TORONTO PUBLIC LIBRARY

Branch Staffing Reduction Impacts

Date:	August 21, 2014
To:	Budget Committee
From:	Acting City Librarian

SUMMARY

The purpose of this report is to respond to a Toronto Public Library Board Budget Committee request to report regarding how a reduction of 19 full-time equivalents (FTEs) from the District branches and Research and Reference libraries would be implemented in 2015 without reducing open hours or adversely impacting program delivery.

The staff investigation of the Committee's request has been based not only on research conducted since the date of the request, but also on research, analysis and consideration of similar matters, including reduction scenarios, from past budget years. In this report, the presentation of the results highlights the activity levels and hours of the District branches and Research and Reference libraries, the staffing reductions that have already taken place in them, and the central role of these libraries in developing and delivering Toronto Public Library's (TPL) overall service program and in achieving TPL's strategic plan.

With respect to the Committee's motion and for the Committee's consideration, the conclusion of the report is that a reduction of 19 FTEs from the District branches and Research and Reference libraries in 2015 cannot be implemented without service impacts. Staffing reductions would have some impact on current services and would also challenge TPL's ability to be responsive to changing customer service expectations and to achieve the initiatives in the strategic plan. The nature and extent of any impacts would be relative to the size of the staff reduction.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

There are no financial impacts resulting from this report beyond what has already been approved in the current year's budget.

The Director, Finance and Treasurer, has reviewed this financial impact statement and is in agreement with it.

DECISION HISTORY

At its April 17, 2014 meeting, the Budget Committee requested an update on the Branch Staffing Model and an explanation of changes made to the model since 2011, including the FTE count for each branch.

At its July 28, 2014 meeting, the Budget Committee reviewed the Branch Staffing Model Update report and adopted the following motion:

"*Requests staff report back at the next meeting of the Budget Committee on how the following would be implemented for 2015: a reduction of 1FTE average per district branch and research and reference branch without reducing open hours or adversely impacting program delivery.*"

ISSUE BACKGROUND

In the July 28, 2014 Branch Staffing Model Update report, the Budget Committee was provided with information on the Library's Service Delivery Model, public service staffing responsibilities and staffing requirements for both Branch and Research and Reference libraries.

The report outlined staffing reductions already achieved since 2011, described the factors taken into account when allocating staff for public service locations, and outlined public service staffing responsibilities for four of the key public service staff positions (librarians, supervisors, public service assistants, and pages).

Factors taken into account when determining staff levels are service tier, activity levels (visits, in-branch check-outs and renewals, in-library use, information requests, program attendance and workstation users), community needs, open hours, and the size and layout of the facility. Activity and staffing levels vary widely by service tier, starting from the smallest Neighbourhood branches and ranging up to large Research and Reference libraries. As well, some work is not captured in the activity level statistics, including collections maintenance, outreach and community engagement.

Since 2011, there have been a number of staffing changes at Toronto Public Library. A Lean Six Sigma review of the Library's process intensive operations was undertaken and technology driven initiatives were extended to increase efficiencies, improve customer service and reduce costs. This was followed by the Voluntary Separation Program in 2012 where the number of staff in the branches and the Research and Reference libraries was decreased by 68.3 FTEs. This was achieved through a combination of efficiencies identified in the Lean Six Sigma review and technology driven efficiencies. A further reduction of 4.5 FTEs was made in the branches in 2013. The majority of the staffing reductions that occurred between 2011 and 2013 were concentrated in Research and Reference libraries and District branches.

At the same time, as a result of the introduction of standard scheduling efficiencies and self-service technologies, 272.5 open hours per week were added between 2007 and 2013. This was achieved without any increase in staffing by reallocating staffing resources to cover the extended hours based on service requirements. In addition as part of the approved 2014 operating budget, further efficiencies and additional staff (4 FTEs) were combined to expand open hours and open new branches (10 FTEs at Fort York and 10 FTEs at Scarborough Civic Centre) for a total of 158.5 new hours per week. Excluding the two new branches, 45% of the hours increases took place in District branches and Research and Reference libraries where the number of staff required per hour is highest.

The 19 District branches and Research and Reference libraries also contribute significantly to activity levels at TPL. A total of 19% of TPL's branches receive 44% of all visits, 37% of all in-branch circulation, 48% of all information requests and 43% of all program attendance. Their role in the measureable success of TPL is considerable.

Public service staff complements are continually assessed. Ongoing adjustments are made to meet changing patterns of use and service requirements that reflect strategic plan initiatives and activity levels. For example, some resources are being shifted from positions responsible for physical handling of materials to positions that have the skills and flexibility to support evolving strategic directions as e-circulation is gradually changing patterns of use. As a portion of total circulation, it has been increasing year over year, from 0.5% in 2009 to 10% in the first half of 2014. While this trend may level off, it is expected to continue to have an impact into 2014 and 2015 as the range of downloadable content expands. However, it still represents a small percentage of the Library's total circulation and has created a demand for staff assistance in using the new e-reading devices and downloading content. These demands and challenges are being addressed on a daily basis in branches across the City.

Other new services and activities being taken into account when adjusting staffing levels include digital innovation hubs and maker programs; creating digital content; children's and youth initiatives; older adults' initiatives; and roving and bookable reference.

Examples of these adjustments include the 2013 reconfiguration of the departments and staffing at the Toronto Reference Library and North York Central Library to address changing service needs and the 2014 reallocation of staff to support the opening of Digital Innovation Hubs.

COMMENTS

The TPL Vision statement envisages Toronto Public Library 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.

TPL's performance, reputation and customer feedback indicate that the Library is reaching successfully towards that Vision. The Library continues to be busy and responsive with high activity levels. In 2013, the Library circulated 31 million items, processed 4.5 million holds,

welcomed 18.5 million visitors, answered 7 million information requests, and offered 31,000 programs with an attendance of 808,000 people.

The Toronto Public Library has a reputation for providing excellent customer service, for providing innovative services and for being responsive to community needs. Survey results from 2013 show that Toronto Public Library continues to be a well-used and highly valued service in Toronto. Almost three-quarters of adult Torontonians (72%) used library services in the past year and 97% were satisfied with the overall quality of public library service. The vast majority of Toronto residents (92%) also indicated that public libraries are an important resource for the community.

To continue to meet the needs of Torontonians in a changing service environment, TPL's strategic plan focuses on e-content, e-services, and technology; reading and early literacy; and support for culture, creativity and innovation delivered through a wide range of programming and services. Initiatives in the areas of bookable reference, enhanced self-service, digital innovation hubs, and children's and youth services are being implemented.

District branches and Research and Reference libraries are key drivers of the Library's strategic initiatives and supporters of system activity. Reductions in staffing levels at these key locations will impact both the individual branches and the achievements of the system as a whole. To explain these impacts, the following sections of this report review the roles of Research and Reference libraries and District branches and analyze the strategic and service impacts of the reduction of 19 FTEs.

Role of Research and Reference Libraries

The two Research and Reference libraries provide comprehensive and specialized collections and services with an emphasis on access to and preservation of a broad range of information resources. This tier supports the provision of centralized and unique service development and delivery. In addition, it provides physical and technology infrastructure that supports large numbers of users from across the city.

The Research and Reference libraries deliver three very different types of services, each with unique staffing requirements. Large and small subject-based departments are responsible for delivering information and research assistance to the public and for maintaining extensive collections. Circulation departments are responsible for carrying out very large numbers of customer transactions that include library registrations, circulation and holds. A significant number of departments provide specialized or centralized system-wide services to limit redundancy and maximize efficiency. Examples include Answerline, user education, digital production, interlibrary loan and new services like the Digital Innovation Hub and Asquith Press.

Staff work on teams such as collection development, information services, reader's advisory, children's, youth, and older adults services. A base level of staff to operate departments across the service week is maintained in all cases. Staff are allocated according to the varying responsibilities associated with designated service priorities. These may include:

- public service activity (information requests, computer use, circulation, holds and collection size);
- collection development and maintenance;
- retrieval of library items from closed stacks for use in-library (e.g. 75% of TRL's collection is not available on public shelving);
- programming, special events, partnerships and outreach;
- user education, computer training and curriculum support through student research training and class visits;
- support for website and content development;
- specialized service delivery requirements in unique or system-wide support departments.

Role of District Branches
District branches offer more in-depth services and longer hours than many Neighbourhood branches as well as supporting Neighbourhood branch staffing, collections, services, programs, and community engagement. They are larger than Neighbourhood branches and have more service points, often distributed across more than one floor. District branch services include:
- broader and deeper collections, including more languages and formats;
- broader and deeper information service and reader's advisory;
- services for people with disabilities;
- user education in Learning Centres;
- programs serving customers from a wider area;
- larger spaces with more zones to supervise and manage.

Neighbourhood branches rely on support from the District branch to maintain hours and operations. District branches support Neighbourhood branch staffing by:
- coordinating staffing in the District;
- hiring pages;
- providing staffing relief coverage;
- managing District schedules.

District branch staff take the lead in fulfilling strategic objectives by:
- representing the District or the broader Area on system work teams such as collection development, information services, reader's advisory, children's, youth, and older adults service teams;
- leading community engagement and partnerships in the District and with Neighbourhood Improvement Areas;
- supporting services and programs by offering, for example, one-on-one information services in multiple locations;
- supporting outreach such as Kindergarten and Grade 4 Outreach;
- providing staff training;
- maintaining the collections in Neighbourhood branches.

Customer Service Impacts

The reduction of 19 FTEs at the District branches and Research and Reference libraries cannot be implemented without service impacts. On a day-to-day basis, these may include:

- Delays in getting materials into the hands of the public, including holds, returns and new items;
- Delays in responding to customer enquiries and providing customer service;
- Closing service desks and reducing responsiveness to information requests;
- Canceling or reducing the number of programs and outreach visits; e.g. Kindergarten Outreach;
- Fewer programs and increased wait lists for programs such as Ready for Reading story times;
- Reduced capacity to maintain safe and welcoming environments;
- Reduced capacity to support community engagement and partnerships;
- Reduced capacity to participate in and support staff training.

These reductions would potentially also have an impact on all library branches because of the role the District branches and Research and Reference libraries play in the overall network of branches. They have corporate responsibility for service planning, achieving strategic plan initiatives and health and safety. They take the lead on developing and implementing service plans based on local community needs and contribute to the development of strategic plans. Reducing staff would limit the Library's ability to respond to changing services by reallocating resources. District branches also support Neighbourhood branch staffing by providing staff coverage for vacations and illnesses.

Another potential impact is on the achievement of TPL's gapping. A high proportion of this gapping is currently achieved in the District branches and Research and Reference libraries. With fewer staff at these locations, meeting the required gapping budget would be more difficult.

CONCLUSION

Staffing resources in the District branches and Research and Reference libraries have been optimized over the last five years. Open hours have been expanded and the number of staff reduced while the level of activity continues to be high with the introduction of new services. As a result of the cumulative effect of these changes, further reductions in FTE cannot be implemented without an impact on service, both in these branches on a daily basis and more broadly on a system level as TPL seeks to be responsive to changing customer service expectations and to achieve the initiatives in the strategic plan. As always, the Library will continue to seek to increase its efficiency as it has done in the past to reduce costs. As opportunities arise, any savings will be integrated into operating budget planning and development.

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SIGNATURE

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