

'Targeting more rural areas': Clarington launches new book locker service in Hampton

Automated book locker brings library services to rural residents

Rural Clarington residents can now access library services easier with a new book locker at the Darlington Sports Centre.



Monika Machacek, CEO of the Clarington Public Library, unveils the organization's first book locker. An automated library service now available at the Darlington Sports Centre in Hampton.

Darlington Sports Centre isn't just a sports hub anymore.

The Hampton arena is now home to Clarington's first book locker, an automated book vending machine offering a variety of top book picks from the Clarington Public Library.

"This is a natural place for us to be," said Monika Machacek, CEO of Clarington Library, Museums and Archives (CLMA), of the location of the book locker at Darlington.

"Families gather here, sometimes spending hours watching their kids compete," she said, noting families can grab a kids book from the locker to entertain children while waiting or watching siblings play, or choose books to take home for later.

"Families are only getting busier and the cost of living is getting higher — families are looking for ways to save and putting a book locker here creates a hub that's in line of sight for community members," she said. "Equitable access to literary materials is essential."

Residents can use the locker by swiping their library card and entering their pin, which is the last four digits of their phone number, which will allow the locker to open. From there, they just pick out the materials they want and close the door. The machine will automatically record what has been taken from the shelves using RFID technology and record the loan on the library card.

The book locker hub also includes a book return so residents can bring their books back at the same location.

“We don’t have a lot of services in rural areas and there isn’t a lot of areas to put those services,” Machacek said of the locker. “Clarington is so large and, outside of our urban areas, the population is dispersed in more rural and northern hamlets, so we really want to be targeting more rural areas.”

Clarington Mayor Adrian Foster praised the new book locker during an unveiling event on May 7.

“You constantly pull off amazing things and amazing new ways to provide services,” Foster said of the library. “You do more with less funding than any other library in Durham.”

Plans are already underway to add more book lockers, including one already approved for the future South Bowmanville Recreation Centre, and library staff say they will continue to look at ways to reach more rural communities.

“Over the past year, we’ve been doing community mapping, looking at hot zones in terms of library users,” said Alison Dee, director of strategy and innovation for CLMA.

“There are so many different pockets of community that aren’t able to be served with brick and mortar,” she said. “We’re still looking at how we can provide moving or targeted services.”

The book locker is available at the Darlington Sports Centre during regular business hours. For more information on library services and hours, visit www.cplma.ca.



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Officials and library staff joined Clarington Mayor Adrian Foster, centre left, and Clarington Public Library CEO Monika Machacek, centre right, celebrate the opening of the organization's first book locker, an automated library service now available at the Darlington Sports Centre in Hampton.