

2023 Annual Report

**A Library for
everyone**



Ottawa Public Library
Bibliothèque publique d'Ottawa

Message from the Board Chair

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

As I look back on 2023, I remember a remarkable year of growth and excitement. Last year welcomed a new term of the Ottawa Public Library (OPL) Board, including returning expertise and fresh perspectives from new trustees. With new and renewed commitment to advance the work of our outstanding organization, the Board is excited to look ahead to the coming years. I am privileged to be surrounded by people of such talent and with such demonstrated dedication to OPL's vision and mission.



In 2023, we resumed in-person Board meetings while retaining the accessibility benefits of continued virtual participation by adopting a hybrid model. It has been tremendously rewarding to gather together again with my fellow trustees, staff, and citizens. The continued availability of the meeting livestream on the Library's YouTube channel, and the option to make a public delegation remotely, is a meaningful way to improve access to, and the transparency of, the governance work of the Board for all Ottawans.

One of the first orders of business for this new term of Board was to update the Strategic Plan. The OPL 2023-2028 Strategic Plan incorporates several directions and priorities from the previous Plan, which remain valid, useful, and achievable. Social shifts in the last few years, influencing activities such as library use, as well as significant OPL strategic initiatives such as the Service Delivery Framework (SDF) and a renewed commitment to community development work, were integrated into the Strategic Plan. This plan for 2023-2028 will take us past the opening of the Central branch at Ādisōke in 2026 and allows us time for a more fulsome renewal thereafter.

The Board also oversaw progress on the implementation of the Service Delivery Framework and the Facilities Framework. Both documents help OPL redesign the library experience and address barriers to service, so that everyone in Ottawa can more easily access library services.

Work continues on the implementation of our Intellectual Freedom Policy Statement, and I am pleased with the progress. There will be challenges ahead as we ensure OPL continues to provide multiple perspectives and sources of information and is a champion of information literacy.

I am proud that this 2023 Annual Report showcases the considerable work that was accomplished by OPL last year, and the important role the Library plays in our city.

I am grateful to each and every one of our staff for their dedication and hard work over the last year. Our greatest resource is you.

Matthew Luloff

OPL Board Chair and Councillor for Orléans East-Cumberland

Board members

Chair: Councillor Matthew Luloff

Vice-Chair: Kathy Fisher

Trustees: Councillor Jessica Bradley,
Mary-Rose Brown, Alison Crawford,
Councillor Rawlson King,
Councillor Catherine Kitts,
Harvey A. Slack, Adam Smith



Message from the Chief Librarian/CEO

Message from Sonia Bebbington, Chief Librarian/ Chief Executive Officer

When I first came to Ottawa Public Library towards the end of 2022, my vision was simple: a library for everyone. More than one year into my time with OPL, I remain firmly committed to ensuring that this statement is true every day of every year. The Library is an anchor of our city's social infrastructure. We provide experiences that nurture a healthy, connected, and engaged community, create economic opportunities, improve equity, and strengthen participatory democracy. We provide services to Ottawa residents regardless of their economic, social, or cultural situation. At OPL, there is room for everyone's story, and we are dedicated to providing access to a world of ideas and supporting our community in myriad ways – old and new!



I am proud to lead a library that is increasingly inclusive, that reflects our community, and is valued by the citizens of Ottawa. It is profoundly meaningful to be at the helm of an organization where the search for information and understanding is strongly encouraged and supported, and the path to learning, creativity, and connection is wide open.

Since my arrival at OPL, I have been so impressed by what I see at the Library – the immediate positive impact our work has on citizens of Ottawa, the strong bonds and partnerships we have built with community groups and residents, and the way in which we are a part of so many people’s daily lives.

I’m proud to say that in 2023, we made a concerted effort to emphasize the core of our work – literacy. Literacy is at the forefront of everything we do. Our children’s Storytimes and book clubs for teens and adults cultivate the joys of reading; conversation groups help integrate newcomers to our community; our programs and events build financial, digital, food, or music literacy skills – and we always have something for everyone on our physical and virtual shelves! We also prioritized access, notably by returning to the full, pre-pandemic complement of branch opening hours to better align our schedule with your needs.

Last year, we increased our commitment to community development by forming a brand-new Client Experience and Community Development team and launching several new initiatives. Within the library context, community development means connecting, consulting, and working collaboratively with community members to understand their needs and to inform the direction of library work. This is exciting progress, and an opportunity to build authentic, inquisitive, and open-minded relationships with new and long-term community partners.

We also continued our efforts towards reconciliation with the Host Nation, as well as First Nations, Inuit, and Métis peoples living in Ottawa. For example, recommendation #62 of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission’s Calls to Action asks government organizations to make available age-appropriate information about residential schools, treaties, and Indigenous Peoples. In 2023, OPL provided programming and resources through book lists, displays, and blog posts to support this Call to Action.

As we move towards the opening of the Central branch at Ādisōke, we are dedicated to enhancing OPL as a whole, recognizing that growth must occur across library services, including our spaces, collections, programs, tools, and expertise. I am confident that with the support of each of you, we are on the right path.

Sonia Bebbington

Chief Librarian/CEO

Senior management team

- Sonia Bebbington, Chief Librarian/Chief Executive Officer (CEO)
- Anna Basile, Deputy CEO, Corporate Services
- Craig Ginther, Division Manager, Service Planning
- Sarah Macintyre, (Acting) Division Manager, Client Services
- Myra Skaronski, Division Manager, Branch Services
- Alexandra Yarrow, Program Manager, Board and Strategic Services



2023 Highlights

Here for all in the community

One of the core values of Ottawa Public Library is Inclusion and as such, the Library is committed to working towards providing barrier-free access to its services. To make sure OPL is welcoming and open to all, efforts were made in 2023 to increase inclusion and accessibility.

- The new Client Experience and Community Development department was created. Its objectives are to provide more meaningful, intuitive, and accessible client experiences across both virtual and in-person services, as well as advance community development and support to vulnerable communities, to oversee digital/virtual content creation including considerations of client experience and accessibility, and to dedicate one position to furthering OPL's relationship with the Anishinābe Algonquin Host Nation and urban Indigenous communities, with an initial focus on developing the Indigenous spaces and services at the Central branch at Ādisōke. The first priority for the new team is to identify community needs and service gaps as an initial step towards addressing barriers.
- OPL introduced a new Flex card option for Ottawa residents who do not have photo ID and/or fixed address. The Flex card gives full access to the Library's digital content, programs and events, in-branch tools and equipment and up to five physical items of the core collection.
- The reading and media campaign "One Book Can Change a Life" took place at



multiple venues, with more than 150 youth participating. The event involved a variety of engaging activities, including basketball games, drop-in services, and the distribution of T-shirts. Two hundred copies of the book *Stamped: Racism, Antiracism, and You* by Jason Reynolds and Ibram X Kendi were given to participants which was followed by a discussion about the book. This event created an environment that was not only fun and interactive but also designed to underscore the importance of literacy and inclusion.

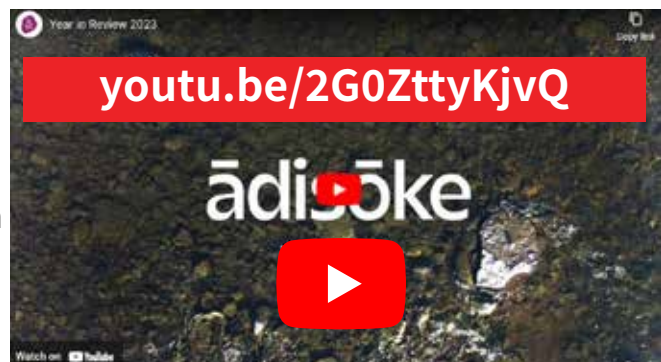
- The Library partnered with the John Howard Society to develop book clubs and provide reading material for justice-involved persons at the Ottawa Carleton Detention Centre.
- OPL partnered with the Ottawa Valley Food Security Project on the Community Backyard Garden Pilot Project. The pilot project aims to increase capacity for growing local healthy food, tackling food insecurity, and building community.
- OPL joined the Red Scarf Project in partnership with the AIDS Committee of Ottawa. Knitting clubs from Manotick and North Gower branches as well as members of the public crafted many beautiful scarves to give out to those in need. Every red scarf is tagged with important information about HIV to raise awareness and end stigma in the community. Approximately 70 scarves were donated in this initiative.

Strides and storeys towards the new Central branch at Ādisōke

The new Central branch at Ādisōke is set to open in 2026, and the progress made in 2023 means this transformational project is closer than ever to reality. From high-quality literacy programs and events with local and national artists to beautiful spaces to work and study that include the latest creative technologies, this modern, accessible, and iconic facility will build, strengthen, and enrich the community and bring people together.



- Construction of the building is now well underway, and in 2023, the project team celebrated a significant construction milestone: the completion of concrete pouring of all five floors – also known as “Topping off”! Following that, the focus turned to the construction of the iconic roof, scheduled to be completed in 2024.
- Ottawa Public Library and Library and Archives Canada (LAC), the partner for this project, released the branding for Ādisōke. It is inspired by the partnership with the Anishinābe Algonquin partners and the landscape on which Ādisōke is built.
- Service planning continues in preparation for the Central branch, and broad engagement with employees, clients, and community groups make meaningful contributions to shape the services and visitor experience.



Towards Reconciliation

Reconciliation with First Nations, Inuit, and Métis peoples remains a priority for Ottawa Public Library. Several initiatives were put in place to further develop the relationship with the Host Nation and raise awareness of Indigenous culture and history.



**255 copies
of *Every Child Matters* by
Phyllis Webstad given out on
the National Day for Truth and
Reconciliation**

- Program activities and displays were available to the public at all branches in the days leading up to the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation. They included contributing to a heart garden and painting remembrance rocks, showcasing Indigenous authors and reading suggestions about residential schools, and inviting interested clients to sign up to access a special pre-recorded video featuring Phyllis Webstad, the founder of Orange Shirt Day.
- Seven branches were open on September 30 for the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation offering the public opportunities to learn more about the impact of the residential school system. Open branches distributed free copies of the book *Every Child Matters* by Phyllis Webstad and also displayed StoryWalk panels inspired by the book, screened six National Film Board (NFB) films that offered insight into the trauma caused by the residential school system, and distributed free copies of the 94 Calls to Action published by the National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation.
- In partnership with the National Arts Centre (NAC), OPL hosted two performances of the play *Bloodline* by Albert Dumont and Phil Jenkins. In addition to the free live performances, at the NAC and another at the Meridian Theatres@CentrepoinTE, the play was also streamed online. A total of 157 people attended either in person or virtually.
- Meetings were held in person with Elders from Kitigan Zibi Anishinābeg and the Algonquins of Pikwakanagan First Nation for updates on the Ādisōke project and a presentation by the Indigenous artists who have been selected to be part of the Indigenous public art program at Ādisōke.
- As the new Central branch at Ādisōke took shape, a series of construction terms in Anishinābemowin was featured on social media and the OPL website in collaboration with a language keeper from Kitigan Zibi to raise awareness and familiarize people with the Anishinābemowin language, in keeping with OPL's core focus on literacy.
- To celebrate Indigenous culture in June during National Indigenous History Month, OPL hosted several in-person programs along with a four-week virtual film festival that elevated Indigenous voices through NFB films. The Library also offered *Moon of the Crusted Snow* by Waubgeshig Rice as an unlimited eRead to be enjoyed without a wait list, and it was checked out 1,392 times over the month.

Most popular books of 2023 at OPL

OPL is a cultural institution devoted to literacy, cultivating the joys of reading, learning, discovering, and creating. Here are 2023's most popular print books based on the number of hold requests.

**11,182,742 items
borrowed
up 5% over 2022**



Adult (English)

1. Spare by Prince Harry
2. Lessons in Chemistry by Bonnie Garmus
3. Demon Copperhead by Barbara Kingsolver
4. Happy Place by Emily Henry
5. Tom Lake by Ann Patchett



Adult (French)

1. Que notre joie demeure by Kevin Lambert
2. Rose à l'île by Michel Rabagliati
3. Veiller sur elle by Jean-Baptiste Andrea
4. Qimmik by Michel Jean
5. La vie de ma mère by Nathalie Petrowski



Teen (English)

1. A Good Girl's Guide to Murder by Holly Jackson
2. A Court of Thorns and Roses by Sarah J. Maas
3. The Ballad of Songbirds and Snakes by Suzanne Collins
4. The Summer I Turned Pretty by Jenny Han
5. If He Had Been with Me by Laura Nowlin



Teen (French)

1. Hunger Games (series) by Suzanne Collins
2. Inheritance Games (series) by Jennifer Lynn Barnes
3. Le prince cruel by Holly Black
4. Juliette à Boston by Rose-Line Brasset
5. Caraval by Stephanie Garber



Teen Graphic Novels (English)

1. Demon Slayer (series) by Koyoharu Gotoge
2. One Piece (series) by Eiichiro Oda
3. Naruto by Masashi Kishimoto
4. My Hero Academia by Kohei Horikoshi
5. Heartstopper by Alice Oseman



Teen Graphic Novels (French)

1. La rose écarlate (series) by Patricia Lyfount
2. Naruto (series) by Masashi Kishimoto
3. Princesse Sara (series) by Audrey Alwett
4. Bone (series) by Jeff Smith
5. La vie compliquée de Léa Olivier (series) by Alcante



Children's Fiction and Non-fiction (English)

1. Diary of a Wimpy Kid (series) by Jeff Kinney
2. Dragon Masters (series) by Tracey West
3. Minecraft (multiple titles and authors)
4. Harry Potter (series) by J.K. Rowling
5. Bad Guys (series) by Aaron Blabey



Children's Fiction and Non-fiction (French)

1. Les Méchants (series) by Aaron Blabey
2. Le club des baby-sitters (series) by Ann. M. Martin
3. a. Défense d'entrer (series) by Caroline Héroux (tied)
b. Nutshimit: Un bain de forêt by Melissa Mollen Dupuis (tied)
4. Le petit prince by Antoine de St-Exupéry



Picture Books for Children (English)

1. Don't Let the Pigeon Drive the Sleigh (series) by Mo Willems
2. The Sour Grape (series) by Jory John
3. Pete the Cat (series) by James Dean
4. The Class Trip by Robert Munsch
5. The Leaf Thief by Alice Hemming



Picture books for Children (French)

1. Le voleur de feuilles by Alice Hemming
2. J'aime l'automne by Kim Dean
3. La nuit de l'Halloween by James Dean
4. a. Cinq petites citrouilles by James Dean (tied)
b. Le monstre des couleurs va à l'école by Anna Llenas (tied)
c. Une montagne de feuilles by Robert Munsch (tied)



Children's Graphic Novels (English)

1. Baby-Sitters Club (series) by various authors
2. Dog Man (series) by Dav Pilkey
3. Wings of Fire by Barry Deutsch
4. InvestiGators by John Patrick Green
5. Baby-Sitters Little Sister by Katy Farina



Children's Graphic Novels (French)

1. Les Légendaires (series) by Patrick Sobral
2. L'agent Jean (series) by Alex A.
3. Super chien (series) by Dav Pilkey
4. Le club des baby-sitters (series) by various authors
5. Ariol (series) by Emmanuel Guibert

At a Glance

3,365,950

in-person visits
+29%*



244,544

active cardholders
+16%*



2,674,402

eBooks and eAudio
borrowed
+13%*



394,225

digital music, film,
video streaming
+15%*



8,131,201

physical items borrowed
+3%*



251,145

database sessions
+3%*



* Percentage represents the change compared to 2022.



203,166
people attended events
in person, up 152% over
2022

Redesigning the Library Experience

Return to full regular hours

In early September, urban and suburban branches returned to their full complement of opening hours (as offered pre-pandemic). This included full hours on Monday and Wednesday evenings.

- With the addition in 2022 of full-day service on Sundays at ten branches and InfoService, the Library's contact centre, the Library's hours of operation are now longer than they were before the COVID-19 pandemic.
- With this return to a full complement of open hours, the Library reaffirmed its commitment to serving as an essential hub for learning, creativity, and community engagement and is now in a better position to meet the wide-ranging needs of a diverse clientele with various schedules.



Return to full regular hours

To improve the physical experience, OPL continued to enhance its facilities through upgrades and renovations.

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commitment to serving as an essential hub for learning, creativity, and community engagement and is now in a better position to meet the wide-ranging needs of a diverse clientele with various schedules.

- Rideau branch was reconfigured to better suit the flow for clients and its shelving was replaced. The new shelves reflect OPL's commitment to accessibility by being lower and offering better sightlines. The children's collection was also relocated to the mezzanine area.
- Hazeldean branch was renovated to convert the branch's accessible washroom to a universal washroom. The washroom was enlarged to accommodate a new adult change table and was completely refitted.
- Centennial branch received landscaping and a clean-up of the grounds to improve its curbside appeal and the sightlines to the branch from the street.



Closing the gap

- Following the approval of the Facilities Framework, OPL assessed gaps in terms of the locations of library facilities across Ottawa using the decision criteria approved in 2022. The Gateway Criterion identified neighbourhoods with a facilities gap based on the neighbourhood's proximity to an existing public library branch while the Prioritization Criteria considered three factors: equity, distance, and growth.
- In total, 106 neighbourhoods within the city of Ottawa were assessed, with 30 (29 urban and one rural) identified as having a facilities gap per the Gateway Criterion.
- The Library now has a prioritization list that addresses both legacy gaps and projected gaps based on growth.
- The next step is to develop an Asset Management Plan that will be integrated with the legacy and growth gaps (from the prioritization list) to create a Facilities Master Plan for the next 25 years.

**Average distance to an
OPL branch is
3.25 km**

Improving the Library's technology

OPL is always on the lookout for ways to upgrade tools and technology to enhance the client experience. In 2023, three key innovations were introduced allowing cardholders to get more with their Library card.

- A new mobile printing service was launched



in March. With mobile printing, clients can upload a variety of file types to the cloud using their own device or a Library computer and print them at any Print Release Station in an OPL branch. 21,929 documents were printed using this new service.

- Cricut, sewing, serger, and embroidery machines are now available in the Imagine Space located at the Nepean CentrepoinTE branch.
- Sewing machines were introduced at the Sunnyside and Orléans branches, with sewing programs for teens available at those locations.



46,150
new OPL cardholders,
the highest annual increase since 2018

Building Organizational Capacity

Ensuring OPL spaces are welcoming for all

OPL made excellent progress in 2022 to return Library services close to pre-pandemic levels.

- OPL is committed to ensuring employees have the capacity to perform their work and carry out the library services they are hired to deliver, in line with their role and expertise.
- Using data-driven decision-making, OPL presented a report on safety and security to the Board that recommended a multi-pronged approach focused on four key elements: incident preparation, incident prevention, incident response, and incident recovery.
- Several additional measures were identified to be explored for implementation including a peer support network, making available Naloxone kits in all branches for use by anyone, and reviewing the security services to determine changes required for the next contract, including consideration of a mobile security service.



Redesigning the employee experience

OPL is a literacy and learning organization that strongly believes in employee training: by investing in employees, the whole institution is improved. In 2023, OPL continued to support professional and personal growth to ensure a positive, inclusive, and fulfilling employee experience.

- All branches were closed on November 2 for OPL's biennial employee forum and development session. Library staff learned about mis/disinformation as well as community development. OPL employees are knowledgeable and passionate about their communities, and by developing their expertise, they can better support literacy and information needs across Ottawa.
- OPL is committed to maintaining a physically and psychologically safe and healthy workplace and to ensuring that all incidents of violence or harassment are managed appropriately. To formalize this commitment, OPL introduced an updated Workplace Violence and Harassment Policy and five related procedures that apply to all OPL employees and work locations.
- The Library made significant strides in filling empty positions and welcomed 92 new people to the organization.
- 12,453 hours of training and development were provided to staff via the classroom or eLearning.



1,859,309
physical items in the OPL
collection,
up 4% since 2022

Demonstrating the value of OPL

Continually improving an evolving collection

The collection at OPL improves continuously, expanding and adapting to changing demands and supply to ensure the physical and digital catalogue offering is responsive, active, valuable, and balanced to community and client needs.

- A new Book Club Kit program was launched in June to support shared reading experiences and foster a love of reading in the community. The Library has 90 kits available and each set contains 10 copies of a single title with thought-provoking discussion questions to ignite fiery debates, unveil hidden meanings, and reveal the depths of a fellow reader's insight. The kits can be reserved for specific dates to facilitate planning and include contemporary and classic titles in a variety of genres and writing styles.
- Ottawa Public Library is now a FamilySearch affiliate. FamilySearch is the largest genealogy organization in the world, with billions of records from across the globe including birth certificates, travel documents, and obituaries, and OPL clients can now access millions of records and images using branch computers — or their own laptops in branches — that are not available to FamilySearch users at home.
- Ann Archer, Manager of Content Services until her retirement in June, was selected by the Ontario Public Library Association as the 2023 recipient of the Leadership in Adults Readers' Advisory Award. Ann was recognized by her peers in the library profession for her outstanding commitment to promoting a culture of reading.



Connecting people across Canada

Intellectual freedom is a core value of OPL, and it is paramount for the Library to defend the free and open exchange of lawful information and ideas, respecting individual's rights to privacy and choice.

- To celebrate Freedom to Read Week in February, OPL created displays in its branches of books that have been challenged in North America. Resources and booklists were also made available online to help spark conversations among clients of all ages about controversial books and clients were invited to join the discussion on social media to have the chance of winning a limited-edition Free People Read Freely / Lire librement t-shirt.
- In May, James Turk, the Director of the Centre for Free Expression and Distinguished Visiting Scholar at Toronto Metropolitan University, delivered in-depth workshops to the OPL Board and the staff leadership team. This followed the 2022 approval of a revised Board position statement on intellectual freedom, affirming the Board's commitment to free expression in all formats and all OPL services.
- Seven titles in OPL's collection were challenged in 2023 by cardholders who requested OPL remove or re-classify these materials. All seven items were retained, and none were moved to other areas of the collection.



Inclusive programming

Throughout 2023, OPL delivered a wide range of programs and events, making sure there was something for everyone and to meet the needs and interests of diverse communities. Here are some key examples:

For Children, Youth, and Families

- A record number of submissions (739) was recorded for the Awesome Authors youth writing contest. This annual contest encourages young people aged 9 to 18 to develop their creative writing skills. The Library supports these youth by offering writing workshops with local authors allowing budding authors to hone their skills in the following categories: poetry, short story, and comic/graphic novel.
- To promote family literacy and digital literacy, 22 branches offered a combined 30 programs in English,



**739 entries
to Awesome Authors youth
writing contest, a new record**

French, and bilingually, in the week leading up to Family Literacy Day in January. These interactive in-branch programs featured Cubetto, a screen-free coding robot.

- Children's programming during March Break encouraged early literacy through fun and engaging activities and presenters. Some of the programs included a STEM adventure, Métis jigging, Brazilian drumming, and an afternoon of crafting.
- The Library had a tremendous turnout for all three virtual author visits featuring Shauntay Grant and Mireille Messier for Canadian Children's Book Week in the spring. More than 900 children attended the programs (two in English and one in French).
- OPL took part in the TD Summer Reading Club and organized more than 100 programs to support literacy, learning, and physical activity. These programs were offered online and in-person to ensure they were easily accessible and convenient.
- In November, CBC Radio in Ottawa held and broadcast its local All in a Day Book Club at OPL's Main branch. The starring book was Tom's Story by local author Jo-Ann Oosterman which tells the story of the late Ojibway painter Tom Hogan, who experienced homelessness at times in his life and spent a lot of time at the branch where he found refuge, kindness, and inspiration.
- OPL's popular Teen Staycation provided teens with 26 in-person or virtual events over a seven-week period in the summer. The Staycation was designed to drive creativity, facilitate interaction, and feed curiosity through a variety of activities including STEM and financial literacy programs.
- Ottawa Reads YA (Young Authors) returned in the fall for its 12th edition with a writing workshop and two author events, including, for the first time, a hybrid (simultaneous in-person and virtual) session with one of the authors, Kelley Armstrong, which was attended by 180 people.
- In partnership with Ottawa Storytellers, the Library hosted the Children's Storytelling Festival, a full day of storytelling open to all children in Ottawa. The main event was hosted at Ben Franklin Place and included seven professional and guest youth storytellers. The day included craft activities designed to support literacy and storytelling.

For the General Public

- In collaboration with the Integrated Neighbourhood Services Team and Recreation, Cultural and Facilities Services, OPL took part in the Welcome Bus project to welcome families in temporary housing to the neighbourhood and introduce services and resources available to them in the community.
- Ottawa Public Library participated in several events during Capital Pride Week to foster learning and community connections. OPL also participated with the Bookmobile in the 2023 Pride Parade which was the biggest ever with over 200 floats and an estimated 10,000 people marching.
- Several OPL branches hosted movie programs throughout the year, selecting titles



that would appeal to the local community. A total of 142 movies were screened in 2023. These film screenings provided access to cultural information and entertainment for individuals and families for whom movie outings may be difficult or unaffordable. Equally important, these are experiences that create a sense of community and connect people to each other through shared interests.

- Several computer programs were offered in partnership with the Ottawa PC Users' Group, including: Typography, Keeping Passwords Safe, Protecting Your Computer, Windows Performance Tune up, Who's the Boss - You or Your Camera?

For Older Adults

- OPL offered programs for seniors to promote literacy and lifelong learning, and to spread the valuable benefits of OPL to more Ottawans as the population ages. Some programs were in person at branches across the city and other programs were held virtually to facilitate accessibility. Examples of these programs included advance-care planning programs, grief and bereavement workshops, jigging dance classes, easy movement classes, and Powwow workouts.
- The Greenboro and Cumberland branches offered water colour programs using the Creativebug database.

Developing a brand strategy

One of the strategic priorities for 2023-2028 is to develop and implement a new brand strategy for Ottawa Public Library.

- The first phase of work, research and discovery, was largely accomplished through external and internal engagement in 2023. This included a public survey that was completed by more than 18,000 people in the fall - a broad and impressive response from the community.
- The research also included community interviews, employee workshops and a staff survey in the spring and summer. Data analysis began at the end of the year to produce a research report to conclude this phase of the project.

**94% of OPL clients and
89% of non-clients
trust OPL to foster literacy
and a love of reading**

Fair access to eBooks and eAudiobooks

Ottawa Public Library took a leading role in organizing the third bilingual edition of One eRead Canada, a national virtual book club.

- In collaboration with other Canadian Urban Library Council (CULC) member libraries and media partner CBC-Radio-Canada, OPL connected people and libraries across Canada throughout the month of April with unlimited online access to *Tatouine* by Jean-Christophe Réhel which was borrowed by 8,603 people in both English and French.

- More than 1,700 people across Canada joined the discussion in the official Facebook group, an increase of 14.5% over 2022.
- The initiative aims to raise awareness of the need for fair access to digital books and audiobooks. One eRead Canada helps by underlining the value of eContent and the importance of electronic access through libraries. Issues such as pricing and access, currently faced by public libraries in Canada, can be explored by visiting eContent for Libraries, the website for CULC's ongoing campaign.



Enhanced by client donations

Thanks to Library donors, OPL's annual fundraising campaign was a resounding success.

- OPL is developing and implementing its fundraising plan by continuously building on the success of previous years. The 2023 campaign was made up of fundraising emails sent to 80 000 clients.
- The annual campaign raised more than \$240,000. This is approximately a 330 per cent increase compared to 2022.
- Since 2021, the number of monthly OPL donors has gone from seven to 80, reflecting how members of the community recognize the Library's impact.
- Community support helps OPL enrich its programs and services, including things such as the purchase of kits to facilitate initiatives such as sensory storytimes and memory cafes.

**More than \$240,000
raised through e-appeals and
monthly donations**

Empowered by client donation

OPL staff welcome invitations to community events to connect with residents, learn about their interests and needs, and demonstrate the value of a library card.

- OPL participated in Salon du Livre de l'Outaouais, in-person again for the first time since 2020. School visits brought nearly 12,000 students to the event and approximately 42,000 people took advantage of the various activities available over the course of the event. OPL had a booth that offered information about French resources, in print and online, and a virtual reality headset was available to show off the plans for the new Central branch at Ādisōke.
- The Library participated in the Blackburn Hamlet Funfair and Parade where they made contact with hundreds of young and young at heart community members

and reintroduced many to the wonders of the library.

- In July, OPL attended the Ottawa Book Expo at the Lansdowne Horticultural Building. Staff connected with close to 30 members of the public and some of the conversation topics included how to get books from both small publishing houses and local authors onto the shelves of the Library and describing the variety of online collections and resources available.
- OPL participated in the Ottawa Comiccon to promote its services and to help some of the more than 40,000 Comiccon attendees select their next read. Staff interacted with 633 people and took 88 green screen pictures to help capture the great costumes that attendees were wearing!
- The Library had a booth at the Metcalfe Fair, and ensured a strong presence when the fair prioritized attendance for children with special needs, and the attendance of school groups. Library employees offered Storytimes and spoke with hundreds of kids and teachers.
- OPL participated once again in the popular Santa's Parade of Lights in November. A crowd of approximately 150,000 people attended and several OPL Board Trustees were present at this community event. The Library also participated in the Kanata Santa Clause Parade in November, the first time this parade had been held since the pandemic.



**633 people
visited the OPL booth at
Ottawa Comiccon**

Helping you stay healthy

Studies show that reading is correlated with a longer lifespan, can reduce stress, slow cognitive decline, improve sleep, and enhance both intelligence and social skills such as empathy. To help keep you even more healthy, and given OPL's presence in communities across Ottawa, the Library expanded its partnership with Ottawa Public Health (OPH) now offering more services in some of its branches.

- Starting in 2023, clients could pick-up a Rapid Antigen Test (RAT) Kit and individually wrapped medical masks from 31 OPL branches. This grab-and-go service was developed to support ongoing access to COVID-19 testing and personal protective equipment, free to those who want it.
- OPH continued to offer vaccination clinics at OPL's Greenboro and Emerald



Plaza branches to offer a convenient and accessible location to people in the community.

- OPH nurses offered training on how to identify and respond to an overdose, including how to administer Naloxone. Free kits were available to participants at the end of the session.

Honouring the community

In March, OPL named the program room at the Rideau branch the “Daniel Poliquin Room,” in recognition of Mr. Poliquin’s contribution to Franco-Ontarian literature and his links to the Lowertown and Sandy Hill communities.

- Daniel Poliquin is a prolific Franco-Ontarian novelist, essayist, and award-winning writer and literary translator living in Ottawa. He was appointed a Member of the Order of Canada in 2005 and officer of the Order of Canada in 2018. He won the Trillium Book Award in 1998, the Ottawa Book Prize in 2007, and the Prix France-Acadie in 2019. He won the Governor General’s Award for English to French translation in 2014 and 2017 and was made a Knight of the Order of Arts and Letters by France.



Your Library, Your Democracy

In October, Ottawa Public Library celebrated Library Month with a month-long campaign centered on the theme of democracy and the critical role libraries play in supporting an engaged and informed community.

- The Library organized multiple events such as The Right to Read: An open book on Intellectual Freedom, Reporting on Truth in an Era of Lies with CNN’s Fact Checker Daniel Dale, Evidence Matters: Putting evidence at the heart of everyday life, and Break the Fake: What is real information or fake news.
- New clients who registered for a Library card received a free limited-edition reusable book bag, as did the person who recommended OPL to them. There was also a book bag giveaway on social media.
- More than 4,550 new cardholders joined OPL by the end of Library Month. This was more than the average for 2023 which was 3,890 per month.





**30,031
followers
on social media, up
13% over 2022**

Thank you to our partners

Accora Village

African, Caribbean & Black Wellness
Resource Centre

Alexander Community Centre

Association des auteures et auteurs de
l'Ontario français

Banff Ledbury Community House

Boys and Girls Club

CAA Orléans

Carleton Heights Community Centre

Carlington Community Centre

Catholic Centre for Immigrants

Canadian Urban Libraries Council

CBC/Radio-Canada

Centre 507

Chrysalis House

City of Ottawa

City of Ottawa - Housing Services

City of Ottawa - Public Works Department

Conseil des écoles catholiques du Centre-
Est

Conseil des écoles publiques de l'Est de
l'Ontario

CRA - Community Volunteer Income Tax
Program

Eastern Ottawa Resource Centre

Haven Too Youth Shelter, Fourth Avenue
Baptist Church

Hazelview Properties

Hunt Club Riverside Park Community
Centre

Ingenium

Integrated Departmental Task Force

Integrated Neighbourhood Service Team

Interval House Ottawa

John Howard Society

Keller Williams Integrity Realty

Library and Archives Canada

Matthew House

Michele Heights Community Centre

Nepean, Rideau and Osgoode Community
Resource Centre (NROCRC)

OC Transpo

Ottawa Carleton Detention Centre

Ottawa Catholic School Board

Ottawa Community Housing

Ottawa PC Users Group

Ottawa Public Health

Ottawa-Carleton District School Board

Parks Canada

Pinecrest Terrace Community House

Salvation Army

Scientists in School

Shenkman Arts Centre

Stepstone House


Sun Life Financial

The Ottawa Mission

United for Literacy

Youth Haven Shelter

Youth Services Bureau



**42,277 calls, 5,111
emails, and 3,043
chats answered by
InfoService**

Friends of the Ottawa Public Library Association

Message from FOPLA President, Kathleen O'Connell Renaud

Since its creation in 2003, FOPLA has gifted more than \$4.25 million to OPL with funds raised from donations, memberships, and the operation of 29 used bookstores in library branches across the city, and through FOPLA's online used bookstore kindreads.com, and other specialty sales. These funds help enhance OPL spaces and sponsor special OPL programming and projects.



It was another year of renewal for the Friends of the Ottawa Public Library Association (FOPLA), as the organisation, number of volunteers, and revenues continued to grow

back to pre-pandemic levels. The Friends' Board and volunteers demonstrated their unwavering commitment to the FOPLA mission of leading a community of friends in support of Ottawa Public Library by contributing over 22,000 hours of their time.

**\$4.25 million
raised by FOPLA since 2003**

Funds from donations, membership fees, and used book sales in 2023 resulted in a gift to OPL of \$112,500. In addition, the Friends created two new awards for the University of Ottawa and Algonquin College to support racialized and Indigenous students pursuing careers in public librarianship - <https://www.fopla-aabpo.ca/scholarships-and-bursaries/>. FOPLA was also able to purchase new equipment, furnishings, and supplies to help expand operations and significantly increased its planned contribution to the new Central branch at Ādisōke, now under construction and due to open in 2026.

Highlights 2023

- FOPLA donated \$112,500 to OPL to support 2023 programs and enhancements.
- FOPLA was proud to sponsor, for the 17th year running, OPL's Awesome Authors Youth Writing Contest and publication of the pot-pourri anthology.
- FOPLA's ongoing support for the TD Summer Reading Club included the distribution to young readers of coupons for free books from FOPLA bookstores.
- FOPLA's donation to OPL in 2023 was used for:
- New OPL furnishings purchases - Bistro chairs and table at OPL's Greely branch; children's benches at Cumberland branch; shelving at Main branch's FOPLA store; study carrels at Alta Vista, Carlingwood, Nepean CentrepoinTE, Orléans, and Ruth E. Dickinson branches; Storytime carpet at Sunnyside branch; electronics credenza at Orléans branch; seat cushions at North Gloucester branch; and a green living plant wall at Stittsville branch.
- Enhanced painting and crafts programs at Cumberland, Manotick, Ruth E. Dickinson, Stittsville, and Blackburn Hamlet branches.
- Storytime, puppet show, and early literacy supplies at Cumberland, Beaverbrook, and Blackburn Hamlet branches.
- Victor reader to access DAISY collection for those with a reading disability at the Nepean CentrepoinTE branch.
- The Beaverbrook bookstore, Bookends, was nominated for a FACES magazine peoples' choice award in the category of "Best Ottawa Bookstore."
- FOPLA's e-commerce team created two new pick-up locations for customers of our online used bookstore, kindreads.com, at Beaverbrook and Cumberland branches.
- FOPLA expanded offerings and hosted author events at the always popular monthly Mammoth book sale at 100 Tallwood Drive.
- A new FOPLA used bookstore, Second Blooms, opened at OPL's Rosemount branch.
- For more details on how to get involved or donate to FOPLA, visit www.fopla-aabpo.ca



23%
of Ottawans are active
cardholders

Statement of Revenue and Expenditures

At the end of the 2023 fiscal year, OPL closed its financial books with a surplus of \$1.87M. During the year, library services continued trends towards post-pandemic norms with increased spending across almost all categories. Future planning for the new central library added funding to the salaries and benefits category for the 2023 fiscal year. Expenditures against this funding were limited in the year as positions and related duties for new or revised services were still under development. Compared to recent years, the significant savings accumulated in salaries and benefits over the course of the fiscal year were much lower.

Spending increased in all categories with the exception of Library Materials, where expenditures exceeded the planned budget, but less than the previous year by \$40K. Revenues from fees decreased in 2023, however, rentals and other fee sources experienced a significant increase compared to 2022 as meeting room rental inventory returned to historical levels and in-person library use and lending increased. Continued support from the Province of Ontario, Ministry of Heritage, Sport, Tourism and Culture helped to offset expenditures in 2023.

A special thank you to the Friends of the Ottawa Public Library (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)	2022	2023
City of Ottawa	\$50,173,961	\$54,545,703
Library Fees	\$318,626	\$308,866
Province of Ontario	\$1,380,328	\$1,380,328
Rental and Other	\$37,897	\$149,932
Total Revenues	\$51,910,812	\$56,384,829

Expenditures

Actual Expenditures	2022	2023
Salaries & Benefits	\$36,873,848	\$40,130,988
Library Materials	\$6,507,932	\$6,463,828
Purchased Services	\$2,920,558	\$3,314,374
Materials & Supplies	\$1,884,171	\$2,268,940
Program Facility Costs	\$3,724,303	\$4,206,699
Total Expenditures	\$51,910,812	\$56,384,829
Year-End compared to Budget Surplus / (Deficit)	\$4,622,167	\$1,870,475

Please note: the Annual Report does not represent the official annual financial report which is issued separately pending the annual audit and resulting statements.