



Topic: Pandemic Response

Date:	April 20, 2020
To:	Barrie Public Library Board
From:	CEO

RECOMMENDATION(S):

THAT the Barrie Public Library Board accept this report as information only.

SUMMARY:

The Barrie Public Library has been closely monitoring the developments related to COVID-19 since early March. The Library has been working diligently to manage this extraordinary challenge ensuring that the health and safety of our staff members and our patrons remain the highest priority. This report provides an update on the Library's response to COVID-19 pandemic to date and to outline actions we are exploring moving forward.

TIMELINE:

This timeline only reflects major decisions and developments from March 13, 2020 – April 20, 2020.

March 13, 2020

- After consultation with the City of Barrie, we decided to temporarily close both branches due to COVID-19. The City of Barrie closed all recreation centres and seniors' facilities as well.
- Emergency text notification system purchased and implemented to push important and time-sensitive notifications to staff

March 16, 2020

- All staff scheduled on Monday, March 16th attended work at their respective branches.
- L. Jessop held an all staff town hall meeting Downtown and D. Glidden shared the message with Painswick staff. Physical distancing and increased cleaning practices were implemented
- Prime Minister Justin Trudeau addressed the nation and urged all Canadians to "stay home." Staff members were sent home later that day.
- Book drops closed, due dates and holds pickups extended to April 15th, memberships that expired from March 1 onwards were extended to July 10

- Managers developed and evaluated a virtual service delivery model (online and phone questions and membership creation)
- Plans for online programming evaluated

March 17, 2020

- Ontario declared a State of Emergency and mandated all public libraries to close immediately
- L. Jessop initiated a daily mid-afternoon Management Team call
- L. Jessop initiated twice daily updates for staff members on the Hub (10:30 am and 4:00 pm)
- Staff building access temporarily removed to maintain health & safety and secure facilities; access for management only
- IT staff begin working remotely to set up infrastructure to support remote workers and deploy technology as required
- Proposed Holly Branch presentation to Council postponed indefinitely

March 18, 2020

- Contacted by Deputy Mayor Ward regarding Library assistance with the Social Support Task Force

March 19, 2020

- Request for a Letter of Understanding received from CUPE 2380, Library
- Response sent April 1, 2020; Union agreed no LOU was required

March 20, 2020

- Delayed the delivery of the two book kiosks (delivery was scheduled for April 15th)
- They will be stored in the Convergent Warehouse until we are in a position to receive them

March 23, 2020

- Librarians began providing virtual service delivery and programming from home
- All Staff working from home, as directed by Managers, to complete assigned professional development
- Public Service Working Groups defined, under direction of Managers and with a Librarian as lead, to rotate through virtual service delivery and programming
- Collections staff members continue working with vendors to maintain ordering of materials, uploading of records into the catalogue, provide access to new resources, and manage increased usage of digital resources

March 26, 2020

- L. Jessop participated in a Canadian Urban Libraries Council video conference. These calls take place weekly and information is shared among library CEOs from across Canada
- Personnel & Finance Committee video conference meeting to discuss staffing implications

March 27, 2020

- L. Jessop and J. Little initiated weekly meeting with A. Langlois, City of Barrie HR Director to ensure City/Library alignment

March 31, 2020

- Received a legal opinion from S. Jeronimo regarding the use of Declared Emergency Leave

April 3, 2020

- 11:00 am, all Pages and Tinker Techs informed by L. Jessop that they were being placed on Declared Emergency Leave via conference call (follow up by managers as needed)
- L. Jessop attended a CELUPL (Chief Executives of Large Urban Public Libraries) video conference meeting to share information with other Ontario libraries; this is now a bi-weekly call

April 7, 2020

- Due dates and holds pickups extended to June 30th
- Book drops remain closed

April 8, 2020

- 14 staff members in public and technical services were given notice of layoff in accordance with the Collective Agreement
- Depending on personal circumstances (school-aged children, illness, etc.) some of these staff members may be eligible for job-protected Declared Emergency Leave instead of a layoff
- After contacting affected staff by phone, we provided the layoff letter and an FAQ document by email to help staff members navigate the options available to them
- 5 relief public service staff placed on Declared Emergency Leave

April 14, 2020

- Patron phone calls go directly to staff during virtual hours of operation. Patrons are able to leave messages at any time

April 18, 2020

- Re-instated Saturday/Sunday limited virtual operating hours. Phone calls are being answered live, virtual programs shared, etc.

April 20, 2020

- We spoke to the Canada Revenue Agency and they confirmed that the Library would qualify for the Canada Emergency Wage Subsidy. More information on the implications of this to come.

DISCUSSION:

During the Pandemic, our efforts are shaped around the following three areas of activity,

listed here in priority:

1. Managing the Emergency Response – Immediate Issues
2. Online Service Enhancements during Closure Period
3. Preparing for Re-opening and Long-Term Challenges

Managing the Emergency Response – Immediate Issues

- **Support for Staff Working from Home**

- **Managers Following up with their Teams**

- Managers are focusing on supporting their team members with regular one-on-one calls and texts and also arranging team conference calls to maintain communications and check in with each other

- **Purchased and configured Zoom**

- Zoom is required to livestream the April Board Meeting on YouTube but is also being used to host live virtual programming such as English Conversation Circles

- **Purchased and configured Text Magic**

- Text Magic allows the CEO to reach all staff or groups of staff by text. For staff without a cell phone, it works with a landline by reading out the message. This is used as an emergency line to reach staff when timing of the message is essential. Regular communications continue to take place on the Hub, phone, or by email. Total spent to date on this service is \$155.90

- **Purchased and configured VoIP conference lines**

- Internet bandwidth and accessibility is an issue for some staff and so in addition to Skype videoconferencing, we have also purchased and configured telephone conference lines for meetings from the vendor we use for our iTiva telephone notification system. The cost for this service ranges from \$15-20/week depending on call volume

- **Deployment of Laptops, Devices, Technology and other Supplies**

- Various pieces of library-owned technology including laptops, iPads, headsets, microphones, 3D printers, the Cricut machine, wireless hotspots, as well as program supports (puppets, books, etc.) and various other supplies have been deployed to staff homes

- **Facilities**

- Access to facilities is restricted to city facilities staff and library management.
 - A few days before facility closures, additional cleaning measures were put in place. The City obtained an anti-viral cleaning product to be used on high-touch areas like door handles, railings, etc.
 - Both facilities will be deep-cleaned by city facilities staff teams during the closure.

- **Support for the Broader Pandemic Effort**

- **3D Printing of PPE Parts**

To support access to personal protective equipment (PPE) for front-line health care workers our staff members are using BPL 3D printers to print parts needed for face shields and masks. We have been in contact with Inksmith in Kitchener, Ontario and are currently printing parts for their Community Shield. These shields will be sanitized and distributed to areas of greatest need. We have moved both portable 3D printers to staff homes to support this work.

- **Participation in the Mayor's Social Support Task Force**

In cooperation with the Mayor's Office, the Library has established the Social Agency Hub, a central communication hub where local businesses can offer items for donation to help social agencies meet the needs of our community. These items may include: non-perishable food, cleaning supplies, toiletries, and other practical sundries. All perishable food items including bagged breakfast, sandwiches or dinners will continue to be coordinated by the Barrie Food Bank

- **Information Barrie**

BPL maintains Information Barrie, a database of community information. Information Barrie staff members have created custom searches that lead directly to topical information for those in the community needing assistance. The information is updated dynamically and staff members are reaching out to community agencies to ensure we are providing up-to-date information.

- **Participation in the Folding@Home Project**

BPL's public computing resources have been reallocated to contribute to the Folding@Home project by running protein folding simulations. Protein folding simulation is an incredibly difficult and processor-intensive series of calculations that are used in biology research. They help determine how complex and subtle differences in shapes at a microscopic scale change the way molecules interact with each other. The data derived from the simulations are used by disease researchers. Our public computers are participating in this crowd sourcing program to contribute to the cluster, specifically researching their highest priority project; COVID-19.

Online Service Enhancements during Closure Period

- **Increase in Patron Communication by Email**

The AskUs mailbox saw an increase of 126% in email enquiries when comparing the first two weeks of March (89) to the last two weeks of March (202).

- **Virtual Memberships**

The promotion of our online membership registration form resulted in the creation of 520 new memberships from March 14 – April 14. This number does not include expired cards that have been reactivated during this time. Over 500 new patrons now have access to the resources in our Digital Library.

- **Increased use of Digital Library**

(Increase in Usage, 2 weeks Pre-closure compared to 2 weeks Post-closure)

- Increase in ebook borrows: 97%
- Increase in audiobook borrows: 43%
- Increase in streaming video borrows: 109%
- Increase in other Digital collections: 155%

	March 1-13 (pre-closure)	March 14-31 (post-closure)	% Increase
ebooks			
Hoopla	766	1384	81%
cloudLibrary	4000	8016	100%
Cantook (French)	2	3	50%
Total	4766	9400	97%
Audiobooks			
Hoopla	1100	1381	26%
cloudLibrary	2046	3114	52%
Total	3146	4495	43%
Streaming Video			
Hoopla	432	904	109%
Total	432	904	109%
Other Digital collections			
Tumblebooks	77	161	109%
RBDigital (issues read)	939	1255	34%
PressReader (issues Read)	788	1896	141%
Lynda (videos viewed)	726	2398	230%
Universal Class (lessons viewed)	126	1053	736%
Total	2656	6763	155%
New Registrations/First Checkout March 1-31			
Hoopla	206		
cloudLibrary	481		

- **Virtual Programming**

The closure has shifted BPL Programs and Outreach online, making our programs

more accessible to our customers and engaging them with new technology. See CEO Report for greater detail.

- **Vendor Responsiveness**

A number of vendors have stepped up to offer complementary access to resources or to extend access to resources previously available on-site only. Examples of vendors offering complementary access to our users include:

- Tumblebooks has offered free access to TumbleMath, Romance Book Cloud, and Audio Book Cloud
- Hoopla has negotiated with publishers to create a “Bonus Borrows” selection of 1,800 items available with no associated cost-per-use charges
- Cricket has offered Cricket Media with free access to ebooks for Pre-K to Grade 8.
- World Trade Press has offered access to AtoZ World Food, AtoZ Food America, AtoZ World Travel, AtoZ World Business, AtoZ Maps Online, and Lingo Lite.

In addition to these complementary resources, we are temporarily permitted to provide off-site access to Simply Analytics, Ancestry, and Grant Connect which were all formerly restricted to onsite access only.

- **Purchased Niche Academy**

Niche Academy provides us with two separate products – one for staff access that allows us to provide training materials for staff and one for the public that allows us to host pre-recorded programs as well as training materials for our digital resources. This was a product that we were planning to purchase but we accelerated the purchase in response to the pandemic. In the first 4 days of the launch (March 31 - April 3):

- Staff viewed 587 tutorials in the Staff Academy
- The public viewed 776 tutorials with the Family Storytime the most popular with 667 views.

Virtual Service Delivery Plan

Virtual Service Delivery has been built in stages to ensure that we had sufficient technology and training in place at each stage. This has proven to be effective in supporting staff members as they adapt to changes in workflow and virtual working environments. A key element throughout this plan is frequent communication and connection between staff teams and managers.

Week 1

- Managers worked closely to develop, evaluate and execute virtual workflows to include online membership creation, account updating (such as resting PINs and renewing accounts), virtual assistance and retrieving phone messages
- Managers reviewed training needs and all staff worked on professional development and updating training (WSIB etc.) from home

Week 2

- Management met with Librarians daily to review service delivery plan
- Librarians trained on virtual workflows and began virtual service delivery

- Working groups for Public Service staff were established with Librarians as the lead
- Librarians, Public Service staff members and Managers developed virtual programming plan
- First virtual program runs

Week 3

- Public Service staff members trained on virtual workflows and begin virtual service delivery
- Program planning and development continues

Week 4

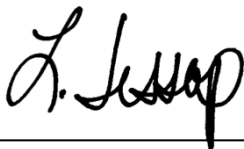
- Patrons are able to connect with staff live on the phone using the Rogers Unison App
- Designated staff are able to provide virtual service delivery for membership creation, account updating, live answer phone inquiries
- Virtual Program schedule begins Sunday April 19
- A wide variety of online engagement is planned to promote eResources. For example, book chats and continuation of Tech Coach sessions via phone or Zoom

Preparing for Re-opening and Long-Term Challenges

As the days go by, it is clear that the duration of the restrictions and measures established by the Province of Ontario, the Chief Medical Officer and the City of Barrie to reduce the spread of COVID-19 will continue for an extended period of time, and consequently lengthen the closure of our service points. This closure has resulted in a drastic reduction in our services and is taking its toll on our economy, locally, provincially and nationally.

Library management will continue to follow the advice of government and the local health unit and will not initiate any in-person services until it is safe to do so. In the coming weeks, we hope to see some best practices emerge from health authorities so that we can begin to plan for re-opening.

SIGNATURE:



Lauren Jessop
CEO