

Ontario Library Service Informal Library Chat Summary Notes

August 5, 2021

OLS Updates

- The 2020 **Ontario Public Library Statistics** are now available. On the [Ministry website](#), you will find a [Statistics](#) page with a series of Excel files organized by size of library and then by topic, e.g. library financials, activities, holdings, etc. On the Province's open data site (INSERT LINK), you will find [library statistics](#) in a CSV file, listed question by question across the entire Annual Survey of Public Libraries.
- The **Applications** for funding under the Public Library Operating Grant (PLOG), Pay Equity and First Nation Salary Supplement programs are now available. Every library CEO should have received an e-mail from Ministry staff, with the background information. The application is completed in [Transfer Payment Ontario](#) (TPON), and is due on Thursday, September 23, 2021.
- Registration for the one-day **Ontario Library Service Virtual Conference 2021** is now open through Learn HQ. Further information about this Conference, set for Tuesday, September 21, 2021, was also distributed to all Library CEOs via e-mail.
- An e-mail went to all Ontario Library CEOs regarding the **Connecting Public Libraries Initiative** (a previously announced \$4.85 M investment in broadband connectivity to improve access to reliable Internet in rural, remote and First Nation libraries). Individual messages went out to the 170 library locations regarding site assessments, with information due back on August 25, 2021.

COVID Snapshot of library services

Those in attendance were polled on a variety of current service levels for their libraries. See [COVID-19 Snapshot of Library Services](#) document for this week's results (as well as results from the past 5 chats).

Discussion topics

Use of volunteers in the library - The responses were mixed, with these chat responses being representative of the discussion:

- allowing 1 at a time in our Genealogy room
- allowing all volunteers back, go through the screening process same as staff.
- don't have volunteers - but we are allowing the Friends of the Library back into their "book nook" rooms, though only 2 at a time.
- won't be bringing volunteers until we find out what's happening after Step 3... mainly due to space needs as most of our volunteers work in the stacks (put books away, etc), and don't want to take space away from our patrons browsing our collections.
- have one volunteer back in one day a week, but works alone in the archive room
- Friends are assisting with our Weekly Outdoor Book Sales
- Have our garden volunteers (2). will look at bringing back more volunteers in September.

Question about screening – As clarification, the Ontario government's [Public Health Measures](#) state that "Workplaces must actively screen all workers before entering the work environment". A tool is provided if you wish to use it - [COVID-19 COVID 19 Screening Tool for Workplaces](#). The regulations do not state that you have to keep copies of the answers provided (paper or electronic), just that you must do the screening.

Vaccination status of staff members - In a few libraries, patrons have been asking about the vaccination status of staff. Those who responded to the question about “how to answer”, used phrases such as “this is private health information and is not to be shared”

Flags at Libraries - For those libraries with flags, it was noted that many were flying at half-mast in honour of missing children from Kamloops residential school. Most agreed that they are following the municipal council’s lead on changing the status of the flag.

Identification required for a library card

- Question about what ID is required – and why? Reasons given included:
 - o recovery of print materials (and mailing of invoices for late and/or missing items)
 - o checking residency related to a library service contract (e.g. both the Town and the Township want to know the percentage of their population that have a card)
- This discussion prompted further discussion about digital content and who can get a card and use it for digital content. One library noted that they have a good neighbour policy whereby if a person has a card at a neighbouring library, they can also get one at their library.
- Digital cards and digital resources were a topic of discussion on the “All Ontario Library CEO” listserv” with several related points raised during the chat:
 - o vendor contracts for electronic resources are paid based on number of residents in your community
 - o such barriers illustrate the need to advocate for an Ontario Digital Library – and not just a grant but a full service offering to cover province-wide e-resources (like the older Knowledge Ontario)

Renewal of Library Membership – The responses varied with a number renewing every year (mostly to maintain current contact information) and just as many renewing every two years. Some had in-person renewal, some by telephone or e-mail. As a clarification, the Ministry does not specify a renewal period – but in the Annual Survey asks for “A1.14-Number of active cardholders”, that is, the “number of library cardholders who have used their library card in the past two years”

Public Holidays

- The federal government has added a new statutory holiday under the Canada Labour code, for those working in federally regulated workplaces. Thursday, September 30, 2021 will be the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation. This date corresponds with Orange Shirt Day, started in 2013 to honour Indigenous children who had to attend residential schools.
- Public library staff work under the Ontario [Employment Standards Act](#) (ESA). The *ESA* specifies nine public holidays – New Year’s Day, Family Day, Good Friday, Victoria Day, Canada Day, Labour Day, Thanksgiving, Christmas and Boxing Day – in which an employee must be given a paid off or be paid statutory holiday pay. Other days (e.g. Easter Monday, Civic Holiday) may be added through a library’s HR policy or collective agreement but are not listed in *ESA*.
- The question was whether others were going to observe the new federal stat day by making it a stat day or whether they were planning special events on that day. *To allow for more time to consider, this topic will be carried over to the next informal chat.*

<p>The next Informal Library Chat is scheduled for Thursday, August 19, 2021, 10 am ET (9 am CT). Connection details will be provided via the “All Ontario CEO listserv”.</p>
