

## LOCAL

# Sussex County unveils new traveling library, reviving 80-year-old tradition

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## Key Points

The Sussex County Library System unveiled a new mobile branch at ribbon-cutting June 18.

The bookmobile will visit schools, nursing homes and other locations in more distant parts of the county.

Sussex County bought the truck with \$295,000 in federal COVID relief funds approved in 2021.

Books are on the move in Sussex County after the [library system](#) unveiled a mobile unit called Dot at a June 18 ribbon-cutting ceremony outside the Sussex-Wantage Branch.

The polka-dotted box truck will soon be driving throughout the county to bring reading materials to more far-flung parts of the community, beyond the library's [six permanent branches](#). Dot will be visiting schools, nursing homes and other locations, according to Julie Knapp, public information officer for the Sussex County Library System.

People can also request a stop from Dot [online](#).

“We may not have been able to build libraries in every single corner of the county, but today, with this mobile library, we can bring the library to them, whether it’s a child discovering the joy of reading for the first time, or a senior citizen reconnecting with the written word,” state Assemblywoman Dawn Fantasia, a former Sussex County commissioner, said in her speech at the event.

Books can be borrowed and returned at the mobile library. Visitors can also get a library card and make use of Wi-Fi and a TV. The truck is also wheelchair accessible.

Mobile libraries, also known as bookmobiles, are not new in Sussex County and have been around since 1942. Dot is the eighth mobile library in the system, but the county has not used one since 1992, according to Tara Schaberg, the local history and genealogy librarian.

The vehicle was purchased for \$295,000 in COVID relief funds from the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 according to Sussex County Commissioner meeting minutes from April 2023, when the purchase was authorized.

Any continued costs for the mobile library beyond that will be under the Sussex County libraries' budget, according to Commissioner Jill Space.

The mobile program was revived after Library Director Will Porter and Assistant Director Ellen Callanan went to a conference about outreach and learned about the "renaissance in mobile libraries and bookmobiles," said Porter.

He learned that a mobile library was a good tool for outreach.

They brought the idea to the commissioners, who secured the ARPA funding.

The mobile branch's name, Dot, is no coincidence. It is named after the system's first librarian, Dorothy Henry, who drove the county's first bookmobile in 1942.

Henry had a large influence on bringing bookmobiles to the library system, even driving them around the county herself. The book mobiles visited stations, which were eventually replaced by direct stops, as well as schools and libraries.

**More:** [Make one of these 10 books that are set in New Jersey your next beach read for summer 2025](#)

One person at the ribbon-cutting remembered growing up in the county and getting a book from Henry, who handed them out along with the assistance of a puppet, Bibs.

“I can remember that smell of books and wood and gasoline,” said JoAnne Daniels, who was also a librarian for the Sussex County main library branch for 50 years.

The mobile library will have its first stop at the Louise Childs Branch in Stanhope for the summer reading kickoff on June 27. More information on the mobile library and its schedule can be found on the library’s [website](#).