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Contra Costa Libraries Receive Grant

By Moya Stone



Using your local library is about to get a lot more convenient. A grant of \$60,000 was recently awarded to our library system by the Bay Area Library and Information Systems (BALIS) to create a mobile platform that will make new and existing library content and services accessible via your mobile phone.

The first phase of the grant will improve existing technology that interfaces with mobile phones. "Mobile phone users can already search the online catalogue and check their accounts," explains Deputy County Librarian Cathy Stanford, "but this grant will allow us to improve the technology." The library plans to move toward making the entire library website mobile phone ready, which will make all the usual functions we do on a PC, like renewing, placing holds, and downloading e-books just as easy on a mobile phone.

The second phase of the grant is even more exciting. The library plans to develop a Mobile Phone Support System that will connect patrons with mobile phones to even more library services and information. Library materials will have a QR (Quick Response) barcode, which is a two-dimensional barcode technology widely used in Japan. By scanning the QR barcode, the phone will launch the library's mobile website and provide access to reviews, first chapters,

Photo courtesy Contra Costa County Library web site: <http://ccclib.org/>

and links to library web pages. Even library flyers will have these QR barcodes allowing patrons to upload the flyer's information. Caroline Glick, Senior Community Library Manager at the Orinda Library, says this new technology is exactly what Lamorinda library patrons have been demanding. "With this new technology, phones become personal library tools," says Glick. "As more and more of our Lamorinda residents go mobile, I'm excited that our libraries are going mobile with them."

According to the 2008 SRDS Lifestyle Market Analyst, Contra Costas County is above the national average for owning wireless devices, cell phones, and smart cellular phones. The Contra Costa Library system is anxious to develop programs that make use of this new and rapidly moving technology. "With budget cuts and reduction in hours we are looking for technology to help us," says Stanford. "We want to take our services to the customer."

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