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TORONTO PUBLIC LIBRARY

**STAFF REPORT
ACTION REQUIRED**

Achieving a Paperless Board through Technology

Date:	April 20, 2015
To:	Toronto Public Library Board
From:	City Librarian

SUMMARY

The purpose of this report is to respond to the Toronto Public Library Board's request that Library staff examine what lessons can be learned from other boards in the public sector, in particular the public library sector, which could potentially transform the conduct of Board business by moving communication and document delivery from paper format to electronic format and report back on the feasibility of such a transformation.

Large urban public libraries in Canada and the USA were asked for comments about their practices regarding electronic distribution of board documents. Based on the response to date, digital distribution of board documents is growing among library boards. Simplicity and ease of use, complemented by orientation, training and support, is paramount – a key learning from the libraries' responses and consistently mentioned in published articles and reports on board portal implementation.

The exploration of the feasibility of implementing a "paperless Board" has proceeded far enough for the Library staff to recommend a course of action, which is to implement a board portal, using the SaaS model. More detailed examination of the board portal options most appropriate for the Library Board are underway. It is recommended that the Library proceed with procurement of a board portal subscription, for implementation in 2015.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The City Librarian recommends the Toronto Public Library Board:

1. directs staff to proceed with procurement of a board portal subscription, for implementation in 2015.

Implementation Points
Subject to Board approval of the recommendation, the Library will proceed with procurement of board portal technology. Implementation will include orientation and technical support for Board members, training for Library staff responsible for board portal administration. Implementation will address governance issues; for example, transparency,

security of confidential attachments, and record retention policies. Library staff will examine options for eliminating all production of paper copies of the agenda package.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

Until the procurement process is completed, the exact financial impact will not be known. However, based on research to date, the annual cost is expected to be in the range of $10,000 to $20,000. This cost is offset by a reduction in the cost of producing the paper agenda package. In addition, there will be one-time costs for implementation and training that will be covered by the IT budget for implementation of new technologies.

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

DECISION HISTORY

The Board, at its February 17, 2015 meeting, approved the following motion:

That the Toronto Public Library Board requests Toronto Public Library staff to examine what lessons can be learned from other Boards in the public sector, in particular the public library sector, which could potentially transform the conduct of Board business by moving communication and document delivery from paper format to electronic format and report back as soon as possible on the feasibility of it.

ISSUE BACKGROUND

Large publicly held companies and very large non-profits stopped distributing paper documents to their board members several years ago, and the Gartner group predicts that by 2018, 80% of board-run organizations will be using systems that are specifically designed to support the needs of corporate boards. The widespread use of the iPad and other tablets has accelerated the adoption of purpose built applications. The Library Board, which uses technology to deliver many of its library services, has asked staff to report back on how it can lead by example, to explore options for achieving a paperless Board through technology.

COMMENTS

The current method of distributing Board agenda materials can be seen as inefficient, wasteful or "non-green" and not in keeping with popular and ubiquitous technologies that Board members use to read and download documents and communicate. The production of a paper agenda package takes staff time, incurs costs for printing, collating and courier delivery and doesn't allow for corrections prior to the Board meeting date.

The public Board agenda package is published in pdf format on the Library website at the same time that the paper agenda package is issued to Board members.

Current paper process

The Board by-laws state that notice of a scheduled meeting, and therefore the Board agenda package, is to be issued three clear days before the day of the meeting. In order to meet the notice requirement, the agenda package is couriered to Board members Wednesday afternoon for a scheduled Monday meeting. Print production of the agenda package begins on Tuesday, after the final versions of the reports have been signed. The Library prints 70 copies of the agenda package, for the Board members, the Library CEO and Directors, selected City officials, Toronto Public Library Workers Union, Local 4948 executives and for members of the public attending the Board meeting. The production statistics for the March 2015 agenda package were tracked and hard costs for production of an agenda package are $525. If a paperless Board were achieved, these hard costs could be avoided and staff time reallocated.

Investigation of electronic distribution options

Initial research in response to the Board's motion identified the existence of purpose-built content sharing and distribution services, known as board portals, specifically designed to distribute board books/agenda packages using digital mechanisms. Board portals were initially used by large publicly held companies and very large non-profits. The use of board portals was accelerated by the introduction and widespread use of the iPad and other tablets. The market place for board portals seems to consist of two tiers, those targeting large, publicly held companies and those targeting smaller organizations, including non-profits, with lower-priced offerings. It is the second tier that would be of interest to the Library.

Board portal offerings are very similar across the vendors in terms of functionality. Some of the features that would be of interest to the Library Board include:
- increased efficiency in producing and distributing the board agenda package;
- increased efficiency in the scheduling of meetings;
- security for confidential attachments;
- integration of materials such as policies, by-laws, communications, into a single tool for board members;
- tools for Board members to annotate, highlight and markup reports;
- Board member access from any location with Internet access, from a variety of devices (iPad/tablet, laptop, desktop).

Board portal offerings are available as software as a service (SaaS) solutions, which don't require any infrastructure investment or technical support from the Library. The SaaS offerings also typically include technical support for the end users. SaaS allows for quick implementation once a contract is awarded.

Lessons learned

The Library sent out a request to urban public libraries in Canada and the USA, asking for information from those libraries distributing documents electronically to their board members.
- A number of libraries published the board agenda package on their websites, similar to current practice at Toronto Public Library. These libraries reported that some board members downloaded the board agenda reports and accessed them on their tablets at meetings, as do some TPL Board members.

- One library issued iPads for all board members, installed with an app that allowed board members to annotate and highlight the board agenda documents, which were distributed as a pdf file. That library has used this method since 2011 and is pleased with the results.
- A few libraries had developed in-house board web sites, with password log-in, for the distribution of board agenda materials.
- One library uses a cloud-based mobility management service to distribute files electronically to board members.
- One library participates in the city e-agenda system for electronic distribution and access to board agenda packages. Confidential documents are still distributed by paper. That library board meets at city facilities and makes use of laptops provided by the city for their meetings.
- One library reported an unsuccessful attempt at electronic distribution and has reverted to printed document distribution.
- Red Deer Public Library presented a session at the Ontario Library Association conference earlier this year titled *Taking your Board to the Cloud* and highlighted the need for orientation for board members, training and support, the importance of ease of use and the creating incentive for adoption, *i.e.* the digital experience has to be better than the paper experience.

None of the libraries reported the implementation of a third party, purpose-built, SaaS board portal. Based on the response to-date, digital distribution of board documents is growing among library boards.

Simplicity and ease of use, complemented by orientation, training and support, is paramount – a key learning from the libraries' responses and consistently mentioned in published articles and reports on board portal implementation.

Options / Feasibility of implementation
There are a number of options for digital distribution of board materials:
1. Make board documents available in pdf format on the website or through some other digital delivery (*e.g.* Dropbox) and provide Board members with an app that allows users to annotate, highlight and markup documents on a tablet. Board members would download the pdf documents to tablets, which would be provided for board members if necessary. This option is least desirable, since its lack of simplicity and ease of use, would require a higher level of technical knowledge and would not provide a secure method of delivering confidential attachments. This option would also require a higher level of support from Library staff.
2. Build an in-house board portal with password log-in for board members. Board members would have access to a secure site, but would have to download board materials to a tablet for use, reading at board meetings. As with the first option, the board members would be provided with an app that allows users to annotate, highlight and mark-up documents on a tablet. This option would require significant IT staff investment to create an in-house portal and on-going support and development. For that reason it is not considered a viable option.
3. Subscribe to a purpose-built board portal, using the SaaS model. Good board portals offer the intuitive interface and easy navigation found in the best iPad and Android apps. After logging in, the portal app should check for newly updated materials and

alert users to begin the download process. The portal app should provide the ability to take notes, annotate or markup documents. Moving through materials should be as quick as with a physical book. Security for confidential documents should be ensured. The board portal should also be available from different devices, PC/laptop web browser, iPad/tablet app. Because of the SaaS model, there is no up-front IT investment for development or on-going development and support. Good board portal offerings provide orientation, training and on-going support for board members. The board portal option is the recommended option with the most likelihood of successful adoption.

CONCLUSION

The exploration of the feasibility of implementing a "paperless Board" has proceeded far enough for library staff to recommend a course of action, which is to implement a board portal, using the SaaS model. More detailed examination of the board portal options most appropriate for the Library Board are underway. It is recommended that the Library proceed with procurement of a board portal subscription, for implementation in 2015.

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SIGNATURE

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