

The Schenectady County Public Library's decision to withdraw from the Joint Automation Project (JA) marks a strategic move toward modernization and enhanced service for **our community**. The current system, while functional, has become outdated and limits our ability to provide the cutting-edge technology and personalized experiences that today's library patrons expect.

By transitioning away from the JA, we open the door to a new era of innovation, one where we can leverage the latest technology to allow the Schenectady County Public Library to unleash its full potential as a catalyst for learning, growth, and community building. The future will be ours to create – and it's brighter than ever before.

While change might seem unnecessary to those already well-served, upgrading our library creates a welcoming space where **all** community members, especially those who have felt excluded or underserved in the past, can find resources and support tailored specifically to them.

The upcoming enhancements to our catalog and services, like automatic renewals, better search tools, and improved printing/faxing capabilities, are merely the first steps in a thrilling transformation of your library experience. This change paves the way for a future filled with exciting possibilities.

Imagine an intuitive library mobile app, an augmented reality experience that brings books to life, or even a personalized bookmarking feature that caters to your unique interests. Envision a vibrant makerspace where local entrepreneurs can collaborate, and small businesses can thrive. While it may seem like a far-off dream, perhaps one day we could even have book delivery drones bringing library materials directly to those who are homebound.

This is not just a vision of the future – it's the reality we're actively building.

These are just a few of the ways we envision enhancing your library experience and expanding our reach into the community however, we cannot do this without the first step of withdrawing from the Joint Automation Project. The future is bright, and we're excited to explore all the possibilities together.

While this transition may present some temporary challenges, we are confident that the long-term benefits will far outweigh any short-term inconveniences. We are committed to working closely with our partners and community stakeholders to ensure a smooth and successful transition, and we look forward to unveiling a revitalized library that is poised for growth and innovation.

The Schenectady County Public Library is on the cusp of a thrilling transformation, poised to become a beacon of innovation, connection, and boundless possibility for our entire community. By embracing the future, we envision a library that transcends its traditional role, evolving into a dynamic hub where technology, creativity, and human interaction converge.

Here are some highlights of some of the specific benefits Schenectady County Public Library will enjoy from expanding IT resources by being supported by County IT and withdrawing from Joint Automation including:

- Access to a local team of fifteen IT staff shared only with other county departments instead of a remote team of 6 IT staff shared with 49 other libraries
- Regularly scheduled IT support during some of our night/weekend operating hours instead of on-call support for emergencies during all night/weekend operating hours
- Compliance with county records retention and record management policy and improved records retention
- Implementation of rigorous cybersecurity practices in compliance with county policy and procedure including endpoint protection and firewalls
- Eligibility for cyber liability insurance through the County once we are in compliance with cybersecurity best practices
- Dramatically improved protection of patron privacy through discontinuing routine JA practices such as use of generic staff logins with weak passwords
- Access to upgraded Office365 licenses that include an improved ability to collaborate on documents for a more efficient and effective workflow
- Centralized network so all of our libraries can talk to one another and we can implement library-wide services such as print and PC management (we currently manually manage much of this at all locations other than Bornt, Mont Pleasant and Central), as well as being able to easily access all security cameras on-site (currently we drive to the individual location to retrieve and save footage from that location), and add a door fob system to all of our buildings for improved safety and security (keys can be lost, copied, etc., and rekeying each time an employee leaves the library is not practical or cost-effective)
- Email addresses on our own domain of scpl.org instead of mvls.info
- Confidentiality of library files and emails from any non-County third parties
- Access to support for a wider variety of computers and related technology hardware
- Ability to offer upgraded patron printer/copier/scanner/faxing systems
- Ability to easily and effectively communicate with the county via email and file sharing
- Ability for library staff to print from their library-issued laptops while connected to library Wi-Fi (critical for branch librarians)

JA is a small operation of only 6 IT staff serving SCPL and 49 other libraries. The practical constraints due to their size means they only offer a one-size-fits-all approach that does not meet our needs as a large county library with nine locations. We are restricted in which equipment we can order/have supported, which software we can use (such as type of Office 365 licenses and type of public PC and print management solutions), our ability to collaborate with one another and our county colleagues as well as community partners, and our ability to customize our configurations to our library's needs.

While the primary impetus for this change is the ability to manage our own IT in order to benefit from significant improvements and upgrades, withdrawal from Joint Automation and exploring alternate resource sharing arrangements with regional libraries has many advantages for us as it relates to the integrated library system (ILS/catalog), delivery and Overdrive, key among them:

- Ability to implement autorenewal - instead of items going overdue at their original due date and us billing for their replacement costs at 3 weeks overdue, the system can automatically renew them if no one is waiting
- Improved public catalog features including the ability to filter by items currently on the shelf, display of locations on the main search results page, display of how many holds are currently on a title and your place in line
- Ability for us to manage and set appropriate ILS permissions for each library employee according to their job titles, functions and assigned responsibilities
- Ability to implement SCPL Board of Trustee policies relating to circulation, such as our fine block threshold
- Ability to automate replacement cost bills via digital communications instead of printing and manually mailing them
- Ability to discontinue collecting unnecessary personally identifiable information such as driver license numbers and reduce library liability and impact in the event of a cybersecurity breach (which in itself would be much less likely with the enhanced cybersecurity measures we'll implement under County IT)
- Ability to do our own cataloging
- Ability to edit bib records
- Ability to run custom reports
- Ability to utilize functionality such as bulk record changes
- Ability to spend our Overdrive contribution directly and do our own selecting, as well as participate in Overdrive Advantage in addition (Advantage titles prioritize SCPL patron holds before holds for patrons of other member libraries)
- Ability to expand delivery to all nine of our libraries to 5 days per week

CURRENT MVLS DELIVERY SCHEDULE					
	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY
KBJ	X	X	X	X	X
BORNT	X		X	X	
GLENVILLE	X	X	X	X	
MONT PLEASANT	X		X	X	
NISKAYUNA	X	X	X	X	X
QUAKER STREET	X	X			X
ROTTERDAM	X	X	X	X	X
SCOTIA	X		X	X	

Frequently Asked Questions about SCPL's withdrawal from Joint Automation

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.