

Developing a Brand Strategy for Ontario Public Libraries

Final Report

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Introduction

The Symposium: Libraries 2020 clearly called for collaboration across the public library community to be ramped up with five priorities established to realize that end. From these priorities, collaborative initiatives were outlined and leadership organizations were identified to move these initiatives forward.

Collaborative #3 “Library branding and promotion: creative a distinct identity with local and provincial messages” to be lead from the Federation of Ontario Public Libraries (FOPL) indicates that an overall brand for Ontario’s public libraries is considered an essential component of library capacity building and needs to be created. A lofty initiative with the objective of increasing public- and decision-maker awareness, use, perceived value and support, the vision is for a single brand identity for Ontario’s public libraries with messaging customizable to the provincial and local levels.

Brand Strategy Project Phase 1: Establishing the Context:

RESULTS:

In Phase 1, there were three goals with the following results realized:

1. We better understood the online environment of public libraries in Ontario and identified the 91% of libraries that have a website as well as the social networking channels in use;
2. We reviewed some of the best branding practices in public libraries in North America and, as a result, have a better understanding of what goes into particularly successful branding initiatives;
3. We identified the wealth of research available on the value of public libraries and understood the opportunities for positive messaging that spring from this research.

The Phase 1 Report submitted on February 1, 2014 presented the detailed findings related to the three goals.

Brand Strategy Project Phase 2: Branding with Internal Stakeholders:

RESULTS:

In Phase 2, there were two goals with the following results realized:

1. We successfully engaged senior management from public libraries across Ontario in this branding project – gaining buy-in – and received feedback from this group to start to build on the public library brand.
2. We reviewed the success of the OCLC Geek the Library campaign and the ALA @Your Library campaign to better understand the measured outcomes of successful campaigns.

The Phase 2 Report submitted on July 14, 2014 presented the detailed findings related to the two goals.

Brand Strategy Project Phase 3: Branding with Municipal Stakeholders:

RESULTS:

In Phase 3, there were two goals with the following results realized:

1. To engage selected municipal stakeholders – CAO's and city managers –to get their buy-in and gain their insights on the present position of the brand of Ontario's public libraries and to get feedback on where the public library brand should go - including emerging target audiences for libraries – as well as the strengths and weaknesses of these institutions and the competitors.
2. To synthesize the results of the work with all the internal stakeholders over the three phases of this project and to draft recommendations for next steps to fulfill the collaborative initiative to realize a distinct identity for Ontario's public libraries.

The Phase 3 report was submitted on September 15, 2014 and presented the findings related to these two goals representing this final phase of the project.

Background: Definition of a Brand

A brand is the proprietary visual, emotional, rational and cultural image that is associated with an organization, setting them apart from the competition. A brand is a promise to deliver value. For all key audiences, it has to stand for something that is credible, compelling, engaging and differentiating in order to drive the desired perceptions, behaviours and attitudes.

NOTE: The process being used for this project is taken from the Centre of Excellence for Public Sector Marketing's "Guide to branding in the public and not-for-profit sectors" (Ottawa, 2009).

Introduction to Branding

As markets become more competitive, and clients become more demanding, organizations must work harder to secure their fundamental relationships. Building distinctive relationships with clients and stakeholders is what branding is about, whatever the market, whoever the client. **Many members of the public and not-for-profit sectors are hesitant to recognize that they face stiff competition** and they fail to see the need to put an emphasis on branding and positioning. However, this view is slowly changing as more leaders in these sectors are recognizing that they are in a competitive market with limited funding.

IT STARTS AT HOME:

Branding starts on the inside and moves outwards. The reality of the organization and the attitudes and behaviours of people who work in the organization have to be in line with the brand values that the organization is projecting. Making brand promises and creating brand images are of no value without the internal practices and attitudes to deliver the promise. The commitment of every member of the organization is critical for delivering consistently on the brand promise.

KNOW YOUR TARGET AUDIENCE BUT KNOW YOURSELF FIRST:

Building a strong brand takes time. Understanding the needs, expectations and experiences of target audiences is the most important part of this process. This requires researching and getting to know your target audience. It also involves getting to know your organization. Most brand strategies involve some level of customer, and stakeholder and staff interviews. Branding does not really change what your organization does on a daily basis – it changes how you do it.

STEPS TO BUILDING A BRAND:

The starting premise is that the development of a brand is a process of decision making; making tough decisions regarding what an organization must and can do to realize its desired brand state. It is also based on the belief that a brand strategy starts with analysis and ends with action – and along the way, it must build momentum and buy-in by engaging all those involved in developing common ground.

- 1. Conducting internal research**
 - **Determine the brand's present position and that of competitors**
 - **Get buy-in from all internal stakeholders**
 - **Decide where to go and how to get there**
2. Conducting external research
 - Determine the brand's present position with the public
 - Get buy-in from all external stakeholders
3. Developing potential branding models
 - Craft the necessary communications
 - Validate direction with internal and external stakeholders
4. Deploying a 1 – 2 year implementation plan
 - Integrate strategy across segments and media
5. Monitoring the impact
 - Monitor and maintain the brand

KEY CHALLENGES:

- Early involvement of various internal players will provide the opportunity for the organization to gain a wide range of ideas and perspectives, as well as give staff a sense of ownership to the brand and the process.
- Branding a decentralized organization has a number of challenges; therefore, regional operations should be involved early in the process.
- Clerical and heavily unionized staff can be hard to motivate to live the brand promise.
- It is easier to implement a branding program when the internal stakeholders are very committed to the goals of the organization.
- A strategy to motivate internal stakeholders is required: a level of involvement in the brand building process and training practices linked to the brand promise are possible motivational strategies.

Project Approach: Conducting Internal Research:

The focus of this project has been on Step 1 to building a brand – conducting internal research.

Determine the Brand’s Present Position and that of Competitors: **COMPLETED**

In addition to other related goals, in Phase 1, we reviewed the landscape of public libraries in Ontario, specifically focusing on their web presence and social media channels in use. This environmental scan enabled us to better understand the current position of the diverse library brands in play in the province as well as evaluate the opportunity to disseminate a new brand using these technologies.

In Phase 2, we conducted surveys to get specific feedback from the internal stakeholders – management, trustees and employees of libraries – on the present brand position of Ontario’s public libraries as well as that of competitors, gaining intelligence on the existing state of public libraries as perceived by these internal stakeholders. We also sought their insights into possible preferred values and characteristics to inform the desired state.

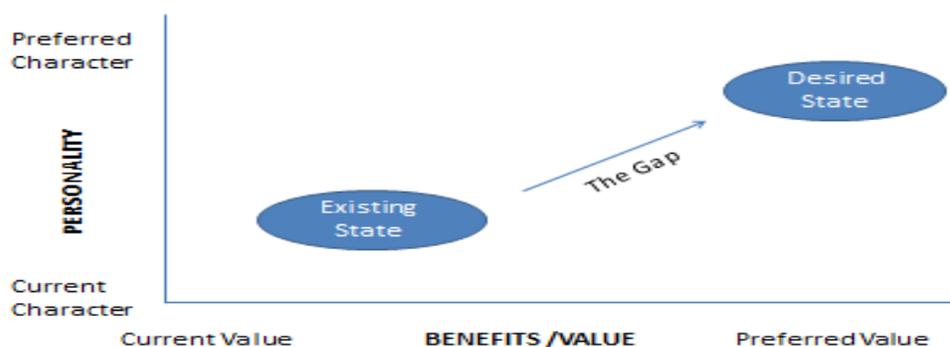
In Phase 3, we engaged more internal stakeholders – municipal CAO’s and city managers – in one-on-one telephone interviews to gain further insights into the existing state of public libraries as well as the desired state.

Get Buy-In From All Internal Stakeholders: **COMPLETED**

At the conclusion of Phase 1, a presentation was offered at the OLA SuperConference to begin the process of gaining buy-in. Then, throughout Phases 2 and 3, using webinars as well as direct one-on-one interviews, we have worked with the internal stakeholders – from CEO’s of public libraries to trustees to municipal CAO’s – to gain buy-in for this initiative.

Decide Where to Go and How to Get There: **NEXT STEP**

The approach through Phases 1-3 has been to provide input on the existing state and the desired state – representing intelligence needed for the tough decisions required from the project Steering Committee.



Phase 1: Establishing the Context:

In Phase 1, there were three goals:

1. To develop an understanding of the environment and the broader context in which the brand will be developed. Before developing the desired brand identity, we need to understand the current situation with the many public libraries across Ontario. Given their diverse environments, resources and initiatives, we need a benchmark of how they are using the web and which channels they have deployed.
2. To review the best branding practices in public libraries across North America to better understand particularly successful branding initiatives.
3. To synthesize research conducted on the impact of public libraries. The value ascribed through the research and the associated positive messages will help to start identifying possible messaging.

Goal #1: Understand the Current Situation: Library Websites and Channels

Approach:

For the purposes of this census, I was provided by FOPL with a list of all 318 public libraries in Ontario including their library service type. I worked with the Executive Director of FOPL on behalf of the Steering Committee to ascertain what we wanted to learn from the sites including which web 2.0 channels the libraries had deployed. This list created the base for the census of these libraries' websites. We scanned widely for the channels of interest, ultimately settling on a wide-reaching group that included some older and newer tools, specifically: Facebook; Twitter; Blogs; Flickr; Pinterest; Tumblr; Instagram; MySpace; LinkedIn; YouTube; Reddit; Google+. I also noted "Other" (eg. Good Reads) where applicable.

I visited the site of each public library identified in Ontario, browsing their pages to determine how they were using the different channels, specifically documenting Facebook names and Twitter handles as well as noting the use of the other tools as well as their individual branding initiatives. I also used a list of FOPL members to further define the type of library being surveyed. A completed spreadsheet with all these details on a library-by-library basis is provided in electronic form.

Observations and Analysis:

Websites:

The variety of websites I reviewed equalled the variety of public libraries that exist in Ontario today. No two were alike. Some websites – typically corresponding to the "Large Urban" library (as identified by their FOPL membership) – were very sophisticated. Other sites were more straightforward – often

belonging to the “Rural” or “Northern” FOPL-member library. However, there were surprises – for example, a particularly robust site from a small town library. In all cases, the dedication to the community and to service was clear.

Some of the links provided to the libraries’ websites were broken – in which case, I updated the link. In some cases, the links were to a community website with only a brief mention of the library – in which case, I identified that library with “no website”. Some of the libraries on the list indicated an email address in lieu of a link to a website – in which case, I searched for that library – sometimes with success, sometimes not.

In terms of websites, the news is good: of the 318 libraries surveyed, approximately 9% did not have a website.

- 29 (ie. 9%) did NOT have a website;
- 2/3 (ie. 19) of those libraries without a website were identified as First Nation libraries;
- 3 of the 29 without websites were FOPL members.

As we progress in our initiative to use virtual channels as a primary distribution vehicle for our public library branding and community engagement, this finding means that most libraries are well-positioned to make full use of the brand and messages as they are developed. Unfortunately, the majority (at 2/3) of the libraries that did not have websites were First Nation libraries (not necessarily FOPL members – but identified as First Nation). This means that this core group of libraries is not prepared for our brand strategy initiative as much as it pertains to taking advantage of web distribution channels and web 2.0 tools.

Web 2.0 Tools:

Social Networking Tools:

More good news: in terms of social networking tools, public libraries in Ontario are well on their way to embracing this technology. As shown in Table 1 (below), adoption rates of networking tools – particularly Facebook and Twitter (perhaps the two most important channels for our branding purposes) – were solid.

With **Facebook**, there was uptake across the spectrum of library service types; however, larger libraries are at an advantage and were more likely to have deployed this channel. Of the Large Urban libraries (including TPL), 100% of this group have Facebook pages. Amongst the Small Medium caucus libraries, 85% (ie. 55) have Facebook pages. There was declining uptake of Facebook among the other caucus types – perhaps not unreasonably given their smaller size and more limited resources. Further, it should be noted that Facebook adoption among non-FOPL members was significantly off-average, with only 24% having adopted this social networking technology.

Like Facebook, with **Twitter** there was uptake across the spectrum – again, with Large Urban (including TPL) and Small Medium libraries leading the way with most libraries in both these caucuses having

Twitter handles. Again, there was a particular deficit in the First Nation caucus libraries and declining uptake amongst the other caucuses as well as with the non-FOPL libraries.

Using **Blogs** as a social networking channel is not as wide spread. Even among the Large Urban libraries caucus, fewer than half of the libraries had links to blogs from their websites. Use of other tools – **Google+** and **LinkedIn** – was rare. **MySpace** – perhaps due to the fact that this is an older channel – was not used at all.

As **Twitter** and **Facebook** are two social networking tools that interact robustly, it will make particular sense – as most of the libraries with both tools in place have successfully done – to feed a library’s tweets to their Facebook page in order to maximize the branding effort. These two tools – and their interactivity – will undoubtedly become critical to the success of the brand strategy as it is developed. And so, it will be imperative that as many libraries as possible deploy both Facebook and Twitter as two essential social networking channels and that they employ the functionality of having tweets fed to Facebook to easily cross-pollinate with brand messages.

Table 1 - Adoption of Social Networking Tools:

Tool	Yes	%	Notes
Social Networking:			
Facebook	144	45%	Large urban (including TPL) have adopted at 100%; Small medium = 85% (55). Of the non-FOPL libraries, only 24% (29) used FB.
Twitter	106	33%	Caucus members with T: 1 FN; 1 Franco; all the Lg Urban (including TPL); 10 North; 6 Rural; 43 Sm-Med.
Blogs	48	15%	
Google+	2	0.6%	
LinkedIn	2	0.6%	
MySpace	0		

n = 318

Media Sharing and Other Tools:

For the media sharing tools, as shown in Table 2 (below), uptake was not as robust as that of the social networking tools. It is possible that the libraries are making use of these tools without proclaiming their adoption on their websites; however, it does seem to be the case that there is less use of media sharing technologies. That said, there was some use of **YouTube** – again with Large Urban (including TPL) and Small Medium caucus libraries leading the way in that deployment representing almost 70% of all usage of this technology. There was only nominal interest in **Pinterest** and **Flickr**.

The other tools used included **Good Reads** and **Delicious** – albeit only in a minor way. I could not find any usage of **Reddit** or **Tumblr** although, as stated earlier, it is possible that libraries are using these tools without noting the usage prominently on their websites.

More than likely, while for the purposes of building community and promoting specific aspects, programs or collections of individual libraries, the media sharing and other tools may be useful, they would have limited use as branding platforms. That said, this intelligence on how robustly these tools are deployed is probably of interest to the library community to better understand how libraries are taking advantage – or not – or web 2.0 tools.

Table 2 - Adoption of Media Sharing and Other Tools:

Tool	Yes	%	Notes
Media Sharing:			Uptake of media sharing tools was not as robust as the social networking tools. Distribution of uptake was spread across the library types as defined by the FOPL caucuses.
YouTube	39	12%	
Pinterest	25	8%	
Flickr	20	6%	
Other:			
Good Reads	6	2%	
Delicious	4	1%	
Reddit	0		
Tumblr	0		

n=318

Library Brands:

Branding initiatives – as evidenced by the promotion of a tagline on the libraries’ websites – were scattered. The following are the taglines used as I could identify them from this census of the websites. The libraries using taglines were from across the range of library service types and caucuses.

Brand Tagline:

- Linking our community to a world of knowledge!
- For the love of reading!
- We’re more than just books
- Your doorway to discover
- Enriching our community
- Your community your library
- Education – Information – Inspiration
- Explore today, discover tomorrow
- Information for a lifetime

For all reasons
Idea / Exchange: murderers, cross-dressers, prostitutes and holy men – you never know what you'll find
Experience community
Read, learn, grow / La croissance par la lecture
Find out what's happening @your library
A citizen's door to lifelong learning
There's something for everyone @your library
Books and so much more ...
The place to connect, explore and learn
Connection, Collaboration, Community
A world within our doors
Your library – Your world
Imagine. Discover. Connect.
Your community resource centre ...
Resourcefully yours
How can we help you?
Learn, Discover, Experience, Explore
The place where Markham's communities come together to imagine, learn and grow
A playground for your mind!
Read, play, learn. Together.
What's new @your library
Expanding minds and enriching the community since 1800
Your Library, Online, All the time
Making the most of every mind
If it's out there, it's in here
Building generations of readers
Information. Imagination. Inspiration.
Find books, music, movies and more
Inspire. Connect. Educate.
It's more than you think
A natural attraction
Preserve the past, serve the present, shape the future
Supporting dreams
Knowledge is power!
A world of discovery today and tomorrow
Check out more reasons to enjoy your local library!
Open up your world
Growing stronger ... together
Find your way
Explore your world
Working together as a learning community
Beyond books

It takes a library to raise a community
Doorway to discovery
Your destination for discovery

The next page is a Wordle of these taglines indicating the prevalence of certain terms with **Library, Community, World** being the most prevalent followed by **Learn, Explore, @Your, Discovery, Information, Together, Find, Books** in the next most popular group. These words and others should be used to explore the types of messaging and brand the public libraries of Ontario want representing them.

Goal #2: Review the Best Branding Practices in Public Libraries

Approach:

At the direction of the Executive Director of FOPL – on behalf of the Steering Committee – I identified and reviewed selected particularly successful brands in the public library space in North America. This review is intended to synthesize the findings from these brands in order to inform our own project with some insights into good branding initiatives and is not intended to be an exhaustive overview of all library brands.

Observations and Analysis:

Edmonton Public Library: Spread the Words



The Logo:

The bars can represent a stack of books, a subtle reference to the current logo and a nod to historical identity of libraries. It can be seen as a stack of compact discs, DVDs or video games, representing EPL's many entertainment options. It can reference library shelves with a diversity of materials. It even echoes the barcodes that are scanned as EPL materials are shared with users. The multitude of bright colours suggests diversity: diversity in content, resources and services; diversity in how the library is used by each of its members; diversity in users themselves – demographically, ethnically and in lifestyles.

The Brand:

- 1.Modern– Current, colourful, smart, innovative and aspirational. It evokes a feeling and emotion about EPL that is currently absent. Utilizing the coloured lines and text differentiates EPL from the thousands of brands that exist.
- 2.Diverse– Represents many ideas, interests and people without using images that inherently include some people while excluding others.
- 3.Evolving– Grows with us. We have the freedom and flexibility to design and develop new messages as we need and want them.

The Value statement:

We provide a caring, humane, customer-centered experience, incredible content, unparalleled access, and unrivalled value that cannot be bought for any price anywhere else. We are

essential to our city, our communities, and our customers. We want all of Edmonton to know who we are, what we do and how we can help.¹

“Spread the words” is a call to action. Clearly, EPL provides an exceptional service to Edmonton. This tagline tells us that it’s worth talking about and sharing.

Adams County, CO. AnyThink : A Revolution of Rangeview Libraries



The Logo:

The “doodle” represents the beginning of all ideas. The animated video of the doodle shows the doodle taking on a life of its own – representing the many things the doodle can become and the sparks of imagination available to anyone who visits an Anythink library.

The Brand:

Anythink is the brand name for seven cutting edge, revolutionary libraries in Adams County, Colorado. Anythink is growing into a place of learning, experimentation and discovery. The idea of a library is morphing from a place of books to a place where the community connects with information and creates content.

The Value Statement:

Mission statement: We Open Doors for Curious Minds

We are guided by these shared values in everything we do:

- Compassion for our customers and for each other
- Passion for our product
- Eagerness to learn
- Optimistic attitude

–we believe that an anything is possible²

From the librarians’ titles (“Guides” and “Experience Experts”) to their classification scheme (“WordThink”) to their buildings with a layout and features designed to facilitate access to the attitudes

¹ Source: Edmonton Public Library. www.epl.ca

² Source: Anythink Libraries. www.anythinklibraries.org

of the staff – these are more than just cosmetic changes, **the Anythink Libraries represent a revolution** - but the revolution has to start within.

San José Public Library / San José State University Library



In 2003 San José State University and the City of San José came together to form a unique partnership to offer joint library services to citizens of San José and SJSU students and faculty at the Martin Luther King, Junior Library.

The Brand:

This collaboration offers users and supporters:

- Enhanced resources and services
- Beautiful Space for Study and Collaboration - Including a multi-use facility recognized with the 2004 Library of the Year Award from Thomson Gale and Library Journal and a hub of revived downtown area offering the community a gathering place.

The Value Statement:

- Our users are not only our customers, they are the reason the library exists. We provide quality service and treat all users fairly and equally. Services are provided in a non-judgmental manner that is sensitive to and supportive of human differences.
- Our employees and volunteers are valued as individuals and for their important contributions to the organization. An open exchange of ideas is encouraged throughout the system. We nurture our talents and each other.
- We are a learning organization that is not afraid to change and take appropriate risks in pursuit of meeting community needs. We constantly reassess our services and methods and try to see ourselves through the public's eyes.
- We maintain high standards in our work and help instill a sense of pride in all employees, as well as a strong sense of responsibility and integrity.
- Both staff and users are encouraged to enjoy their library experience.³

This cooperative partnership creates a learning organization that is not afraid to change and is prepared to take risks in order to meet community needs and **sparked urban renewal**.

³ Source: San José Public Library. www.sjlibrary.org

Surrey Libraries: Discover – Connect – Inspire



The Logo:

Surrey Public Library unveiled its new image and tagline Discover, Connect, Inspire. This simple, yet elegant, phrase represents the new reality of Surrey’s public library. The new logo graphically represents a stylized series of books placed on end to mirror the look of buildings, incorporating a gentle curve shape that inspires the feeling of a pathway to learning and discovery of the library. Fresh bright blues and greens not only complement the city’s existing brand but complement the blending of nature and progressive design elements.

The Brand:

In 2010, Surrey Libraries was launched as the Library’s new “brand” with a new visual image and colours. It is a place to discover new technologies, connect people and ideas and inspire creativity. This new vision coincides with the exciting development of the City’s newest library designed by renowned architect Bing Thom. The name emphasizes the multiple service points throughout Surrey and the new image reflects that “The Future Lives Here”.

The Value Statement:

Vision - Where the power of knowledge inspires people to build a better future.

Mission - We open doors to lifelong learning, information and ideas.

Values:

- create welcoming spaces that are shared by all
- connect people and ideas
- engage the community
- inspire creativity and innovation
- take leadership in promoting the value of literacy and a love of learning
- advocate for intellectual freedom⁴

The Surrey Libraries are a good example of citizens standing behind a library system with the initial referendum to withdraw from the Fraser Valley Library System – **“It takes a Library to raise a community”** – and having **architecture inspiring a vision**.

⁴ Source: Surrey Libraries. www.surreylibraries.ca

Goal #3: Synthesize Research on Public Library Impact

Approach:

A survey of the online literature revealed a plethora of research on the value of public libraries. We are indeed fortunate in Canada that the Toronto Public Library recently commissioned a valuation from the University of Toronto's Martin Prosperity Institute which speaks specifically to the Canadian situation in terms of the actual value delivered by the public library. At the same time, the Pew Institute in the US released their report in December on "How Americans Value Public Libraries in Their Communities" – another invaluable resource. Finally, OCLC produced a report in 2011 on the perceptions of libraries with a special focus on "a long view – looking forward". OCLC also created an infographic, drawing from a survey conducted with Canadian urban libraries, to demonstrate visually how Canadians tangibly benefit from using their public libraries. The intent with this search was not to be exhaustive – but rather to select from some of the key research that has emerged recently and focus on the intelligence that's coming out today from some of the world's top think tanks.

Observations and Analysis:

So Much More: The Economic Impact of the Toronto Public Library on the City of Toronto

University of Toronto – Martin Prosperity Institute

December 2013

In 2013, the Toronto Public Library Board commissioned the Martin Prosperity Institute, a University of Toronto economic think tank, to report on the economic impact of TPL on the City of Toronto. This report, entitled "So Much More", is the first Canadian study to quantify in concrete terms the return on investment for the library's service. Some highlights of their findings:

- Toronto Public Library creates over \$1 billion in total economic impact.
- For each \$1 invested in the library, there is \$5.63 generated of economic impact.
- For the 72% of Torontonians who use the library's services, the total direct benefit is \$500 per member.
- The return on investment to the City of Toronto is 463%.

Given that the City's strategic plan for economic growth focuses on competitiveness and prosperity, Toronto must attract and develop workforce talent through education and life-long learning. TPL's strategic alignment with the City's plans results in services that offer residents opportunities to improve literacy skills, enhance educational and employment situations and improve their quality of life. Further, this alignment promotes conditions that support livability, create an attractive climate for business investment and ensures a sustainable cycle of prosperity.

How Americans Value Public Libraries in Their Communities

Pew Research Center

December 2013

Underwritten by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, this report is part of a larger research effort on the part of the Pew Research Center – a non-partisan “fact tank” – to explore the role libraries play in people’s lives and in their communities. In 2013, Pew surveyed more than 6,000 Americans over the age of 16 who have used their public libraries. Some highlights of their findings:

- 90% of Americans say that the closing of their public library would have an impact on their community – 63% say that the impact would be “major”.
- 95% say that the resources available at the public library play an important role in giving everyone a chance to succeed.
- 94% say that having a public library improves the quality of life in a community.

The impact of the public library cannot be denied. Given that 81% of all Americans aged 16 and over have visited a public library at one point or another in their lives, clearly the public library is a central player in the American cultural landscape. This report highlighted that those surveyed highly value library services such as: access to books and media; having a quiet, safe place to read and study; having librarians help to find information. And, perhaps more importantly, particular groups – including those with lower levels of education or lower household income – especially valued other services such as finding and applying for jobs.

Perceptions of Libraries, 2010: Context and Community

OCLC

2011

The worldwide library cooperative, OCLC, has long been at the forefront of change in the library community. This report is based on data from a survey conducted on behalf of OCLC and provides new insights into information consumers and their online habits, preferences, and perceptions. Particular attention was paid to how the current economic downturn has affected the information-seeking behaviors and how those changes are reflected in the use and perception of libraries. Some highlights of their findings:

- “Books” (including e-books) as the library brand grew even stronger. *OCLC tells us: Embrace the brand. Extend the experience. Connect the dots.*
- Libraries help users save money. *OCLC tells us: The recession had a profound impact on the consumer. Across every age group, library use increased. The perceived value of the library also increased. How can we leverage our strengths, build on the core and the brand, and tell powerful stories about the vital role of the library?*
- Search engines and library web sites are trustworthy. *OCLC tells us: Even self-sufficient information consumers appreciate the librarian’s expertise and passion for learning. How can we serve our users as personal information trainers – rather than as information literacy instructors?*

- Social networking is for all ages. *OCLC tell us: Two-thirds of Americans online use social networking. Physical libraries are social spaces; online libraries are not. While many libraries have established a modestly active Facebook, this is only the first step. How can we “socialize” the concept of the online library across the community?*

The OCLC report confirmed that librarians are valued – particularly by those who are more vulnerable who have had their employment impacted by the economic situation. However, over 80% of users say that THEIR LIBRARIES DO NOT ADVERTISE THEIR SERVICES. Our clients are calling us to action. It’s time to pay heed.

How Canadian Public Libraries Stack Up

OCLC

2012

This infographic created by OCLC spotlights research conducted with public libraries across Canada. Some highlights of their findings:

- Every month, 204,000 Canadians get job-seeking help at their public library.
- Canadians visit the library almost as much as we go to the movies and 20 times more than we attend Canadian NHL games each year.
- Over half of Canadians visit public libraries annually – more than visit museums, live theatre or zoos.
- Business owners and employees use resources at the public library 76,000 times per month to support their small businesses.
- Nearly 200 public libraries offer meeting rooms which are used by over 28,000 people each month.
- Public libraries offer over 8,500 internet workstations which are used over 18 million times annually.
- Most public libraries provide free wi-fi , supporting 3.2 million wi-fi connections annually.
- Over 300 public libraries offer technology training classes, which are attended by nearly 16,000 people each month.

From the above research, clearly we have a lot of positive messaging that can be created.

Phase 2: Branding with Internal Stakeholders

In Phase 2 of this project, it was important to start to get feedback from the internal stakeholders on the brand identity of public libraries in Ontario.

STEP 1: CONDUCTING INTERNAL RESEARCH:

This phase provided the opportunity to overcome challenges often seen in branding projects – including involving the various players from all the various regions of the organization early and creating a feeling of commitment among all internal stakeholders and especially the unionized staff. Early engagement is crucial and is a goal we worked to realize.

To that end, two of the three elements of this phase of the project address this need for feedback:

1. Webinars – conducted with library staff, management and trustees;
2. Survey – invited feedback from all webinar participants.

The third element of Phase 2 provided additional background information on other branding campaigns:

3. Research – conducted on the ALA and OCLC library promotion initiatives.

WEBINARS:

The goals of the webinars were to:

- Inform the internal stakeholders about the branding project in general and about the results of the website census from Phase 1 of the project;
- Get feedback from these stakeholders in response to specific questions that will lead the brand development;
- Involve the stakeholders in this project – as it specifically evolved from the Libraries 2020 Symposium and requires their ongoing participation to ensure success.

Key Details:

- The invitation to participate in the webinars was sent out to members via FOPL, OLA, SOLS and OLS-N.
- 5 sessions were conducted with some variation on dates and times to ensure wide participation: Wednesday May 7 12:00-1:15 PM; Friday May 9 12:00-1:15 PM; Monday May 12 12:00-1:15 PM and 6:30-7:45 PM; Tuesday May 13 12:00-1:15 PM.
- 133 participants registered in response to the invitation with some organizations including multiple participants under one registration.
- The participating organizations covered the gamut of public libraries in Ontario – with representation from all of FOPL's caucuses.
- The webinars were interactive – enabled by the use of AdobeConnect from OLA combined with a teleconference tool from FOPL.

- To fully capture the participants' feedback, we downloaded the AdobeConnect chat window to preserve those comments – additionally, we had a colleague type take notes to document points made.

SURVEY:

The survey, following up the webinars, was intended to allow participants the opportunity to contribute anonymously to the conversation on brand identity as well as provide for the potential ability to do some analysis on the responses. The goals of the survey were to:

- Identify the target audience / the client;
- Identify the strength of current service offerings / what the client wants;
- Identify competitors / where clients go when not using the public library;
- Identify the competitors' advantages / the public library's weaknesses.

Key Details:

- The survey was prepared using FOPL's SurveyMonkey subscription.
- The link to the survey was sent out by FOPL to all registered participants on May 15. Two reminders were sent out to encourage the broadest possible participation.
- Close of the survey: June 26, 2014 noon.
- 58 participants completed the survey.

ADDITIONAL RESEARCH:

Two specific library promotion campaigns were identified for their longevity and breadth of scope: ALA's campaign @Your Library and OCLC's campaign Geek the Library. Both of these campaigns had specific goals they were seeking to achieve and research into the outcomes – from the perspective of the respective organizations – could inform the measures of success for this Ontario public library branding initiative.

Webinars: Input and Insights

Again, the goals included not only engaging the internal stakeholders – staff, management and library trustees – in the branding project by getting their feedback, but also informing them of the outcome of Phase 1 of the project so they would be up-to-date on the project status and involving them in the larger project by putting this initiative into the context of Libraries 2020 thus ensuring their participation:

- Inform the internal stakeholders about the branding project in general and about the results of the website census from Phase 1 of the project;
- Get feedback from these stakeholders in response to specific questions that will lead the brand development;
- Involve the stakeholders in this project – as it specifically evolved from the Libraries 2020 Symposium and requires their ongoing participation to ensure success.

The feedback from the groups was positive about the project, with participants actively engaged in the webinars via both the telephone conference facility and the chat window in the webinar tool. Further, all the internal stakeholders understood that there would be more work to be done in the future as the branding project progressed to implementation.

INPUT FROM INTERNAL STAKEHOLDERS:

The Story: A key outcome of the webinars was the **development of the library's "story"** – the "face" behind the brand that creates the feelings of commitment and connection in the audience. In response to the questions: *"What do we want people to know about public libraries?"* *"What do public libraries stand for?"*, internal stakeholder comments included:

"Public libraries are a public service – we are places to find ideas that are non-judgemental."

"Libraries are advocates for the people – we are the public defenders of freedom of speech and a pillar of democracy."

"Libraries are a source of ALL resources."

"We are essential for helping people make their lives better on their own terms and in whatever ways they need."

"A public library is essentially an "ideas market" – we are trusted sources in a non-commercial, non-judgemental way."

"We help people satisfy their curiosity and help them on their quest for knowledge."

"Libraries are welcoming, curious, open, reputable, thorough, diverse and multi-faceted."

"Libraries represent stability and ubiquity – we will always be there."

"With public libraries, the resources may change but the platform remains the same: we support free and open discourse, an opportunity to learn and to contribute to community knowledge and growth."

“We have the ability to connect people with materials – and with each other.”

“Libraries promote equality. We are the equalizer – everyone is welcome. We are the fabric that brings our communities together.”

The Competition: Another key outcome of the webinars was the **identification of the areas of weaknesses** for public libraries and the **resulting impact on behaviour of users**. In response to the questions: “*When users don’t come to the library, where do they go?*” “*Why do users sometimes choose to not use the public library?*”, responses from internal stakeholders included:

“Public libraries like to try to be all things to all people – which is impossible. We end up diluting our own service offerings.”

“Where do our users go? Three places: online, online, online.”

“Those who are able, prefer to buy their own books and use the Internet.”

“I’ve had people tell me that they don’t like to ‘share’.”

“People want speed and convenience. We need to easily provide those options rather than dragging them to where we are.”

“Although everyone says they support the public library, when asked where they go, online and Chapters come out as their top go-to places.”

“We do try to meet everyone’s needs – but the diversity of needs in our community is overwhelming our resources.”

“Everyone sees the public library as a community good – but they don’t feel that they need it for themselves. They see the library more as a service for the ‘disadvantaged’.”

“Two reasons to go elsewhere: the patron has to come in person to the library to get a library card in the first place – and then they have to use the library card every time to authenticate online.”

“Those who don’t use the library are those who don’t have the time.”

“Some people just don’t see us as relevant in what we offer.”

“There are some members of our community who are intimidated by the institution – and so they go elsewhere or they go without.”

“Because libraries are for everyone, services are created to be welcoming and open to all. However, this can shoot us in the foot. We aren’t targeted enough.”

“People know that we have services and resources – but we haven’t tailored our services to meet specific needs. So, we are many things to many people – but not highly valued since the patrons perceive that we are not meeting their needs.”

“People prefer a consistent experience – like Chapters. No matter where you go, libraries should all be the same.”

INSIGHTS:

Successful brands don’t happen by chance. The organizations behind successful brands make specific efforts to create a story behind their brands. From the definition of a brand (above):

“...it has to stand for something that is credible, compelling, engaging and differentiating ...”

Step 1 of branding includes determining the brand’s present position. From the comments from the internal stakeholders (above) regarding the “story” of the public library, several strengths were identified. **These strengths form the backbone of the core values of what the public library stands for:**

- ❖ REPUTABLE
- ❖ COMMUNITY
- ❖ PUBLIC SERVICE
- ❖ NON-JUDGEMENTAL
- ❖ ADVOCATE
- ❖ DEMOCRACY
- ❖ SAFE
- ❖ EQUALITY

Step 1 of branding also includes determining the present position of competitors. From the comments from the internal stakeholders (above) regarding user behaviour, **the weaknesses of the library brand as well as the position of the competition were identified:**

- ❖ **TARGETED SERVICES:** Our competitors tailor services to meet target market needs while libraries dilute their own service offerings by trying to be all things to all people.
- ❖ **EASY ACCESS:** The market wants speed and convenience – libraries have too many barriers, whether it’s the time it takes to get to the branch, the immediate access to what they want now or the requirement of authenticating with a library card to access services.
- ❖ **“PUBLIC” GOOD:** The public perceives the library as a service more for the “disadvantaged”. Those who can afford to buy would prefer to do so.

Survey: Input and Insights

As early engagement of internal stakeholders is crucial to long term success of branding initiatives, the intent of the survey was to allow webinar participants – library staff, management and trustees – the opportunity to contribute anonymously to the conversation on brand identity as well as provide for the potential ability to do some analysis on the responses. The goals of the survey were to:

- Identify the target audience / who is the target client?
- Identify the strength of current service offerings / what is it the client wants?
- Identify competitors / where do clients go when not using the public library?
- Identify the competitors' advantages / what are the public library's weaknesses?

INPUT FROM INTERNAL STAKEHOLDERS:

The Demographics: Of the 58 survey respondents, 52 were FOPL members. The demographic breakout was as follows:

Caucus:	Number of Respondents:
Small-medium	22
Large urban	9
Rural	8
Northern	7
First-Nation	3
Francophone	3
Not FOPL members	6

(Note: The small population of responses makes any segmented analysis difficult.)

The Context: The survey intended to contextualize the respondents' perspectives by ascertaining community "pain points" in order to zero in on the strength / competitive advantage of the public library by asking: "What is the biggest challenge your community is facing?" Results were as follows:

1. Economic downturn (unemployment / businesses closing / youth leaving the area) = 54%
2. Accelerated community development (newcomers / overcrowded schools / schools not close) = 36%

The Target Market: The survey asked respondents to identify **the top 3 target audiences** with which their libraries wanted to engage. The following elicited the highest response rates:

Rank:	Target Audience:	Number of Responses:
1	Students (grades 1 – 12)	54 (aggregated)
2	Parents with children	34
3	Seniors	27
4	Small business owners / Entrepreneurs / Home-based business owners	17
5	Un- or under-employed individuals	14
6	Working professionals	14

Note that the following audiences seeded lower:

- New Canadians;
- Homeless people;
- Donors;
- Post-secondary students.

Details:

Students – grades 1 – 8: Of the 20 respondents who indicated that this was one of their top target audiences, 7 identified this audience as #1 and 8 identified this audience as #2 – for a combined total of 75% indicating that this target audience was either #1 or #2.

Highschool students: Of the 34 respondents who indicated that this was one of their top target audiences, 12 identified this audience as #2 and 13 identified this audience as #3 – for a combined total of 72% indicating that this target audience was either #2 or #3.

Parents with children: Of the 34 respondents who indicated that this was one of their top target audiences, 62% indicated that this was their #1 target audience.

Seniors: Of the 27 respondents who indicated that this was one of their top target audiences, 52% indicated that this was their #2 target audience.

Small business owners: Of the 17 respondents who indicated that this was one of their top target audiences, 41% indicated that this was their #3 target audience.

Un- or under-employed individuals: Of the 14 respondents who indicated that this was one of their top target audiences, 79% indicated that this was their #1 target audience.

Working professionals: Of the 14 respondents who indicated that this was one of their top target audiences, 64% indicated that this was their #3 target audience.

Most Beneficial Services: The survey asked respondents to rate their **top 5 services that would provide the most benefit** to their target audiences. The following elicited the highest response rates:

Rank:	Top Services:	Number of Responses:
1	Access to computers / Internet / Wifi	42
2	Digital and technology skills help	38
3	A “community livingroom”	26
4	Reading material	23
5	General interest programs	22
6	Meeting space	18
7	Job seeking help	17
8	General skills improvement help	16

Note that the following services seeded lower:

- Homework help;
- Reading readiness help;
- School readiness help;
- Local community information;
- Discussion forums;
- Quiet study space;
- Book clubs;
- Reference service;
- Research resources;
- Small business support.

Details:

Access to computers: Of the 42 respondents who ranked this service highly, 45% ranked this service #1 and 36% ranked this service #2.

Reading material: Of the 23 respondents who ranked this service highly, 35% ranked this service #1.

Digital and technology skills help: Of the 38 respondents who ranked this service highly, 32% ranked this service #1 and 26% ranked this service #4.

A community livingroom: Of the 26 respondents who ranked this service highly, 27% ranked this service #3, 23% ranked this service #2 and 23% ranked this service #5.

General interest programs: Of the 22 respondents who ranked this service highly, 41% ranked this service #4 and 32% ranked this service #5.

The Competition: The survey asked respondents to rank **other sources their target audiences use** when they do not use the library. The following elicited the highest rankings:

Other Sources Used by Target:	Rankings:
Online	52% ranked #1
School	24% ranked #2
Friends and family	21% ranked #3
Government	19% ranked #4
Community centre / groups	19% ranked #5
Bookstore	
Service clubs	
Other libraries in other towns	
For-fee service provider	
YMCA / other	
Church / place of worship	

The Competitors' Advantages: The survey asked respondents to identify the reasons **why their target audiences choose to use a source** other than the library. The following indicated the percentage of respondents selecting that reason:

Rank:	Why Target Uses Other Source:	% Selecting Option:
	Lack of awareness of library offerings	88% of respondents
	Convenience	62% of respondents
	Hours / days open	43% of respondents
	No waiting list/ immediate access	36% of respondents
	Location	22% of respondents
	Atmosphere	21% of respondents

Note that the following reasons seeded lower – perhaps indicating a perceived area of strength on the part of public libraries by the internal stakeholders responding to the survey:

- Expertise;
- Better service / Product.

Barriers to Success: In any open-ended question, the survey asked respondents to identify – other than funding – specific **barriers to success**. The following reflects the general category of barriers indicated by respondents:

Rank:	Barrier:	% Identifying:
	Awareness	38% of respondents
	Staff	28% of respondents
	Facilities	24% of respondents

Your Community's Challenge: In an open-ended question, the survey asked: **“How is your library helping your community address its biggest challenge?”** Note the biggest challenges identified were: Economic downturn (54%) and Accelerated community development (36%).

Comments reflected a trend to partnering with other organizations, addressing funding challenges, raising awareness, being responsive to the community:

“Knowing that we are here.”

“We are supplying lots of programming for young families and children.”

“Our library is attempting to work with other community organizations that target the same user groups that we are interested in reaching.”

“Being fiscally responsible and reducing our budget.”

“Promotion and marketing.”

“Trying to take library programs and services out to the community.”

“Re-evaluating products and services to ensure that they are aligned with the community needs.”

“Providing free access to resources.”

“Applying to funding where possible.”

Additional Research

Two specific library promotion campaigns were identified for their longevity and breadth of scope: ALA's campaign @Your Library and OCLC's campaign Geek the Library. Both of these campaigns had specific goals they were seeking to achieve and research into the outcomes – from the perspective of the respective organizations – could inform the measures of success for this Ontario public library branding initiative.

GEEK THE LIBRARY:

Geek the Library was designed by OCLC with funding from The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation as a community public awareness campaign to highlight the vital role of public libraries and educate the public about the critical funding issues many libraries face. Materials, resources and support are made available to libraries willing to do what it takes to adopt this awareness campaign. The intent is to help libraries tell their stories while engaging the public to join the local public library funding discussion to the end of increasing community awareness of the value of the library and how the library is funded. The campaign requires the interested library to commit to the initiative with dedicated resources and is designed to work within and alongside other library promotion campaigns.

The Goal: To inspire a conversation about the incredible public libraries and their urgent need for increased support.

OUTCOME OF CAMPAIGN:

“A successful community awareness campaign has to do three things:

1. Wake up potential supporters to the fact that the library is relevant in the 21st century.
2. Put libraries squarely in the mix of important community infrastructure, alongside fire, police and schools.
3. Activate conversations about the vital and transformative role that the library plays, and its value to the community.”⁵

This report made it clear that – in terms of both qualitative and quantitative analysis – the Geek the Library campaign was a success. Some positive impact indicators were that the campaign:

- Got people's attention – after 5 months in the pilot markets, 64% of the residents of central Iowa and 49% of the residents of southern Georgia were familiar with the campaign;
- Raised awareness – perceptions and attitudes around the library's importance and value increased with more people indicating willingness to fund the library;
- Encouraged action – more than 2/3's of the residents in the pilot states had responded or intended to respond to the campaign by taking action – for example, telling a friend.

Quantitative analysis identified 4 specific segments of the population more apt to support library funding – with 2 segments being particularly vital to success: “Probably supporters” – who are likely to

⁵ OCLC, “Geek the library: a community awareness campaign – a report to the OCLC membership.”
<http://www.oclc.org/reports/geekthelibrary.en.html>

support but not a given; therefore, are the primary target of a marketing campaign; “Super supporters” – who are already firmly committed; therefore, are not the primary target of a campaign but are important to help spread the word.

Qualitative findings included:

- Most people claim that they would support the library – fewer are firmly committed to doing so;
- There is a lot people do not know about their public libraries;
- Library support is only marginally related to visitation;
- Perceptions of the librarian are highly related to support;
- The library occupies a very clear position in people’s minds as a provider of practical answers and information;
- Belief that the library is a transformational force in people’s lives is directly related to their level of funding support;
- Increasing support for libraries may not necessarily mean a trade-off with financial support for other public services.

Bottomline: Geek the Library made an impact.

@YOUR LIBRARY:

Although libraries are recognized as places of learning, innovation and opportunity, they also face challenges, including:

- While libraries are popular, they are often taken for granted;
- While libraries are ubiquitous, they are often not visible;
- And while libraries are unique, they are facing new challenges.

From these challenges emerged ALA's campaign @your library. This campaign is designed to remind the public that libraries are dynamic, modern community centres for learning, information and entertainment.

The Goal:

The broad objectives are:

- Increase awareness and support for libraries by increasing their visibility in a positive context and by communicating why libraries are both unique and valuable;
- Update the image of libraries, librarians and all library staff for the 21st century, sustaining and strengthening their relevance;
- Bring renewed energy to the promotion of libraries and librarians; and
- Bring library messages to a more diverse audience.

The internal objectives are:

- Develop a campaign that represents and is useful to all types of libraries;
- Create turnkey tools, resources and materials that could be utilized by all types of libraries;
- Provide an opportunity to share public relations/marketing/advocacy best practices within the library community;
- Tie together ALA promotions into one unified brand, reinforcing key messages;
- Quickly respond to emerging issues such as library funding cuts;
- Develop more cross-collaboration across the association to ensure that new Campaign projects and initiatives are inclusive and effective;
- Work more closely with ALA Chapters and Affiliates to help them achieve their public awareness objectives;
- Promote the contribution of all library staff, including both librarians and support staff;
- Seek increased foundation and sponsor funding to expand Campaign activities;
- Conduct public opinion research to refine and expand Campaign messages on an ongoing basis; and
- Increase coordination with other public relations and marketing efforts, such as READ posters, National Library Week, Library Card Sign-up Month, etc.

Critical areas include:

- Increased library usage;
- Positive professional recruitment impact;
- Stronger commitment to funding at national, state and local levels; and
- More receptive public policy involving libraries.

OUTCOME OF CAMPAIGN:

“Thousands of libraries of all types – across the country and around the globe – use the ALA campaign’s @ Your Library brand.”⁶ As a result, with this campaign, ALA is leading a broad effort to engage libraries and librarians in a process of transformation.

ALA’s 2014 State of America’s Libraries report confirmed that more than 90% of the respondents to a national survey indicated that libraries are important to the community. 96% of Americans agreed that public libraries are important because they provide tech resources and access to materials – the same number found libraries valuable because they promote literacy and a love of reading.

And in terms of funding, the campaign is already resulting in success with President Obama signing a spending bill in January 2014 which will see a partial restoration of funding to the Library Services and Technology Act.

Bottomline: the @ Your Library campaign’s is still ongoing – but outcomes thus far are positive with world-wide pick up of this brand.

⁶ ALA’s website: <http://www.ala.org/advocacy/advleg/publicawareness/campaign@yourlibrary>

Phase 3: Branding with Municipal Stakeholders:

In Phase 3 of this project, it was important to address the internal stakeholders who had not yet been approached: the municipalities.

Goal #1: Engage the Municipalities:

I interviewed selected individuals to engage these municipal stakeholders – CAO's and city managers – to get their buy-in and gain their insights on the present position of the brand of Ontario's public libraries and to get feedback on where the public library brand should go - including emerging target audiences for libraries – as well as the strengths and weaknesses of these institutions and the competitors.

Approach:

For the purpose of this internal stakeholder research, I was provided with the names and contact information for a total of 6 individuals within municipalities by SOLS and OLS-N. These individuals all held the title of either Chief Administrative Officer or City Manager. Of the 6, two were located in OLS-North's jurisdiction and four were located in SOLS' jurisdiction (although one contact is now located outside of the province). I worked with the Executive Director of FOPL, on behalf of the Steering Committee, to ascertain what we wanted to learn from these individuals regarding the existing state and desired state of public libraries in Ontario. We decided to focus on the same issues addressed with the other internal stakeholders in Phase 2 who participated in the survey in order to gain comparable insights. Questions were provided in advance to interview participants.

Questions used in telephone interviews:

- To put the public library's service into context, what is the biggest challenge your community is facing?
- Who is the #1 target audience with whom the public library should engage?
- What library services would most benefit this target audience?
- When / if they do not use the public library services, where does this target audience go to access the required services?
- When the target audience chooses to go elsewhere for service, what motivates them to make that choice?
- To realize greater success, who does the public library need to partner with: 1) in municipal government; 2) in the community?

Observations:

Community Challenges:

The challenges identified by the library sector participants in the survey conducted in Phase 2 were echoed by the municipality sector and essentially fell into two categories, depending upon the circumstances of the community:

1. Rampant growth in the community with resulting infrastructure challenges.
 - “We are a rapidly growing community. And the demand to sustain old and develop new infrastructure – and having the ongoing financial wherewithal to support that infrastructure – is a challenge.”
2. Economic hardships resulting in population stagnation / decrease and employment challenges.
 - “Our biggest challenge is our stagnating – and aging – population.”
 - “Our challenge is local employment. Industry is leaving – and the result has been significant unemployment.”
 - “It boils down to money. Certain councillors are taking a very hard line with the library budget.”

In either case, the impact on the community was a financial one with pressures being applied to the tax base with corresponding repercussions on the municipal budgets (which includes the public library).

#1 Target Audience:

The municipality sector lined up with the library sector responses regarding who the target audience was for library services, agreeing that the biggest audience has traditionally been students and seniors. And, while acknowledging that these audiences were important, the internal stakeholders from the municipalities also saw an audience that was largely under-served and under-appreciated in terms of the weight they carry in a community: **business people and middle-aged adults**.

- “Our target audience is who we can reach – for now, that’s students and seniors. However, there is a huge group in the middle. The target audience should be those mid-life rate payers who may not be current library users and who may be largely unaware of the services offered by the library.”
- “The library has become a hub for internet access in our community and two audiences have been well-targeted by this service: youth for after-school homework support and older people, enabling them with computer access. Who’s missing? The 40 – 50 year olds who may be needing employment support.”
- “The business community. Finding a way to provide services to the business community will gain long term support. My perception is the business community does not see the library system as a service for them.”
- “The library needs to start partnering with small business groups. This is a real opportunity as employment is a key issue for this community.”

Library Services:

The municipality sector agreed with the library sector responses in terms of the value that public libraries bring to their communities: credible, trustworthy, reliable resources. However, the CAO’s also anticipated that future demand will be for more and more electronic products and services delivered in

a mobile format. They also perceived that the public library did NOT have the pulse of the community and that market research was required to align the public library with the public's demands and expectations.

- "In the future, materials will be mostly electronic. People need access to appropriate, reliable, trustworthy reference and recreation materials. But those materials will be mostly electronic. Libraries need to anticipate those new formats and get ahead of the curve."
- "The library's services need to be taken outside of the box that is the library. Find ways to more mobile services. Create download stations in other places that the community goes – arenas, parks. And then make sure that the community is aware of what's available at that it's "for free" – as in, already paid for with their taxes."
- "What is the target audience expecting from the library? The users have expectations that the library is not aware of. And then, once the library can serve those expectations, the users need to know how easy it is for them to access and use those products and services."

The Competitors:

According to the CAO's, the public library has two competitors: online and ignorance. Like the library sector, the municipality sector all agreed that the Internet was where the target audience was accessing required information services. They also mentioned social networks and school. However, more important was the perception that the community was not aware of the services the library could provide – a perception with which, from the survey results, the majority of the library sector participants also agreed.

- "The people are disengaged."
- "The target audience assumes that they would have to pay for library services. They don't know it's free. So they are buying the books, resources, music, whatever they are interested in directly. They don't think about the library."

The Competitors' Strengths:

With the municipality sector and the library sector agreeing on the library's greatest weakness: lack of awareness on the part of the public, they were also in agreement on the strength of the competitor: convenience. Clearly, the opportunity is for the public library to make its resources – certainly its online resources – known for being accessible and convenient.

- "People go elsewhere because it's convenient and it's easy. There's no hassle. They know that they will have immediate access. Amazon has really turned the spotlight on the customer. Between Amazon and Netflix, they've created a customer-focused access model that the library needs to consider for its future."
- "They're going online at home because it's convenient. Distances in a rural community can be great. And our library branches are well distributed, but there's resistance to having to go anywhere physically. Libraries should be spreading the word: go online – but don't go to Google, come to the library online."

Library Partners:

The responses from the municipality sector indicate that they feel very strongly about the importance of close ties between the public library and the municipal government – and that those ties should be even closer with some respondents calling for an end to library boards. Further, the CAO's indicated that local engagement can also ensure a positive relationship between the library and rate payers, raising that awareness so critical to the library's success.

Municipal Government:

- "The library needs to take the time to develop an understanding and appreciation with local government."
- "The only time council sees the library is at budget time. Really, the library needs to position itself to be seen as a component of the municipality's business and strategic plans."
- "The library benefits from close ties to municipal finance and admin departments. However, the ties to the municipality could be even closer without the historical need for autonomy as evidenced by the library board. In some case, that administration-type spending could be handled by the municipality rather than duplicating those expenses in the library."
- "There are some natural partners within municipal departments – for example, culture and heritage, museums and archives."
- "Without the library board, the library could be fully integrated into the municipal structure."

Local Organizations:

- "Libraries need to be present in the community – with a physical representation of the library by library staff. Local groups they should be involved with include sports organizations, cultural groups, historical societies, the chamber of commerce. Get out of that box. You need to market yourselves to the community."
- "The library should be seen as complementary to the entire education system."
- "Finding a way to provide services to the business community will gain long term support. My perception is that the business community does not see the library system as a service for them."
- "Communities have various organizations focusing on development and learning. Engaging with these groups would be very beneficial."
- "In our community, the library has started to partner with small business groups – but this is a huge opportunity as employment is a key issue here."
- "There are opportunities with long-term care facilities and adult senior centres."

Barriers to Success:

The library sector's response to this issue came down to awareness, staff and facilities – concerns that were largely echoed by the municipal sector in these interviews with some very pointed comments made.

- "There is a real lack of understanding of the library's role as well as the services provided by the library on the part of the community. This is the biggest barrier."
- "We have facilities challenges. Unfortunately, our library buildings are old and were designed with an orientation towards the circulation of books. And with the advent of more electronic

resources, the wiring in the buildings is a problem. People are using the spaces differently. We need to provide wired work stations. Fundamentally, the purpose of the buildings has changed.”

- “The library needs to market itself. They need to anticipate where people are going for information – and get ahead of that curve – and then raise the public’s awareness of what the library has to offer. Services provided should run the gamut from recreational reading to being a source for local information. The library needs to work to stay relevant.”
- “The library really needs to get the message out there that libraries are important to communities – and describe the benefits of what libraries bring to their communities. There is a ‘silent majority’ out there who is uninformed about the future of public library services. They see a proposal to spend money and they don’t understand it ... so they can – and have – gotten plans killed. The library needs to engage with all members of the community.”
- “The public library is a symbol of a free and democratic society. This is an important message that needs to be strongly conveyed to communities. The public needs to know this.”

Goal #2: Synthesize the Results:

The following analysis and draft recommendations for next steps are the result of the work done with the internal stakeholders over the three phases of this project to the end of realizing the Symposium 2020's collaborative initiative to create a distinct identity for Ontario's public libraries.

Analysis:

In Phase 1, we indicated that "Most successful branding efforts start with the development of a sound brand strategy that takes into account stakeholder input and client perceptions. This approach involves articulating your desired brand identity." Through the three phases of this project, we have done in-depth work with the internal stakeholders to develop the profile of the existing and desired brand. The perceptions of the library brand as expressed by the clients / general public is work to be completed in a future project.

Throughout this project, we focused on the following questions to guide the articulation of both the existing and desired brand states:

- Who – is your target market?
- What – do they want?
- Where – do they get it?
- Why – do they not use the library?

The final question:

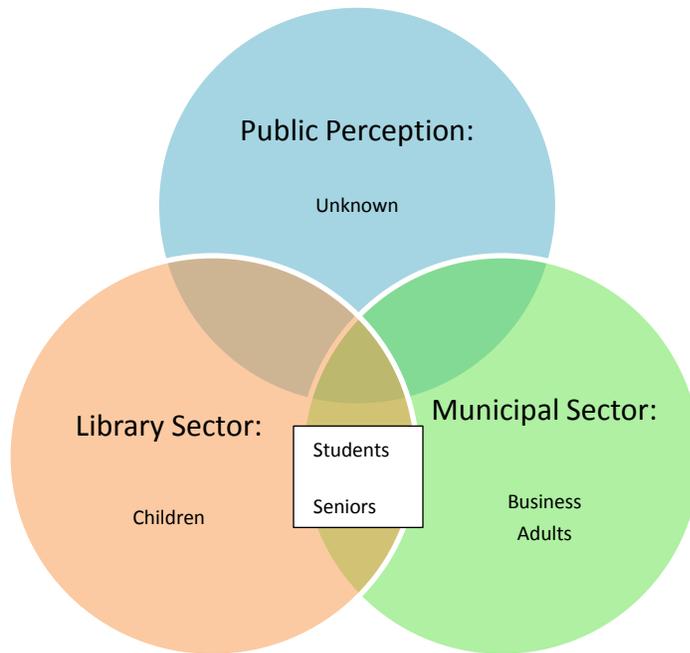
- How – are libraries going to change?

Is a question to be addressed by the Steering Committee and the stakeholders in a future project as the desired state is identified.

Who?

The greatest disparity amongst the internal stakeholders – specifically between the library sector respondents who participated in our survey and the selected municipality sector participants who were interviewed – arose in answer to the question:

Image 2 – “Who is your target audience?”



As illustrated, the library and municipal sectors agree that students and seniors are current audiences for the public library. However, the library sector perceives that children are a significant target audience while the municipal sector believes that the business community and mid-life adults are audiences that are currently under-served or not serviced at all. The municipality sector participants indicated that both these audiences represented an opportunity for the desired state of the public library.

For Follow-Up:

- What is the public’s perception of the target audiences for public library services?
- How do public libraries need to change if they want to extend services to these target audiences identified by the municipal stakeholders?

What?

While the library sector's responses in regards to the question "What do the target audiences want?" did rank online access highly, they also ranked "community livingroom" as the third-most-beneficial service to their target audience. Comparatively, the municipality sector's responses to this question challenged the library to get out of its comfort zone.

Image 3 - "What do the target audiences want?"



For Follow-Up:

- What is the public's perception of the desired services from their public library?
- How will public libraries ensure that they are "ahead of the curve" as demanded by the municipalities and be responsive to their audiences emerging needs?

Where?

The library and municipality sectors agree that the biggest competitor to public libraries – as evidenced by the responses to the question “Where do the target audiences access information resources when they don’t use the library?” – is the internet. The challenge for libraries is to position the library website as the portal through which their users access electronic resources – both for fee and for free. Unfortunately, despite most public libraries in Ontario having a website, awareness of all the online resources available to users via their public library seems to be very low.

Image 4 – “Where do the target audiences access information resources?”



For Follow-Up:

- This is a key branding challenge: how will public libraries communicate to the public about their value and benefits in comparison to that of their major competitor?

Why?

The answer to the question “Why do they not use the public library?” clearly indicates the library’s greatest weakness and highlights the competitor’s strength. The library and the municipality sector respondents agreed: lack of awareness. The public does not know about the extent of the public library’s offerings. And the public values convenience.

Image 5 – “Why do they not use the public library?”



For Follow-Up:

- There is a large gap between the existing state and the desired state when defining the benefits and value of the public library.
- What will the desired state’s benefits and value look like?
- How will public libraries change to articulate this desired value proposition?

Insights:

All internal stakeholders – both from the municipality sector and the library sector – agreed on the challenges their communities were facing: Ontario’s municipalities seem to be either in a state of rampant growth with the accompanying infrastructure challenges OR are in a state of economic decline with the resulting population shifts and a decreasing tax base. Where there was a disconnect between the municipality sector and the library sector was in their responses to the challenge: the municipality sector respondents saw this challenge as a call to action on the part of the library to support a new target audience – specifically, the business community and mid-life adults whose changing circumstances can result in a change in their need for access to authoritative and reliable information resources and services. The library sector responses seemed to not reflect the challenges in their communities, focusing on their traditional audiences.

- **The “pain points” in communities can help libraries identify their differentiators for branding purposes.**

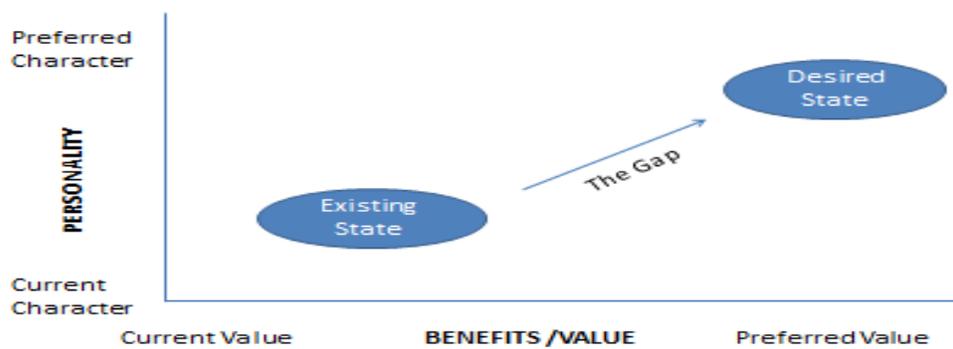
The biggest competitor to the public library is “Online”. Whether its online access to books via Amazon or Chapters or movies via Netflix or online “answers” using Google, the public library needs to ascertain – given its competitor’s strengths and its own weaknesses – what the opportunity is for its brand position.

- **Online’s greatest competitive advantage: Convenience**
- **The Public Library’s greatest weakness: Lack of awareness**

Recommendation #1:

Again, the starting premise is that the development of a brand is a process of decision making; making tough decisions regarding what an organization must and can do to realize its desired brand state. At this point, the Steering Committee should make some decisions to complete Step 1 (as outlined below) by deciding “where to go and how to get there”. These decisions are specifically regarding the existing state and the desired state based upon the benefits and value as well as the character of Ontario’s Public Libraries.

Decide Where to Go and How to Get There:



Recommendation #2:

In the steps to building a brand, the next step is conducting external research. An external organization should be engaged to help in confirming the public's opinion of the brand's desired state as well as validating the identified strengths and weaknesses of the public library with the market.

Steps to Building a Brand:

1. Conducting internal research
 - Determine the brand's present position and that of competitors
 - Get buy-in from all internal stakeholders
 - Decide where to go and how to get there
2. **Conducting external research**
 - **Determine the brand's present position with the public**
 - **Get buy-in from all external stakeholders**
3. Developing potential branding models
 - Craft the necessary communications
 - Validate direction with internal and external stakeholders
4. Deploying a 1 – 2 year implementation plan
 - Integrate strategy across segments and media
5. Monitoring the impact
 - Monitor and maintain the brand

The following is a list of external market research firms for your consideration:

- Phase 5 <http://www.phase-5.com/>
- InnerViews <http://www.innerviews.ca/>
- Strategic Council <http://www.thestrategiccounsel.com/>
- Market Probe <http://www.marketprobe.com/>

Conclusion:

If a “brand is a promise to deliver value”, what is the unique value proposition of Ontario’s Public Libraries?

Thank you for the opportunity to work with the FOPL, OLA, SOLS and OLS-North teams.