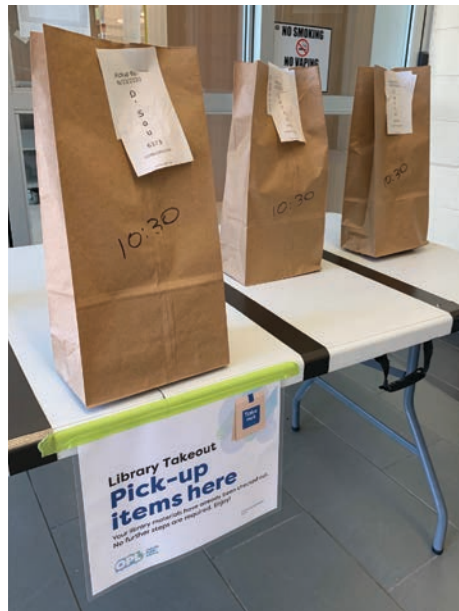
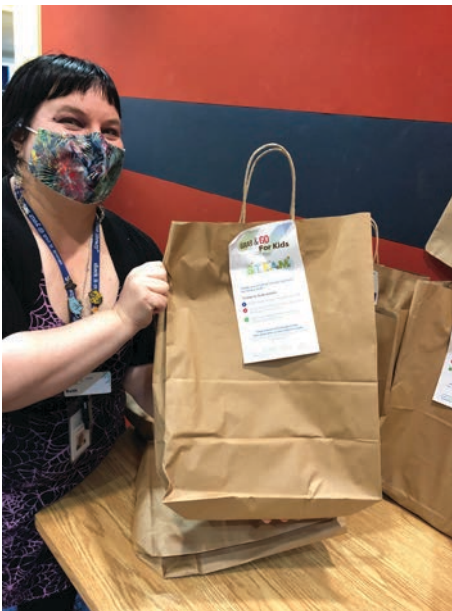




Oakville  
Public  
Library

# 2020 Report to the Community



# Rising to the Challenge

2020 was unlike any year Oakville Public Library (OPL), and the community at large, has experienced in recent memory. The year started with the celebrations as we welcomed the community back to a newly-renovated Glen Abbey Branch. The re-opening of Glen Abbey set the tone for many other exciting initiatives and events we had planned for the year. However, only a short time later, we had to close our doors and face uncertainty as we grappled to understand how the COVID-19 pandemic would impact us at home and globally.

As we look back on 2020, we are extremely proud of OPL's commitment to continuously supporting our community. We did this by learning to embrace change, reducing barriers, and encouraging innovation in order to serve all our customers in the face of uncertainty.

In recognizing the importance of our role in supporting mental health and wellness, especially for our most vulnerable and senior populations, the core of our responsive approach became providing a welcoming and accessible environment during times of crisis. We swiftly pivoted to an online model for many of our programs and services: introducing Library Takeout and other contactless services; innovating using new technology to host virtual programs, introduce digital library card registration, and provide virtual technology assistance; continuing to operate our free, accessible food shelves to support those facing food insecurity; and notably, altering our policy to permanently eliminate all overdue fines.

2020 also marked OPL's 125th anniversary, celebratory news to embrace during a year of challenges. For 125 years, our values of fostering discovery and creativity, and providing access to literacy and information, still holds as true today as they did when we came to be.

Thank you to the OPL Board for their guidance and focus on community and our community partners for their ongoing support and cooperation. Thank you to our dedicated staff for their tremendous work, for showing up and making our community a better place.

But mostly, thank you to the Oakville community for your resiliency. You inspire OPL to continue to innovate and build strong relationships with our customers to ensure everyone in Oakville can reach their full potential no matter the challenges.

OPL is located on Indigenous lands and we acknowledge that we are gathering on traditional territory that has been inhabited by the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation for thousands of years before us. We are grateful for the opportunity to meet here, and because we are all treaty people, we affirm our collective commitment to make the promise and the challenge of Truth and Reconciliation real in and with our community and libraries.

Sincerely,

**Tara Wong, Chief Executive Officer**  
**Councillor Jeff Knoll, Library Board Chair**

**OPL Library Board:**

**Councillor Jeff Knoll, Chair • Steven Bright, Vice Chair • Councillor Janet Haslett-Theall**  
**• Pankaj Sardana • Bill Smith • Susan Fanelli • Andrew Cashman**

# 2020 By the Numbers

**86,097**

Total cardholders

**633**

Interlibrary items borrowed

**1,105,695**

Digital items borrowed

**982,969**

Physical items borrowed

**112,694**

eAudiobooks borrowed <sup>1</sup>

**38,000+**

Collection items added

**157,336**

eBooks borrowed <sup>2</sup>

**20,430**

Contactless hold pickups through Library Takeout

**760,976**

Total OPL.ca website visits

1. Includes AudioBookCloud, cloudLibrary audiobooks, Hoopla audiobooks

2. Includes cloudLibrary ebooks, Hoopla ebooks, Hoopla comics, TeenBookCloud, TumbleBooks, TumbleBooks Jr.2.

As of March 13, 2020, all OPL branches were closed or engaged in limited services due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

“I love being able to look for books from the comfort of my home in these challenging times. I also really appreciate being able to pick up books in this new contactless way and am grateful for anyone working in the libraries in Oakville!”  
Thank you all! – J.

“Although I miss touching the books and browsing in the stacks, your website has been a lifesaver during COVID-19. I find the services provided by the library personnel to be truly wonderful. The library remains my most valued public service and I also love the caring and informative help provided by the staff.” – M.



# 2020 Highlights

## Going Fine-Free

In October 2020, the OPL Board voted unanimously to move to a fine-free model. This was an extension of the existing policy introduced in 2019 for the permanent elimination of overdue fines on children's materials and OPL's COVID-19 community response to eliminate fines since the start of the pandemic.

“Outstanding, this is a really progressive and community-focused policy decision.” – N.

“Feel so grateful for your support and love as always. Thank you for the amazing staff!” – OPL Customer T.



## Library Takeout

We welcomed customers back into branches in June with new contactless services so the community could safely access and enjoy library materials once again.

## OPL Express: Browse and Borrow

We expanded our OPL Express services with the introduction of Browse & Borrow kiosks. The new OPL Express kiosk makes it easier for customers to find and borrow reading materials on-the-go, in locations convenient to them. Like a vending machine, scan your card, choose your book, and enjoy! The first kiosks were introduced at St. Luke's Community Centre, and Queen Elizabeth Park Community & Cultural Centre, with plans to add more in the future.



“You are doing an excellent job! I used OPL Express and it's brilliant! Thank you for advancing to the future!” – Z.



## Community Food Corners

Deemed an essential service, OPL's food corners remained open throughout the pandemic to support our vulnerable communities, in partnership with Food for Life Canada. Items provided included perishable and non-perishable food, along with hygiene products, snack packs for students and pet food. The food corners continue to be much-used service within the Oakville community and available at Central, Glen Abbey and Clearview branches.

## Supporting Family Historians

Access to the Oakville Images and Oakville Newspapers databases increased by an incredible 52% in 2020 from 2019, and access to Ancestry Library Edition (ALE), which we were able to offer outside of library walls, increased in March 2020 by just over 221% from the two previous months! For ALE, usage ballooned in 2020 compared to 2019 overall at over 227%.

## Grab and Go

The Grab and Go service was introduced in October 2020, as a safe and easy way to pick up surprise book bags curated by library staff.

On average, 158 bags were circulated per week with an average of 790 items. Within three months of launch, the demand for Grab and Go bags increased by 29%.



“Love this idea [for Grab and Go]! Going to head over to my favourite branch for mine!”  
– T.



## Connection Kits

To support older adults in isolation, the Connection Kits service was introduced to support those who did not have access to the internet or technology, to be able to stay connected with friends and family. In addition, those with print disabilities could use the kits to access alternate formats of reading material. Launched in December 2020, 52 customers received support through this service. Special thanks to the United Way Halton & Hamilton for grant funding from the Emergency Community Support Fund (ECSF), via the Government of Canada.

“Thrilled with the library’s generosity and the range of books you have loaded. I am embracing this new experience with excitement and the thrill of learning something new.”  
– OPL customer, 90 years old



## Celebrating 125 years

2020 will always be memorable as it’s also marked OPL’s 125th anniversary. From our humble beginnings in 1836, where the library’s roots started with a reading room at the location of now-Central Branch, to 1895, when the name “Oakville Public Library” was first used thanks to an amendment to the 1882 provincial Free Libraries Act to allow the adoption of the term “public library.”



## StoryWalks®

StoryWalks provide Oakville residents of all ages with access to year round self-guided walks based on selected stories. Residents can leisurely stroll a trail and enjoy a tale that unfolds along the way in a safe and socially distanced environment. Funded through government grants, the first two walks were installed at Bronte Heritage and Tannery waterfront parks.

# Pivoting to Virtual Programs



In early 2020 OPL programming was able to expand our offerings through the newly opened Creation Zone at the Glen Abbey Branch. On Family Day, February 2020 the launch event of the new space was a success bringing in over 500 community members to the Creation Zone that day. Other Family Day programs including the preschool dance party, mini makers, cardboard creations, and more, were enjoyed by the community with a one-day attendance of 1,386.

Following the immediate closures due to the pandemic, OPL pivoted to virtual program offerings with the first virtual programs only two weeks after the provincial closures. We leveraged community partnerships with over 40 organizations, resulting in over 90 partnered programs in 2020.

## New Parent Connections

Enabling caregivers with infants to connect to each other and their community resources.

## Kids and Jr. Kids Club

Developed to support the Ontario School Curriculum and provide a place of socialization for school aged children

## Books Clubs

Expanding current book club offerings allowing isolated adults to connect with each other in a virtual setting

## Annual OPL Summer Reading Challenge

Expanded to include all ages, and ran virtually.

## Creative Experiences

With the Creation Zone tools, OPL was able to assist customers in learning or experiencing new creative programs. Programs include monthly Take & Make projects, Digital Paint Night, Lunch & Learns and more.

**28,938**

People reached through virtual programs

**1,014**

Virtual programs delivered

**338**

Pre-recorded program videos uploaded to OPL's YouTube channel

# Creating Community Connections



## Library LOVE

### Our donors gave us so much to be thankful for!

OPL is touched by the thoughtful people in our community who showed their love for the library with their generous donations in 2020. Just when our community needed it most, our donors responded! Our donors connected community and we are grateful for their support. Thanks to our donors, OPL ensured we had loanable items for our community to enjoy and that all library customers continued to access the library safely. Their gifts are pivotal and have given the library the ability to provide equitable access to library services and spaces. Their support connected our customers to the world at large, sparked innovation in our community and supported growth and mental health through access to library resources.