

King Public Library brings the world to residents

By Mark Pavilons

Your King Township library card is your ticket to the world.

Technology has quickly changed the services offered by your local public library branch. And King is riding the wave, connecting residents to every service under the sun.

Despite being a small municipality, King's library team has leveraged many partnerships to bring the world to our doorstep. And it has paid off.

The library has launched its user-friendly, interactive catalogue (digital content management tool). This intuitive, fully integrated cloud-based system means it supports numerous e-book platforms and downloadable content, along with highly sought-after streaming video releases and DVDs.

It's the ultimate in one-stop shopping, or in the library's case, borrowing.

Sharon Bentley, deputy CEO of King's library services, said the new interface groups customer favourites together, making it easier to browse and acquire what you're looking for. From bestsellers to TV series, clicking on a hot button will make your selection much easier. Even advanced searches are made simpler.

Logging in using your library card, you can access bestselling books, new DVD releases, foreign films and e-books.

The book publishing industry is still grappling with the intricacies of electronic books, but Rona O'Banion, King's Library CEO, said libraries can actually be great support mechanisms for publishers and authors. Libraries, she said, aren't taking over the market, but rather they're bringing in a larger audience, which in turn helps everyone.

King has roughly 50,000 e-titles available and e-books are generally lent out for two weeks, just like a real book. Physically, the local library has more than 70,000 titles on the shelves and the inventory continues to grow. Some 3,281 DVDs are available and new releases remain high on people's wish lists.

It's all about meeting the consumers' growing demand and providing the service seamlessly.

'We're creating as many access points as possible, to make it as seamless as possible,' O'Banion observed. 'This new catalogue brings everything together.'

She admitted staff are still experimenting to see where public demand takes them, but they can respond quickly and easily. One e-book platform, referred to as Overdrive (Download Centre), is a province-wide consortium that enables libraries in southern Ontario to achieve economies of scale, which really packs a punch, all to the benefit of patrons.

Bentley monitors activity and sees which titles are in demand. They're very responsive to patron requests. Staff are also residents' best sources as they are advocates and have their fingers on the pulse of what's out there.

This is phase one of the library's current evolution. The next will be the launch of a revamped website.

O'Banion noted there are still some broadband Internet issues in parts of King, but as service improves so will access to the library's data bank.

It's all about partnerships, O'Banion noted, adding the more connections King can obtain, the greater the benefit to its users. And these partnerships are much more economical than simply going it alone.

While the role of libraries has shifted, O'Banion said 'print is not going anywhere.'

The world is yours to discover, and all you need is a King Township Public Library card. Check out the Library's website at kinglibrary.ca.