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## STAFF REPORT ACTION REQUIRED

### Open Data Policy - Update

**Date:** October 28, 2024

**To:** Toronto Public Library Board

**From:** City Librarian

### SUMMARY

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The purpose of this report is to recommend adoption of the revised Open Data Policy (Attachment 1).

The revised Open Data Policy aligns with the Library's current approach to leverage the City of Toronto's Open Data portal to publish open data sets. Furthermore, it acknowledges more explicitly the City's Open Data Policy & Principles.

The policy replaces the previous Open Data Policy (Attachment 2) and further clarifies language, separates the Open Government Licence (Attachment 3) and provides better alignment with other, existing best practice Open Data principles.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

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The City Librarian recommends that the Toronto Public Library Board:

1. approves the revised Open Data Policy (Attachment 1).

## FINANCIAL IMPACT

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

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

## ALIGNMENT WITH STRATEGIC PLAN

This policy supports the Strategic Plan's objective to provide ingredients for a democratic society through information, information literacy and civic engagement. Specifically, educators, citizen data scientists and others are offered hands-on opportunities to engage with Library data in a free, open environment.

## EQUITY IMPACT STATEMENT

The Library's approach to open data, and the relevant policy, support the Library's Equity Impact Statement by actively breaking down barriers to information, encouraging information literacy and platforms for expression.

## DECISION HISTORY

At its meeting on March 24, 2014, the Toronto Public Library Board approved the addition of an [Open Data Policy](#) to the Library's Work Plan.

In November 2015, the Library launched its first [web page that hosted a limited quantity of open data sets](#). This page then grew to include data sets and feeds related to the catalogue and MARC data, programs and events, circulation data, expanded data related to branch information, such as catchment population and rooms for rent, and top website searches.

At the same time, the Library hosted its first open data hackathon, in partnership with the City of Toronto's Open Data Team and the Open Data Institute of Toronto. The event brought together 50+ civic-minded enthusiasts, from students to seniors, to develop open data-activated ideas or visualizations related to the library's strategic plan priorities.

At its meeting on February 22, 2016, [the Library's first Open Data Policy](#) was approved by the Board.

In 2016, The City of Toronto committed to create an [Open Data Master Plan](#), and in 2017 approved a three phased approach to develop it

At its meeting on April 30, 2018, [revisions to the Library's Open Data Policy](#) were approved by the Library Board. This includes the adoption of principles that are derived from the [Open Data Charter](#) (ODC).

Since the 2015 hackathon, the Library has hosted other open data hackathons and programs such as the Open Data Book Club. In 2019, the Library hosted the Go Open Data Conference and its related hackathon event at Toronto Reference Library. Open Data 101 and 201 training sessions have also been provided to staff over several years. In June 2024, the Library hosted the Open Data Community Challenge in partnership with Genwell, the Toronto Foundation and the City of Toronto Open Data Team.

In July 2022, a Digital Strategy project entitled 'Open Data Service Optimization' was approved and launched by the Library. It closed in September 2023. This included re-issuing data sets through the City of Toronto, a [revised web presence](#) and tie-ins to events, including a [live panel discussion](#) on June 7, 2023.

## COMMENTS

### **Overview of the Library's Approach to Open Data**

After an open data set gets appropriate Library Data Sponsor sign-off, it is sent to the City of Toronto for upload to their [open data site](#). This happens one or more times in a year, depending on availability and Library resources. In the case of certain other data sets, such as a [live feed of Library events and activities](#), this happens via an automated refresh.

The feeds of data presented to the City are primarily customer activity or interactions (visits, card registrations) but not exclusively. The general theme of the data sets is the Library's primary service metrics, plus what might be available or interesting to the public. There are seven (7) active data sets with more anticipated to be added over time, while maintaining the current roster.

### **Policy Revision Approach**

At five years old, this policy is in a reasonable timeframe to review. Given the changing landscape of Open Data, some requirements for revisions are not unexpected.

The aforementioned Open Data Service Optimization project entails a change to how the Library makes Open Data available to the public. This policy revision puts this policy in line with the intent of that project.

The City of Toronto has matured their processes, policies and interface of their Open Data Portal since TPL's original Open Data Policy was written in 2018. The City has standards, and a well-organized process for on-boarding new Open Data, and are enthusiastic about including more of TPL's data into their portal. Because of this potential for synergies, there is an opportunity for a new approach. The Library's Open Data Policy should reflect that.

### **CONTACT**

Shawn Mitchell; Director, Policy, Planning & Performance Management; Tel: 416-395-5602; Email: [smitchell@tpl.ca](mailto:smitchell@tpl.ca)

### **SIGNATURE**

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Vickery Bowles  
City Librarian

## ATTACHMENTS

- Attachment 1: Open Data Policy – Updated 2024
- Attachment 2: Open Data Policy (2018)
- Attachment 3: Open Government Licence

## **Open Data Policy**

### **Policy Classification: Board Policy**

**Motion # and Approval Date:** DRAFT October 28, 2024

**Motion # and Last Revision Date:**

#16-041 February 22, 2016

#18-063 April 30, 2018

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**Effective Date:**

[Provide date when the policy is to come into effect]

**Purpose**

This policy establishes the guiding principles by which Toronto Public Library data is to be made available to the public in Open Data format (see Definitions section of this document). The Open Data Policy is meant to eliminate barriers and provide free and equitable access to library data so that members of the public use and are encouraged to collaborate with Toronto Public Library the Open Data Policy aligns with Toronto Public Library's values of accountability and innovation.

**Scope**

The Open Data Policy applies to information provided by Toronto Public Library and made available through the [City of Toronto Open Data Portal](#).

Toronto Public Library's Open Data Policy will:

- provide a mechanism to grant access to the public Toronto Public Library's Open Data sets;
- set minimum requirements and standards for an Open Data set to be deemed ready for public release;
- describe supporting documentation and appropriate licensing for use by the public.

**Underlying Principles**

Toronto Public Library adopts the following guiding principles for Open Data and recognizes these principles as providing the necessary structure for public sector engagement with open government and to ensure that data is open, accessible

and reusable:

1. **Open by Default:** Open Data should be open by default unless it compromises personal data or privacy rights.
2. **Meets Quality Thresholds:** Open Data must be comprehensive, accurate, timely and of high quality.
3. **Accessible and Usable:** Open Data should be easily discoverable-and made available without administrative barriers.
4. **Comparable and Interoperable:** Open data should be in structured and standardized formats that enable comparison between sectors, locations, and over time.
5. **Non-proprietary:** No entity has exclusive control over the data sets.
6. **Long Term Preservation of data sets:** Open Data should remain online, with appropriate version tracking and archiving over time.
7. **Usage Costs:** Open Data is to be made available free-of-charge.
8. **Inclusive Development and Innovation:** Supporting Torontonians to access and use Open Data is part of Toronto Public Library's commitment to providing digital literacy and technology access services that meet community needs.

These principles are derived from the International Open Data Charter (ODC). The ODC is the result of an international collaboration developed to help governments maximize Open Data. A version of these principles were adopted by the City of Toronto and are modified to reflect the licensing arrangements of Toronto Public Library.

Toronto Public Library also acknowledges and supports the City of Toronto's Open Data Policy, and its principles.

## **Policy Statement**

Toronto Public Library aspires to have an Open by Default orientation as part of a comprehensive approach to making data more readily available to the public. This orientation fosters greater opportunities for co-creation, co-delivery and an open source approach to the development of Toronto Public Library's Open Data.

Toronto Public Library's Open Data will meet specific minimum requirements in order to be available. Availability, minimum requirements and the supporting documentation are described below.

## **1. Availability**

- 1.1 Links to data sets are available at the City of Toronto's Open Data Portal (see References).
- 1.2 Additional data sets will be released as determined by Library staff based on the following considerations:
  - Public demand;
  - Value to the library sector including academia;
  - Resources required to extract and format data; and
  - Library Open Data is subject to the Open Government Licence of Toronto Public Library.

## **2. Minimum Requirements**

Data sets released as Open Data will meet the following requirements:

- 2.1 Does not include personal information protected pursuant to the Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act;
- 2.2 In a file format that is accessible and recognized as being reasonably appropriate for Open Data;
- 2.3 Part of a Data set generated by Toronto Public Library and upon which Toronto Public Library relies;
- 2.4 Machine readable (see Definitions, below);
- 2.5 Not subject to any legal (including contract), public safety, or other restrictions that would prohibit Toronto Public Library from releasing it as Open Data;
- 2.6 Meet other requirements based on the City of Toronto's Open Data Policy.

## **3. Supporting Documentation - Data Dictionary**

Each Data set will include explanatory reference documentation in the form of a data dictionary. The data dictionary will include the following elements:

- 3.1 A list of available columns;
- 3.2 A short description of each column, and;
- 3.3 A description which includes the rate of refresh and other useful information for users.

#### **4. Communication**

4.1 Toronto Public Library maintains an open channel of communication with community members and encourages members of the public to contact Toronto Public Library with suggestions regarding the release of data. Customers can provide feedback on data sets to the Toronto Public Library.

#### **Accountability**

The Director of Policy, Planning & Performance Management is responsible for ensuring data provided to the City of Toronto Open Data Team is posted on the City of Toronto Open Data Portal in accordance with this policy.

#### **References**

Municipal Freedom of Information and Privacy Protection, R.S.O. 1990, c. M.56

[Open Data Charter principles](#), 2013

[City of Toronto Open Data Portal](#)

#### **Definitions**

**Open Data:** Data that is freely available for anyone to use and republish as they wish, without restrictions.

**Data set:** A collection of raw, non-manipulated data with associated metadata, and which is machine readable.

**Machine Readable:** In a form that a computer can process.

#### **Contact**

Director  
Policy, Planning and Performance Management

**POLICY:** **OPEN DATA****SECTION:** **II - General Policies - Miscellaneous****MOTION#/DATE:** **18 - 061 – April 30, 2018**

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**Effective Date**

April 30, 2018

**Policy Objective**

This policy establishes the guiding principles by which Toronto Public Library data is to be made available to the public. The underlying principles of accessibility, transparency and accountability in the Open Data Policy enable Toronto Public Library to provide public data for the public good. The Open Data Policy is meant to eliminate barriers and provide free and equitable, access to library data so that members of the public use and are encouraged to collaborate with Toronto Public Library using open data sets. By providing valuable, Machine Readable data to the public, the Open Data Policy aligns with the broader Mission and Vision of the Toronto Public Library as an internationally leading institution that preserves and promotes universal access to a broad range of human knowledge, experience, information and ideas in a welcoming and supportive environment.

**Underlying Principles**

The Toronto Public Library adopts the following guiding principles<sup>1</sup> for open data and recognizes these principles as providing the necessary structure for public sector engagement with open government to ensure that data is open, accessible and reusable:

1. **Open by Default:** Free access to, and use of, open data is of significant value to society and the economy; hence, it should be open by default unless it compromises personal data or privacy rights.
2. **Timely and Comprehensive:** To be of value, open data should be prioritized given the needs from users and the resources needed for publication. It must

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<sup>1</sup> These principles are derived from the International Open Data Charter (ODC). A previous iteration relied upon the Sunlight Foundation's rules for Open Data. The ODC is the result of an international collaboration developed to help governments maximize open data. These principles were adopted by the City of Toronto and are modified to reflect the licensing arrangements of the Toronto Public Library.

- be comprehensive, accurate, and of high quality.
- 3. **Accessible and Usable:** Open data should be easily discoverable, widely accessible, and made available without bureaucratic or administrative barriers that would deter people from accessing it.
- 4. **Comparable and Interoperable:** To be most effective and useful, open data should be in structured and standardized formats that enable comparison within and between sectors, locations, and over time.
- 5. **Improved Governance and Citizen Engagement:** Open data strengthens trust in government by enhancing transparency around decision-making, increasing visibility into how society's needs are being met, and empowering civic participation.
- 6. **Non-proprietary:** No entity has exclusive control over the datasets.
- 7. **Licencing:** Library data is subject to the Open Government Licence of the Toronto Public Library. Dataset users are granted a worldwide, royalty-free, perpetual, non-exclusive licence to use information for commercial purposes. Use includes the ability to copy, modify, publish, translate, adapt, distribute, or otherwise use the information in any medium, mode or format for any lawful purpose. The Open Government Licence requires acknowledgement of the source of the information by inclusion of an attribution statement.
- 8. **Long Term Preservation of Datasets:** Datasets made available online should remain online, with appropriate version-tracking and archiving over time where applicable and available.
- 9. **Usage Costs** – Datasets are to be used free-of-charge.
- 10. **Inclusive Development and Innovation:** The Toronto Public Library will aim to enable everyone to understand and use open data effectively so that benefits generated from it are not limited only to those with specific tools and resources.

## Policy Statement

Library data sets are available at <https://opendata.tplcs.ca/>. Toronto Public Library aspires to have an Open by Default orientation as part of a comprehensive approach to making data more readily available to the public. Additional data sets will be released as determined by Library staff based on the following considerations:

- a. Public demand;
- b. Value to the library sector including academia; and
- c. Resources required to extract and format data.

The Toronto Public Library maintains an open channel of communication with community members and encourages members of the public to contact the Toronto Public Library with suggestions regarding the release of data. This orientation fosters

greater opportunities for co-creation, co-delivery and an open source approach to the development of the Toronto Public Library's Open Data platform. Customers can provide feedback on data sets via the Contact Us page, <https://www.torontopubliclibrary.ca/contact/>.

Datasets released as Open Data will meet the following requirements:

- a. Does not include personal information protected pursuant to the Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act;
- b. in a file format that is recognized as being reasonably appropriate for Open Data;
- c. part of a dataset generated by the Library and upon which the Library relies;
- d. machine readable; and
- e. not subject to any legal (including contract), public safety, or other restrictions that would prohibit the Library from releasing it as open data.

It is inherent within the nature of Open Data for more inferences to be drawn as an increasing number of data sets become available. Toronto Public Library strives to balance the need for anonymized data while preserving protections surrounding the personal information of TPL customers.

## **Accountability**

The Director of Policy, Planning & Performance Management is responsible for ensuring data provided to Digital Services and Emerging Technologies is posted on the Library website in accordance with this policy.

## **Definitions**

“Dataset” means a collection of raw, non-manipulated data usually presented in tabular form with associated metadata, and which is Machine Readable.

What is a raw dataset - a structured file format (including geospatial formats) that can be read by a machine, such as spreadsheets, comma delimited, Extensible Markup Language (XML), or JavaScript Object Notation (JSON)

What is not a raw dataset - a report, a flyer, some web applications, a PDF document, anything that cannot be exported or used by a machine.

“Machine Readable Data” means data in a form that a computer can process.

## **Attachment**

Schedule 1 – Open Government Licence – Toronto Public Library

## **SCHEDULE 1**

### **OPEN GOVERNMENT LICENCE – TORONTO PUBLIC LIBRARY**

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### **"Information Provider"**

means the Toronto Public Library.

### **"Personal Information"**

means "personal information" as defined in subsection 2(1) of the Ontario Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act.

### **"Records"**

means "Records" as defined in subsection 2(1) of the Ontario Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act.

### **"You"**

means the natural or legal person or body of persons corporate or incorporate, acquiring rights under this licence.

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#### [Governing Law](#)

- 10. This licence is governed by the laws of the province of Ontario and the applicable laws of Canada.
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means the Toronto Public Library.

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means "personal information" as defined in subsection 2(1) of the Ontario Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act.

**"Records"**

means "Records" as defined in subsection 2(1) of the Ontario Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act.

**"You"**

means the natural or legal person or body of persons corporate or incorporate, acquiring rights under this licence.

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