

Advertising Policy – Proposed Revisions

Date:	December 17, 2012
To:	Toronto Public Library Board
From:	City Librarian

SUMMARY

This report responds to Toronto Public Library Board’s request at its February 27, 2012 meeting to refer to the *City Librarian consideration of the addition of 10(i) [The Library will NOT accept the following types of advertising content:] “promotion of products and services that are targeted to children” to the [Advertising] policy, and to report back to the Board at the end of Phase 1.*

To consider the question of whether to include a statement limiting advertising to children in the Advertising Policy, staff conducted an extensive environmental scan examining research related to the impacts of advertising on children, current practices in the City and public and library sector regarding advertising. Advertising to children has become a topic of much debate and requires careful consideration.

The report recommends that the Advertising Policy include a statement excluding commercial advertising to children with additional measures to limit children’s exposure to commercial advertising for adults in the Library. This recommendation seeks to balance the Library’s role in providing a welcoming and supportive environment for all with the Library’s revenue goals. Research shows that children lack the cognitive development to understand and analyze the persuasive intent behind advertising. Non-commercial promotions, including public service and government announcements and promotions for library services, programs and collections will continue to be offered.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The City Librarian recommends that the Toronto Public Library Board:

1. adopts the amendments to the Advertising Policy as included in Attachment 1 and summarized below:

- a) specific Directives of the Advertising Policy be amended to include 10(i):

The Library will not accept the following types of commercial advertising content:

- commercial advertising primarily targeted to children, including but not limited to the commercial advertising of food and beverages directed to children.

- b) Processes for Advertising with the Library of the Advertising Policy be amended to include:

In considering the approval and placement of commercial advertising the Library will limit children's exposure to advertising by considering:

- the manner in which the advertisement or promotion is presented, not accepting commercial advertising that uses animation, cartoons, puppets and persons that are well known to children;
- the time and place that the advertising is presented, such as in areas of libraries and the website designated for children;
- the nature and intended purpose of the product or service that is advertised, such as products and services where the primary users are children (e.g. sugary cereals).

- c) The Scope of the Advertising Policy be amended to include the following exception:

This Policy does not apply to advertising targeted to children in the following categories: books or other material in the Library's collections, government advertisements, and public service announcements.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

The recommendations in the report are not anticipated to have a significant impact on revenue opportunities.

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

DECISION HISTORY

At its February 27, 2012 meeting, the Toronto Public Library Board approved the Advertising Policy, with the recommendation that the Toronto Public Library Board:

“refers to the City Librarian consideration of the addition of 10(i) [The Library will NOT accept the following types of advertising content:] “promotion of products and services that are targeted to children” to the policy, and to report back to the Board at the end of Phase 1.

<http://www.torontopubliclibrary.ca/content/about-the-library/pdfs/board/meetings/2012/feb27/minutes.pdf>

BACKGROUND

To propose a recommendation on advertising to children, staff completed an environmental scan of research and current practices. Specifically, the following information was considered:

- research regarding the impacts of advertising on children;
- legislation and industry standards related to advertising to children;
- recommendations of the Toronto Board of Health regarding advertising to children;
- the Library’s Sponsorship Policy related to limiting food and beverage advertising to children;
- Ontario Library Association’s statement on Children’s Rights in the Public Library endorsed by the Board as an appendix to the Materials Selection Policy.

Research on the impacts of advertising to children

There has been increased research and awareness around the potential impacts of advertising on children, and as a result, although not yet legislated, there is movement in both academic and public health communities to advocate for the limitation of children’s exposure to advertising.

The potentially harmful effects of food and beverage advertising are well known. Food advertising typically does not align with the recommended nutritional requirements,ⁱ and unhealthy food represents a disproportionate amount of the food advertising space.ⁱⁱ Advertising influences children’s desires and requests,ⁱⁱⁱ their patterns of food intake, and the quantity consumed,^{iv} leading to an increased consumption of unhealthy foods and unhealthy eating patterns.^v It has been linked to significant concerns in children’s health, including an increase in childhood obesity and diabetes.^{vi}

Ongoing research has highlighted additional issues related to the potential harmful impacts of advertising on children. Academic research has shown that children do not have the same cognitive capacities to critically decipher advertising as adults do.^{vii} Children under the age of eight are shown to have little understanding of the persuasive intent behind advertising,^{viii} and lack the information-processing skills to be skeptical and critically analyze the advertising.^{ix x xi} Children between 8 - 12 can potentially recognize

advertising, depending on whether the ad triggers memory cues.^{xii} Both age groups are shown to be influenced by the advertising,^{xiii} resulting in an increased demand for the products, often by pestering their parents to purchase the items.^{xiv xv xvi} Advertising creates demand in children for items that they have no direct power to acquire.

Advertising to children has been shown in research to influence how children grow up, and have lifelong impacts. One area that children are influenced by advertising is their self-image, as advertising has been linked to gender-stereotyping^{xvii} and the sexualization of childhood.^{xviii xix} Children's buying patterns and habits for the rest of their lives^{xx} can be influenced through brand recognition and loyalty,^{xxi} as well as through the increase in materialistic attitudes.^{xxii}

Industry Standards

Similar to many countries, the Canadian advertising industry is self-regulating. The *Canadian Code of Advertising Standards* places general restrictions on what may be advertised to children. Advertising Standards Canada specifies that advertisements cannot use children's inherent trust or sense of loyalty and ads may not harm the children physically, emotionally or morally.^{xxiii}

City of Toronto Board of Health

The Board of Health is participating in advocacy efforts nationally, provincially and locally to ban commercial advertising to children in recognition of the potential negative health effects. To support this work, the Board of Health has analyzed advertising practices of Agencies, Boards and Commissions in the City of Toronto and has been involved in reviewing development of the Toronto District School Board's advertising policy anticipated in 2013. The Board of Health is concerned that self-regulation may be inadequate to address the concerns that are associated with advertising targeted to children,^{xxiv} especially in the face of new media such as the Internet.^{xxv}

Toronto Public Library: Sponsorship Policy

The Library's Sponsorship Policy (approved 2002, amended 2008) contains wording to disallow sponsorships for programs and services from companies whose products and services cannot legally be sold to children, are inappropriate for use by children, or contain advertising for food and beverages directed at children.^{xxvi}

The Ontario Library Association's Statement on Children's Rights in the Public Library

The Library's mission of providing service in a welcoming and supportive environment is reinforced through the Ontario Library Association's Position on Children's Rights in the Public Library^{xxvii} endorsed by the Board as an appendix to the Materials Selection Policy. The statement outlines that children in public libraries have the right to: a library environment that complements their physical and developmental stages; a welcoming, respectful, supportive service from birth through the transition to adult user; and to have library policies written to include the needs of the child.^{xxviii}

RECOMMENDED POLICY DIRECTIONS

In recommending that the Library not accept advertising to children, careful consideration was given to balancing the Library's revenue generation goals with the Library's mission and values, the practices of other public sector organizations as well as emerging research, trends and social norms related to advertising and children outlined above.

It is recommended that the Advertising Policy be amended to include language which prohibits commercial advertising targeted to children, and requires that, when considering the approval and placement of commercial advertising, the Library will limit children's exposure to advertising by considering: the manner in which the advertisement or promotion is presented; the time and place that the advertising is presented, and the intended purpose of the product or service that is advertised. Exceptions to these restrictions apply to the following types of advertising: advertisements of books or other material in the Library's collections, government advertisements, and public service announcements

Recommended changes to the Advertising Policy are included in Attachment 1.

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SIGNATURE

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ATTACHMENTS

Attachment 1: Advertising Policy with proposed amendments

Endnotes

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- ^{xxvii} Endorsed by Toronto Public Library Board through the Materials Selection Policy
- ^{xxviii} Toronto Public Library, Materials Selection Policy, Appendix 4