
**COMMUNICATIONS
GENERAL CORRESPONDENCE**

TORONTO PUBLIC LIBRARY BOARD MEETING – June 18, 2018

It is recommended that the Toronto Public Library Board:

1. receives Communication (a)* from Ian Strang dated June 6, 2018 regarding a Human Resources recruitment matter, for consideration and response;
2. receives Communication (b) from Archana Shah, Member, Toronto Public Library Board to Board members dated June 8, 2018 reporting on her attendance at the 2018 Ontario Library Association Superconference, for information.

** Confidential as the subject matter being considered is a personal matter about identifiable individuals.*

OLA 2018 Superconference
Report from: Archana Shah, TPL Board Member & Board Liaison to Youth

June 8, 2018

Fellow TPL Board members,

I wanted to thank the Toronto Public Library for the opportunity to attend the Ontario Library Association (OLA) Superconference this past January 31 to February 2, 2018. I am reporting back to the with some notes from my favourite sessions. I also encourage all TPL board members, especially new members, to attend this conference in the future as it is a useful learning experience.

1. What I Love About Being a CEO - Panel

- This was a very popular session with a packed room. The theme was about succession planning for the CEO role, and how to attract and also build a pipeline of talent within libraries for the top jobs.
- The CEOs mentioned that the unique communities they serve make library service an exciting field to be in. They are trying to think outside the box and provide nimble service.
- They also shared ideas on how to build relationships with municipalities and city governments. At one library system, councilor board members are assigned to another councilor who is not a library board member, and they proactively ask about what issues are facing other councilors and their wards, and how the library can help.
- Another library system has an advocacy committee on the library board, where community members volunteer to be library advocates and reach out to city councilors.
- One CEO visits branches directly twice a year, and asks the frontline staff what their barriers and frustrations are, as well as what they are proud of.
- Future opportunities in the next 5-10 years include finding funding from non-traditional sources (such as the Ministry of Health or Education), digitizing local history.
- In addition, there is not enough data about the librarianship profession and the work that libraries do. There is a need to engage the academic sector to perform more research about public libraries, which helps support and strengthen funding requests.

2. Creating and Marketing Library Programs for Millennials

- Young librarians presented some interesting ideas about library programming targeted to millennials (defined as people born in the 1980s to 2002, or age 16+ to 40).
- I noted with interest that there were multiple sessions on the topic of millennials at the conference this year. I thought it was great that focus is being placed on the needs of this group.
- The presenters noted that millennials without children risk becoming isolated and seek a sense of community and belonging. The young people in their communities have creative and technology-focused hobbies outside of work.
- They surveyed millennials in the area and found they are aware of library services, wanted to engage more, and are financially strained.
- Some programs that these libraries have put on include “Books on Tap”, which are book club meetings held offsite and after hours, with a variety of books ranging from self-

help, romance to gothic. Some patrons had not read the book but still attended to participate in discussions with others.

- Other programs targeted to millennials include a tabletop games night where they partnered with a local games store, and a paint night where they partnered with a local artist and charged a minimal fee to cover the cost of the program.
- One library also ran a program called 'Inklings' where 16-22 year olds could relax with hot chocolate and the ever-popular colouring books for adults.
- Another interesting program was the "How To Festival" held on a Saturday, with 44 drop-in workshops covering topics from bike repair, taking better photos with a smartphone to kickboxing. One presenter noted that millennials seem to prefer drop-in events rather than registering.
- Another program mentioned was "Bridging the Gap", targeted to younger millennials in the 16-25 age group. This group is transitioning from youth to adult. One library held a youth summit, with topics ranging from graduating to accessing housing and accessing mental health services.

3. Serving Socially Vulnerable Populations

- This session was put on by a public library system, and discussed their collaborative project with the local university
- The focus of the project was on how socially vulnerable people use the public library's spaces, and what the concerns of staff were, in order to improve services and identify where staff need support.
- Using focus groups and surveys, they gathered over 4,000 responses and came up with recommendations.
- They identified that homeless patrons were using the library for many reasons, including using the computers, researching, studying, reading, meeting friends. They had a lower level of program attendance as they were not as available in the evenings when programs were being held.
- Marginalized youth visit the library more and for longer periods, and were least likely to have computer access elsewhere.
- Their research also uncovered high rates of staff burnout and stress, with recommendations for more collaboration and debriefing sessions. For example, the social workers in the library had established support structures and something similar was needed for library staff.
- In addition, homeless patrons were identified as great resources to help others with questions about how to find health services and meals.

4. In the Not Too Distant Future: Robots, AI, and the Future of Libraries

- This was a very interesting talk about technology and the future of libraries.
- Some suggestions for how libraries can stay relevant in a time of automation and new technologies is to focus on proactive 'customer service' and to gather data and research to make sure the services libraries provide are in line with what patrons want.
- Another suggestion was to provide STEAM (science, technology, engineering, arts, math) based programming for adults, as the focus is generally on children's programs. One example would be robotics workshops for adults.