

Library Report



Compiled by
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Library staff prep for June 29 re-opening

Western Counties Regional Library will open most of its branches to the public, beginning the week of June 29.

“We have faced challenging times with the COVID-19 pandemic,” says Library Board Chair Jimmy MacAlpine. “But our communities have done a great job with the use of social safety measures that were enacted. Because of that, and with the safety measures that have been adopted at our branches, I am pleased to see that most of our library services will be available to our patrons once again. I also want to thank our staff for the tremendous work that they have done to get the branches ready for reopening.”

The regional library launched a special books-by-mail service on May 20 to allow patrons to begin receiving physical books, movies and magazines again while work was under way to prepare the branches for the re-opening.

The Izaak Walton Killam Memorial Library in Yarmouth will re-open to the public on June 29 and the other regional library branches will follow suit on June 30.

The library’s physical locations and its branch services were shut down on March 16 after the COVID-19 State of Emergency was declared by the provincial government. Staff members worked hard to expand online services on its eLibrary at

www.westerncounties.ca.

“We’ve been working tirelessly to ensure a safe re-opening of libraries,” says Library Director Erin Comeau. “All staff are being trained on new health and safety protocols and branch hours are being adjusted to allow for more frequent disinfecting of high touch surfaces. The library has also implemented a 72-hour quarantine time for all materials returned to ensure that patrons can continue to borrow materials safely”.

Branches will re-open for slightly fewer hours to allow for more frequent disinfecting and fewer people will be allowed in at a time. However, people can expect to browse for materials, request information, and use a computer for Internet access as they had been doing prior to COVID. There will be fewer public computers available and usage will be reduced to allow for proper cleaning after each use and for social distancing.

“We will continue to offer books by mail for people who are not comfortable coming into the branch,” Comeau explains. “It is important to us that everyone has access to library materials no matter what their circumstances may be.”

A significant amount of furniture has been removed and, where necessary, the library’s interior will mark the flow of traffic and direct people where to stand while waiting to check-out



Pictured above, newly installed Plexiglas surrounds the Barrington Municipal Library’s circulation desk.

materials. Plexiglas barriers are being installed at the circulation desks, so that patrons and staff can interact safely.

“People can come and sit and read, relax and enjoy their time in the library while respecting public health regulations including physical distancing,” Comeau says. “We ask that if someone is feeling ill, that they avoid coming to the library. People can always call or email to ask that materials be sent to them in the mail”.

There will be no in-person programs or in-person events during the summer months and program room bookings are suspended until further notice. These activities and services will be reviewed as Nova Scotia Public Health continues to lift restrictions.

Beginning June 29, patrons will be able to resume normal borrowing activities, placing holds for in-branch pickup. Hours for the initial re-opening can be found online at www.westerncounties.ca. For further information, call toll-free 1-866-742-2486.

BEHIND THE SCENES

“We have to clean our (personal) work stations three times a day, says Karen Doucet, who is the acquisitions clerk in library headquarters.

“Every staff member gets their own kits,” says Office Manager Yvonne LeBlanc. Compiling the kits has been a challenge, LeBlanc says, because so many businesses and organizations are seeking the same products.

Library clerks Tenasitee Robbins and Karen Comeau have been busy, quarantining, sorting and processing all of the library holds and books-by-mail requests.

“It keeps us very busy,” says Robbins, who also does deliveries to the branches. Her schedule has been reduced to allow for the proper quarantining and cleaning of material coming into the branches.



Pictured above, clockwise from upper left, Office Manager Yvonne LeBlanc prepares the personal sanitation kits, headquarters clerk Karen Comeau works on processing books by mail, headquarters clerk Karen Doucet sanitizes her work station, and library clerk Tenasitee Robbins completes books-by-mail requests to send out to library users.



Board profile

Patricia Nickerson

Western Counties Regional Library's newest board member is hardly new to the board. Representing the Shelburne Library Building Committee, Patricia Nickerson served on the library board from November 1991 to 2008 as the representative of the Municipality of the District of Shelburne.

Now retired, Nickerson had a 29-year career as a municipal councillor with two terms as warden of the municipality. She brings a wealth of experience and a love of libraries to the board.

"I first served on the Shelburne Library Building Committee in 1975 – this was considered the safest place to put the first-ever female councillor," she says. She rejoined the building committee as a willing volunteer in 2019, and replaces the committee's Bernie Nickerson of the regional library board.

Born in Cambridge, England, she spent many hours in college libraries reading medieval documents. "I loved the feel and smell of ancient leather paper and inks," she says.

She says libraries are always part of her soul. With a Bachelor of Science in Home Economics from University of Leeds and three years of teaching experience in England, she emigrated to Nova Scotia in 1966 and taught home economics in Lockeport and Barrington.

She became a guidance counsellor at Shelburne Regional High School while earning a Bachelor of Arts and Bachelor of Education from Mount St. Vincent University.

She believes finding financial support for library buildings is the biggest challenge facing the board, especially when library facilities must upgrade and adapt to changing provincial regulations.

The future of public libraries, she says, will be to cooperate more with schools. She would like to see more local history and stories available to everyone, including digitizing the stories of Mi'kmaq elders and veterans before they are lost to us.

Pre-pandemic, Digby library refresh a hit with library users

The new-look Isaiah W. Wilson Memorial Library was a hit with library users when it re-opened at 84 Warwick St. on Tuesday, Feb. 4.

Last fall and early winter, the Digby branch library received a makeover which included new paint, carpeting, plug-ins for electronics, seating and layout. "We are getting so many positive comments about the update," Digby library clerk Cindy Hazel said prior to all library branches being shut down because of the pandemic in March. "The patrons and staff appreciate the changes."

There is a more comfortable café-style seating area with accessible outlets in convenient locations. The children's area is a defined space to allow children to move around freely, and the space is brighter. The library also created an area for teens.

Of the improvements, the designation of a children's and teen area were the most noticeable.

"Teens are hanging out in the teen section," said Deputy Library Director Joanne Head at the time. "Kids are going to the children's section."

Head said the staff was seeing more people pulling out their laptops and using the café tables.

Although there were still some finishing touches to complete, she said, "So far, so good."

There is space for hanging art, and when the branch re-opens fully, the branch will put out a call to artists to contact the library to arrange an exhibit.

Prior to the pandemic, more people were taking advantage of the program providing income tax filing



New shelving, carpet, paint, plug-ins and more are part of the big refresh that took place at the Isaiah W. Wilson Memorial Library this winter.

help for low-income earners, Head said, estimating over 70 people had made use of the service between March 1 and March 10.

The library refresh came about following a library survey a couple of years ago. The Digby Library Committee, consisting of the chief administrative officers of the Town of Digby and the Municipality of the District of Digby and Western Counties Regional Library Director, looked at what was possible to provide better service.

Library eliminates fines on overdue material

Western Counties Regional Library is eliminating fines for all library users who have overdue items.

"We want to remove barriers to reading," says Library Director Erin Comeau. "We want make the library as welcoming and as accessible as possible."

Effective June 29, 2020, fines will not be charged on late materials. This will not include fees associated with

lost or damaged items. In 2016, the library eliminated fines on items borrowed by children.

Existing fines on accounts are included in the elimination of fines. However, they will appear on the library user's account until the library can clean patron records. If patrons notice overdue fines on their account, they can contact the library to get them removed.

Summer Reading Club 2020 kicks off June 20

Western Counties Regional Library kicks off its 2020 Summer Reading Club on Saturday, June 20 in virtual fashion.

"We have a reading club for any age that includes perks such as draw prizes and reading rewards," says Joanne Head, deputy director at the regional library. "The reading club will look a lot different this summer because of the restrictions related to COVID-19."

This year's theme is Game On!. The club runs from Saturday, June 20 through Saturday, Aug. 22 at the regional library's 10 branches in Digby, Shelburne and Yarmouth counties.

"The idea is to keep everyone reading over the summer months while having fun," says Head. "It's wide open."

The Children's Summer Reading Club is for children up to the Grade 6 level. The teen club is for students entering Grades 6 or higher, up to age 18. The adult summer reading club is for people aged 18 and older.

"It is a family affair," says Head. "It doesn't matter what you're reading as long as you're engaged in reading."

There are various ways to register. Children are asked

to register online through the TD Children Summer Reading Club website at tdsummerreadingclub.ca/.

For those without access to the Internet, they can call 902-742-5040 from Monday to Friday between 8:30 a.m. and 4:30 p.m. to arrange to register and arrange to receive a reading log to track their reading. Teens and adults can sign up at westerncounties.ca/summer-reading-club-2020/.

The website allows people to register for the club and ask for a form to be mailed out to them. Once the library branches open, they can arrange to pick them up at the branch. People can also download their own reading log on that web page.

Although library branches will be closed to the public for the launch of the program, they will be re-opening on June 29 and 30. There will still be no in-person programs throughout the summer. Once the branches re-open, the staff will be creating grab-and-go-bags for the various virtual programs that will take place during the summer.

The bags will include various supplies and instructions to help children to participate in the virtual programs.