

The Espresso Book Machine: Innovative Technology to Rebuild the New Orleans Public Library

The New Orleans Public Library (NOPL) suffered heavily in the flooding that followed Hurricane Katrina: eight of its thirteen libraries were damaged beyond reopening; 318,000 books, CDs, etc. were destroyed—nearly half the collection. NOPL is striving to restore library services through interim branches and innovative technology while it creates a network of renovated and new libraries across the city.

To help rebuild the collection, NOPL will install an **Espresso Book Machine** (EBM), new print-on-demand technology that produces retail-quality paperback books from digital files transmitted via the Internet. A typical book can be produced in ten minutes for about one cent per page.

The Espresso Book Machine may be the most important innovation in publishing since the postwar paperback revolution. This technology reduces printing and transportation costs and makes it economically feasible to produce titles that would otherwise go out of print. With the EBM, New Orleans Public Library can quickly and economically put more books into the hands of New Orleans' children and adults.

Uses of the Book Machine. Through the generosity of On Demand Books, LLC, and the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation, NOPL will use an Espresso Book Machine—one of only four in the nation—to:

- Replace books in its lending collection that were destroyed in Katrina's aftermath
- Produce books for schools whose libraries were destroyed, beginning with six partner schools
- Explore other ways that public libraries can use the EBM, e.g.,
 - Print original and hard-to-find books of local interest
 - Collaborate with local booksellers
 - Assist local authors (students and adults) to publish their own books

Schools participating initially in the demonstration project are

- Martin Behrman Elementary School
- Chalmette High School
- Warren Easton High School
- Albert Einstein Charter School
- Benjamin Franklin High School
- Martin Luther King, Jr. Elementary Charter School.

Special projects under development include:

- *Guide to Genealogical Research Using the New Orleans Public Library*
- New Orleans Center for Creative Arts student work
- *Researching Your House Using the New Orleans Public Library*
- Out-of-print cookbooks, in collaboration with Southern Food & Beverage Museum

- Out-of-print titles of local interest, such as *Dinner at Antoine's*

Schedule. June 2008 will see the Espresso Book Machine installed on Main Library's first floor and staff trained in its use. An unveiling is planned for mid-July, with a second school-oriented event in September.

Production. NOPL estimates initial production of 4000 volumes in 2008 for its own collection, school libraries, and special projects. As the Library gains experience with EBM book production, we look forward to expanding its services to the community.

Local and National Funding. On Demand Books (ODB) is donating an Espresso Book Machine for NOPL's use, an in-kind gift valued at \$100,000. The Sloan Foundation's \$353,000 grant is funding: further software development; twelve months' salary and benefits for a librarian dedicated to the project; training. ODB will be responsible for major maintenance and technical assistance.

Locally-funded 2008 operating expenses are estimated at \$23,000, including consumable supplies (paper, toner, glue), graphic design, and an allowance for minor maintenance. At this point 2009 operating expenses are projected conservatively at \$60,000, including salary and benefits for the project librarian and increased production.

Over 2008 and 2009, local sponsor support totaling \$83,000 will leverage national support of nearly \$500,000 (Sloan Foundation funding plus ODB in-kind donations of machine and services). Local sponsorship of these costs will permit NOPL to offer books to the school libraries at no charge, and to re-invest special projects revenues into the Library's rebuilding.

Sponsorships. NOPL's Espresso Book Machine demonstration project exemplifies its determination to restore books to New Orleans children and adults and to create a state-of-the-art public library the equal of our peer cities. The NOPL Foundation is seeking local sponsors to support the demonstration through 2009. Sponsors will receive prominent recognition in Main Library, at all EBM events, and in EBM-produced books, and can expect the demonstration to receive national and local media attention.

The **New Orleans Public Library Foundation** is a 501c3 charitable organization founded in 1990 to support the work of the New Orleans Public Library. Since Hurricane Katrina the NOPL Foundation has taken a lead role in funding Library repairs, renovation, education programs, and restoration of the collection.

On Demand Books, LLC, a New York corporation, was founded in 2003 by the prominent former Random House editor Jason Epstein, and by Dane Neller, former CEO of Dean & DeLuca. The EBM technology was developed by Jeff Marsh, who has granted exclusive license to the EBM's patents and copyrights to ODB. The Espresso Book Machine is currently in use in four US and four overseas locations. (www.ondemandbooks.com)