The pandemic created a vocabulary of new phrases and acronyms: ‘COVID-19’, ‘social distancing’, ‘PPE (Personal Protective Equipment) and ‘stay-at-home orders’; as well as a slate of colour-coded lockdowns that limited our interactions. Change was constant. Donning masks became normal. But throughout the upheaval, HPL Staff adapted to each circumstance with resilience, innovation and a can-do attitude.

HPL Staff balanced delivery of services with public health directives to ensure the safety of everyone. We reached out over the phone, online and in person, when it was possible. Helping people and the community get through the pandemic was our focus.

Through 2020, HPL remained true to its core values: nurture a love of reading, advance literacy, preserve the past, support lifelong learning, reduce social isolation, advance intellectual freedom and provide equitable access to information.

The pandemic forced us to find new ways to do these. And we did.

We are here for you. #InThisTogether

Our virtual branch is always open.
We added more digital resources, made it easier to access eBooks and eAudiobooks, Staff checked in on elderly Members with friendly calls, improved access to WiFi, introduced new services such as remote printing, eliminated fines and persevered with building projects.

Our mandate is to increase our positive impact on the city, one person at a time. To do this, we are building and strengthening community partnerships, to ensure recovery from the pandemic creates a more inclusive, sustainable and prosperous future for all.
Staff pivoted through the year to support the community. The pandemic forced HPL to move all in-person programs online in March.

Audiences enjoyed watching shows on our virtual branch including Noon Hour Concerts and Staff-led storytimes and puppet shows.

We launched Hamilton Reads two months early in April, to engage readers during the citywide shutdown. By coincidence, the fictional storyline in *Moon of the Crusted Snow* mirrored life in a pandemic. The Indigenous themes of Waubgeshig Rice’s novel sparked a cooking show series called In the Kitchen with Esh, tours of artists’ studios and a live interview with the author, all of which aired on HPL’s YouTube channel and Cable 14. The book also prompted plenty of discussion in online bookclubs at HPL and among neighbouring library systems.

To help students, caregivers and educators, Staff put together book lists, activity sheets, links to tutoring, educational resources and more on Learning at HPL and Discover at Home. The TD Summer Reading Club featured videos about gardening, local creatures great and small, museums, musicians, magicians and more.

To reach people who had difficulty getting to HPL, especially during the pandemic, Borrow by Mail was created. It delivered library materials to Members through the postal service. To make it easy to pick up books when the pandemic halted browsing at branches, Takeout was added. To reach Staff, Members only had to dial one phone number (905-546-3200) or use a newly created chat feature on hpl.ca.

Students in the Google IT Support Certificate program at HPL also switched to online learning. By year-end, 38 students, or 76 per cent, graduated. The CISCO Learning Academy also found a home on hpl.ca, giving access to a series of free courses for those interested in an IT career. Coding classes for kids was also a popular draw.
“I am very excited to read all the suggestions you have sent me. They are all very interesting and I wanted to thank you for taking the time choosing the books!”

Jana, who used our Which Book Next reading recommendations service

“I’m curious about everything. Even subjects that don’t interest me.”

Alex Trebek (1940-2020), Game show host of Jeopardy! since 1984

Read and watch more about this famous Canadian in HPL’s catalogue at hpl.ca

NOTABLE NUMBERS

18,097
New Library Cards Issued

1,543
Virtual Programs

1M+
eBooks and eAudiobooks Borrowed
Hamiltonians love to read. This became evident in October when HPL reached a record-breaking one million digital book checkouts.

HPL was one of 75 public library systems worldwide to reach this milestone. Among the top titles was our Hamilton Reads book, *Moon of the Crusted Snow*, which was downloaded by more than 1,000 Members just one month after it was announced. Borrowing through our Virtual Branch increased 300 per cent.

Demand for our Which Book Next service is further proof of this city’s love of reading.

Staff provided personalized recommendations for more than 315 Members in 2020.

When eBooks and eAudiobooks were the only way to read because of shutdowns, HPL staff were ready to help residents figure out how to borrow and use their tablets and ereaders. More than 440 people booked an appointment through our web form.

Working with Internet Archives — a non-profit, digital library advocating for free access for everyone — HPL launched its Open Library collection. In 2020, more than 43,560 items were added to the Archive.

Staff connected the community with additional resources and services including online tutoring and job-search skills, loaning devices to school boards and facilitating virtual court sessions and interviews.

*Team HPL’s Lisa, left, meets with our one-millionth eBook borrower, Konnie, at Terryberry Branch in October.*
“LOVE MY LIBRARY!! I love the downloadable audiobooks and e-pub books. Saved my life during the pandemic. So valuable to ALL Hamiltonians.”

Donor to HPL’s Pay It Forward campaign

“Part of the great wonder of reading is that it has the ability to make human beings feel more connected to one another, which is a great good, if not from a pedagogical point of view, at least from a psychological one.”

Anna Quindlen, novelist, journalist, Pulitzer Prize winner

More books by Anna Quindlen at hpl.ca
MAKING CONNECTIONS IN BRANCH AND IN THE COMMUNITY

Nurturing established partnerships and forging new ones is at the forefront of HPL’s mandate.

HPL Staff rose to the occasion in many ways in 2020. Waiving all fines and fees until December 31, 2021 — and permanently for children and teens — was a welcome relief for Hamilton residents. It signalled a fresh start for everyone.

Whether it’s Winterfest, Telling Tales, Fringe Festival, Black History Month, Supercrawl, United Way, Hamilton Philharmonic Orchestra, Cable 14, Wesley Urban Ministries, McMaster University, Mohawk College or myriad other events, services and organizations, HPL works collaboratively for the benefit of the community. From tax clinics to Noon Hour Concerts and author visits to code clubs, collective effort bodes well for us all.

Staff helped the City through the pandemic in many ways, from beautifying landscapes to assisting public health and delivering supplies where needed. Staff also made 8,734 calls to socially isolated seniors, sewed then donated thousands of fabric masks and manufactured hundreds of shields for frontline workers using 3D printers. Our volunteers also did their part by tutoring Newcomers online, writing reviews for Teen Members, and knitting hats and mitts for Hamilton Out of the Cold and Wesley Urban Ministries.

HPL opened its spaces to charity-minded knitters whose creations are given to babies and breast cancer patients; paramedics who offered flu shot clinics on eight Saturdays in Fall and private space to conduct Ontario Court sessions.

Valley Park’s temporary branch opened in January and HPL managed to forge ahead with construction projects including Valley Park, Parkdale, Greensville and Carlisle.

HPL extended Wi-Fi hours and added remote printing, which allows Members to send jobs from home for pickup at a branch.

HPL donated school supplies and headphones to community agencies such as Kiwanis Boys and Girls Clubs and Ronald McDonald House. Also, gently used library materials found new homes with community partners.
NOTABLE NUMBERS

8,734
Friendly Calls From Staff to Isolated Seniors

8,048
Volunteer Hours Logged

21,355
YouTube Views

MAKING CONNECTIONS IN BRANCH AND IN THE COMMUNITY

Top: HPL Staff made 2,669 PPE items using 3D printers at Central in May.
Bottom: Hillary at Ronald McDonald House accepts headphones donated by HPL in September.

Right: Knitters meet at Turner Park and donate their finished work to community charities.
The community has long looked to HPL to preserve and share its stories. It’s an important role we take very seriously.

Early in the year, HPL stepped up to the task of housing the Canadian Children’s Book Centre’s regional collection of 18,000 titles — including classic titles such as Alligator Pie, Anne of Green Gables and The Paper Bag Princess. More than 800 books are added annually to the collection, which preserves Canadian culture for future generations of aspiring authors, students, academics, educators and families. Work is underway to launch the CCBC collection in 2022.

Documenting the experiences of Hamilton residents during the COVID-19 pandemic was launched in June 2020. It’s part of the Love Your City, Share Your Stories digital project that started in 2015. Over the years, the project has documented local stories about music, libraries, Gore Park, Tim Horton’s, immigration and water.

Add your COVID story to our collection by visiting hamiltonstories.ca/covid19-submissions

During lockdown, history-seekers used their time well by accessing Ancestry.ca through our website for free. More than 7,750 searches were undertaken by keen sleuths searching to find out more about their family.

Our stalwart and popular writing competitions — the 26th annual Power of the Pen and the Short Works Prize — were unmoved by a mere global pandemic. More than 210 entries poured in for both competitions. Our new Writer-in-eResidence, Janet Marie Rogers, also worked with aspiring authors electronically.

Bottom: HPL’s first Writer-in-eResidence Janet Marie Rogers
“Preserve your memories, keep them well, what you forget you can never retell.”

Louisa May Alcott, American author and poet, best known for writing *Little Women*. Available in all formats on [hpl.ca](http://hpl.ca)

“YISSS. I was literally just looking into this. Thank you!”

Samantha Adams, HPL Member responding to a social media post offering free access to Ancestry Library through [hpl.ca](http://hpl.ca)

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NOTABLE NUMBERS

7,752

Ancestry Online Searches

225,000

Views on LH&A’s Flickr Commons, a Treasure Trove of Archived Digital Photos

210

Writing Competition Entries

Bottom: Some of the Canadian Children’s Book Centre’s 18,000 titles housed at LH&A.
**January**

The annual Power of the Pen writing competition for youth celebrates its 25th year.

Valley Park branch’s temporary site opens.

**February**

Programs, books, talks, movies and more celebrate the achievers and achievements of Black Canadians during Black History Month.

**March**

HPL hosts Open Data Day because information is power.

**March 14**

COVID-19 forces the first province-wide shutdown, including the closure of all HPL branches. WiFi hours expanded at all branches.

HPL Staff become video stars as our Virtual Branch offers programs online.

**April**

More to Borrow. HPL card holders can now access eBooks from Mississauga and Burlington public libraries too.

**April 16**

Hamilton Reads title announced: *Moon of the Crusted Snow* and Scout’s Book Club titles.

**May**

HPL Staff log more than 8,734 Friendly Calls to local seniors within a month. Partnership with Cable 14 to air HPL programs.

**May 25**

TD Summer Reading Club launches.

**June**

Pride Month, Indigenous History and Black Lives Matter are all cause to celebrate, mend, educate, appreciate and create a better future. HPL Staff’s curated book lists help start these important conversations.
**August**

HPL launches a kids fine free and Pay-it-Forward donation program. Staff record telephone stories for little listeners.

**September**

Bookmobile is back on the road. HPL donates books, journals, pens, pencils and headphones to Wesley Urban Ministries, Ronald McDonald House, Kiwanis Boys and Girls Clubs and Rotary Club of Hamilton’s Christmas celebration at Cathy Wever School. Members can browse in HPL branches again.

**October**


**November**

Flu shot clinics offered on eight consecutive Saturdays with Hamilton paramedics. HPL and McMaster University host the Hamilton Reads finale with Waubgeshig Rice, Janet Marie Rogers and Cherie Dimaline.

**December**

HPL’s Print on the Go, which gives Members the power to print from anywhere, is launched. The Short Works Prize winners are announced.
The emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic in March resulted in a significant priority shift for 2020.

HPL’s response to the pandemic was shaped by our commitment to support Hamilton’s emergency response and maximize the safe delivery of library services. Staff worked tirelessly throughout the year to respond to the crisis and support the community. Service innovation ensured continuity through shutdown periods; investment in these enhancements will continue to serve us through the pandemic and strengthen our support of Hamilton’s recovery.

Circulation Highlights

1M+ eBooks and eAudiobooks Borrowed

1.3M Hours of Wi-Fi Use

43,560 Items Added to HPL’s Internet Archive

305,910 GB Wireless Network Used

1,000 Loans in First Month of Hamilton Reads Book Launch

18,097 New Library Cards Issued
## Staff Flexibility

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>25</strong></th>
<th><strong>8,734</strong></th>
<th><strong>8,048</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Staff Seconded to Help City of Hamilton Deliver Pandemic Services</td>
<td>Friendly Calls to Hamilton Seniors</td>
<td>Volunteer Hours Logged</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>8</strong></td>
<td><strong>2,669</strong></td>
<td><strong>18,000</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Flu Clinics Hosted with Hamilton Paramedics</td>
<td>PPE Shields and 3-D Printed Straps Assembled in Makerspace</td>
<td>Canadian Children’s Books Received for Archiving</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## Member Services

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>7,752</strong></th>
<th><strong>441</strong></th>
<th><strong>3,768</strong></th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ancestry Online Searches</td>
<td>Tech Problems Solved with Book an Appointment</td>
<td>Programs Offered</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>225,000</strong></td>
<td><strong>70</strong></td>
<td><strong>210</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Archived Digital Photos Viewed on LH&amp;A’s PreView</td>
<td>Online student/tutor pairs for Newcomer Learning Centre</td>
<td>Power of the Pen and the Short Works Prize entries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>21,355</strong></td>
<td><strong>38</strong></td>
<td><strong>100+</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>YouTube Views</td>
<td>Google Tech Grads</td>
<td>How-To Tech Courses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>315</strong></td>
<td><strong>300</strong></td>
<td><strong>46,417</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recommendations for Readers Through Which Book Next</td>
<td>Welcome Baby Bags for New Moms</td>
<td>Quick Answers by Phone, Email or Instant Chat on hpl.ca</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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HPL closed March 14, 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Reopened in June for limited service at select branches. By July 23 all branches reopened with limited services.