

Library of Things takes Aurora Public Library beyond books, media



The Aurora Public Library has long-challenged the idea of being a place just to check out a book or for quiet study; now it's a place that can help you get your household projects done.

This month, the Aurora Public Library (APL) is excited to roll out its 'Library of Things,' a new collection of tools, small appliances, and much more that card-holders can check out for up to two weeks.

While a Library of Things is not a new concept, it's a first for the APL and one that has been spearheaded by Victoria Dillon, APL's Manager of Access and Collections.

Dillon says the initiative will be 'really life-changing for some people.'

'The idea of the Library of Things is kind of the same ethos as the Library itself: you borrow a book, it's all about sharing and borrowing. Here, you're borrowing something you can use,' says Dillon. 'A lot of other York Region libraries have already got on this and we're almost late to this, I think. At APL, we're not a traditional library; the library is pretty loud and it's not that silent place you think of growing up. We're always trying to be non-traditional, I think, and having this non-traditional collection is something we should have had a long time ago, frankly.'

Acquiring items for the Library of Things will be an ongoing process, and members of the public are encouraged to reach out with suggestions of what they would like to see up for grabs, but as the program launches, they have 15 items available.

These include a digital camera, a Cricut machine, speakers, and drawing pad that users can connect to their computers.

For more outdoorsy patrons, there are snowshoes, walking poles, a telescope, a gardening set, fishing rods, compact camping tents, and more.

'I had a feeling our community was probably going to other libraries to get these things,' says Dillon. 'Now I'm in the middle of collecting information from our community as well, and we have a lot of suggestions, which is awesome. Our wish list is strong and we're just starting.'

One suggestion has been the addition of a drone, which Dillon says 'we don't know if legally we can do that,' along with a leaf

blower, which is a more feasible option. Also considered for the future are children's toys, but boardgames might be a challenge from a maintenance standpoint.

?A lot of libraries have boardgames, and that is great, but something like a boardgame is really tough to maintain the quality of ? you're going to lose Monopoly money, you're going to lose the figurines, and having a staff member sit down and count each Monopoly dollar I don't think is a valuable use of time,? says Dillon, noting they have a budget mandate of nothing over \$1,000 at this time.

Objects that ultimately end up in the Library of Things have to be easily maintained by staff.

As the Library of Things rolls out, patrons will be able to initially check out items for 14 days, a difference from the 21 days allowed for a book, and you can renew how long you have each item up to five times if there are no other holds in place.

?If you're going away for three weeks and nobody wants the hiking poles, you can renew it again and still use it on your trip,? says Dillon. ?These are meant to be shared and we don't want someone taking it for months and not being able to renew it.

?We are totally open for suggestions. We have an email for suggestions and we will be happy to take any electronic suggestions as well. We want to build [the Library of Things] so it is things that people actually want. We started with things with a community pulse to see what it would be like and this is the first part of it. We really want to make it so it is made by the community not by us.

?Test it out, see how it works, and we would love to have you as a member to borrow everything we offer.?

By Brock Weir