



# Customer Comments

September 2020

The following comments were received by the Library during the month of September 2020. Where the customer requested a personal reply by phone or email, it was provided. Customer comments and responses are posted on the Library's website.

## RECEIVED BY E-MAIL

### **Comment:**

Hello, I suggest you open the drop boxes at the Sequim library. This is even safer for us to drop off our books and seem safer for the employees. Plus it's much more convenient. This would reduce curbside wait and reduce person to person encounters.

### **Response:**

Thanks for reaching out. Yes, 24/7 book drop access is very convenient and we've been making plans for reopening the book drops all NOLS locations. One of the many challenges of offering library services during the pandemic is quarantining materials for 4 days (and making sure we have a place to store the materials in boxes before being processed). We're very close to having everything in place at the Sequim Branch Library, so that the book returns can open again. We strive to offer great customer service, while maintaining safe practices for employees and patrons. Watch for the book drops opening soon in Sequim.

Thanks for your suggestion and for your patience as we adapt.

### **Comment:**

There are never enough new books to browse, and now that the library is closed, I wondered: Are new books being added to the collection at the same pace as when the library was open? In other words, while the library has been closed, have new books been added at the same rate, or has there been a hold placed on new purchases?

Also, does the "new books" category include all books added since one year ago, or is this category reduced to just the last few months? One year ago, I wanted to read a new book, but so did many others. By the time I thought it would be available, the library closed and at least 10 other holds have been in place ever since (maybe because patrons were not returning books). Does the library recognize this high demand and purchase additional copies? This book is not currently included in the new books category, but it was a "new book" when the library

closed. Should it still be considered a "new book", and will it be found within the new books shelving when the library reopens?

I am not real comfortable in choosing a book online, I need to touch the pages and read the inside cover description to make a choice that will not end up in wasting my time. Please reopen as soon as possible, and lobby the Governor for updated rules!

Finally, please purchase more hard science fiction and non fiction science, history and political books--that's what this life long learner wants to see!

**Response:**

Thanks for your suggestion and your interest in NOLS' collection! The staff who select materials for the Library's collection strive to have a variety of new titles and subject matter available for customers. We have set up parameters and targets so that spending is spread out more or less evenly over the year. This year's health crisis has interrupted the flow of spending and borrowing. During the initial months of the pandemic, when the library was completely closed, many vendor warehouses were also closed. If we had ordered materials they might not have been available and there was no way for people to check them out. We would have had to have more staff onsite to receive the orders, pay the invoices, and physically prepare the materials. In the initial stages, NOLS followed the governor's orders (as we are now) stating staff should work remotely when possible.

In short, materials were not being ordered during that time. Additionally, many publishers were delaying publications of new titles and materials in the wake of the pandemic so not all titles that we ordered are available as we anticipated. As the State's safety parameters have allowed more staff onsite, ordering has picked up and we are now back to near-normal workflow. Lots of new titles are available for checkout via curbside service at this time.

New Books under normal conditions are placed in the "NEW" category for an allotted time based on their collection (fiction, for example) or format (talking books, for example.) There has been a struggle to know when to reassign a "NEW" book into the regular (not new) collection and when to leave it in "NEW" status because of the closure. Some branches in our system have very tight space constraints and it makes it difficult to amass extra "NEW" titles so the rate we have been reassigning material has been inconsistent. This is one topic that will be discussed amongst staff at a meeting later this week. Not as many materials are circulating right now so the "NEW" shelves are overloaded in most locations. The more titles customers place on hold and check out via curbside service, the less stuffed our shelves will be.

Also, under normal conditions we look at titles that have high demand every 2 weeks and order additional copies, if warranted. This is not based on "NEW" status but rather a ratio of how many copies we have compared to how many holds are placed on the material. We have not

been purchasing additional copies as we wanted to allow all outstanding and overdue materials a realistic timeframe for return. You are correct that many materials are still checked out from prior to the March closure. In order to be fiscally responsible and because of the purchase availability of some materials we were erring on the side of not ordering too many additional titles. Additional copies of some high demand titles were purchased in e-formats which have been available even during the closure. I anticipate being fully back to normal in terms of high demand titles by October 1<sup>st</sup> at the latest.

In addition to the regular catalog offerings, there are some new services available that you might be interested in to help you “browse” from home. Grab Bags (<https://www.nols.org/grab-bag/>): an assortment of 5-10 titles often with new titles included. BookMatch (<https://www.nols.org/bookmatch/>): allows customers to indicate more specific preferences so staff can customize a booklist – just for you! NoveList helps you choose your next great nonfiction or fiction book. To search, visit the “Reader’s Advisory” option via the Online Resources page. You will need your library barcode number to navigate this site. NoveList has information on read-alikes, authors, series, and more. The Suggest It! form is open 24/7 (<https://www.nols.org/inter-library-loan/>). If you don’t find a title in the catalog, feel free to reach out with your suggestion for purchase.

We would love to reopen, but libraries are currently not allowed to open until Phase 3 of the Governor’s Safe Start plan. As soon as we can meet the health and safety guidelines from our local and state officials, for both staff and the public, we will open as soon as we can. We look forward to seeing you when that is allowed.

Please let me know if I can be of further assistance.

**Comment:**

Weather going bad and the public grade need a place to charge and sit between shelter and kitchen during the days to study employ or evacuate please. The state library said it is up to each franchised location their operating hours. Even though the COVID vaccine is already shipped for shelving? Please open,

**Response:**

COVID-19 has created less than ideal conditions for NOLS to work with, but Library staff are committed to continuing to improve the services and extend services as possible during the pandemic. Washington State has issued guidance allowing libraries to offer limited service in Phase 2 of the Safe Start Plan. While it does not yet allow NOLS to open its facilities to the public, it does allow the Library to start on the path to reopening by offering curbside returns and holds pickup. The Safe Start Plan will allow the public back into libraries for limited service

in Phase 3, which NOLS is preparing for, but does not expect to happen soon, considering current conditions.

Until NOLS is able to open its facilities to the public, some of the additional shelter options offered around the county may be useful to you. Specifically, Clallam County is operating a Social Distancing Center near William Fairchild Airport, west of the Clallam County Fairgrounds. The County states the shelter is open to anyone who needs it. However, they are only accepting individuals between the hours of 9am and 7pm. The shelter requests a phone call before arriving. The phone number is 360-301-9350. The shelter can be accessed off L Street via the baseball field parking lot, behind the youth center. The entrance is on the south (airport) side of the building.

If NOLS can help identify additional resources for you during this time, please let me know.