



Ottawa Public Library
Bibliothèque publique d'Ottawa

2020 Annual Report



Ottawa Public Library continued to build community and transform lives by adapting services to inspire learning, spark curiosity, and connect people during the global pandemic in 2020. Public libraries are valued and relevant, especially in uncertain times.



Ottawa Public Library Board

Message from Matthew Luloff, Chair of the Ottawa Public Library Board and Councillor for Orléans Ward

2020, a year unparalleled in recent history, can be summed up by the importance of COVID 19 and the pandemic that have completely transformed our lives. On the advice of Ottawa Public Health and provincial authorities, we quickly learned to keep our distance and stay home to slow the spread of the virus.



Many of the services normally provided in person have gone virtual, and the Ottawa Public Library was no exception. The terms “contactless” and “streetside” among others have made their place in our vocabulary. By serving Ottawa clients and residents, day in and day out, OPL staff have worked to make virtual interactions humane. During this difficult time, thanks to the flexibility and clarity of staff objectives, I have seen the Library preserve, if ever, better embody its mission to inspire the community.

By 2020, the OPL had already begun serious consideration of the impact of late fees on its customers, recognizing, like many other libraries in North America, that they impede access to libraries for many potential customers. After suspending these fees in the pandemic context, in October 2020, the Board unanimously supported their abolition. I am very proud to have contributed to this breakthrough, which demonstrates that we can improve equitable access to our services. We will continue to work in that direction.

The Board approved other important recommendations in 2020, including the admission of the Ottawa-Gatineau United Muslim Organizations to the Order of Friendship, the posthumous naming of volunteer Helen Tweddle in the Cumberland Branch programming room, the amendment of regulations to allow us to meet virtually, and the adoption of the 2020-2023 Content Management Framework.

We also saw the end of the term of former Board President, Councillor Tim Tierney, who was able to promote the OPL’s cause far beyond the limits of his role. For the first year of my mandate, I thank him for his advice and I appreciate the extent of his contribution and commitment to the Library. We can count on Mr. Tierney, an ally, to support us on City Council. On behalf of the Board, I thank him from the bottom of my heart for his outstanding contribution to this high-quality organization.

Board members

Chair: Councillor Matthew Luloff

Vice-Chair: Kathy Fisher

Trustees: Steven Begg, Councillor Riley Brockington, Mary-Rose Brown, Allan Higdon, Councillor Carol Anne Meehan, Harvey A. Slack, Councillor Tim Tierney



Senior management team

Message from Danielle McDonald, Chief Executive Officer

What a year! 2020 started with an important milestone as we revealed the design of the Ottawa Public Library–Library and Archives Canada Joint Facility in January, the result of one of the most inclusive engagement processes for any public building in Canada. I am proud to report that this momentous project advanced smoothly despite the unprecedented challenges of an unusual year. Some key accomplishments to note from 2020 are the beginning of preparatory work on the site at 555 Albert Street, and ongoing engagement with members of urban Indigenous communities, as well as stakeholders from across the country. This coming year will bring even more progress and the start of construction.



I am truly in awe of what we have been able to accomplish despite the global pandemic—new ways of doing things, new community partners, and a better sense of our positive impact in Ottawa. When Ottawa Public Library branches were forced to close in March, we increased our digital content, built the “Isolation Recreation” portal, and started offering virtual programming for the first time. We supported our community by lending the 3D printers in the Imagine Space to an organization to create face shields for front-line workers. We also focused on members of our community who were unable to access the Internet by working closely with community organizations, many of them new partners, to loan out ChromeBooks and WiFi hotspots to areas most in need. Then, in June, provincial guidelines allowed us to reopen with curbside services. With the guidance of our Board, we approached reopening cautiously, starting with six branches and progressively opening and expanding our services, as we were able to, and as it was safe to do so.

At the same time, we recognized the impact the pandemic was having on our community and worked to end late fees at a time when it was needed most. The

events of this past year have truly deepened our understanding of the Library's impact on the community, and how important it is to reduce barriers to accessing our valuable services.

I am equally humbled by the commendable strength, resiliency, adaptability, and creativity of Library employees in the face of unprecedented challenges. I am extremely grateful for, and proud of, their dedication to the communities we serve. It is because of them that there is still so much to say about our services, projects and accomplishments in 2020.

Senior management team

Danielle McDonald,
Chief Executive Officer

Anna Basile,
Division Manager,
Corporate Services

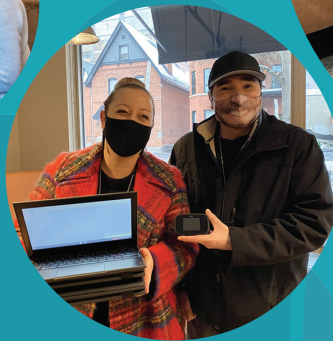
Craig Ginther,
Division Manager,
Central Library Project

Michael Poliwoda,
Program Manager,
Major Gifts and Partnerships

Donna Clark,
Division Manager,
Branch Operations

Catherine Seaman,
Division Manager,
Customer Experience

Alexandra Yarrow,
Program Manager,
Board and Strategic Services



2020: A year of adaptation and resilience

Adapting Ottawa Public Library services during the pandemic

This year was the first of Ottawa Public Library's 2020-2023 Strategic Plan. The Plan was developed in consultation with the community, employees, and the Board to focus on redesigning the Library experience, building organizational capacity, and promoting the value of OPL. This would prove important as OPL entered the global pandemic soon after with clear strategic directions already identified. In an exceptional year of adaptation, OPL moved ahead on its plan with these key accomplishments:



- Library services were adapted to meet pandemic-related needs.
- Late fees were suspended, then eliminated effective January 1, 2021.
- Digital collections were enhanced proactively to meet changing customer needs while access and usage of this eContent increased significantly.
- Staff worked together across departments to develop new virtual initiatives and programs.
- Work on the landmark new Central Library project continued and key milestones were achieved.
- OPL remains committed to the 2020-2023 Strategic Plan's overarching goal to increase the number of active cardholders by 25 per cent by the end of 2023. This is an even more ambitious goal now that 12 percent fewer cardholders were able to make use of the Library in 2020, when in-person services were limited and physical locations were open for less than half of usual operating hours.

Measuring success in an extraordinary year

Throughout an evolving crisis that isolated people in their homes and dramatically altered ease and access to services of all kinds, OPL committed to innovations that would ensure Ottawa residents could find the educational, informational, and recreational resources they needed in 2020. A clear indication of the public's need and interest for the OPL collection was the extraordinary borrowing activity during the last weekend before the announced closure of OPL branches on Monday, March 16. Customers flocked to branches both days, and four times more items were checked out than on an average weekend. Although fewer services were available, Library use remained steady for the rest of the year.

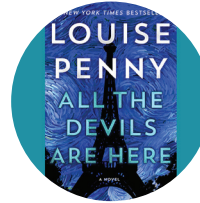


- 25 per cent more online card signups and 14 per cent more circulation per hour.
- More than 4,000 events and programs viewed by upwards of 130,000 participants.
- More than 2.7 million eContent downloads: eBooks, eAudiobooks, streaming services, and databases like Ancestry Library, PressReader, Tumblebook, and many more.
- 206 ChromeBooks and 22 WiFi hotspots lent to 37 organizations to provide Internet access to vulnerable residents, 20 of which were brand new partners.
- Booklists created by staff and cardholders viewed more than 160,000 times and readers spent an average of one to five minutes on the most popular lists.
- Ottawa Central Library construction planning 90 per cent complete.

Most popular Canadian books

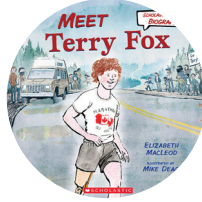
Adult English

- **All the Devils are Here**
by Louise Penny
- **From the Ashes: My Story of Being Métis, Homeless, and Finding my Way**
by Jesse Thistle
- **How to Pronounce Knife**
by Souvankham Thammavongsa
- **The Pull of the Stars**
by Emma Donoghue
- **The Skin We're In: A Year of Black Resistance and Power**
by Desmond Cole



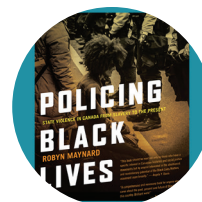
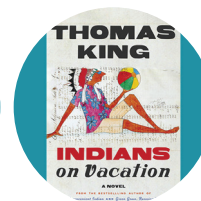
Youth English

- **The Barren Grounds**
by David A. Robertson
- **Hunted by the Sky**
by Tanaz Bhathena
- **I Talk Like a River**
by Jordan Scott. Illus. by Sydney Smith
- **Meet Terry Fox**
by Elizabeth MacLeod
- **Shirley & Jamila Save Their Summer**
by Gillian Goerz



Downloadable English eAudiobook

- **The Glass Hotel**
by Emily St. John Mandel
- **Indians on Vacation**
by Thomas King
- **Mexican Gothic**
by Silvia Moreno-Garcia
- **Policing Black Lives: State Violence in Canada From Slavery to the Present**
by Robyn Maynard
- **They Said This Would be Fun: Race, Campus Life, and Growing Up**
by Eternity Martis





Redesign the Library experience

From system-wide closure to reopening in stages

OPL started to plan its response to COVID-19 in the first months of 2020. Managers were asked to update their business continuity plans by March. In the days before March 17, 2020, when the state of emergency was declared in Ontario, OPL began to address the developing situation. Responding to employee and public concerns and staying abreast of changes as they impacted Ottawa were top priorities of the senior management team.



OPL liaised with the City of Ottawa (City) and followed the lead of Ottawa Public Health, actively participating in a variety of taskforces to share resources that would help the community. OPL helped disseminate key information from City partners on the OPL social media channels and website, keeping cardholders informed while adapting Library services in safe and scalable ways.

From March 13 to 15, 2020, unprecedented numbers of items were borrowed and cardholders sought service before the impending closure:

- 80,000 items were borrowed on Saturday March 14, 2020, before the closure of branches due to the COVID-19 pandemic shutdown
- 70 per cent more calls and emails to OPL's InfoService

On March 16, 2020, OPL closed all branches and services to align with recommendations from Ottawa's Medical Officer of Health. Before reopening in June, 500,000 items were checked out and in the hands of customers. When OPL reopened, these items had to be returned, quarantined, and put back into circulation – safely.

As per provincially mandated protocols, masking, plexiglass barriers and other adaptations, such as the rearrangement of public computers, furnishings, and

storage areas, were required to welcome the public inside OPL branches and to accommodate the quarantining of all items before recirculation. Each branch facility with its unique layout required its own response to the new health protocols.



OPL approached reopening cautiously, starting with the six largest branches, as well as resuming Homebound Services for those who are confined to their home or residence for more than three months because of age, illness or disability and cannot visit a Library branch or Bookmobile stop. Additional branches opened in phases, and services expanded as public health safeguards allowed, and staffing was available. By the fall, 26 of 33 branches, including the Bookmobile, were offering services until late December, when another province-wide shut down and stay-at-home order took effect. OPL then returned to curbside service.



- By December, 75 per cent of branches were reopened, a third of Bookmobile stops and 60 per cent of Homebound cardholders were being served.
- OPL's normal hours of branch operation were reduced by more than half: 36,500 hours compared to 81,000 hours in a normal year.
- Despite offering less in-person service and being open fewer hours, 88 per cent of items checked out pre-pandemic were returned and quarantined before going back to circulation.

Eliminating late fees to increase equity and access

OPL moved ahead on removing a significant barrier that North American and local data showed was impeding access to library use – overdue fines. Analysis of Ottawa cardholder data and postal codes revealed that socio-economically disadvantaged areas have significantly lower circulation rates than wealthier areas. Staff analysis of postal codes associated with cardholders found that most library cards blocked due to fees owing of more than \$50 belonged to vulnerable populations or people who live in areas of the city with racialized groups and lower income markers.

Having suspended late fees at the onset of the pandemic shutdown, the Library seized the moment to find a cost-effective and responsible way to eliminate them permanently to help open OPL up to a broader population. The OPL Board approved the Materials Recovery Model in October that eliminated late fees starting January 1, 2021, while encouraging timely return of library materials with a less punitive approach.

OPL collections: easier to discover and access

The pandemic closure created an opportunity for existing and new OPL customers to explore aspects of the library collection that were not familiar to them. Many people discovered eContent like eBooks, eAudiobooks, learning databases, streaming platforms, and more. OPL seized this opportunity early in the pandemic and worked to highlight these digital resources for customers.



A new portal was created on the website, aptly called Isolation Recreation. Employees contributed blogs and ideas to promote the Library's lesser-known online offerings, bringing together creative activities, wellness tips, literary and cultural recommendations, learning tools, and more, to inspire, encourage, and entertain library customers of all ages during COVID shutdowns.



OPL also acquired or enhanced access to new databases and streaming options to respond to the demand created by stay-at-home orders and online homeschooling, such as EduMedia, Toutapprendre, Solaro, and Ottawa Citizen Historical Newspapers 1845-2010.

Most online resources saw double digit growth during 2020—streaming platforms like Kanopy, learning tools such as LinkedIn Learning (formerly Lynda.com), historical and genealogical research databases like Ancestry Library, and especially, French eContent:

- French eAudiobook use more than doubled (up by 157 per cent); French eBook use grew 63 per cent.
- More than 2 million total eContent downloads: eBooks, eAudiobooks, streaming services, and databases such as Learning Express, PressReader, and Tumblebooks (French ones – Toutapprendre, Eureka.cc, Encyclopaedia Universalis).

OPL's collections are planned and continuously managed and enriched to stay current and relevant to customer needs and interests. Two exciting additions to the online collections that were planned and implemented shortly before the start of the pandemic are Spanish eBooks and eAudiobooks, which are expected to be well used in the national capital, and more e-titles for youth and adults in Chinese.

To facilitate access to digital library offerings that could best answer the growing needs of locked-down residents adapting to the crisis, OPL made online registration easier and automatically renewed more than 30,000 cardholder accounts between April and July.

- More than 13,000 new online cardholders registered in 2020, up 25 per cent from 2019.

With fewer opportunities for browsing and in-person recommendations, curated book selections were wildly popular with cardholders coming into branches for a quick stop.

- Grab-and-Go book bundles designed for all ages on popular themes, like cooking, mysteries, or romance novels for adults.
- Take Home Storytime Kits made available with picture books and literacy-based activity sheets for kids learning to read.
- Curated booklists created by staff were viewed more than 160,000 times.
- On average, readers spent between one to five minutes on the most popular lists.

OPL's refreshed Content Services Framework for 2020-2023, approved by the Board in March, outlines the principles that shape the OPL collection and provides the

Library with the flexibility to purchase eContent relative to demand for physical content. The Framework also includes an Indigenous Collections statement, World Language Collection sustainability, and an updated process whereby customers can request the reconsideration of a title in the OPL collection.

Staff select physical materials to add to the collection up to six months in advance. When OPL reopened in June, staff began processing a huge backlog of new items including books, graphic novels, movies, and more. Thanks to this work, popular titles and additional copies of *Five Little Indians* by Michelle Good, *The Boy From the Woods* by Harlan Coben and *Camino Winds* by John Grisham, to name a few, were made available to cardholders who had been patiently waiting their turn.

- 71,000 new physical items added to the collection from June to October.
- All new DVDs made available for online request instead of the longstanding practice of starting on Express shelves.
- Express books were transitioned to fill holds.

Delivering programs and services virtually

As the pandemic kept people home, OPL developed virtual programs and services to replace those that had traditionally been provided in-person at a branch: personalized consultations, engaging cultural and educational programs, and community events.

Library programming had to be reinvented for engaging online delivery. With minimal audiovisual software and equipment, employees stretched their skills to pivot to virtual, online programming at OPL for the first time.

OPL's first digital book club featured *Crow Winter* by local writer Karen McBride for Indigenous History Month (June). The eBook was checked out by 1,333 cardholders and the live-streamed and recorded author event has been viewed 1,800 times. On Orange Shirt Day, September 30, survivors of Canada's residential and day schools were honoured with an array of special virtual programs, including an online story time in English and French with storyteller Daniel Richer that reached more than 4,000 children.

Additional highlights of programming include, but are not limited to:

- Interactive wellness activities for older adults such as sing-alongs, fitness classes, and workshops delving into key skills for aging well on subjects ranging from technology to finances to cognitive health and more.
- Teen Staycation, a summer-long series of programs and events created and chosen in consultation with teens from OPL Teen Advisory Groups across Ottawa.
- OPL's Make-It Kits with the materials and instructions for 10 different TD Summer Reading Club-related activities for kids to make at home, with or without an accompanying YouTube video.
- Participation in the Ottawa Capital Pride Festival via a video submission to the virtual parade, murals at Main branch and the Rosemount temporary location, and a video series of book recommendations by members of 2SLGTBQ+ communities.



- Comfort Food cooking programs with local chefs to encourage food literacy and provide expert advice related to popular trends like sourdough bread and slow cooker soup.
- Winter Words at Play holiday-themed videos with suggested readings, songs, rhymes, and winter book picks to warm the heart for the festive season and reconnect familiar faces and voices of branch employees with much-missed customers.

Many more author and artist programs organized with partners are included under the section titled Promote the value of OPL.

OPL launched a new virtual consultation service in the summer, Library 1:1, to provide personalized cardholder services. Thirty-minute phone consultations provide tailored services to meet the needs of individual customers and help them better access OPL's vast array of collections and resources.

- 475 Library 1:1 tutorials were given, from July to December
- Most popular topics: eBooks, eAudiobooks, and other digital resources.

An average of 14 customers per week made use of the Library 1:1 service in its first year. It covers topics related to computer, Internet, and email basics, introduction to eBooks and eAudiobooks, how to use the OPL catalogue on Bibliocommons, reading recommendations based on customer interests, research assistance, and online databases.

Ottawa Central Library planning neared completion

Despite the challenges presented by the COVID-19 pandemic, the Ottawa Public Library and Library and Archives Canada Joint Facility project continued to advance. Work progressed seamlessly to refine the detailed drawings and architectural plans of the construction design phase. In addition, feedback gathered through engagement with the Anishinābe Algonquin host Nations and with members of the urban Indigenous community, as well as accessibility and community groups, drove the improvements to the building design for a welcoming and reflective space for all.

Thousands attended January design reveal

On January 23, 2020, thousands of Ottawa residents participated in a Design Reveal event and public open house at the Ottawa Art Gallery. Distinguished guests included the Minister of Canadian Heritage Stephen Guilbeault; Minister of Infrastructure and Communities Catherine McKenna, who also represents the Ottawa-Centre riding; Librarian and Archivist of Canada Leslie Weir; Anita Tenasco, Director of Education from Kitigan Zibi Anishinabeg, and Elder Arlene Closter from the Algonquins of Pikwakanagan First Nation; as well as Ottawa Mayor Jim Watson; and Beacon Hill-Cyrville Ward Councillor Tim Tierney, then-Chair of the Ottawa Public Library Board. In addition to its in-person attendees, the event attracted more than 100,000 virtual views, with extensive coverage in local, national and architectural media outlets. Significant public support was expressed for the design, which reflected input received through robust public engagement. Awareness, enthusiasm and support for the landmark project continued to grow in 2020.

Indigenous engagement for the long-term

Consultation with local and national Indigenous organizations continued virtually in 2020 with a series of online engagement sessions and a web survey to gather input on the Joint Facility's design, services and programs. Facilitated by Indigenous Engagement Consultants, a session with local Indigenous representatives gathered fruitful feedback that is being used to create a welcoming and inclusive facility for First Nations, Inuit and Métis peoples. Through engagement, OPL is building relationships that will continue beyond opening day, to enrich the customer experience and amplify the benefit for all who will use and visit the new Ottawa Central Library.

A sustainable, world-class facility

The design of a world-class sustainable facility continued to advance and take shape with plans for enhanced green features. In November, the Minister of Canadian Heritage as well as the Member of Parliament for Ottawa-Centre announced additional sustainability funding for the Joint Facility, which means the building will be able to achieve net-zero carbon. Some of the additional sustainability enhancements to the design include upgrades to the building's envelope and insulation; triple-glazed windows; solar panels on the rooftop and the façade; a green wall and more.

Planning for accessibility

Further to consultations with accessibility groups and advocates, additional accessibility features were incorporated to the design of the Joint Facility, such as a gentler slope and a better location for the ramping in the exterior plaza. Additional elements such as more accessible outdoor seating, intuitive wayfinding from the central gathering space, prominently located elevators, and more, will make the joint facility one of the most accessible buildings in the National Capital Region.

Major Facility Improvements: Rosemount branch revitalization

Revitalization of the historic Rosemount branch was put on hold in April, due to a provincial order to pause construction of nonessential projects, with work resuming in May. The first floor of the newly renovated building reopened for contactless returns and holds pickup December 3, with three new washrooms, including an accessible washroom with a height adjustable adult change table. Small space landscaping and bird-friendly glass windows were among the final additions to the revitalized historic branch in 2020. The project continues to progress with reopening anticipated by mid-2021.

New purpose-built Bookmobile

In 2020, OPL took possession of a brand-new, custom-built Bookmobile. The new bus replaced an aging vehicle that was purchased in 2005 and had reached the end of its life. This vehicle, one of three in the Bookmobile fleet, allows OPL to continue delivering high-quality customer service to 25 Ottawa neighbourhoods that experience gaps in library service.

Build organizational capacity

New KPIs for data-driven decision-making

In February, OPL's Board approved the use of new key performance indicators (KPIs) aligned with the 2020-2023 Strategic Plan. Then in March, the COVID-19 pandemic affected the delivery of in-person library services, the hiring process, and the ability to collect first-hand data from new cardholders. OPL used existing data to support its response to the pandemic, such as determining which locations to open and the number of open hours, staffing needs, computer workstation availability, use of space and facilities, materials delivery between branches, among other areas.



Nearly 16,000 customers responded to an online survey launched in September 2020 about in-person services. While recognizing that not all residents can access an online survey, staff were able to draw several key observations, which informed OPL's pandemic recovery plan. Some of these include the importance of holds pickup and returns, flexible hours (including evenings and weekends), better information about existing services, and the need for basic services across a large geographic area.

Increased transparency and leadership accountability

Given in-person gathering limits as a result of the pandemic, OPL held its Board meetings online from April to December. Close to five times more people attended virtual Board meetings. Participants were a mix of OPL employees, members of the public, leaders from other libraries, City Councillors, leaders from OPL's union partner, CUPE 503 Library Group, and other stakeholders and media.

Promote the value of OPL

Widespread recognition, awareness, and understanding of OPL's offerings are required for the Library to fulfill its mission to inspire learning, spark curiosity, and connect people. To promote the value of OPL is to extend the benefits of knowledge, creativity, and connection to evermore Ottawa residents. The need for communications, web, and technology expertise and support intensified with the pandemic and continued throughout the year. Clear, proactive, and inclusive communications were essential to keep customers informed and connected to Library resources at every stage of the crisis. At all times, it is important to ensure public awareness of the Library as a responsibly and professionally managed provider of learning resources and cultural assets that plays an integral part in the community, fuelling a virtuous cycle of enrichment above and beyond the benefits to individual customers.

Communications to ensure engagement and connection

OPL's primary audience is its customers, many of whom are vocal in championing the Library. In 2020, customers relied on accurate, up-to-date information to know when and how to access OPL branches and services during the evolving pandemic response. As part of OPL's marketing and customer experience strategy, the Library procured a sophisticated client relationship management system when communicating service updates were of the utmost importance. Designed to integrate with existing library databases, while ensuring security and privacy, this system improved OPL's ability to reach customers directly by email throughout an unpredictable year, in addition to media relations, social media and web communications.

- Of 1.665 million emails sent to customers, more than 980,000 were opened.
- This 59 per cent open rate is exceptional compared to a more common open rate of 20 to 30 per cent.

Un Livrel/One eRead Canada digital book club

OPL and colleagues from the Canadian Urban Libraries Council (CULC) organized the first national bilingual eBook club—Un Livrel/One eRead Canada. OPL led the initiative by coordinating logistics and promotion to demonstrate the benefits of public libraries and help advocate for better access to eContent. Nearly 1,000 public libraries from coast to coast to coast joined in, providing unlimited digital downloads of *Vi* by Kim Thúy, in English and French, for library cardholders across Canada. Promotion began in late 2020 for the month-long initiative to take place in January 2021, which would include French and English live-streamed interviews with the captivating author by CBC's Shelagh Rogers and Radio-Canada's Kevin Sweet.



#AskALibrarian on Twitter

When OPL closed in March, staff began participating in #AskALibrarian every Thursday from 12 to 1 pm, an increase from every second week pre-pandemic. This informal initiative regularly brings together many international public libraries and became increasingly important for both staff and customers to feel connected this year. Taking place exclusively on Twitter, the event allows people to ask for recommendations on what to read next or to find out more about the Library. On average, about 1,500 people from around the world join in every week. Because of its international reach, #AskALibrarian has boosted OPL's visibility and reach on Twitter, as well as allowing the Library to connect with members of the community in a new way. Authors like Neil Gaiman and Candace Bushnell retweeted OPL content to 2.8 million and 74,000 followers, respectively. Views and engagement generated by #AskALibrarian account for roughly a third of OPL's weekly performance on Twitter.

Kindness for Library Month

Like most activities in 2020, Library Month in October was held virtually. With Kindness/La gentillesse as the theme, the campaign was designed to be inspiring, rather than celebratory, and to underline the values of caring and sharing, fundamental to the Library's mission, at a time when these principles were critical for the community coping with the pandemic. The



campaign conveyed OPL's appreciation for its cardholders and encouraged a sense of connection, agency and comfort amongst customers, partners and the community. A "Kindness Calendar" offered a witty or whimsical motivational prompt every day that was also posted on OPL social media channels. From quotations to suggestions, the prompts led to thematic booklists.

Library Month #Kindness social media posts reached more than 75,000 people and generated nearly 1,500 engagements (for a 1.8 per cent engagement rate, considered strong by leading social media company Hootsuite). On average, each post reached 1,186 people and had 22 engagements. An interactive call out to followers to share #Kindness stories gave them a chance to win an OPL-branded fanny pack or book bag.

First-rate author and artist events through partnerships

In spite of the global pandemic, OPL broadened and deepened partnerships with organizations in the community to extend its digital reach and forge beneficial connections. Collaborations with Library and Archives Canada and the Ottawa International Writers Festival allowed OPL to provide thought-provoking virtual events on exciting new books with high-profile authors such as Desmond Cole, Julie Lalonde, David Waltner-Toews, Joshua Whitehead, Jesse Thistle, Emma Donoghue, Eva Holland, Kaie Kellough, and Ian Williams.



Croisée des mots, OPL's French-language series of monthly readings and conversations with francophone authors, was offered in partnership with l'Association des auteures et auteurs de l'Ontario français (AAOF) for a second year. Attendance grew significantly with participation by francophones and francophiles in a city where approximately 17.9 per cent of residents have French as their first language and 37.6 per cent are bilingual in French and English.

Ottawa Live & Local was a concert, conversation and workshop series organized with Meridian Theatres @ CentrepoinTE. It provided opportunities to showcase 10 local musical acts, including Kimberly Sunstrum, Amanda Rheame, Silla and Rise, Moonfruits, and Lynne Hanson, whose livelihoods were impacted by the pandemic. It was a chance to support music literacy, aligned with the Sun Life Financial Musical Instrument Lending Library, and strengthen the local music industry.

Local theatre troupe, Company of Fools, also teamed up with OPL to produce an online reading of *The Tempest* in celebration of Shakespeare's birthday, as well as a digital comic mashup of five Shakespeare plays called *Love from Afar*, among other virtual performances and workshops.

Community stakeholders and agencies amplify OPL impact

Society's increased reliance on technology during the pandemic also highlighted the need to continue the Library's critical work in supporting digital inclusion. Outdoor WiFi was provided at eight library branches in key Ottawa neighbourhoods for the first time, so that up to 10 people at a time could connect to the Internet for free.

OPL also worked with 37 agencies and forged 20 new partnerships with family shelters, community housing, and other groups to lend 206 ChromeBooks and 22 WiFi hotspots, so vulnerable residents could access the Internet. These devices became lifelines to reduce isolation, find employment, fill out forms, attend court online, participate in online education, and more. Without them, members of the community would not have been able to connect to service providers, teachers, family and friends, or obtain essential information about health and community resources during the global pandemic.



Three 3D printers from OPL's Imagine Space were lent to ComputerWise, a local non-profit that helps adults with multiple disabilities learn computer skills. With OPL's help, ComputerWise produced face shields to provide to local agencies serving adults with disabilities and special needs, including many who live in group residences. OPL staff also made sure the people operating the 3D printers were fully trained and had access to the right materials.



Helen Tweddle Children's Program Room

In recognition of her extensive community service to the Friends of the Ottawa Public Library Association (FOPLA), the children's programming space in the Cumberland branch was renamed the Helen Tweddle Children's Program Room. The late Helen Tweddle was a founding member of the Bookworm Used Bookstore and it is estimated she helped raise more than \$500,000 to support OPL. She served as an inspiration to other FOPLA volunteers whom she helped recruit, train, and support. She was well known as a voracious reader herself; her personal library contained more than 10,000 books, and she brought her love of learning and literacy into the volunteer work she performed at the Cumberland branch every day. Her family continues the tradition of volunteer work in the community, and OPL was honoured to celebrate the new space at Cumberland branch with them, virtually, in a ceremony to unveiling the commemorative plaque.

Order of Friendship to the United Muslim Organizations of Ottawa-Gatineau

For their contributions to the community during the pandemic, the OPL Board's Order of Friendship was awarded to the United Muslim Organizations of Ottawa-Gatineau (UMOOG), a group of ten mosques and community centres led by Jalil Marnhouj. Their network of more than 250 volunteers delivers food, medicine, and other supplies to elderly, at-risk, and immunocompromised Ottawa residents, as well as single-parent families with children. In the summer, one of these deliveries included 200 TD Summer Reading Club Make-It-Kits to vulnerable children aged 6 to 12, so they had an equal opportunity to participate in the reading club activities.





In the words of OPL customers

“I’ve always loved the library and consider it to be one of the most noble and non-controversial civic institutions that exist, but especially in COVID I’ve been deeply appreciative.”

“I am incredibly grateful for all the money the library has saved me from not buying books. Also, it’s pretty awesome that you can suggest a book for the library to acquire, and they generally always do!”

“I love the Ottawa library, my joy and gratitude for them can’t be put into words, they are so amazing. My favourite feature is being able to check-out, download, and read eBooks/audiobooks on my phone whenever and wherever I want. It’s been a super useful and accessible way for me to enjoy stories again.”

“I am a big library fan. They are not just a place to go and take out a book, libraries are community centres and sometimes they are a lifeline and the only refuge for a vulnerable person. People use libraries to access the Internet if they don’t have service at home. They provide so much more than just books.”

“As far as I am concerned, you are my heroes. I am so grateful you are here today to provide an essential service that contributes to our mental health.”

“The OPL hotspot has been such an important part of children’s education: the kids are able to participate in their classes without the interruptions we so often experience with our regular WiFi. Taking any worries away from these children is such a victory right now. Without this hotspot, I have no doubt our kids would be struggling even more with their education. One of the concerns I often hear are the kids’ concerns about how their peers are perceiving them – can they tell they are at a shelter? A choppy WiFi connection can mean that these already nervous kids are dealing with the stress of missing class time and knowing their video screen is popping in and out, meaning their peers might be even more focused on them. All this to say, we are super grateful for your support. We have also had some adult residents use the hotspot to complete online classes in the evenings once the kids have finished their classes for the day.” – Employee of Chrysalis House, a family shelter

“Going in there this am [sic] was the highlight of my week. So quick to pick up my holds was almost sad I didn’t have to hang out longer.”

“The OPL is doing a great job providing service and keeping patrons safe.”

“I picked my books up this week at CentrepoinTE and it felt so great and everyone was so happy. Thank you OPL and staff. You were so respectful of safety, for both me and yourselves, with masks, directional arrows and physical distancing.”

“Shout-out to the Greenboro branch of OPL. I had a surprisingly pleasant curbside pick-up/drop-off. Well run! You are doing it right! Laden with my 50 lbs of books and discs, I said, behind my mask, “See you in a week!” to resultant laughter from all wonderful women staffers.”

“Carlingwood was amazing today – all the staff were so helpful :) so easy to pop in and grab my holds while socially distancing.”

“My son very hopefully asked if we could go to the library to pick out new books tonight, and I was so happy to be able to say yes! OPL was very clean, everyone was masked, arrows were easily navigated, and my son picked out so many books. Thank you for the great experience.”

“Super easy return of items and pickup of holds at OPL Main Branch today. Everything so well organized. Great job everyone!”

“Shout out to the staff at Rosemount branch for a quick and super easy pick up of books on hold today!”

“I want to thank you people so much for your patience and your dedication and all that you do for me. Thanks a million. These books mean a lot to me. Thank you.”

“I knit, so I love to be able to browse through the knitting books either online or in person for new stitch patterns or ideas. Connecting through the Libby app is wonderfully convenient.”

“Having this extra source of WiFi has allowed us to make effective use of a secondary space which has no WiFi connection. As a result, our team has been able to take full advantage of both spaces, and youth have been able to complete their homework. We were able to open this space during the lockdown to teenagers only who come from multigenerational families to spread out with peers. This has also enabled our team to spread out our workspace and allow for increased social distancing. It has also made our work serving the community so much easier and more productive because we can now move seamlessly back and forth between our spaces with the ability to use technology everywhere we need it.” – Employee of Pinecrest Terrace Community House



Thank you to partners

- Association des auteures et auteurs de l'Ontario français
- Boys and Girls Club
- Bytown Mac Users Group
- Canada Revenue Agency
- Catholic Centre for Immigrants
- Canadian Urban Libraries Council
- CBC/Radio-Canada
- Centretown Community Health Centre
- Company of Fools
- ComputerWise
- Conseil des écoles catholiques du Centre-Est
- Conseil des écoles publiques de l'Est de l'Ontario
- Council on Aging of Ottawa
- Eastern Ottawa Resource Centre
- Envirocentre
- Frontier College
- Home Hospice Association
- Interval House Ottawa
- Invest Ottawa
- Jewish Family Services
- Library and Archives Canada
- Maison d'amitié
- Master Gardeners of Ottawa-Carleton
- Meridian Theatres @ CentrepoinTE
- National Arts Centre
- Ontario Bar Association
- Ontario Genealogy Society
- Ottawa Book Awards
- Ottawa Catholic School Board
- Ottawa Community Housing
- Ottawa Film Office
- Ottawa International Writers Festival
- Ottawa PC Users Group
- Ottawa Public Health
- Ottawa World Skills
- Ottawa StoryTellers
- Ottawa-Carleton District School Board
- Parkdale Food Centre
- Residential Services, Community and Social Services, City of Ottawa
- Timberlake Community (Herongate)
- TVOKids
- United Muslims of Ottawa-Gatineau
- United States Embassy Ottawa
- Western Ottawa Community Resource Centre
- YMCA Merivale Employment Services



Friends of the Ottawa Public Library Association

Message from Friends of the Ottawa Public Library Association President, Vladimir Uher

It was a year unlike any the Friends of the Ottawa Public Library Association, or any of us for that matter, have ever experienced. The global pandemic due to COVID-19 in March 2020 brought most of FOPLA's activities to a sudden halt, meaning we must consider our year within the context of the pandemic and the accompanying extraordinary events in Ottawa and around the world.



We began 2020 with strong support for the exciting design reveal for the upcoming Ottawa Public Library-Library and Archives Canada Joint Facility, an initiative that we proudly highlighted on all our platforms. We look forward to further involvement in this community-building, once-in-a-generation space for our city.

COVID-19 necessitated closing all FOPLA used books stores and sales in March 2020 and halted our intake of book donations from the community. Our bookstores remained closed for all of 2020, given the ever-present challenges of operating in a pandemic and new public health rules. This has been difficult for us as an organization, but the safety of our volunteers and customers was, and remains, our priority.

The year was not without its positive experiences though, as we developed all facets of planning for our eventual safe return to operations. We briefly began accepting limited donations at the FOPLA Distribution Centre in the fall of 2020. We also held our first Book Donation Drive-Thru in December to resounding success, where we received more than 800 boxes of used books from Ottawa's generous community donors!

We are very pleased to have gifted \$35,000 to the Ottawa Public Library in 2020, which contributed to the excellent and innovative programming offered by OPL that

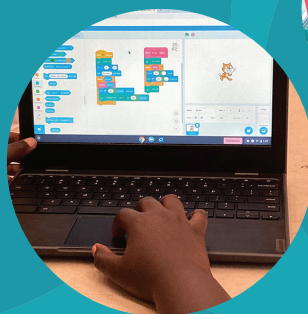
year. We are optimistic that once our operations resume, we will be able to continue supporting the Ottawa Public Library in a meaningful way through our fundraising and advocacy.

We consider this mission more important now than ever, as 2020 has certainly reminded us all how needed, valuable, and loved our public library system is in Ottawa.

FOPLA Highlights for 2020

- FOPLA donated a total of \$35,000 to the Ottawa Public Library in 2020.
- FOPLA sponsored OPL's Awesome Authors youth writing contest and published the winning entries in the fourteenth edition of pot-pourri.
- FOPLA sponsored the Ottawa Live & Local music series, a series of online music performances and workshops from the Ottawa Public Library in partnership with Meridian Theatres @ CentrepoinTE. The series allowed OPL to celebrate and support local musicians during an otherwise challenging period.
- FOPLA sponsored National Indigenous History Month programming, including the popular online author visit with Karen McBride, author of Crow Winter.

For more details on how to get involved or donate to FOPLA, visit www.fopla-aabpo.ca



Statement of revenue and expenditures

At the end of the 2020 fiscal year, OPL closed its financial books with a surplus. The \$6.2 million surplus is almost entirely the result of unprecedented operational conditions in response to the Coronavirus (COVID-19) Pandemic. The pandemic, and necessary Provincial orders, mandated the closure of library branches for extended periods of time eventually accumulating a significant savings in salaries and benefits. Spending was reduced in all categories with the exception

of Library Materials, where spending increased to accommodate demand for digital collections. This provided an increased inventory of materials available to library customers from the safety of their home. Revenues from fees, rentals, and other sources experienced a dramatic decline despite continued support from the Province of Ontario, Ministry of Heritage, Sport, Tourism and Culture. A special thank you to the Friends of the Ottawa Public Library Association (FOPLA), the Ottawa Community Foundation, and numerous corporate and private donors, whose efforts and financial support helped to further offset expenditures.

Revenues

Revenues (In Dollars)	2019	2020
City of Ottawa	\$47,666,775	\$43,613,577
Library Fees	\$1,022,017	\$35,7516
Province of Ontario	\$1,380,328	\$1,380,328
Rental and Other	\$185,015	\$34,517
Total Revenues	\$50,254,135	\$45,385,938

Expenditures

Actual Expenditures	2019	2020
Salaries & Benefits	\$36,694,924	\$31,674,353
Library Materials	\$531,4572	\$6,224,734
Purchased Services	\$2,171,611	\$1,976,660
Materials & Supplies	\$1,945,672	\$1,928,408
Program Facility Costs	\$4,127,349	\$3,581,783
Total Expenditures	\$50,254,128	\$45,385,938
Year-End compared to Budget Surplus / (Deficit)	\$256,724	\$6,277,755

Please note

The Annual Report does not represent the official annual financial report, which is issued separately pending the annual audit.