

# 2020 **REPORT TO OUR COMMUNITY**



**SASKATOON  
PUBLIC LIBRARY**

Located on Treaty 6  
territory and the homeland  
of the Métis.

# BOARD MESSAGE

2020 started like all years at Saskatoon Public Library (SPL) typically do, with optimism and positive expectations for the year ahead. However, it soon became clear that the world would see a year like no other. In mid-March, and seemingly without warning, libraries closed as the city ground to a halt due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The negative impact of library closures on Saskatoon's most vulnerable populations—people living in poverty, especially children and older adults—was immediately apparent. SPL set to work to reimagine library services and develop a path to reopening. We immediately pivoted to online program delivery. We quickly removed barriers for people to get library cards, suspended all late fines, and made it easier to access digital materials. Our employees worked tirelessly, together with community organizations, to pack supplies for people in need. Our outreach workers assisted other organizations whose crisis lines were overrun. We partnered to provide a Phone Buddy service for isolated older adults. We extended our free WiFi to outside the libraries and loaned laptops to shelters. It would be three months before SPL was cleared to begin offering curbside pickup for physical library items and five months before we were able to safely welcome patrons into the libraries. Though COVID-19 restrictions remain in place as of April 2021, and we have been unable to restore service fully, we are proud of how SPL employees transitioned to the many changes they faced and resolved to continue providing library services under unprecedented circumstances.

As a result of our closure and limited services available for most of 2020, there was a predictable fall in statistics like visits, programming attendance and physical borrowing. Despite the disruptions, however, demand for library service remained strong. We witnessed significant increases in the demand for digital materials and SPL members collectively still saved more than \$21 million by using the library.

The new central library project also continued to move forward, with several milestones achieved throughout 2020. We purchased land at 321 2nd Avenue North, between 24th and 25th street. A team of award-winning architects from Formline

Architecture, Chevalier Morales Architects and Architecture49 were selected to design the new central library. We chose this team because of their experience, vision and commitment to incorporate Indigenous and non-Indigenous leadership, values, history and ways of knowing into a state-of-the-art library. The new central library remains on track to open in 2026.

We also took a significant step forward in our ongoing commitment to removing barriers to library service by announcing that SPL would be fines-free beginning Jan 1, 2021.

The Board is looking forward to the time where libraries can safely reclaim their role as vibrant community meeting hubs. Until then, we would again like to express gratitude to SPL's employees and patrons for their support and resilience. While it was a challenging year on many accounts, we firmly believe the future of library service in Saskatoon remains bright.

**Brett Bradshaw**  
Board Chair

**Carol Cooley**  
CEO

## 2020 BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Brett Bradshaw, Chair  
John Thronberg, Vice-Chair  
Councillor Hilary Gough  
Markel Chernenkoff

Elise Truscott  
Cheryl Starr  
Jim Siemens  
Carol Cooley, CEO

Ex Officio  
Mayor Charlie Clark

Saskatoon Public Library is governed by a volunteer library board and the Public Libraries Act (1996).

## BY THE NUMBERS

It was a different year for SPL and the world as a whole, but Saskatoon's residents were still showing lots of library love! Here's an overview of the year that was.



**7,156**

new librarycards issued.

Patrons saved over

**\$21.3**

**MILLION**

by checking out  
2,137,081 items.



**338,000**

eBooks downloaded.

**1,022,839**

digital materials  
accessed.



**11,186**

items in the  
Indigenous Collection.

**498,279**

items in the physical  
collection.



**49%**

of the city's residents  
are members.

**203,647**

reference questions  
were answered.



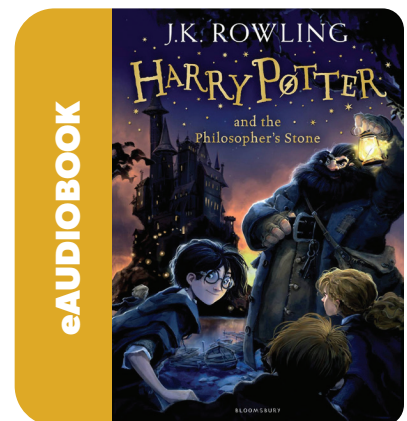
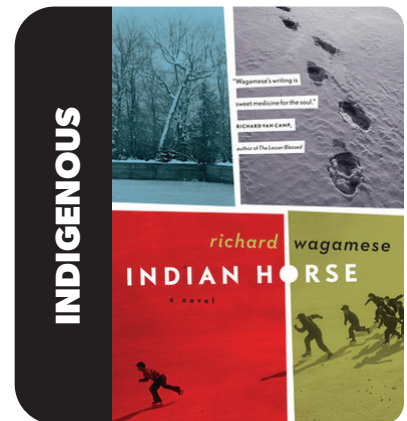
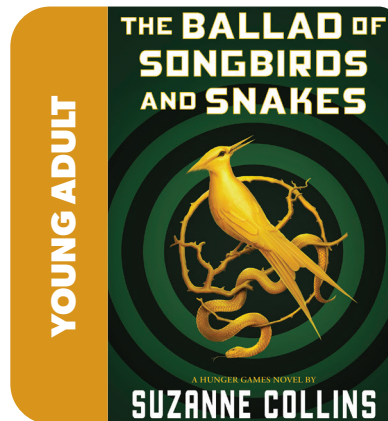
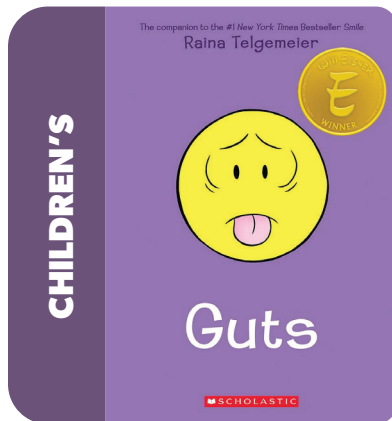
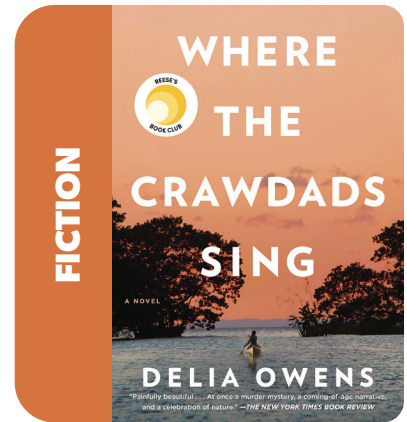
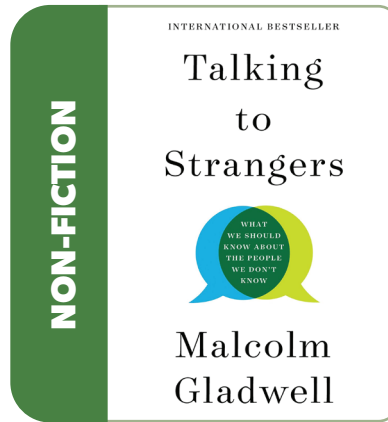
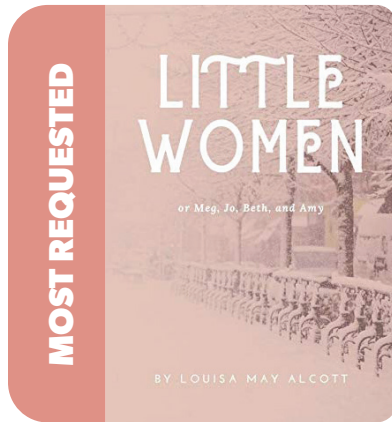
**127,197**

public computer  
sessions  
and 142,907 devices  
connected to SPL's WiFi.



# MOST POPULAR

Of the more than 2.1 million items borrowed in 2020, these were the most popular.





## **RIISING TO THE CHALLENGE**

The COVID-19 pandemic presented obstacles for many in our community, and SPL responded.

### **Vulnerable Sector Activity Kits**

As a member of the Saskatoon Inter-Agency Response team, SPL helped provide 1,925 activity kits to vulnerable children and families. The kits included donated books, games and other items to help relieve boredom and encourage safe home-based activities.

### **Grab & Go Bags**

To make checking out library items easier and safer, SPL introduced Grab & Go bags in June. The bags each contain 10 books, randomly selected by genre, and they immediately proved very popular with 1,049 bags being checked out over the last six months of 2020.

### **Online Programming**

When the pandemic forced the suspension of in-person programming, we moved programs online. Beginning in late March, SPL began presenting programs for all ages on our social media channels. In total, 788 online programs were virtually attended by 74,172 people.

### **Tech Lending**

We partnered with several community organizations to provide more than 60 laptops and WiFi hotspots to patrons without computers or internet access at home.

### **Online Chat**

We added a live chat feature to our website, which provides patrons with another avenue to ask questions and get answers about ever-changing library services during the pandemic. Launched in June, employees interacted with a total of 7,115 patrons via online chat over the last half of 2020.

### **COVID-19 Archive**

To create a permanent record of the 2020 pandemic, we asked residents to send us photos, videos, audio recordings, written thoughts, drawings, or anything else that reflected their individual experience of this time. The 233 submissions we received will be stored in Local History to help future generations understand what life was like during the COVID-19 pandemic in Saskatoon.



# TD Summer Reading Club

The TD Summer Reading  
program moved online and the

**1,194**

Saskatoon kids who registered  
kept their imaginations active by  
reading for a combined

**26,337**  
days.

Returning summer 2021.  
[saskatoonlibrary.ca/summerreading](http://saskatoonlibrary.ca/summerreading)



**knowlympics**

We moved the  
Knowlympics online and

**1,178**  
completed

**15,357**

challenges in our fourth annual  
all-ages summer learning  
challenge.

The fifth annual Knowlympics  
kicks off June 2021.  
[saskatoonlibrary.ca/knowlympics](http://saskatoonlibrary.ca/knowlympics)



## OUTREACH & ACCESSIBILITY

We miss you! Although the pandemic affected our ability to conduct outreach in 2020, we're looking forward to getting back out into the community and meeting with residents soon.

**470  
DELIVERIES**

made to people who were unable to physically visit the library.

**468  
APPOINTMENTS**

were made with SPL's Outreach Workers.

**290  
CONSULTATIONS**

were booked with SPL's Writer in Residence, Edward Willett (first half of 2020) and Danny Ramadan (second half of 2020).

**490  
BOOK CLUB  
IN A BAG**

kits were checked out.

**26  
PHONE BUDDY**

adults signed up for our program, where employees have lighthearted conversations with individuals each week to help relieve boredom and isolation.

## STRATEGIC PLAN 2020 UPDATE

Due to COVID-19, some of our priorities were adjusted as we responded to the pandemic. However, we still had many noteworthy achievements:

- The Storywalk™ program launched in Kinsmen Park.
- The Discovery Pass program was launched, providing free admission to the Western Development Museum, YWCA and Remai Modern.
- holdIT pick-up lockers were installed at the Carlyle King and Cliff Wright libraries.
- Free faxing service was added.
- Our popular summer events, the TD Summer Reading Club and Knowlympics, went virtual.
- A new Saskatoon Public Library website launched.
- Live chat service added to website to improve avenues for patron assistance.
- We added VOX Books (talking/audio books) to the collection.
- A walk-up window was installed at the central library—thanks to a United Way grant—so patrons can access outreach services without entering the library.
- Phase 2 of the J.S. Wood Library refresh was completed.
- Land was purchased for the new central library at 321 2nd Avenue North.
- The award-winning team from Formline Architecture, Chevalier Morales Architectes and Architecture49 were selected as the new central library design team.



# **THANK YOU TO OUR DONORS!**

**You gave us so much to  
be grateful for in 2020.**

SPL is touched that so many thoughtful people showed their love for the library with a donation this past year. We think the world of our supporters and can't thank them enough. Because of their generosity, SPL can continue to be a welcoming place that opens doors to learning in our shared community.

**To learn more about giving to SPL,  
visit [saskatoonlibrary.ca/donate](https://saskatoonlibrary.ca/donate).**