities have continued to spread out and the smaller outlying towns have increased tremendously in size.



This has pushed the Bookmobile service further out to the small towns as the cities added fixed site libraries.

At this present writing, the Bookmobile program has five flourishing Bookmobiles under the direction of the USL which are, Iron County, MultiCounty (Garfield & Kane),



*5 Bookmobile interior with children*

Sanpete/Southern Juab County, Tri-County (Wayne, Sevier & Piute) and Utah/Northern Juab County. These five Bookmobiles make a combined 80 community and 42 school stops every two weeks during the school year with a total of 97 stops every two weeks during the summer.

Throughout the years the Bookmobile service has evolved from the old card signing out the books to bursting into the new technology realm. With laptops and computer software designed to support the library platform and wireless service expanding to almost every community served, it has streamlined the process of checking out materials to patrons.

A patron can now go online to browse the collection of their Bookmobile, renew their books or even put books on hold so they can pick them up the next time the Bookmobile stops

in their community. Videos and cassettes have gone by the wayside and now DVD's and audio CD's are available. Also, online patrons can use Overdrive or the Libby application on their device to access and download eBooks or audiobooks. If patrons cannot find



*6 Iron County Bookmobile's Beryl Junction stop*

the book they want, a service called Interlibrary Loan (ILL) is available to request books, audiobooks and DVD's that a participating library across the US will loan to them through the Bookmobile and the items are then sent back by the Bookmobile when they are finished or due. Information on the Library for the Blind and Disabled, a service provided by the USL, is also available on the Bookmobiles.

Over the years the Bookmobiles vehicles have evolved from larger van type vehicles to trucks with boxes on the back to smaller sprinter vans to RV motor coaches transformed into bookmobiles and the latest to arrive this June of 2021 will be a school bus type vehicle converted to Bookmobile.

Utah State Library's Bookmobile Program is an impressive operation. It is a fleet of five large Bookmobiles all designed to reach remote areas and is supported by professionally trained staff, both at the local level and at the USL.

Bookmobiles provide amazing service by bringing new technologies and around 5,000 items including books, audiobooks, DVD's and other resources to patrons in remote areas, despite weather, scheduling and logistical problems.

USL's Bookmobile Program brings mobile libraries to remote and hard to reach areas to serve those people who would otherwise most likely do without.



*7 Sanpete/Southern Juab County Bookmobile - on the road in Nephi Canyon*