

Drayton library looking forward

The library has diversified services and virtual programming during the pandemic

Graham Long
Drayton Valley Free Press

Parents looking for assistance as they home educate their children over the coming weeks can find a lot of the resources they need through the Drayton Valley library.

While books are still at the heart of what the library offers, the library has adapted over the years to accommodate other methods of reading and of gathering information, says library director Doug Whistance-Smith.

Today the library offers a range that includes DVDs and e-books as well as serving as a portal to access an array of resources offering both education and entertainment. That includes a large number of online resources made available through the Yellowhead Regional Library of which Drayton Valley is a member.

"All that's needed to access those resources is a library card, and a library card is free," says Whistance-Smith.

The process for signing up to join the library is simple and straightforward and can be carried out online in a few minutes. Once it's complete the user will have access to everything the library has to offer, without having to wait to be issued with a physical membership card.

"We can keep your card here until you come in to get it, but as soon as you have that membership number you're able to access everything," he says.

The library does not stock textbooks as found in a school or university, but it does offer easy access to a vast range of support materials. As an example Whistance-Smith says he recently ordered \$400 worth of DVDs featuring Bill Nye the Science Guy.

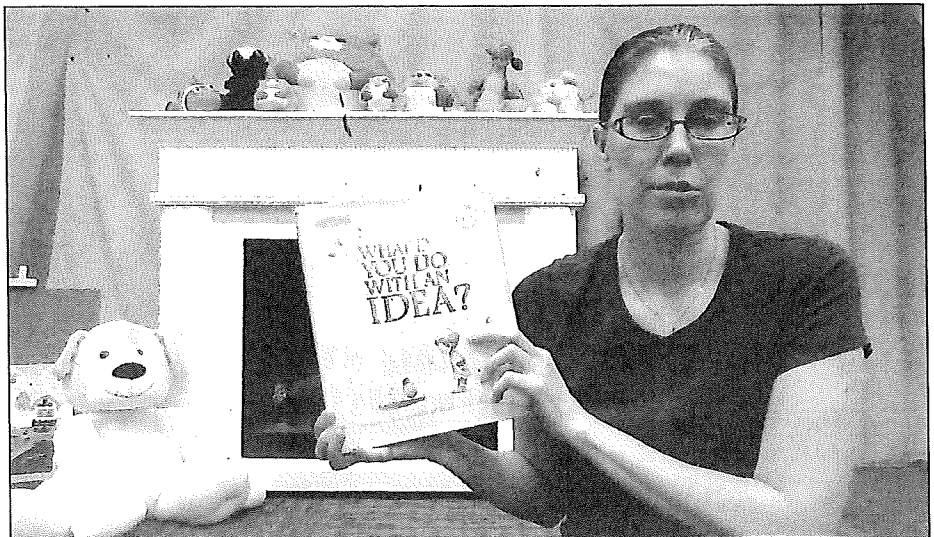
"All people have to do is let us know what they'd like to see for books, DVDs and other resources and we'll see what we can do to get that stuff in," he says. "If they're looking for something we don't have on our shelves and can't get from another library we'll go out and buy it if it's reasonable."

The Drayton Valley library was one of the first in the province to re-open once restrictions due to the Covid-19 pandemic were lifted. There are still a number of safety precautions in place to ensure the wellbeing of staff and patrons and the library has a supply of non-medical face masks available for users or the community at large.

While it brought with it a number of challenges, Whistance-Smith says the pandemic has helped the library to broaden its services and offer a higher level of community support.

"The Covid crucible has given us the incredible opportunity to innovate and diversify with services, virtual programs and expand electronic resources," he says.

E-books are becoming more popular during the pandemic, since they don't require any kind of physical contact. He's also noticed that people are



Librarian Verna Wicks delivering a virtual story telling experience on the library's YouTube channel.

Photo submitted

spending less time browsing the shelves, tending to search for what they need online and simply attend the library to pick it up.

Although the main branch has been open to the public since June, as of yet there is no date set for the reopening of the Rotary Children's Library, however any of the books or other resources are available through the main branch.

"Drayton Valley Library is committed to take every necessary and appropriate step to resume services and provide our communities with the swiftest possible return to normal. We're not back to 100 percent yet, but we're working towards that goal and we appreciate the understanding, support and patience of those who rely on the library," says

Whistance-Smith.

Looking ahead, ideally Whistance-Smith says he'd like to see both branches brought together under one roof. Several months ago a proposal was put forward that would see both the main library and the children's library move into a single space in downtown Drayton Valley. The library board has evaluated that proposal, along with one involving another possible site and made a recommendation


regarding its preferred location to the Town of Drayton Valley and Brazeau County.

"The library board would like to have everything under one roof together. It's the best cost-saving mechanism we could look for," says Whistance-Smith. "Ultimately the decision has to come from the municipalities. We'd like to get some forward momentum and a decision so we can begin planning."



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