

## What’s being said about public libraries in Saskatchewan

Lately there has been a lot of misinformation and assertions being made about public libraries in Saskatchewan. Here are some side-by-side comparisons of what’s been said, and factual information about our system.

What’s being said	Factual information
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Canada Post has a book rate: \$1 a book.</li> <li>• Libraries could ship books directly to a person’s house.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The majority of costs to ship materials (books, CDs, DVDs, etc.) are associated with staff time. Using Canada Post will not reduce costs such as picking books off shelves, updating the computer system, packing the books, labeling them and getting them to the courier/post office. These costs are still going to be there, regardless of how the books are shipped.</li> <li>• Last year libraries shipped 693,000 materials through library courier systems (there are two courier systems: one that moves books to and from regional library system headquarters and the two urban libraries, and one that moves materials from regional library headquarters to branches in the region). Materials are sorted and packed together according to the region and location they are being shipped to, rather than wrapped individually and shipped one by one.</li> <li>• Canada Post’s book rate “rule of thumb” is \$1.20 for a one-kilogram book. Added to this type of shipping is the cost of bubble packaging, which costs between 50 cents and a dollar, depending on size, as well as individual labelling, and postal metering.</li> <li>• The maximum package size for Canada Post’s book rate is 5 kg. The current weight of bins shipped among libraries is up to 33 pounds.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We don’t need “bricks and mortar” libraries.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It’s up to local library boards to determine whether to maintain local library services.</li> <li>• It is difficult for smaller libraries to determine how many people actually use library spaces, because so many in-branch services don’t require a library card.</li> <li>• Over the past few years, RPL has conducted three public consultation exercises regarding its library locations. Overwhelmingly, engaged citizens have told us they support “bricks and mortar” libraries. In fact, they tell us they want even bigger library spaces.</li> </ul>

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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>In our province we have one library for every 4,000 citizens.</li> <li>Alberta and Manitoba have fewer libraries per capita than we do.</li> <li>There are five libraries between Martensville and Langham.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Saskatchewan library branches were built because local taxpayers requested that local governments use local tax revenues to build and support local libraries.</li> <li>Use of Regina's and Saskatoon's libraries by rural residents is a major issue, and so the surrounding regions have worked hard over the years to ensure residents in bedroom communities have access to their own local libraries.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>If you pay for library services at a municipal level, why should you pay for it again at a provincial level?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Library buildings, upkeep and maintenance, and local staff are typically covered by local governing bodies.</li> <li>Provincial taxes enable materials to be shared across the province.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Overall use of libraries is down.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Borrowing numbers and in-person visits vary between regions, the two urban libraries, and small city and rural branch libraries.</li> <li>At Regina Public Library, the number of customers has increased by 13% over the past five years: in 2016 we had 1.5 million visits.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Libraries are sitting on substantial surpluses.</li> <li>Libraries have reserve funds they can draw from.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A library's surplus is made up of net financial assets, tangible capital assets and reserves.</li> <li>Net financial assets are used to offset typical yearly expenses.</li> <li>Tangible capital assets are physical assets such as buildings, vehicles and (of course) library materials (books, CDs, DVDs, etc.). These can't be readily converted to cash.</li> <li>Reserve funds are like savings accounts. Larger purchases are planned out, and money is earmarked and put away to fund bigger purchases that require more than what is in the yearly operating budget.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Print books aren't being used – we should focus on electronic materials.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Use of eBooks and eAudiobooks continues to increase at RPL, but we still lend out 17 times more print materials than electronic.</li> <li>There is a lot of public discussion about the preference of one format over the other. Some people prefer the ease of using a digital format. Others like to feel, smell and savour a print edition.</li> <li>Many people take advantage of both formats, depending on their circumstances and their preferences (e.g. digital books are great for airports, print books are great at the cabin, etc.) We prefer to offer both options.</li> </ul>

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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The number of library cards issued has decreased</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Saskatchewan libraries recently introduced a new feature that allows families to use one library card, rather than each family member requiring a card. This has significantly reduced the number of cards in circulation, and we believe it has helped our customers.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Libraries don't use STC to move books around the province.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>It's true, we didn't use STC to move all of our books. However, some regional library headquarters were still making use of STC for transportation to and from some small cities and rural libraries.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Public libraries and school libraries should amalgamate.</li> </ul>	<p>It's a complex process and not as easy as it sounds.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>It's up to local library boards to determine whether to maintain local public library services.</li> <li>The open hours of a public library are not the same as a school library. For example, most schools close over the summer.</li> <li>Some clientele of a public library may not be welcome in a school.</li> <li>Public libraries offer unrestricted Internet access and encourage intellectual freedom for all users.</li> <li>Public libraries offer a variety of in-house materials, while schools offer materials curated for a specific, young audience.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>We have one of the best interlibrary loan services in the Dominion of Canada.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>We <i>had</i> one of the best interlibrary loan services in the Dominion of Canada.</li> </ul>