



Our Mission

Freedom to Belong and Discover

Our Values

Accountability

Inclusion

Innovation

Intellectual Freedom

Respect

Cover Images

Top Left: Young, talented entrepreneurs showcase their creative works at the BLK Owned Youth Market in March at Central Library. Photo by Moments w/ Matt

Middle Right: Team HPL's Aaron at Binbrook ignites a love of music in Maisie who is a fan of the Music for Babies and Toddlers program.

Bottom Right: Sofia learns All About Birds at the Westdale's Branch's March Learning Lab.

A Message from Paul and Gagan

Over the past five years, Hamilton Public Library has adapted to significant disruptions: the pandemic, a major cybersecurity incident and growing community challenges related to homelessness, mental health, addictions and economic uncertainty.

In 2025, our focus was clear: deliver reliable, equitable library service while strengthening our organization to remain resilient and responsive in a changing environment.

A key priority focused on stability. Building on service expansions made in 2022 and 2023, we maintained consistent branch hours and after-hours Study Halls while growing programs within existing capacity. Despite the lingering impacts of the City's 2024 cybersecurity incident, Staff delivered more programs than before, with increased attendance. Membership growth was also strong, with more than 195,000 active cardholders, representing roughly one-third of Hamilton's population and demonstrating the Library's ongoing relevance and community trust.

At the heart of this work is our role as a public library: to advance social cohesion and belonging by providing welcoming, free, accessible spaces for everyone. In a time of continued social and economic strain, the Library's role as a place for learning, connection, creativity and cultural exchange is especially vital.



Paul Takala
CEO, Hamilton
Public Library



Gagan Batra
Chair, Hamilton
Public Library Board

Throughout 2025, our branches and outreach services were animated with author talks, live music, children's programming, cultural celebrations and community-led partnerships that brought people together across generations and neighbourhoods.

As pressures within public spaces increased, we advanced a values-based approach to safety and security. Investments in peer support partnerships, new Community Connector positions and facility upgrades reduced strain on Staff while preserving our branches as places of learning, dignity and connection.

We also made significant investments in organizational effectiveness and resiliency. Following the cybersecurity incident, progress was made to modernize IT infrastructure, strengthen cybersecurity, improve connectivity and rebuild data-tracking and reporting systems. These efforts position the Library to make more informed, evidence-based decisions and better demonstrate the impact of our services.

Looking ahead to 2026, our priorities include completing the Facilities Master Plan, advancing sustainability initiatives, launching new electric bookmobiles, re-envisioning the Discovery Centre and strengthening digital services and partnerships. Together, these efforts will ensure Hamilton Public Library remains a trusted, resilient and welcoming institution. One that belongs to the entire community, today and into the future.

Where Hamilton Comes Together

Hamilton Public Library is a trusted, welcoming place where people connect, belong and are supported.

In 2025, HPL had **193,356 active** cardholders of all ages and walks of life who borrowed materials, participated in programs and special events, sought information and used online resources and in-person services.

Initiatives such as Coffee with Paul, where our CEO invited residents to chat candidly with him at their home branch and outreach at many city events year-round reinforced the Library's role as a civic gathering place.

HPL also deepened its commitment to the health and well-being of Members by partnering with the **Canadian Mental Health Association** to provide Peer Support Workers at Central Library.

HPL honoured Hamilton's Black history in February, showed appreciation to our many volunteers in April, celebrated the 2SLGBTQI+ community during Pride Month in June, Indigenous culture, also in June, Women's History in October and many others who contributed to community life in so many positive ways.

Image: Teens Paws the Pressure while studying for exams by visiting with St. John's Ambulance therapy dogs at the Waterdown Branch.



Opening Doors Across the City

Expanding access is central to HPL's mission. In 2025, **1,388 hours** of service were provided each week across **23 branches** and **two Bookmobiles**, ensuring citywide access to free learning, culture and community spaces.

Evening Study Halls at seven branches offered **112 hours of access** each week. Visits increased by more than **32 per cent** among students and learners.

Access also extended beyond library walls to guarantee that geography, income, or circumstance never stand in the way of participation. Permanent free museum admission with an HPL card opened doors to civic museums, while Bookmobile and Home Library Service reached long-term care facilities, schools and underserved neighbourhoods.

Top Image: Zoey and her mom learn all about sticky stuff from Scientists in School at the Ancaster Branch during March Break fun.

Bottom Image: The Bookmobile added Storytime to its route at the Discovery Centre in 2025.



Stronger Together: Partnerships in Action

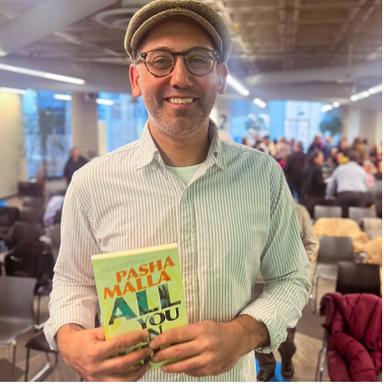
Partnerships are essential to delivering exemplary programs, services and reliable information at HPL. In 2025, more than 150 partners stepped into our branches to provide literacy programs, settlement services, employment-readiness help, cultural conversations and book clubs, baby wellness, tax clinics and health information, to name a handful of mutual efforts.

Free tax clinics returned more than **\$2.4 million** to moderate-income earners in the community, while newcomer workshops, language and conversation circles, and health-focused programs provided practical assistance and meaningful connections. Partnerships with organizations such as CBC, McMaster University, Amnesty International and Empowerment Squared generated award-winning programming.

By working collaboratively with cultural organizations, social agencies and educational institutions, HPL strengthens services and reinforces its role as a connector, bringing people, ideas and resources together across Hamilton.

Image: Mishka Social Services provides support for newcomers at Central Library.





Collections and Programs that Inspire

HPL's collections, programs and specialized services in the Newcomer Learning Centre, Local History and Archives, and Makerspaces inspire curiosity, creativity and lifelong learning among residents of all ages. In 2025, more programs filled branch calendars and attendance increased.

Children's and family programs such as **Storytimes** are a cornerstone of this success. Summer Reading Club fostered a love of reading in thousands of children and teens. To keep this momentum going, **Pumpkin Palooza** and **Fright Fest** transformed branches into eerily vibrant community spaces.

Among the romance-loving genre set, **Steel Town Love** enticed many fans to HPL's inaugural event in July. **Makerfest** also made its debut in November and brought out the how-to crowd in droves. More than **100,000** people attended **123** live concerts across the system.

Collections also evolved to meet community needs through expanded World Language books, expanded digital collections and innovative non-traditional materials such as birding kits, park passes and CO2 detectors, to name a few items in the newly created Lendporium.

Together, HPL's programs and collections ensure free, equitable access for residents of all ages and interests.

Left Image: All You Can Kill by Pasha Malla (pictured) was the 2025 Hamilton Reads title.

Right Image: A family explores hands-on learning at a Dino Dig program.

HPL by the Numbers

193,356

Active Members

This is the highest number of card holders HPL has recorded in **12 years** proving it's a valued item in many wallets.

1,388

Hours of Service Weekly

Service hours expanded in 2025 at HPL's **23 branches** and **two** Bookmobiles.

112

Hours of Evening Study Halls Weekly

Study Hall visits increased to **7,106** in 2025, which is a **41.4 per cent** increase from 5,026 in 2024.

More Materials Circulated

5,599,040 physical and digital library items were circulated in 2025. That's an **18.1 per cent** increase over 2024.

More Programs and Increased Attendance

HPL offered **19.5 per cent** more programs in 2025 and attendance to them jumped **23.5 per cent**.

Growth in Social Media Audiences

Digital engagement increased **14.7 per cent**.

Timeline

January

HPL received the Ontario Library Association's Communications Award for its part in the live broadcast of CBC's White Coat, Black Art at Central Library in May 2024.



March

March Break delivered **274 programs** for **8,841 attendees**. Highlights included live performers, workshops and fun activities.



May

The **Ukrainian Bookshelf Project** added 80 Ukrainian-language fiction and non-fiction titles to HPL's collection.



February

Black History Month featured concerts, author talks and cultural celebrations. The ever-popular **Seedy Saturday** on Feb 1 filled the 4th Floor with promises of Spring.



April

HPL's CEO Paul Takala, right, held informal chats with Members at several branches throughout the year. The **How-To Festival** was also a hit with DIYers new and experienced.



June

National Indigenous History Month featured author talks and a performance by **James N. Wilson**. HPL also featured local musicians at the **Pier 8 Summer Music Series**.

2025

July

Hamilton's inaugural romance festival, **Steel Town Love**, drew more than **1,000** guests to author talks, workshops and more.



September

Truth and Reconciliation featured collections by Indigenous authors. HPL also welcomed a new Writer in Residence, **Saumiya Balasubramaniam**.



November

Makerfest launched in 2025. Hundreds attended to make crafts and use HPL's tech equipment. Louis Riel Day celebrations on Nov 15 also drew a big crowd to Central Library.



August

The Summer Reading Club engaged **7,145** children and teens. A delegation from HPL's partner library in Liberia also visited.



October

Fright Fest and **Pumpkin Palooza** brought eerie fun to branches. **Women's History Month** honoured trailblazers near and far.



December

Holiday concerts, puppet shows and storytimes brought festive energy to branches across Hamilton. **951** little ones rang in 2026 a little earlier at **Noon Year's Eve Countdowns**.

Members of the Hamilton Public Library Board 2025

The Hamilton Public Library Board has nine citizens and two City Councillors. The Board establishes Library services for our community based on public input and market research.

Image: Central Library.

Hamilton Public Library Board Members:

- Gagan Batra, Chair
- Brie Berry
- Kojo Dampety
- Dayna Firth
- Alison Griggs
- Jennifer Horwath, Vice-Chair
- Lynne Serviss
- Nicolas van Velzen
- Carly Whitmore
- Councillor Cameron Kroetsch
- Councillor Ted McMeekin

