

Frequently Asked Questions

Why did you stop the holds system?

While the province's public library collections were available to anyone at the click of a mouse, behind the scenes it was a very resource-intensive system. It required staff time to retrieve materials (books, CDs, DVDs, etc.) from shelves, label and process them for shipping, sort them according to destination, send them through at least two different courier systems, receive them, unpack them, sort them and shelve them for pickup by the customer. After customers returned the material, all of this happened again, but in reverse.

When the cuts were announced, many regional library systems determined they would not have the resources to maintain their regional courier systems, or to maintain the staffing levels necessary to sort the volume of materials the system generates.

Why can't you find something else to cut?

The provincial grant for public libraries is specifically for resource sharing, and makes up a significant portion of the revenue for regional library systems. Each regional library board is making different choices on how to manage the cuts, because each has to deal with their cut in a way that makes the most sense for their customers.

Why did Saskatchewan choose this system of sharing?

We wanted to find a way to provide materials to anyone in any part of the province. Our huge geography and small population made that a challenge. We developed the online system to allow anyone from anywhere to request an item in our online database and have it delivered to their home library. It is an extension of decades old cooperation in Saskatchewan – something that has made library service providers and library customers are very proud.

When was the last time you reviewed the system for cost efficiencies?

Public libraries as a group are continually reviewing policies and procedures to balance service and efficiency. One of the improvements that was recently being assessed was the degree to which materials shipped around the province could be reduced by rebalancing customer wait times.

Why not charge for a library card? For materials that require shipping?

Saskatchewan public library legislation does not allow libraries to charge for library cards, and no charge can be made for the loaning of a book. Public libraries could charge for a few of the services that are currently free, however, public library boards throughout the province have worked very hard to ensure that library services are free and accessible to all. This has been an important principle in Saskatchewan public libraries.

Would a donation of books help?

While we appreciate the offering of support from the community, now that the province-wide database is shut down, over 10,000 items are coming back to RPL, and we are currently determining how best to fit those items back into our collections, and our shelves.

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Definitions

The following definitions are used within the Saskatchewan library system.

Holds	People across the province were able to use the system-wide database to place holds on materials. Placing a “hold” meant you wanted to check that item out at your branch, regardless of where it was located in the province. In the case of print and hard-copy materials, staff at the owning branch would pick the item off the shelf (or wait for it to be returned), pack it up and send it to your local branch. You would receive notification by text, email or automated phone call that the item was available for you to pick up.
Interlibrary loans	Interlibrary loans is the system used to provide access to specific materials from other libraries outside of public libraries – for example, resources in academic libraries, and at libraries in other parts of Canada. This loans system remains intact for Saskatchewan residents.
Reciprocal borrowing	Reciprocal borrowing is the ability for any Saskatchewan resident to use any public library in the province, in-person. While card holders are unable to request holds electronically, they can still visit a library and borrow materials. Reciprocal borrowing is still available across Saskatchewan.
Single Integrated Library System (ILS)	A single, province-wide computer system and database that allows library card holders access to books, eBooks, eAudiobooks, DVDs, CDs and other resources available around the province. This “One Card, One Province” system was put online in 2009, and is often referred to as the “Holds System.” The system was recently turned off due to funding cuts. That means library card holders are only allowed access to materials available in their own city or regional library.