

A whole digital world to explore at Aurora Public Library

If you've explored every last inch of your home during this time of self-isolation, there's a whole digital world to explore via the Aurora Public Library.

As a response to the COVID-19 pandemic and closures of public spaces across Ontario, the Aurora Public Library (APL) has launched a digital library card service to enable more residents than ever before to access the myriad online services they continue to provide.

Membership at the APL is free to all who live, work, attend school or own property in any York Region municipality, and by heading over to the APL's website at aurorapl.ca and filling out a brief form, you will be able to access all online programming within 72 hours.

“One of the things we have done in the short-term is bringing forward the ability for people who don't already have a library card to go online and get temporary digital cards,” explains Bruce Gorman, CEO of the Aurora Public Library. “You can use that card to take advantage of any of our online services right then and there.”

These online services are not limited simply to e-books and audio books; through a wide variety of programs and services, holders of digital library cards can stream movies, access public services, and even take online courses to acquire new skills or brush up on some dustier ones in this time of isolation.

“It's a great place to spend quality time while we're all at home and doing the right thing by staying at home,” says Gorman. “It is a great way to spend some time with yourself learning, or your kids too. There's lots of opportunity for the public to spend some time at the Aurora Public Library at home.”

Before COVID-19 began gaining a foothold in Ontario, the Library was already well-positioned in the realm of digital services. As the situation rapidly developed, Library staffers knew that strengthening their online outreach would be critical.

Resources include the APL's Cloud Library, which offers hundreds of thousands of e-books and audio books, Hoopla, which streams countless movies and TV shows, Tumblebooks – a collection of animated online kids' books, language learning through Little Pim and Mango, and LinkedIn learning courses.

“It is a great opportunity,” says Gorman. “I have heard this quite a bit in recent days – people talking about how to spend their time doing different things and trying out different things, and this is a neat opportunity to try something new. Through LinkedIn learning, there are over

14,000 online courses you can take, things like software development, leadership and business courses, and these are all free through the Aurora Public Library. Once this has subsided and we come back to some normalcy, you'll have a new skill.

?I have been taking advantage of some of the leadership courses to hone my skills and I know some of our other staff have been taking unique courses that are maybe not something they would normally take, or take a different spin on something, look at something they wouldn't normally look like. Everyone at the Library, we have access to these programs and our staff take advantage of them.?

Since ramping up their digital library card program last week, Gorman says there has been a positive uptake from the community and registration numbers continue to rise.

?Once you're exposed to our wonderful digital world, you will have a whole host of new opportunities to look at it,? he says. ?I would encourage everyone to go and if you don't have a card, please come to our website and we will give you a digital card in just a day or so ? and explore all these great learning opportunities.

?As we are all attempting to do our best by staying home as much as possible, please leave your library books at home with you. You don't have to return them and we will be waiving any fines or fees, so stay home, stay safe with your family, and open up the Aurora Public Library's digital world to you and your family.?

By Brock Weir