

Aurora Public Library welcomes new CEO



Jodi Marr is set to take the helm of the Aurora Public Library as its new Chief Executive Officer.

Marr's new position as CEO was confirmed by the Aurora Public Library (APL) on Wednesday and solidifies her position at APL after more than five months as Acting CEO following the departure of Bruce Gorman this past summer for a similar role in Richmond Hill.

"On behalf of the Aurora Public Library Board, we are thrilled to appoint Jodi Marr as Aurora Public Library's new CEO," said Adam Mobbs, Chair of the Aurora Public Library Board, in a statement. "Her leadership, vision and dedication to community-driven service make her the ideal choice to guide the library's continued growth and success."

"Hiring a CEO is one of the most important roles of a Board of Trustees and the Aurora Public Library Board took this task very seriously. Our Board formed a CEO Selection Committee, engaging members of Town Council and Town staff and worked with a leading executive search firm to conduct a comprehensive national search process."

Marr's appointment is effective immediately, and speaking to The Auroran, she said she was eager to hit the ground running.

"I am really excited for this role, I am really excited for the future, and I really do believe that the Aurora Public Library is one of the best libraries," says Marr. "We work really hard, we have so many people come through our doors and last year we hit our most in-person visits ever."

Marr joined the APL team in 2018, first in a customer opportunity capacity, which included several programming initiatives, including book clubs and story times "all driven by a desire to help staff "make their big ideas into a reality."

Gorman's departure, of course, presented further opportunities to bring big ideas to fruition.

"I really enjoyed being in a management role and I really like working in Aurora," says Marr. "When the opportunity came to contribute even greater, I was all over it. I really liked what we were doing with programming, and I have done some really engaging initiatives, made some really positive changes, and [in this role] I can just make a greater impact, work closer with the Town "and now that Aurora Town Square is open there is going to be so many opportunities for joint collaboration between us and all of the stakeholders."

"I have a big imagination and I see a lot of exciting things down the road for the Library and the Town to work together on."

One exciting thing down the road will be the development of a new Strategic Plan for the APL this year, which will include significant community consultation.

"It's [a chance] to work with the community and really hear what they think about the Library and make some changes that they want to see. I'm excited about that," she says. "If we're talking a few years down the road, I would really like to see APL and the Town of Aurora recognized for the good work that we do by winning a couple of awards through the Ministry of Culture and Tourism. I think we're already on track, I think we're already a leader within the industry, and we can really give back to other libraries in the area. With Aurora Town Square just opening, there is so much potential there and there can be so many great things we can do with the Town of Aurora, the Cultural Centre, the Museum & Archives, in the Performance Hall. All working together to come up with programming and services that will be a great draw for the community and help them celebrate the wonderful space that we have here."

Elsewhere, the APL is preparing to launch a kiosk at the SARC so people in Aurora's northeast will have better access to library materials and be better engaged in what APL has to offer. Within their walls at Yonge and Church Streets, Marr says she would like to lay the foundations of offering a Seed Library, not only to help keep local gardens flourishing, but to help highlight native pollinators, encourage self-sufficiency, and highlight food disparities.

"It's a big initiative I think would be wonderful for the future in Aurora," says Marr. "Our Library of Things just launched and we have had fantastic results with a long hold list for very specific products. The more that we can do here, we can continue to grow that so the community has access to not just good books, but also things they need to better their lives."

The days when libraries were just about books is long-gone. Instead, in Aurora's case, over the last two decades, it has grown to become a vital community hub on many fronts. It's a legacy Marr would like to further, and it's also reflective of what's now expected of today's librarians.

"It's a diverse role," she says. "You can be someone who works on large-scale events, you can be someone who works on core library services and programming, you can be someone who engages with community partners or the collection, but everything you do as a Librarian is to serve the community you work under. I really see a Librarian as a servant, someone that is here to support the community, listen to their needs, and create the right projects and programs that will help that community grow."

"When you can make an impact and really help achieve those big goals for libraries like civic engagement, literacy-building, education, all of those greater things that you do, it really makes you feel good!"

By Brock Weir