What is a Smart Library?

Answers to frequently asked questions about the changes taking place in your library

Smart library technology has been installed in 14 Leicestershire libraries. This technology enables us to keep libraries open, extend the opening hours and encourage more community use of library buildings. A consultation on the Communities and Wellbeing Strategy showed respondents were supportive of the introduction of self-access technology as a new way of delivering library services.

This booklet is designed to provide some answers to questions you may have about how this will work at your library.

What is a smart library?

A library fitted with 'Smart Library' technology is able to be open to library users without being staffed. The technology enables remote control of library buildings, including automatic doors, lighting, self-service kiosks and public computers. This allows us to significantly extend library opening hours, so more people can use the library at times that is convenient for them.

How does it work?

Library members can have their library card activated for use when the library is in self-access (Smart Library) mode. A short induction will be required before your library card is activated. This induction will provide all the details you need on how the system works and how to use the Smart Library safely and responsibly.

The induction will be available in a number of ways – in person at the library whilst the library is staffed, or as part of a dedicated induction session in the evening. We are also intending to introduce an online induction in the near future.

To access a Smart Library, you scan your library card at the door and enter your PIN. The door will then open and you can use the library in the normal way. 15 minutes before closure audio loud speaker announcements will begin warning that the library is due to close and the public computers will switch off 10 minutes before closure. Lights will go out once the library is closed.

What can I do in a smart library?

During Smart library hours you can:

- Borrow, return and renew library items and pay charges using the self-service kiosks.

- Collect reserved items that are awaiting collection at the reservation collection point and borrow them using the self-service kiosks.

- Use the public PCs and free library WiFi

- Print from the public PCs, photocopy and scan documents.

- Access and browse the public library catalogue on public PCs

- Meet as a group free of charge in the open library space

- Hire a meeting room (pre booking required)

What can't I do in a smart library?

During Smart library hours you won't be able to:

- Make general enquiries and access staff support including help to use library facilities such as public computers, self-service kiosks and photocopiers.

- Make changes to your personal library membership details

- Access public toilets unless you have a radar key. Radar keys enable access to locked disabled toilets for people with a disability.

- Access meeting rooms unless you have pre booked them

- Access local studies reference collections.

- Hire DVDs

Services that are not available during Library Plus hours can still be accessed during staffed opening times.

Who can access the library when it's in smart mode?

People aged 16 and over are eligible for smart library membership, unless they have been barred from using the library or are on a final warning. Young people under the age of 16 can still access the library during smart hours but they will need to be accompanied by a parent or guardian over the age of 18.

Does the introduction of smart library technology mean that the library will be open for 24 hours?

No, currently the technology does not allow us to do this. It is the intention at the moment to allow access no later than 9.30pm. Currently most libraries close at 5 or 6pm.

What if I need staff support to use the library?

We recognise that there are customers who won't be able to use the library in smart mode or who require the support of our staff in order to make full use of library facilities.   We will therefore make sure that customers can still access staff support most days of the week.   We will also plan the staffed hours so that when one library is in smart mode, a library nearby is being staffed.

What about my safety when I'm in the library and there are no staff there?

For your safety and security, all smart libraries will be monitored by CCTV during smart hours.

 In addition, a phone will be on the library counter with the numbers available displayed next to it. This will include 999 and the County Council property help desk in case of any problems with the library building.

There will also be a first aid box provided for any minor injuries.

During the induction you will be made aware of emergency evacuation procedures and the location of emergency exits. All libraries will be fitted with fire alarms that will both sound and flash in the event of a fire.

What if I get locked in the library?

At closing time the machines and lights are automatically switched off, the door is locked and the intruder alarm is set. If anybody remains in the building after closing time, the alarm will be activated and security staff will be alerted. Anybody in the building will be unable to leave until security staff arrive.

Will the library still hold events like author talks in the evenings?

Yes - the smart library system is very flexible and will enable us to open up the library for evening events in the usual way. Events can also take place during the allocated staffed hours during the day.

Can I still hire a library room or have a meeting in the library?

Yes in most cases room hire is still possible during smart library hours; if you speak to library staff they will be able to discuss this with you. We view the library as an important community space and would encourage groups to meet in the public area, both in smart library and staffed hours. Free space to hold meetings (for instance for book / craft or support groups) is often difficult to find in a community so we would like to encourage local residents to take advantage of the opportunity that extended opening hours will bring. Please contact your library for further details.

I am a student with the adult learning service, but my class is held in the library – how will this affect me?

Leicestershire Adult Learning Service holds many classes in our libraries and we are in discussion with them about how classes will be run during smart library mode. We do not foresee that this will present any major problems as we can adjust smart library times to reflect when the building needs to be open. If your class will be taking place in a library you will be required to register with the smart library service. Details of this process will be shared at the time of your enrolment. If you have any queries about how you will be affected please speak to your tutor.

Has this technology been used anywhere else in the country?

Smart access was first introduced in Denmark some years ago and many of their

libraries now use it. In the UK, a lot of public library authorities are starting to introduce smart technology, for instance in Peterborough all ten of their libraries have had smart libraries for a number of years now. Managers from Leicestershire have visited a couple of authorities to learn from their experiences in preparation for the work in Leicestershire.

Has the technology been tested anywhere in Leicestershire?

Yes, Syston library had the technology fitted in March 2017 and has been operating as a smart library ever since. A user survey was conducted after a 3 month trial of the system which revealed a generally positive response and informed the decision to roll out the system across a further 13 libraries.

How do I register for smart library membership?

If you are already a member of the library you can go into your library during staffed hours to request an induction, or call the library to find out when an induction session is taking place. If you are not a library member you will need to join the library first. You can do this in the library during staffed hours, or visit our website www.leicestershire.gov.uk/smart-libraries

What if I have further unanswered questions?

If you have a question or questions that we haven't addressed in this leaflet, please contact smartlibraries@leics.gov.uk

If you need this information in an alternative version or language please contact libraries@leics.gov.uk or call your local library'