



Hamilton Public Library's first Junior
Librarian-in-Residence, [Ainara Alleyne](#).

Annual Report 2021

WE'RE
OPEN

Young fans of HPL's Grab and Go, a loot bag of library items.

We're Open

Two simple, four-letter words that meant a lot, to a lot of people — especially in 2021.

- 'Open' means more than hours at a branch.
- We're open to serve. With open minds and open hearts.
- We're open to meeting the needs of the masses and marginalized.



Paul Takala, Chief Librarian and CEO



Nick van Velzen, Board Chair

Across the country when many libraries were forced to close, HPL remained open. We did more than unlock the doors to our 23 branches and Bookmobile.

We innovated.

We added services such as lamination for vaccine passports. Staff offered to help book vaccine appointments and set up vaccine clinics in branches. We invited ambassadors to disseminate accurate information and clarify the process. And when more than 70 HPL Staff were seconded to work in Public Health Services clinics, our branches remained open.

HPL helped close the digital divide offering iPads and free tech courses to increase skills and employment opportunities.

But when browsing wasn't possible, due to provincial restrictions, we introduced Grab n' Go bags. Staff stuffed these literary loot bags with a selection of materials, based on Member preferences and readied them for easy in and out pickup. Same with Print on the Go. Members uploaded their documents and Staff printed them in time for pickup.

We opened minds to Hamilton's past and present by launching an Augmented Reality (AR) site called *Experience Commons*. It allows people to see long-lost

landmarks, envision current spaces in a new way and create sound solutions toward a better future. We also introduced two innovators in 2021: HPL's first Researcher-in-Residence, Kaitlin Wynia Balik and our first Junior Librarian-in-Residence, Ainara Alleyne.

In 2021, we opened doors to more parts of the city. Members could borrow passes for free entry to the Art Gallery of Hamilton, Ontario Parks, Grand River Conservation Authority sites and Hamilton Conservation Authority.

We opened our 23rd branch on Parkdale and Melvin avenues and moved to a newly built branch in Greenville.

We opened our doors when it was cold, giving people a place to stay warm and when it was too hot, they came in to cool off.

By deciding to permanently eliminate fines in April and clear overdue accounts for good, many doors opened again for Hamilton residents.

Challenges are often opportunities waiting to be discovered. Certainly 2021 presented myriad obstacles. But through perseverance and creative thinking, new ideas thrived at HPL.

- Paul & Nick

We're Opening Minds With Digital Literacy And Technology

Access to the internet has become increasingly necessary over the past two decades. At HPL, wireless technology (Wi-Fi) used to connect computers, tablets, smartphones and other devices to the internet is a daily mainstay for many. In 2021, Members tapped into HPL's expanded Wi-Fi network a whopping **850,000 hours**. That's 850,000 hours of reaching out to faraway friends and family, applying for jobs, booking vaccine appointments, filing important government documents, researching community resources and other vital to-do activities.

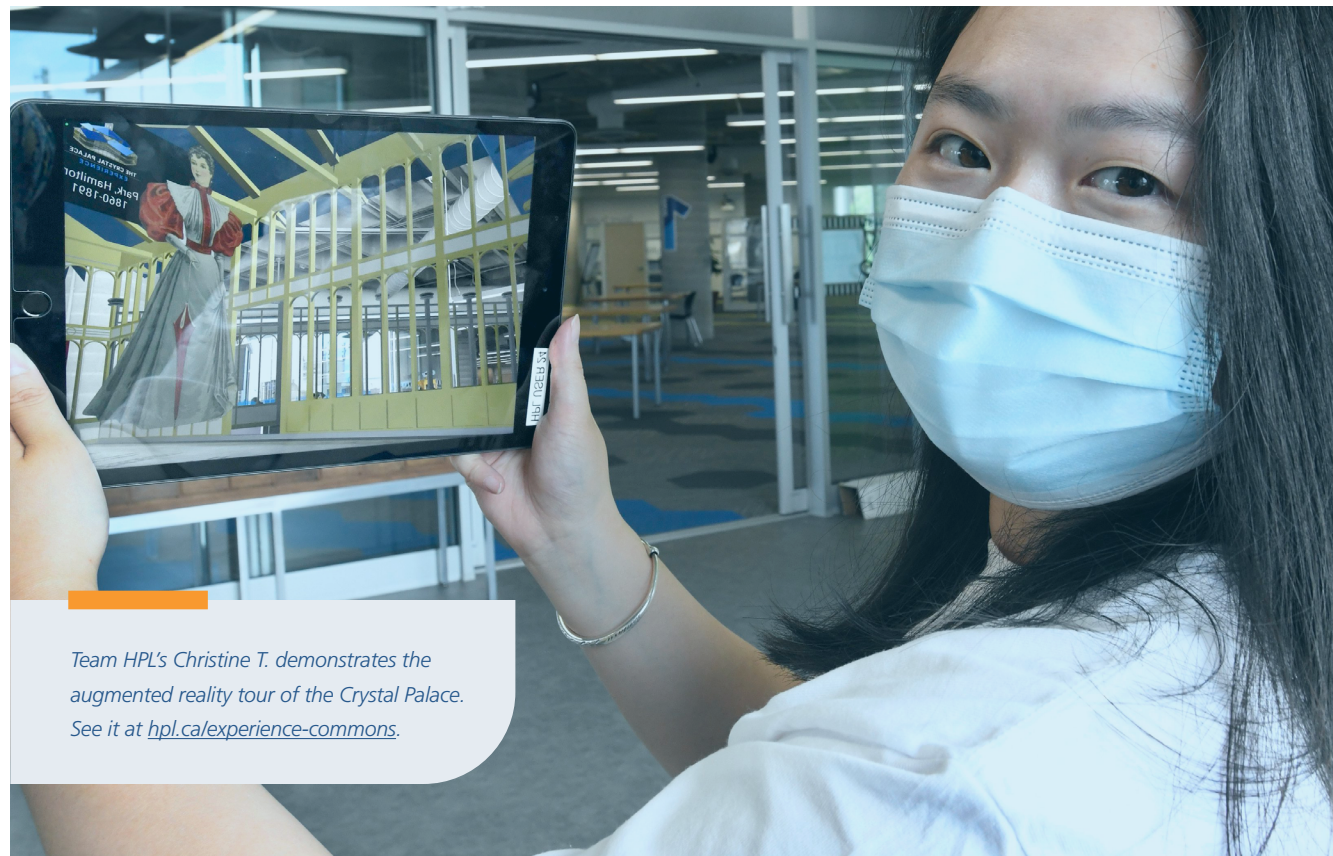
Members relied on HPL's public computers day in and day out, logging in more than **115,000 times over the year**.

When pandemic restrictions limited legal proceedings across the province, HPL Staff opened doors to host virtual

hearing rooms. We also launched a **2.0 version of our popular HPL app**, now a staple on many Members' smartphones. Many found new materials to read, watch, listen and learn.

Print on the Go, which allows Members to send jobs from anywhere and then pick up prints at a branch, flourished in 2021 with more than **62,000 print jobs, totaling 294,000 pages printed**. Makerspace Staff supported HPL's 3D printers, large-format printers, iMacs and vinyl printers. Each hummed daily at a steady pace as talented Makers in the city continued to create.

Augmented Reality (AR) joined the library realm in 2021 with the launch of [Experience Commons](#), which created a way to see the world around you with images of what



Team HPL's Christine T. demonstrates the augmented reality tour of the Crystal Palace. See it at hpl.ca/experience-commons.

isn't there. This new tech provided Staff, Members and the community the opportunity to explore the past, present and future – celebrating yesterday's architecture and artifacts using tomorrow's technology. We harnessed AR to celebrate the City turning 175 and created a random activity generator. Visitors could roll the digital dice and one of 175 ideas would pop up. It was a popular feature that encouraged many Hamiltonians to explore their City.

To ensure success in the digital world, now and in the future, HPL offered online classes instructing kids about coding, launching thoughtful TEDx Talks and providing free access to online tutoring resources such as Brainfuse.

Staff also loaned digital devices, answered Members' tech questions and helped hundreds of Hamiltonians navigate tech through **HPL's Book An Appointment service by answering 59,000 AskHPL questions**. To close the digital divide and reduce barriers to technology, **HPL purchased 100 iPads with data plans** and made them available to Members through our catalogue. Members can borrow these devices short term, with the option to renew up to three times. Partners such as Boys and Girls Club Hamilton and City School by Mohawk helped HPL reach those in need. Partnerships with educational organizations such as Northstar, NPower and Citrix helped equip people with digital technology skills and earn credentials that translate into better jobs in the marketplace.



"Got in 25 minutes before closing. Had to hurry to get on the internet. Found myself confused by a couple of glitches and in my rush to finish urgent business, I needed to request assistance. I got quick clear assistance and finished my needs in the last minute of closing. Thank you to the librarian."

- Viesia Pobega, Saltfleet Branch, September 29, 2021

Open To New Ideas

Talk about vaccines dominated conversations and headlines throughout 2021. HPL did its part and more in the city-wide effort to vaccinate against COVID-19. In early September, we began hosting **Public Health Service clinics** in our branches and by the end of the year, **90 clinics distributed 5,708 vaccinations**. Each time the City called on Staff to help, dozens upon dozens stepped up to work in the multiple roles required. Staff who remained in branches helped residents book vaccine appointments and when proof was required to gain entry almost everywhere, Staff turned on the printers and laminators. **More than 60,000 vaccine certificates were laminated** for residents by year end.

The power of a library card grew exponentially in 2021 with new partnerships. As well as enjoying free access to Hamilton Civic Museums, Members were able to borrow passes for free entry to the Art Gallery of Hamilton, 100 Ontario Parks and Grand River Conservation Authority

sites. In July, HPL doubled Members' borrowing power by teaming up with Burlington Public Library. The [Borrow Around the Bay](#) partnership allowed Library Members from each system to borrow books, DVDs/Blu-Ray, CDs, audiobooks, magazines, video games and more at the other system's branches. Fans of eBooks and eAudiobooks also enjoyed a boost to their borrowing power when Ottawa's and London's electronic book catalogues were added to OverDrive. **HPL Members borrowed more than one million eReads in 2021.**

Partnerships are paramount at HPL. Members benefit in many ways, from programs such as the Stratford Festival Lecture series, to a free tax return filing service organized with McMaster University, to the award-winning Red Book of Community Information database, which provides trusted, up-to-date information about social services and community resources for residents of Hamilton.

"I never knew there was a place where you could go look at books, much less borrow them, then return them when you are through looking. Imagine! Something that precious."

The Secret Keeper of Jaipur by Alka Joshi, Page 98
In our collection: [Search](#) | [Hamilton Public Library](#) | [BiblioCommons](#)



Young readers enjoy the books packed into their Grab and Go bags in February.

"Friendly and helpful. Shrunk and laminated our proof of vaccines at no cost. Great service."

- Kathy Holden, Terryberry Branch, October 13, 2021

In addition to welcoming **Writer-in-Residence Pasha Malla** to the well-loved mentoring program in 2021, HPL created two new residencies with **Researcher-in-Residence Kaitlin Wynia Baluk** and **Junior Librarian-in-Residence Ainara Alleyne**.

Branch number 23 opened in July 2021. Named **Parkdale** for its geographic location at Parkdale and Melvin avenues, it's a small (1,500 square feet) but mighty neighbourhood branch that lays claim to several firsts. Parkdale is the first branch attached to a residence, in this case McQuesten Lofts, a 50-unit affordable housing building. Parkdale is also HPL's first Passive House-designed branch, which means it's an energy-efficient building that dramatically reduces its ecological footprint.

A new Greenville Branch opened in September 2021. The little branch at 59 Kirby Ave., moved into a 3,400 square-foot branch attached to Greenville Elementary School, at 625 Harvest Rd.

With the new Valley Park Branch opening in 2022, we put a call for artists to create a large-scale (14m wide x 4m high) mural to grace the entrance. Twenty-eight entries from around the world came in and six were short-listed. The public weighed in, casting 338 votes Aug 25-Sep 8. Toronto artist Vivian Rosas' mural won the competition. The public will get a first look at it in Spring 2022.

Openly Supportive

Inspiring a love of literature and reading is at the core of HPL's mandate. In 2021 we expanded our reach in the community in many ways.

Hamilton-Wentworth Detention Centre set up its first library with a donation in May of more than 4,500 new fiction and non-fiction paperback books from HPL. In December, 13 boxes of multi-lingual books from the Red Hill Branch were also donated.

When **Rotary Club of Hamilton AM** needed books to fill Christmas gift bags for **Hess Street School** elementary students, HPL came through again donating a book for each of the 300 students. Library Staff also filled the shelves with free materials at community sites, such as the **YWCA** and **Eva Rothwell Centre**. These library materials are free to take.

HPL's **Local History and Archives** donated **1,000 books** about British and American theatre of the 18th, 19th and 20th Centuries to the **Internet Archives Open Library**. The organization is committed to digitizing and preserving

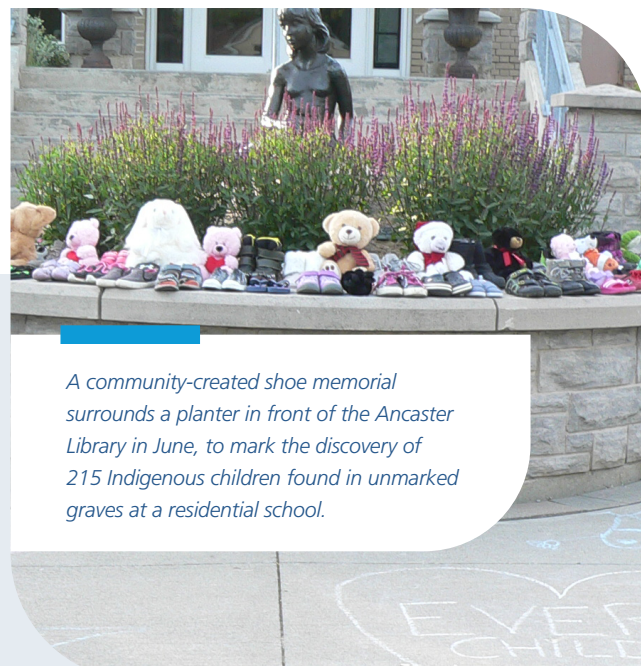
historical treasures such as these. This ensures wider accessibility to researchers and the curious of mind for time immemorial. These contributions led to the archives honouring HPL with an Internet Hero award in October.

Local History and Archives acquired additional materials from local broadcaster CHCH TV as the station moved to a new home in Flamborough. Staff are working to organize and catalogue the massive collection of historical tapes to make them available at no charge, for future research.

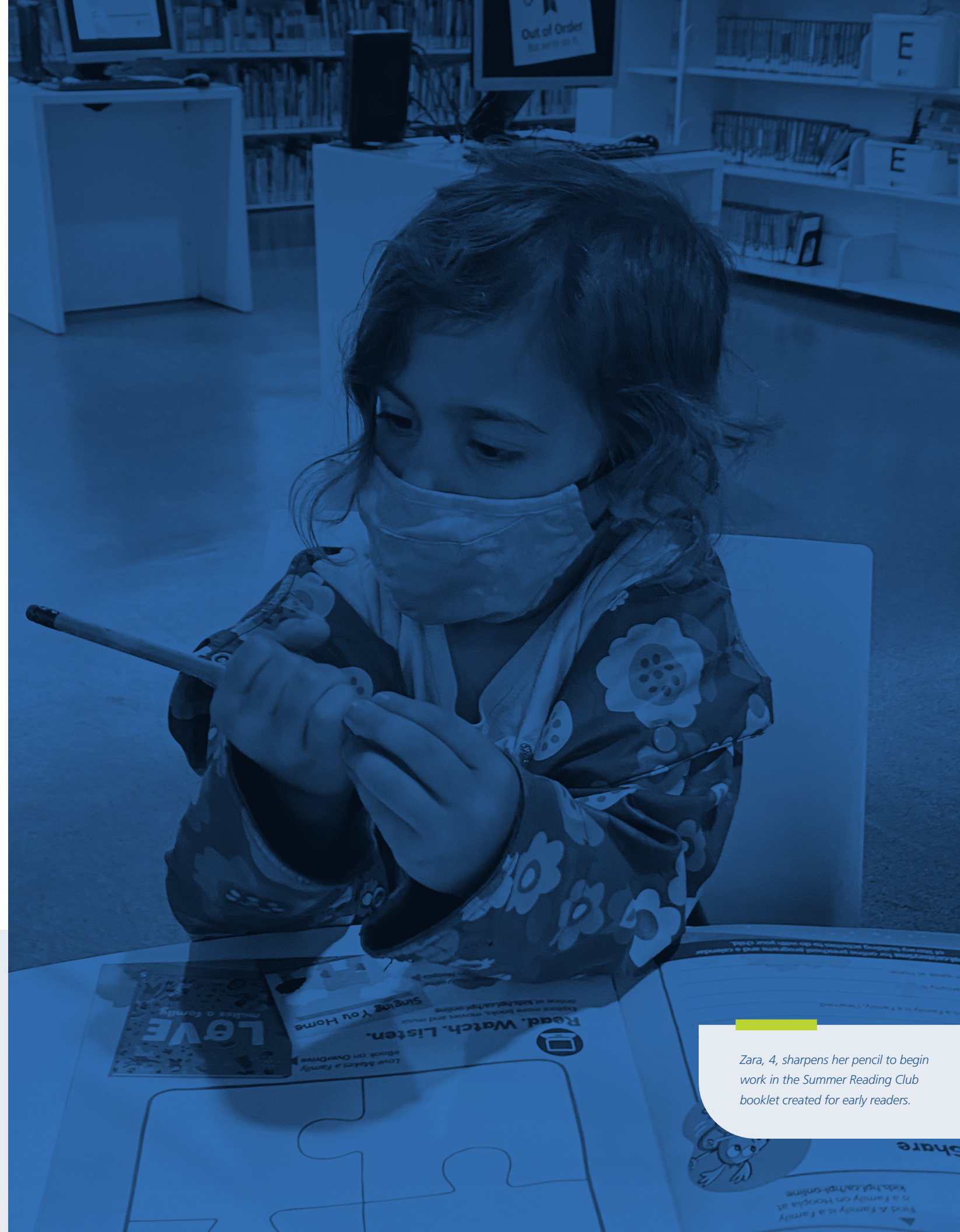
As pandemic restrictions limited movement for many vulnerable people, HPL introduced a **Borrow By Mail** service in February. This door-to-door service delivers library materials monthly to homebound people who are unable to come to a branch. HPL delivered **15,241 items** in 2021 to this population.



Mohawk College Business Analyst students Amna Sadiz, left, and Ogochukwu Assams were featured in the Spring 2021 issue of Momentum for their work in helping HPL improve Wi-Fi service.



A community-created shoe memorial surrounds a planter in front of the Ancaster Library in June, to mark the discovery of 215 Indigenous children found in unmarked graves at a residential school.



Zara, 4, sharpens her pencil to begin work in the Summer Reading Club booklet created for early readers.

“HPL is very accommodating for trans people. They allow the use of preferred names on your library card.”

- Crimson Lord, October 1, 2021



A safe practices Pride Clinic offered Hepatitis C and HIV testing at the Westdale Branch July 15.

The community joined the annual city-wide book club reading of Catherine Bush's *Blaze Island* in 2021. The timely story about environmentalism and community featured an online visit by the author, panel discussions about climate change, a reading challenge and more.

As part of our **Summer Reading Club**, HPL distributed colourful booklets tailored to early readers, elementary school-aged students and teens. Filled with stories, reading trackers, activities and more, they were a popular and fun way to enjoy the school break. Booklets in English, French, Mandarin and Spanish were also created and distributed to many cultural organizations in the City.

HPL's annual **Power of the Pen** and **Short Works Prize** contests drew hundreds of entries in 2021. The long-standing competitions are a wonderful expression of the local writing talent in this city and beyond. HPL is grateful to the judges who read all the entries and managed the challenging task of choosing the winners.

All these outreach efforts contributed to the creation of a new and expansive partnership policy at HPL called **Working With Us**. The goal is to enhance, support and improve community resources, collections and programs for the economic, social and cultural benefit of Hamilton residents for now and in the future.

MEMBERS OF THE HAMILTON PUBLIC LIBRARY BOARD 2019 - 2022:

- Gagan Batra
- Elly Bowen
- Vittorina Cecchetto (Deceased Sept 3, 2020)
- Robert Coruzzi
- John Kirkpatrick
- C.A. Klassen
- Stu Laurie
- Lynne Serviss
- Nick van Velzen
- Councillor Judi Partridge
- Councillor Maria Pearson
- Lori-Anne Spence-Smith

“Kudos to the Hamilton Public Library for consistently engaging the community during this challenging time. They have called patrons to assess their literary needs and provided a wide variety of books, events, eBooks, as well as virtual events and groups. They've been very creative in providing information, as well as providing safety during use. All these services are provided free of charge and always with a smile. Many thanks to these community providers of relief during the pandemic.”

- Anne Abdel-Fattah, Hamilton, February 9, 2021

2021 Snapshot

2021 thrust many challenges at the community — and HPL. We faced each with an eye to innovation, to do our best by Hamilton residents. While restrictions limited visits, Staff figured out ways to safely provide services to Members in branch, online and for the City. Doors opened, services met demands and Members read, watched, listened and learned using HPL's catalogue, online resources and programs. Through effort, creative thinking, community outreach and diligence, new ideas thrived and served our City well.

CIRCULATION HIGHLIGHTS

1,649,820

Catalogue Visits

4,602,589

Circulated Items (Physical and Digital)

3,430

Hamilton Reads *Blaze Island* Checkouts

15,241

Items Borrowed through Visiting Library Service and Borrow By Mail

ONLINE AND IN-PERSON VISITORS

725,000

In-Person Visits

18,420

New Members

28,926

Social Media Fans

WIDER DIGITAL ACCESS

360,172

Gigabytes of Data Downloaded via Wi-Fi

850,000

Hours of Wi-Fi Used by Members

115,000

Times Members Used Computers

62,000

Print on the Go Jobs

294,000

Pages Printed

213,438

Red Book* Searches

COMMUNITY SUPPORT

60,000

Vaccine Certificates Laminated

5,708

Vaccinations Administered at Branch Clinics

90

Vaccine Clinics Hosted at Branches

02

New Branches Opened

70

Staff Seconded to Help City of Hamilton Deliver Pandemic Services

*Red Book is an Extensive List of Local Community Services and Resources.



2021 Timeline

JANUARY

We pick, you pick up. HPL launches Grab and Go.



MARCH

Dozens of HPL Staff begin lending a hand at City vaccination clinics.

Video talks by St. Joseph's mental health experts air on HPL's YouTube channel.



MAY

HPL's 2021 Hamilton Reads title is ecological thriller *Blaze Island* by Catherine Bush.

HPL donates more than 4,500 new paperbacks to help set up a library at Hamilton-Wentworth Detention Centre.



JULY

HPL opens its 23rd branch, Parkdale, inside an affordable housing complex.

Borrow Around the Bay doubles the borrowing power for cardholders in Hamilton and Burlington.



SEPTEMBER

HPL opens a new Greenville Branch alongside an elementary school and daycare centre.



NOVEMBER

HPL prints and laminates more than 60,000 COVID-19 vaccination receipts.



FEBRUARY

HPL partners with Ontario Parks to offer free access to more than 100 sites.

Black History Month celebrations included book displays at branches and online including Noon Hour Concerts featuring BIPOC artists.



APRIL

HPL eliminates fees for all, forever.



JUNE

HPL's curated book lists aim to celebrate, educate and appreciate National Indigenous History Month and Pride Month.



AUGUST

Experience Commons, an Augmented Reality project, launches with Hamilton Civic Museums and Parks and Cemeteries. It's a new way to see Hamilton's past, present and future.



OCTOBER

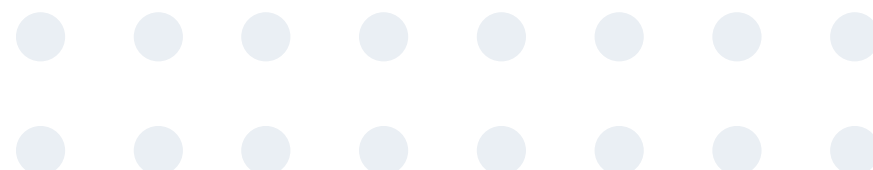
Work begins on renovating Carlisle's TD Bank building into a new library branch. TD donated the building slated to open in Spring 2022.

The Internet Archives honours HPL for several donations that increase worldwide access to a wealth of materials.



DECEMBER

HPL offers postcards inviting the community to send kind messages to special people. Hundreds are sent to long-term care residents.



2021 Annual Report



Team HPL's Linda K. with our Hamilton Reads 2021 Choice, *Blaze Island* by Catherine Bush.