

Service During COVID-19 - Our response to your feedback

Community Survey Results

Curbside Pickup

Most respondents were very pleased with the curbside pickup process and were grateful for the access to materials while remaining at home. We received a few comments from patrons wishing that we had reopened sooner and that they would have preferred to browse for their own materials.

We know our communities were eager to gain access to KFPL materials in May 2020. Before re-opening, the library needed to comply with local and provincial guidelines to ensure the health and safety of both staff and the public. Some items required for reopening (ex. PPE, Plexiglas for service desks) were in short supply at that time. Unfortunately, we could not reopen until our health and safety measures were in place. As well, during the provincially mandated closures, patrons were not allowed to browse the collections.

When we first opened for curbside pickup, we asked our patrons to call out to library staff when they arrived. Many of you gave us a better solution - a doorbell! We've installed doorbells at most of our urban branches making it easier for staff to know when you've arrived.

We know that some of our branches had challenging setups for curbside pickup. KFPL is continually working to improve our curbside pickup processes while prioritizing Public Health guidelines and the safety of our staff and patrons. We recognize that our branches weren't designed for curbside pickup and we will continue to investigate solutions to improve our service.

KFPL also recognizes that the constant changing of regulations could sometimes be confusing. Provincial regulations about how libraries are able to offer service have continually evolved during the pandemic. At certain points, we were not allowed to let people into the buildings. This included waiting in an entryway to be shielded from the elements. As regulations have allowed, we adapted curbside pickup locations and, where possible, allowed people to stand in entryways.

Notifications and Pickup Times

Several patrons requested that we hold their reservations longer and they appreciated that we'd extended our pickup time. Recognizing that many people are minimizing their

trips to once a week, KFPL extended the pickup time for reservations to 5 days in which the branch is open. If you need more time to pick up your items, please contact us and we will do our best to accommodate your request

Hours of Operation and Staffing

At some of our busier branches, we had the suggestion to have two people working at the same time. Early in the pandemic, this was a challenge because at that time we were trying to minimize the number of people handling each transaction. Staff were also careful to maintain the required 2m for physical distancing. Branch hours have changed at many of our branches due to the pandemic. For instance, when we reopened to the public, the Rideau Heights branch was only open 2 days per week. We added Saturday hours in March to better serve this community. KFPL is planning to review the hours of all 16 of our branches. We encourage you to participate. We need your feedback!

For some of our patrons, there seemed to be some confusion around the Christmas closure. We apologize that we did not communicate our Christmas closure message clearly. All branches were closed December 24th to 28th. When our branches are closed for a holiday, this information is communicated on our website, through posted notices at our branches, and through social media.

Better Process for Returns

As we continued in the pandemic, we learned a lot about what worked and what didn't.

During the uncertainty of virus transmission at the beginning of the pandemic, KFPL erred on the side of caution by requiring paper bags for pickup. As the world learned more about virus transmission, paper bags became an option for reservation pickup. KFPL chose paper bags as they break down more quickly than plastic bags and the scientific evidence indicated that the virus would not survive as long on paper as it would on plastic.

The Isabel Turner and Central branches present unique challenges in the current COVID environment. Both have drop boxes by the door where people are waiting which creates challenges with physical distancing. We are continually monitoring the curbside pickup at all of our branches and adapting when things don't work.

We do acknowledge that wait times for popular items are taking longer in the pandemic. As per provincial guidelines, we were required to quarantine our materials when returned. KFPL initially quarantined items for a minimum of 72 hours, and then decreased the quarantine time to 24 hours after more information about virus transmission became available. With a further update to provincial requirements, we completely removed the quarantine requirement which should improve wait times. We

acknowledge that sometimes items get missed in the return process. If that happens, please contact us so that we can clear items from your account. The courier that transports library materials to our 16 branches continues to run as it did pre-pandemic.

Customer Service Issues

We have heard from some of you that you've received less than ideal service at times. Customer service is a priority for KFPL. Our staff have done their best adapting to the constantly changing protocols and we recognize that this can be stressful for everyone. We want every patron to feel welcome when using our services, but sometimes that doesn't happen. We encourage you to bring it to our attention at the time it happens so we can address it with individual staff members. We also regularly engage staff in customer service training and initiatives.

Health and Safety Concerns

In the midst of a global pandemic, KFPL was very aware that health and safety was top of mind for our patrons and our staff. Our services follow the COVID-19 response framework provided by the Province of Ontario, the advice of the KFL&A Public Health and other health experts, and follows best practices within library and retail industries. KFPL's COVID-19 safety plan is available for review at all branches.

Here are some of the measures we have put in place:

- All staff members have Personal Protective Equipment (PPE).
- Intensive cleaning of branches has been done in advance, including cleaning of upholstery and special disinfecting of high touch surfaces.
- Regular cleaning and hand washing protocols are in place.
- Library branches have proper physical distancing protocols in place. Plexiglas is in place in certain locations where physical distancing protocols cannot be maintained.
- When available, computer workstations are two metres apart to ensure physical distancing measures.
- According to provincial directives and to keep you safe, we are monitoring occupancy capacity at our branches and limiting the number of people inside.

When libraries have been ordered closed by the province, we have offered warming/cooling centres at select branches. Before admitting anyone, we are required to ask the screening questions each time a person enters the building. We know that for those who frequent the branch, these questions can be repetitive. However, KFPL is

required to follow the regulations under the public health order which includes screening questions, contact tracing information, ensuring physical distancing, and mask compliance.

Accessibility

A few respondents commented on the accessibility of our branches. Renovating an existing building presents a number of challenges. The accessible route for the Central Branch is the ramp on the west side of the building (near Bagot Street). The ramp meets the City of Kingston Facilities Accessible Design Standards (FADS) and the Ontario Building Code with a 1:25 or 4% slope. We were not able to safely modify the covered walkway off the parking to meet FADS, but it does comply with the Ontario Building Code, which requires a 1:12, or 8.33% slope. We know it is not ideal, but it was the best we could do within the constraints of the site.

Programming

Many of you let us know how much you missed in-person programming and wanted it to resume as soon as possible. We know you are eager to see us again!

KFPL understands the value of in-person programming to reduce isolation and build community, along with building literacy, encouraging lifelong learning, and more. We carefully considered offering in-person programming when it would have been possible under the provincial emergency orders, but decided we would not move forward for a few reasons. All of our branches, when open, were strictly limited in capacity, which meant that allowing room rentals or offering group programs would have restricted access to other library services. The space available within our branches, when factoring in a 2 metre separation between individuals and family groups, would have meant serving only a small number of people with programming and take staff resources away from creating the recorded programs that were able to reach hundreds. The pandemic situation shifts regularly and without warning, making it more efficient to continue virtual programs rather than shifting back and forth between formats.

As outdoor gathering restrictions permitted, we planned outdoor children's storytimes in parks and at Springer Market Square through the summer, and moved some of our adult programming outdoors. Participation is limited and registration is required to make sure we align with any limits set by KFLA Public Health and provincial emergency orders. Details are in our event calendar and will be updated as needed.

Patrons have really appreciated the effort our staff have put into the programs on our YouTube Channel and want to share them with others. People who live outside of Kingston Frontenac are welcome to enjoy the programs on our YouTube channel, and to subscribe to our email-based storytimes. Please feel free to pass any of those along to friends and family around the globe! We also heard that our staff provided valued

support to patrons who needed to learn how Zoom and other virtual services worked – we were happy to help and thank you for participating.

We did receive some feedback about the sound and video quality of some of our programs. Our earlier programs were created with whatever tech the library and our staff had close to hand, which meant that the audio-video quality was inconsistent and not in keeping with our usual high standards for programs. Over the past year we have been purchasing new equipment, including digital cameras, lighting and microphones to improve both quality and accessibility.

There was also some confusion about why earlier recorded programs were no longer available for viewing. Some of our earlier program content was removed from YouTube due to copyright restrictions put in place by various publishing companies. Permissions for “performance” of books have changed over time, and it is determined by each publisher separately. We are sorry you are missing some favourites, but hope you continue to enjoy the new programs we create.

KFPL received a question about staff-led crafting activities. Our Central Branch features the “Create Space” – an area with free equipment to support a variety of creative projects. Patrons can use 3D printers, Cricut makers, sewing machines, button-makers, photo and video digitizers, and more. This space is supported through programming, and prior to the pandemic those programs provided hands-on support. Community surveys related to the space, and to library programming, consistently ranked the arts and crafting highly. We developed our programs in response to that feedback, and also launched a Create newsletter that explores a wide range of creative endeavours and connects patrons to resources to help pursue new skills in these areas.

We also received a request for more French language programming for adults. We appreciate your feedback. We will keep this in mind when planning our guest speaker and visiting author series for fall 2021. Historically, it has been challenging to draw audiences to French-language programs for adult audiences.

KFPL received a request to offer workshops and events targeted to the homeschooling community, and a comment from a teacher who was searching for “content and inspiration for use in the classroom and/or online.”

Homeschooling families and school classes are welcome to participate in all of our virtual programs for children. We recommend our YouTube channel and subscription-based storytimes! Homeschooling families will also want to keep an eye out for educational take-home kits. Over the past year we have offered several STEM-focused kits as well as arts and crafts. These are often tied to the school systems’ PA Day calendar.

We also heard that some patrons really value the opportunity to participate online and would like to see that continue. One of the silver linings of shifting to virtual programs was providing opportunities for people to participate from across our service area without having to travel to a specific community or branch. We were also able to bring in guest speakers and authors to speak with you from across the country. Our

programming team is already discussing how we might offer a blend of programming formats, including hybrid programs that offer both in-person and virtual participation once the pandemic ends.

Loan Periods and Reserving Materials

A few comments were submitted regarding one week loan periods for certain items. The Library has shorter loan periods for items that are more in demand such as DVDs, video games, or magazines. This allows us to ensure that they are returned quickly and can then go to the next patron on the list. If items are not on hold by other patrons, they can be renewed up to three times. Recognizing that it may be challenging for some patrons to return items on time, especially during the pandemic, the Library Board made the decision to eliminate library fines as of January 2021. If patrons are a few days late returning, they don't have to worry about library fines. For online options of movies, KFPL subscribes to Kanopy and Hoopla, and Flipster offers numerous digital magazine titles.

Sometimes it seems that a patron's position in the holds queue may change. The reservation queue provides an estimate of a patron's position in line for an item. There are a number of factors that may affect this:

- **Pause Reservations** – This allows patrons to place an item on hold and then pause it for a period time or indefinitely. They will keep their position in line (not displayed in the reservations queue) but will not show up until they reactivate the hold.
- **Item Location** – If an item is returned to a rural branch it would get captured for the next person in line but could take over a week to travel to another branch and be processed there.
- **Lost/Deleted Items** – If an item has been lost and removed from the collection, it will decrease the number of copies available to everyone in the reservation queue.

In-Branch Experience

Some concerns were raised regarding the length of time patrons had to use the self-checkout machines at some of our branches. We increased the countdown on these machines by a few seconds to better accommodate large checkouts. We have also heard comments where those using self-check machines may want to switch between a receipt that is printed or email. To minimize the amount patrons need to touch the self-check units, an email is sent by default to those patrons with an email address on their account.

We received comments specifically on the collection, holds shelf, and signage at the Isabel Turner Branch. The collection was redistributed to maximize the space and ensure ease of access to the collection. We have updated our signage to ensure that patrons can find what they are looking for and staff are always happy to provide assistance. We recognize that space for holds has been an ongoing challenge. We have added shelving and changed the lines at the service desk to increase space and improve flow for physical distancing. We will continue to make changes as needed.

Digital Collections

KFPL's digital collections have been very popular during the pandemic. We're so happy that you love our digital services like Kanopy and Hoopla. A common question regarding these two popular services was about why we set monthly limits. These two services have a per checkout fee. Limits are placed to assist KFPL in managing the budget.

Our decision to move to cloudLibrary was one that we considered very carefully. We evaluated many factors including budget and the increased demand for titles from our patrons. In the end, the overriding issue was the increased breadth of the collection. By moving to cloudLibrary, we are joining Ontario's cloudLink consortium which includes over 25 public libraries. We gained access to over 100,000 titles from the shared collection compared to about 10,000 titles we had in OverDrive. In short, we receive access to more titles for the money we are spending.

KFPL had been planning to migrate to cloudLibrary before the pandemic hit. We expedited the implementation to give our patrons access to more titles while they were staying at home. We recognize that there have been challenges with the cloudLibrary interface and are continuing to work closely with cloudLibrary to address these challenges.

Tech Support

Many patrons missed our Tech Tutors during the lockdowns! We appreciate the difficulty of not being able to have an in-person session regarding technology. This is why Tech Tutors have been so valued. Along with our decision to suspend in-person programming, KFPL also decided to suspend the Tech Tutor program when the pandemic began. Since then, we have created YouTube resources to assist our patrons with [Ancestry](#) and [cloudLibrary](#). We will continue to explore other online training options, and our staff are ready to provide assistance by telephone until we are able to welcome you back into our buildings..

Website Issues

We heard from you that our website doesn't always work well for you. KFPL is looking at a website redesign in the near future. Patrons are encouraged to contact the Library directly for staff assistance on dealing with technology challenges.

Library Collections

The Library has a robust [collection development policy](#) in place. We make every effort to meet the needs of the community in our selection of materials for the collection. We have several electronic platforms for patrons to access eBooks, eAudiobooks, music, newspapers, digital magazines and movies including cloudLibrary, Flipster, Hoopla, Pressreader, and more. We switched to cloudLibrary from OverDrive in 2020 which allowed us to access eBook collections from other libraries in Ontario, increasing our digital collection.

If patrons are unable to find what they are looking for in our physical collection, they can suggest up to three titles per month for us to purchase. In addition, we were pleased to bring back our interlibrary loans service in March 2021 which allows patrons to request to borrow physical items from other libraries in Ontario. To suggest a title in cloudLibrary, one can follow the instructions on our cloudLibrary page: <https://www.kfpl.ca/ebooks-eaudiobooks-and-digital-collections/cloudlibrary>

When everything shutdown in March 2020, many publishing houses also shut down. When services resumed, there were delays in the publishing industry due to the backlog. KFPL is ordering again with the same frequency, however due to the shutdown, anticipated publishing dates were pushed back.

Many people missed browsing the collections when we are in curbside pickup, so KFPL created Mystery Packs! With this service, you can request a pack of randomly assigned items in broad categories. Based on your feedback, we recently updated the categories and added a Comment fields for the Mystery Packs.

[The Friends of the Library book sale](#) is a wonderful opportunity for patrons to donate books and help raise money to enhance services, materials and equipment not provided by public funding. The Library's collections budget is used to purchase new materials that fit within the criteria of the collection development policy.

Communication from KFPL

We've recently redesigned our newsletters to better serve our patrons, and that includes creating a standard template. We've received positive feedback! There are now three newsletters – Connect (general information for adult and teen audiences), Grow (for children and families) and Create (resources on creative endeavours for all ages). All

will include a blend of recommended library materials, upcoming programs and community news.

KFPL acknowledges that the pandemic has been a stressful time for everyone.

The Kingston Frontenac Public Library Board was pleased to eliminate fines in January 2021 as a way to provide greater library access and alleviate worries about financial penalties. During lockdown periods, we have encouraged patrons to combine trips to the library to pick up items with essential trips and not have to worry about being a few extra days late. This also helps with the mandatory quarantine period as set out by Public Health. Items do not immediately come off a patron's card once returned but patrons can rest assured that they won't be charged.

We have an automated messaging system in place to ensure that, even though we are fine-free, we still get our materials back in a timely fashion so that they can be ready for other patrons who are waiting for them. Our automated messages are sent out as follows:

- A courtesy reminder notice is sent three days before material is due, if we have an email address attached to the library card.
- Two notices are sent if items have not been returned, one at eight days, and the next at 18 days overdue.
- When items are 21 days overdue, the account is blocked until those items are returned.
- The material is marked as lost after 45 days, and a replacement invoice is placed on the library account. If the amount owing is \$20 or more, the library account is blocked.

We encourage patrons to contact the Library if they believe the notice was sent in error, and ask that people use email as their primary method of receiving communication from the Library for pickup and overdue notices. We recognize that not every patron has access to email, so our phone messaging system is an alternate method patrons can use. While it works for most patrons, if there is a technology issue, we welcome patrons to contact the Library so we can work with them to solve it.

General

We recognize the importance of physical books, staff, and spaces and are doing everything we can to serve our community in a time when we can't always serve them in person. Our digital resources such as cloudLibrary and Hoopla complement our physical collection, which is still available through curbside pickup during periods of lockdown. Our virtual programming has offered patrons a chance to continue to engage with staff and community members safely during the pandemic. We look forward to a

future when our community will be able to safely use library spaces once again for studying, connecting with others, and browsing our physical collections.

When the pandemic is over, we look forward to seeing our patrons in person – meeting up with friends, working collaboratively at our tables, and browsing our collection. In the meantime, we are providing opportunities for patrons to socialize virtually through online programs such as book chats, author events, and more!

Library spaces serve all members of the community. We don't allow animals other than service animals because there may be those who fear dogs, have allergies, or do not want to be near dogs due to cultural and/or religious beliefs. We encourage patrons to leave their dogs at home if they are planning to visit the branch for an extended period of time.