

Gardiner Public Library
152 Water St.
Gardiner, ME 04345

MEMO

Date: October 30, 2008
To: Jeff Kobrock, City Manager
From: Anne Davis, Director of Library and Information Services
Re.: Downloadable books

Jeff,

The library has the opportunity to become part of a pilot program that will allow our patrons to download audiobooks from their home computer. I would like your permission to sign up for this program in its beginning stages. I would like to expend an additional \$1,000 from my book budget. Unfortunately, this opportunity did not become available until after the 2008/09 budget was approved. It is a result of a successful grant received by the Maine State Library on behalf of the residents of Maine.

One of the most popular collections in the library is our audiobooks section. We offer titles in both CD and tape format to meet the needs of our users. As is often the case, technology is rapidly creating a new demand for electronic downloads of books, movies and music. With the decreased cost of most MP3 players, people can now listen to books by subscribing to any number of websites (Amazon, Overdrive, Internet Library) and, for a price, are able to download a title into their player. Though prices vary, our residents do have to pay for this service.

If you approve this expenditure, anyone with a library card issued from our library will be able to go to www.overdrive.com and “borrow” a title from the company’s catalog for no additional charge. They will then be able to load it into their MP3 players and listen to it as they would any other audio they may have purchased from iTunes, etc.

If we join at the beginning, our cost of \$1,000 (based on our service population) will be fixed. If we do not join at the beginning, there will be an additional charge of between \$300 and \$1,500 to libraries that do not sign up before 11/24/08. This higher cost would continue as long as we continue with the service.

The most interesting aspect of this program is the target audience. Though I suspect many adults will enjoy the service, I am sure that our teen population will overwhelmingly enjoy the benefits of downloading titles. As you know, most kids have their own MP3 devices and we have had many requests from our local teenagers as well as our middle school-aged teens being served by our satellite library at the Boys and Girls Club to download books from the Internet. I think this is one of the best ways to keep kids “reading” during those years when they inevitably become reluctant or non-readers. We have an incredible success rate serving this population already by our recent hiring of our Young Adult Librarian, Ginni Nichols. I believe Gardiner should be very proud of the service teenagers receive at their local public library. I think this is a good next step to keep kids familiar with their public library and making the Gardiner Public Library one of the coolest places to hang out in after school!

I had hoped to be available to City Council to answer their questions, but I have to take some time off and will not be able to attend the next meeting. I hope you will allow me to sign onto this exciting project and I can address any concerns when I return to work.