



2020 Report to the Community

St. Albert
Public
Library

Here for **YOU**. Here for **ALL**.
#T8NTogether

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Land acknowledgement

We respectfully acknowledge that we are on Treaty 6 territory, traditional lands of First Nations and Métis peoples. As Treaty People, Indigenous and non-Indigenous, we share the responsibility for stewardship of this beautiful land.

Messages from the Chair and CEO



Janice Marschner, Chair, Library Board

St. Albert Public Library entered 2020 with a vision and a plan to make that vision a reality. In March, the pandemic changed everything, for our community and for how we serve them. The Library stepped up in a time of crisis, finding new and changed ways to support the entire community. Every day we experience all the ways the library matters to our community; in a pandemic, the Library's role in building community health, access to opportunities, and supports for personal and economic recovery has been made vividly clear.



Peter Bailey, CEO, St. Albert Public Library

Thank you to our staff for going above and beyond for the community during the pandemic. Staff were innovative and nimble in responding to the crisis, finding new and enhanced ways to serve the community. SAPL was among the first Alberta libraries to pivot to new and changed services like curbside pickup and online programming. Innovations and hard work by our staff kept St. Albert Public Library serving our community even under difficult circumstances.

Jensen Lakes Library was a dream realized

Something amazing happened in St. Albert at the beginning of 2020. Thanks to the support of City Council, we opened a brand new storefront location in north St. Albert in January – Jensen Lakes Library (JLL). It truly was the realization of a dream. Jensen Lakes Library opened with a community celebration and a blessing from Hazel McKennitt, a local Indigenous knowledge keeper. With that, JLL took its place as a crucial part of St. Albert and began to fulfill its mission serving a growing part of the city and all citizens.

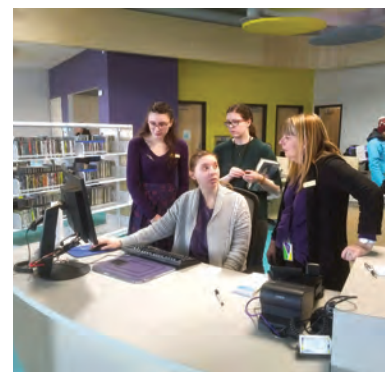
This dream came true because of the hard work of many people over many years. What they all shared was a belief in the power of libraries. As that great St. Albertan Lois Hole said in 2000: “To me, a library is the highest architectural expression of human civilization. It represents all the best parts of the human soul – our desire to learn, to explore, to question, to ponder, to dream...”

JLL played a key role in our pandemic response in 2020. Its storefront windows and plentiful parking made it the ideal location to roll out the first phase of Curbside Pickup service for the entire community. When the Library reopened in July, JLL offered designated hours every day for vulnerable patrons, and became a favoured location at all hours for patrons who felt cautious about entering public spaces.

Jensen Lakes Library is an interim solution to the Library’s long-time need for expanded library space. We look forward to continuing to build services at this key north-side location to serve St. Albertans in ever more exciting ways in the coming years.



Photo credit: Graeme Matichuk



March 2020 – everything changed with COVID-19

When the pandemic hit, people immediately turned to the Library for help. When the library closed its doors on March 15, we swung into action. Staff continued to offer remote library support online and by telephone. Loans were extended and fines were suspended. And behind the scenes, we got to work creating new and innovative ways to serve the community to make sure all the people who counted on us could continue to do so. It was a true test – and a fulfillment – of the promise we make to St. Albertans: that we are here for them, here for all.

The Downtown Library reopened its doors on July 2, and Jensen Lakes Library reopened on July 16. We were one of the first libraries in Alberta to resume full browsing of library collections. Opening our doors also meant the return of free public computer access; in September, in response to community need, both library locations also reopened distanced study spaces.

We introduced each step with care and caution: free masks, hand hygiene, mandatory masking, clear protocols and low occupancy limits. Through it all, we worked closely with the City of St. Albert Emergency Operations Centre and we appreciate their support.

At the direction of the Province of Alberta, on December 12 public libraries closed their doors again and SAPL moved nimbly back to curbside and remote services.



I appreciate all that library staff are doing to keep St. Albert patrons connected to the library. The library is one of the jewels in St. Albert. I am missing the sense of community that the physical library creates. It is truly the glue that holds St. Albert together.

Great work, St. Albert Library! Your care for patrons and staff and the way you've set up COVID protocols made me feel safe and happy to return to the library.

Pivoting to digital

The pandemic meant a dramatic pivot from in person to remote service. The demand for first-time memberships was strong, and we immediately moved to issuing new memberships and extending current ones online. We removed overdue notices and fines. Our goal was seamless access to library collections, services and programs for all.

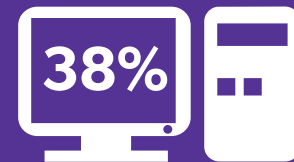
I love libraries and especially this library. You can get so many great things for free with your library card and AcornTV is one of them. Tell all your colleagues or anyone that will listen that you have a real fanbase out there.

With people staying safe at home, the digital resources of the eLibrary were more important than ever. We spread the word about free Library memberships through advertising, social media and newsletters. We added four new digital resources specifically to support educators, parents and learners, and we expanded borrowing limits on a number of our existing digital resources. Staff supported first-time patrons to use the eLibrary by phone, by email, and through the creation of many short video tutorials.

eLibrary usage rates soared. St. Albertans borrowed more than 129,374 eBooks and audiobooks, plus magazines, newspapers, comics and graphic novels. They streamed more than 18,000 TV episodes and movies. And it was all free with their library card.



30-40%
INCREASE IN
eBooks
(across several platforms)



INCREASE IN
**DIGITAL USE
OVERALL**



172,911
DIGITAL LOANS

Finding new ways to connect the community

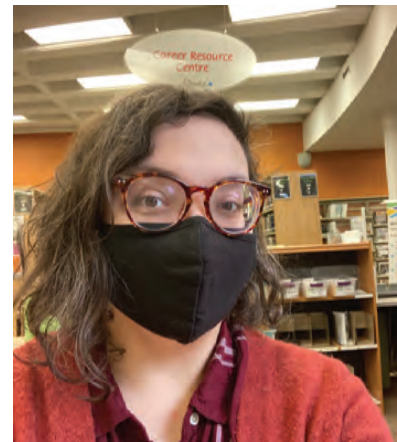
When libraries closed their doors in March, staff swung into immediate action. We were one of the first libraries to move programming online, hosting our first storytime on Facebook Live only 11 days after closing. At the same time we were shifting existing programs to Facebook and then Zoom, staff were developing new programs to meet emerging pandemic needs. The sudden reliance on screen time also created a need for alternatives, and Children's staff responded with the Storytime Stew podcast for kids ages two to six.



In 2020, the library offered **570 programs**, attended by **23,153 people**.

Teen highlights included online review opportunities, creation of an online LGBTQ+ book club in partnership with Outloud St. Albert, and creation of a series of Virtual Escape Rooms that were as popular with adults as with teens. Adult staff moved Canada Reads at the Library, book clubs, and other programs online, and instigated popular bi-weekly Adult Trivia Nights on Facebook.

Staff also developed a library of prerecorded programs people could access on their own schedules: more storytimes, Neighbourhood Nature videos, STEAM activities, crafternoons and more. The Library's pandemic programming evolved as the community's needs evolved; through it all, SAPL staff were creative, responsive and flexible.



The **Summer Reading Game** has been a beloved St. Albert tradition for 30 years, and staff felt strongly about ensuring its continuation through the pandemic. We moved the Children's, Teen and Adult games online: reading challenges, science and art experiments, escape rooms, choose your own adventure activities, and a virtual wheel to spin for reading suggestions.



Taking programs outdoors and STARFest online

As soon as the weather permitted, Outreach staff were out in the community with the Outreach Van, offering distanced pop-up libraries and outdoor storytimes, self-guided Trail Tales, and scavenger hunts. It was a year of experiments and successes: this year we piloted winter scavenger hunts and all-season Trail Tales, to the delight of community members.

I just wanted to thank (you for) the scavenger hunt around St. Albert Place. It was a great way for our family to get out of the house this weekend and spend some time in our beautiful city while still being able to physically distance. It was fun and just right for our elementary school aged kids. Thank you for continuing to work to help keep our community connected even when we all have to be far apart!



Outreach offered **154 programs** with **1,841 attendees**.



STARFest across North America

The Library made another dramatic pivot to online with STARFest, the annual St. Albert Readers festival. Moving a literary festival online required mastering another learning curve, but it also created new opportunities. New viewers from across Canada and North America tuned in to 10 exciting and diverse STARFest events, raising the profile of our small-city festival and the world-class authors we host every year. This year we were proud to feature bestselling authors Desmond Cole, Emily St. John Mandel, and Jesse Thistle.



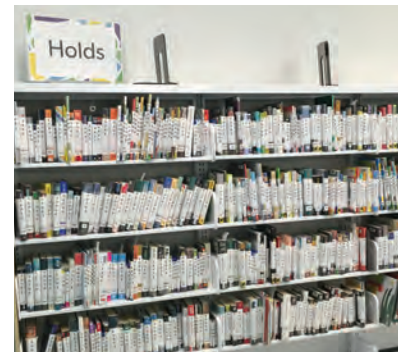
Curbside Pickup service and other innovations

Remote services, online programs and digital collections were a great start to our pandemic response, but there was a deep hunger in the community for in-person services, and especially for books and other physical materials. In response, we launched Curbside Pickup service.

Thank you so very much for the new curbside service. Being able to borrow materials from the library is a tremendous help in maintaining our sanity during the COVID crisis.

Curbside Pickup service began with the items that were waiting on the shelf for people when the doors closed suddenly in March. Curbside Pickup operated for 21 days in June, ending when Library doors reopened on July 2. When libraries were ordered to close again in December, Curbside Pickup resumed at both locations.

Over the 29 days Curbside Pickup operated in 2020, hundreds of St. Albertans borrowed thousands of items.



Specialty Curbside Pickup services:

By the end of the year, All Abilities Afternoons, our popular program for adults with developmental disabilities, included access to take-home craft kits through Curbside service. We put Book Club kits, Reading Workshop kits and other oversized items into the hands of patrons by personalizing Curbside Pickup arrangements.

Seed Library packages were shared through personalized Curbside Pickup arrangements, by mail and, in some cases, by delivery. The Russian Mammoth sunflowers, in particular, were a big hit.



Supporting community recovery

Supporting economic recovery through the Career Resource Centre

St. Albertans rely on the Library's Career Resource Centre (CRC), and staff worked with our partners to move those career and job search services online; almost 1,000 people in the region attended free online career workshops. Our Résumé Tutor Service moved to online meetings. Library staff gave career-specific support to thousands more people through in-person and phone reference service, and through CRC computer use.

Thanks to you people at the library! You were so much help using the computer and finding a job.

Supporting educators and learners

With the fall return to in-person classes, staff used makerspace technology to make selfie buttons for more than 200 teachers, so they could share their smiles with students while wearing masks. We developed a monthly Educators Newsletter, featuring services, resources and programs designed to help teachers and students navigate a year with no field trips or special guests.

Schools need field trips! So we moved the annual St. Albert Optimist sponsored Rooney & Punyi Reading Show online and took it to 61 classrooms and 1,400 students. It went so well that we turned our annual Christmas Around the World program into a digital field trip, too. 84 classes and 1,591 students took part in this popular curriculum-based exploration of the many ways our community celebrates the season.

Parents took on a larger role supporting their children's learning this year, and Children's staff ran online Reading Workshops to support them on their journey. Free kits of support materials were given out digitally and through Curbside Pickup.



3,322 USES OF
CRC RESOURCES



**eLearning
USAGE
INCREASED BY
28% IN 2020**

2,991
students in
141 classrooms
took digital library
field trips

The Library remained a community gathering space

The Library is the community's space to meet, to learn, and to grow. That didn't change in 2020. eLibrary use soared, but it didn't replace patrons' need for physical library materials, public computer access, in-person services, and community connections. Despite limited hours, occupancy restrictions, and several facility closures, in 2020 we saw 133,710 in-person visits and 8,308 uses of public computers in addition to more than 571,000 online visits.

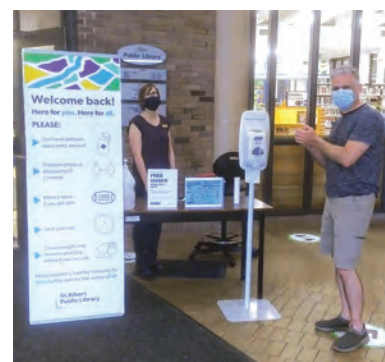
When everything closed down, the place I missed visiting the most was the library. I'm so glad you're open again!

The move to remote learning prompted many requests from high school and university students for study space, and we were proud to be one of the first libraries in Alberta to reintroduce safe, distanced study spaces at both locations.

We helped patrons get in and out quickly with the addition of themed binge box movie sets. Children's staff created themed Grab and Go Book Bundles on popular topics, and then added Board Book Grab Bags in response to more demand. These quick, fun options helped to make family visits to the library joyful as well as fast and easy.

I'm very glad to hear about the extra hours. I cried when I heard the Library had reopened.

Despite the challenges of 2020, the Library remained a place for St. Albertans to be together, whether virtually on a screen or safely distanced and masked inside. This pandemic will end, and we look forward to St. Albertans gathering together, in-person, face to face, shoulder to shoulder at their public library.



Thanks to our partners and supporters

St. Albert Public Library is a municipal service funded primarily by the City of St. Albert. We thank the City for its ongoing support of Library collections, programs and services needed by all in our community. We value our close relationship with the City and appreciate their understanding of the benefits the Library brings to our community.



The Province of Alberta supports St. Albert Public Library and other public libraries across Alberta, including direct funding through an annual per capita grant and support of shared resources such as interlibrary loan, digital resources and training and development. In addition, we thank the Province for support of the Library's Career Resource Centre.



We thank other individuals, organizations and institutions for their financial and other support of the Library. In particular, we gratefully acknowledge the support of the Friends of St. Albert Public Library in a difficult year. In 2020 the Friends supported Jensen Lakes Library and STARFest.





**St. Albert
Public
Library**

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Jensen Lakes Library | #1010 880 St. Albert Trail | St. Albert, AB | T8N 7V2 T 780-544-0444



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