



STAFF REPORT ACTION REQUIRED

Display and Distribution of Information for the Public Policy – Revisions

Date:	February 17, 2015
To:	Toronto Public Library Board
From:	City Librarian

SUMMARY

The purpose of this report is to request Toronto Public Library Board approval of the proposed revisions to the Library's Display and Distribution of Information for the Public Policy. The policy was reviewed with the goal of providing better guidance and greater clarity for branch staff and for outside organizations and individuals requesting that their materials be displayed in library branches, and to ensure the policy aligns with the Advertising Policy, which was established subsequent to the last review of this policy.

As a result of this review, staff are recommending amendments to the policy. The key amendments include: a definition of the word "commercial", provisions to ensure consistency with the Library's Advertising Policy and a clarification that only Library partners in programming or marketing are eligible to have materials of a commercial nature displayed without charge. Amending the title of the policy to Display and Distribution of Information for the Public is also being recommended.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The City Librarian recommends that the Toronto Public Library Board:

1. approves the *Display and Distribution of Information for the Public Policy* as amended (Attachment 1).

FINANCIAL IMPACT

There is no financial impact arising from the recommendations in this report.

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

DECISION HISTORY

The Display and Distribution of Information for the Public Policy was last revised and approved by the Board in February 2012. <http://www.torontopubliclibrary.ca/content/about-the-library/pdfs/board/meetings/2012/feb27/12.pdf>.

The policy was first approved by the Board in May 2008.

<http://www.torontopubliclibrary.ca/content/about-the-library/pdfs/board/meetings/2008/may12/10.pdf>

BACKGROUND

The Library provides access to information about community activities and events and space to display materials in a variety of formats, including bulk publications (e.g., community newspapers and magazines, cultural brochures, continuing and full-time education calendars). Displaying and distributing information for the public helps the Library to fulfill its mission by providing residents with opportunities for full participation in the life of their community.

Annually, the Library receives a high volume of requests from the public to display or distribute information in branches. The policy establishes the conditions and context within which the Library supports the distribution and posting of community information in its branches from individuals, community groups, agencies, institutions and government.

Requests to display materials are made locally at branches and centrally to the Communications, Programming and Customer Engagement division for all materials requested to be posted at multiple branches.

Staff undertook a review of the Display and Distribution of Information for the Public Policy and identified areas in the policy that required clarification. The policy now:

- includes a definition of “commercial”;
- aligns the policy with the Advertising Policy;
- expands the scope of the policy to outdoor signage and online materials;
- and clarifies the application of the policy to library partners.

The content of the policy has been reordered and is more consistent with other Board policies.

COMMENTS

The Display and Distribution of Information for the Public Policy sets out the context and conditions for the posting of community information without charge from individuals, community groups, agencies, institutions and government. Providing opportunities for these organizations to display and distribute information helps to foster civic engagement and awareness of community events that are of interest and more generally promotes an informed citizenry. Because there is limited space available in most branches, not all community information can be displayed. A policy that outlines the terms and conditions in which material will be displayed helps both the staff and the public to understand what will be

accepted. Generally, the policy prohibits posting material that is “primarily devoted to the sale, advertising, solicitation, or promotion of commercial products or services” unless the organization is a Library partner in programming or has partnership marketing arrangements with the Library.

In order to assist outside organizations and staff to understand what qualifies as ‘commercial’, the following definition” has been added to the policy:

Any particular activity, transaction, act or conduct connected with trade and commerce – including, but not limited to, the buying and selling of merchandise and the exchange of goods or services – whether or not the person or organization who carries it out does so in the expectation of profit.

This definition is an adaptation of the definitions used in the *Canadian Law Dictionary* and *Canadian Oxford Dictionary*.

The scope of the policy now includes materials displayed on outdoor signage and also online materials that are submitted for posting. Staff have received requests to include information on outdoor digital signage and also to post information on the Library’s website. Including these locations in the policy will provide staff with direction regarding what can and cannot be displayed.

A general clause under Section 11 has been added that gives the Library the right to reject materials that it believes could negatively impact the Library’s reputation. This is substantially the same clause the Library uses in its Advertising Policy.

Staff are also recommending changes that provide more clarity on the application of criteria in the policy. Section 2 states what restrictions apply to all promotional or informational materials regardless of their source. Namely, the Library will not display content that is:

- a. contrary to any law, including the *Ontario Human Rights Code*;
- b. contrary to any library policy;
- c. promoting or affiliated with any faith or religion;
- d. primarily political in nature (including election campaign materials);
- e. primarily devoted to the sale, advertising, solicitation, or promotion of commercial products or services (including rentals), except as permitted under Section 3;
- f. primarily devoted to promoting an event or activity that requires a fee to participate in, except as permitted under Section 3;
- g. a personal ad;
- h. an invitation to participate in medical research;
- i. a survey or contest;
- j. a petition or pledge form;
- k. for the purposes of fundraising, except from the Toronto Public Library Foundation or for the Royal Canadian Legion’s Poppy Campaign.

These restrictions are substantively the same as those in the current policy, but they are now being explicitly applied to all materials with only one exception.

Section 3 outlines the conditions under which the Library will display materials that are commercial or that promote events or activities with a fee. All other organizations wishing to display commercial advertising with the Library must do so under the Advertising Policy.

CONTACT

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SIGNATURE

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ATTACHMENT

Attachment 1: Display and Distribution of Information for the Public Policy
Attachment 2: Advertising Policy