Implementing a Simple and Cost-effective Library Bike Share Program

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How Does it Work?

• Keep it simple!
• Catalog and number each bike
• Establish the checkout period. We have a 24-hour checkout with one renewal.
• We put the barcode on a keychain for each bike
• Circulation desk checks out keys to bikes to patrons
• Checkout is free
• Lost or broken key = $25
• Lost/irreparably damaged bike = $250

Liability Concerns

• Bike share liability can be managed
• A carefully crafted waiver is only a starting point
• Keeping bicycles in proper working order helps manage liability
• Not charging for the service reduces liability
• Educating users reduces liability
• An additional insurance rider may be required
• Helmets should either be required or recommended to users
• Highly recommended: Liability Issues for Bike Share Programs by Public Health Law Center at William Mitchell College of Law

Equipment Recommendations

• Focus should be on simplicity and reliability
• Single-speed cruiser bikes are ideal for their ease of operation, simple maintenance, and low cost
• Note that singlespeed bikes are not ideal for hilly areas
• Cost of about $200 per bike
• Added quick release levers for easy adjustment of seat height
• Added safety leashes to deter theft of seats
• Rust-proof chains are a cheap, worthwhile, upgrade
• Durable baskets and/or racks are worth considering
• Helmets can be made available for checkout, should be sanitized between uses
• During the COVID-19 Pandemic, disinfecting wipes for patrons to use when checking out a bicycle

Maintenance Requirements

• Our singlespeed bikes require an average of about 1 hour of maintenance each per year
• Tire pressure needs to be checked regularly for safety and to prevent flats
• Fixing flat tires are the most common maintenance task
• Keeping chains lubed is important, but can be skipped if chains are upgraded to stainless or rust proof models
• Check all bolts at least once a year to maintain safety
• Involving students or local bicycle advocacy groups in maintenance reduces time commitment and costs
• If funds exist check with local bike shops to see what professional maintenance fees would be

Why?

• Consider alignment with library mission statement
• Much cheaper to implement and maintain than commercial bike share programs
• Equitable access to transportation can support diversity initiatives
• Bike shares are community health resources
• Environmental sustainability: reduction in carbon emissions

Bicycle Friendly University / Community

• Establishing a library-based bike share helped IWU achieve Silver level Bicycle Friendly University status from the League of American Bicyclists
• There are also awards for Bicycle Friendly Communities that would apply to public libraries

Library Bike Shares: Additional Resources

Biking Librarians Facebook group:
https://www.facebook.com/groups/bikinglibrarians/about

Cox, Stefani. Why Bike Share Makes Sense as a Library Resource
http://betterbikeshare.org/2018/01/30/bike-share-makes-sense-library-resource/


“Lorain Bike Share.” Unabashed Librarian, no. 192, July 2019, pp. 6-8.