TORONTO PUBLIC LIBRARY

**STAFF REPORT
ACTION REQUIRED**

Alternative Library Service Delivery including Pop-ups

Date:	June 22, 2015
To:	Toronto Public Library Board
From:	City Librarian

SUMMARY

The purpose of this report is to explore options for alternative service delivery, including pop-ups at Toronto Public Library. Initiatives currently underway are reviewed. An overview of opportunities for further extending service into the community is provided. Technology offers new options for extending library service beyond the walls of library branches, and new community engagement and outreach initiatives provide opportunities to deliver programs and services in local communities. Future directions will be considered within the context of the new strategic plan.

These possibilities need to be balanced with the Library's existing infrastructure to ensure that new and existing programs and services are sustainable. The establishment of pop-up storefront branches is not recommended at this time given the extensive branch infrastructure that already exists in Toronto and the challenges involved in maintaining existing locations in a state of good repair. Piloting other types of alternative library service delivery will help the Library to better understand community needs and develop criteria for establishing these types of service. The importance of continuing to expand the delivery of library service outside the walls of library branches is recognized.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The City Librarian recommends that the Toronto Public Library Board:

1.   does not adopt a pilot project for a pop-up storefront branch; and

2.   requests staff to explore additional options for pop-up and alternative community-based services as part of the strategic planning process.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

There is no financial impact beyond what has already been approved in the current year's budget. Implementing alternative library service delivery, including pop-ups may have an impact on capital and operating budgets in future years.

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

DECISION HISTORY

At its February 17, 2015 meeting, the Toronto Public Library Board approved the following motion:

That the Toronto Public Library Board requests staff to:
1. *explore the feasibility of opening a "pop-up storefront branch" as a pilot project at a suitable location within the City of Toronto, along with the appropriate services, which could be offered on a smaller scale than our currently operated branches;*
2. *explore opportunities for partnerships in operating the pilot project with City of Toronto Departments, as well as suitable partners in the private sector;*
3. *submit a request to the City of Toronto for the 2016 capital/operating budget cycle, if feasible; and*
4. *report back to the June 22, 2015 Board of Directors meeting.*

ISSUE BACKGROUND

Toronto Public Library has a long history of offering services outside the walls of library branches. Bookmobile service, deposit collections in seniors' residences and hospitals, and home library services are all examples of how the Library has reached out to provide convenient service within the community. Library participation in events like Word on the Street and Geek Street are also examples of pop-up programming. More recently, technology has expanded the range of services that can be offered. Public libraries world-wide have been experimenting with a variety of options that extend the reach of the library. These new service models typically have a small footprint and are located in places where people gather in the community. They may be true pop-ups, where service is offered for a short period of time. Or they may offer service on an ongoing basis. The focus is often on self-service and may or may not involve staff being on site.

The range of alternative services being offered by libraries is wide. Self-service kiosks allow customers to borrow library materials, pick-up holds, download e-content, and charge mobile devices. After hours card access to small library spaces can extend service beyond staffed hours. Some small libraries go even further, with no onsite staffing component at all. Programming pop-ups of different types are offered in many communities. Storytelling, maker spaces, and technology labs are offered off-site in indoor or outdoor community spaces or in specially outfitted vehicles. Googling pop-up libraries yields some interesting results, including airport libraries, park libraries and even a swim-up library located in a lake!

COMMENTS

A number of initiatives are currently underway at Toronto Public Library that explore new service models and utilize new technologies to build and expand services in a way that both

ensures the quality of service and supports efficient delivery. Some pilots have been completed, while other projects are in the planning stages. This next section of the report provides an overview of work in progress and identifies key planning issues for the future.

Kiosks

Toronto Public Library will be locating a self-service kiosk at Union Station as part of the Union Station Revitalization Project. Funded by the City, the kiosk will provide opportunities for improved customer service and allow the Library to gain experience with alternative service delivery models.

Automated library kiosks are used to provide access to library materials in high traffic areas such as transit stations and malls, or alternatively in remote or underserved areas. For Toronto Public Library, the kiosk service model provides an opportunity for the Library to achieve strategic goals such as extending open hours and access to services and providing greater access to self-serve technologies. It enables the expansion of library service without the costs associated with building and operating a library branch.

Initial planning for the Union Station kiosk focussed on access to high demand books and DVDs. With construction delays, new possibilities are now available and the kiosk pilot may be adjusted to incorporate downloading e-books.

If successful, the kiosk model could be considered for implementation in other high traffic community locations, including both publicly and privately-owned facilities. For example, as an overall strategy to enhance access to library services and facilities for area transit users, the creation of offsite digital kiosks in Eglinton Crosstown stations has been suggested for further exploration. These kiosks would act as a library self-service outlet for commuters, providing access to the Library's on line services and loans of popular material. http://www.torontopubliclibrary.ca/content/about-the-library/pdfs/board/meetings/2014/apr28/17.pdf Many different types of partnerships could be pursued. Kiosks could also be installed in branch lobbies for after-hours access. This idea is being explored as part of the St. Clair/Silverthorn capital project.

A kiosk costs approximately $200,000, depending on the model. There may be ongoing staffing costs associated with kiosks if physical library materials are circulated.

Digital Innovation Hub Outreach Project

Pop-up programming is another service option that is being explored. In 2014, Toronto Public Library conducted the Digital Innovation Hub Outreach Project funded by the Metcalf Foundation. The focus of this project was to provide those living in neighbourhoods with high levels of unemployment with access to new technology and training that would allow them to improve their employable skills in the area of technology and by improving their digital literacy through the Library's innovation program.

From October to November 2014, three Innovators in Communities were hired to conduct three different workshops (3D printing, filmmaking, coding & programming) in three different communities throughout Toronto. The workshops were all delivered at community

agency sites located in Neighbourhood Improvement Areas designated under the Toronto Strong Neighbourhoods Strategy. These workshops identify that there is significant interest in these new technologies, but the lack of access to the tools, and the training to use them, hinders many people from developing skills vital for prospering in an increasingly digital based economy.

These findings strongly suggest that there would be great interest in a digital literacy program in the future.

The Metcalf Foundation funded this project with an amount of $40,000, which funded the Innovators in Communities, and equipment such as the 3D printer, 12 MAC laptops, 10 Arduino kits and other outreach workshop programming-related costs. The equipment is now being rotated among branches, bringing pop-up programming to different parts of the city.

Pop-up Learning Labs

Similar in concept to the Digital Innovation Hub Outreach Project, the Pop-Up Learning Lab concept (PULL) has been developed with a focus on service to children in the middle years. Portable technology kits will allow innovative maker programming to pop-up in different library branches and in community locations. Examples of potential programs include Arduino micro-controller, Python for Pi, 3D Selfies, Green Screen and stop motion story creation. A similar concept was used to introduce gaming equipment and programs with kits that rotated initially amongst branches.

Funding is currently being sought through the Foundation to establish PULLs. The cost per PULL ranges from $10,000 to $25,000.

Thinking to the Future

Alternative library service services located in community gathering places provide outreach through programs and services and enable residents to engage in their communities. They increase the accessibility of the library and contribute to the vibrancy of local neighbourhoods. With advances in technology, there are more and more opportunities to take the library outside its walls in a meaningful way.

The initiatives currently being prototyped at Toronto Public Library are building knowledge both of implementation issues and customer wants and needs. This experience will feed into the development of new service models and criteria for selecting and locating these new services.

The different pilots underway offer types of service that are not based in traditional branches. The establishment of pop-up storefront branches is not recommended given the extensive branch infrastructure that already exists and the challenges involved in maintaining a state of good repair in them. Past experience with this type of "storefront" service, for example at Trinity/Niagara and St. Christopher's House, were not well used and were subsequently discontinued.

Strategic Plan and Next Steps
Work is now underway on the Library's new Strategic Plan. This provides an opportunity to consider alternative library service, including pop-ups within a larger planning context. While they represent an exciting opportunity for the Library to deliver services in the community, care must be taken to balance new services with the existing branch infrastructure, which is extensive. Through the strategic planning process, staff will examine these new concepts to deliver services within the context of the Library's mission and goals.

One option currently being explored is after-hours card access to small branches with limited hours, which could greatly expand access to library service. Branches could be re-configured to run with enhanced spaces and improved self-service, expanding the Library's ability to provide service to communities without an increase to operating costs. Branches would be staffed at key times to support customer registration, program delivery and information service. A self-service model might make it possible to expand open hours at branches in shared facilities to match those of the overall complex. Or, after hours card access could provide access to library services in a lobby area of a free-standing branch, in much the same manner as bank ATMs. The estimated cost of these upgrades is $450,000 per branch.

New alternative library services impact both the capital and the operating budgets. Capital funding may be required for some projects. Operating funding is required to ensure sustainability of equipment, build collections, and provide ongoing staff support. Even unstaffed kiosks require staff support, particularly if they need to be stocked with library materials or holds. Maintenance and security implications for both kiosks and unstaffed library access also need to be considered and addressed to provide the service in a safe and welcoming environment. In order to ensure the success of these new services, it will be important that sufficient additional funding is secured through both the capital and operating budget process. Given the June 2015 deadlines for the submission of the 2016 budget and the timing of the strategic planning process, budget requests for alternative library service, including pop-ups would be made for 2017 and beyond.

The content of this report was provided to Toronto Public Library Workers Union (TPLWU), Local 4948, prior to the June 22, 2015 meeting of the Library Board.

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SIGNATURE

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