



CHAD FELTON — THE NEWS-HERALD

The Overdrive, Inc. Digital Bookmobile made one of several Northeast Ohio stops in South Euclid at the Cuyahoga County Public Library South Euclid-Lyndhurst Branch on July 16 as part of its national tour. The traveling exhibit first launched in New York City's Central Park in August 2008 and has since welcomed over 240,000 visitors at over 1,000 events.

Local library hosts Digital Bookmobile National Tour

Free event highlights e-books, audiobooks from public library — anytime, anywhere you have internet access

By Chad Felton

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Motorists and pedestrians alike couldn't help but to stare at the imposing 53-foot Digital Bookmobile commandeering the equivalent of seven parking spaces at the Cuyahoga County Public Library South Euclid-Lyndhurst Branch on July 16.

It was part of the traveling exhibit's national tour, and the stop marks one of about 150 to 200 locations, depending on scheduling, the Bookmobile will make as it cruises coast to coast until November. The "e-library" on wheels has also traveled to select Canadian provinces, and is on the road about 10 months of the year, averaging roughly four stops a week.

The ADA-accessible Digital Bookmobile provides devices, Internet connectivity and expert guidance to local libraries for their digital collections of e-books and audiobooks. It first launched in 2008 in Manhattan at Central Park, and has since traveled more than 233,000 miles and welcomed over 240,000 visitors at over 1,000 events.

"We go everywhere from Middle-of-Nowhere, Minnesota, to the largest city in California," said Joe Skelley, marketing and events specialist with Overdrive, Inc., a global distributor of digital content for libraries, schools and booksellers, based in Garfield Heights.

"The Bookmobile started as an actual semi, and by sheer size, precluded us from going to a lot of places. Now, we require less space and, to our way of thinking, highlight more efficiently everything the library provides.

"E-books and audiobooks continue to grow in popularity and libraries are a valuable resource in providing digital books to their communities," he said. "It's a lot of fun."

All digital services are free — though a valid library card is required — and cost local libraries nothing. Services are also available 24/7, 365 days a year. No fines or late fees are implemented, as titles are automatically returned and/or renewed. Works even resume where a reader left off, Skelley noted.

"With over 100,000 downloads available per individual library collection, and over 3 million titles altogether, readers aren't going to be wanting for much," he said. "And, of course, we offer all varieties for all ages, from fiction and cooking to AP prep exam study guides."

The Bookmobile is equipped with interactive workstations and self-serve kiosks featuring video tutorials, touchscreen activities, devices to sample titles and more. Library staff and e-Reading experts are available to guide visitors throughout the vehicle demonstrating use of instruments.

Tours are free and open to the community.

"Everything is set to download on Wi-Fi, and titles won't use your device's data, unless you let it," Skelley said. "And it makes no difference where you are, outside of your home state or the country. You just need access to the Internet. We think of the Digital Bookmobile as the library that never closes."

The Bookmobile will visit Euclid Public Library July 18 and Elyria Public Library July 19 before heading east to New England. It also makes frequent stops at community events and festivals as time allows.

Skelley said feedback, primarily ease of access, continues to be positive.

"One of our drivers refers to Digital Bookmobile as a 'technology petting zoo,' and it's basically true," Skelley added. "Through our services, we're constantly able to see what impacts the patron, and that's ultimately the end result — bringing reading to everyone."

"I mean, the Internet already gives us everything, why not more books?"

Readers with a valid library card can borrow titles at any time by visiting <https://ccpl.overdrive.com> or downloading OverDrive's one-tap reading app, Libby.

To view the full Digital Bookmobile schedule, and for more information, visit www.digitalbookmobile.com.