

**Jennifer Keyes, Port Hope Public Library Board Chairperson will present the following annual report at the October 19, 2021 meeting of MPH Council. Margaret Scott, CEO and possibly other Board members also will be in attendance.**

Good Evening Mr. Mayor and members of Council. Thank you for this opportunity to talk about life at the Port Hope Public Library over the past year.

Let me begin by thanking you for the plaque presented to the library staff in recognition of their continued good service to the public despite the pandemic. The staff are grateful for the acknowledgement of their efforts. As the performance statistics we have provided demonstrate even though we are operating for fewer hours, with limited capacity and only in one location at present, circulation numbers at the Mary J Benson branch are up by about 6% over last year at the same time. Perhaps people have run through everything worth viewing on Netflix and have returned to reading or, what is perhaps more likely, the library staff have done an excellent job of providing diverse and interesting virtual programming and activities. Since June 2020 staff have delivered accessible library service either as takeout or limited in person while keeping visitor and staff safety a top priority.

Circulation at the Hub of course is a different matter. What is interesting to note though is the increased use of the wifi connection in that location despite the building being closed. We are planning to reopen the Hub Branch soon. People in the rural community continue to use that location for reliable access to the internet, something which the Municipality needs to keep in mind as they plan for the future of that building.

Considerable time and effort were spent over the last year in the assessment and selection of an upgraded integrated library system (ILS). The new Syrsi Dynix Symphony system will enable the staff to serve the patrons in improved ways by allowing for a robust on-line catalogue with visual graphics including coloured book jackets, enhanced data content, accessibility features as well as integration of social media. We anticipate having the new system up and running by early January 2022.

Books, of course, remain the mainstay of the library. The staff have developed some innovative ways of letting the public know about new additions to the collection. The many windows at Mary J. Benson provide space for coloured photocopies of the new book jackets. Staff have created “unboxing” videos to share the delight of opening the boxes of new material as it comes in.. These videos were shared on Facebook, and Tik Tok. The staff are continually adjusting the collection to meet the needs of the community and as a consequence this year has seen the addition of a significant number of titles dealing with mental health, depression and anxiety as well as reference books on the nature of viruses, pandemics and the transmission of disease.

The monthly “*What’s On*” newsletter is not just in print but also on Facebook, our webpage and promoted through Snap’d, Cogeco and the local community radio station. And while in person programming is still not possible the staff have devised many virtual ways to continue to connect. The youth advisory group provides an opportunity to local high school students to earn some of their volunteer hours by doing video book reports which are shared with others once a month via Zoom. In January, 15 students registered for this program . Their videos were posted on Facebook, Tik Tok and Instagram. This summer staff ran the TD summer reading club with 42 participants who took out close to

600 items over the course of July and August. “New Peeps”, a group for those new to Port Hope, and “Unfinished business”, a stitchery group, are examples of the virtual outdoor programs available through the library that continue to provide ways to connect with our neighbors even during the pandemic.

Of course some former initiatives are still proving to be popular. “Throwback Thursday” posts highlights items from our local history database. The “caterpillar watch” provides a fascinating look at our ever evolving natural world, and “Where is Yannick”, the mysterious appearance of the Yannick Bisson cut-out in various places around town encourages us to get out and explore. For those who aren’t familiar with Yannick Bisson, he’s also known as William Murdoch of CBC’s series *Murdoch Mysteries*. And while in house crafts are not a thing at the moment, “Grab a craft” is! Each month a different free craft in a bag, ready to pick up and do at home. These are things we have done before but which are back by popular demand.

In an effort to connect with all age groups within the community partnerships with Early ON (preschool group) and Empire Crossing retirement community have been formed. This summer story hour took place in Memorial Park with 28 participants and 11 residents of Empire Crossing listened in on a presentation about the history of nursery rhymes. These were in person presentations made following all the appropriate Covid protocol.

Some new initiatives include the Book Walk, enlarged pages of a story book posted along a path in a public place so families can enjoy a story as they walk and play, and the Mini Art Gallery, somewhat like the mini libraries but for art work. And speaking of Mini libraries there are now three more located at the Town Park Recreation Centre, Big Wood Park and the Alex Carruthers Memorial Park in Garden Hill. These were installed with the assistance of the Rotary Club of Northumberland Sunrise. Coming soon to the Hub will be the Gadget Library, kitchen gadgets for loan, just like books!!

The efforts of our Friends of the Library group have been hampered by the constraints of Covid but they have been a tremendous help to the Library by providing “greeters” who help ensure that Covid protocols are in place. As well this past month they held a fundraiser highlighting two local gardens and providing some gardening tips to help participants prepare their gardens for winter. Their members also helped with our huge used book sale held up at the Hub. An event made more successful through their participation and the participation of the Bewdley Lions Club and their wonderful food truck.

And of course there is more but even this short list gives us an understanding of how busy and active a place the library is. On a more mundane level the Library Board and the CEO have been working on both a comprehensive IT plan and a more detailed financial plan. Both of which clearly demonstrate the need for increased sustained financial support if the Library is to maintain and improve the services it currently provides to the community. In August we ran a Community Survey the responses to which will help guide our service moving forward.

All in all, despite Covid, it has been a good and productive year at the library.