Library of Things initiative set to launch as APL concludes Ontario Public Libraries Month

The Aurora Public Library has been a hive of activity this October as Ontario Public Libraries Month unfolded.

From a College & University Fair that attracted hundreds, to activities in their maker and creative spaces, to story hours and more within the Aurora Town Square complex, there was something for everybody on the menu ? but, in many respects, it was just another month for the Aurora Public Library (APL). It's always been a hive of activity and shows no signs of slowing down.

?Whenever you go into any business training, they say the worst business model is something that tries to meet everyone's needs ? but libraries do that. We find a way!? says Jodi Marr, Acting CEO of the APL. ?It's all those age demographics, the economic levels and that's another important thing of what we do: you can come here and be able to spend time without feeling a financial burden. If you feel economic pressures, you can still attend our programming, use our space, and those little things help push forward. Everywhere else, it's ?buy a coffee if you want to use our WIFI and study;' the Library is that hub of space where you can come and just connect without feeling additional pressures from everywhere else.?

As the APL and libraries elsewhere have evolved away from institutions typified by the image of librarians delivering a pointed ?Shh!? at the slightest sneeze or hiccup, they have occasionally faced push-back, but Marr says these are opportunities to offer perspective on what libraries, can, could and should be.

?The Library is a great value-add to the community but other community members sometimes only see it from their perspective, of ?I want to study, so I need it to be quiet for me.' We have quiet options, meeting everyone's needs as best we can, but it's still important to have a story time out in the open every day at 10.30 a.m.

?You want people to use your spaces. If the Library was just a quiet space, we wouldn't be meeting anyone's needs, except for one very specific demographic. Our library is active and full of people who are engaged, so the noise level is going to go up, but that's what you want. These are your tax dollars and this is your library being well-used. A well-used library is all the value and it demonstrates its value as soon as you see us full of people.?

The next initiative the Library is stepping up to spearhead in the month ahead is a ?Library of Things? which will allow patrons in the community to check out things they might need only for a short period of time, such as a tool or appliance, or simply to find out how they work.

?It's a great way to borrow things you don't have the money to invest in,? says Marr, adding the APL considered becoming part of

The Lendery initiative in York Region, but decided to step out on their own. ?There is so much stuff sitting around our houses, and our housing and spaces are getting smaller and smaller and [purchasing them outright] doesn't make sense all the time.?

For Marr, building partnerships with community organizations on initiatives like these open up untold doors for libraries in being all they can be for their patrons and the community at large.

?We're at capacity with what we can do, but when we start with new partnerships we can expand and that's when you become a really powerful organization giving back to the Town, creating more and more engaging events,? she says. ?I really do find that we're here for you when you need us; not everyone needs us all the time, some people are financially able to go and purchase their own books and hang onto it, but what we do really well is when you need us, we're here from you and we will support you through all those things.

?Need to find a job? We've got connections to resources for that. You need to study and improve your education? We have community resources for that. Starting a new business? Come and use our study rooms and meet with clients. We're meeting you where your needs are.?

By Brock Weir