



Federation of
**ONTARIO
PUBLIC
LIBRARIES**

La Fédération des
**BIBLIOTHÈQUES
PUBLIQUES
DE L'ONTARIO**

Annual Report on the State of Public Libraries February 2012



PEOPLE LOVE THEIR PUBLIC LIBRARIES.

Ontario public libraries have more cardholders than VISA, handle more items than FedEx, and have more outlets than McDonald's. Each year, 72.3 million visits are made in person to Ontario public libraries, which is 3 times the annual attendance at all North American NHL hockey games.

Message is Clear:

Citizens Support their Public Libraries

Budget pressure on many public libraries in Ontario triggered a resurgence of civic engagement across the province, which brought forward voices of all ages and walks of life to speak compellingly about what the public library means to them, and how important it is to their individual and community lives.

As a result, municipal officials became increasingly aware of the value and relevance of public libraries in today's society, especially in the digital age. Many of Ontario's municipal councils demonstrated this heightened awareness through the level of funding they eventually approved for their public libraries.

Bridging the Digital Divide

Public libraries bridge the digital divide and ensure that everyone in Ontario has access to the technology and content they need to be successful.

Without public libraries, many Ontarians would not be able to:

- Apply for education, employment and government services
- Keep their skills up to date
- Maintain social contact with family and friends
- Connect with emerging channels of mainstream entertainment and recreation

Public libraries are becoming tech hubs by:

- Providing downloadable or online content, eBooks and assistance 24/7
- Becoming tech help centres for people unsure how to operate new devices
- Expanding their instructional programs to cover new technologies, job hunting in the digital age, use of social media

Public libraries need increased and sustainable funding to ensure no one is left behind as the digital divide widens.



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Ontarians realized a hard value of over \$3 billion in 2009 from borrowing books, CDs, DVDs, and other items from public libraries 127,991,267 times.^{1, 2}



WHO'S STRUGGLING TO MAKE THE LEAP?

- 21% of Canadians do not have access to the Internet at their home or office.³
 - Changing technologies require investment in new, upgraded hardware and devices. As a result, the digital divide among Ontarians is increasingly seen as a function of socio-economic condition.⁴
 - Only 37% of Ontario's First Nation communities have public libraries, which are open 29 hours per week on average, and are staffed by a single (typically part-time) librarian in 97% of cases.⁵

Include Public Libraries in Provincial Literacy Strategies

Public libraries are huge players in the delivery of literacy programs, especially for children between the ages of zero to six. Yet there is no provincial strategy for partnering with public libraries in implementing the Best Start Strategy, despite its emphasis on early literacy

Each year public libraries offer over 1.2 million hours of literacy instruction – often during evening and weekend hours that are convenient for families, and using staff with specialized training.

Use public libraries to ensure literacy success in Ontario:

1. We have the expertise, materials and reach in our communities to support provincial literacy goals – take advantage of it.
2. Expand eligibility criteria for provincially-funded literacy programs to include public libraries.
3. Use the expertise of public libraries when developing Ontario's future literacy policies to realize full literacy potential.



About the Federation

The Federation of Ontario Public Libraries is a not-for profit membership association established in 2005 to provide a single strong voice for public libraries in Ontario to enhance library policies and programs. Its services focus on four strategic pillars: advocacy; marketing, research and consortia purchasing. The Federation's 215 member libraries represent organizations of all sizes and from all geographic regions, and are responsible for serving 80% of Ontario's population.

¹ http://www.mtc.gov.on.ca/en/libraries/statistics2009/2008_2009_Summary_Comp.pdf

² Library Services Centre (LSC), *Canadian Library Purchasing Power 2009*, September 2009.

³ <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/daily-quotidien/110525/dq110525b-eng.htm>

⁴ <http://www.digitalontario.mgs.gov.on.ca/sites/default/files/pdf/Digital%20divide%20and%20access%20issues.pdf>

⁵ OLS-North, *First Nation Public Libraries in Northern Ontario: Past, Present and Future*, January 2009

Federation of Ontario Public Libraries

5120 Yonge Street

Toronto, ON M2N 5N9

admin@fopl.ca

☎: 416-395-5638 | 📠: 416-395-0743

🐦 @foplnews

📘 <http://on.fb.me/aGYiVX>



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