
Subject: FOPL Executive Director's Contract Renewal Report
Prepared by: Stephen Abram, Executive Director
Prepared for: FOPL Board

Margie asked that I prepare a short summary to help you in your deliberations on my contract renewal and this will also serve as my executive director's report for our Board meeting.

FOPL was very active and productive since I joined in June 2013. We are now preparing for the next phase as my contract expired on June 8, 2015.

I have assumed a position philosophy of 'servant leadership' a phrase made current in modern time by Robert K. Greenleaf in "The Servant as Leader", an essay that he first published in 1970.

As such, I am led by our FOPL board under three chairs over the term of this contract. This board set our foci as research, marketing and advocacy for public libraries in Ontario. This is where I focus and all activities are viewed, prioritized and implemented through this lens.

On a collaborative basis our activities are now showing fruit at costs that would be unaffordable to individual library systems. The return on investment for membership in FOPL has never been stronger! When I started, we asked ourselves, "What do we need to know?" We need to know a lot before we make an investment in a province-wide marketing campaign and we made progress this year. For this effort we determined that we needed:

- a census of public library e-presences (websites, social media and social networking) This may be a critical channel for marketing libraries across our province.
- a collection of public library taglines from their websites.
- review of the research on major public library "value" branding campaigns in Canada and the U.S.
- hold focus groups and interviews with key internal and external stakeholders including librarians, library staff, library board members *and* municipal administrators.
- know our statistics and develop new measurements for the 21st Century.
- data on Ontario public library performance over time
- data on our marketing channels, market positioning, and preparedness for a 'push'
- insights from stakeholders in libraries, boards and municipalities.
- a new public opinion poll of Ontarians attitudes towards public libraries and how they've changed from our 2003, 2006, and 2010 polls.

Listed below are some of the highlights (this is not a full list of my activities) of the projects that I have led on the staff level as part of my consulting agreement.

HIGHLIGHTS

1. **Board Training:** The release of the first two modules of an online learning program for trustees using the SOLS LearnHQ environment has occurred. This project will be free e-learning that can be integrated into your board meetings, assigned as learning activities to orient board members to their roles, and provide contextual access to the resources of One Place to Look and Learning by Design. Future modules are in development and will be released in the next 18 months. We also helped plan and implement the Trustee Boot Camp at OLA Super Conference.
2. **Public Opinion Poll:** We have recently done a major field survey of Ontarians about their attitudes towards public libraries in our province. We have received the reports and are analyzing them now with our task forces! We will be communicating these results through symposia, webinars, press releases and more. This is the 4th poll done by FOPL and this poll was updated to modern times while respecting the older data context.
3. **Public Library Statistics:** We will continue our analysis of the Ontario Government's 2001-2013 open data provided by all library systems in Ontario. Major reports based on 10 measurements will rank all libraries in Ontario on their operational measures and community engagement are expected in spring 2015. This is the very first time this has been done in Canada and shows leadership from FOPL. We have released over a dozen reports on the performance of Ontario's public libraries from 1999-2010. In mid-2015 we will be able to release an update with 2011-2013 data included. I believe that that this project derives value for public libraries from the data we have provided for many years from our sector and underpins results that show the Ministry the strong impact of public libraries from the long-term investment in us.
4. **Fundraising:** The good news is that we are batting 1000 in the past 2 years having received every grant we applied for. We received funding from SOLS and OLS-North to complete the 2020 branding study and distributed these results. We received funding from the Culture Development Fund in partnership with OLA and OLBA to build advanced e-training and beyond for Ontario library board members. In January 2015 we have confirmed another grant from the Ministry of Culture to continue our work on the analysis of the Ontario Public Library statistics collection. We consulted with the Ministry on the 3 year, \$10 million Ontario Library Capacity Fund to support innovation in public libraries. Let's hope our grantsmanship success continues in 2015 with the OLCF and beyond.
5. **Membership:** Membership is very stable and grew at FOPL this year and we make good progress with the members' investments in our efforts on their behalf. Mississauga recently joined and we are hopeful of a few more large systems in the near future.
6. **Library Day at Queen's Park (Nov. 26, 2014) and Election Follow-through:** FOPL sent formal congratulatory letters to appropriate MPPs and letters on the appointments to key cabinet portfolios for Minister and parliamentary assistants. We have met with many of them as the Legislature came into session. Impact Public Affairs (Toronto Office) and Huw Williams was engaged by OLA and FOPL to organize a Day at Queen's Park on Nov. 25-6, 2014 with targeted meetings with the new government and senior civil servants. We are planning to do this again – hopefully during Ontario Public Library Week in 2015. FOPL partnered with OLA on this project and we led the charge on public library advocacy as OLA focused more on school libraries and the college sector. We are continuing to cooperate on lobbying efforts on behalf of our sector throughout 2015.
7. **2020 Branding Project and Public Opinion Poll:** With special funding from the Libraries 2020 project FOPL engaged a consultant to study the branding, communication and marketing status of Ontario Public Libraries. We have received the Phase 1, 2, and Phase 3 reports and have distributed a final report to SOLS/OLS-North and our members.
8. **Libraries 2025 Summit Planning Team:** The executive directors of FOPL, OLA, SOLS, OLS-N and CULC met to start envisioning a Libraries 2025 Summit to repeat the success of the 2020 Summit that eventually delivered \$18 million in additional public library funding. The date was this spring (April 29-30) and the hotel was the Royal York and about 350 people attended this event. It was MC'd by Valerie Pringle! We had 5 themes that were facilitated by a broadly representative group of public libraries and a debriefing and planning for next steps will be held on May 29.
9. **Canadian Anti-Spam Legislation Legal Opinion and Template Library Policy:** FOPL contracted for a fulsome legal opinion on the impact of the new Canadian Anti-Spam Legislation on the public library sector. This was distributed to members followed by the template library board policy to serve as the model for the entire province. A webinar was offered to all members and recorded for use at any time. This was a small \$7.5K cost for all libraries to benefit from.

10. **Webinars, Symposia and Training:** FOPL continues to offer free webinars to its members and archive them on the FOPL.ca website for viewing and listening at any time. There is a ten part series on influence and advocacy as well as sessions on Statistics and CASL. More are planned for 2015 on the topics of statistics and public opinion.
11. **Library Association and Agency Cooperation and Coordination Meetings:** We continue to make great progress on coordinating with the other associations and agencies in Ontario that support the needs of public libraries. OLA, SOLS, OLS-N, CULC and FOPL meet at least quarterly and we make sure to harness our energy and funds to ensure the biggest impact for our sector. I also communicate, meet and coordinate with other bodies such as our CELUPL and associate members, AMPLO and ARUPLO. The executive director attends or sends reports to the SOLS Regional Trustee meetings. I believe that this has been a major shift in the framework of cooperation in this province and that it is acknowledged by our partners that it is better than ever.
12. **Access Copyright:** We coordinated an opinion on public library licenses from Access Copyright and offered webinars on this. This was a small \$5K cost for all libraries to benefit from.
13. **Research:** We have gotten permission and published the 'early years' research and infographic.
14. **Office Administration:** Over this term the office has run smoothly. We said good-bye to one administrative assistant and hired another. Both were exemplary. We have remained on budget and driven surpluses that can be invested in projects. We run very tight to the bone.
15. **Board Activities:** We have had all of our required board meetings successfully and with minimal disruption. The three Annual Business Meetings went well. All elections, board transitions, and website updates are going well. I have tried to make sure that our task force committees are involved in providing input regularly.
16. **Cost Avoidance:** Monica/Susie and I report regularly on our grants from various agencies. We do this religiously since we had to clean up 2-3 grants that were not handled well by previous incumbents.

LOOKING FORWARD

We dream about a major marketing push province-wide for public libraries in Ontario to promote our value and impact. How do we rise above promoting our branches, collections and programs and complement local marketing with a collaborative push? Can we raise awareness, library usage, and the number of cardholders of public libraries in Ontario? How do we turn these dreams into a reality?

- **Marketing Campaign:** Lastly, we are in the planning stages of a major province-wide marketing campaign on the value and impact of libraries in Ontario based on the research we accomplished in 2014. I hope to fund this with an application to the OLCF.
- **Community Hubs:** I submitted several reports this week and a formal submission to the Premier's Task Force on Community Hubs.
- **Communicating Results:** Investing time and effort in making sure our members get value out of our research through press releases, tweets, blog postings, webinars, and meetings.
- **Lobbying:** We need to intensify our lobbying efforts with more ministries (sometimes opportunistically) as well as address funding issues and threats (PLOG, e-resources, AODA, etc.)

Each of these activities supports one or more of FOPL's strategic pillars. Members have input and priority access. Our association is led by a volunteer board equally balanced between library CEOs and board members.

Progress is being made! Every member enjoyed a great return on investment for their investment in FOPL and the efforts of their staff and volunteer Board. I would rate my personal performance very highly in light of the alignment with FOPL's strategy, major improvements in our relationships with the association community, member feedback to us at HQ, and the successful creation of research reports to support decision-making in our members, while maintaining an environment of fiscal prudence.

Thank you to the FOPL Board for their support and leadership in their volunteer roles supporting our entire community. My personal thanks to FOPL's executive assistant Monica Mixemong for her great work. We look forward to working with the new 2015 Board and members!

Monica and I are only committed to FOPL work for about 12 days per month each so progress isn't as fast as we'd like but we are making progress.

As always, I'm just at the end of the phone or e-mail if you have any questions, comments, or suggestions.

Cheers,

Stephen

Stephen

sabram@fopl.ca

Office: 416-395-0746 / Cel: 416-669-4855

The Federation of Ontario Public Libraries is a non-profit with a mandate to benefit Ontario public libraries through advocacy, research, and marketing.

La Fédération des bibliothèques publiques de l'Ontario est un organisme à but non-lucratif. Elle a comme mandat, de répondre aux besoins de toutes les bibliothèques, en concentrant leurs efforts dans la recherche, en marketing et en agissant comme plaidoyer.