



Is Schenectady County Public Library (SCPL) leaving the Mohawk Valley Library System (MVLS)?

SCPL is not withdrawing from the Mohawk Valley Library System but rather the Joint Automation Project (JA). The Joint Automation Project is a separate contract SCPL has for third party managed IT and automation (catalog) services.

Why is SCPL withdrawing from JA?

As SCPL continues to grow, and after much discussion and investigation, it was determined outsourcing our IT services to the Joint Automation Project no longer best serves the needs of our patrons or staff, and all would be better served by bringing IT services in-house, under the management of the Schenectady County IT Department. In addition, and perhaps even more importantly, membership in the Joint Automation Project did not afford us the flexibility and autonomy we need to best serve our community and adapt and innovate to continually evolving needs. To that end, the Board of Trustees voted to cancel the current contract with Joint Automation. The Joint Automation Project requires six months notification of this change, which gives both parties time to plan for a smooth transition.

Will Schenectady County Public Library cardholders still be able to check out at other MVLS libraries?

We will still provide cards and borrowing privileges to all residents of MVLS and vice versa as members of MVLS. SCPL cardholders will be able to visit MVLS libraries to get a card and check out there.

Will other MVLS library cardholders still be able to check out items at SCPL locations?

We will still provide cards and borrowing privileges to all residents of MVLS and vice versa as members of MVLS. MVLS cardholders will be able to visit SCPL libraries to get a card and check out there.

Will SCPL cardholders be able to request items from other MVLS or SALS libraries for pick up at a SCPL location?

This will still be possible through interlibrary loan, a process where libraries who do not have a shared catalog request items from other libraries. We do this currently to request items from all over the country when a patron wants an item that is not held anywhere within our shared catalog. The existing delivery infrastructure between MVLS and SALS libraries will still be in place and can be used to transport items between SCPL and other libraries. In 2023, less than 10% of the physical materials checked out at SCPL locations came from outside SCPL's collections.



Will all interlibrary loan requests (items coming from outside of SCPL’s catalog) have to be placed in person?

Interlibrary loan requests will not need to be completed in person at one of our libraries and can be submitted from home through our website.

Will all interlibrary loan requests (items coming from outside of SCPL’s catalog) come by mail?

The existing delivery infrastructure between MVLS and SALS libraries will still be in place and can be used to transport items between SCPL and other libraries. With this change to who provides our IT and automation services, we are also hoping to increase the frequency of delivery to all SCPL locations to five days per week so patrons receive their requested items even quicker than they do now.

Will this reduce the access SCPL patrons have to physical or digital collections?

We don’t anticipate any reduction in service as a result of this change, and in fact expect an expansion of access for SCPL cardholders through continued direct access to MVLS libraries as well as resource sharing agreements with other regional libraries. We plan to be able to get all the same titles we can for you right now with our new system.

Will SCPL cardholders be able to use their cards in person at SALS libraries and vice versa?

This is dependent upon policy set by each individual library’s board of trustees. Many of the libraries who participate in Joint Automation currently also issue cards to any resident of the MVLS or SALS service areas. For example, SCPL’s policy is to issue cards to anyone within SALS and MVLS currently. Clifton Park-Halfmoon Public Library’s policy is to issue cards to anyone within SALS, MVLS or UHLS.

What changes will patrons see as a result of SCPL withdrawing from Joint Automation, and when?

We are not far enough along in the transition process yet to have exact timing or finalized details of what patrons can expect ready to share, given there is a six month notice period for our withdrawal from Joint Automation and much of the details depend on how Joint Automation works with us to ensure a smooth transition now that we’ve provided our notice. Since much of the change will involve internal procedures and configuration, the biggest change we expect most will notice is a different catalog interface sometime late this year. Once that happens, we are excited to implement catalog features such as autorenewal (your books will be renewed for you automatically close to the due date if no



one is on the waiting list for them), display of how many holds are currently on a title and your place in line, and easily filtering search results by items currently on the shelf. Regarding the change in IT support, SCPL will be able to implement upgraded public computer and print/copy/scan/fax services, increase patron privacy protections and improve cybersecurity measures at our libraries.

Please be on the lookout for additional information about this once our migration plans progress and we get closer to making changes. This change in who we contract with for our automation services is just one of many exciting projects we have in progress to improve services in the near future, including: a new website, a new event calendar and online room reservation system, added staff and expanded branch location operating hours, and expanded digital collections.