

Achieving a Paperless Board through Technology – Evaluation

Date:	November 23, 2015
To:	Toronto Public Library Board
From:	City Librarian

SUMMARY

This report contains the findings from an evaluation of the recent practice of producing and distributing Board agenda materials in PDF format only. The evaluation is based on conducting three Board meetings using electronic documents. The experience was evaluated by seeking input of Board members through a questionnaire, examining the cost and time savings, and by evaluating the reception of the new practice by the public and other stakeholders. The results of the evaluation are for the most part positive with most Board members satisfied to receive materials in electronic form. Costs have been reduced and the process is more efficient. The Library has not received any complaints about the practice. It is recommended that the Board continue to receive Board agenda materials electronically.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The City Librarian recommends that the Toronto Public Library Board:

1. continues to receive Toronto Public Library Board agenda materials in PDF form.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

Producing the Board agenda materials in electronic form will reduce costs by approximately \$5,270 per year, based on ten Board meetings per year. Cost savings include approximately \$3,700 in photocopying costs and \$1,560 in courier fees.

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

DECISION HISTORY

At its February 17, 2015 meeting, the Board approved the following motion:

Requests Toronto Public Library staff to examine what lessons can be learned from other Boards in the public sector, in particular the public library sector, which could potentially transform the conduct of Board business by moving communication and document delivery from paper format to electronic format and report back as soon as possible on the feasibility of it.

<http://www.torontopubliclibrary.ca/content/about-the-library/pdfs/board/meetings/2015/mar23/04.pdf>

Following an investigation by staff on the various ways that the members could receive Board agenda materials electronically, including the purchase of a Board portal service, the Board approved the following at the April 20, 2015 meeting:

Directs staff to proceed with a PDF version of the Board meeting agenda package in lieu of paper copies for Board members, and evaluate the revised process in three months.

<http://www.torontopubliclibrary.ca/content/about-the-library/pdfs/board/meetings/2015/may25/04-Minutes-April-20.pdf>

ISSUE BACKGROUND

The Toronto Public Library Board plays a leadership role in encouraging the adoption of new technologies and services to make the Library more efficient. It also strongly supports environmentally sustainable practices throughout the Library. Introducing a pilot project to receive Board agenda materials electronically and conduct Board meetings without paper copies of most materials are examples of the Board's commitment to both the environment and efficiency through technology. While some public library boards have moved to electronic agenda materials, the practice is not wide spread. By going paperless, the Board is providing an example to the broader library community on ways to be more efficient and environmentally friendly.

While the Board adopted a low-cost solution to receive agenda materials electronically through a PDF file that can be downloaded to a tablet, laptop or workstation, the resolution requires that an evaluation of the practice take place after three months. Since the Board conducted its first electronic meeting on June 22, 2015 and did not meet again until September 21, 2015, the review period extended to the October Board meeting.

COMMENTS

Following the approval of the motion to receive Board materials in PDF form, Toronto Public Library staff developed a process to make materials easily accessible to Board members, including software options and training materials to assist members to access and annotate reports and other documents. In order to provide the Board with a simple and efficient process for accessing and downloading agenda materials, it was decided to create the entire package as a single PDF document. Members are emailed a link to the package that they download to a mobile device. The packages can be accessed with various editing software, including Adobe Acrobat and PDF Expert for iPads. The training materials prepared for members included how to download, save the file, navigate through the materials, and annotate reports. An instructional presentation was

made to members at the May 25, 2015 meeting. Board agenda materials have been made available as an electronic document for three meetings.

Confidential documents are treated separately. These are emailed directly to Board members and are password-protected for security. A review with staff in the City legal division confirmed that the practice was as secure as receiving paper copies via a courier.

As a result of producing Board packages electronically there have been a number of changes to workflows and production. Previously staff assembled 70 copies of the agenda materials. This has now been reduced to nine. While the Board Chair receives the package electronically, he receives a paper copy at the meeting in order to conduct the meeting more efficiently. Five additional copies are kept on hand as back-up and three additional copies are provided to Toronto Public Library departments for research purposes.

Evaluation

The evaluation of the electronic process has considered three factors:

1. Feedback and input from Board members through an evaluation survey;
2. Cost and efficiency;
3. Reception by other stakeholders.

Board member Input

A 12-question survey was completed by Board members. The survey results are included as Attachment 1. Board members report they use the electronic documents prior to Board meetings and at Board meetings. For the most part, members are satisfied with the current practice, find the process as easy and efficient as receiving paper copies, and report that the process of receiving Board materials electronically works well. Fifty percent of members report printing copies of a few key financial reports and documents. Sixty-six percent indicate that the experience of using the electronic documents at Board meetings is easier or the same as paper. Through the evaluation survey Board members made the following suggestions:

- *Have an extra device available at the meeting in case a member forgets or has technical trouble with their own device.*
- *Provide the package sooner.*

Members were provided with a list of additional document management functionality and features and asked to identify which features they would like to see. All the additional features, with the exception of having a single package containing both confidential and non-confidential materials, received less than 50% support. Staff will continue to monitor electronic document technology in order to identify improvements that can be made to the current process.

The City Librarian's office will keep an additional iPad available for use by a Board member if for some reason their own device is not available.

Cost and Efficiency

Producing the Board agenda materials electronically saves the Library approximately \$5,270 annually, based on ten meetings per year. In addition, for each meeting approximately five hours of staff time is saved by the elimination of photocopying, assembly and delivery. Board members also receive the materials in a more timely fashion as they no longer have to wait for the delivery via a courier.

Stakeholder Reception

As the move to eliminate the production of paper copies of Board agenda materials affected both the public and other stakeholders, it was important that staff monitor any comments received about the new practice. To date the Library has not received any comments or complaints concerning the practice of only producing Board agenda materials in electronic form. The Toronto Public Library Workers Union, Local 4948 (CUPE) was asked if they would like to comment on the new process and indicated that they had no comment about the revised process.

CONCLUSION

Since the evaluation of the new practice of producing the Board agenda materials in PDF form has been for the most part positive, it is recommended that the Board continue to receive materials in electronic form.

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SIGNATURE

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ATTACHMENT

Attachment 1: Survey Results