

The Library as Place: Tales from the Community Learning Commons



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- Building the Community Learning Commons is both a direction and 'people theme' for supporting a great tradition and moving it forward in one of the most dynamic technological ages since the dawn of learning;
- We define the Community Learning Commons as the place where knowledge exchange occurs regardless of cultural, socio-economic or other circumstances;



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- We believe that public libraries are unique in providing ongoing learning and education opportunities that are dynamic, foster diversity, innovation and creativity in the Community Learning Commons .
- In the knowledge economy, the relationships to learning, innovation, libraries and community prosperity are complicated and inter-connected! These are not always well valued nor understood.

A 2003 multi-country study from the European Commission found that if the national average educational attainment level is increased by a single year, aggregate productivity increases by 6.2% on impact, and by a further 3.1% in the long run.

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- The now is overwhelmed by economic pressures, unemployment, failing businesses and a quest for the next big thing;
- The library is:
 - the gateway to ideas and information;
 - a focal point for creators and learners;
 - sustenance for talent and knowledge;
 - a source of inspiration through freely available information;

Prosperity hangs on our innovative/creative capacity.

The ideas that will move us forward come from freely associating information, sharing knowledge and being creative!

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- **Anxious politicians may rue the Library as not essential - beyond water, roads and air few things are essential – but being essential never determined excellence or success;**
- **Talent can come from anywhere – as demonstrated by American Idol and the election of the first black President of the United States – Equitable access to learning and opportunity mines creative capacity!**

The community learning commons is a vital underpinning of Ontario's knowledge economy and it thrives in its Public Libraries!

In the past year 85% of households made use of RHPL and The majority of households have more than one user! Significantly greater than the rest of Ontario.

Market Probe Nov 2011

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- It is a myth that only the socially underprivileged participate in libraries.
- 3,500 people visit our library daily. Most are between 15 and 30 years of age and reflect the diversity of the community.
- Many are career building- students, or operating home based businesses and using the library's information resources, computers and facilities to support their learning, research or training.
- The majority of workers do not attend conferences or workshops and many businesses do not have the resources to train staff. Their staff use the library for ongoing training or borrow our manuals to support hobbies or home based businesses.

Compared to the rest of Ontario Richmond Hill respondents more strongly endorsed the library as 'a place' or 'best place ' for:

- study,
- affordable information
- lifelong learning for all ages
- services to new Canadians
- Training in basic computer/Internet skills
- Social networking

Market Probe Nov 2011

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- The Library is home to the popular, the uncommon, the unusual the specialized and the rare.
- It supports information and learning in a way no other institution can. It is not constrained by curricula, nor restricted by learning jurisdictions;
- Learning is complicated -not served from a single institution or area but rather through many diverse sources as this clip from Technology, Entertainment and Design (TED Talks) Director, Sir Ken Robinson endorses.

When we speak of the Arab Spring we speak of a world in transition and the importance of access to information in fueling the confidence and understanding to move forward.

The issue is how well equipped would our knowledge based society be without libraries?

[Ken Robinson Movie 2012-01-18.wmv](#)

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- *Fostering creativity is as important as fostering literacy!*
- Human progress depends on creativity defined as the ability to transcend traditional ideas and create meaningful new ideas and interpretations.
- Diversity is critical to innovation and creativity— we aren't just speaking of a plethora of different cultures nor of the variety of media deployed to access, present, store or display information nor of different learning styles or information needs but rather *we are speaking of all of them.*

The public library is one of the few places in the community learning commons that allows that free association of information, experience and knowledge; *and provides the resources to support them.*



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- Our users value library service and use it every day in very diverse ways.
- The most connected generation is turning up in droves. With the Internet we predicted the demise of the public library. We even pondered that it would only be virtual – there would be no need for physical space. Those who did could not be further wrong.
- In fact the demand for library space is increasing as the community seeks places to meet, engage, study and find information from trusted sources;

Within the last year 7 in 10 Richmond Hill adults visited RHPL in person. 75% have library cards- higher than the rest of Ontario!

Market Probe Nov 2011

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- Three services distinguished our Community Learning Commons over the past 3 years:
 - Annual Community Information Fairs
 - Extended Study Hall Program
 - Newcomer Services

Technology Fair 2011
Richmond Hill Central Library

Would you like to get on Facebook?
Finding your BlackBerry difficult to navigate?
What kind of personal computer should I buy?
How do you create your own Web site?
Want to learn more about eReaders & eBooks?
What is Web 2.0, Twitter, or Skype?

If any of these questions intrigue you then join us!

See...demonstrations of the latest information technology by knowledgeable vendors & exhibitors

Learn...from a group of tech-savvy student volunteers and our array of computer workshops

Discover...the latest technology in personal computing and communications devices

Stroll the 3rd floor to meet vendors and browse their products, attend a workshop on the 2nd floor, drop into our Technology Help Desk Pit in Room B or visit the Computer Doctor in Room C to help diagnose or navigate your computer.

— A detailed program schedule will be available on our Web site and at the Fair —

Richmond Hill Central Library
Wednesday, September 7, 2011
2 to 7 p.m.

All Are Welcome - Registration not necessary. It's a Fair!

RICHMOND HILL PUBLIC LIBRARY

www.rhpl.richmondhill.on.ca

LSP

Connect with us at the 3rd Annual LSP Day Event at the Richmond Hill Central Library

Over 3,000 people and their families have participated in our program to date. On Friday October 21st we offer you a unique opportunity to meet service providers who can help you in all the areas you have told us you are interested in. From 1:30pm to 5:30pm we have assembled sessions and displays from 27 vendors and service agencies bring your neighbours, family and friends.

Information Tables:

- Be Connected—LSP Information Display 1:30-4:30pm
- Human Library—Borrow a Human Book to have a conversation* 1:30-4:30pm
- Pumpkins to Jack-O'-Lanterns to... —Storytime for Kids (3-6yr old)* 2:00-3:30pm

Workshop Sessions:

- Explore Your Library—Library Tour* 2:30-4:30pm
- Taste of Richmond Hill—Light Refreshment from various cultures 1:30pm
- Your Voice Heard—Newcomer Needs Survey 1:30-4pm
- Lucky Draw—Fill out the survey and win exciting prizes 2pm-6pm

Prizes include coupons to Ontario Science Centre, free admission to Royal Ontario Museum & Art Gallery of Ontario and more.

*Pre-registration required. Please register at the Pull Service

Financed by Citizenship & Immigration Canada (CIC) and partnering with Canada Community Services of The Region (CCSR). LSP program provides newcomers with information on basic language training, settlement employment, health and education, health care and housing, transportation and other essential information and services for their new community. For more information, visit the Website: www.rhpl.on.ca, the LSP poster at Richmond Hill Central Library, a 24-hour contact centre, 416-709-0100, or to your nearest LSP office. For opening hours offered by LSP, please check LSP poster at www.rhpl.on.ca

CONNECTIONS
Come and Meet Your Community Service Providers

Canada Citizenship and Immigration Canada
Citoyenneté et Immigration Canada

***Extended Study Hall Hours**
November 28 to December 11 2011

EARLY CLOSURE DUE TO BUILDING CONSTRUCTION ISSUES

Available to Richmond Hill residents attending College and University! Bring your student ID. You could be asked to present it to Security in order to remain in the library after hours.

Monday—Thursday
Close @ 11:00 pm

Saturday
Close @ 9:00 pm

Sunday
Close @ 9:00 pm

Friday no extended hours
Close @ 6:00 pm

CENTRAL LIBRARY
Richmond Hill Public Library

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Major Characteristics of RHPL Information Fairs:

- Social Space
- Interactive and collaborative
- Free information/service exchange
- Connect service providers to library users and resources in a trusted environment
- Leverage innovation and creativity

- Information Fairs
relied on RHPL's
unique assets:
- Daily traffic of 3,500
– 4,500 users
 - Existing Facilities
 - Subject expertise
 - Hard copy and
electronic
collections
 - ***Trusted
environment***

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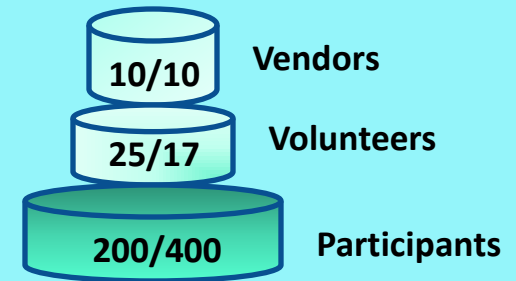
- *The Information Fairs transformed the Library's 3rd and 2nd floors into show space for vendors, volunteer experts and Heath Practitioners - placing them in the heart of our library – using 25% of the 3rd floor to concentrate these displays in full view of all users!*



- The 2nd Floor meeting rooms hosted workshops and demonstrations ;
- Space is integral to social learning, interactivity, visibility and presence and a fair like atmosphere!

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- Launched September 29, 2010 with the theme *Technology is For Everyone* the first Technology Fair introduced local volunteer experts, service providers trainers and technology vendors and included residents with disabilities. It was our first integrated community learning experiment.
- The second one was held on Sept 7 2011 with even greater results.

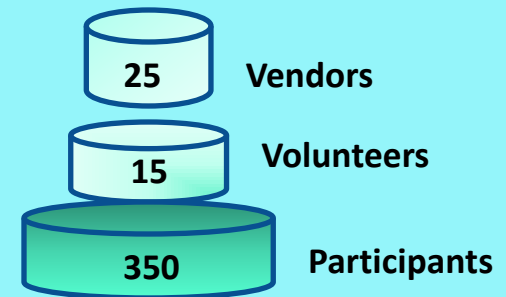


Technology Fairs 2010/2011



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- The Health Information Fair, with the theme *Mind Body and Soul* was our next effort to engage our community on a topic of keen interest to residents of all ages.
- It showcased community and library health and wellness resources providing demonstrations and information from health experts, vendors, and practitioners .



Health Fair 2011



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Newcomer Services - Library Settlement Program (LSP)

- In partnership with 3 libraries in York Region Markham, Vaughan and Richmond Hill since 2009 – being phased out by March 2011
- 3,225 new clients (RHPL) discovered their library and community;
- Made RHPL's existing programs more inclusive increasing participation - over 1100 newcomers attended group sessions and workshops;
- Raised the Library's profile -other community partners discovered its resources to support their work.
- Introduced Human Books as part of the LSP Day experience in 2010;

- Using the Information Fair Model, LSP Day October 2011 introduced over 350 newcomers to 25 community service providers .



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- Since 2009 RHPL's Extended Study Hall program provided 2-4 additional hours of opening over 153 days . 10,000 people participated based on counts taken after the Library closed. It includes only those who remained for the program.
- Designed to facilitate college, and university students a surprising number of other professionals preparing for exams, or researching dissertations turned up.

Counts collected 30 Minutes After Closing				
Dates	Days	People	Institutions	
			Canadian	Foreign
April 14 - June 7 2009	51	2567	51	9
Nov 28 - Dec 12 2009	21	1566	44	5
Mar 31 - April 29 2010	24	2149	51	11
Nov 30 - Dec 11 2010	19	1587	57	5
Mar 28 - April 28 2011	26	1794	82	5
Nov 28 - Dec 11 2011	12	980	87	2
	Total	153	10643	62 *

* Average Institutions per day

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- Our experiment demonstrated that RHPL is in a unique position to expand its information resources with timely and relevant community expertise and foster the interactivity and diversity necessary for creativity, innovation and entrepreneurship.
- If we diminish the public library's capacity to provide the combination of resources for ongoing learning we will diminish the community's ability to thrive in the knowledge economy and support creative and innovative endeavour as an ongoing community aspiration.

At 2 pm on January 22nd 2011, and 3 pm on January 18, 2012 400 people were gathered around books, laptops, PDAs, mobile phones, or connected wirelessly to the Library's OPAC or electronic resources on the 3rd floor at RHPL affirming that while virtual and physical spaces have in fact blended ***people need diversity to learn and create!***