

Toronto Public Library

2011 Operating Budget – Budget Committee Update

Consolidate Urban Affairs at Toronto Reference Library

Current Urban Reference and Research Service

TPL currently operates two municipal and urban affairs library services in separate locations that serve the entire City, the largest being the Urban Affairs Library (UAL) located in 13,700 square feet of leased space at Metro Hall and the smaller urban affairs service that is part of the Business and Urban Affairs Department at the North York Central Library (NYCL). Both are part of the Research and Reference service tier. Consolidating these two urban affairs services at TRL would preserve their core service of extensive collections and research support in this subject area while contributing significant savings, primarily through the elimination of lease costs paid to the City for the Metro Hall location and reduction in staffing levels.

Of the two services, the relocation of UAL to TRL has the greatest impact on users. Current services, activity levels and costs include:

- 48.5 service hours per week, Monday to Friday;
- 113,000 catalogued books and government documents;
- 300 periodical subscriptions; extensive microfilm, community newspapers, newspaper files, pamphlet and audiovisual collections;
- nine computer workstations offering Internet access and Microsoft Office applications; wireless access;
- meeting room and four private study booths;
- an extensive urban affairs collection that forms TRL's research collection on the subject
- a circulating corporate collection that Councillors and City staff are able to borrow;
- information service for the public and detailed corporate research services for the City of Toronto;
- 2010 budget:
 - library materials budget of \$0.105 million;
 - annual lease payment to City of \$0.436 million;
 - gross operating budget of \$1.198 million;
- staff establishment of 8.8 FTEs.

The volume of public research activity and the specialized corporate research have decreased since the move of the seat of government to City Hall. The performance measure comparisons between 2000 and 2009 are:

	2000	2009
Reference requests	14,425	9,125
Corporate research projects	1,339	332
In library use of resources	99,075	48,550

Research User Impacts and Remedies

From a service perspective, while there are some losses, there are overall net gains for the research users as a result of consolidation of urban affairs services at TRL. The core research collection would continue to be available publicly as a standalone consolidated collection on the second floor at TRL. The collection would continue to be developed and maintained by the current UAL librarian who would also take the lead in delivering the reference and research service to the public and City Council and staff. The service would have greater infrastructure support at TRL providing capacity for increased user education activity and public programming on related topics. Users would also have the benefit of large related collections in close proximity to support their research needs. Access to the collections and staff support would be increased from the current 48.5 hours service week in the current location to 60 hours per week and an additional 3.5 hours on Sunday at TRL.

Access to the corporate research service and circulating collections provided to City Council and staff at Metro Hall would be less convenient for current users with no immediate access to documents to support their work. Those who wanted to use the collections would have to travel greater distances to TRL.

Adequate notice of the change would be provided to all users. Information on the Toronto Reference Library will be provided including web, telephone and email contact points.

Urban Affairs Service at TRL

Concerns have been expressed about the level of service that would be available to current users if the UAL services were consolidated at TRL. Current service levels would certainly be maintained, and in some cases services would be improved. The distance from Metro Hall to TRL is 3.6 kilometres. Both facilities are on the subway line.

Collections

At TRL, the core UAL research collections would be housed together, supported and maintained by the current UAL librarians who would also provide public reference service and corporate research service.

The UAL research collections would be housed together as a unit on the second floor within the Humanities and Social Sciences Department which holds related and complimentary subject material. The “Toronto Collection” (approximately 36,000 items) is a collection of major Toronto books and documents, generally from the 1980’s to the present with particular strengths in planning documents on major municipal issues such as transportation, housing, environmental assessments, refuse disposal and recycling, water supply, and poverty and a wealth of material on Toronto’s neighbourhoods and

people. Government documents (approximately 70%) are mostly unique while the commercially published books (30%) have some overlap with TRL.

The “Urban Affairs” collection (approximately 68,000 items) is composed of post-1990 material in the urban studies field that are not Toronto-specific but with a Canadian, American and British emphasis. Core subject areas are municipal and local government, housing, urban communities and transportation, and represents TPL’s major system collection on these subjects. It also includes more general subject areas such as architecture, social issues, the environment, etc, when the material focuses on the city or urban environment. Approximately 70% of the collection is commercially published titles and the rest are government documents.

Primary users of this core research collection are students, academics, architects, planners, consultants and City staff. They will continue to find the research collection as a cohesive whole at TRL.

Other research collection components such as pre-amalgamation City Council minutes that are not available on the City’s website, municipal legislation, indexes and abstracts, periodicals and Toronto area planning maps would all be integrated with similar material on the second floor.

Currently, 43.4% of the collection is housed on public shelves with the remaining 56.6% in closed stacks but available through staff retrieval. A similar balance would be maintained at TRL.

The Corporate circulating collection (approx. 8,000 items) is a current collection of topical work-related materials that have circulated only to City of Toronto staff. Subject coverage includes computers and systems management, human resources, public administration and finance and circulating copies of recent City publications on all topics. The majority of this collection is duplicated in the system and many of these items can be transferred and circulated from NYCL.

The small circulating Careers Collection (approx. 100 items) includes only titles that are duplicated in a larger collection at TRL. The UAL copies can be integrated into the TRL circulating careers collection.

The Urban Affairs Collection at NYCL is a much smaller stand-alone collection of some 12,700 items, of which 6,700 items are reference and 6,000 circulate. The core of the research collection consists of current and historical municipal and related government documents, including predecessor municipalities, but with an emphasis on North York. Current acquisitions largely reflect planning and zoning issues in North York and key reports from the City of Toronto. Titles from mainstream publishers on urban affairs trends and issues supplement the collection. Many of the government documents duplicate titles in UAL and it is estimated that only about 10 – 15% of them will be transferred to TRL in the consolidation of services.

Staffing and Service Support

If the UAL collection is relocated to TRL, the most suitable location would be the second floor, in the Humanities and Social Sciences department, the department with the closest subject affinity to the Urban Affairs collection. The majority of the librarians at Urban Affairs (four of the current 5.2 FTEs) will be reassigned to this department. Expertise in the subject area will be maintained and through training and knowledge exchange, other department librarians will also develop expertise in the Urban Affairs collection. In the revised plans for the subject departments, there is only one information desk per floor. In keeping with this service principle and for maximum efficiency, there will not be a separate Urban Affairs Desk at TRL, but efforts will be made to have at least one UAL librarian on desk or on call at all times. Customers should not experience any difference in reference service from what they currently experience UAL.

Corporate Research Service

The Corporate Research Service can be continued with the current team of UAL librarians and if required, can be expanded to the broader team as expertise permeates through the department. With the convenience of email, an existing delivery service to City Hall and the introduction of a web request form, the service should continue in much the same way as it does at UAL.

Collection Development

Separate lines for the UAL collection in the library materials budget will be maintained within the overall TRL budget in order to fulfil information service needs and collection development goals for urban affairs material. The librarians that move with the UAL collection will continue to develop and maintain the collection. Collection expertise will be maintained and it is expected that public service will be enhanced with the close proximity of other related collections at TRL. Staff will continue to liaise with the City to ensure that key City reports are acquired. Librarians will also outreach to visit City departments to promote the collection and corporate research service, and will continue outreach efforts to schools to maintain relationships and promote services.

Infrastructure Support

At TRL, UAL will have the advantage of an existing infrastructure of building support, security, in-charge functions, stacks retrieval and the proximity to other collections with interrelated subjects. The Le@rning Centres at TRL will provide greater capacity for tours, class visits and user education sessions to increase awareness of the UAL collection and how it can support researchers' needs. The larger TRL facility and longer service hours will also facilitate more public programming related to urban affairs subjects. The Urban Affairs service will receive more exposure at TRL and should be able to expand its pool of users.

Cost Savings

Relocation of the UAL collections would need to be coordinated with the construction work at TRL and could not take place until the fall of 2011. Relocating the urban affairs services to Toronto Reference Library would save \$0.729 million; \$0.100 million in 2011 and an additional \$0.629 million in 2012. The costs to consolidate the collections are estimated at \$0.225 million. The savings in 2011 are \$0.325 million, less the moving costs, for a net savings in 2011 of \$0.100 million and include the elimination of 1.1 FTEs. The more significant savings occur in 2012 with an additional savings of \$0.629 million and elimination of 2.5 FTEs.