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Sunshine Library Card accesses all libraries

DAVE ROSSMAN DROSSMAN@TRIBUNE.COM

Palm Beach County library users now have expanded options, thanks to a new program. Florida Atlantic University Libraries are among five in the county to implement the Sunshine Library Card, which allows cardholders to access collections of other participating libraries.

Palm Beach Community College, the Palm Beach County School District, Palm Beach County and the city of West Palm Beach are also on board, and the goal is to break down barriers.

"The program is modeled after an existing collaboration between 23 academic libraries, but a col-

laboration of this sort is rare," said Tom Sloan, Southeast Florida Library Information Network executive director. "It exists in a few states, but this is the first program of this nature in Florida."

SFLIN facilitated the discussions and agreements between the participating institutions, and Sloan said that streamlining the process is a unique challenge.

"The loan time at public libraries is typically shorter than an academic library because it is often popular material, and academic loan times are longer because of the research component," Sloan said. "This card will give users the op-

portunity to move between different types of libraries seamlessly."

FAU dean of libraries Dr. William Miller said they were happy to open the doors to the local community.

"We have always welcomed the public to use the library, but they were unable to check items out," he said. "This new program will not affect our students or faculty, and we do not anticipate any complications."

Users will be able to check out books and other materials, but certain features will still only be accessible by those affiliated with the university.

"There are academic

agreements, and universities are linked into certain databases, and those can only be utilized by students or faculty," Sloan said.

Card users must be at least 16 years old with a valid library card from a participating library or an AP or international baccalaureate high school student.

"There are discussions under way concerning other libraries joining the program, but we want to gauge community response," Sloan said. "We plan to re-evaluate the program after one year, and we will go from there."

Call 877-733-5460 or visit www.seflin.org and click on Sunshine Library Card.