

Technology adds to rural libraries' ability to serve local community members

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Anyone who loves books will tell you a library is a magical place.

Just cracking a cover allows patrons to enter foreign lands, sleuth after criminals or learn something as practical as small engine repair.

However, new technology is now opening even more doors right at your local libraries.

The Rural Information Services Initiative (RISE) has set up a pilot project of video conferencing centres in six rural libraries, including Bow Island and Foremost.

The project will connect RISE libraries around the world. Locally, the central site is at the Marigold Library System in Strathmore.

"You can call up other libraries like on a phone," explained local librarian Kathryn Van Dorp.

"Power point presentations can be done through a

laptop," she added.

Sue Andersen, Bow Island's head librarian, said the applications are numerous and can be beneficial in a multitude of surprising ways to a rural community. For instance, a consultation between a local patient and a doctor in Calgary is entirely possible.

"You can take trips without ever leaving the library."

-Kathryn Van Dorp

"They would have to book it ahead of time to get a connection, and arrange it through the Shortgrass Library headquarters, but it

would be possible," she said.

Other applications include everything from several libraries sharing presentations from guest authors to being part of a live visit to a museum.

"You can take trips without ever leaving the library," said Van Dorp.

Joanne Harty from the Foremost Library is just as excited about the new technology.

"I'm looking forward to children's programming including virtual field trips,



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SETTING IT ALL UP: Jim Dunbar, RISE consultant librarian, shows the new video conferencing technology to Foremost librarian, Joanne Harty.

author talks, connecting Foremost to the wider world and sessions for home-

schooling parents and students."

She's also looking forward

to programming like museum visits and cultural organizations.