



**Strategic Directions and Priorities  
2008-2011**

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# Message from the Chair



It is my pleasure and honour to present the Ottawa Public Library's vision and strategic plan for 2008–2011. I have always believed that libraries are not luxuries, but crucial to modern living. They provide both a service and a civic space. They are a community treasure.

This plan is in response to what the citizens of Ottawa tell us is important to them about their libraries. The directions and priorities in this Plan will ensure that the Library can support emerging needs in Ottawa and advance civic priorities.

Our vision is simply stated: to build a strong community by supporting literacy and lifelong learning, fostering inspiration and enjoyment, and connecting people to each other and the world.

Our challenges and goals as we look ahead over the next four years are to be responsive to changing community needs; to extend our partnerships; to care for and enhance the places from which we serve the people of Ottawa; to transform our future and preserve our past by developing a new central library; and always to ensure that we are an accountable and innovative organization.

For over a hundred years the Ottawa Public Library and its predecessor libraries have served the residents of Ottawa, connecting people and communities. Our vision for the future retains the unique strengths of our services – direct access to high quality information and leisure materials. And we now embrace new technologies to ensure that our residents can keep up to date in a changing world. In doing so, we strive to contribute to the strength of our city, to provide opportunities for community building and to foster participation and inclusiveness.

This plan outlines the broad directions the Ottawa Public Library will take to meet the needs of the people of Ottawa. We look forward to a continuing dialogue with our residents as we pursue detailed implementation.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jan Harder". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Jan Harder, Chair, Ottawa Public Library Board

# Board Members

2007-2010



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The Ottawa Public Library is committed to playing its part in supporting Ottawa’s vision of being a world-class city. The strategic directions outlined in this Strategic Plan will ensure that the Library can support emerging needs in Ottawa and advance civic priorities. The Strategic Plan will guide the development of the Library and its services over the period from 2008 to 2011.

## **Introduction** **2**

Provides an overview of the Plan’s purpose, scope and the planning process.

## **The Planning Context** **4**

Provides some background information about the Library, its services, and key trends influencing library services both in Ottawa and across North America.

## **Our Mission and Values** **7**

Outlines who we are, why we’re here, and the core beliefs and principles that guide everything we do.

## **Strategic Directions 2008–2011** **8**

Outlines the five key directions and specific priorities for the Library over the planning horizon.

## **Approach to Implementation and Monitoring** **16**

Outlines how we will translate directions into action, and how we will monitor our progress.

Number of times in 2007  
that a person visited  
a library branch:

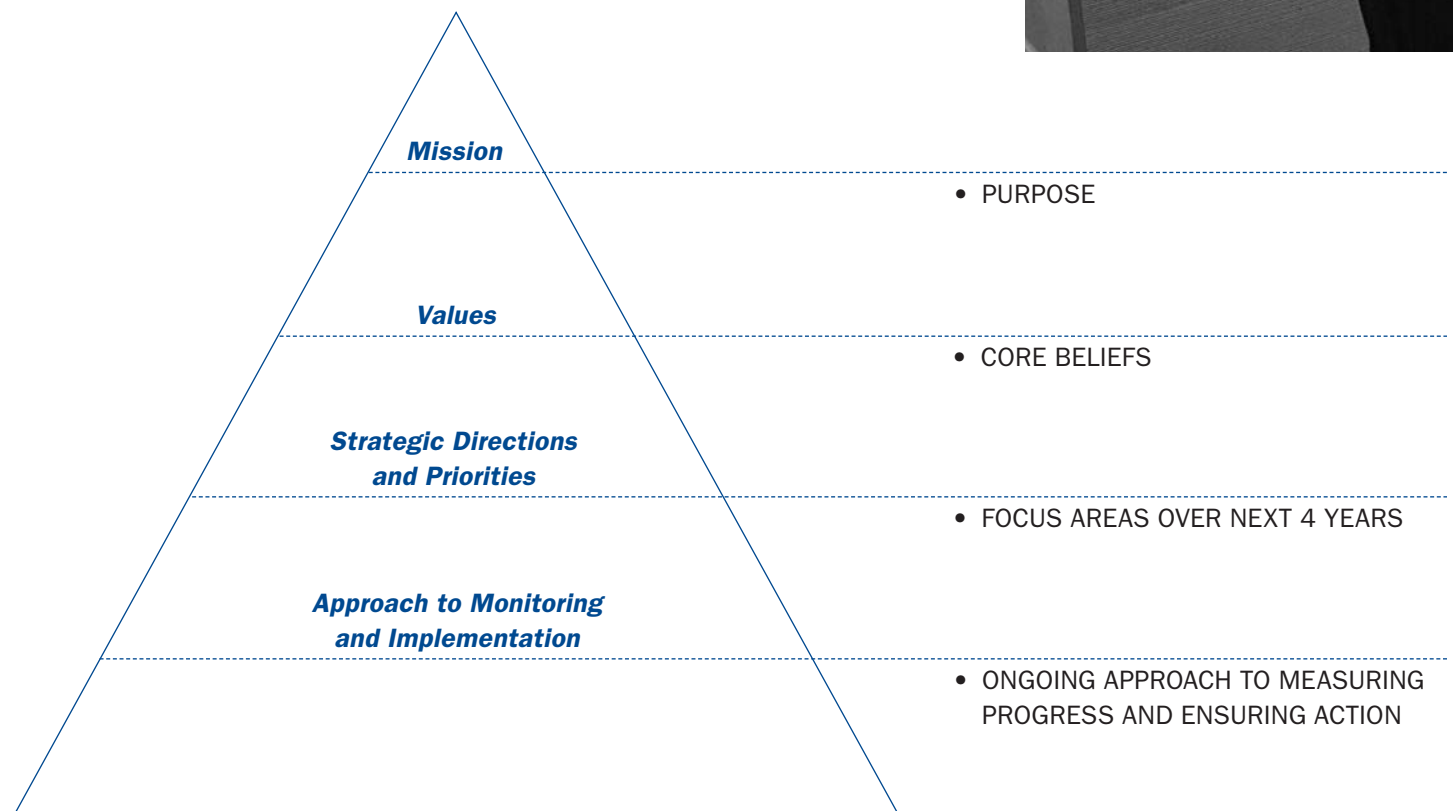
**4,286,900**

## Introduction

In April 2007, the Board of the Ottawa Public Library initiated a process to develop a clear Strategic Plan to guide the development of the Library from 2008 to 2011.

### PLAN COMPONENTS

The components of the Plan include:





Number of items borrowed:

**10,083,595**

## THE PLANNING PROCESS

This planning process was designed to build on previous planning exercises and consultations, and included the following components:

- **Review of the changing Ottawa community**, including demographic, social and economic changes, as well as a review of emerging municipal priorities
- **Review of emerging trends and issues in library service**, including changing approaches to service delivery, as well as relevant research on perceptions and attitudes regarding library service
- **Review of the current state of the Ottawa Public Library**, including how OPL compares with selected provincial and national benchmarks, and with other municipal services

Through this process, and our ongoing customer feedback mechanisms, we have developed a sound understanding of where the Ottawa Public Library stands today and where it needs to focus in the future.

- **Planning workshops** involving the Board and senior management, during which future directions were drafted including mission, values, strategic priorities and target groups for service enhancements
- **Consultations** with target groups, including focus groups with representatives of business, including Small Business and

Entrepreneurs, as well as Business Improvement Area (BIA) representatives, youth and new Canadians

- **Opportunities for public feedback** provided through posting of the draft plan on the Library's website and provision of an online feedback mechanism

# The Planning Context

OPL PROUD OF OUR PAST – CONTRIBUTING TO OTTAWA'S FUTURE

For over 100 years the Ottawa Public Library (OPL) has opened its doors to the people of Ottawa – being *a special place for knowledge, inspiration and enjoyment*. Through amalgamation in 2001, the Ottawa Public Library evolved into a system with a rich heritage of rural, suburban and urban libraries. In 2007, there were 4.3 million visits to our 33 branches, over 10 million items borrowed, and over 5 million electronic visits to our website and e-services.

Ottawa citizens have access to a total collection of 2.3 million items including collections in both official languages. In fact, we are the largest bilingual public library in North America. Our collections are available in a variety of media including books, magazines, newspapers, audiocassettes, video-cassettes, CDs, DVDs, CD-ROMS, downloadable audio books and Internet links organized by subject via the Library's website and catalogue. Citizens can access a vast range of quality information through a total of 359 public Internet access stations in our branches, and through our website from their homes. Seventy-nine data-bases are available for use in the Library, and most of these can also be accessed from the home or workplace.

In 2007, we delivered a total of over 8,400 programs for children, teens and adults.

## OUR CHANGING COMMUNITY

As we look ahead, the Ottawa Public Library is well positioned to make a key contribution to Ottawa's future strength and capacity. We know from our review of changes in the Ottawa community that the population will continue to grow, age, and become more diverse. The Library will need to meet different needs across the full spectrum of age groups – serving the young families and children at one end of the spectrum, through to the growing group of seniors in the city. The Library can play an important role in helping the increasing number of newcomers to Ottawa, by being a safe and welcoming point of entry to the community and its resources.

As we look ahead, we know that the City of Ottawa faces many challenges in the future:

- Fiscal sustainability
- Maturing and aging infrastructure
- Environmental concerns
- Demands for openness and accountability
- The need to ensure quality and excellence in all public services





PHOTO: bellaphoto.ca

Number of people attending library programs:

**195,569**

## CHANGING ROLES OF LIBRARIES

Research suggests that the great cities of the twenty-first century will thrive because of innovation and creativity, human resources, quality of life, positive business climate, physical infrastructure, and effective governance. There is growing recognition across North America that libraries have a strong role to play in building communities and local economies. A recent study funded by the Bill & Melinda Gates and Geraldine R. Dodge Foundations noted:

In this era of economic transformation, the business of public libraries is being recast. Public access to digital information and technology is a draw for libraries. Their open structure, combined with the power of new digital collections, technology, and training, position them to help communities make the transition from manufacturing and service economies to high tech and information economies.

Public libraries build a community's capacity for economic activity and resiliency. Many families and caregivers rely on the library to provide important preschool reading and learning. Many people entering the workforce rely on libraries to get them online. Local businesses are increasingly tapping into the library's online databases to keep themselves competitive and to find synergistic new business opportunities. Library facilities often anchor downtown and commercial developments, and are attractive neighborhood amenities. (*The Urban Institute and Urban Libraries Council, January 2007*)

# The Planning Context

## CONTRIBUTING TO THE OTTAWA COMMUNITY

The Ottawa Public Library is about more than just books. Through its 33 branches, bookmobile, outreach and online services, OPL contributes to the Ottawa community in many different ways:

- **Supporting the development of literacy skills** (e.g. reading and technology/information literacy), particularly among children, youth and newcomers
- **Enabling lifelong learning** by making available materials and online resources that support continuous learning
- **Building global and cultural awareness among Ottawa's citizens** by providing access to current information about our changing world
- **Supporting small businesses and entrepreneurs** by providing them with access to essential research databases and information that they could not access on their own (e.g. licensed subscription databases)
- **Helping people with life challenges and decisions** by helping them to access quality, up-to-date information (e.g. health information)
- **Being a gateway for newcomers to Ottawa** by easing their transition into the local community, providing a safe welcoming place and easy access to important information, as well as helping newcomers to develop their language skills and prepare for employment
- **Building communities by providing a focal point** where individuals, families and groups can meet, connect and work together
- **Enhancing the quality of people's lives** by providing not just information, but also knowledge, entertainment, and exposure to the arts, enjoyment and relaxation

Our challenge as we look ahead over the next four years is to:

- Be responsive to changing community needs
- Extend our partnerships
- Care for and enhance the places and spaces from which we serve the people of Ottawa
- Transform our future and preserve our past by developing a new Central Library
- Be an accountable and innovative organization

These strategic directions, along with our mission and values are outlined on the following pages.



## Our Mission and Values

The Library's mission and values describe who we are, why we're here, and the core beliefs and principles that guide everything we do.

### OUR MISSION

Building a strong Ottawa community by supporting literacy and lifelong learning, fostering inspiration and enjoyment, and connecting people to each other and the world

### OUR VALUES

**Access for all:** We are committed to providing basic services to every person in Ottawa free of charge, and to providing barrier-free facilities, resources and services.

**Accountability:** We are responsible for meeting the library service needs of the community in an efficient, effective and fiscally responsible manner.

**Bilingualism:** We provide a strong bilingual context in English and in French for our resources and services.

**Dynamic Workforce:** We promote a stimulating work environment that recognizes and rewards staff creativity in serving the people of Ottawa.

**Innovation:** We continuously review current practices, make improvements, leverage technology and create new standards of performance to drive service improvements.

**Intellectual Freedom:** We defend the right of Library users to freedom of thought, belief, opinion and expression as the basis of a democratic society.

**Love of Reading:** We nurture the joy of reading in people of all ages.

**Right to Privacy:** We respect and protect the privacy of our users.

**Service Orientation:** We excel in customer-driven service and respond to the diverse needs of the population of Ottawa.

**Smart Community:** We believe that Ottawa's future economic and social prosperity depends on ensuring that all of our citizens are well informed and supported in their aspirations to learn throughout their lifetimes.

# Strategic Directions

2008-2011

We look forward to the next four years with excitement and commitment. We have established an ambitious agenda to guide our work in partnership with the City and other key community partners. An overview of our strategic directions and priorities is provided below:

STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS	KEY PRIORITIES
<b>A. Responsive Services</b>	<p><b>Focus on our future leaders</b> – Engage and support key groups who will influence Ottawa’s future success: youth, newcomers, entrepreneurs and small business</p> <p><b>Catch up</b> – Build our print and electronic collections to address the gap between growing demand and current supply</p> <p><b>Be virtual</b> – Enhance technology-based access and services</p> <p><b>Good reads and the right information</b> – Support lifelong learning, literacy and reading for all</p> <p><b>Stay “open” for our citizens</b> – Provide more and better hours of service</p>
<b>B. Partnerships for Accessible and Efficient Service</b>	<p><b>Add value</b> – Leverage public investment by working with other City departments and partners on key initiatives</p> <p><b>Be a window to the City</b> – Extend public access to City information and services through the Library’s 33 branches and website</p>
<b>C. Places and Spaces</b>	<p><b>Care for what we have</b> – Implement upgrades and improvements in existing branches</p> <p><b>Build community – fill the “holes”</b> – Develop new branches to support growth and address service gaps</p> <p><b>Reduce the barriers</b> – Enhance accessibility to our services through physical and technology upgrades</p> <p><b>Go green</b> – Demonstrate environmental leadership in all future facility development</p>
<b>D. The New Central Library</b>	<p><b>Transform our future and preserve our past</b> – Develop a new Central Library as a civic cultural focal point, which supports the City’s goals of being inclusive, creative, innovative, proud, and liveable</p>
<b>E. Accountable and Innovative Organization</b>	<p><b>Develop our people</b> – Ensure effective staff and volunteer development, including the Board, Friends and Foundation</p> <p><b>Use technology wisely</b> – Utilize the power of technology to extend our services, make connections with our citizens and realize ongoing efficiencies</p> <p><b>Measure what matters</b> – Implement a new approach to performance measurement that informs our continuous improvement and more accurately reflects the value-added roles the Library is playing</p> <p><b>Tell our story</b> – Build increased awareness of what we have to offer and report on our progress to the public and taxpayers</p>

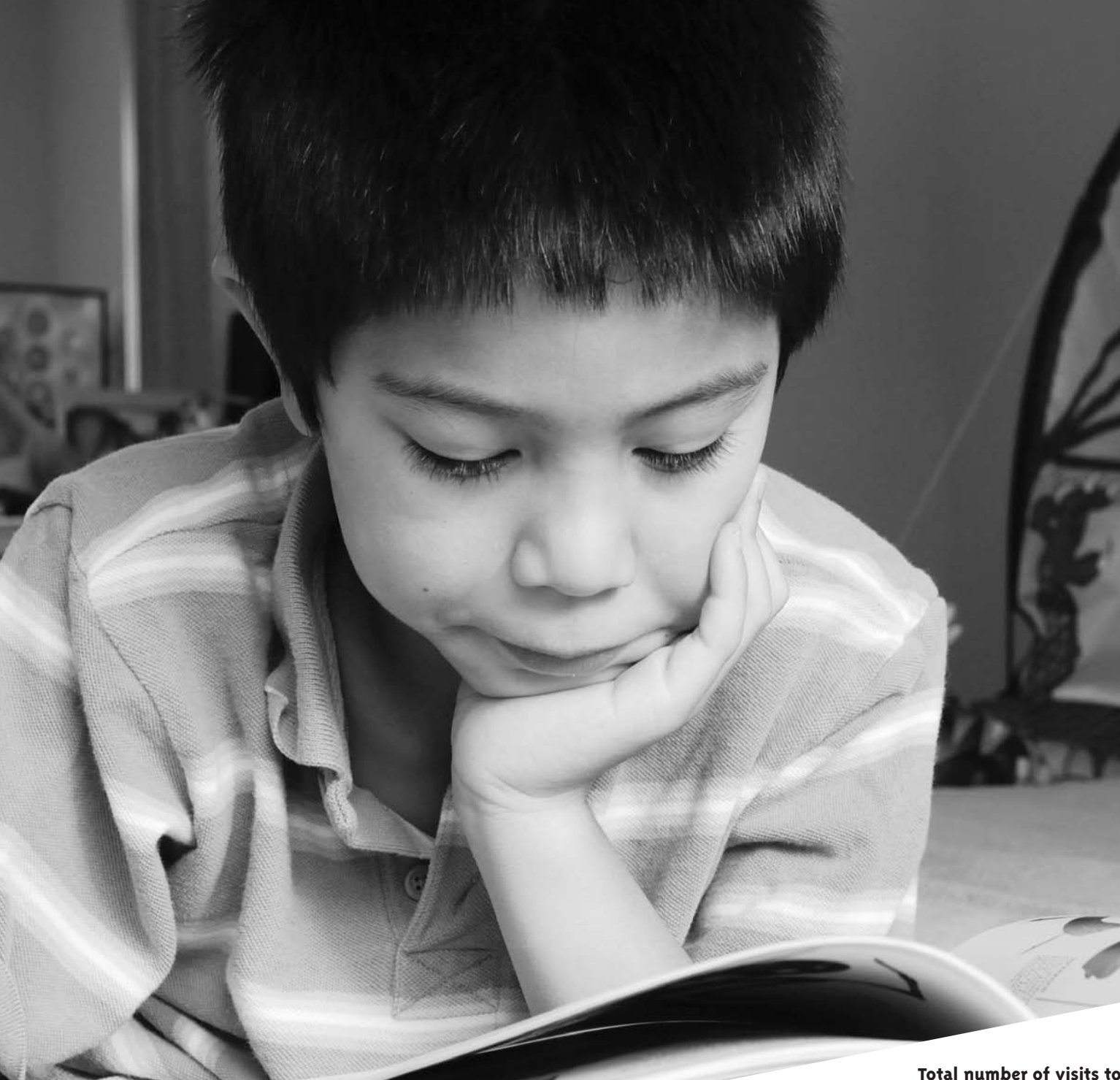


PHOTO: bellaphoto.ca

Total number of visits to  
OPL (physical and virtual):

**9,341,451**

Total number of  
library uses:

**22,972,501**

# Strategic Directions

2008-2011

## A. Responsive Services

### Why Responsive Services Matter

Our services make a difference every day in the lives of children, youth, families, entrepreneurs, newcomers to our city and others. One of our strengths is being a place for everyone. However, this is also one of our greatest challenges – particularly as our community grows and changes. If we are to keep pace with growth, and sustain our critical role in supporting reading, literacy and our city's future strengths, we need to address a number of key areas, as outlined below.

- While we have made significant headway, we are not doing enough to serve youth – they are our future and increasingly see the Library as a safe place to learn, interact and connect. Our critical role in ensuring every child is ready to read must be sustained in the future. In many areas, we cannot meet the demand for participation in our early reading programs.
- Our collections are used very efficiently, but we are well below the standard, particularly as we provide materials not only in English and French, but also in eleven other languages. We have 2.9 “holdings” per capita, while the median for OMBI municipalities (Ontario Municipal Benchmarking Initiative) is 3.2.
- Our hours are insufficient and don't always fit people's changing lives (e.g. need for enhanced Sunday hours).
- Our electronic services have grown and enabled us to provide access to citizens across Ottawa from work and home. We need to continue to invest in technology to keep up-to-date.

Number of items added  
to the collection:

**240,998**



Total number of public  
Internet workstations:

**359**

#### **Responsive Service Priorities for 2008–2011**

Over the next four years we will concentrate on five key priorities:

- **Focus on our future leaders**  
– Engage and support key groups who will influence Ottawa’s future success: youth, newcomers, entrepreneurs and small business.
- **Catch up in our collections** – Build our print and electronic collections to address the gap between growing demand and current supply.
- **Be virtual** – Enhance technology-based services and online applications to support greater remote (home-based) access to our services, increase customer self-service, and build community through social networking opportunities on the Internet.
- **Good “reads” and the right information** – Support lifelong learning, literacy and reading for all, including early literacy and programming initiatives.
- **Stay “open” for our citizens** – Provide more and better hours of service.

#### **VOICES OF OUR CUSTOMERS**

*The Library staff members were very helpful for me and my kids as we came into the country 2 years ago. We had difficulties with the language and they helped us find our way around the books. They are very friendly and professional.*

*I am very happy with and supportive of the OPL. It was a lifeline in times of hardship, providing me with information, education, spiritual comfort through its collection, entertainment on VHS and DVD, and even helped me get my last job when I was unemployed through Internet access.*

Source: OPL Customer Satisfaction Survey

# Strategic Directions 2008-2011

## B. Partnerships for Accessible and Efficient Service

### Partnerships Make a Difference

Partnerships enable us to extend ourselves, add value to the community and ensure effective use of taxpayer dollars. We have many partners today with whom we work to:

- Enhance access to library resources (e.g. our Sm@rt Library partnership with other libraries in the National Capital Region)
- Encourage literacy with such initiatives as our Toronto Dominion Summer Reading Club
- Build community (e.g. Community and Protective Services Neighbourhood Planning Initiative)
- Support our citizens by partnering with settlement agencies and organizations supporting persons with disabilities

By working together we can provide more accessible and efficient services to the people of Ottawa. For example, we have developed a successful partnership with the City Public Health nurses for our 1, 2, 3 Read with Me infant literacy campaign, which results in promotion of reading among new Ottawa parents.

Our network of 33 branches is an invaluable resource not only to the local communities in which they are located, but also to the City of

Ottawa in supporting its efforts to engage and serve its citizens (e.g. by providing access to City information and services in the branches).

### Partnership Priorities for 2008-2011

Over the next four years we will focus on two key priorities:

- **Add value through partnerships** – Sustain existing strategic partnerships and leverage public investment by working with other City departments and partners on key initiatives – including partnerships with health, crime prevention and the City's targeted efforts to support newcomers and communities at risk.
- **Be a window to the City** – Extend public access to City information and services through the Library's 33 branches, mobile services and website. We will extend our role in acting as a portal (both virtually and physically) to the City – providing links to City services and information.

## C. Places and Spaces

### Maintaining What We Have, While Building for the Future

Our branches and virtual library, including our website, are the backbone of our library system. Ottawa Public Library serves the City of Ottawa with 33 public facilities (ranging in size from 519 sq. ft. to 88,453 sq. ft.) and two bookmobiles. The levels of service offered vary, according to staffing complement and the size of facilities. The facilities are grouped into three categories:

- Community branches serve the needs of their immediate community and benefit from the support of their district branch.
- District branches are built in densely populated areas, are central to their district and are a minimum number of kilometers from other district branches and the Main Library. District branches are service hubs for the community libraries in their catchment area.
- The Main Library is the cornerstone of the OPL and shares its knowledge and resources with the community at large. It is the foundation of the Library's service delivery channels, providing support to each tier of library services while fulfilling its role as a district library and a community library (see Section D).

The modernization of our library facilities to reflect changing service demands has been identified as a top priority in the "Libraries for Ottawa" policy.





PHOTO: bellaphoto.ca

Annual amount spent on library materials per capita:

**\$4.79**

### Infrastructure Priorities for 2008–2011

Like other municipally funded services, we face the challenge of maintaining and upgrading our older facilities, while responding to the needs of growth. Our priorities over the next four years will be to:

- **Care for what we have** – Implement upgrades and improvements in existing branches such as Greely and Rideau.
- **Build community – fill the “holes”** Develop new branches to support growth and address service gaps (e.g. a critical need to be addressed is the development of a new West District Library).
- **Reduce the barriers** – We will enhance accessibility to our services through physical and technology upgrades that support persons with disabilities and patrons who find it difficult to move around inside some of our current branches (e.g. barrier-free upgrades for seniors, mothers with strollers).
- **Go green** – Demonstrate environmental leadership in all future facility development, consistent with City of Ottawa standards.

### VOICES OF OUR CUSTOMERS

*We are new to the city and the library is one of our favourite places to go. It offers a safe, comfortable and child-friendly setting. We spend so much time with the books we borrow. The selection meets the needs of all three kids, who are 2, 4, and 6 years old. All of our library experiences have been very positive.*

*Source: OPL Customer Satisfaction Survey*

# Strategic Directions 2008-2011

## D. The New Central Library

### Great Cities Have Great Central Libraries

Great cities have central libraries that serve their cities in many ways. The central library provides access, resources and services, maximizing technologies to deliver efficient and effective service for all of its citizens. The central library supports access to materials at the district and branch libraries through the sharing of its wider and deeper collection, and the provision of specialized resources and expertise. Central library buildings typically provide a distinguished city landmark and a sense of civic identity.

Central libraries should be multi-purpose family destinations; a destination for artistic and cultural activities; the home of a comprehensive collection; a coordination point for specialized services (e.g. special collections, and multilingual materials); a central point for system-wide operations; a branch library for downtown residents and commuters; and a civic destination and permanent addition to the urban landscape.

Our current Main Library is sadly deficient in many ways and unable to fulfill the proper role of a central library. In addition to being too small for the collections, the programs and the people, the Main Library has numerous problems including: major accessibility issues (e.g. poor access for people with disabilities; the

largest public reading area can only be reached by stairs; major problems with elevators and escalators); safety and security issues (e.g. auditorium, meeting room and washrooms are outside of the security area of the Library; multiple access and entry points); and numerous operational challenges (e.g. shipping and receiving areas, parking, building leaks, and poor support for technology).

We look forward to exploring linkages with the municipal archives and other City and civic partners as we advance the new central library for Ottawa's future.

#### Central Library Priorities for 2008-2011

Our priority over the next four years will be to work together with our City partners to:

- **Transform our future & preserve our past** – Develop a new Central Library as a civic cultural focal point, which supports the City's goals of being inclusive, creative, innovative, proud and livable. We will do the necessary planning and approvals work. We commit to engaging the community as we move ahead on this critical initiative.

## E. Accountable & Innovative Organization

### Transforming for the Future

Across the public sector we see that more and more focus is placed on:

- A citizen-focused, citizens-first dynamic
- Better and longer-term corporate planning
- Processes that focus on outcomes
- Better employee satisfaction
- Organizational transformation

If we are to meet the needs of the future and ensure the trust and respect of our citizens, we must be an accountable and innovative organization, that pays attention to human resource management, technology development, effective planning, performance management and public reporting.

Our capacity to move ahead will rest to a large extent on our people – our staff, our managers, and our volunteers, including the Board of Trustees, the Friends of the Ottawa Public Library Association and the Ottawa Public Library Foundation. Libraries, like other employers, are undergoing significant human resource pressures. A major study of the library profession in Canada known as the 8R's report – *The Future of Human Resources in Canadian Libraries* (2005) – highlighted the need for libraries to proactively address issues related



On-line databases  
available:

79

to retirement, recruitment, retention, education and training, and job satisfaction. We must also address supporting systems, which enable us to extend our effectiveness and efficiency.

## VOICES OF OUR CUSTOMERS

*Our branch is a vibrant, happy place to visit because of the staff, their hard work and pleasant attitude. Being able to search and request online has greatly increased my use of the library.*

Source: OPL Customer Satisfaction Survey

### Transforming Priorities for 2008–2011

Over the next four years we will focus on these priorities:

- **Develop our people** – Ensure staff continually develops their skills and knowledge, that Library Trustees develop their ability and skills to govern wisely, and that the Friends and the Foundation continue to support the extension and improvements of library services.
- **Use technology wisely** – Utilize the power of technology to extend our services, make connections with our citizens and realize ongoing efficiencies.
- **Measure what matters** – Implement a new approach to performance measurement that informs our continuous improvement and more accurately reflects the value-added roles the Library is playing.
- **Tell our story** – Build increased awareness of what we have to offer, and report on our progress to the public and taxpayers.

# Approach to Implementation and Monitoring

Number of items requested  
by library users:

**2,550,132**



## Planning and Budgeting Systems

The true test of our planning will be the results. Once refined and approved, these directions will come to life through our work with our partners and our ongoing work planning and budgeting processes, as well as our ongoing capital development. We will monitor the changing environment annually, and adjust our directions as necessary. Each year we will prepare a strategic work plan and associated budget that shows how we will move forward to implement these directions.

## Progress Monitoring and Benchmarking

We will measure our progress and make quarterly reports to our Board on key indicators, including circulation usage, electronic usage and program usage, as well as other indicators as data becomes available. We are committed to reporting to the community on an annual basis.

We will continue to participate in provincial and national benchmarking initiatives including the annual Canadian Urban Libraries Council survey, the Annual Provincial Survey of Public Libraries conducted by the Ontario Ministry of Culture, the Ontario Municipal Benchmarking Initiative, and the Public Library Data Service (a major survey of North American Libraries conducted by the American Library Association). And finally, we will continue to listen to our customers – both every day in every encounter with them, and more formally through our recently launched online Customer Satisfaction Survey, “Your Opinion Counts.”

## Engaging Our Community

Our commitment is to bring value to the community we serve. We are committed to reaching out and engaging the communities we serve on an ongoing basis. We look forward to your input and exciting times ahead.

For further information about the Library and its services, visit the OPL website at [www.BiblioOttawaLibrary.ca](http://www.BiblioOttawaLibrary.ca)



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PHOTO: bellaphoto.ca



PHOTO: bellaphoto.ca

# Notes

