

MVLS Statement on Reciprocal Holds Between SCPL and Other MVLS & SALS Libraries
August 27, 2024

Schenectady County Public Library (SCPL) previously decided to leave the collaborative arrangement, called the Joint Automation Project (JA), that currently provides a shared catalog with the libraries in the four counties served by the Mohawk Valley Library System (MVLS) and the four counties served by the Southern Adirondack Library System (SALS). SCPL recently voted to extend the time frame of their withdrawal from early September to a target date of December 31, 2024.

This is a complex process, and we are working to minimize the impact on patrons and libraries throughout both systems.

As a result, reciprocal holds between SCPL and other MVLS and SALS libraries are being disabled as of August 31, 2024. A reciprocal hold occurs when a request for an item is placed for pickup at one library, and that request is filled by an item owned by another library.

A committee was established, and met in June, to make recommendations related to reciprocal holds. The committee included representatives from among the 48 libraries that make up SALS and MVLS, including representatives from SCPL. The committee recommended to end reciprocal holds four months before SCPL transitioned out of the shared catalog, and that recommendation was approved by both MVLS and SALS boards. Therefore, with SCPL recently deciding to make their transition by December 31, 2024, reciprocal holds are being disabled as of August 31, 2024.

We understand that disabling reciprocal holds is an inconvenience to patrons. However, it is a necessity. At any point in time, there are thousands of non-SCPL items borrowed by SCPL patrons, and thousands of SCPL items borrowed by non-SCPL patrons. By stopping reciprocal holds, library materials will have time to make their way back to the libraries that own them before the transition occurs.

This action will ensure that materials owned by MVLS and SALS libraries, including SCPL, are accurately accounted for and not lost in transit during SCPL's transition to a new catalog. It will ensure that patrons are not inadvertently charged fines or fees for missing materials that they returned. Libraries invest a great deal of time, effort, and finances into building and maintaining robust collections. Simply put, this action is necessary because it demonstrates the commitment of all of our libraries to be good stewards of the materials they loan out.

Depending on the specific item or situation, there may be other options available to library users to borrow a specific item, and we encourage library users to discuss such situations with staff at their local library.

This change to reciprocal holds will not have any impact or change on reciprocal borrowing that occurs between non-SCPL libraries.

MVLS will continue to work with all of the MVLS and SALS libraries, including SCPL, to make the transition process as smooth as possible and to support the residents in all eight counties.