# 2021 Annual Report





# **Message from the Board Chair**

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



As Chair of the Ottawa Public Library (OPL) Board, I am honoured to see, firsthand, the tremendous contribution OPL makes within our community. It inspires learning, sparks curiosity, and connects people. What I found most impressive in 2021, was OPL's commitment to continuously improve access and services for customers. The elimination of late fees at the beginning of the year was a game changer. It was a huge step towards removing systemic barriers so that everyone, especially our most vulnerable and marginalized community members, could feel welcome and be able to access the amazing and varied resources of our public library.

COVID-19 was very much a part of our lives last year, but it was heartwarming to witness the determination of OPL staff to ensure that Library programs and services continued virtually and, when possible, in-person in branches. Service modes and levels varied with the often unpredictable waves of the pandemic; but access to OPL's remarkable digital offerings remained constant thanks to the Library's adaptable OPL staff.

I am extremely grateful for the dedication and professionalism shown by all employees of this organization: from the branch staff at the front lines, to the employees behind the scenes, to the leadership team, OPL continued serving customers during a tumultuous period in our city while advancing the Library's longer-term strategic goals.

I also want to thank my fellow trustees for their considerable contributions, support and time, especially given the challenges of the pandemic. A sincere farewell to Trustee Tim Tierney, former OPL Board Chair and Councillor for Beacon Hill-Cyrville who has done remarkable work; and a warm welcome to Rawlson King, Councillor for Rideau-Rockcliffe. Trustee King's commitment to the Library is second to none, and I'm confident that with his insightful input, we will continue to guide and support a strong public library for Ottawa that is there for everyone.

**Matthew Luloff** 

OPL Board Chair and Councillor for Orléans



### **Board members**

Chair: Councillor Matthew Luloff

Vice-Chair: Kathy Fisher

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

# **Message from the CEO**

# Message from Danielle McDonald, Chief Executive Officer



I am proud that, in 2021, OPL was there for our community as a constant source of connection and inspiration, and was a valued service that residents of Ottawa could rely on. I am grateful for our dedicated employees, who worked tirelessly to provide a continuous array of virtual and branch services to support and engage Library customers throughout the year. This was not easy, as we all experienced our own challenges during the pandemic, balancing personal and professional responsibilities with admirable resilience.

As we worked towards ensuring we were meeting community needs as best we could, OPL made significant strides in improving access to virtual services and reaching out to our most at-risk populations.

From navigating the pandemic safely, to providing Chromebooks and Wi-Fi hotspots to vulnerable communities, to introducing full online customer registration for Library membership – to note only a few of OPL's achievements in 2021 – we maintained our forward momentum as we adapted to the evolving context. I am confident that OPL is well positioned to continue meeting the needs of its customers and contributing to the success of the larger community.

Much progress has also been made on the Ottawa Central Library Fundraising Campaign: "Unlock Potential". We are pleased that the Right Honorable Beverley McLachlin has taken on the role of Honorary Chair of the campaign. Funds raised will help bring the new facility to life with state-of-the-art technology, equipment, furnishings, programming, and pilot projects that will make Ādisōke a superlative cultural hub; and, by extension, enhance Library services across OPL.

I look forward to the year ahead, knowing that our team is inspired by everything we have learned and accomplished throughout the pandemic and excited to welcome more customers as we continue to build community and transform lives.

Danielle McDonald

CEO

# Senior management team

- Danielle McDonald, Chief Executive Officer
- Anna Basile, Division Manager, Corporate Services
- Donna Clark, Division Manager, Branch Operations
- Craig Ginther, Division Manager, Central Library Project
- Catherine Seaman, Division Manager, Customer Experience
- Michael Poliwoda, Program Manager, Major Gifts and Partnerships
- Alexandra Yarrow, Program Manager, Board and Strategic Services
- Sarah Macintyre, (Acting) Program Manager, Board and Strategic Services (as of August 2021)



# 2021 Highlights

# **Uninterrupted service despite COVID-19**



The ongoing pandemic continued to impact OPL services and staff availability. Despite the challenges, we delivered in-person services throughout all of 2021, providing the greatest level of service possible within the limitations of COVID-related health regulations and staffing pressures.

- We provided continued access to collections and resources all year through virtual channels and varying levels of service in branches across the city
- By prioritizing the health and safety of employees and customers, there were no known cases of work-related transmission of COVID-19
- Board trustees provided input into pandemic recovery plans through a Board Ad Hoc Committee and received regular updates at Board meetings in 2021
- The Greenboro branch supported Ottawa Public Health (OPH) by providing space in its facility for a COVID-19 immunization clinic
- Branches offered free printing and lamination for customers' proof of vaccination, funded by OPL donors
- We provided digital access through the loan of Chromebooks and Wi-Fi hotspots to groups at risk of digital exclusion
- OPL was one of 100 organizations recognized by United Way's Community Builder of the Year Award for its participation on their COVID-19 Community Response Table

### **OPL Steps to Recovery**

- Until February 22
  Curbside holds pick-up and returns during open hours
- **February 22**Limited browsing and public computer use at 25 branches
- March 8
  Limited browsing and public computer use at 31 branches
- 4 April 8
  Back to curbside services at 31 branches
- June 14
  Contactless service, no browsing, limited use of public computers, 24-hour returns
- 6 July 5
  Browsing, access to more public computers, newspapers and magazines
- 7 July 26
  Reopening of creative spaces and kiosk services
- 8 September 7
  Return to regular hours, 33 branches open at limited capacity
- 9 October 25
  Capacity limits increase, some in-person programming

## Customer Feedback

"I would like to thank the staff for their kindness in helping me to overcome the solitude of the COVID isolation by providing me with library books on hold... Many thanks for keeping the pleasure of access to books going."

#### Ādisōke - Towards a new OPL central branch



OPL's project for a new, accessible, spectacular central branch in partnership with Library and Archives Canada (LAC) and the City of Ottawa celebrated many significant milestones in 2021:

- Reveal of the final design of OPL-LAC joint facility
- Approval of additional funding for the project by OPL's Board of Trustees and Ottawa City Council to address inflationary costs
- Awarding of the construction contract

Notably, the most significant milestone in 2021 was the gifting of a new name for the landmark joint facility shared between OPL and LAC. On behalf of the Anishinābe Algonquin Nation, host nation communities Kitigan Zibi Anishinābeg and the Algonquins of Pikwakanagan First Nation, the facility was named Ādisōke.

- Ādisōke is an Anishinābemowin word that refers to the telling of stories. Storytelling is the traditional means by which Indigenous peoples share knowledge, culture and history over generations
- It is a meaningful and fitting name, as storytelling represents the coming together of knowledge, history, culture, creativity, collaboration, and connections
- Ādisōke evokes what is at the heart of the partnership between OPL the sharing of stories to build community and transform lives – and LAC – the keeping and preserving of Canadian and Indigenous stories

# Eliminating late fees – for more equity and inclusion!

# 155,000 customers had late fees removed from their accounts

By eliminating late fees in 2021, as many North American libraries have, OPL is better aligned with our broadly inclusive mission to serve everyone who can benefit from OPL services. The elimination of late fees with the introduction of OPL's Materials Recovery Model (MRM) was a concrete action to remove systemic barriers and a step towards achieving equity, while reinforcing the concept of the library as a shared resource. On January 1, OPL eliminated fees, shifting the focus from fines that could be perceived as punitive to a more helpful approach to encourage the return of Library materials.



#### **Customer Feedback**

"Thank you @opl\_bpo for automatically renewing my due library book! Makes things easier and better!"

# **Popular content**

# 9,539,945 items borrowed last year, both physical (6,750,863) and digital (2,789,082)

OPL is a cultural institution devoted to literacy. We cultivate the joys of reading, learning, discovering, and creating. Here are 2021's most popular print books based on the number of holds requests.



#### **Adult Books**

- 1. State of Terror by Hillary Clinton and Louise Penny
- 2. The Madness of Crowds by Louise Penny
- 3. The Rose Code by Kate Quinn
- 4. Fight Night by Miriam Toews
- 5. The Last Thing He Told Me by Laura Dave



#### **Teen Books**

- 1. Shadow and Bone by Leigh Bardugo
- 2. Firekeeper's Daughter by Angeline Boulley
- 3. Concrete Rose by Angie Thomas
- 4. Iron Widow by Xiran Jay Zhao
- 5. Hunting by Stars by Cherie Dimaline



### Children's Books

- 1. Big Shot by Jeff Kinney
- 2. Christmas Pig by J.K. Rowling
- 3. Howl of the Wind Dragon by Tracey West
- 4. Keepers of the Empire by Geronimo Stilton
- 5. Bo and the Merbaby by Rebecca Elliott



# www.youtu.be/cTcRNuQqLXU

# \*We really believe these Ottawa I

"We really believe these Ottawa Public Library contributions will help change the self-esteem of our youth. We are very grateful to receive these kits and the OPL Wi-Fi hotspot. The OPL Hotspot continues to be a lifeline for our clients during the pandemic. Because of these two initiatives, we believe OPL has effectively increased visibility and begun to build an ongoing relationship with the shelter staff and hopefully the youth themselves."

# **Redesigning the Library Experience**

# Making digital access inclusive



87,652 branch uses of Chromebooks (2,945) and public PCs (84,707)

The pandemic starkly reinforced the need for digital inclusion, as access to the internet for remote learning and the increasing necessity to interact via technology became all the more important. OPL took decisive steps to reduce barriers to services by focusing on digital inclusion.

- We shared a total of 279 Chromebooks and 30 hotspots to 45 community partners working with vulnerable populations
- 35 iCanada iPods loaded with a mix of curated Canadian songs, poems, audiobooks and OPL programs were loaned to seniors in isolation at Carlington Community Health Centre and the Ottawa Mission
- Chromebooks were made available for three-hour use outside branches and the WiFi signal boosted at 22 locations with outside space during curbside and contactless service
- We made improvements to accessibility for customers with vision challenges on public printing stations by providing larger fonts and a higher contrast mouse
- Recorded programs from the Aging Well Together "Wellness Friday" series were loaded onto USBs and distributed in Wellness Kits to 160 low-income seniors

# On a path towards Reconciliation



More than 260 books in Indigenous languages added in 2021

OPL is committed to reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples. Throughout 2021, we took concrete steps towards building relationships with Indigenous communities and enhancing knowledge of the histories and cultures of Indigenous peoples.

- In partnership with our host nations, we developed and implemented the use of an official Recognition of Anishinābe Algonquin Territory Statement at all OPL Board meetings, programs, and events.
- We offered programs, a teaching toolkit, blog posts with reading lists, and other
  resources to further educate customers and employees about the impacts of
  residential schools on Indigenous people leading up to the National Day of Truth and
  Reconciliation. Recorded programs are available on our YouTube channel's Indigenous
  playlist.
- In keeping with our commitment to "Reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples through library collections" in the Board-approved Content Services Framework, we added Indigenous Languages materials throughout branches, with dedicated collections at the Main and St-Laurent branches with a focus on:
  - Indigenous Language fiction and nonfiction (Ojibwe, Cree, and Inuktitut),
  - Language learning material for these languages, and
  - Bilingual/trilingual fiction and nonfiction (Indigenous language with English and/or French text).

# **Enhancing virtual services**

# 4,600 print jobs requested via OPL's online form

OPL made even more services available to all customers online, using OPL's virtual branch - the website!

- We launched a chat feature averaging 100 chat requests every week.
- A new ePrinting service was rolled out for cardholders to make a request for their document to be printed for pick up at their local branch the following business day.
- We provided the ability for Ottawa residents to register for a Library membership online, with 30 per cent of new memberships now created virtually.



#### **Customer Feedback**

"I love @opl\_bpo. Thank you for everything you do for our community. When I moved here many moons ago, I had a library card before I switched my provincial health card."

# **Programming to inspire and connect**



74,724 customers enjoyed recorded programs on Facebook or YouTube

OPL is committed to serving everyone, and that inclusive approach is reflected in our programs and events. In 2021, OPL had a mix of virtual and in-person programming for all age groups.

- More than 150 programs were uploaded to OPL's YouTube channel in 2021. They were viewed 35,000 times, with an average of 166 views per video, live or recorded versions.
- Summer programming included a virtual staycation for teens, a second edition of "Summerland" virtual summer camp and bilingual story walks to support TD Summer Reading Club activities.

- A series of online videos, "Get Active at Home", promoted physical activity for older adults; while "Wellness Friday" kits were distributed to more than 500 local seniors, supplying such equipment as yoga mats and a guide to the virtual activities.
- Community art projects were offered to older adults and rural customers, in partnership with MASC, where participants worked with the creative supplies at home under the virtual direction of MASC artist CJ Fleury. Art works are now installed at the Blackburn Hamlet, Carp, and Greely branches.
- A dedicated web page celebrated 50 years of Capital Pride. It featured reading lists, programs linked to Capital Pride Week, and guest blog posts by such local experts as Glenn Crawford, researcher for the Village Legacy Project, as well as by colleagues at the City of Ottawa Archives.
- Take-home Storytime kits were available at branches. The kits offered ideas for families to recreate a Storytime at home, empowering them to read, sing, play, talk, and write together.
- We celebrated Science Literacy Week with a variety of online programming and STEAM take-home kits for families, prepared by our Imagine Space team.
- To support caregivers and educators, we developed Teaching Toolkits with ideas and resources about Black History Month, National Indigenous History Month, Asian Heritage Month, and National Day for Truth and Reconciliation.



# Customer Feedback

"Myself and a lot of other mothers have benefited from these librarians' tremendous caring and support. My children who have outgrown the kids programs still love to see them when they go to pick up their books. These librarians delivered more than just a program for kids!!!"

# **Maintaining and improving OPL branches**



**Every 3.3 seconds, an item** was borrowed from OPL

As always, OPL was hard at work to improve its physical spaces to enhance the customer experience.

The Rosemount Revitalization was completed with a virtual reopening celebration and tour. Take a tour by clicking on the video below.

- Five branches (Alta Vista, Centennial, Orléans, Ruth E. Dickinson, and Vanier) were refreshed with new carpets, fresh paint, and lower shelving to allow for more open sight lines and natural light, and to improve accessibility and visual appeal.
- A public engagement campaign was launched regarding a new Library branch in the growing community of Orléans/Cumberland. The information collected from this survey will help shape OPL's services to the eastern part of Ottawa.
- Improvement work continued with asset upgrades to the Alta Vista branch and planning for a new temporary location for the Metcalfe Village branch.



www.youtu.be/c30i4kO\_1RY

# Customer Feedback

"Thank you, Ottawa Library, for being my safespace and ray of continuous hope since I was nine"

# **Ensuring accessible formats and collections**



4,882 loans of DAISY discs to help with a print disability

The OPL Board supported the Centre for Equitable Library Access (CELA) and National Network for Equitable Library Service (NNELS) in their request for continued, sustainable funding to help improve access to services for people with specific challenges. CELA provides accessible audiodiscs and other materials, such as DAISY discs and players, to libraries across Canada, including OPL, that may be borrowed by any Canadian with a print disability.

2,317,550

in person visits

233,378

active customers

2,371,267

eBooks and eAudio borrowed









417,815

digital music, film, video streamings



6,750,863

physical items borrowed



363,428

database sessions





# **Building Organizational Capacity**

### **Redesigning the Employee Experience**

# The new OPL jobs web page received 978 unique views

OPL is committed to improving the employee experience and to making the Library an inclusive and collaborative workplace that enables continuous improvement and reflects the community we serve.

- A new web page was launched to promote jobs at OPL: Jobs at Ottawa Public Library
- Proactive recruiting strategies were piloted to attract diverse candidates to our workforce, such as sharing our job postings with organizations connected to diverse, Indigenous, racialized, newcomer, youth, LGTBQ+ and other communities
- We introduced a new mandatory training program, "Pathways to Indigenous Learning", to help foster understanding of, and the need for, reconciliation

### Customer Feedback

"All your librarians are fabulous. Each time I come here with a problem, it is solved immediately."

# **Promoting the Value of OPL**

# **Ensuring accessible formats and collections**



7,770 OPL customers borrowed 72,790 items from other libraries' Overdrive collection

The Ottawa community now has access to a larger and more diverse Library collection.

- A larger selection of eBooks and eAudiobooks was made available through a reciprocal lending agreement with Hamilton Public Library, London Public Library, Burlington Public Library and Mississauga Library to provide access to each other's OverDrive digital collections
- Nintendo Switch games were added to our video gaming collection
- Thermal cameras were made available to borrow in November, in partnership with the City of Ottawa's Energy Evolution Plan, and over 300 requests were made by December
- 99 provincial park passes were made available and loaned 780 times
- 16 telescopes were added to the collection and borrowed 200 times
- We added remote access to Généalogie Québec, consulted 86,150 times, and PRDH (Programme de recherche en démographie historique) which was consulted 11,683 times
- We added 58 items to the Sun Life Financial Musical Instrument Lending Library



4,224 people across Canada viewed live author events with Kim Thúy

#### **One eRead Canada**

The Canadian Urban Libraries Council (CULC)'s first bilingual national eBook club launched in January 2021 with great success. OPL was a lead organizer and contributor. We secured the support of CBC/Radio-Canada and the participation of professional hosts Shelagh Rogers (CBC) and Kevin Sweet (Radio-Canada) for the two virtual author events.

- The featured book, Vi by Kim Thúy, was accessed by more than 30,000 readers and listeners from across Canada
- Nearly 1,000 libraries took part in this initiative... almost 85 per cent of public libraries in Canada
- One eRead/Un livrel Canada supports CULC's advocacy efforts for fairer pricing and less restrictive licensing on eBooks from multinational publishers for libraries – to ensure public library users can easily and equitably access digital content

# **Celebrating Library Month**

In October, OPL promoted Library Month with a campaign on the theme of friendship; specifically: "Bring a friend to the Library, Bring the Library to a friend." New library customers received a handy USB 'friendship bracelet' and so did the person who referred them to OPL. The initiative underlined the Library's welcoming, inclusive and positive approach to customer service while aligning well with OPL's overarching strategic goal: to increase the number of active card holders by 25 per cent, by 2023.

- 3,990 new cardholders joined OPL in October
- 47,902 people were reached through OPL social media channels
- 1,999 engagements (likes, comments, clicks, shares) were generated during Library Month

### "We recommend" via Twitter too!

Every Thursday at noon, OPL provided reader's advisory services on Twitter via #AskALibrarian.

- 540 recommendations from OPL
- 323 questions answered by OPL

# **Customer generosity improves our services**

# More than \$50,000 was raised through general fundraising e-appeals and monthly donations

Donations empower OPL to provide important services that address the needs of our customers and our community in a timely manner. OPL greatly appreciates the generosity of our donors and supporters.

Thanks to Library donors, we were able to:

- Provide free printing and lamination for proof of vaccination
- Improve digital inclusion by lending Wi-Fi hotspots and Chromebooks to vulnerable populations

#### **Youth Wellness Kits**



300 street-involved teens and young adults received **OPL Youth Wellness Kits** 

With the help of our Friends of the Ottawa Public Library Association (FOPLA), OPL created 300 Youth Wellness Kits, which were distributed to eight community partners who serve street-involved youth.

### Customer Feedback

"I would like to tell you that you brought happiness to our students. We appreciate your lovely initiative, this FOPLA gift lifted up their spirits during the COVID-19 crisis."

#### **Intellectual Freedom**

# 25 titles were challenged in 2021, four times more than in 2020

OPL continued to uphold the core value of intellectual freedom. Public libraries support intellectual curiosity and enquiry, and consider intellectual freedom as the prerequisite for an informed, democratic society. We recognize the right of individuals to express opposition to items selected for the collection.

 Previously available on paper only, OPL's Request for Reconsideration of Library Material form was made available online, making it more accessible and increasing transparency



# Thank you to our partners

Accora Village

Association des auteures et auteurs de l'Ontario français

**Banff Ledbury Community House** 

Boys and Girls Club

Bytown Mac Users Group

Catholic Centre for Immigrants

Canadian Urban Libraries Council

CBC/Radio-Canada

Centretown Community Health Centre

City of Ottawa

Company of Fools

ComputerWise

Conseil des écoles catholiques du Centre-

st

Conseil des écoles publiques de l'Est de

l'Ontario

Eastern Ottawa Resource Centre

Envirocentre

First Words

Frontier College

Haven Too Youth Shelter, Fourth Avenue

**Baptist Church** 

**Hazelview Properties** 

Integrated Departmental Task Force

Integrated Neighbourhood Service Team

Interval House Ottawa

**Jewish Family Services** 

John Howard Society

Library and Archives Canada

Maison d'amitié

**MASC** 

Master Gardeners of Ottawa-Carleton

Matthew House

Minawaashin Lodge/STORM

National Arts Centre

Odawa Native Friendship Centre

**Ontario Genealogy Society** 

Ontario Ministry of Heritage, Sport, Tourism

and Culture Industries

**Ottawa Book Awards** 

Ottawa Catholic School Board

Ottawa Children's Festival

Ottawa Community Foundation

**Ottawa Community Housing** 

Ottawa International Writers Festival

Ottawa PC Users Group

Ottawa Public Health

Ottawa World Skills

Ottawa StoryTellers

Ottawa-Carleton District School Board

Parks Canada

**Pinecrest Terrace Community House** 

Royal Astronomical Society of Canada

Salvation Army

South-East Ottawa Community Health

Centre (SEOCHC)

St. Mary's Home

Stepstone House

Sun Life Financial

The Ottawa Mission

Timberlake Community

United Muslims of Ottawa-Gatineau

**United States Embassy Ottawa** 

Western Ottawa Community Resource

Centre

YMCA-YWCA

Youth Haven Shelter

Youth Services Bureau



# Friends of the Ottawa Public Library Association

# Message from FOPLA President, Shari Hill



Like most businesses in our wider community, our used bookstores across Ottawa saw another year filled with unexpected plot twists. But thanks to our many volunteers who stepped up with exceptional flexibility, we were able to reopen 18 of our 29 store locations before the end of the year.

The pandemic challenged all of us to think creatively about the future, and our team found ways to keep us in business. We launched our first online store, Kind Reads, which provides readers with affordable access to used books in excellent condition. We also added digital payment options at some of our physical locations.

Between sales at our Distribution Centre, Kind Reads, and used bookstores, FOPLA raised \$35,000 to donate to OPL. We were proud to sponsor 2021 OPL community programs such as:

• A discussion with Teddy Syrette (Ozhawa Anung Kwe/Yellow Star Woman), a 2Spirit Anishinābe storyteller from Batchewana First Nation

- Awesome Authors youth writing contest and publishing of the winning entries in the fifteenth edition of pot-pourri
- Science Literacy Week including themed Storytimes, a panel discussion, and STEAM kits
- 300 wellness kits for street involved youth that contained personal supplies, headphones, Presto cards, and bilingual mental health resources

You can learn more about how to get involved or donate to FOPLA on our website: www. fopla-aabpo.ca. Also, visit our online store: www.kindreads.com.



At the end of the 2021 fiscal year, OPL closed its financial books with a surplus. The \$5.44M surplus is the result of reduced services and hours of operation during the recovery from the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. Despite the expansion of in-person library services during the year, and increased expenditures in salaries and benefits compared to the previous year, savings in salaries and benefits was still realized. Spending in all other categories was approximately the same as the previous year with supply chain challenges existing throughout 2021. Revenues from fees decreased in 2021 with the introduction of the Materials Recovery Model, while revenues from rentals and other sources were consistent compared 2020 numbers.

#### Revenues

Revenues (In Dollars)	2020	2021
City of Ottawa	\$43,613,577	\$47,683,273
Library Fees	\$35,7516	\$207,972
Province of Ontario	\$1,380,328	\$1,380,328
Rental and Other	\$34,517	\$44,056
Total Revenues	\$45,385,938	\$49,315,629

# **Expenditures**

Actual Expenditures	2020	2021
Salaries & Benefits	\$31,674,353	\$34,850,813
Library Materials	\$6,224,734	\$6,085,846
Purchased Services	\$1,976,660	\$2,186,449
Materials & Supplies	\$1,928,408	\$1,896,666
Program Facility Costs	\$3,581,783	\$4,295,855
Total Expenditures	\$45,385,938	\$49,315,629
Year-End compared to Budget Surplus / (Deficit)	\$6,277,755	\$5,244,060

# Please note

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

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