

NO: R144

COUNCIL DATE: July 8, 2019

REGULAR COUNCIL

TO: **Mayor & Council**

DATE: **July 4, 2019**

FROM: **Chief Librarian
Library Board Chair**

FILE: **7965-01**

SUBJECT: **Resolution on Increased Access to Digital Publications for Library Users**

RECOMMENDATION

The Surrey Public Library recommends that Council:

1. Receive this report for information;
2. Approve the resolution (attached as Appendix “1”) endorsing the campaign and calling on the Federal government to investigate and help develop a solution to the limited access and high costs of digital materials to public libraries; and
3. Authorize library staff to forward the resolution to local members of parliament.

INTENT

The purpose of this report is to provide information on a nation-wide campaign to improve digital material access for public libraries and to seek Council’s support for a solution by endorsing a draft resolution which would be forwarded to local members of parliament.

BACKGROUND

Surrey Public Library is participating in a nation-wide campaign to raise awareness of and build support for public libraries’ ability to access digital publications. The campaign is being coordinated by the Canadian Urban Libraries Council (“CULC”), of which Surrey Public Library is a member. CULC is national consortium that works to strengthen the capacity of Canada’s urban libraries. The campaign’s goal is for municipalities across Canada to introduce, pass, and forward resolutions to federal members of parliament in order to build support for action in the digital publication issue.

DISCUSSION

Surrey Public Library spends approximately \$2.5 million annually on library acquisitions. In 2019, \$500,000, or 19.6%, of the expenditure is allocated to digital materials, specifically eBooks and

eAudiobooks. As noted in Table 1, this proportion has almost doubled in the last 5 years as the use of digital material by our residents grows.

Table 1: Surrey Public Library Materials Expenditure 2014-2019

	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	(Budget) 2019
Physical Materials	\$ 1,770,000	\$ 1,870,000	\$ 1,935,000	\$ 2,010,000	\$ 1,975,000	\$ 2,050,000
Digital Materials	\$ 200,000	\$ 260,000	\$ 360,000	\$ 441,500	\$ 490,000	\$ 500,000
TOTAL	\$ 1,970,000	\$ 2,130,000	\$ 2,295,000	\$ 2,451,500	\$ 2,465,000	\$ 2,550,000
% Physical	89.8%	87.8%	84.3%	82.0%	80.1%	80.4%
% Digital	10.2%	12.2%	15.7%	18.0%	19.9%	19.6%

CULC member libraries spend approximately \$100 million annually on library acquisitions, yet they are challenged to obtain digital books from multinational publishers due to cost pressures and strict licensing limitations. For example, Canadian author Louise Penny’s book, *Kingdom of the Blind* is available to libraries for \$13 as a paperback, \$22 in hard cover, and \$60 in digital form. The \$60 allows the book to be checked out electronically 52 times a year or for 2 years, whichever happens first. The paper version would be expected to last 3-4 years and comes at a substantially reduced cost. The book is currently not available to Canadian libraries in any e-audio format.

These restrictions and costs impair public libraries’ ability to provide important services in Surrey. The Library plays a vital role in developing proficient readers and ensuring that children succeed in school. For many seniors, low income families, youth, and new Canadians, the Library offers essential tools for participation in civic life – from education to searching for jobs to consuming Canadian cultural materials. The Library’s digital literacy programs and services ensure that Surrey residents are able to participate in and contribute to the digital world. As demand for digital publications grows in Surrey, the Library must provide barrier-free access to these materials as part of its core service to the community.

CULC member libraries are seeking support from municipalities to ask the Federal government to develop a solution that increases access to digital publications and assists libraries in meeting the high costs for these materials across Canada. Libraries serve important demographic groups by providing access to materials that allow learning and civic participation. The Federal government has a key role to play in ensuring that all Canadians have equitable access to digital publications.

SUSTAINABILITY CONSIDERATIONS

Lending support to this initiative supports the objectives of the City’s Sustainability Charter 2.0. In particular, this initiative relates to the Sustainability Charter 2.0 themes of Inclusion, Economic Prosperity and Livelihoods, Education and Culture and Health and Wellness. Specifically, this initiative supports the following Desired Outcomes (“DO”):

- Diversity & Accessibility - DO2: Surrey is a caring and compassionate city that supports its residents of all backgrounds, demographics and life experiences;
- Learning - DO1: Surrey has a culture of learning, with a broad range of diverse learning opportunities available and accessible to meet the needs of all residents;

- Learning - DO3: Meaningful and accessible early childhood learning opportunities are in place for children and families; and
- Learning - DO4: Residents of all ages have strong reading, numeracy, and digital literacy skills and strong knowledge of their rights and responsibilities.

CONCLUSION

Digital materials are essential to serving Surrey's communities and providing equitable access to learning, information, and ideas. The current high costs and restrictive licensing models imposed by publishers affect Surrey Public Library's ability to provide a high level of core services to residents. By endorsing the draft resolution and its distribution to Surrey Federal Members of Parliament, Council will help to build leverage to develop solutions. Improving access to digital publications will support the Library's mission to connect people, spark curiosity and inspire learning, and further support the City's mission to serve its community and improve the quality of life of its residents.

Karen Reid Sidhu
Board Chair, Surrey Public Library

Surinder Bhogal
Chief Librarian

Appendix "I" – Resolution on Increased Access to Digital Publications for Library Users

Resolution on Increased Access to Digital Publications for Library Users

WHEREAS, the City of Surrey recognizes the important role that libraries play in our community. Libraries and the early literacy programs that they run are integral to developing proficient readers and ensuring that children succeed in school. More and more, digital literacy programs run by libraries also help ensure that citizens can contribute to our digital world. Additionally, vulnerable demographic groups, including seniors, low income families, youth, and new Canadians rely on access to libraries as an important tool for their participation in the community – from education to searching for jobs to consuming Canadian cultural materials, and

WHEREAS, libraries in our community recognize that our users increasingly seek to access digital publications offered by multinational publishers, and that access to those publications is too often curtailed by prohibitively high licensing fees or else entirely denied to Canadian libraries, and

WHEREAS, libraries must be in a position to offer digital publications to their users as part of their service offering to our community, particularly given the contemporary rapid pace of digitization of educational and cultural materials,

Now, there be it resolved that the City of Surrey does hereby:

- 1. Indicate its support for the Canadian Urban Libraries Council in its efforts to increase access to digital publications for library users in Surrey and across Canada;*
- 2. Call on the Federal government to investigate the barriers faced by libraries in acquiring digital publications and the problems that poses for vulnerable demographic groups in Canada; and*
- 3. Further ask the Federal government to develop a solution that increases access to digital publications across Canada and assists libraries in meeting the cost requirements to acquire digital publications.*