

## **Library Kiosk at Union Station**

<b>Date:</b>	May 10, 2010
<b>To:</b>	Toronto Public Library Board
<b>From:</b>	City Librarian

### **SUMMARY**

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The purpose of this report is to inform the Toronto Public Library Board of a potential opportunity to pilot a self service library kiosk at Union Station. Automated library kiosks are a means of providing convenient access to library service at popular gathering places such as malls, transit stations and other community hubs, or alternatively, in more remote locations in the city. They provide an opportunity for the Library to achieve strategic goals such as extending service access and providing self service options at high traffic locations. A number of libraries around the world have introduced service kiosks.

Toronto Public Library was approached by the City of Toronto Union Station Revitalization Project about the opportunity to provide library service in the revitalized Union Station. Due to the nature of pedestrian traffic and because it is a transit hub, this presents an opportunity to pilot kiosk service. Piloting kiosk library service at Union Station would allow the Library to create a visible presence, a means of making material convenient and accessible and to promote the Library brand in a central transportation hub.

### **FINANCIAL IMPACT**

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Estimated cost for a single library kiosk and related collection is approximately \$200,000. This cost could be considered for inclusion in the 2011 or future year capital budget submission. Operating budget costs for ongoing support agreements are estimated at approximately \$15,000 per year. Cost details will be confirmed through further investigations.

The Director, Finance & Treasurer has reviewed this report and agrees with the financial information.

### **ISSUE BACKGROUND**

Union Station is being redeveloped and the City (through the Union Station Revitalization Project) has expressed interest in having a Toronto Public Library branch

located in the concourse. The Library has responded by indicating an interest in piloting a self service library kiosk at Union Station which would provide self service access to a limited selection of high interest books and other materials.

Toronto Public Library has two library building projects in its capital budget to serve the growing waterfront communities - relocating St. Lawrence Branch to Front and Parliament Streets and building a new branch at Fort York and Bathurst Streets. The Board's branch development strategy is to maintain existing branches and provide two additional branches in the Scarborough Centre and Waterfront areas only. No further branches are planned in this area. Service at Union Station needs to be considered accordingly.

## **COMMENTS**

An estimated 165,000 people pass through Union Station daily and this is projected to increase to approximately 330,000 by 2016 when the Union Station revitalization project is complete. The nature of library use at a location such as Union Station is anticipated to be very different from that of a typical library branch. It responds to customer demand for convenient, fast and accessible service options. Many customers would appreciate the convenience of picking up or returning items at the Station. There would also be an opportunity to support and encourage new registration during the start up of the service by assigning staff to work at the kiosk location during the launch.

Kiosks can potentially provide a means of establishing temporary or permanent service where a need is identified by population growth, or potential use is identified outside the boundaries of a traditional library branch. A kiosk enables the expansion of library service without the costs associated with building a library branch. There are other potential locations and uses for kiosk service such as subway stations. Neighbourhood partners are interested in the potential for locating "mini libraries" in community gathering spaces and the kiosk service model could provide a cost effective option.

While library kiosks have been in use for many years, there have been recent improvements. A number of libraries around the world have introduced these improved service kiosks. Currently there are two types of kiosks that dispense material and accept returns. A third version is in prototype. Some preliminary information gathering about the various models has taken place. They are compatible with our integrated library system and are compliant with the Accessibility for Ontarians With Disabilities Act, 2005. They can be stocked with a range of material including books, CDs and DVDs.

A feature of the Union Station concourse development includes a "Best of Toronto" showcase to promote art and culture in the City. It would be beneficial for the Library to have a presence as part of this showcase.

Over the summer, the investigation into kiosk service will continue with a view to bringing forward a proposal for consideration with the 2011 or future year capital budget submission.

## **CONTACT**

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## **SIGNATURE**

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