
September / October 2018

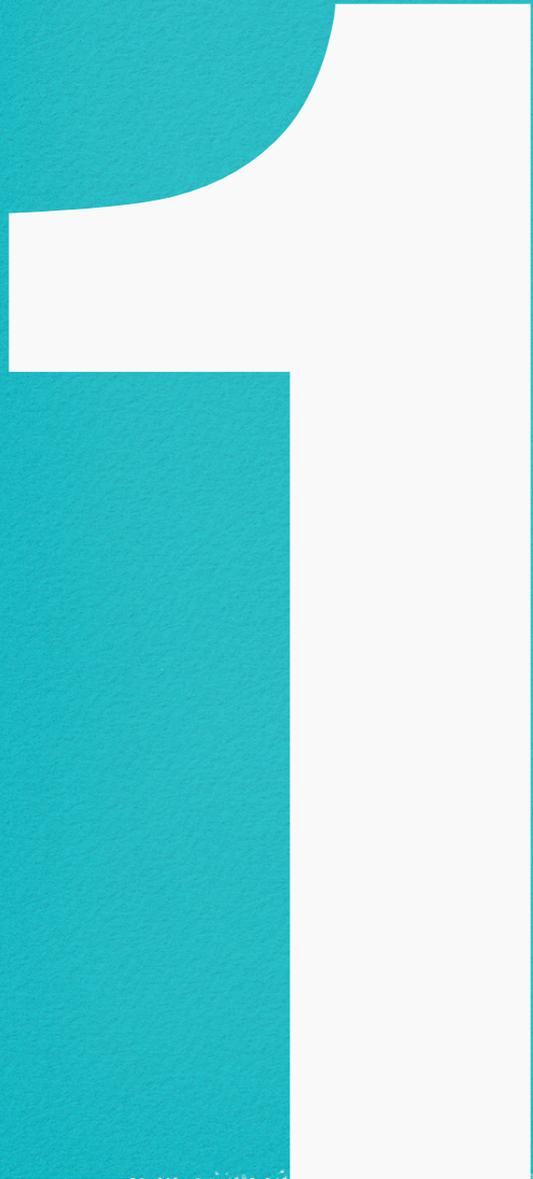
FOPL_OMD Newsroom

SITREP.001*

municipal
elections 2018

* situation report

the problem



what's the problem?

what does FOPL Newsroom solve?

The province of Ontario's 2018 municipal and school board elections represent a clear opportunity for FOPL to underscore for both member libraries and the communities they serve two vital value propositions, not necessarily well-communicated here and now:

one

Libraries are far more than just 'community hubs'. The untold story of FOPL member libraries' contributions to the quality of life and prosperity of Ontario's communities, from Toronto to Cochrane, from Windsor to Cornwall, from Timmins to Sault Ste Marie is, simultaneously, a key election talking point regarding economic development and social investment—at a critical point in Ontario's history.

Takeaway: libraries are key players in local, regional and province-wide economic development, particularly in the support of both local cultural and small business initiatives.

two

Ontario's economic future will stand or fall on the skills, soft and hard, of its citizens. But libraries provide more, a key intangible: those same economic skills are grounded in the cultural diversity and appetite for personal betterment of all Ontario's citizens.

That spirit of diversity and that quest for personal betterment are the cornerstones of service delivery for the government entity most Ontarians trust most: libraries.

Takeaway: there are votes for politicians who vocally and materially support libraries as valuable community assets.

Why?

Because Ontario's citizens know libraries play a vital role in their lives, their children's lives and in enlivening the cultural/quality of life of their communities no matter where in the province they live.

talking point memo.001 | the 'story engine' | FOPL/OpenMediaDesk

FOPL's OpenMediaDesk (OMD) project, now entering Year 3, has trained over 175 library staff from some 70 public library systems, from one-person CEO librarians in the North to the biggest marketing/communications teams in the urban membership base.

Equally importantly, FOPL's social media reach across the two year-old OMD network now comprises well over half the province's population. In other words, OMD can now syndicate messaging across the province to hundreds of thousands library social media followers in towns and cities that no other public entity can reach so effectively.

As of September 4 2018, the Facebook social media reach alone is some 400,000 direct followers in the OMD-trained FOPL network, followers who can be 'touched' instantly. These direct followers represent an influencer base in the populations of the city/region where they reside of some 2.3 million Ontarians...and that number is growing daily as the social media networks deepen via the increased media/marketing efficacy-of-outreach, fruit of OMD's ongoing guidance/curriculum.

We are tapping these networks, at scale, with a FOPL-branded newsroom service designed to provide weekly non-partisan library advocacy updates via archived and emerging 'library good news' stories and video microcontent to attract new audience to the core message: **libraries build community prosperity and well-being, every day.**

FOPL_OMD means sensitizing a massive voter network to the economic, social and cultural value of Ontario's libraries.

the solution



what's this FOPL_OMD Newsroom thing anyway?

objectives + rationale

If helping shape public opinion regarding the efficacy of library services to their communities matters, then media about libraries matters.

Here are the headlines:

- **a library-centric news service** provides FOPL member library marketing/communications staff with a *curated weekly selection of free, highly engaging news, images and feature stories* to post to their library's social media
- **syndicating those library stories** through the established OMD social media networks (whose efficacy is measured by the Library Digital Impacts Index) *enables a highly targeted 'reach' for library advocacy stories* at a vital moment for library advocacy in Ontario politics
- **stories about libraries and their value to the communities they serve**, shared across social media networks, is a *highly-visible, cost-effective means of activating community support* for libraries in the municipal and school board elections of 2018
- FOPL_OMD will incite **'pickup' of library-centric stories in the mainstream election media coverage**, with an eye to sparking *accountability questions for candidates and higher voter turnout* across the province

who cares?

3

why FOPL_OMD news matters

Ontario's community capital

Without question, Ontarians need an alternative community news service about hyperlocal issues not covered in the increasingly fragile, much-depleted corporate-owned media.

Case in point: one OMD-participant library lost its only community newspaper when Metroland, without notice, simply shut down its sole source of weekly news.

This meant the library, which serves a dispersed rural community not touched by neighbouring media in nearby suburban/urban communities (read: no advertising sales to support local news), turned to the OMD team for a solution.

The OMD team—five other participating library teams and the OMD facilitator—co-created a solution in the OMD session that very day which led to the creation a local podcast service run by one of the library staff already podcasting.

Upshot? Library advocacy can't be left solely to orthodox media any longer, despite the long-lived and useful relationships nearly all local media people have with their local library.

OMD has proved one thing: the best local stories are the stories which reveal local culture as lived and loved by the community their library serves.

Those stories, shared nowhere else but the library's social networks, are a window on how community cultural, social and small business capital is co-created and grows.

passing the test

4

the recipe

how does all this help my library?

The recipe is three-fold:

- an ongoing series of pre-packaged social media posts, with links and images pre-selected, in support of a broader conversation in your community about your library and its successes, drawn from library success stories around the world and here at home in Canada, a huge time-save for staff
- a series of 'microvideos' to attract a fresh local audience to your library social media, running from Sept 22 to election day, Monday 22 October. Smartphone- and tablet-ready, these microvideos (less than 30secs long, video 'soundbites') are designed and produced to engage both your staff and your community in library advocacy. The microvideos are also measured via a social media metrics platform: you'll have clear data regarding the microvideos' impact in growing both your library's social media reach and election-focused library advocacy itself
- FOPL_OMD podcast series for staff (who are at once library advocates and voters) to 'get out the library vote' on October 22nd: conversations about libraries and economic prosperity with FOPL member library CEOs, from rural/Northern, suburban and urban public libraries. The podcasts are also social media-friendly for sharing online, directly with voters

talking point memo.002 | libraries and citizenship

Ontario's citizens are from myriad backgrounds, work in vastly different fields, and lead lives of rich diversity. Regardless, Ontarians want roughly the same things from our lives:

- to breathe clean air and drink clean water—we all live in the same Ontario and share a responsibility to our environment
- to cherish our children's future prospects and to leave the province a better place for them
- to enjoy the best possible health in our time here, with the aid of one of the best healthcare systems on earth
- to continue to learn and deepen the meaning of our lives, to the best of our abilities
- to see all the people of Ontario prosper together

Citizenship isn't a one-way street: citizenship carries with it responsibilities to attend to the politics of our time. That attention demands we understand the world around us—and there's no better place to come to that understanding than a public library.

Libraries help make better citizens, from reading groups for the pre-children of New Canadians to sharing books and other resources for teens beginning to make their way in life to families struggling with loss or crisis to retirees and seniors seeking new ways to contribute.

Librarians are first-responders, all the more so in this digital information age, because librarians are trusted 'human search engines'.

aftermath

5

what's success look like?

It's October 23. Your community has a new city council, a new school board, with council and board members aligned far better to the worth and worthiness of libraries. What has library advocacy in the run-up to the election actually changed? Here's what success might mean:

- new conversations about the future not just of community use of your library but a new way of thinking about the possibilities libraries represent for navigating social change, co-creating community prosperity and deepening local culture and quality of life
- new relationships revealed, new ways of creating community partnerships that help to begin to grow better lives, better citizens, more local opportunities and connections
- a different lens through which to understand how this complex, challenging, marvellous and sustaining thing we call our community can serve more of us, better (likewise our library)
- new strategies for activating and mobilizing the community, through volunteers' untapped skills, through youth in action, via intergenerational projects which share the wisdom and energy of seniors with the vision and drive of families of all stripes and the courage of the young to try the untried

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- bringing libraries closer to the community conversation about the problems of the here and now while sparking thinking about the future and how we'll best invest to live better
 - aligning the political will to continue to support what libraries do best
 - to serve every member of the community, without exception, especially the least of the least, the marginalized, the recovering, and the economically fragile
 - to serve as the last great community commons in our society, inclusively and with an eye to always helping discover the valuable, the insightful, the path not taken
 - to share a trusted space in that commons, open to all, where creativity and the world of books meet in a safe place, where curiosity is rewarded
 - attract the best and brightest to new challenges through great stories, trustworthy media and an openness to the best in each of us

Ontario's libraries do all of this and more, every day. It's time library stories were told—and, having been shared, animate a new voice in the political conversation about our province's next decade and beyond.

talking point memo.003 | library storytelling + life itself

None of us has their life together. It's a myth. The one thing that invariably divides us is our own perfectionism—because it makes us feel terrible. This often washes over our relationships with others, in the shape of envy and other not-good thoughts.

Libraries and the stories they keep for us to share—free!—are an instant antidote to the overriding double-barrelled conceit of our time: **(1) more is better and (2) everyone else is doing better than I am.**

Libraries call us on this crap. Why? Because you can't go toe-to-toe with Shakespeare or Chekhov or Atwood and still believe the myth that anyone, from Lenin to Lennon, from Socrates to Ellen, ever has their life together.

We are all in the same leaky boat, losing our keys, our bank cards, our kids (sometimes), our minds (most days).

The thing about libraries and storytelling is this: like the ocean, music and dance fiction and art and poetry and biography open us to those things which are the universe's way of saying: *'it's OK. Something bigger than you is unfolding around you. And if you listen, you might learn something—something true and sustaining—about your own life.'* What could be more wonderful than that?

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