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Monday, April 23, 2018

Big Picture • Local Focus \$1.50

PADDOCK PUBLICATIONS • 146TH YEAR • NO. 191

Nearly 8 million more items

19 libraries in Kane, DuPage counties join cooperative with 78 other libraries

By SUSAN SARKAUSKAS

Bookworms at 19 public, private and school libraries in Kane and DuPage counties are going to be able to really lengthen their reading lists come May 1. That's when they'll have access to a minimum of 7,924,458 more items

as their libraries join 78 others in a much-larger suburban library consortium. All told, patrons in participating libraries will have 9.84 million things to choose from.

Librarians are almost giddy with anticipation about the merger of their two consortia with a group called SWAN.

"We will be providing a much higher level of service, at the same or maybe less cost," Batavia Library Director George Scheetz said.

Who's involved

Illinois library consortia are fond

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The main room of the Kaneville Public Library houses the adult and teen collections. On May 1, the library will be part of a larger consortium that will give its patrons access to many more materials.

Libraries: Merger will cause some disruption over the next 2 weeks

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of acronyms, at least in part because their full names don't roll right off the tongue. SWAN, based in Westmont, stands for System Wide Automated Network; LINC is the Library Integrated Network Consortium, based in St. Charles; and MAGIC is Multitype Automation Group in Cooperation, based in Geneva.

In the groups, members pool efforts in purchasing and cataloging materials; centralizing software services; information technology support and training; consulting and tutorials; managing circulation accounts; and programming. Important, to be sure, but wonky.

With the coming change, what patrons really will notice is the availability of more stuff from more places, including specialized libraries such as those of Brookfield Zoo and Morton Arboretum (now in SWAN) or the Theosophical



SUSAN SARKAUSKAS/ssarkauskas@dailyherald.com Josiah Fleming of Sugar Grove says he "can't wait to see" all the items he soon will have access to, as the Sugar Grove Library will become part of a larger consortium May 1.

Society and the National University of Health Sciences (now in MAGIC.)

"I'm kind of looking forward to a bunch of different options," said Josiah Fleming of Sugar Grove, a 21-year-old college student. "I can't wait to

see it." Fleming, who has moved eight times, said one of the first things he looks for in town is a library. He was thrilled when he found the Sugar Grove Library was just a three-minute walk from his house. He uses the library computers to take online classes from Liberty University, and having access to more materials is important to him.

Benefits

It's an especially good deal for the roughly 1,300 residents of the Kaneville Library District in Kane County. The library, which has about 24,000 items, operates on a budget of about \$80,000 a year.

"It will increase the number of items available exponentially," Director Carla Limbaugh said.

Nearby Sugar Grove Library expects it will still borrow more materials from other libraries than it sends out, Director Shannon Halikias

said. "We do not really have the resources to be a stand-alone library," Halikias said. An inability to increase its operating property taxes has crimped the library's ability to add materials over the past decade. It is lacking in non-fiction and reference materials, Halikias said, which are important to local school and community-college students. "A (consortium) catalog is a door to the world of knowledge," she said of the expanded offerings.

But bigger libraries, such as Batavia's, sometimes also borrow more than they send, Scheetz said. A SWAN report from 2016 said its libraries with higher average circulation borrowed, on average, 68 percent more materials than they lent.

The merger was proposed in July 2015 and member libraries voted on it in 2017.

Implementation

The merger will cause some

disruption over the next two weeks as the go-live date approaches.

To make it easier, the libraries are not adding new materials to their catalogs from April 18 to May 1.

During the week of April 28, you can check out materials, but the activity won't be immediately reflected in your online accounts. Librarians also are asking people to not return books that week (fines will be forgiven).

Some patrons may have to change their library account passwords. Officials also suggest you add .swanlibraries.net to your list of allowed email senders to receive account notifications. Those who use the Shoutbomb app to receive alerts about pickups and overdue books will have to pick another way to receive alerts.

The libraries have had a little fun promoting the merger. Glen Ellyn advertised it as "Spreading Our Wings With SWAN." A big inflated swan

is making the rounds of the libraries involved, with photos showing up on Twitter. The St. Charles Public Library tied it to the roof of a van for the St. Patrick's Day Parade. Batavia gave out bookmarks.

"We want to let people know something good is coming," Scheetz said.

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