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Accessibility a priority for Saskatoon Public Library

We are aware questions have been raised about Saskatoon Public Library's (SPL) collection and related accessibility standards. We would like to take this opportunity to address these issues.

In 2012 the City of Saskatoon released Facility Accessibility Design Standards (FADS) in keeping with the Saskatchewan Human Rights Code and the architectural concept of universal design. These standards included specific requirements for all public library facilities and prescribed minimum and maximum shelving heights, as well as aisle widths, to ensure safe and easy access for all patrons regardless of height or ability.

Through the lens of these important standards, we began examining the layout and organization of our collections to bring our facilities into compliance in 2015. With less shelf space available, materials were reviewed and removed from branch shelving. Many of these materials are in storage at Frances Morrison Central Library. These materials remain searchable in our catalogue and continue to be available to the public. We are happy to retrieve these materials for anyone who requests them and will deliver them to their location of choice.

Other materials in poor condition, or those that had simply fallen out of general interest, were either sold with proceeds returned to the library, given away at outreach events, recycled or discarded. This is standard practice in libraries across the world. Library collections are regularly reviewed, expanding and contracting on this basis the world over.

Last year, SPL's collection increased from 551,939 to 580,616 items. Approximately 90,000 new items were added to the collection in 2016 and 2017.

Managing our collection in this way is an important step in our efforts to ensure SPL branches are open and accessible to all. We are an inclusive space, and we will continue to remove physical and systemic barriers for Saskatoon residents who use our library system.

Given the age of some of our facilities, it will be difficult to meet accessibility standards at all locations. However, we are committed to meeting this challenge and have made accessibility an organization-wide priority as reflected in our 2016-2021 strategic plan.

SPL's current collection development plan remains unchanged in the last ten years. Maintaining a vibrant and contemporary physical collection remains a priority.

Carol Cooley
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Saskatoon Public Library