



Halifax Public Libraries
Annual Report
2019-2020



Halifax Regional Library Board

Members as of August 2020



**CINDY
O'DRISCOLL,
BOARD
CHAIR**

"This year, I learned even more about the enduring value of our Library branches to our community. The public connection with the Library is deeper than ever."



**COUNCILLOR
LISA
BLACKBURN**

"This year, I discovered how incredibly flexible our Library system is (particularly in the face of COVID-19)."



**COUNCILLOR
TIM OUTHIT**

"This year, I learned how beloved and important our Libraries are to so many Bedford-Wentworth and HRM residents. I received many calls and emails expressing how much they missed our Libraries while the physical spaces were closed."



**SHARON
COSTEY**

"This year, I gained an operational sense of library service when the Board toured all aspects of Woodlawn Public Library—from the arrival of the Library patron, to the return of materials back into circulation."



**KIM
BROOKS**

"This year, I learned that we need to put our community and our values and principles ahead of doing things the way we've always done them and rigidity."



**ALFRED
BURGESSON**

"This year, I learned the important role the Library has in supporting the resilience of our communities while influencing the broader society to consider equity and justice."



**MAYOR
MIKE
SAVAGE,
EX-OFFICIO**

"As I travel in the world, I go to libraries. They're the heart of communities."



**MARIKA
WARREN**

"This year, I have come to appreciate in a new way how deep, multifaceted, and valuable the relationships are between Libraries and their communities."



**LINDA
MACKAY**

"As a new Board member, I've seen that the Library is much more than books! The community support that the Library provides is so important, and I am so happy to be a part of it."



**EMILY
MILLER**

"This year, I learned that we can't serve the community unless we know our community, and am so impressed by the work being done by Library staff and volunteers to go above and beyond to support their branches."



**HEATHER
ROSE**

"This year, I learned how deeply committed our Libraries are to removing barriers to access and to optimizing the welcome of all members of our communities."



A Letter From Our Chief Librarian and CEO

The building blocks of traditional literacy are found in the alphabet. In English, that's A to Z, and mastering the ABCs is a milestone moment in most learners' lives. Libraries were built on the foundations of literacy; they were established to serve as hubs of information, to nurture learning, and to champion truth and democracy. While these core values remain today—perhaps stronger than ever—Halifax Public Libraries is proud to be at the forefront of building new literacies as we support the creation and sharing of knowledge in new ways.

This report is a tribute to the all-encompassing literacy building you'll find at the Library. Literacy that gets to the heart of people and their needs. We are adapting our services to answer the call from our communities, and as we write this report, our society is going through a massive shift of identity and structure due to COVID-19. Our Libraries have risen to the challenge. Even while our buildings were closed, we were adapting our services to meet emerging needs and remain connected with our people. Our broad approach to literacy is more relevant than ever.

Knowing which vegetables have the most fibre—that's food literacy. Seniors mastering simple chair exercises to strengthen muscles—that's health literacy. Using the internet to find out when your taxes are due—that's technological and financial literacy. And interacting and engaging with helpful Library staff who care about your wellbeing? That's social literacy: human connection at its best.

Traditional library service—the loaning of books, reading of stories, and stewarding of information—will always remain. In fact, these practices inform how we deliver new literacy tools, programs, and experiences. This annual report is our alphabet of literacy.

So now we know our Library ABCs, next time won't you join us, please?

Åsa Kachan



A Letter From Our Board Chair

What a milestone year for Halifax Public Libraries. Library programs continue to evolve to meet the ever-changing needs of our community. One example is our Food Literacy programming. In 2019-20, we served 152,000 healthy snacks and hosted more than 400 Food Literacy programs. Whether people come together over a meal, conversation group, or Baby's First Books storytime, we see learning, shared ideas, and friendships form.

2019-20 was a year of celebration! We marked five years since Halifax Central Library opened its doors, 30 years of community service in Cole Harbour, and 50 years since J.D. Shatford Memorial Public Library opened. In the summer, Keshen Goodman Public Library opened its Outdoor Library with a community celebration and outdoor storytime. Libraries might look and feel different today, but the fundamentals of equality, literacy, democracy, and community support are stronger than ever.

And finally, we couldn't do this amazing work without the dedication of our Library team. In times of great challenge, our staff goes above and beyond to reach out to the community, inspire hope and joy, and bring people together, even when we are separated. We are proud to share just a few stories with you, and I look forward to our next chapter.

Cindy O'Driscoll



ev•o•lu•tion

The gradual growth and expansion of a library's purpose, especially in relation to the needs of the communities it serves.



“We are always evolving with our communities.”



Libraries through the years

2019 saw the arrival of three big Library milestones. Our J.D. Shatford Memorial Public Library hit its 50-year anniversary, Cole Harbour Public Library turned 30, and Halifax Central Library had its fifth 'birthday.' As we planned celebrations and worked with community members and staff who were part of these branch's beginnings, it became very clear how and why libraries stand the test of time. We are always evolving with our communities.

On December 13, 2014, Halifax Central Library opened its doors, turning heads around the world as a unique, modern public space all can enjoy. In a short time, Central Library has become a model for how a community-designed library can transform a city. As our flagship branch, Central Library's presence has truly reignited interest and engagement across our whole Library system.

Built in 1969 with funding from the bequest of J.D. Shatford, a resident of the area, the J.D. Shatford Memorial Public Library has its own deep and rich history, with ties to J.D. Shatford Memorial Trust, and the local Aspotogan Heritage Trust. Many of our patrons have grown up alongside the Library, and are now welcoming their senior years in Hubbards.

“ We naturally have a personal stake in making our community better. Patrons (who we're not related to or don't know personally) quickly become acquaintances, so we get to know them very well, which enables us to anticipate their needs and delight them with suggestions or recommendations, or even door-to-door deliveries.”

- Jo, staff member, J.D. Shatford Memorial Public Library

Recommended reading: *50 Reasons We Love J.D. Shatford Memorial Public Library* – a blog at halifaxpubliclibraries.ca/blogs



Traditional Literacy

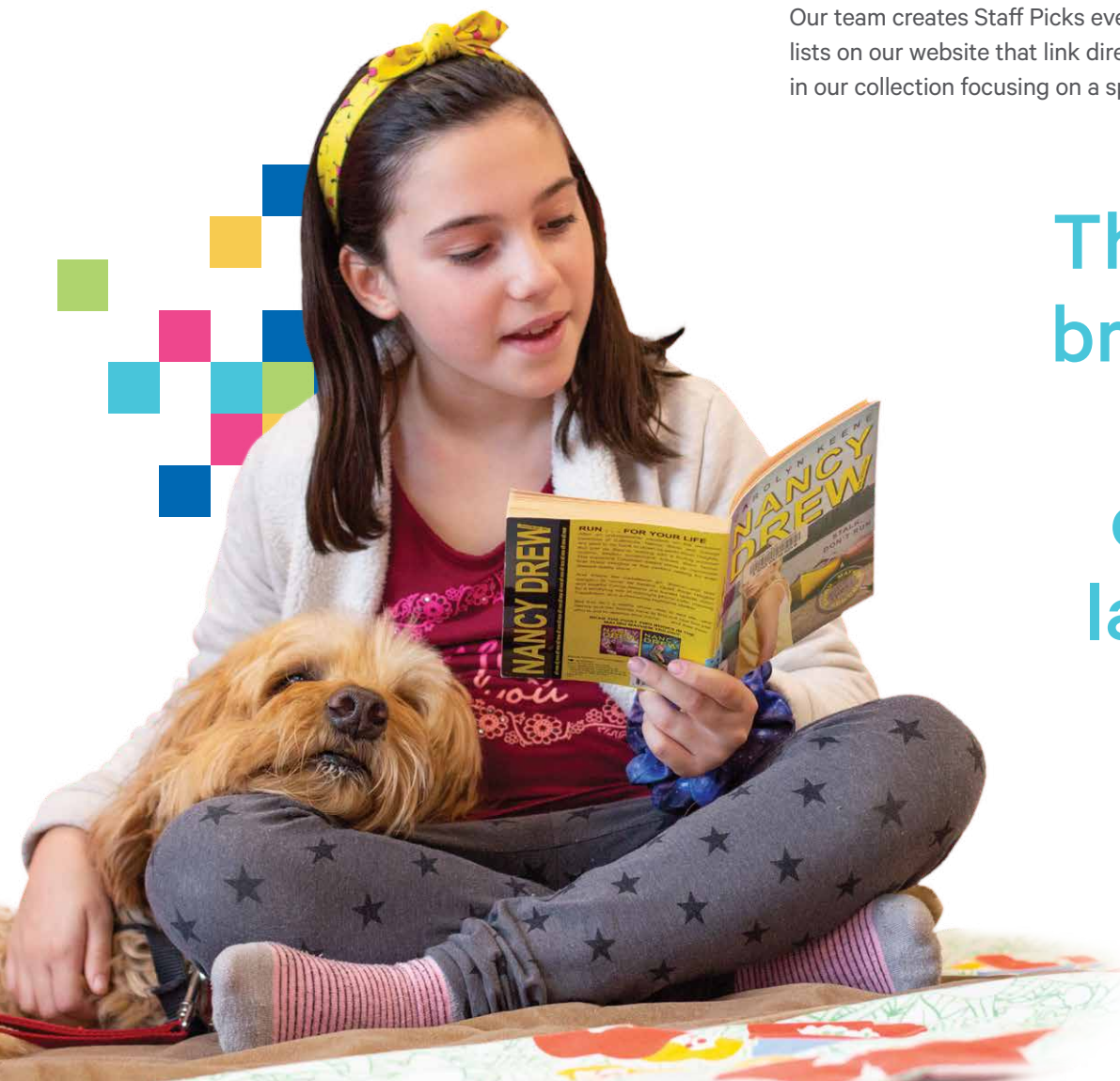
Traditional literacy has its roots in reading and writing. Books, children's reading programs, research, English Language Learning tutoring, Adult Literacy tutoring, and learning tools remain an important part of our services.

As technology has improved and more individuals access digital library services like e-books, online resources, and streaming platforms, we've been able to adapt how we help build literacy.

Every week, across our Libraries, foundational English language learning is happening. In one room, you may find pairs of Canadian newcomers and volunteer tutors, working on conversation skills. Tucked away in another corner, you might see a patient Paws to Read™ pup, listening to a fourth grader read a chapter book aloud.

We find that people are still turning to their Library for reading recommendations, and we love to deliver. Our team creates Staff Picks every month—reading lists on our website that link directly to books and items in our collection focusing on a special topic or genre.

The quick
brown fox
jumped
over the
lazy dog.





في يوم من الأيام ، كانت هناك مكتبة.

Once upon a time, there was a library.



“ When the children ask Death why he has come for their grandmother, he regales them with a story of love and the relationship between sorrow and delight, grief and joy, and life and death. Ringtved does a beautiful job showing that death does not have to be scary or feared.”

– Erin Morice, Collection Development, speaking to CBC about *Cry, Heart, But Never Break* by Glenn Ringtved as a recommended title for “Helping Children Cope with Loss and Grief”



Digital Literacy

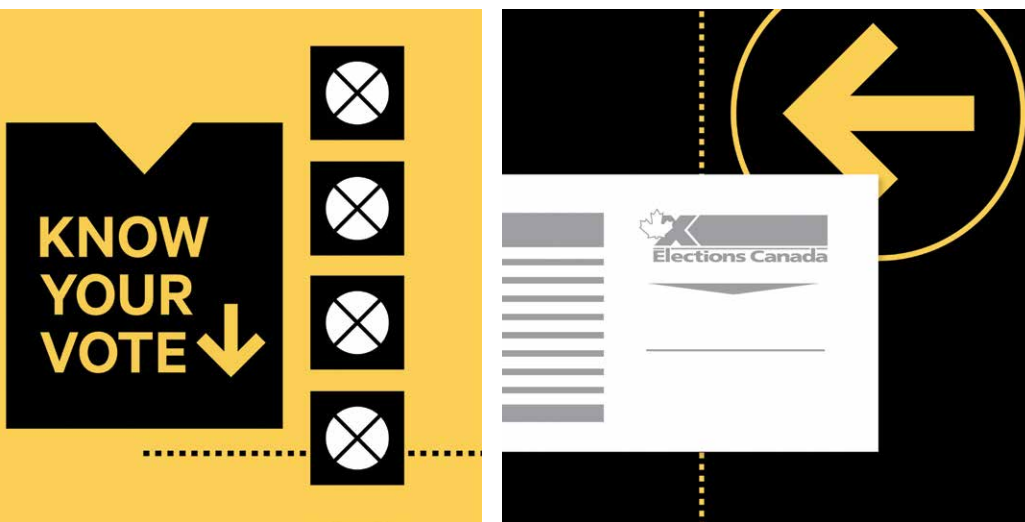
This year, we added several new online resources to our E-Library, including one called Niche Academy. Niche Academy is a collection of how-to video tutorials for online resources in our E-Library, as well as popular social media platforms or computer applications. It brings the Library experience into the learner's home, with immediate on-demand support, and can also be used as a refresher after a One-on-One Technology Training session.

In March 2020, as the Library closed its physical spaces in support of COVID-19 prevention, our E-Library and our efforts to increase digital literacy and access to technology became even more important as a lifeline for community connection and wellness.



Political Literacy

Launched in September 2019, the Library's Know Your Vote campaign's aim was to support and inform voters who live in the electoral districts of Halifax Public Libraries. By creating a website resource hub, and hosting staff outreach events in our communities, Know Your Vote worked to increase the number of voters in the 2019 federal election.





“ My two tween children and I visit the Library about once a week. We feel like it is another home. We feel safe and happy there and we are grateful for the inclusive and compassionate atmosphere.”

- Natalie

Health Literacy

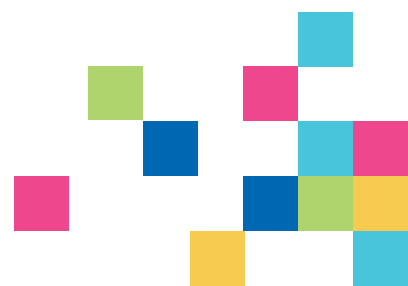
The Library, as a space for everyone, is committed to providing information, resources, and events that support the health and wellbeing of our community members. Over the past year, we have focused on mental health support and education through partnered programs like Psychology Month lectures and mental illness support sessions for families. We also strive to encourage movement and healthy decision-making through the accessible programs we offer for all ages, like Mocean

Dance workshops; and the online resources featured in our collection, like the LGBTQ+ Health Guide and the Nova Scotia Health Authority's Patient Assistance Guide.

The health of our staff is key to the success of all our initiatives, and in 2019-20 our newly established People & Culture team made great strides in creating internal health resources and training for staff.

“ This ‘laughing for no reason’ form of yoga empties the lungs of stale air and balances the different energies in your body.”

- from the *Laughter Yoga* series at Keshen Goodman



Food Literacy

Our plate continues to be very full with delicious and informative Food and Cooking programs. In addition to workshops with our Food Literacy Specialist and local chefs, this year we launched a new series, called Cooking Club for Newcomers. The weekly program brings together new Canadians, drawing on the shared experience of making a meal and learning skills to create a welcoming social group. Participants also celebrate their different cultures and traditions through workshops. Akemi Umebashi, a newcomer to Canada from Japan, said that the program has empowered her to build friendships in her new city and share recipes from home.

FRESHFest brought together many of our partners to celebrate the unique flavours of Nova Scotia. The full-day event featured hands-on activities, cooking demonstrations, education, games, and plenty of tasty discoveries.

FRESHFest stands as a one-day example of the work we are doing year-round across all our Libraries to provide healthy food choices to food-insecure communities, share important information about food purchasing, preparation, and cooking; and overall, increase food literacy in Halifax.

In October 2019, Halifax Central Library hosted its second FRESHFest, a festival-style exploration of all things food.





1 oz = 28.53 g
1 Tbsp = 3 tsp
1 tsp = 15 ml
2 pints = 1 quart
= 32 fl oz = 1L



“ I can't imagine living in Halifax without this Library. It has changed my life in Canada.”

– Akemi Umebashi



**Beyond
Our Walls**
470 offsite events,
out and about in
the community

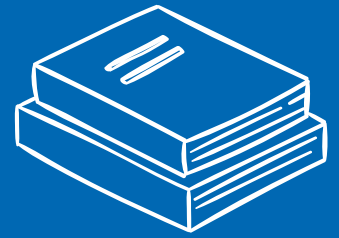
Library & Me

17,503
new Library cardholders

3,303,028
Library visits

33,627 volunteer hours*

*Does not include March 2020 statistics.



3,687,139

WiFi connections

456,353

Public PC bookings

1,316

Technology
Training
appointments

Young Minds

7,238

kids registered for
TD Summer Reading
Club 2019

8,670

took part in youth literacy
programs like Homework
Help, Leading Readers,
and SHINE

9,473

puppet show
viewers

**Access for
Everyone**

51,000

free menstrual
products provided
at Library branches



???

712,586
info inquiries

Literacy on the Move

3,228

Library Kiosk items checked
out at Halifax Stanfield
International Airport and
Tallahassee Recreation Centre

63,002

items delivered
through Home Delivery
and Borrow by Mail

Welcome, Newcomers

3,176

hours of English
Conversation
Group sessions

828

English Language
Learning one-on-one
sessions

308

Cooking Club
for Newcomers
participants

Togetherness Through Arts & Culture

Top-Attended Events and Festivals at the Library:

SYMPHONY
NOVA SCOTIA

Halifax Jazz
Festival



PRIDE 2019

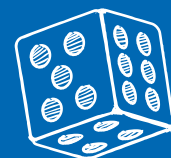
TD presents

African Heritage Month
events at Halifax Public
Libraries



9,050

Library events



3,426

participants in hobby-sharing
socials, from knitting, to Bridge,
to board games

Getting Down to Business

154 Business & Career
support sessions

10,427 meeting room
bookings

Food Security

9,017 adults took part in community food
socials, like Tea Times and Snack Socials

1,631 attendees at Dartmouth North's
Mealtime for Teens



Hit Record
2,283

Media Studio bookings—from
a sister recording a song for
her family to a podcast on
entrepreneurship, you stepped
up to the mic

**Social Media
Engagement**

3,000,000+

Twitter Impressions

71,000+

Facebook Engagements



em·pa·thy

The Library's approach
to operating with
'people at the heart
of all we do.'



Empathy

Oh, the comfort, the inexpressible
Comfort of feeling safe with a person,
Having neither to weight thoughts,
Nor measure words—but pouring them
All right out—just as they are
Chaff and grain together,
Certain that a faithful hand will
Take and sift them,
Keep what is worth keeping,
And with the breath of kindness
Blow the rest away.

— George Eliot



Reducing Social Isolation and Breaking Down Barriers

Over the past year, we've continued to focus on reducing social isolation in Halifax, and ensuring the Library is a safe place for all. Many of our most vulnerable community members call the Library a second home—a safe space to connect with others, use technology, and feel comfortable. Many of our Libraries are now offering weekly social get-togethers that focus on healthy food, discussion, and providing support as it's needed. Additionally, programs like English Language Learning, English Conversation Groups, and our Cooking Club for Newcomers ensure that new Canadians feel 'at home' in the Library, and in their communities at large.

Empathy & Compassion: Supporting those who need us most

This year, a significant portion of our frontline staff members took part in interactive training sessions with Ryan Dowd, author of *The Librarian's Guide to Homelessness*. Dowd is the Executive Director of Illinois' second largest homeless shelter. He delivers training across the globe, focusing on empathy, respect and understanding, helping staff gain confidence in challenging situations.

We also extended the invitation to this training to our partners. Organizations that work closely with vulnerable communities, like shelters, Halifax Regional Police, and local universities had the opportunity to learn and share ideas.

"At the end of the day, it's really about treating people like they matter, and that they realize it too, so they want to bring their best selves to the library. How, and why we do things is as important as the outcome, and we'll see more positive interactions when we lead with empathy," says Sheena Jamison, Community Navigator, Central District.

Dignity & Health: Fighting period poverty

This year, all 14 branches started offering menstrual products, for free, in all washrooms.

It's not typically talked about, but period poverty affects women, girls, and transgender individuals in our community. For many reasons, not everyone has equal access to menstrual products and we saw an opportunity to help.

"By reducing barriers to good health and increasing access to menstrual products, we're creating a more equitable community for women, girls, and the transgender community," said Asa Kachan, Halifax Public Libraries, CEO.

In the first year, Halifax Public Libraries offered 51,000 products to our community. And we heard so much positive feedback. Halifax Public Libraries is just one organization working to reduce barriers and support those experiencing period poverty, and we're proud to be part of the change.

Sharing & Amplifying

In October 2019, Canadian literary icon, Margaret Atwood, visited Halifax Central Library as part of the cross-Canada tour for her new novel, *The Testaments*. Atwood's team chose the Library, rather than a large venue in the city. And Halifax chose Atwood: After an early bird contest, the remaining free tickets to the event 'sold out' in two minutes. Atwood's message of intellectual freedom, social justice, and equality is one that will always stand in line with Library values, and we were honoured to host her.

Atwood was one of many authors and presenters who brought their voices to the Library stage in 2019-20. The Library hosted events ranging from discussions about disproportionate street checks on Black citizens in Halifax, to Drag Queen Storytimes, to academic presentations on the effects of climate change. We believe it is our duty to position the Library platform as a safe space to elevate and amplify the talents, missions, and causes of changemakers. As global-scale social and political shifts intersect with information overload, our platform is more important than ever and we are responsible for using it for good.

“Every book that you open is like a door. So, some of those doors lead to wonderful and liberating places. Others don't. There's nothing that says just by the act of being a book, it's necessarily a good thing.”

– Margaret Atwood, at Halifax Central Library





Photo credit: LaMeia Reddick



“ We believe it is our duty to position the Library platform as a safe space to elevate and amplify the talents, missions, and causes of changemakers.”



Photo credit: LaMeia Reddick

in•tel•lec•tual free•dom

The right of every individual to both seek and receive information at the Library, from all points of view, without restriction.



“Going ‘beyond our walls’ also means getting out in our communities and building relationships.”



A Strong Network

The end of our 2019-20 fiscal year was largely defined by COVID-19. As March arrived, the pandemic reached Nova Scotia's doors, and the Library, following public health recommendations and requirements, we closed our buildings on March 16. Working from home, Library staff moved swiftly to determine: “How can we recreate the Library experience, at home?” and “How can we continue to connect with those who rely on the Library—whether that be for accessing the internet, social connection, or snacks?” As our 2020 year drew to a close and we leveraged our web and social presence, and community partnerships to answer these questions, the resourcefulness of our team, and the care of our communities, had never been more apparent. We look forward to telling you the many stories that emerged from—and continue to emerge from—our response to COVID-19, in the months to come.

a·dapt

To make Library tools, services, and strengths suitable for new uses or purposes.





Always Adapting

We adapt and grow with our community. Our role is to answer the public call by reflecting and honouring our community's needs through the services and resources we offer; and, at the heart of our decision-making, we are anticipating and responding to the ever-present: What's next?


Beyond Our Walls

Our new Outdoor Library at Keshen Goodman Public Library is one example of adapting the Library experience to suit community needs and increase wellbeing. One of our busiest libraries, Keshen Goodman opened in 2001 and has not stopped growing.

Newcomers have discovered the Library to be a welcoming and helpful community gathering spot, and teens have been known to enjoy lounge spaces after school. With the prospect of some repairs on the horizon, and knowing the success of Dartmouth North's Outdoor Library, we knew that we could make changes that went well beyond fixing sidewalks and entrance ways.

The Outdoor Library features updated landscaping, new "pencil" hammocks, an outdoor stage, and a café patio. Its humble mascot is Jerome the Gnome, named by Abbi, our Gnome the Gnome contest winner. Keshen Goodman's once conventional exterior now serves as a space for relaxation, educational programming, and after-hours enjoyment.

Going 'beyond our walls' also means getting out in our communities and building relationships. Whether we host a booth at a career fair featuring information about our Small Business support programs, or pop up at a beach with recommended summer reads, we're always keen to find new and surprising ways to reach new people and places.



Faces of the Library



Randolph White

Community Library Assistant
Sackville Public Library
Started working at the Library: 2007

"I love that every day is different. I love meeting and engaging with all of the people that walk through the doors, and how we can take what we learn from them to provide service that is unique to them."



Alison Creech

Librarian
Alderney Gate Public Library
Started working at the Library: 1998

"It's exciting to work for a library right now—we are always learning, evolving and changing. Whenever I try something new, I learn about my community and I learn something about myself."

Achieving our vision requires great work on the part of our staff, volunteers, donors, and community organizations that partner with the Library. We are so grateful for those who share their talents, compassion, and ideas with us every day.

Monica Carvery

Library Assistant
Collection Management
Started working at the Library: 1979

"In my job I like the independence and research that goes with it. Having access to all the books and information is great! And being able to provide this to our public professionally is very rewarding!"





Volunteers Make a Difference

Sonia Veraboiff has been a volunteer with Bedford Public Library's English Language Learning (ELL) Program since the service launched 20 years ago. Her love for education, formal training as a teacher, and world travel make her a compassionate and dedicated volunteer.

When asked what she enjoys about the program, Sonia says: "I just love meeting new people and I learn so much from my learners." While Sonia has been paired with more than 30 learners through the ELL program, this does not take into account the unofficial friendships that naturally form. It's not unusual for Sonia to meet family members and friends of her learners, further helping New Canadians build community in their new home.

Whether it's helping Learners navigate the grocery store, prepare them with financial terms for visiting a new bank, or encouraging a talented piano player so she could gain the confidence she needed to offer lessons, Sonia supports literacy and all forms of learning in her community.



Cathy Jennex

Branch Operations Supervisor
J.D. Shatford Memorial Public Library
Started working at the Library: 1992

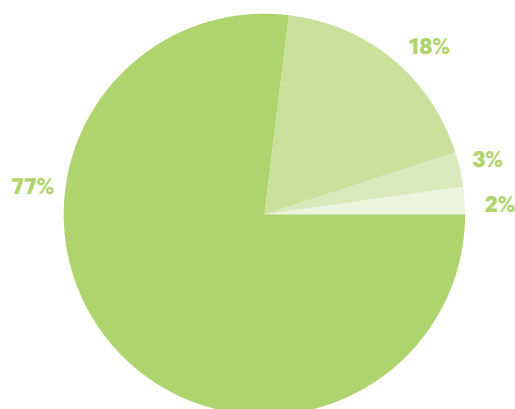
"I have the privilege to work with such an extraordinary group of people, who rise to meet every challenge."

Financials

Halifax Public Libraries receives the majority of its funding from Halifax Regional Municipality and the Province of Nova Scotia. In addition to this core funding, we are incredibly grateful for the support of our generous community members. Each year, donors share stories about learning, growth and connection, and give back by making a gift to Halifax Public Libraries. 100% of donations support library service—taking it from operational to extraordinary.

Salaries and benefits comprise the majority of the Library's expenditures. All staff in our branches and departments work tirelessly to provide an exceptional experience for our community members. As the Library evolves, we're doing even more in our spaces and communities, and staff members are the driving force behind this evolution.

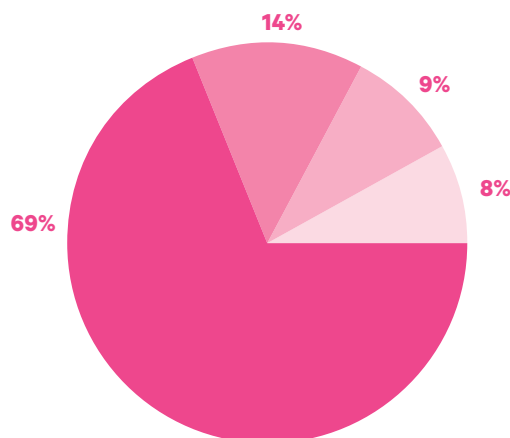
To ensure the Library's spending aligns with identified priorities, the Finance & Audit Committee of the Halifax Regional Library Board oversees the Library's financials. This year's budget priorities included reducing wait times on existing e-books and responding to increased community need for digital materials. When the Library closed its physical spaces to help prevent the spread of COVID-19, the Board quickly responded by approving additional spending from reserves to further improve the Library's e-resources. Additional copies of popular titles were purchased, and the addition of the Lucky Day collection (the hottest titles—no wait lists) was welcomed. Additional funds were allocated to further diversify the collection in underrepresented areas such as Indigenous, Black, and LGBTQ+ titles.



Revenue

\$20,988,382	■ Municipal
\$4,983,167	■ Provincial
\$798,764	■ Library-Generated
\$469,493	■ Special Projects & Donations/Gifts

\$27,239,806*



Expenditures

\$18,944,701	■ Salaries & Benefits
\$3,935,660	■ Facilities & Operations
\$2,334,080	■ Library Materials
\$2,265,559	■ Special Projects & Other

\$27,480,000

* In addition The Halifax Regional Library Board approved \$240,000 from reserve funds to provide additional e-resources to the community in response to COVID-19 and other special projects.



Donate

Few places level the playing field and bring the community together like the Library. We're committed to providing free access for everyone to a diverse collection, vibrant spaces, and engaging events. Whether big or small, your donations help make this possible. You can find more information and make an online donation by visiting halifaxpubliclibraries.ca/donate.

Halifax Regional Library
Charitable Registration# 87486 6551 RR 0001
60 Alderney Drive, Dartmouth, NS B2Y 4P8
Phone: (902) 490-5744 | Email: agadmin@halifax.ca
halifaxpubliclibraries.ca



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