

Mohawk Valley Library System

Southern Adirondack Library System

Frequently Asked Questions regarding the Joint Automation Project

What is a [cooperative public library system](#)? The Mohawk Valley Library System (MVLS) and the Southern Adirondack Library System (SALS) are cooperative public library systems chartered by the NYS Board of Regents. There are 23 public library systems in NY. A cooperative public library system is an association created by agreement of the boards of chartered member libraries which maintain their autonomy. The NYS Education Department has approved both systems' plans of service. This is the mechanism for accepting any public funds. MVLS and SALS are each governed by a board of trustees elected by the systems' board members.

What is the chartered area served by the two systems? MVLS is chartered to serve Fulton, Montgomery, Schenectady, and Schoharie counties (14 libraries). SALS is chartered to serve Hamilton, Saratoga, Warren, and Washington Counties (34 libraries). Through the Joint Automation Project, material sharing is increased for all residents of the 8 counties. Coordinated delivery services are provided to all MVLS and SALS libraries.

What is free direct access? Free direct access requires all public libraries within a system to loan their materials to a library cardholder from any other library within that system. This policy, in accordance with [Commissioner's Regulations §90.3](#), aims to ensure the broadest possible access to information for all New Yorkers, regardless of circumstance. [MVLS](#) and [SALS](#) each has Free Direct Access plans. SALS is not required to provide access to libraries outside of its chartered-to-serve areas (four counties). Through POLARIS, materials are shared among both MVLS libraries and SALS libraries.

What is the [Joint Automation Project](#)? The Joint Automation Project is a [agreement](#) between MVLS and SALS to provide their member libraries access to an integrated automated system (POLARIS). The project staff assists member libraries with technical support, training, and resources and utilizes current and emerging technologies. The MVLS and SALS Board of Trustees exercise oversight over the Joint Automation Project. They must approve the annual budget (including fee structure and major policy changes such as adding or eliminating services).

What is the [Joint Automation Library Agreement](#)? Member libraries in MVLS and SALS must annually review, approve, and sign the agreement indicating their understanding and adherence to JA Policies.

Are SALS libraries required to provide interlibrary loans to Schenectady County residents? Under the current Joint Automation Agreement, the answer is yes. Once Schenectady County Public Library withdraws from the ILS, the answer is no. Each SALS member library can decide, based on its lending and card registration policies, whether it will provide services and materials to Schenectady County residents who physically visit the library.

Why is Schenectady County Public Library withdrawing from the Joint Automation Project? Per the joint automation agreement, any member library may withdraw from the shared ILS. The library administration cited using Schenectady County IT staff, more autonomy with POLARIS consortium settings, permissions, and cataloging.

What will happen with the JA fees? There will be no change in the JA fees for the members in FY 2024 and 2025, as they have been approved by JA Council and the two system boards.

What is the impact on delivery? The delivery system will remain in place until Schenectady County Public Library is completely removed from POLARIS (ILS). Delivery will change between the MVLS and SALS libraries. The number of items sent to MVLS from SALS is expected to be reduced.

How will materials be returned to the proper library? A transition team is formed to work out the details to ensure all materials are accounted for and returned to the owning library.

Are patron library records confidential? Yes, The Joint Automation Council of Mohawk Valley Library System and Southern Adirondack Library System support our nation's efforts to preserve and protect the many hard-fought freedoms we enjoy as Americans. We are responsible for protecting our patrons' privacy per New York State Law*. Therefore, we will do our utmost to uphold the privacy and confidentiality of patrons' free access to information while responding to legitimate security concerns.

Library records, as defined by NYS law 4509, should not be released or made available in any format to a federal agent, law enforcement officer or other person unless a court of competent jurisdiction has entered a court order in proper form.

No outside library staff can access patron data per New York State Law. Each library in the two systems is responsible for abiding by this law and policy.

SALS, MVLS, and the JAC feel it is violating JA policy, security issues, and a clear departure from library values to allow outside agencies access to the patron database. We believe no responsible, cooperative library system should help a library give a government entity, such as a county, direct access to library user records.

Who has access to these records? Library staff who have signed off on the necessary policies and have had the necessary training may access the patron database. It is a cooperative policy among the libraries in the eight counties. It is a shared patron database including patrons from 48 libraries and 2 systems in eight counties.

What will this mean for Overdrive? Overdrive will not change for the SALS libraries. At this point the specific impact on MVLS and SCPL Overdrive is unknown; but member library patrons should not see a significant change.

Is Schenectady County Public Library leaving MVLS? No

Will there be an announcement to share among the libraries and the public? The transition team is developing a joint statement.

How can Schenectady County residents borrow materials available through the 34 SALS (Southern Adirondack Library System) libraries?

At this time, March 2024, people can still borrow materials through the shared POLARIS catalog. At some point, Schenectady County public library card holders will no longer be able to place holds or requests on SALS library holdings through the POLARIS catalog.

Every public library is autonomous and has its own board-approved borrowing policies. It may be possible for people to physically visit the SALS libraries and borrow materials.

Check the information on each library website to learn how to get a library card based on the individual's primary residence. It will be up to individual SALS libraries whether they choose to continue and how they will serve SCPL (Schenectady County Public Library) patrons.

Interlibrary loan protocols and delivery of materials is still a work in progress.

Will that be different for MVLS Libraries? The only difference is that reciprocal borrowing is required within library systems. All MVLS libraries must provide onsite access to the residents of all other MVLS libraries. At some point, Schenectady County public library card holders will no longer be able to place holds or requests on MVLS library holdings through the POLARIS catalog.

Is there a timeline? The short answer is yes. Transitional meetings are scheduled beginning in April to meet the August 2024 deadline.

Will this document be updated? Yes, please send your questions