

Jane/Sheppard Branch Computer Services – Update

Date:	March 23, 2009
To:	Toronto Public Library Board
From:	City Librarian

SUMMARY

The purpose of this report is to provide an update on the computer service enhancements that will be implemented when the Jane/Sheppard Branch re-opens in April 2009.

In response to community demand for enhanced computer services, staff developed a proposal for the introduction of a laptop loaning service with optional media and gaming components, to allow for flexible use of the space in the new branch, including maximizing the use of the new program/study room and the new wireless capability in the new building. Working with Councillor Augimeri, the Mayor's office and the Toronto Public Library Foundation, Microsoft Canada donated 14 reconditioned laptops along with several gaming components to enhance computer services at Jane/Sheppard Branch.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

This report has no financial impact beyond what has already been approved in the current year's budget.

The Director, Finance & Treasurer has reviewed this Financial Impact Statement and is in agreement with it.

DECISION HISTORY

Following on the public consultation for the Jane/Sheppard Branch, staff developed a proposal to enhance computer services at the Jane Sheppard Branch. Due to the pressures on the capital budget for the branch capital project, it was determined that the budget would not support the additional cost of the computer service enhancement. Information about this proposed enhancement was conveyed to the local Councillor, following up on an earlier meeting with the Mayor's office. At its meeting of September 15, 2008, as part of the adoption of the 2009 – 2013 Capital Budget Submission, the Toronto Public Library Board directed staff to seek opportunities to

enhance computer services at the Jane/Sheppard Branch and to report to the Board on the outcome.

ISSUE BACKGROUND

Access to computers is a priority for the community around Jane/Sheppard Branch as many in the neighbourhood do not have a computer at home. In its rental location, the Jane/Sheppard Branch had five computers available for booking by the public and demand for Internet use was high. In the spring of 2007, a number of consultation sessions were held to discuss the plans for the new branch. During open house events many members of the local community requested that there be more computers in the new branch. Email communication is important for the large number of immigrants in the community and often demand for the equipment in the old location could not be met.

A proposal for laptop loaning service was developed as a cost effective and adaptable solution to meet the demand for services. The introduction of a laptop loaning service will allow for a more flexible use of the space in the new branch, including maximizing the use of the new program/study room and the new wireless capability in the new building. There were five bookable Internet computers in the old branch and the project plan called for an increase of four bookable Internet computers in the new building. Although the new building is double the size of the previous leased facility, there are many demands for increased space for computers, programs, meetings, quiet study, children and teens. Standard computer workstations take up considerable space. Using laptops, the Library will be able to increase the overall number of computers available by another 14 for a total of 23 bookable Internet computers. In order to further maximize use of the laptops and the new program/study room, proposals for media and gaming components were developed as well.

COMMENTS

Working with Councillor Augimeri, the Mayor's office and the Toronto Public Library Foundation, Microsoft Canada donated 14 reconditioned laptops along with several gaming components to enhance computer services at Jane/Sheppard Branch and as described below.

Laptop Loaning

The plan is to introduce a laptop loaning service at Jane/Sheppard Branch in order to use the space in the new facility effectively. Ten laptop computers will be available for borrowing to use anywhere in the Library. The program/quiet study room will be used specifically for this purpose when there are no programming activities planned. During these times study desks will be set up for laptop use.

In addition, four laptops will be set up in the program room along a counter designed for this use. These computers will be connected (through cabling) to the Toronto Public Library network and these will be bookable in the same way as the Library's regular computer workstations so, in total, the new Jane/Sheppard Branch will have 23

computers with Internet access, an increase of 14 from the nine computers with Internet access originally planned for the new branch.

Many university and public libraries have provided laptop use and lending within the Library. They have found the service to be very popular and very well used.

Gaming

For youth, games are a leading form of entertainment, a resource for creativity and innovation, and a way to socialize. Gaming play is also widely accepted as an alternative system of learning and improving literacy with many public libraries across North America and Europe, introducing gaming as part of their services to youth. Some games, such as Nintendo Wii also require participants to get physically involved and these games could be used to provide exercise in programs for both youth and seniors. Gaming attracts new male users, youth who otherwise do not find the Library and provides a meaningful way for youth to socialize crossing cultural barriers. It also attracts an older youth audience which the Library has found very difficult to reach. Adding this component will enable staff to offer gaming programs and gaming tournaments and provide the opportunity to introduce participants to other Library programs, collections and services.

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SIGNATURE

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