



2023 ANNUAL REPORT



RED DEER
PUBLIC LIBRARY
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A MESSAGE FROM OUR BOARD CHAIR & CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

2023 marked the 109th year of operation – and another remarkable chapter – for Red Deer Public Library. Looking back, we celebrate our passionate staff, committed Library Board Members, amazing volunteers, funders, and partners who served a vibrant community of over 26,000 card-carrying members as well as the many visitors who use the library without a library card.

Programs in all of our branches were well-attended, there were record numbers of learners and tutors working together, and people of all ages found materials to entertain, enrich, and inform.

Building on the success of our pop-up branch at the Bower Mall, we embraced valuable lessons learned, repurposed furnishings, and express much gratitude to the Friends of RDPL who generously backed our newest Collicutt Branch. We have been delighted to see people picking up holds early and late in the day and reading with children while waiting for older kids to finish their sporting activities. The Collicutt Centre staff have been as supportive and encouraging as the Dawe Centre staff have always been.

In 2023, your library offered programs and services to welcome new residents, from newcomers in our Adult Literacy program to newly born babies enjoying our Baby Fun programs. For long time library patrons not able to get to a library branch, we work with great volunteers to provide personalized service to their homes.

Our online spaces have been busy with people using our books, audio books, movies, music, and learning databases to enrich their lives wherever they may be. Our physical spaces enjoyed just shy of half a million visits with people not just picking up books, but enjoying library programs, having meetings, brushing up resumes, applying for jobs, finding rental housing, connecting with family, and learning new things.

This annual report will detail the many ways that library staff members supported the Library Board's vision as set out in the Plan of Service, specifically focusing on how library staff met the SMART goals set out in the 2023 Action Plan.

We eagerly await what the staff will accomplish with their 2024 SMART goals which you will find in next year's Annual Report!



Shelley Odishaw
RDPL Board Chair

A handwritten signature in grey ink that reads "S Odishaw".



Shelley Ross
RDPL CEO

A handwritten signature in grey ink that reads "Shelley".

2023 BOARD MEMBERS

- Shelley Odishaw, Chair
- Councillor Dianne Wyntjes
- Nancy Batty
- Gabriel Beck
- Valdene Callin
- Jerry Moore
- David Murphy
- Brian Quigg
- Sabrina Samuel
- Laura Thevenaz



VISION

Provide a welcoming environment where everyone will discover, share, develop, and value curiosity.

MISSION

Enrich lives by promoting literacy and providing access to knowledge and culture.

VALUES

Our core values are:

- Intellectual Freedom
- Literacy
- Connection
- Inclusion

2023 | BY THE NUMBERS

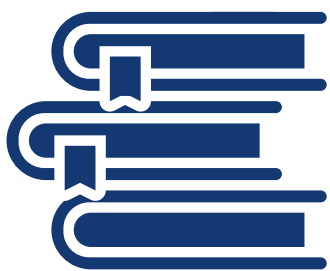


In 2023, we had
408,209 &
library visitors



26,035

people have a Red Deer
Public Library card!



710,839

items were checked out!

*e-content loans = 18.7% of our total circulation!

including
132,676
downloads of
e-Content

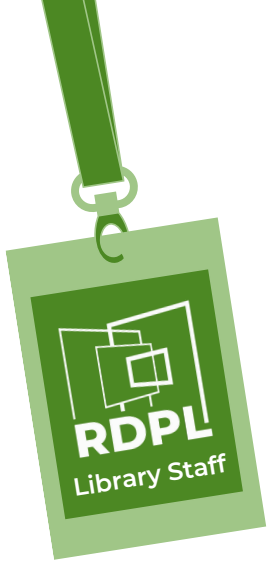


We offered
1,672
library programs

which were enjoyed by

28,843
people in total!





Our service is delivered by

67 & 272

dedicated staff

amazing volunteers!



We answered:

1,690 & 9,424

reference questions

technology questions



Our Wi-Fi had **110,017** connections!

The library added

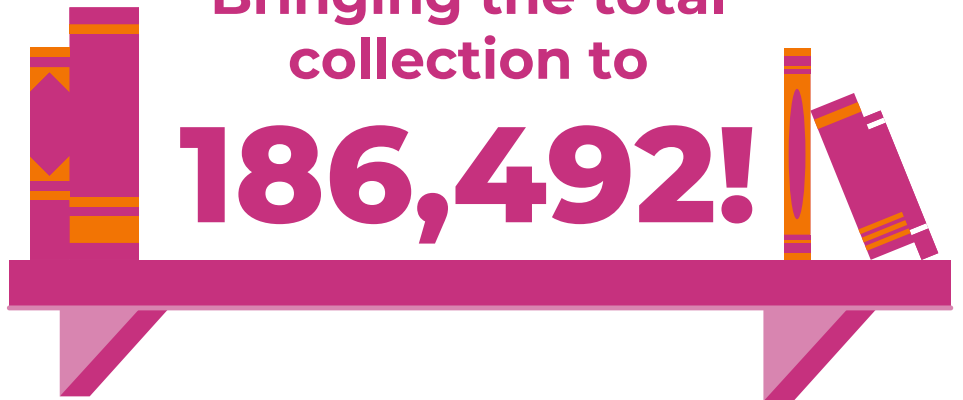
16,473

new items last year



Bringing the total collection to

186,492!



We brought in **5,154 items** from other libraries!



And lent our items to other libraries **4,538 times**

2023 TOP TITLES

These were our most borrowed titles in 2023!

– Adult Fiction –



– Adult Non-fiction –



– Young Adult Books –



– Children's Books –



174

children signed up for the
1000 Books Before Kindergarten
 program in 2023!

Learn more at rdpl.org/1000-books/



2023 Plan of Service

ANNUAL ACTION PLAN

PLAN OF SERVICE: GOALS & OUTCOMES

The Red Deer Public Library Board's 2023-2027 Plan of Service outlines the goals and strategic priorities that will guide RDPL through this service period. Annual Action Plans are defined by RDPL's Management Team each year to follow these strategic priorities.

Read on to find out what our 2023 Annual Action Plans entailed, and how we evaluated and measured the success of these plans.

GOAL 1: A PLACE FOR ALL

Red Deer Public Library provides a welcoming, inclusive, and safe space where we champion diverse perspectives.

Strategic Priorities:

- Use library space creatively and effectively, while planning for future library needs.
- Provide accessible, current, and relevant information on our website and social media.
- Collaborate with community partners to develop and deliver programming reflecting diverse perspectives.

Measurable Goal: The library will reach pre-pandemic program attendance levels and visit counts.

Outcome: *In progress.* We have made great strides toward this goal, and are very close to pre-pandemic program counts! Visit counts remain lower, but we attribute much of this shift to the increase in customers who access primarily (or exclusively) virtual content. As noted previously, our e-content loans amount to 18.7% of our total circulation! We also no longer track Summer Reading Club registrations, so that accounts for some of the decrease as well.

Here are the final numbers, comparing pre-pandemic program, attendance, and visit counts from 2019 to our 2023 totals:

RDPL Program Statistics

Year	2019	2023
Number of programs	1,748	1,673
Number of program participants	33,364	28,243
Number of in-person visitors	550,036	408,209

While overall traffic patterns and program participation are still not where they used to be, the Adult Literacy Program, which collects separate statistics for its grant reporting, has achieved this goal. The numbers below demonstrate that the program has greatly exceeded pre-pandemic numbers. The Adult Literacy Team gratefully acknowledges Shelley Ross (CEO), RDPL Board Members, volunteer tutors, and dedicated library staff for supporting this program.

Adult Literacy Program Statistics

Year	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23
Learners	398	371	299	308	531
Tutors	217	220	181	170	231
Participants in classes	196	125	78	67	286



Measurable Goal: The library will work with three new partner community organizations and/or community groups, and offer programming to reflect diverse perspectives.

Outcome: *Achieved.* In 2023, we exceeded this goal by successfully partnering with TEN new community partners:

1. Community Futures Alberta
2. Credit Counseling Society
3. Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA) - Recovery College
4. Central Alberta Immigrant Women's Association (CAIWA)
5. Central Alberta Pregnancy Care Centre
6. Canadian National Institute for the Blind (CNIB)
7. La Leche League
8. Points West Living
9. Ukrainian Community (Ukrainian Club Katrusia)
10. Red Deer & District Chamber of Commerce

Measurable Goal: The library will pilot extending services into the southeast area of the city by creating a welcoming space at the Collicutt Centre that offers basic library services to the community.

Outcome: *Achieved.* The new Collicutt Branch opened on Wednesday, August 30, 2023! The branch is a pilot project with a timeline of one year, at which time we will evaluate the success of the project and consider the feasibility of a more permanent arrangement within the facility.

The Collicutt Branch operates primarily as a self-serve branch, which means that, more often than not, library staff are not physically present to provide direct assistance to customers. When staff are not present, clear on-site signage and instructions help guide customers through the self-serve process, and library users are able to contact staff at other library locations during the library's normal operating hours by using the phone next to the self-check.

At roughly 600 square feet, the Collicutt Branch can only accommodate a very small browsing collection, which includes an assortment of library materials for all ages. Beyond that, the Collicutt Branch also includes holds pickup service, which allows library users to request materials from any of the library's other three library branches and borrow them from the Collicutt Branch. This service has proven to be extremely popular!

The feedback that we have received so far has been overwhelmingly positive, and we have had growing success with no significant problems. Our self-serve model has proven sustainable within our current budget. After opening to the public, the Collicutt Branch had 18,853 visitors in 2023.

What our customers are saying:

"I love having a branch library at the Collicutt and I hope it becomes permanent!"

"I am so happy. This will be so convenient for this end of the city. Always use the drop box for returns at Collicutt but being able to book pickup will make it so much better."

"Awesome move by Red Deer Public Library – meeting folks where they gather."



Measurable Goal: 85% of library users surveyed will report that Red Deer Public Library is a welcoming, inclusive, and safe space.

Outcome: *Achieved.* RDPL ran the annual 2023 library user survey during the month of November. We are happy to report that we have met and exceeded this goal in 2023. According to the survey, 90% of people feel welcome at the library, 85% report that they feel safe at the library, and 88% feel that the library is an inclusive space.

Many people left heartwarming comments in addition to answering questions:

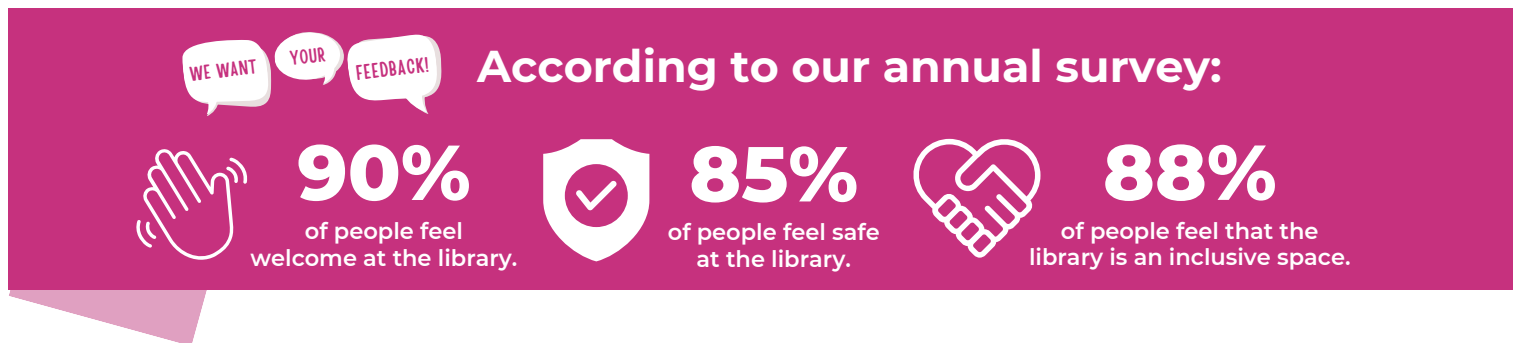
"I love the library and attend the Downtown Branch regularly. It's one of my happy places."

"The staff are incredible. They are what makes the library such a great place."

"The library absolutely feels like a safe space for me. I'm glad I rediscovered my love for reading as an adult and have access to this space."

"As a trans person, navigating public spaces can be tricky, but it never is at the library. I frequent the Dawe and Downtown branches and I always feel safe. Every employee makes me feel welcome. They are always kind and helpful."

"I love our local library and I hope it continues to be a welcoming and inclusive space for everyone!"



Measurable Goal: By the end of 2023, RDPL will develop and launch a new section on the library's website dedicated to elevating diverse voices and increasing representation in the library's online spaces.

Outcome: *In progress.* The Diverse Voices section of the library's website was in its staff preview phase at the end of 2023 for those on the planning committee. The committee will reconvene in early 2024 to finalize this first iteration before launching the site to the public.

Measurable Goal: By the end of 2023, RDPL will create an action plan with timelines for completing the interfiling and re-organization of the collections on Level 2 of the Downtown Branch.

Outcome: *In progress.* The Management Team has determined that more research and planning is needed before moving forward with this goal.

GOAL 2: DISCOVER YOUR WORLD

Red Deer Public Library fosters curiosity and lifelong learning and is committed to improving literacy in Red Deer.

Strategic Priorities:

- Deliver learning-focused programming for all ages that is responsive to community needs.
- Build a strong team that encourages open communication, cooperation, innovation, and creativity.
- Develop opportunities to champion literacy and learning.



Measurable Goal: Red Deer Public Library's new Youth Literacy program will be offered in the 2023-2024 academic year to the Red Deer community to assist elementary students experiencing difficulties with reading in English and French and to help middle/high school English language learners with reading comprehension and academic vocabulary building. The program will be volunteer-based, attracting local citizens who support literacy and learning. It is expected that by December 2023, the program will match 25 students with tutors.

Outcome: *Achieved* As of December 31, 2023, 32 students were matched with 28 tutors. With 8 students on the waiting list and 6 volunteers waiting to be matched after they finish their intake and training, we have 74 people in the program (increased from 12 students and 6 tutors during the pilot program in the spring).

Measurable Goal: 150 Welcome Baby packages will be given to new parents in Red Deer through community outreach events and Welcome Baby partners.

Outcome: *Achieved.* The Welcome Baby program continues to expand, with Central Alberta Immigrant Women's Association (CAIWA) signing on as an enthusiastic new partner in 2023, joining RDPL, Family Services of Central Alberta, and the Pregnancy Care Network. Welcome Baby is an early literacy outreach initiative where parents of a new baby receive a free donated package containing a board book, early literacy tips, and information about library programs and services. We look forward to working with CAIWA as they work directly with immigrant families to introduce them to important community organizations like RDPL and emphasize the importance of family literacy. By the end of September 2023, a total of 180 packages were distributed.

Measurable Goal: The Adult Literacy Program will continue to offer tutor and learner centered programming relevant to the participants' needs and goals as measured by the Adult Literacy annual report. (*Measure: number of adult learners who felt that the program was relevant to their needs and goals*).

Outcome: *Achieved* Based on feedback from class participants, learners, and tutors, this goal has been successfully achieved through a variety of relevant programming. The table below outlines the measurable outcomes as reported by Adult Literacy Program participants.

Adult Literacy Program Relevance

Program name	Number of learners that expressed relevance	Total number of learners evaluated	Percentage of learners who felt that the program was relevant to their needs & goals
Tutoring - English Language Learning	446	446	100%
Group Classes - English Language Learning	267	269	99%
Tutoring - Literacy and Foundational Learning	48	48	100%
Group Classes - Basic Digital Skills	12	13	92%
Group Classes - Skills for Learning	4	4	100%

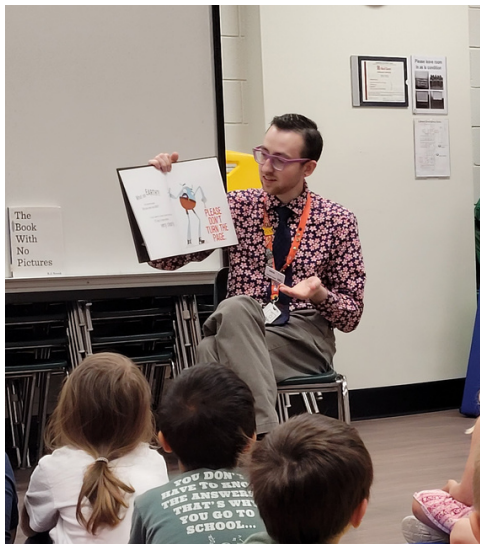
Measurable Goal: Red Deer Public Library is committed to creating positive employment experiences for staff, building productive and engaged employees whose work will make our community a better place. This will be measured by an annual staff satisfaction survey each fall. In 2023, 75% of staff surveyed will report that Red Deer Public Library is a great place to work.

Outcome: *Achieved.* In 2023, 31 staff members participated in the staff satisfaction survey, and 81% of respondents agree that Red Deer Public Library is a great place to work. Additionally, 74% of staff feel their work makes their community a better place, and 90% of staff feel productive at work. Out of 31 respondents, 24 employees feel engaged with the work of the library and their position, and 87% feel that RDPL offers them a positive work experience where they enjoy coming to work.

Measurable Goal: In 2023, at least three new literacy-focused programs or services will be introduced.

Outcome: *Achieved* In 2023, we introduced the following new literacy-focused programs:

1. The new Youth Literacy Program, which provides free, direct literacy tutoring help in a fun and supportive environment. The program strives to offer sustainable and long term literacy support for families, as well as greater opportunities for volunteers in the community.
2. 'Sit, Stay, Read with Katja,' 'Walk and Read with Katja,' and other outreach library programs where Katja, our Facility Service Dog, offered her helpful paws and ears to readers.
3. Reading Connection Family Book Club where kids get to choose the book they want to read related to each month's theme, and their grownup reads it too!
4. Monthly themed library-wide scavenger hunts that introduce kids to new vocabulary words in a fun way and help them to explore our library spaces.



Measurable Goal: In 2023, RDPL will find three new opportunities for outreach in the community to champion literacy and learning.

Outcome: *Achieved.* As of December 2023 this goal was successfully achieved via:

1. Summer Reading Club interactive activities in multiple locations around Red Deer, including the new Woody's Spray Park at the G.H. Dawe Centre.
2. Library tours to classrooms, including Team Katja's visits to many schools in Red Deer.
3. RDPL's participation during the Amazing Race challenge with the Red Deer & District Chamber of Commerce.

GOAL 3: ENGAGED AND CONNECTED

Red Deer Public Library strives to recognize, value, and empower all members of our community by celebrating all identities and incorporating principles of diversity, access, and inclusion in all aspects of our operation.

Strategic Priorities:

- Strengthen relationships and develop meaningful partnerships with local agencies, multicultural communities, schools and volunteers.
- Commit to listening to, learning from, and building relationships with local Indigenous communities in recognition of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada's Calls to Action.

Measurable Goal: By the end of 2023, Red Deer Public Library will increase the volunteer base within the organization by 15%.

Outcome: *Achieved* As of December 2023, 272 volunteers supported various programs and the organization, in comparison with 175 volunteers in 2022, which is an increase of 56%. The work performed by our volunteers is integral to the operations of the organization, not only for the time they contribute, but for their knowledge, skills, enthusiasm and fresh points of view. Thank you to each and every one of our amazing volunteers!

Volunteers support a wide variety of activities at RDPL:

1. Library Board
2. Friends of the Library
3. Adult Literacy Program
4. Home Service Program
5. Youth Literacy program



Measurable Goal: The Adult Literacy Program will continue to match learners from various backgrounds with volunteer tutors. The program will support the number of volunteer tutors as estimated in the Community Adult Learning Program (CALP) grant application.

Outcome: *Achieved.* As a result of advertisements, promotions, and the program’s presence in the community, 102 new volunteers joined the program during the 2022/23 grant term (this is a 96% increase from last year). Many community members stepped in to help with the influx of learners from Ukraine. In order to reduce the wait list, some tutors started working with small groups and a few volunteers took on multiple learners. The Adult Literacy Program supported 231 volunteer tutors over the 2022-2023 grant term (36% increase from the previous year).

Measurable Goal: In an effort to build a membership base that more accurately represents our diverse community, we will increase overall membership numbers by 15% by the end of 2023 (as compared to December 31, 2022).

Outcome: *Achieved.* As of December 2023, we increased overall membership numbers by 16%.

Number of RDPL Memberships

December 2022	December 2023
22,447	26,035



Measurable Goal: During each year of the Plan of Service, RDPL will complete diversity and/or language audits in one or more areas of the library’s collection, in consultation with local community groups, where applicable. In 2023, the library will focus on the Adult World Languages Collection.

Outcome: *Achieved.* With Spanish as her primary language, Library Assistant Angelica Ceron audited the Spanish collection, utilizing her experience in public and school libraries. The Adult French and Chinese collections were also reviewed and weeded in November with the assistance of French and Chinese-speaking volunteers. A Korean volunteer helped select titles from a large donation. Volunteers were able to provide valuable advice on authors and titles that are important to keep or add to these collections, improving our overall World Languages collections.

Measurable Goal: In 2023, Red Deer Public Library will pursue at least five opportunities to share, promote, and amplify Indigenous and Metis culture and perspectives, in partnership with local community groups and individuals.

Outcome: *Achieved.* This goal was reached by holding the following programs and representing RDPL at the following events:

1. 'Coyote and Crow' roleplaying game in celebration of National Indigenous History Month
2. Attendance at the Annual Waskasoo Seepee Traditional Powwow in June
3. 'Kits-to-Go' filled with information and crafts for families to honor and learn together about Residential School Survivors for National Day for Truth and Reconciliation
4. 'Bead and Share' program, where Orange Shirt pins were created during Culture Days in September
5. Ribbon Skirt making workshop in September
6. Indigenous Youth Conference at Red Deer Polytechnic



GOAL 4: SUSTAINABLE AND HEALTHY WORKPLACE

Red Deer Public Library is guided by modern best practices.

Strategic Priorities:

- Use and promote our resources responsibly.
- Engage the board and staff in annual action planning.
- Ensure that library staff have the skills, support and training required to contribute to the success of the Plan of Service.

Measurable Goal: The 2023 Annual Action Plan for the new Plan of Service will be finalized by the Management Team by May 31, 2023. The Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-bound (SMART) goals to deliver the 2023 Annual Action Plan will be identified in consultation with library staff, and will be tracked and reported to the Library Board in early 2024.

Outcome: ***Achieved.*** Results are presented here in this report.



Measurable Goal: The Health and Safety Committee will continue to participate in the promotion and protection of employees' safety and health.

Outcome: ***Achieved.*** The Health and Safety committee met quarterly and completed branch inspections, identifying and remediating any issues posing safety risks. Hazard Assessments were thoroughly reviewed and updated to more accurately reflect current roles and duties. Employees participated in emergency preparedness quizzes, which reinforced awareness of procedures and identified gaps that prompted clarification of processes within the Emergency Procedures guide.

In addition, the majority of employees completed mandatory First Aid training, with the remainder registered to complete the training in 2024.

Measurable Goal: In Fall 2023, RDPL staff who contribute to the library's online and social media presence will complete accessibility training from the Public Library Services Branch (PLSB) related to communication strategies, social media, and creating accessible internal and public-facing documents and information.

Outcome: *Achieved.* On October 24, 2023, seven members of RDPL staff and management completed in-person Accessibility Training from the accessibility team at PLSB. The team, consisting of Kim Johnson, Kel Banks, and Camelia Campbell, taught attendees how to ensure that our digital documents and social media posts are accessible for those reading with assistive technologies. There were many great takeaways that can be implemented into staff workflow. They also provided the library with documentation to share with all staff that demonstrate how to create accessible documents in Word, Excel, Google Docs, PowerPoint, Social Media, and PDF format.



Measurable Goal: RDPL Management, in consultation with the Board, will continue to develop policies and procedures to ensure that staff have the training and skills to promote and use library resources responsibly, including fiscal, actual, and intellectual property.

Outcome: *Achieved.* Initiatives took place throughout the year, including (but not limited to):

- Staff received cyber training, learning how to act as a human firewall in protecting our systems by spotting various malicious techniques such as phishing emails.
- The MobileStaff application was rolled out, where staff utilize iPads instead of printing reports.
- The annual RDPL Staff Development Day was a success! It was planned and developed by a committee consisting of staff members and managers, and included guest speakers from Safe Harbour Society and Family Services as well as time for group discussions, team building, staff recognition, and some fun!

Measurable Goal: By December 2023, the first iteration of the Staff Training Portal, an internal-facing staff site with training support materials, will be made available for staff.

Outcome: *In progress.* This item is still in progress, to be completed in 2024.

Thank you

for being a part of our story!



rdpl.org



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