

**Date:** June 17, 2020  
**To:** Library Staff & Board Members, Hamilton Emergency Operations Centre (EOC)  
**From:** Paul Takala, CEO/Chief Librarian  
**Subject:** Report on HPL's Response to COVID-19 to Date

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**Note on June 2020 updates to this report:** Updates in this June update from the May and April reports appear in **blue coloured text**. Some other edits have been made to the April report to remove outdated information and update text.

### **HPL EMERGENCY RESPONSE TEAM**

HPL has a comprehensive **Pandemic Plan**<sup>1</sup>. The Plan has two (2) parts: A *System Pandemic Plan* and detailed *Departmental Plan*. When it appeared that COVID-19 had the potential of reaching a global pandemic, the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) reviewed and updated the plan. We also reached out to Public Health to offer our support for any public education efforts and have since offered volunteers to support the City of Hamilton's Emergency Operations Centre (EOC). HPL's Plan called for activating an **Emergency Response (ER) Team** during a pandemic.

### **PRIORITIES DURING THE PANDEMIC**

During the Pandemic, HPL's efforts are shaped around the following three (3) areas of activity, listed here in order of priority. This report outlines activities around the first two (2). The accompanying report on **Working Assumptions and Reopening Plans** addresses the third priority.

1. Managing the Emergency Response – Immediate Issues
2. Online Service Enhancements during Closure Period
3. Preparing for Re-opening and Long-Term Challenges

### **SUMMARY OF CURRENT ACTIVITIES**

#### **DIRECTLY PROVIDING HPL STAFF TO ASSIST WITH CITY EOC**

HPL's highest priority during the emergency is supporting the City's and Public Health's response, assisting with relief efforts and preparing to assist with the recovery. To this end, we are maintaining a list of staff that have offered to do tasks for the Emergency Operations Centre (EOC). A list of staff able to assist and respond has been developed and continues to grow. Staff currently assigned to EOC tasks include:

- One HPL driver is completing deliveries for Public Health
- One HPL driver is completing deliveries for Paramedics Services
- Two HPL Courier vans and drivers are supporting deliveries and pick-ups for the EOC.
- Nine staff have been assigned to work with the Horticulture department.
- A second team of nine staff have been assigned to Public Health to assist with the call center.

#### **PHYSICAL REOPENING PREPARATIONS**

- **TAKEOUT TASKFORCE**

A cross-organizational team of 10 staff developed recommendations for offering take-out service to library members. The plan examined all aspects of being able to initiate this service from health and safety concerns for staff and library members, communications, technology enhancements, needed in-branch preparatory work, the City area staff allocations and schedules. To start takeout service will be offered from 11:00am-7pm Tuesday to Thursday, with 11am-5pm service being

offered on Fridays and Saturdays. In phase 1, Terryberry, Central, Dundas and Red Hill will be first to offer this service. We will rollout to all other branches in phases. We are hoping to do this over several weeks but we need to ensure we have all our safety measures in place first.

- **FACILITIES PREPARATIONS**

Eased public health and safety restrictions have allowed cleaning and custodial staff to return to our branches and undertake cleaning and maintenance activities in preparation of our phased re-opening. Heating, Ventilation, and Air Conditioning (HVAC) assessments are currently in progress which will allow us to order and install new higher-grade air filters where needed and where possible. Enhanced cleaning procedures are being developed based on City-approved recommendations and will be in place for the Takeout phase.

- **TECHNOLOGY PREPARATIONS**

Changes to the Integrated Library System has been reviewed and is currently being implemented to accommodate a new delivery model. The website has been modified in preparation for the launch with a Takeout page that has instructions and access to a booking calendar. The team reviewed and implemented a solution for online takeout booking using library card and PIN.

- **MARKETING AND COMMUNICATION**

Created a launch plan for Take-Out services that includes internal communications, media relations, government relations, marketing and advertising, social media, customer communications and updates. In addition the design and print of the in-branch and exterior graphics and signage is underway.

## **COOLING CENTRES**

In response to the two recent Heat Emergencies the library opened 3-4 branches as cooling and hydration centres in collaboration with the City. Media relations, social media outreach and partner outreach were done to communicate the centres. The May opening was covered by CBC Hamilton, CHCH and The Spectator. These were also covered in the Mayor's media briefings.

## **REMOTELY SUPPORTING INDIVIDUALS**

The implementation of new call support system Freshdesk (FD) has been launched. We have set-up the main contact forms email and forwarding the main library phone number (905-546-3200) to FD. We also rolled out chat, a new feature to our public communication system. We have extended the support hours to:

- Monday – Friday: 8:00am - 10:00pm
- Saturday: 8:00am - 5:00pm
- Sunday: 1:00pm - 5:00pm.

Extensive training of a wide range of staff has been completed and is ongoing. While this system will be essential while our branches are closed, we plan to continue to offer this enhanced service after we are able to reopen. On May 19 we will begin to promote this service to ensure there is awareness that the service is available. We have been reaching to key partners to see how we can support community members needing assistance. For example, we are currently exploring with the City Economic Development Department to see how we can train a team of information staff to support small businesses looking for information about current programs available to them.

The system's Knowledgebase is being populated with standard responses and building content that would be available for staff use and some will be available online to customers such as hours of operation etc.

### **CALLING SENIORS OVER 75**

Staff are calling customers 75+ to check-in and see how they are and if they need any assistance. They are also asked if they want a weekly check-in call, response have been overwhelmingly positive. As of May 14, over 4900 calls have been placed. The Spectator published a recent article that highlighted our seniors programming and friendly calling and interviewed HPL senior customers who received the services.

### **3D PRINTING OF PPE PARTS**

To support access to personal protective equipment (PPE) our staff are using HPL 3D printers to print parts needed for masks. We have partnered with the City of Hamilton, Innovation Factory, Hamilton Wentworth District School Board, Hamilton Wentworth Catholic District School Board and shop3D.ca to source and print the PPE. We have moved all HPL 3D printers to Central to support this work. We have also shared other equipment that might be helpful and are willing to lend during the emergency, if this is helpful. There are currently 30, 3D printers running 24/7 at Central Library. 7 from HPL, one from the City's Planning Department and 22 on loan from the Hamilton Wentworth District School Board.

- The finished face shields are distributed by the City's EOC to local health organizations, including six nations, that most need PPE. We've printed and delivered 117 (Apr 14, 2020) of the original design, 318 3D Printing Canada masks, 227 Shop 3D masks (+100 from their package), and 358 surgical mask ear savers. We aimed to print 100 PPE masks per week.
- An additional 750 masks shields were printed. 450 were delivered to COH EOC and HPL staff and the remaining 300 are being assembled. 1300 surgical mask strap ear savers are complete. There have been some challenges in acquiring plastic shields which has caused some delays.

### **COMMUNITY INFORMATION & SERVICES**

HPL maintains the [Red Book Hamilton](#) database of community information. Our staff are creating custom searches that lead directly to topical information for those in the community needing assistance. The information is updated dynamically, and staff are reaching out to community agencies to ensure we are providing up-to-date information. For example, see the list of agencies providing [Mental Health Hotlines](#). We can create custom lists for agencies or government services looking for specialized information to help their clients.

### **HPL WEBSITE & EXPANDING DIGITAL COLLECTIONS ACCESS**

We created a [COVID-19](#) page with links to Public Health and other credible information that could be helpful. We have made several changes to our website to highlight access to free digital resources for anyone who lives, works or goes to school in Hamilton. Increased visibility and promotion of online card registration including a streamlined form for teachers to help students access library resources online. Increased focus on/promotion of digital resources and increasing access to digital resources by purchasing more titles and increasing limits. One place to search displayed on home page reducing number of clicks. Coordinating promotion for CELA customers who are without materials. Other changes include:

- **Home Access** - Improved access: move from in-branch databases to unlimited online databases ([Ancestry.com](#), [IELTS](#), [Open Library](#), [Kanopy Movies and Documentaries](#))
- Promotion of partner-run online programs that benefit customers while at home (for example, HPO online concerts, YWCA in-home/online workouts, Hamilton Arts Council Concerts)
- **More to Borrow:** A much-anticipated reciprocal online borrowing program was launched between HPL, Mississauga Library and Burlington Public Library. Initial feedback from residents in all cities has been very positive.
- **Ease of Access and Navigation:** HPL Home Page was optimized to make it easier for customers to navigate to virtual and live streamed events, book appointments, interact with HPL staff online by

submitting requests or through live chats. The events page was also redesigned to focus search to the virtual programs with embedded recording of the events and to showcase partner virtual events.

### **SUPPORTING LEARNING FROM HOME**

Several library eResource vendors are offering free access to new databases while schools and library branches remain closed. This will be helpful to parents and students while they continue their studies from home. We currently offer **remote technical support** to customers. As learning from home is going to be increasingly relied upon, we want students and their families to know they can get remote help from HPL staff.

- [Online Things to Do at Home](#) links to some of our most useful and popular online resources.
- A special page of [Resources for Learning](#) was also created.
- For learners of all ages, a rich collection of [Do-it-Yourself Resources](#)
- A new [simple online library card application](#) has been created for students

### **SUPPORTING OUR STAFF AND OTHER LIBRARIES**

Prior to the emergency, we shared HPL's [Pandemic Plan](#) with other libraries trying to prepare for COVID-19. To ensure our staff can easily access information, we have created a [Staff Site](#) (available to everyone). With many of our staff working from home, completing online training and maintaining a weekly learning log, we created a list of [Professional Development Resources](#). Our staff are embracing this and we have other Library systems using our curated list of training as a basis for their own training. Digital Technology and Learning & Development Staff have rapidly deployed online learning and are supporting staff using MS Teams.

- Over 15 specialized staff online training sessions have taken place, ranging from specialized training with smaller groups to live training events for the entire organization, DT provided Microsoft Teams training to over 500 people. An average of 40 staff attended each of our live Q&A events, with over 100 staff for each session during our first week of training.
- In May HPL has participated in a Canadian Urban Library Council (CULC) Think Tank that has released reports to assist libraries with plans for reopening. HPL Staff contributed to the Governance, Information Services and Programming documents.
- OneNote online training has taken place in May and June. After developing and collating the training material the DT team mirrored the training approach provided earlier for Microsoft Teams. The team hosted 3 sessions ranging from specialized training with smaller groups to live training Q&A events. The events were attended by over 254 staff. An average of 85 staff attended each of the live events.
- Staff Updates were moved to Microsoft teams allowing for an easy to update centralized location for staff to get latest news from HPL, Hamilton community, Helpful Tips and other relevant staff news.
- We are working with Six Nations Public Library staff to prepare the Library for opening by providing weekly cataloguing support.

### **VIRTUAL BRANCH PROGRAMS AND LIVESTREAMING**

Public programming is being provided through Microsoft Teams. Staff have been trained to provide programming from their homes with minimal technical support required. Staff can set up meetings and invite external presenters (for discussions like book clubs) or create public live events where customers can join without an invitation. For special events throughout the year, livestreaming will provide a live event feed on hpl.ca. After events are finished, event listings will be updated with the recorded video so that customers can quickly view events directly in Communico event listings for our new "Virtual Branch". This will also create an archive of past events which will be easy to access through hpl.ca.

- **Supporting Local Artists** - HPL has partnered with the Hamilton Arts Council and AGH to create online learning performance opportunities for local performers. These online events will pay local artists \$250 per performance to bring some needed live music and entertainment to our community.

We will promote these virtual events to our customers. [HPL is also sponsoring artist performances during Hamilton Art's Week and Cobalt Connects events.](#)

- **Which Book Next** - The Library has introduced a new online service called Which Book Next. This is an email-based Reader Advisory (R.A.) service run by the AskHPL team. Sample feedback received from customers: "Wow, thank you so much for the speedy reply! I am very excited about your new service! I just put 3 of them on hold. You totally nailed the suggestions based on the summaries of these books. Thank you! I will use this service again, I love it!"
- **Writer in Residence** – HPL, McMaster University and McMaster Library welcomed Janet Rodgers as our new Writer in Residence and we've moved the program online. [Janet's "At Home" podcast received 50 entries which will be released in June.](#) Janet is available for Hamilton writing and aspiring writers digitally via [enqlwir@mcmaster.ca](mailto:enqlwir@mcmaster.ca).
- **Code Club** – We have launched a 10-week Code Club Online program for children between 8 – 12 in different creative exercises sessions to learn and develop coding skills.
- **Google (GISC) Project** – In total 52 learners in the program have completed their courses in different levels. We promoted a workshop about virtual interviews and workshops to the learners.
- **Digital Literacy Programs** – this month saw an increase of online HPL digital literacy programs with the launch of events such as Grow with Google, 3D print TinkerCad, Create a Website and others.

### **BOOK DISTRIBUTION**

[The library completed a second distribution of book sale titles to 10 food banks across the city to share with customers with their food hampers.](#)

### **STAFF SCHEDULING SOFTWARE PROJECT**

Significant progress has been achieved toward HPL's Synerion implementation in the past couple months. We created a new model for shift naming and design in Synerion. Next steps focus on the finalization of our current configuration environment, followed by its transfer into our live production environment, preceding expansion from DT into other branches and departments.

### **ADDITIONAL COMMUNITY SUPPORT ACTIVITIES**

After addressing HPL and COH needs, during the Public Health emergency, we are engaging with community agencies for staff to support the community response where appropriate. While working from home, staff are accountable for their time to their manager. Any participation from staff supporting community partners during work time is pre-authorized by the ER Team and the individual's Manager or Director. Any activities that staff engage are reviewed by the Library's Health and Safety Coordinator. Ensuring staff stay safe and do not participate in activities that could spread the virus is of critical concern. Here are some of the activities staff are currently supporting:

- Dundas Community Services - friendly calling to isolated people in the Dundas Community:
- Kids Help Phone – staffing phones to answer calls from concerned children
- Hamilton CareMongering - grocery drop off to people in need
- Scrub Caps for Ont. Frontline Workers - sewing of scrub caps and headbands
- Canadian Blood Service – Donations of Blood, Plasma and Platelets
- Stinson Neighbourhood Association and St. Clair Community Church - preparing Care packages for Frontline workers (approx. 30)
- New Vision Church (Rest and Hygiene Centre) - assisting at rest and hygiene centre

### **OTHER IDEAS WE HAVE SUGGESTED TO THE CITY'S EOC**

We connected with other Canadian Library systems to see how they are assisting their City's and community response to the pandemic. We do not want to duplicate efforts, rather we want to complement

and strengthen existing supports and programs. Some ideas that we think are worth exploring with the City and community partners.

- Having Library Information Staff work as contact tracers for Public Health.
- Assisting with food distribution to vulnerable individuals using Library facilities.
- Working with vulnerable clients in City locations (shelter, community housing) to provide Wi-Fi hotspots for families living there.
- Deposit Libraries: Putting together packages including books, movies, etc., for local organizations serving the community, such as shelters for women, men, teens, newcomers, and group homes.
- Working with LHIN (Local Health Integrated Network in Ontario) on a platform for them to deliver the programs they were scheduled to deliver in person at our Library: "Powerful Tools for Caregivers" and "Understanding Blood Pressure".
- Creating a COVID-19 Response Community Archive with the City of Hamilton Museums.

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<sup>i</sup> The **Pandemic Plan** is posted on this page: <https://www.hpl.ca/articles/key-reports>