



2020

COMMUNITY REPORT



South Shore
Public Libraries



MISSION

South Shore Public Libraries celebrates reading, discovering, learning, and sharing.

VISION

South Shore Public Libraries is a vital centre of the community, sharing a robust collection and innovative technology, that inspires life long learning and literacy in a positive, welcoming environment.



For a long time now, it has been my pleasure to bring greetings in the South Shore Public Libraries annual report on behalf of the members of our Board of Directors.

This year, my greetings are a little different than normal. The past 12-plus months have been challenging in ways that no one could have predicted as the world faced a pandemic that claimed the lives of scores of people across the planet. Thankfully, as I write this, the full efforts of our scientific community have put us in a position where multiple vaccines are available and, it would seem, there is light at the end of the tunnel.

On behalf of the Board of Directors, I want to express my gratitude to both our staff and our patrons for their adaptability, their courage, and their willingness to creatively find ways to ensure our residents in Lunenburg and Queens counties continued to have access to our collection and its resources through the pandemic. One of the more exciting projects we were able to work on this year is the acquisition of a new mobile branch to replace our aging bus. We are all very much looking forward to seeing the fruit of that work on the roads of our region in the summer of 2021.

This year has truly reminded us just how important it is to be willing to be life-long learners. Beyond the pandemic and the importance of scientific methods and access to information, we were reminded at the library this year that the importance of striving to be better never abates. There is always room to grow and a need to listen to our community with open minds, and to make our libraries a safer and more welcoming space for people – particularly those who are marginalized because of their race and who struggle against an inherently racist system that is rife with inequality and underrepresentation.

Our staff and our Board of Directors have embraced the opportunity to re-examine our own biases, conscious or unconscious, and to engage in meaningful conversations with Black, Indigenous, and People of Colour in our community. As part of that work, we have begun a relationship with the Bridgewater Anti-Racism Task Force and I believe that our position as a trusted community institution will allow us to build more relationships and develop more programming that will sow the seeds of inclusiveness and equity, and inspire our community to grow closer together as we share stories and build understanding.

We have so much to learn and we can accomplish so much by listening to each other's stories with open minds and open hearts.

Patrick Hirtle



CHIEF LIBRARIAN MESSAGE



3



It has been an interesting year to say the least. This time last year all South Shore Public Library outlets were closed as part of a province wide lockdown in response to Covid 19. Closing our libraries, while necessary, was disheartening. We are in the business of removing barriers, not building them. With programming cancelled, our space is weirdly empty, and our materials sitting on shelves, we decided to find new ways to offer services to our friends and neighbours.

Days after closing we loaded up on cleaners, hand sanitizers, and wipes and launched curbside pickup of materials in Bridgewater, Lunenburg, and Liverpool. A few days after that, our bookmobile was on the road delivering library materials to all its regular stops. We also greatly increased capacity to our e-book collection via our website including “the best blazes Canadian Lit collection” available at any public library in the country. If you haven’t checked it out yet, I encourage you to have a look. If we missed any of your favourite Canadian writers let us know. We will gladly include them.

With our curbside and bookmobile services running safely we quickly pivoted to preparing our branches to re-open. We installed plexiglass screens, changed workflows, and created pathways to ensure safe physical distancing between people. By the first week of June, we were ready to go.

While it was not “business as usual” I am proud to report we came very close to it. Our hours went back to full service quickly and we offered programming for much of the year including hosting our signature program “Lunenburg Lit” in person in. In addition, we started a “caring calls” service and continued our work to improve our bookmobile service with a custom designed new bus. Work on the new Bookmobile is almost complete. You will see it on a road near you soon.

We also took time to reflect on how we can do better in the areas of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion. This resulted in a new DEI training plan currently being rolled out to everyone as well as working with the Province Accessibility task force to make our spaces better for all. We will continue to work with our Provincial and Municipal partners to remove all barriers, both physical and systemic. Our goal is to serve everyone all of the time. We will strive to achieve this goal regardless of the obstacles we must overcome.

Almost a year later, we are back in lockdown as Nova Scotia fights a third wave of SARS Covid 2. This time we switched to curbside pickup within hours and our mobile also adjusted quickly to the new restrictions. We will be living with this virus for some time to come and SSPL will continue to adapt so we can safely provide you with the best public library services anywhere.

I want to thank members of our Board, staff, and our many volunteers for their unflinching dedication and commitment to our mission during these uncertain times. I am lucky to work with such a passionate group of people who believe in community, information, and accessibility during good times and bad. Together, we will make sure you get what you need when you need it.

We are living in an extraordinary time which, in retrospect, will have many lessons to teach us. One of them, I am sure, will be clear: in periods of social isolation like this, public libraries are the glue that hold communities together. Public libraries are the important mix of facilities, places, spaces, programs, projects, services and networks that maintain and improve the standard of living and quality of life in our community.

In good times we may take our libraries for granted but in times of pandemic we see clearly how important and essential they are.

I look forward to seeing you in the library one day soon!

Troy Myers

**"Curbside service is a lifesaver.
It has saved my sanity during
the COVID lockdown.
Thank you!"**

SSPL Borrower





The COVID-19 pandemic presented many challenges in our community throughout the year. SSPL is a nimble organization. We were able to use this agility along with the flexibility and skill of our staff to quickly pivot and change.



ASK US!



10,603

people picked up items

1003

calls made

512

questions answered

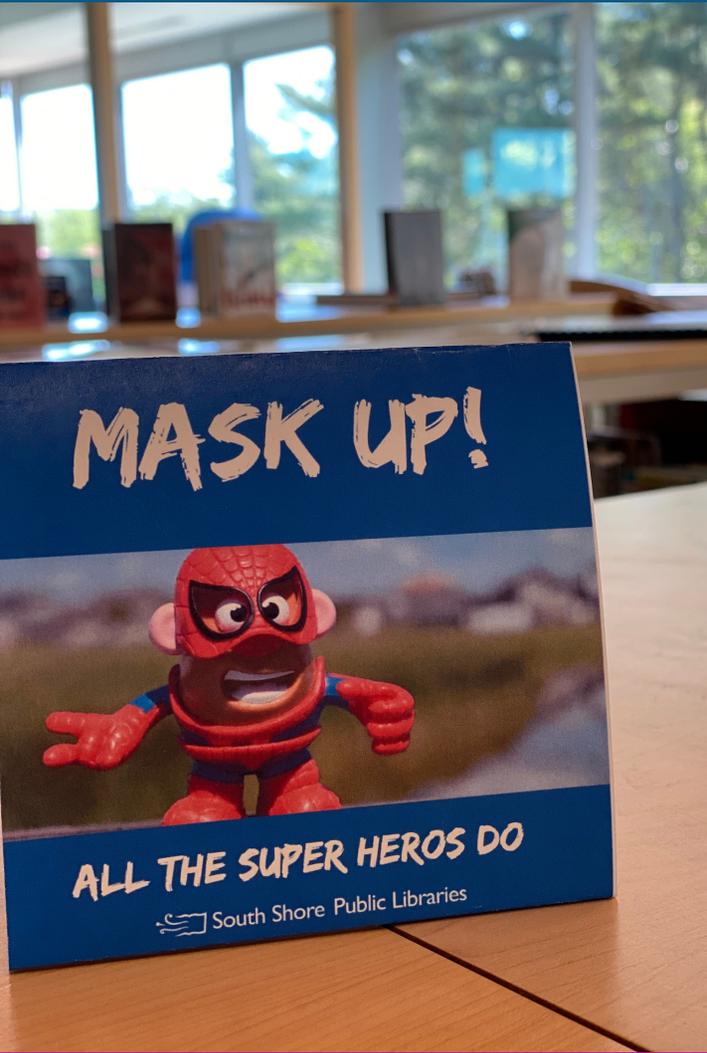
74

submissions

BRANCH UPDATES



REAL PEOPLE. REAL CONVERSATIONS.





An unprecedented year indeed. Even behind massive amounts of P.P.E. the Mobile managed to shine through the Covid-19 Pandemic. With thanks to CEO Troy Myers, Christina Pottie and management, we were able to do a thriving Curbside pick up business during lockdown periods. The Mobile staff received many pats on the back and kind words for our continued service during the stressful pandemic year of 2020-2021. It was a pleasure to host Colleen Jones and her Crew from CBC and share a day in the life of Curbside Pickup from the Bookmobile.

We resumed our normal hours and schedule for several months and tried to keep things as normal as possible. Book displays were created for seasons and specially designated months and days.

We were featured at least three times in local newspapers. Saltwire wrote a series of articles about our stellar service, and also featured one on the brand new Bookmobile.

Patrons were very generous donating during the annual Gift A Book campaign.

We continue to do the best we can under the circumstances and hope for the opening of the Atlantic Bubble again.





Through the challenges that the Covid-19 pandemic has presented us all with, Thomas H Raddall Library has continued to serve the community, helping to inform, educate and entertain, and bring people together. Our doors reopened to the public in June, and we started active programming shortly thereafter. The branch provided many patrons with books, magazines, DVD's, and audio books via curbside pickup, throughout the lockdown. We have continued to serve the residents of Liverpool and Queens County by providing a diverse range of programs and information sessions for adults and children.

We have provided fun and exciting programs for children which allow young minds to explore, create, and play including Story Time, Science experiments, arts and crafts activities, scavenger hunts and out of the ordinary activities like ten pin bowling and crazy golf! Throughout the summer the branch was able to provide programs that allowed children to explore science and encourage reading during the holiday period. It was wonderful to have well-attended March Break activities once again and offer children's activities, which included the Break Out! Escape Room, Button making, Cardboard Challenge, Clay making and Rock Decorating.

The branch partnered with Autism NS to run "Boys Group" from November to January. This program, facilitated by Behaviour and Autism Consultant Andreas Arnmarr, provided an opportunity for boys in grades 6-8 to chat and learn new skills and strategies necessary to navigate their preteen/teenage years.

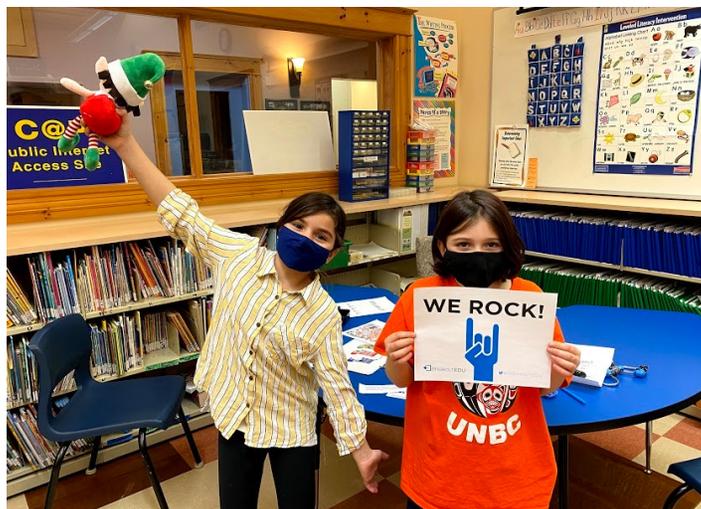
The branch has provided an exciting range of programs for adults too, regular programs such as French Conversation, Rug Hooking, Fibrecraft, Relax and Paint, Chair Yoga and the Raddall Reading Club were supplemented with monthly information sessions from Community partners such as Big Brothers, Big Sisters, Queens County Transport, Second Story Women's Centre, and NS Health. Our Community partnership is further strengthened by hosting Queens County Garden Club, and a local Church prayer group. We are also helping our patrons with their tech problems with our Learn it @ your Library program, which is proving very popular!

Thanks to community presenters, we were able to host Pest and Problems in the Garden, Weather Proofing Your Property, A History of Martial Arts, Self-defense for Seniors, Helping Your Worried Child, Stress Management and Self-Care, Wellness Practice, Paddling Down Home, Skiing in the Back County, Hiking Trails and Tails, and Sex Ed. for Adults.

We are thankful for the enthusiastic support from our patrons, the residents of Liverpool and Queens County, and the Region of Queens Municipality.

We would like to also extend a heartfelt thank you to all of our staff, volunteers, and students for all their hard work, particularly during this challenging time.





Well, this has certainly been an interesting year! As with all of the other branches of South Shore Public Libraries we were closed for nearly three months due to the COVID-19 pandemic, though we continued to serve the community by offering curbside pickups once a month. Although we weren't able to chat and visit with patrons, it was nice to see them briefly from a distance!

Throughout the summer we were open extended hours on Wednesdays, Fridays and open all day on Saturday. Being open all day on Saturday has continued and while the new afternoon hours are quite slow, the regular, year-round patrons are starting to get used to these hours and are taking advantage of them.

For the first time this year we had a summer student working in the branch on Saturdays throughout the summer. She ran summer reading club programming. As with most branches there were challenges with running programs during a pandemic. Several programs were well attended, while others were not. Charity was able to obtain lots of supplies, so the branch is quite well set up for future programming. In early 2021 Charity began hosting several virtual programs and while the interest in several has been low, there has been good attendance for the Anime Club, which has increased to meeting once a month to twice a month. The other virtual programs are a YA Book Club for Everyone and Kahoot! Trivia, which is an online trivia platform that uses the Kahoot! app as well as Zoom.

Despite everything with the COVID-19 pandemic we were lucky to have most of our volunteers return when it was safe to do so. The dedication of our volunteers is truly wonderful and we are so thankful to have them!

REAL EXPERIENCES. REAL INFORMATION.



REAL PEOPLE. REAL CONVERSATIONS.





What a year we've all had! During closure due to the pandemic we took time to do a deep clean of the library waiting for the time when borrowers could once again browse the collections. We maintained our commitment to serving the public by instituting curbside pickup. We heard that this was much appreciated, and continue to this day to hear stories of how being able to borrow books safely helped so many of you to weather the rough times during the provincial lockdown. Thank you for your kind words, and rest assured that we'll keep doing all we can to keep you safe and reading, no matter what!

We reopened in June. Program planning was tricky this year – limited numbers, physical distancing, and household bubbles (or lack thereof) were challenges, but we were up to the task! We offered outdoor activities as much as possible, and indoor programs were closely monitored to stay in line with health guidelines. Programming started in July and August with summer students running lots of programs for kids of all ages. The activities included STEAM workshops, Lego robotics, electric circuits, computer coding, story time, crafts, scavenger hunts, green screen and stop-motion animations! The Summer Reading Club also allowed kids to use the library and win prizes while at home, the take-home craft and activity kits were big hits too.

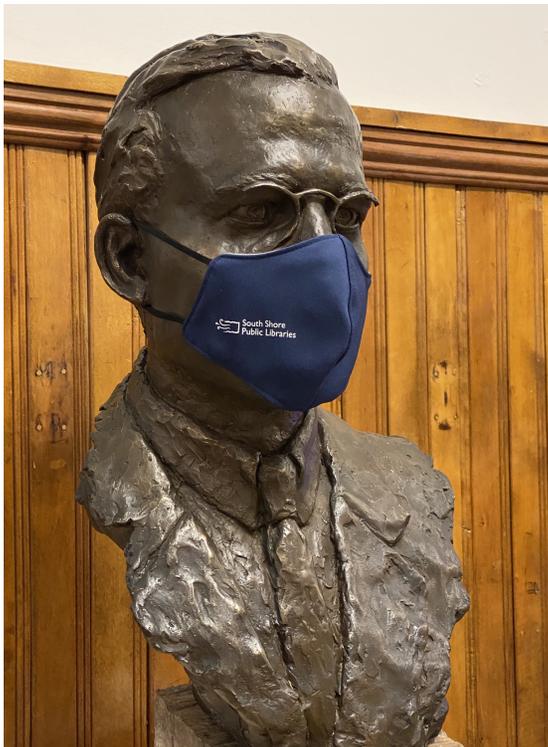
The fall saw the start up of regular children's programming, including Story Time, Magic: the Gathering, Break Out Boxes, Drumming for kids, science programs, sculpting programs, and a special Hallowe'en craft workshop. The adult knitting group and needle-felting started back up as well. We tried some new adult library programs; Mindful Art Journaling and Guided Meditation. In addition to regular activities, November programs also included Day of the Dead stone painting, and making kaleidoscopes for kids. The children's drumming program received lots of interest from adults, and so we responded with a drumming program for all ages! In December we had a special Christmas tree ornament-making program for kids and yoga for adults, to end the year on a relaxing note.

The new year brought with it some new programs, such as a one-off Virtual Codemakers workshop led by SuperNova and Clay Club for kids. Guided meditation continued with increased attendance, and the drumming program filled with adults (had a significant waitlist!). Tech help for adults began in February.

In March we had a student intern leading a Mi'kmaq heritage program, Seven Sacred Teachings, for both children and adults. We were able to put on a successful March Break this year. Some of the more popular programs included Break Out Box, drumming, xylophones, Stone Painting, and Monster-Making. Drumming, needle-felting, guided meditation and Crafty Hands continued to be strong with regular attendance each week. To finish off the month local author and photographer Stephen Ernst presented his book "Lunenburg, a History in Pictures", marking the centennial of the launch of the Bluenose.

We have had regular community groups meet at the library throughout the year, including the Lunenburg Book Club, Raging Grannies Book Club, Council of Canadians, Lunenburg Foundation of the Arts, and several others booking the space for both one-time and recurring meetings.

We look forward to serving our community in the year to come.





Time has moved differently this year. During the pandemic closure our staff were busy behind the scenes answering calls and emails, selecting and cleaning books and getting them to you using curbside pickup. Seeing you line up outside rain or shine, respecting everyone's space, was quite the sight to see! Every day we had dozens of books on our request list and we couldn't wait to pull them off the shelf for you. As an added surprise for kids we put together Take and Make craft and science kits to help during the long days at home from school.

We were very excited to reopen to the public in June and were thrilled by the reaction of patrons, you were all kind, patient, and supportive. We received amazing feedback, and I thank you all for taking the time for the socially distanced chats.

In July we were able to start programming again. Programming is an important part of what we do, and we knew we could find a way to offer educational, fun, and safe programming for everyone. We offered "Book a Program", where a family or bubble could select what type of program they wanted and what time worked best for them. We did lots of outdoor programming including our fan favourite Monarch Butterfly Program. We also resumed our community art display, which is in its seventh year of existence.

Since the Fall we have been back to regular programs including baby group, story time, table top games, writing club, chess, Writers Group, S.T.E.A.M, science, arts and crafts, and cooking. We were able to offer all these programs with a few modifications.

March Break was a full week of mini programs with smaller numbers per session. One day over March break, spaced throughout the day, we managed to make slime with 107 happy kids. How is that for a day at the office? We had 500 kids in attendance over the week. We managed this due to our enthusiastic staff and understanding patrons; who waited their turn and shared details for contact tracing. We cleaned a lot of scissors, glue sticks and markers that week, and it was all worth it!

We look forward to see what next year brings.



It was a year like no other and we quickly realized that in order to keep engaged with our community we needed to change the way we worked. The global pandemic made us think in new ways; create, react and revise. I'd like to share a few of our responses here.

A state of emergency was declared and within a few days we shifted to a whole new service delivery model. Curbside Pickup was planned and implemented.

We are proud to say that SSPL was the only Library in the province to offer this service. In order to get the word out we concentrated our efforts on social media posts, and radio and newspaper ads creating the "Stay Connected, Stay Safe" campaign. Helping folks join the library and use the service was a priority so we streamlined our online membership portal and stove to get people a library card number and PIN within 24 hours.

Other ideas generated during the pandemic include:

- Created "Ask Us" helpline where borrowers questions could be answered in live chat, by phone or email.
- Offered curbside printing, people emailed us a print job for pick up at curbside.
- Generated Take and Make craft and science kits for kids.
- Collected stories, poems and works of art displaying experiences and feeling as a resulting from isolation and uncertainty and sharing them as the LQ Quarantine.
- Dipped our toes into virtual programming by having a Virtual Young Adult book club and hosting online trivia events.

We knew that people were feeling isolated - we needed to help any way we could and chose two hands-on options. With the help of funding from United Way Lunenburg County we created Caring Calls. We started calling all library members over the age of 65, to check in and see how they were doing. We are steadily working our way through the membership rolls and from these calls we've created a roster of folks we call to chat with weekly, biweekly and monthly. Caring Calls also accepts referrals from non library members. The other project we started was helping facilitate lunch deliveries for Souls Harbour Mission. Lunches are delivered 3 times a week to vulnerable seniors in our area. We help find volunteers, organize deliveries, and coordinate incoming recipients.

Municipal elections were held in the fall and we felt compelled to support this democratic process, so partnered with the Town of Bridgewater to hosted and broadcast an all candidates debate. Chambers were closed to the public so we recorded the debate and shared it online - it was viewed over 500 times.

One of the amazing things that happen in libraries is conversation. People come to read the paper, grab some movies, get some books and chat. We couldn't replicate that experience for folks who couldn't get together but we thought perhaps we could share what people thought about the books they read so we started asking people for book reviews. Folks have reviewed everything from the picture book "Diary of a Pug" which was rated as "a ten out of ten so grate" to an analysis of "From the Ashes" a remarkable memoir about hope and resilience, and a revelatory look into the life of a Métis-Cree man who refused to give up.

When health restrictions allowed we had presentations, activities and events. Staff, students, and community members stepped up to make presentations. All who attended were pleased to be out and enthusiastic to attend something in person. This sentiment was repeated at our signature reading event, the Lunenburg Lit Festival, in September. The authors we hosted were thrilled to be reading to a live audience and soak in that synergy that comes from gathering together and sharing stories.

We keenly anticipate the time when our libraries can safely reclaim their role as vibrant community hubs but until that time thanks for steering the course with us as we navigated the year.





Troy 10 years



Crystal 35 years



Jeff 15 years

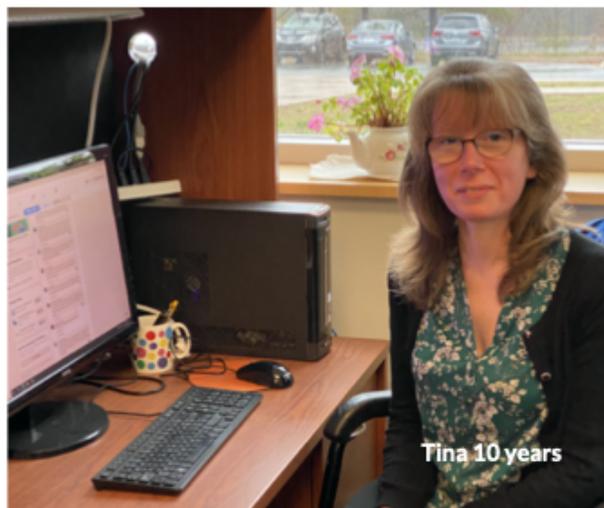


Sheena 15 years



Real People, Real Experiences

Congratulations to our 2020
Long Term Service Award
Recipients



Tina 10 years



David 5 years



Charity 5 years



Holly 5 years



1141

new library cards issued



11,963

reference questions



219,430

items were checked out



35,898

digital items borrowed



80,512

Library Visits



52,141

hours of free WiFi



4894

people attended a program



3363

items loaned to other library systems



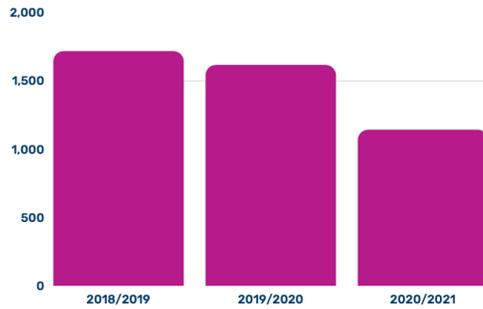
109,397

website visits

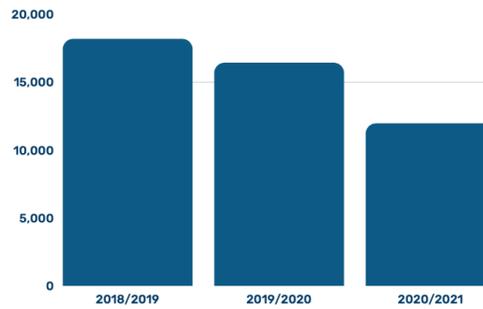
KEY METRICS



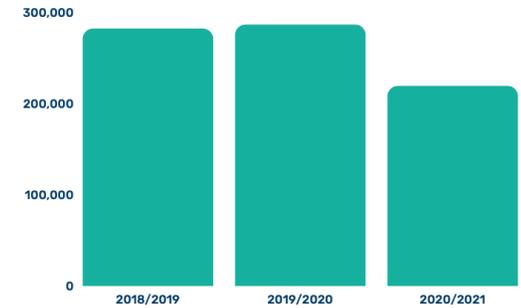
New Library Cards



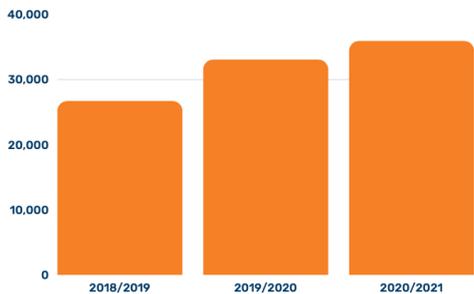
Questions Answered



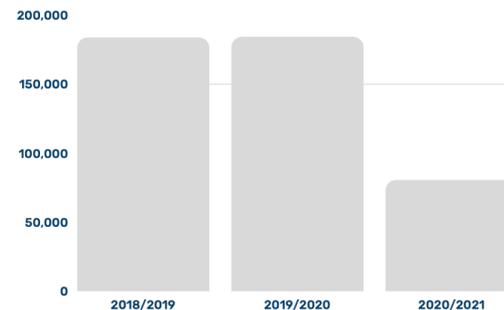
Items Checked Out



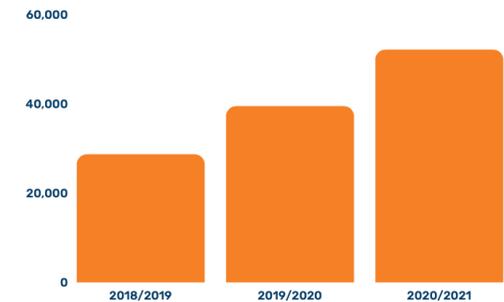
Digital Items Borrowed



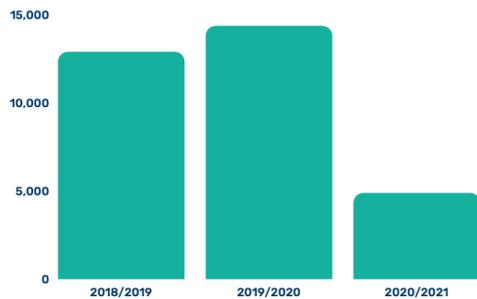
Library Visits



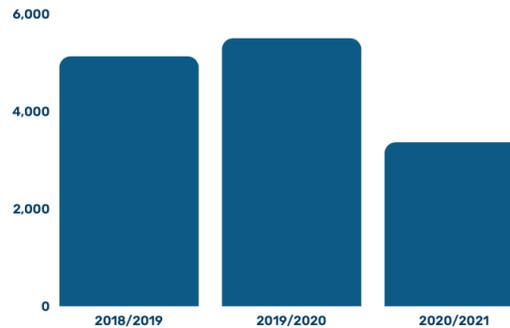
Hours of Free Wifi



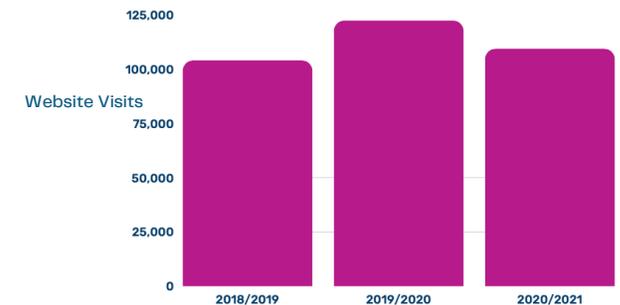
Program Attendance



Loaned to Inter Library Loan



Website Visits



REPORT TO THE COMMUNITY 2020

LOCATIONS

ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE

135 North Park Street
Bridgewater NS
B4V 9B3

902-543-2548

LUNENBURG LIBRARY

97 Kaulbach Street
Lunenburg NS
B0J 2C0

902-634-8087

BOOKMOBILE

135 North Park Street
Bridgewater, NS
B4V 9B3

902-543-2548

TOLL FREE NUMBER

WEBSITE

<https://southshorepubliclibraries.ca>

MARGARET HENNIGAR PUBLIC LIBRARY

135 North Park Street
Bridgewater, NS
B4V 9B3

902-543-9222

ALEAN FREEMAN LIBRARY

5060 Highway 210
Greenfield, NS
B0T 1E0

902-685-5400

THOMAS H. RADDALL LIBRARY

145 Old Bridge Street
Liverpool, NS
B0T 1K0

902-354-5270

1-877- 455-2548

INSTAGRAM

<https://instagram.com/ssplibraries>

MANAGEMENT TEAM

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Jeff Mercer

Lynn Robart

Christina Pottie

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Deputy Chief Librarian

Executive Assistant

Community Engagement

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Councillor Stacey Colwell

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Councillor Michelle Greek

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Tom Sheppard

Wilma Stewart-White

Mark Taylor

Kara Turner

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