

## Public Library Services

Winnipeg has been served by some form of public library service since the early 1880s.<sup>1</sup> Today services are delivered by Winnipeg Public Library whose mission is “to enrich the lives of all Winnipeg citizens and their communities by providing high quality, responsive and innovative library services”.<sup>2</sup> Within the structure of the municipal government, WPL is referred as the Library Services Division of the Community Services Department.

Central to the work of WPL is the promotion of “21st century learning skills such as collaboration, communication, creativity, and critical thought”.<sup>3</sup> The City of Winnipeg’s library staff play the role of public educators who foster a lifelong love of learning and help create an informed public better equipped to engage with their government and fellow community members. In 2016, library staff hosted 4,266 programs which were attended by an all-time high of 106,221 people.<sup>4</sup> Library staff perform this work across 20 brick-and-mortar facilities and as part of an Outreach Services unit that delivers off-site services.<sup>5</sup>

Additional staff perform cataloguing and materials processing, while others make create and maintain the Library’s virtual presence (website, social media accounts, online resources guides, electronic collections, etc.) and service the system’s information technology.

## The Value of Public Library Service

In its discussion paper for the Manitoba Culture and Creative Industries Strategy the Government of Manitoba noted the added value that public library services deliver for the publishing, visual arts and music, archives, education and tourism sectors.<sup>6</sup> However, public libraries add value to initiatives of all kinds by providing the information needed to make informed decisions. They also act as catalysts that spark and guide community conversations about challenging topics.

The arguments for increasing investment in public library services are as numerous and diverse as the individuals and communities served — and go far beyond the cultural sector. Following are just some examples. Is a community committed to:

- supporting the literacy skills of children during their critical early years?
- acting as a useful partner in mental health and homelessness strategies?
- providing age-friendly options for life-long learning, leisure and socialization?
- ensuring that the information and technology needed to foster innovation are accessible to all who want to make their ideas a reality?
- creating the social space and learning opportunities needed to advance broad societal goals such as anti-racism, respect for LGBTQ2S communities and relationship-building with Indigenous peoples?

TABLE 1 Winnipeg Public Library activity – 2016

Library card holders	301,257
In-person visits	2,990,003
Items borrowed (including electronic)	5,121,266
Programs offered	4,266
Program attendance	106,221
Computer bookings	438,244
Questions answered	176,058

SOURCE: 2016 Winnipeg Public Library Annual Report

Libraries not only provide information to answer questions related to these topics (and more) — libraries themselves form a critical part of the answers. Put another way: the goal of public library services in Winnipeg, as elsewhere, can be distilled into one main objective: to help individuals and communities meet the goals they have set for themselves.

**The goal of public library services is to help individuals and communities meet the goals they have set for themselves.**

Studies in recent years have undertaken the challenge of quantifying the impact or contributions that public libraries make in the communities they serve. One Canadian example of such a study was the 2013 Martin Prosperity Institute's *So Much More: The Economic Impact of the Toronto Public Library on the City of Toronto* which concluded that for every \$1.00 of public investment the library system produced \$5.63 of economic impact.<sup>7</sup>

Another study commissioned by the Edmonton Public Library and released in 2016 found that that system generates “\$3.11 in economic value for each dollar invested in the library’s operations.”<sup>8</sup> While the methodology of these studies differed they both considered the value generated by the libraries’ collections, reference/research services, programming, facilities/meeting spaces and contributions to gross domestic product through their staff complements.

### Current Investment Priorities — Capital Projects

The 2017 Capital budget contains funding for refurbishment or replacement of St. John’s, Cornish and Transcona Libraries.<sup>9</sup> The budget projects funding in future years for St. James-Assiniboia, West Kildonan and Westwood libraries,

in addition to new facilities in the southwest and southeast areas of the city. (New construction or refurbishment of St. Vital, Windsor Park and St. John’s Libraries is currently underway.) The City of Winnipeg should be applauded for these commitments and proposals. Attractive and well-equipped facilities are key to helping public library services support community priorities for years to come.<sup>10</sup>

### Winnipeg Public Library Staffing Levels

While the City of Winnipeg has proposed an ambitious plan of facility renewal for its Library Services Division the same cannot be said with respect to its support for staffing levels.

In 2012 the City of Winnipeg operating budget for 2012 noted that the Library’s staff complement had decreased 12.8% since 2006.<sup>11</sup> The 2012 operating budget funded 283 full time equivalents (FTEs)<sup>12</sup> and in 2017 it funded 285.<sup>13</sup> There has been no attempt made to invest in staffing since the cuts of the late 2000s.

**The library’s staff complement has decreased 12.8% since 2006.**

### Some Comparisons

By comparison, the City of Edmonton’s 2017 operating budget allocated funding for 517.4 FTEs<sup>14</sup> and, according to its 2017 preliminary operating budget Hamilton budgeted for 305.02 FTEs.<sup>15</sup> Halifax Public Libraries recently reported a staff of 333.56 FTEs to serve a population approximately 300,000 less than Winnipeg’s.<sup>16</sup>

New or refurbished library facilities are popular and well-used by the public. It is important that these facilities are staffed at levels that can help meet the programming, research and outreach needs of the communities they serve. The coming wave of new facilities should be complemented by an increase in staffing levels.

## Recommendation

We recommend that the City of Winnipeg reinvest in its Library Services Division staff complement to return it to its 2006 level, which was approximately 325 FTEs. This would require an increase of 40 FTEs above the 2017 operating budget allocation of 285; at an average annual salary of approximately \$60, 221 (based on the 2017 operating budget).

### *New Expenditure:*

- Increase in funding for staff: \$2.4M

We also recommend that any additional funding for staff include what is required to ensure that all Winnipeg Public Library branches employ at least one credentialed librarian. Cross-referencing the City's 2016 Compensation Disclosure report with the Library's locations listings reveals that three library branches do not have a credentialed librarian on staff.<sup>17,18</sup>

With its plans for facility renewal and refurbishment, including a soon-to-be-open makerspace at the Millennium Library, Winnipeg Public Library is in a position to make a positive social and economic impact for years to come. Achieving that impact, however, requires an investment in staff that is currently not in place. The City of Winnipeg would do well to reverse this particular trend.

### **Total New Expenditure: \$2.4M**

Submitted by: Manitoba Library Association,  
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The MLA “provides leadership in the promotion, development and support of library and information services in Manitoba for the benefit of MLA members, the library and information community and the citizens of Manitoba.”

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  - <sup>2</sup> Winnipeg Public Library (2016). Mission Statement and Strategic Plan. Retrieved February 12, 2018, from <http://wpl.winnipeg.ca/library/ourlibrary/missionstratplan.asp>
  - <sup>3</sup> Manitoba Library Association, p. 1–2 (2017). RE: Imagine. Creative Manitoba! Submission [Letter written June 30, 2017 to Honourable Rochelle Squires, Minister of Sport, Culture and Heritage]. (n.d.). Retrieved February 11, 2018, from <http://mla.mb.ca/sites/default/files/Imagine%20Creative%20Manitoba%20Submission%20MLA%20June%2030%202017.pdf>
  - <sup>4</sup> Winnipeg Public Library. (2016). 2016 Annual Report. (Rep.). Retrieved February 11, 2018, from <http://wpl.winnipeg.ca/library/pdfs/annualreports/annualreport2016.pdf>
  - <sup>5</sup> Winnipeg Public Library, (2017, October 6). Locations & Hours. Retrieved February 12, 2018, from <http://wpl.winnipeg.ca/library/branchpages/branch.aspx>
  - <sup>6</sup> Government of Manitoba. (n.d.) p. 70–71. *Imagine Creative Manitoba! 2017 Discussion Paper* (Rep.). Retrieved February 11, 2018, from [http://www.gov.mb.ca/asset\\_library/en/imaginecreative/discussion-paper.pdf](http://www.gov.mb.ca/asset_library/en/imaginecreative/discussion-paper.pdf)
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  - <sup>8</sup> Nordicity. (2016, March), p.3. *The Economic and Socio-cultural Impact of Edmonton Public Library* (Rep.). Retrieved February 11, 2018, from The City of Edmonton Library Board website: <https://www.epl.ca/wp-content/uploads/sites/18/2015/08/EPL-Impact-Report-Final-Report.pdf>
  - <sup>9</sup> City of Winnipeg. (2017), p. 1–11. *2017 ADOPTED BUDGET Operating and Capital Volume 2 Adopted by Council – December 13, 2016*. Retrieved February 11, 2018, from [http://www.winnipeg.ca/finance/files/2017AdoptedBudgetOperatingAndCapital\\_Volume2.pdf](http://www.winnipeg.ca/finance/files/2017AdoptedBudgetOperatingAndCapital_Volume2.pdf)
  - <sup>10</sup> Winnipeg Public Library. (2018, February 2). Library Renovation & Renewal Projects. Retrieved February 11, 2018, from <http://wpl.winnipeg.ca/library/whats happening/renorenewal/sectionmap.asp>

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