



## A Public Library

In a public library, most of the books are fiction. Non-fiction tends to be general, with emphasis placed on biography, history and hobbies (there are always a lot of books on cooking and fixing cars). Public libraries – like Calgary Public Library - cover the area by having a few large libraries and several smaller branches. Often the smaller ones will draw their non-fiction material from the main branch, when a patron asks for it (this is called “inter branch loan”). It is also common to find videos and music. Each branch holds a copy – sometimes more than one copy - of a popular book. Electronic database are common, tending towards general interest, hobbies and those designed to assist with tasks such as students’ homework, hobbies and history.

Most public libraries use “integrated library systems”. These systems can be accessed from computers inside or outside of the library and let patrons find out whether the library has a particular book, whether it is on loan and whether they can reserve it to use later. Public libraries will sometimes borrow books from other library systems, but this isn’t common. An exception is the TAL system in Alberta, where a patron can search all the public libraries in Alberta from home and request that a book is loaned to him/her from a library in another town (this is called “inter library loan”). However, only a limited amount of material is available for inter library loan and music and videos almost never are.

Expert assistance from the staff is limited. There are qualified Librarians on the staff, but not many. In a smaller branch, the only qualified librarian also manages the library. Sometimes the branch is too small to employ a qualified librarian and patrons will be sent to a bigger branch for assistance. The main reason for a public library is to provide fiction books for loan.

In any library, books are put in a specific order on the shelf, to make it easier to find them. In a public library, fiction is often shelved according to the last name of the author. For non-fiction, a number system called “Dewey Decimal Classification” is used. All books are given a number according to the subject and put on the shelf in numerical order, so a patron can find all books on a subject close to each other. For example, all books on Canadian history will start with the number “951”. Most school libraries (including Rundle College) use the same methods.