



Innovation Council Update – 2018

Date:	January 21, 2019
To:	Toronto Public Library Board
From:	City Librarian

SUMMARY

The following report provides an update on the 2018 activities of the Toronto Public Library Innovation Council.

Established in November 2016, the Innovation Council met four times in 2018 and continued to provide the Library with valuable and expert advice on its innovation and technology initiatives, interesting project collaborations and valuable social networking opportunities.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

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

ALIGNMENT WITH STRATEGIC PLAN

The Innovation Council supports TPL's strategic priority of advancing our digital platforms and its initiative to foster excellence in digital service delivery and to inform service development strategies at Toronto Public Library.

EQUITY IMPACT STATEMENT

The Innovation Council consists of members from different backgrounds, lived experiences, and professional affiliations. Its diverse membership helps ensure that the group provides the Library with a diverse range of perspectives and feedback.

DECISION HISTORY

The Innovation Council was approved in Spring 2016 and established in November 2016 as a mechanism to further TPL's strategic priority of advancing our digital platforms. [An update on 2017 initiatives](#) was presented to the TPL Board in January 2018. The group's Terms of Reference state that an annual update will be provided to the TPL Board.

ISSUE BACKGROUND

The Innovation Council was established as an ongoing mechanism to provide expert advice to TPL from a range of innovative organizations and sectors, and to serve as a vehicle for TPL to broaden awareness of the Library's innovation initiatives. Members were envisioned to help identify new opportunities, networks and potential partners with whom TPL could work to advance its innovation program.

COMMENTS

Innovation Council Membership

The Innovation Council is an advisory group of recognized leading individuals from the academic, creative, and technology communities. Meeting quarterly, council members provide the Library with valuable feedback, ideas and collaboration that help shape service development and increase the Library's profile in the technology and innovation communities.

Innovation Council members are listed below. There was one membership change in 2018: the addition of Marcus Gordon.

- **Ramtin Attar** – Senior Principal Research Scientist, Autodesk Research
- **Jeremy Bailey** – Creative Director for Product, FreshBooks
- **Eric Boyd** – Founder, Sensebridge
- **Zahra Ebrahim** – Co-Leader, Doblin
- **Sarah Goodman** – Filmmaker and Writer
- **Marcus Gordon** – Manager, Visual Analytics Lab, OCAD University
- **Strahan McCarten** – Senior Vice President, Product & Strategy, eStruxture; TPL Vice Chair
- **Pamela Robinson** – Associate Dean, Graduate Studies and Special Projects, Faculty of Community Services, Ryerson University
- **Greg Wilson** – Co-Founder and Former Executive Director, Software Carpentry
- **Bianca Wylie** – Co-Founder, Tech Rest Canada; Senior Fellow, Centre for International Governance Innovation (Global Economy Program)

Key Activities

In 2018, the Innovation Council continued to serve as a great sounding board for TPL innovation and technology initiatives.

The group provided valuable feedback towards TPL's: i) Readers Services Incubator Project; ii) eLearning Portal Project; iii) Digital Privacy Initiatives; iv) Innovation Strategy.

Meetings were expanded from 60 to 90 minutes to include a 30-minute education item for Innovation Council members to learn about library programs and services. In 2018, these

education items included tours of the Special Collections at Toronto Reference Library and the new Creation Loft spaces at North York Central Library.

Several members have also initiated or influenced collaborative projects, including:

- TPL had a prolific year of collaborations with Bianca Wylie. In January, she co-presented with staff from the Innovation and Planning teams about TPL's open data programs at the Ontario Library Association Super Conference. In March, the Library partnered with Civic Tech Toronto to host the CodeAcross Toronto hackathon at Toronto Reference Library, attended by nearly 150 participants. This partnership was made possible through Bianca's negotiation. In May and November, TPL staff presented at the Go Open Data Conference, hosted in Barrie, and the Canadian Open Data Summit, hosted in Niagara Falls, respectively. Invitations to participate at these high profile events were made possible through Bianca's networking.
- Thanks to Eric Boyd, the Maker Festival was hosted for the fifth year at Toronto Reference Library, attracting over 15,000 visitors. This year's event featured an Arduino Arcade installation at the Library's Digital Innovation Hub, which allowed TPL to showcase its Arduino lending kit pilot and the unique talents of our staff.
- Greg Wilson led a full-day "How to Teach Technology" workshops for TPL staff in January and August.
- From January to April, thanks to an introduction from Ramtin Attar, TPL collaborated with Rotman School of Management on a digital inclusion challenge. As part of the final project for the "Designing in a Whitewater World" course, students addressed the following challenge: "How might libraries enable a digitally-inclusive society? How might libraries design services, programs and civic engagement opportunities that the public wants and needs to bridge the digital divides?" Students met with staff from the Learning, Innovation and Resource Planning and the Planning departments, and presented two proposals for TPL's consideration.

In 2018, Innovation Council members continued to provide invaluable networking opportunities, share resource support, and serve as ambassadors for TPL. For example:

- Innovation Council members who are active on social media and in the field of journalism regularly share news and positive testimonials about the library. For example, filmmaker and television writer Sarah Goodman regularly promotes TPL programs and services to her social media followers. After visiting the newly-renovated North York Central Library, she tweeted the following message:

"I'm lucky to be on the Innovation Council of the [@torontolibrary](#). We met this morning at the newly renovated North York Central Library & it was a reminder to me of how treasured this institution is..."

- In February, thanks to Ramtin Attar, Autodesk hosted a full-day planning meeting for TPL's Service Development and Innovation managers at its event space at the MaRS Discovery District. Staff also toured Autodesk's high-tech facility as part of the day's agenda.
- In May, Ramtin Attar gave a keynote at Future of Cities, a large technology conference in Australia. As part of his presentation, he highlighted TPL as a positive example of how cities use physical assets as social infrastructure to address the growing divide.
- In September, Bianca Wylie participated in a TPL-organized Civil Society panel about Facebook and privacy, hosted at the annual Word on the Street Festival.

Innovation Council members continue to express that being on the group has allowed them to form meaningful relationships with fellow members and to collaborate within their own fields of work.

Working Together in 2019

The Innovation Council will continue to meet in 2019. Members unanimously agreed to increase the number of meetings from four to five.

Members are also collaborating or supporting TPL programs and projects, including:

- Pamela Robinson is co-presenting with TPL Directors Pam Ryan and Linda Hazzan on Shaping Smart Cities at the January Ontario Library Association Superconference.
- Bianca Wylie and Pamela Robinson are actively involved with the planning committees for the 2019 Go Open Data Conference, which will be hosted for the first time at Toronto Reference Library in May.
- As part of July's Maker Festival, TPL is exploring the idea with Eric Boyd of packaging up the Library's maker programs under a "Month of Making" umbrella to further increase the impact and reach of the festival and TPL's maker initiatives.
- Greg Wilson will deliver another "How to Teach Tech" training session for staff in February. This year, two to three TPL staff will help Greg teach this class, so that TPL will have staff capacity to deliver this well-received training on their own.
- Several Innovation Council members have expressed enthusiasm for and interest in supporting the rollout of TPL's Innovation Strategy. This includes Greg Wilson, Jeremy Bailey and Bianca Wylie's interest in helping organize TPL's first "Fail Camp," a session being planned for the fall where TPL staff will discuss how failure is often part of the innovation process and learn how to move on from challenges and roadblocks.
- Marcus Gordon will help organize a data visualization program as part of the Library's co-development of this year's Digital Literacy Week in May.
- After hearing a presentation from Jonathon Hodge, TPL's Digital Privacy Lead, at the September 2018 Innovation Council meeting, Marcus Gordon and Pamela Robinson

expressed interest in collaborating to bring TPL's digital privacy training to OCAD and Ryerson University respectively, for faculty and students, in 2019.

- Pamela Robinson is exploring program collaborations with TPL's Learning team related to the subject of artificial intelligence.
- Thanks to an introduction from Zahra Ebrahim, TPL will partner with Toronto Biennial, a 90-day contemporary art exhibition taking place for the first time in the Fall, to host a series of programs, including an Innovator in Residence focused on digital art creation.

Library staff will continue to provide more ways for members to learn about library programs and services. TPL will continue to explore ways to collaborate on projects with members or to invite members to participate in consultation sessions outside of planned meetings.

Evaluating the Innovation Council

As stated in its Terms of Reference, "The Innovation Council will have a lifespan of four years (2016 to 2019) to coincide with the strategic plan."

As part of TPL's planning process for its new strategic plan, the Innovation Council will be evaluated. Feedback from TPL staff and council members will help inform if and how the group will evolve for future years and to support TPL's new strategic objectives.

CONTACT

Pam Ryan; Director, Service Development and Innovation; Tel.: 416-393-7133;
Email: pryan@torontopubliclibrary.ca

Ab. Velasco; Manager, Innovation; Tel.: 416-393-5903;
Email: avelasco@torontopubliclibrary.ca

SIGNATURE

Vickery Bowles
City Librarian

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment 1: Innovation Council Terms of Reference

INNOVATION COUNCIL – TERMS OF REFERENCE

NAME OF COMMITTEE:	Innovation Council
TERM:	The Innovation Council will have a lifespan of four years (2016 to 2019) to coincide with the strategic plan. External members will be asked to commit to a minimum of two years.
PURPOSE:	<p>Reporting to the Director, Service Development and Innovation, the Innovation Council consists of representatives from TPL's Innovation Team and external organizations – with a focus on technology and innovative organizations – who will serve as an advisory and advocacy group to provide feedback about the library's innovation services and programs.</p> <p>The Council supports Goal #12 of TPL's Strategic Plan Goal: <i>Develop new partnerships to support access to emerging technologies, software and expertise.</i></p>
MANDATE:	<p>Within its stated purpose, the Innovation Council will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Act as an expert for the library by providing strategic advice and counsel that can help enrich and expand TPL's innovation spaces, services, programs, and other initiatives ▪ Encourage the development of new ideas by identifying opportunities and challenges relevant to TPL's innovation initiatives – including recommending new technologies, suggesting partnership opportunities and identifying funding opportunities ▪ Advocate for and broaden awareness about TPL's innovation initiatives to the community, including influencers and industry leaders, the media, and potential partners and donors ▪ To open and enable networking opportunities for the library's Innovation Team with relevant external technology and innovative organizations
STRUCTURE:	
<u>Composition:</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ TPL Members: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Director, Service Development and Innovation ○ Manager, Learning, Innovation and Resource Planning ○ Manager, Innovation (Chair) ○ Other Innovation Staff as Required (e.g. Project Leader, Senior Service Specialist, Service Specialist) ▪ External Members: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ 1 Members from Technology Industry ○ 1 Members from Private Sector (e.g. retail, publishing) ○ 2 Member from Maker Community ○ 2 Member from Civic Tech Community ○ 1 Member from Academic Institution ○ 1 Member from Arts Community ▪ Guest Members – Invite other TPL staff as the discussion requires
<u>Meeting:</u>	The group will meet quarterly at Toronto Reference Library. Additional meetings will be scheduled as required.
<u>Reporting:</u>	The Director, Service Development and Innovation will provide updates on the Innovation Council's activities and outcomes annually.