

Comparator Measures for Canadian Public Libraries

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

SUMMARY

The attached briefing note responds to the Toronto Public Library Board's request at the April 30, 2012 meeting, that staff provide *additional comparator measures, including efficiency measures for Canadian libraries*.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

There is no financial impact arising from this report.

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

COMMENTS

Overview

Toronto Public Library participates in provincial, Canadian, and international benchmarking initiatives to compare services levels, best practices and efficiency measures within the public library sector. Comparability between library systems is influenced by the unique characteristics of cities in which library service is being provided, including the size, growth and demographic characteristics of the population, the urban form, the range of services provided, and the size, age, and location of the facilities infrastructure. Cities experiencing large population growth, including Calgary and Brampton libraries have lower service levels and continue to develop services and infrastructure to address population needs. Systems with newer branch infrastructure are able to optimally locate and build facilities which reflect current service needs and are efficiently designed.

The Canadian Public Libraries Statistical Survey is the primary source for Canadian public library benchmarking information; however, there are limitations in using the data for comparability. The survey details measures to standardize costs across municipalities, including the cost of services delivered by the respective municipality through service level agreements; however, there may be variation in what is reported.

There are also differences in both the data included in performance measures and in data collection methodology with the most difference in newer electronic measures.

FACTORS IMPACTING THE DELIVERY OF LIBRARY SERVICE IN TORONTO

Demographic Characteristics of Toronto's Population

Toronto Public Library serves a diverse and growing urban population. From 2006 - 2011, overall population growth in Toronto was 4.5%, which does not factor in undercoverage¹, or marginalized persons excluded from census counts, and turnover, or the net in and out migration from the City. These factors impact the complexity of service environments. To ensure equity of access, there is an ongoing requirement for outreach, promotion, and orientation to library service for new or marginalized residents.

Service delivery is also impacted by linguistic diversity within Toronto. Forty-five percent of the population has a mother tongue other than English or French with over 160 languages and dialects spoken and there are significant shifts in languages spoken within the City. There has been growth in the size of linguistic populations speaking Mandarin (+45%), Bengali (+22%) Persian (+11%) Tagalog (+10%), and Spanish (+3%) requiring ongoing investment in language learning resources and multilingual collections.²

The age of Toronto's population is shifting to include more young children, increasing demand for early literacy programs, and seniors with a 29% increase in those aged 60 - 64 and 28% increase in those 85+, increasing demand for recreational reading and informational programs, materials in accessible format and Home Library Service.

Other socio-economic factors that impact service delivery include rates of poverty, homelessness and persons living with mental illness. Among major Canadian cities, Toronto has the third highest rate of poverty; rates are highest in Montreal followed by Vancouver, Toronto, Winnipeg, Edmonton and Calgary.³ Low income families and residents use the library to access computers and wireless service, to upgrade their skills by attending computer classes and employment-related programs and to access collections to build literacy skills. Libraries offer programs and collections that provide constructive, low cost, cultural and recreational opportunities. Libraries are a place where residents access service and engage with the community.

¹ The rate of undercoverage in the 2011 Census is 4.69% Backgrounder 2011 Census: City of Toronto. Age and Sex Counts. http://www.toronto.ca/demographics/pdf/censusbackgrounder_ageandsex_2011.pdf Accessed December 8, 2012.

² 2011 Census" Language Backgrounder. City of Toronto. http://www.toronto.ca/demographics/pdf/language_2011_backgrounder.pdf Accessed December 8, 2012.

³ Profile of Low Income in the City of Toronto. Social Development, Finance and Administration. 2010 http://www.toronto.ca/demographics/pdf/poverty_profile_2010.pdf Accessed December 8, 2012.

Comparative Services Levels and Usage

Toronto Public Library is a mature library system with facilities and services developed over 100 years to meet the changing needs of Toronto's neighbourhoods. Toronto Public Library offers a comprehensive range of library services, including extensive research, archival and special collections and three tiers of branch service, including research and reference, district and neighbourhood branches.

Toronto Public Library services and usage per capita rank in the mid-range when compared to the nine other Canadian libraries serving a population of 500,000+. The 2011 Jurisdictional Comparative Tables for Canadian libraries serving populations of 500,000 or more are included in Attachment 1. Comparative service levels, usage and efficiency measures are summarized below with factors influencing services levels and delivery in Toronto.

Service level provided by the Toronto Reference Library

The Toronto Reference Library's history and role, physical size, breadth and depth of collections and range of services make it unique in Canada and in most North American cities; therefore, Toronto Public Library's comparative results are impacted by the size and scope of the Toronto Reference Library. For this reason, the comparative tables in Attachment 1 show Toronto Public Library with and without the Toronto Reference Library.

With collections that date back to the 1830's, the Toronto Reference Library provides access to important historical books and documents covering the history of Toronto, Ontario and Canada. The Toronto Reference Library's roots as "the people's university" began in 1830 with the establishment of the Toronto's Mechanics Institute. The Toronto Reference Library predates the establishment of the National Library of Canada in 1953 by over 100 years. There is no comparative Canadian public library with a similar background and role.

Toronto's ranking is in the lower range for measures, including square foot per capita and items added per capita when the Toronto Reference Library is removed.

Collections:

TPL offers comprehensive collections from historical and archival to current and popular, in a range of formats, subjects and reading and intellectual levels to respond to the needs of Toronto's diverse population. The depth and range of collections is not duplicated in other Canadian cities. Information and reference services support collection access and usage.

When compared to the nine other Canadian library systems serving populations of 500,000+ Toronto Public Library ranks:

Inputs:

- 1st in collection size and 2nd in collection size per capita reflecting Toronto Public Library's extensive research, special and archival collections;
- without Toronto Reference Library, TPL would rank 4th in collection size per capita;
- 4th in collection spending per capita, 6th without TRL; Edmonton, Vancouver and Calgary are higher;
- 6th in new items added per capita; Calgary, Edmonton, Ottawa, Hamilton and Winnipeg are higher.

Outputs

- 2nd in in-library use per capita reflecting TPL's extensive research and reference collections;
- 6th in circulation per capita; Edmonton, Calgary, Vancouver, Hamilton, Ottawa are higher;
- 1st in total reference requests and 4th in reference requests per capita.

Branches and Open Hours

TPL operates 98 branches, including two research and reference, 17 district, and 79 neighbourhood branches. Branches reflect historical patterns of growth and development in the City and former municipalities, and include standalone, joint and leased facilities and one and multi-floor locations in a range of sizes. Branches are popular community hubs and provide access to community, group and individual study space to respond to Toronto's dense urban form, with relatively small housing units. Cities with a newer infrastructure are able to increase efficiency through facility size, location relative to recent population growth and development, design and staffing levels.

When compared to the nine Canadian library systems serving populations of 500,000+ Toronto Public Library ranks:

Inputs:

- 1st in the number of branches and 2nd in square footage of library space per capita, 5th in square footage without TRL;
- 1st in total open hours and open hours per capita;
- 6th in open hours per branch; Calgary, Edmonton, Mississauga, Montreal and Brampton are higher.

Outputs:

- 1st in total visits and 3rd in visits per capita; Vancouver and Hamilton are higher.

Programs

TPL provides a range of programs delivered by TPL and through partnerships that contribute to the economic and cultural vitality of Toronto with a focus on literacy and

technology. Programs include high profile special events offered at the Toronto Reference Library and local branch initiatives.

Outputs

- 1st in programs offered and 4th in programs per capita; Edmonton, Montreal and Vancouver are higher;
- 1st in program attendance and 2nd in program attendance per capita.

Efficiency Measures

The efficiency of a library system is influenced by the service levels, staffing levels required to support service delivery, the extent of automation, the level of electronic usage, and the relative costs of delivering service in the municipality. Systems serving large urban populations have higher costs related to the infrastructure.

When compared to the nine Canadian library systems serving populations of 500,000+ Toronto Public Library ranks:

- 2nd highest in cost per capita, Vancouver is higher;
- 3rd highest in cost per use, Montreal and Winnipeg are higher;

It should be noted that this data is from 2011, and does not reflect budget reductions experienced in 2012.

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SIGNATURE

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ATTACHMENTS

Attachment 1: 2011 Library Jurisdictional Comparisons