

Use of Library Space for Art Exhibits Policy – Revisions

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

SUMMARY

The purpose of this report is to recommend changes to the Use of Library Space for Art Exhibits Policy, including the permanent inclusion of an art exhibits fee. A \$20/month art exhibit fee has been charged on a pilot basis for the last two years. Between \$2,000 – \$3,000 of revenue was achieved each year. While the number of applicants dipped in the second year of the pilot, the number fully recovered for the 2015/16 season, which starts in September 2015.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The City Librarian recommends that the Toronto Public Library Board:

1. approves the revised Use of Library Space for Art Exhibits Policy (Attachment 1).

FINANCIAL IMPACT

Between \$2,000 – \$3,000 of revenue will be achieved annually from art exhibits fees.

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

DECISION HISTORY

The Use of Library Space for Art Exhibits Policy was adopted at the Toronto Public Library Board's May 14, 2007 meeting. The policy was implemented in 2009. At its May 28, 2012 meeting, the Library Board requested that staff pilot a program to charge an exhibition fee of \$20 a month beginning in 2013 for one year, and report back to the Board regarding the program. On October 20, 2014, the Board adopted the following motion in response to an update report on the exhibit fee pilot:

That the Toronto Public Library Board:

- 1. extends the art exhibit fee pilot for the 2015/16 season with additional promotion of the program to be undertaken; and*
- 2. requests staff to report back to the Board in spring 2015 with a final recommendation about the art exhibit fee.*

ISSUE BACKGROUND

Toronto Public Library's Use of Library Space for Art Exhibits Policy states that "the Library is pleased to provide free space for art exhibits which reflect the diverse cultural interests of the City and its neighbourhoods, and which foster community and individual expression." The Library's 2012 – 2015 Strategic Plan includes the priority area "Create" and a goal focussing on "promoting and providing pathways to Toronto's culture through resources, services and programming." Providing space for local community artists to display their work provides visitors with an opportunity to engage in the creative life of their community, and presents community artists, including youth, with a valued place to exhibit their art locally.

Exhibitors include individual artists, artists' collectives, students at local schools, and artists sponsored by community agencies; for example, newcomer artists or artists with disabilities. Art is selected for exhibit by an annual jury comprised of community artists and library staff.

Artists exhibiting at the Library are required to set up and take down their shows by themselves. Shows are promoted on the website and in What's On, but any flyers, posters and press releases must be handled by the artist. Library staff does not provide support for sales. If artists wish to hold a launch, they must pay to rent space at the Library as well as providing refreshments and promoting the event.

Not all library branches have suitable space for art exhibits. In many cases there is not enough bare wall space available in a visible location.

A pilot aimed at revenue generation began in 2013. A \$20/month fee for art exhibits was levied during the 2013/14 and 2014/15 art exhibit seasons. Between \$2,000 and \$3,000 in revenue was generated each year. A total of 194 artists applied for the 2013/14 season, which was an average amount. Roughly 200 artists per year have applied since the program's inception in 2009. In 2014/15 a marked decline occurred in the number of applicants, with only 137 applications, a decrease of 30%. In October 2015, staff requested that the pilot be extended for the 2015/16 art exhibit season to further assess the impact of the fee on applications.

COMMENTS

A total of 197 applications were received for the 2015/16 art exhibits season, returning the number of applications to the historic average. It is anticipated that approximately 140 paid exhibits will be held in 2014/15, generating approximately \$2,800 of revenue. A total of 14 branches will regularly host monthly art exhibits. Other branches occasionally host smaller

exhibits on an ad hoc basis. Libraries will also host some unpaid exhibits, primarily children's art from local schools.

The cost of administering the fee on an ongoing basis is minimal. Payments are accepted in the branch at the time the exhibits are installed.

Overall, the art exhibit fee pilot has been successful. Revenue has increased, the number of participants in the art exhibits program is acceptable and the work involved in collecting the fee is minimal.

No increase to the fee is recommended at this time. The art exhibits programs confers a benefit to Library in beautifying our spaces with community art. A higher fee would act as a barrier to many artists who would be unable to afford a higher fee on top of the significant costs of art materials and framing.

Revisions to the Use of Library Space for Art Exhibits Policy are required to institute an art exhibit fee permanently (Attachment 1).

CONTACT

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SIGNATURE

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ATTACHMENTS

Attachment 1: Revised Use of Library Space for Art Exhibits Policy