The Mohawk Valley Library System (MVLS) and the Southern Adirondack Library System (SALS) began a cooperative Joint Automation Project in 1983 to help public libraries in our service area take advantage of economies of scale, share resources responsibly, and prove ourselves to be responsible stewards of public funds.

For the past 41 years, Joint Automation Project member libraries in both systems have benefited from the ease of access through a shared delivery system and an increase in the amount and type of materials available for patrons. The system has allowed reliable and valuable access to many materials to the people who live, work, and visit Hamilton, Saratoga, Warren, Washington, Fulton, Montgomery, Schenectady, and Schoharie counties.

Despite that history of successful collaboration, the Schenectady County Public Library's Board of Trustees voted to leave the Joint Automation Project at its February 29, 2024, board meeting. The reasons given ranged from economic efficiencies to consistency with County record-keeping procedures, to government-provided provision of IT services and security.

It is important for JA participants to know:

1. A transition team is being formed by the Joint Automation Project to ensure a smooth transfer of their holdings and patrons' data.

2. Schenectady County Public Library is not leaving the Mohawk Valley Library System, so direct access for system card holders must still be provided on site at the Schenectady County Public Library.

3. There will be many library users in MVLS and SALS libraries who will not notice any change at all. Schenectady County residents may have limited access to the resources held by the SALS libraries.

4. However, many Schenectady County residents will no longer have easy access to SALS member library holdings.

5. MVLS and SALS users at non-Schenectady locations will still have access to 2 million items and can place requests and receive those items in delivery; all users will continue to seamlessly use any non- Schenectady location.

The impacts will be felt in different ways, and through the transition team, we will work to minimize any negative effects.

We leave this update with this comment: When libraries agree to participate in the Joint Automation Project, their staff, trustees, and volunteers are expected to enforce confidentiality laws and policies to ensure that all personal information, including borrowing, requests, and information, remains private. This is both a legal and ethical duty of public libraries and cooperative library systems. Because of this, the current situation causes a deep concern that allowing county government, not library IT staff access to patron data is a violation of 49 public libraries' information.

The Mohawk Valley Library System (MVLS), the Southern Adirondack Library System (SALS) and the Joint Automation Council are open to the SCPL considering this concern, and deciding to stay a part of the Joint Automation Project.

Information about the process and moving forward will be shared as it is available.

March 22, 2024