

Toronto Public Library
Submission
to the
Royal Society of Canada's Expert Panel
on
The Status and Future of
Canada's Libraries and Archives

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SUBMISSION BY THE TORONTO PUBLIC LIBRARY TO THE ROYAL CANADIAN SOCIETY'S EXPERT PANEL ON THE STATUS AND FUTURE OF CANADA'S LIBRARIES AND ARCHIVES

Introduction

Toronto is a city of neighbourhoods, and residents identify themselves in terms of their community's unique diversity and culture. Toronto Public Library is a neighbourhood-based system: local library branches design programs and services to meet the needs of their local communities. For each branch, collections are carefully selected to meet local needs, custom programs are scheduled, and services are provided to ensure culture and language needs are met. Toronto Public Library is one of the largest public library systems in the world. With 98 branches located across the City of Toronto, most Toronto residents live within a two-kilometre radius of a Toronto Public Library branch; bookmobiles extend access to residents living outside of this radius. In 2014, Toronto Public Library is preparing to open two new branches: Scarborough Civic Centre, and Fort York. Library branches are integrated into the fabric of the city, embedded in neighbourhoods, and are a part of the streetscape.

The Toronto Public Library's mission as outlined in the recent Strategic Plan *Read. Learn. Create. Deliver* is:

Toronto Public Library provides free and equitable access to services which meet the changing needs of Torontonians. The Library preserves and promotes universal access to a broad range of human knowledge, experience, information and ideas in a welcoming and supportive environment.

The vision of the Strategic Plan 2012 – 2015 is that:

Toronto Public Library will be recognized as the world's leading library by informing and inspiring Toronto and its communities, making us all more resilient, more knowledgeable, more connected and more successful.

The library is a busy place where people of all ages and backgrounds come to read, study, attend programs, borrow materials, engage with members of their community, and use wireless and public computers with Internet access. They are neighbourhood hubs, offering safe and welcoming places in the community for all ages, but especially for children and youth. In addition, the Toronto Public Library provides extensive online services and well-organized research and reference materials online. The curated content connects users with ideas, current issues and electronic resources to facilitate greater meaning and understanding.

Community-based services bring library service to every corner of the city and break down barriers related to geography, physical disability and literacy levels. In 2012, there were 19 million visits to the Library's 98 branches and over 32 million items were borrowed, and there were 26 million virtual visits to the website by its 1.3 million card holders (51% of Toronto residents).

Libraries contribute to successful cities and regions through inclusive services and strategies to mitigate barriers to access. Welcoming and accessible libraries located in the local community set the stage for services that respond to the growing diversity of Canadian populations. In most communities, a high percentage of the population visits and spends time in their public library, where people of all ages, cultures and socio-economic backgrounds are welcome and where one can access collections and services at no cost. The market research firm, Strategic Counsel conducted a survey for TPL that asked Torontonians about their use of the library and found that 72% of Torontonians used the library in 2012 and one in six visited at least once a week.¹ Canadian libraries report high levels of participation and use of public libraries as the recent OCLC research Statistical Insights on the Arts highlighted the fact that nearly two out of three Canadians have library cards.² Membership and use of public libraries contribute to social cohesion and tolerance, enhancing the livability of the community.

This submission will focus on the following issues considered to be important for Public Libraries in the 21st century: building diverse communities, fostering a culture of reading, lifelong learning and digital literacy, community development, the provision of public space, the role of the research and reference library, and the role of the Librarian.

The Economic Impact of Public Libraries

The recent economic impact study, *So much more: the Economic Impact of the Toronto Public Library on the City of Toronto* recognizes the strong return on investment through the delivery of library services that enhance Toronto's competitiveness and prosperity, and contribute to a better quality of life for all.³ This study was completed by the Martin Prosperity Institute of the Rotman School of Management, University of Toronto for the Toronto Public Library Board. The study highlights the ways that Toronto Public Library contributes to the City and that these library services are commonly delivered by public libraries in Canada. The study found that the Toronto Public Library delivers a strong return on investment through the delivery of library services that enhance Toronto's competitiveness and prosperity and contribute to a better quality of life for all. This value includes opportunities for residents to improve their literacy skills, engage in lifelong learning and enhance their educational and employment opportunities. These outcomes deliver a

¹ Strategic Counsel for Toronto Public Library Presentation of the Results of the Public and Visitor Surveys to the Toronto Public Library Board February 2013 (Retrieved January 2, 2014:

http://www.torontopubliclibrary.ca/content/about-the-library/pdfs/board/meetings/2013/feb25/12b_1.pdf)

² OCLC, 2011, primary research 2011, How Canadian Public Libraries Stack Up (Retrieved on January 2, 2014:

http://www.oclc.org/content/dam/oclc/reports/canadastackup/214109cef_how_libraries_stack_up.pdf)

³ Kevin Stolarick and Kimberly Silk. *So Much More; the Economic Impact of the Toronto Public Library on the City of Toronto*. Martin Prosperity Institute for the Toronto Public Library. December 2013 Retrieved January 6, 2014.:

http://www.torontopubliclibrary.ca/content/about-the-library/pdfs/board/meetings/2013/dec09/10_1.pdf

Submission by the Toronto Public Library to the Royal Canadian Society's

Expert Panel on the Status and Future of Canada's Libraries and Archives

lifetime of value to residents and increase the economic competitiveness and prosperity of Toronto. The Library supports livability and quality of life for residents, creating an attractive climate for business investment and supporting a sustainable cycle of prosperity.”⁴

Measuring the value of programs and services in economic terms only tells part of the story. The report also includes analysis of some Toronto Public Library programs and services that make a difference to the city, going beyond the numbers. These services are not easily quantifiable, but create significant value for residents, including opportunities to improve literacy skills, engage in lifelong learning and enhance educational and employment opportunities. These outcomes deliver a lifetime of value to residents and increase the economic competitiveness and prosperity of Toronto.

The study methodology quantified the total economic impact and return on investment of Toronto Public Library services based on analysis of direct tangible benefits, direct spending and indirect tangible benefits.

Key findings include:

- The total economic impact of the Toronto Public Library on the city of Toronto is \$1 billion.
- For every dollar invested in Toronto Public Library, Torontonians receive \$5.63 of value.
- For those who use the library, the value of their library membership is as much as \$500.
- On average, one open hour at any one of the library’s 98 branches generates \$2,515 in benefits for the city of Toronto. The average cost of one open hour is \$653, so the average benefit is almost 4 times the average cost.
- Beyond tangible benefits outlined in the report, the library delivers value to Toronto’s communities and residents in ways that are not easily quantifiable but nonetheless support Toronto’s economy, increase its competitiveness and prosperity and contribute to the city’s livability and quality of life.

Building Diverse Communities

Policies and practices are reviewed to ensure that services are accessible and that where barriers exist, initiatives can be introduced to mitigate them. Public libraries across Canada are well positioned to be the meeting place for Canadians regardless of background. They bridge the gap, actively building community resilience and vitality and will continue to be recognized by residents for fulfilling this role in supporting a strong democratic society.

⁴ Kevin Stolarick and Kimberly Silk. So Much More; the Economic Impact of the Toronto Public Library on the City of Toronto. Martin Prosperity Institute for the Toronto Public Library. December 2013 Retrieved January 6, 2014.: http://www.torontopubliclibrary.ca/content/about-the-library/pdfs/board/meetings/2013/dec09/10_1.pdf

a. Support for Settlement and Integration

Canadian public libraries include collections in other languages to reflect the cultural and language makeup of the municipality. Materials and services are available to support successful integration into Canadian society including language learning collections, citizenship materials and employment supports.

Toronto Public Library provides the following supports:

- Material in other languages – in Toronto material in forty languages is actively collected
- ESL classes coordinated through educational institutions and community-based agencies
- Citizenship classes
- With funding from other levels of government, libraries partner with local settlement agencies to provide access to Settlement or newcomer activities and information services
- English Conversation Circles
- Career and job seeker programs

Libraries such as Albion (a library branch in Toronto) are often one of the first places that new immigrants come after they arrive. They come to find books, use the computers or seek help from one of the settlement agencies that works in partnership with the libraries.”⁵

b. Support for social cohesion and civic engagement

Responsive service development results in public libraries that have collections, programs and services that are responsive to and reflective of different cultural backgrounds, sexual orientation, different abilities and different interests.

Toronto Public Library provides the following programs and services:

- Extensive programming to celebrate a communities diversity through partnership with city-wide events such as Asian Heritage events, Black History month or Aboriginal celebrations or at the most local level by including performances by local cultural groups at branch events
- Services and programming for specific age groups such as youth programming that includes gaming, local music concerts
- Programs supporting democratic practices such as events to highlight municipal elections and voting
- Unique programs, such as the Human Library program, to promote tolerance, celebrate differences and encourage understanding of people who come from varied cultural or lifestyle backgrounds.

⁵ Libraries Keep Us Connected in a Wireless World (Marcus Gee, Globe and Mail, August 10, 2011 . (Retrieved on January 2, 2014 <http://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/toronto/torontos-libraries-keep-us-connected-in-a-wireless-world/article626234/>)

- Focused collections including First Nations collections, LGBT collections
- Accessible materials available through programs such as the CNIB Partners program for patrons with print disabilities
- Literacy collections to support adult learners

c. Library Services for Canada’s Aboriginal Peoples

Toronto Public Library has dedicated Aboriginal and First Nations collections housed at both the Spadina Road branch and at North York Central Library. Each year in June, the Toronto Public Library celebrates Aboriginal Month, which is an opportunity to partner with local organizations and to highlight the Library’s special collection.

Lifelong Learning

Libraries play a powerful role in learning and engagement which supports success for individuals through all life’s transitions. Public libraries are recognized as trusted, inclusive and welcoming places that offer the learning opportunities and resources that people need. Available collections, places to study, programs and group meeting spaces, and open hours provide the critical support needed for learning achievement in school, accreditation and retraining, job seeking, and for entrepreneurs and small business people. In addition, library programs, collections, and services support hobbies and recreational pursuits and provide local access to cultural experiences and creative learning opportunities. In combination, these activities result in improved social cohesion and stronger communities.

A recent report for the Ontario Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sport highlighted the library’s role in economic prosperity, “the elements of sustained prosperity will continue to be highly relevant to public libraries and the communities that create them. These elements include the central importance of creativity in the economy, the role of learning in an innovative economy, and the need for robust access to ideas”.⁶ The Conference Board of Canada and its three-year project on the Canadian economy also identifies an increasing need for learning and innovation in Canada.⁷ “A strong focus on lifelong learning in public libraries continues a long tradition of responsive service development that supports the changing learning needs of Canadians and supports Canadian innovation and competitiveness.

⁶ Wendy Newman. *Third Generation Public Libraries: Visionary Thinking and Service Development in Public Libraries (to 2020) and Potential Application in Ontario*. Report for the Ontario Ministry of Culture 2008.

Retrieved on Jan 2, 2014: http://www.mtc.gov.on.ca/en/publications/third_gen_libraries.pdf

⁷ Conference Board of Canada. *Mission Possible: Sustainable Prosperity for Canada – three-year project on conditions for prosperity*. (Retrieved January 2, 2014:

<http://www.conferenceboard.ca/canadaproject/>)

Public librarians regularly visit schools to meet with students, teachers and school librarians to promote the public libraries' resources for students and work in partnership to enrich the learning experience. Libraries strongly support early literacy and a developing love of reading and learning in young students through the schools and directly with parents.

The library environment allows a student to move from the formal, structured environment of school, where reading is required, to an environment of choice where they are supported in finding materials tied to their personal interest. Library branches offer a broad mix of reading, programs, and cultural and digital experiences for school-age children, enabling them to direct their own reading and creative development. The safe and supportive environment of libraries makes them popular after school and during vacation periods.

Outside of formal education, people also learn from experience and through self-directed, community-based and recreational learning. Public Libraries located in communities across Canada provide convenient, accessible, and low cost opportunities for self-directed and lifelong learning.

a. Access to culture and creative learning opportunities is needed to support social cohesion and strong communities.

Increased access to arts and culture and creative learning opportunities builds social cohesion and contributes to safer, healthier neighbourhoods; likewise, evidence links strong communities and neighbourhoods to the presence of cultural and creative activities. People who engage in cultural activities develop lifelong skills, perform better academically, feel connected to society, and learn to express themselves as adults and future leaders.⁸ Cultural participation during childhood and youth is the best predictor of future participation.⁹ Older adults who participate in arts programs are likely to report better health and less disease.¹⁰ Where people have the opportunity to participate in culture as creators, participators or audience members, it is likely that the community will have a stronger sense of well-being and belonging, have stronger social bonds with their fellow residents, and have greater pride in their identity and their community.

Programs and services at the Toronto Public Library include:

- How-to collections related to cultural pursuits
- Local music collections
- Historical and special collections such as sheet music, play collections
- Open mic evenings and writing conferences for youth

⁸ City of Toronto Economic Development Committee and Toronto City Council, Creative Capital Gains: An Action Plan for Toronto. May 2011. (Retrieved January 2, 2014: <http://www.livewithculture.ca/wp-content/uploads/2011/05/CCI-Final.pdf>)

⁹ City of Toronto Economic Development Committee and Toronto City Council, Creative Capital Gains: An Action Plan for Toronto. May 2011. (Retrieved January 2, 2014: <http://www.livewithculture.ca/wp-content/uploads/2011/05/CCI-Final.pdf>)

¹⁰ Creative City Network of Canada, Making the Case (Retrieved January 2, 2014 <http://www.creativecity.ca/publications/making-the-case.php>)

- Extensive programming with Canadian and international authors and illustrators
- Maker spaces, media labs
- Partnerships with cultural institutions to make access to culture widely available e.g. Museum and Arts Pass programs
- Bookable auditorium and theatre spaces with affordable not-for-profit rates

b. Workforce development

Recently, many Canadian newspaper articles have been focused on the challenges that youth today are experiencing in entering the workforce due to limited opportunities and the limitations of skills and experience. This is also true for newcomers.

In the past, most people's education ended with graduation from high school, apprenticeship, college or university. In the workplace, learning predominantly took place early in employment when the tasks learned would remain fairly consistent throughout the working life. In today's workplace, employees and new recruits are increasingly responsible for having the skills employers' demand in order to "hit the ground running" when they are hired, and too often they find that they do not have these skills.¹¹ Job seekers will need to continue to learn and develop new skills in order to succeed.

Business and municipal planning reports indicate that any plan for the future economic success of Canadian cities requires that specific attention be given to the training needs of youth and of newcomers. Canadian cities are facing a future employment shortage; it is expected that youth and newcomers will play an increasingly important role in addressing this gap.

With the need for knowledge-based skills increasingly dominating employment prospects, the responsibility for acquiring and maintaining job-related skills has transferred from the employer to the individual employee; rather than retraining employees whose skills no longer match business requirements, employers will bring in the talent they need. Employment is now dependent upon individual performance, a demonstrated willingness and ability to learn, and the ability of the individual to offer the skills needed by the employer today and in the future.¹²

Library collections and programs are tailored to respond to these learning needs and include resources for job seekers, skills upgrading and accreditation and ESL material. Online resources include products to evaluate career choices and curriculum and testing applications as examples of critical resources available through libraries and otherwise not available to people outside of the formal education system. Newcomers benefit from having accessible and conveniently located free services including access to computers and word processing programs; similarly evening and weekend hours provide access for youth to library services. Youth recognize the library as a neutral and trusted source of information that offers support tailored to their needs and which is found in their community.

¹¹ The Center for Public Education. Defining a 21st Century Education. 2009 (Retrieved January 2, 2014: http://www.cfsd16.org/public_century/pdf/Defininga21stCenturyEducation_Jerald_2009.pdf)

¹² The Center for Public Education. Defining a 21st Century Education. 2009 (Retrieved January 2, 2014: http://www.cfsd16.org/public_century/pdf/Defininga21stCenturyEducation_Jerald_2009.pdf)

Examples of programs and services offered by Toronto Public Library include:

- Extensive open hours
- Computer training classes in basic word processing
- Resume writing and job searching clinics in association with community partners
- Sessions on internet and library resources to assist in career research
- Access to computer workstations with Microsoft Office products and Internet access
- GED and other accreditation programs in association with colleges and universities
- Wi-Fi service

c. Small business and entrepreneurs

Libraries carry significant business resources including, in the larger urban centers, all key online resources for those researching business opportunities, market forecasts and other related material. Community agencies and city economic development departments recognize the library as an important partner in reaching small business owners and entrepreneurs. Small business experts are delivering programs through the local library branch – libraries leverage this and other business expertise to deliver needed information and learning opportunities geographically across a municipality – meeting the need where people live and work, and when they can be available to participate.

Similarly, the concept of ‘business incubation’ has been coined to describe the business support process that accelerates the success of new businesses by providing them with targeted resources and services of space and technology, information and networking.¹³ Libraries are creating successful spaces that encourage conversations, support co-working and stimulate and spark ideas, as well as provide information resources and strong technology support.

Examples of support for small business and entrepreneurs provided at Toronto Public Library include:

- Specialized collections and databases such business directories
- Recommended reading lists
- Entrepreneur in residence
- Business incubation programs and one off events
- Expert help with government resources
- Targeted programs e.g. social media marketing, small business and taxes

d. Supporting lifelong learning

Information services offered by the Library have evolved from supplying quick reference information to supporting in-depth research on a range of topics, including job searches,

¹³ National Business Incubation Association, Business Incubation FAQ (Retrieved January 2, 2014:

http://www.nbia.org/resource_library/faq/)

business, health topics and genealogy as examples, and through the sharing of expert library staff, also promote understanding of information sources. Supporting readers with recommended reading is integral to information services. The services are evolving online and are gaining popularity as library staff create prepackaged information including online guides, blog posts on subjects such as digital and media-literacy skills. In addition, with increasing use of e-readers and other technology libraries provide support to customers in the use of these technologies.

Library programs extend and promote the role of the library as a community resource, supplement and extend the information found in library collections, offer an alternative way for people to obtain and assimilate information, encourage participation in civic life, and help to address the cultural and leisure-related interests of the community.

Many library programs are available as a result of partnerships with community based organizations, cultural institutions and educational groups. These include an array of informational talks for adults, after-school programs for children and youth and newcomer support programs. Many small business and employment and health-related programs at Toronto Public Library are offered in conjunction with City departments and community agencies.

To support lifelong learning, Toronto Public Library offers public access to technology and helps residents gain the basic skills they need to use it effectively. Toronto Public Library has computer centres and wireless access and bookable workstations with Internet access available in all locations.

Learning experts are predicting that in the future, learners will have more control over where and how they learn using flexible and online options. They will design their own learning approach, choosing various types of content — videos, apps, games, social media tools, and more — to match their own personal learning style and pace. Increasingly, games are being recognized as a successful tool for building collaboration and engaging students more fully in the process of learning.¹⁴ As online learning options expand, access to these curriculum-based resources will become more available outside of formal learning, making this type of self-directed learning a reality.

Canadians expect public libraries to provide comprehensive collections to meet the varied information needs of learners and in a variety of formats, including e-content and e-learning resources. Information and learning needs of Canadians continue to grow. Ubiquitous access to information resources is recognized by Canadians as essential in a democratic society. They also expect libraries to stay current with technology and information trends to support customers, including children and youth, in selecting the best resources from the extraordinary amount of information available online. It is also expected that libraries recognize different learning styles and the specific interests of an aging population by providing alternate learning opportunities through programs. In many cases this is made possible by leveraging community and partner expertise to effectively meet the needs of Canadians.

¹⁴ New Media Consortium, The Horizon Report k-12 Edition, 2010 (Retrieved on January 2, 2014:

<http://www.nmc.org/pdf/2010-Horizon-Report-K12.pdf>)

Submission by the Toronto Public Library to the Royal Canadian Society's
Expert Panel on the Status and Future of Canada's Libraries and Archives

e. Digital Literacy

Public libraries provide a range of service to support customers in the digital era. This begins with the provision of free access to public computers with full access Internet and with wireless internet access in branches. In addition, digital media and innovation spaces are being developed in libraries, integrating the idea of maker spaces to encourage individuals, whether children, youth, or adults, to make things for fun and on their own terms, and this is a powerful context for learning. These spaces open opportunities to demystify science, technology and art, connecting people through the act of creation.

Access to the Internet and the ability to use technology is essential for daily life, and wireless access through mobile devices is becoming increasingly important. People are using multiple devices for work and leisure activities – these include laptops, tablets, smart phones and e-readers. The ability to use devices proficiently, both in terms of practical skills and ability to make best use of digital and online resources, is challenging for all demographic groups. Using technology is a fundamental 21st century skill for Canadians of all ages and digital media literacy is now a key skill in every discipline and profession, yet the digital divide is still with us. There is also a large, unmet demand for these digital literacy skills, including among older adults and seniors.

In metropolitan areas such as Toronto, up to one in five households has no Internet access according to Statistics Canada, and this figure is higher among teens and older adults. Among people without the Internet at home, equipment costs and lack of confidence and skills are significant barriers to adoption. People without access to e-mail, social media and the Internet are increasingly likely to experience some level of social exclusion. Without the skills necessary to use digital technology, learning, employment and full participation in society are insurmountable challenges.

Technology continues to change rapidly, posing challenges for organizations to keep up-to-date and relevant. The proliferation of devices requires organizations to develop responsive websites and online service options that can adjust the display and functionality to match the device used in order to meet customers' needs. Users need additional support in order to be able to navigate between devices and online services. Organizations must also integrate current communication and engagement channels such as social media to remain responsive and relevant to their customers.

A strong, strategic and sustainable approach for technology-based services and organizational infrastructure will help organizations keep up with the pace of new technological developments. Cloud computing and hosted services are improving the scalability and reliability of web-based services while greatly reducing costs. Online communication channels and social media networks are maturing, and the opportunities and limitations they offer for both service delivery and in building stronger relationships with customers are now better understood.

Reading

Public libraries promote literacy and a love of reading.

The recent Pew Internet and American Life project study “How Americans Value Public Libraries in Their Communities” survey confirms this statement, indicating that 95% of Americans age 16 and older say that public libraries are important because they promote literacy and a love of reading;

While being a good reader is important, research indicates that loving to read is one of the most significant factors in academic achievement and having a positive attitude towards learning in the teen years.¹⁵

To establish a strong culture of reading, it is critical that children be engaged with reading from a young age so they can develop a lifelong love of reading and engaging families with young children is a primary role for public libraries in Canada¹⁶.

Evidence has shown that there is a “summer learning loss” among school age children, especially among children from high-needs communities due to a lack of external opportunities and experiences, including access to books and positive reading practices. Students who do not continue to read during the summer vacation are likely to struggle on their return to school. The Summer Reading Club programs delivered by public libraries across Canada every summer are very effective in countering the ‘summer learning loss’ while also delivering much needed accessible, free recreation opportunities to children and their families throughout the summer months.

Reading benefits go beyond success in school and the employment opportunities that that success affords. Among the benefits reported are; the chance to enhance our current social relationships and to form new ones through conversations and sharing experiences around books, improved health and well-being, and academic and cognitive benefits and the opportunity to better understand ourselves. Reading is also associated with encouraging civic participation in the society at large¹⁷.

Reading stimulates young minds and sustains and engages individuals of all ages. Four out of 10 adult Canadians, age 16 to 65 - representing 9 million Canadians - struggle with low literacy. They fall below level 3 on the prose literacy scale (Adult Literacy and Life Skills

¹⁵ Kate, Hammer, “Ontario Kids Can Read Well, but They Don’t Have to Like it. Globe and Mail, December 12, 2011 (Retrieved April 10, 2013)

¹⁶ National Reading Campaign, “Joy of Reading Drops in Ontario Schools” December 12, 2011 (Retrieved February 23, 2012)

¹⁷ Sharon Murphy, “Towards Sustaining and Encouraging Reading in Canadian Society: A Research Report” The National Reading Campaign, April 2013 (Retrieved July 25, 2013)
Submission by the Toronto Public Library to the Royal Canadian Society’s
Expert Panel on the Status and Future of Canada’s Libraries and Archives

(ALL) Survey, Statistics Canada and the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2005).

Low adult literacy levels will impact work-force productivity and the health of the population in future years, especially among seniors¹⁸. Among newcomers, low literacy is higher, especially among immigrants whose mother tongue is neither English nor French, of whom two-thirds may be ill-equipped to function in the emerging economy¹⁹.

Reading is an important part of Canadian life and public libraries are well positioned in communities all across Canada to provide access to collections and reading regardless of the format, expertise in selecting reading material and programs to promote the joy of reading in all ages.

More recently, e-books are revolutionizing the publishing and book trade industry, but public libraries are challenged to provide access to a broad range of material which limits public access. Nine in ten publishers now sell content digitally; e-books and apps are the two most common formats. Canadian market research statistics indicate that in the Spring of 2012, 9% of Canadians (over three million people) owned e-readers or tablets and this number is increasing.

Print publications are still a dominant part of the publishing market, and are expected to remain popular for the foreseeable future. E-content holds a small but growing percent of the market, but online options are displacing the physical distribution model for books, music and videos. The ability to print whole books from digital storage has led to a new print-on-demand industry with self-serve printers being piloted in libraries and with booksellers. The ability to print on-demand has created significant efficiencies in publishing as well, because print runs can be smaller, thereby reducing the need to store large inventories.

Changes in the publishing and book trade are impacting public libraries. Currently, libraries are not able to offer in e-content the same range of resources available in print. This challenge stems from many factors including publishers' wariness of selling e-content to public libraries due to concerns about future sales revenue, and the complications surrounding downloading content on library websites because of digital rights management (DRM) protocols designed to protect content from being illegally copied and shared. Things are changing and more and more content is becoming available as libraries and publishers work through these issues. In addition, due to the nature of the third party services providing access to this e-content, libraries are also challenged to make this content easily discoverable and to show it in context with all other collections.

¹⁸ Canadian Council on Learning, "What is the Future of Learning in Canada? October 2011 (Retrieved February 10, 2013)

¹⁹ Statistics Canada, International Adult Literacy and Skills Survey 2003, The Daily November 9, 2005 (Retrieved February 10, 2013)

The Toronto Public Library has a collection of 11 million items in wide range of formats and genres. This is the building block for the programs and services it offers. Specific programs and services offered by Toronto Public Library that support reading include:

- Ready for Reading, developed to help parents and caregivers of children birth to five years old get Ready for Reading by helping to build early literacy skills through fun, everyday activities;
- The TD Summer Reading Club, which is an inclusive, bilingual program that strives to engage all children in the joy of reading during the summer months;
- Leading to Reading, which is a free program for children who are reading below their grade level or need help with their homework. Children are encouraged to learn and practice their skills in a fun environment. It is open to children in Grades 1 to 6 who can communicate in English;
- Story time for children;
- WordOut!, which encourages teens to read during the summer when they're out of school, keeping them critically engaged and better equipped to return to their studies in the fall, and providing them with a safe space to share their ideas and interests with their peers;
- Reading lists for children, teens and adults;
- Author talks and lectures; and
- Book Clubs and Writers' groups.

Community Development

Public libraries have long been active partners in many local community development initiatives. Libraries sit as service provider partners at the table during community undertakings, such as the development of community-wide crime reduction strategies, literacy initiatives, or early childhood education strategies. By participating in these activities, the library is a partner in what could be considered traditional social development initiatives. Library community development focused partnerships are most commonly service provider-to-service-provider social development focused partnerships.

The focus of community development in a library context goes beyond receiving feedback or hearing from the community (consultation or “information in”) and extends to encompass meaningful and active community member engagement in service prioritization and planning.

Community outreach, engagement, and development are fundamental to all library services in the neighbourhoods as it allows the library to see itself through the community's eyes. It demonstrates respect for individual needs, experiences and differences and involves people in planning library services that are important to their aspirations.

Toronto Public Library staff work in branches and out in neighbourhoods, listening to and learning from people through consultation and engagement. Library staff partner and collaborate with groups and individuals with the goal of developing library services that open opportunities for residents to define and fulfill their interests and needs. Staff also partner and collaborate with groups and individuals to ensure that the Library's resources contribute to capacity-building in communities.

An example of this approach is the Working Together project that resulted in the publication of the *Community-led Libraries Toolkit*, a project of the Canadian public library community, which examined issues associated with barriers to service for poor and socially excluded people.²⁰ The results of this project raised awareness for library leaders of the need for libraries to be more welcoming to all groups including low-income groups and to be cognizant of the issues of fines and other barriers that may be negatively affecting access for some groups in their community.

Examples of programs at Toronto Public Library include;

- Storytime outreach to children whose parents live in shelters
- Family literacy programs to incarcerated adults

Public Space

Modern public libraries are unique and vital public meeting spaces that are open to all. A report from the Benton Foundation that reveals what library leaders and the public have to say about the future of libraries in the digital age states that “The library will become more of a civic integrator and a locus of community information on health, education, government, and other local services”²¹. The social role of libraries has been growing over the last few years. The importance of libraries as safe place for children, an aesthetic refuge and as a hallowed and a liberated space where minds are uplifted, is growing.

The public library is a prime and unique community gathering place and a focal point in many communities, which explains some of the new functional roles of libraries, including, lecture and performance hall, gallery, conference centre, coffee shop, community information commons, computer classroom, study hall, creative innovation space, and a place for relaxation and connecting to the community.

The Toronto Public Library provides neutral, beautiful, innovative and relevant spaces in its branches and at the Research and Reference libraries. These provide a welcoming space, a home away from home where people from all backgrounds, cultures, ages and walks of life can feel comfortable. They serve as vital community hubs which foster community connection. The

²⁰ Working Together Project, *Community-led Libraries Toolkit*. March 2008 (Retrieved January 2, 2014: <http://www.librariesincommunities.ca/>)

²¹ *Buildings, Books, and Bytes: Libraries and Communities in the Digital Age* (The Benton Foundation, 1996). Submission by the Toronto Public Library to the Royal Canadian Society's Expert Panel on the Status and Future of Canada's Libraries and Archives

spaces are flexible, adaptable and respond to changing services and technologies. There are dedicated spaces for children, youth, adults, people with disabilities, for people to read and connect to the community and for people wishing to study. When not in use, program rooms are often used as study spaces in order to meet the ever increasing demand this type of space in the city. A more recent initiative is the introduction of Digital Innovation Labs (maker spaces) where people can use the wide range of technologies available in order to learn, explore and create content.

Examples of such spaces at Toronto Public Library include:

- KidsStops
- Teen Zones
- Theatres
- Media Labs
- Meeting Rooms
- Digital Innovation Labs

Research and Reference Function

The Research and Reference Libraries in Toronto started in the late 19th century when a decision was taken to build the library's special collections of publications and manuscripts documenting the history of Canada. This predates what is now known as Library and Archives Canada. The library collection is mostly non-circulating although some materials can be borrowed. Special collections include:

- The Arthur Conan Doyle Collection, devoted to the life and works of the creator of Sherlock Holmes, is housed in a room built to look like Holmes's study at 221B Baker St.
- The Baldwin Room, a collection of books, pamphlets, periodicals, manuscripts, broadsides and printed ephemera, maps, newspapers and historical pictures relating to Upper Canada (now Ontario) and to early Toronto. This collection is named for Robert Baldwin, a leading political reformer in Upper Canada and pre-Confederation Premier. However it also includes a Canadian historical picture collection illustrating the history of Canada, originally donated to the library in 1910 by John Ross Robertson (1841–1918), founder and publisher of the Toronto Telegram and a major philanthropist of Toronto's Hospital for Sick Children, which now contains thousands of historical paintings, drawings, prints, photographs and postcards.
- The Merrill Collection of Science Fiction, Speculation & Fantasy
- The Osborne Collection of Early Children's Books
- The Genealogy and Local History Collection, whose strength is Canadian content but which also includes numerous resources for Great Britain, Ireland and the United States (particularly the northeastern states).
- The Map Collection of current and historical maps, atlases, gazetteers and cartography resources, which is international in scope. Some of the resources it includes are: maps of

Toronto from 1788 to the present, Toronto fire insurance plans and Goad maps and atlases, as well as current and retrospective topographic and photo maps of the Toronto area.

- The Art Room containing rare books, photographs, posters and manuscripts, including important costume design and sheet music collections.
- The library also has an extensive performing arts collection, including papers and information on many Canadian artists, such as Al Waxman and The Dumbells.

Public libraries recognise digital information resources as a critically important and increasingly large component of its collection access and preservation responsibilities. As a result the Toronto Reference Library has an active digitization project. By digitizing its collections, the Library aims to:

- Respond proactively to the expectations of the public in an increasingly digital world
- Enable people, regardless of their location, to directly access and use a range of rare and special collection materials
- Create new content, and enable the linking of content and ideas through sharing and repurposing.
- Preserve rare and fragile collections and those at risk of format obsolescence, while also improving access to their content by providing digital surrogates of the items for public use.

Libraries, especially research libraries like the Toronto Reference Library, exist to preserve cultural artifacts and to preserve access to them, serving as a repository for cultural memory for Canadians. Until recently, users have had to physically visit the library in order to make use of its rich resources. In order to continue to foster learning and scholarship in a digital age, it is essential for libraries to extend these traditional functions into the digital world and to do so in a manner that preserves open and free access to all – a hallmark of the public library tradition. The main challenges of born-digital material for the library are: Content management, extent of material, digital preservation (how to migrate forward) and authentication.

The Toronto Public Library provides access to rare special collections through an active digitization program with the TD Gallery, holding regular exhibits showcasing special collections. In addition, local collaboration projects such as Your Yonge Street are active partnerships with the community which aim to build online content through community involvement.

Public libraries support broad access to special and historical collections through digital archives. Working with individuals and community based agencies and groups, libraries are ‘crowd-sourcing’ the development of new resources, e.g. focused local history collections. Libraries are also sharing expertise through on line resources such as those created to share expertise on early literacy including games, videos and other learning resources.

Public Librarianship

Public librarianship changes in response to the needs of the community. The skills needed to deliver excellence in library services continue to evolve building on a foundation of the ability to organize and evaluate sources of information, collection development and the use of technology.

Librarians also need to be skilled in developing community connections and supporting community development, developing relationships with customers and designing services that meet their needs, program planning and evaluation, in-depth information requests, leading teams, mentoring, collection development and collaborating with partners to address shared outcomes.

Library schools in Canada have a role to play in ensuring that Librarians are equipped with the skills to meet the demands of the 21st century public library. These include: community development skills, understanding the variety ways in which people learn, and program evaluation methodologies (e.g. evidence based program development).

Key Challenges for Libraries in Canada

The following key challenges are facing public libraries in Canada;

- Ensuring access to e-content and e-collections to meet the growing demand for these formats
- Responding to the changes in technology and supporting digital literacy
- Responding to increased demand for library services and balancing priorities in an environment of fiscal restraint
- Building capacity to demonstrate the value of public libraries through evidence or outcome-based program evaluation

In addition, libraries need to focus on:

- Enhancing collaboration and co-operation to build a robust and vital network of access to information, collections and services including e-content
- Strengthening consortia activities in order to leverage funds and increase access to resources
- Supporting a strong and comprehensive national library and archive that has a clear mandate to be a repository for Canadian memory and history. This involves collecting and making accessible to all Canadians, material published in Canada, historical publications and archives to fulfill the role as the archive to the Government of Canada.

Canadians expect a library that is accessible – in their local community and to be open when they can visit, which requires extensive hours to meet the needs of diverse populations- seniors, families with young children, students and workers. Libraries are well-used, and used for a wide variety of purposes. The branch networks of public libraries in cities across Canada provide that easy access that supports community building by welcoming people of all ages and backgrounds.

ATTACHMENTS

1. Toronto Public Library Strategic Plan Priorities and Goals, 2012-2015

<http://www.torontopubliclibrary.ca/about-the-library/strategic-plan/>

2. So Much More: the Economic Impact of the Toronto Public Library on the City of Toronto

http://www.torontopubliclibrary.ca/content/about-the-library/pdfs/board/meetings/2013/dec09/10_1.pdf

3. What's On?

<http://www.torontopubliclibrary.ca/content/print-pubs/whats-on/whats-on-2014-jan-mar.pdf>

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