

## Library Board Report

To: Newmarket Public Library Board

From: Tracy Munusami, C.E.O.

Date: December 17, 2025

RE: Library Statistics

### Key Issue

A member of the public has raised concerns about the accuracy and integrity of statistics reported to the Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Gaming. Library staff are committed to providing accurate and meaningful data to support the Library Board's oversight and strategic decision making. Current quarterly reports offer a high-level overview aligned with the Library's strategic priorities. However, system limitations prevent capturing all forms of library service in one integrated platform.

### Recommendation

**That** the Library Board receive the report for information;

**And that** the Library Board adopts the current method of reporting statistics for the 2026 reporting period;

**And that** The Library Board directs staff to explore and evaluate alternative methods of reporting library statistics, and to incorporate these considerations into the next strategic planning process.

### Strategic Implications

Library statistics reported to the Board quarterly are based on the 2022-2025 Strategic Plan priorities.

### Background

A member of the public has raised concerns about the accuracy of the statistics reported by Newmarket Library to both the Library Board and the Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Gaming. It is important to clarify that the quarterly statistics dashboard provided to the Library Board is designed to offer a high-level overview of the Library's overall performance. These reports are

not intended to capture every detail, but rather to provide a broad overview of trends and progress in key service areas.

Since launching the strategic plan in 2022, the Library Board has focused on building stronger connections within the community. This shift has been about modernizing library service to better reflect what the Newmarket community needs today.

Some of the most significant service changes include:

- Breaking down barriers to access
  - Previously, library memberships had more restrictions, which created barriers for some patrons. By opening registration requirements, and eliminating fines, the Library is accessible to more individuals regardless of where they live or their circumstances. These updates to policy allow more people to apply for library cards and reduce the financial barrier to borrowing materials. These changes reflect the Library's commitment to affirming inclusivity.
- Meeting people where they are
  - Outreach has grown from an occasional program to something that is part of the Library's everyday work. Library staff are regularly out in the community, meeting people where they are, at local events, schools, the community centre, or partner organizations. This approach helps the Library stay visible, build relationships, and connect with residents who might not otherwise visit the physical library location on Park Avenue.
- More diverse and inclusive programs and services
  - The Library has broadened its offerings to include programs that appeal to a wider range of interests, ages, and cultural backgrounds. This includes everything from literacy programs, to partnering with local organizations, to inviting the community in for social programs. The goal is to attract people back to the Library and create opportunity for connection out in the community. This is especially important after the isolation of the pandemic. Diverse and inclusive programming positions the Library a hub for connection and learning.

These changes have also shaped the way we collect statistics. The data now reflects what matters most under this new approach: Active members, circulation of materials, in-person visits, programs, and outreach. The Quarterly Statistics to the Board give a big-picture view, a quick pulse check rather than a deep dive, so the Library Board can see how the Library's performance is trending year over year.

## Discussion

The member of the public who has questioned the validity of the statistics has asked:

- 1) That the Newmarket Library follow the Provincial definition of "active cardholder", and that the figure be included in the Library's "Report to the Community 2025"
- 2) That Newmarket Library should report on membership renewals and lapses.

- 3) That the Chief Executive Officer should give a presentation to the Board on the capabilities of Polaris to aid members' understanding on what it can do.

In response to the provincial definition of active memberships, the Newmarket Library captures the total number of individuals who currently have access to library services. Memberships remain active for two years and will expire unless the patron renews their membership in-person, online or over the phone. This figure is updated monthly and includes new sign-ups, renewals, on going memberships, while removing expired memberships.

The Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Gaming defines an active member as "cardholders who have used their library card in the past two years." While this is a clear definition, system limitations make it challenging to fully meet this standard. Library services are accessed in many ways beyond traditional check outs, such as attending programs in-house and in partner organizations, using in-library technology, studying in the spaces, browsing reference materials, accessing online databases and resources from home, utilizing the Library Vending machines, and through Visiting Library Services. These activities represent significant engagement but are not all captured within the Integrated Library System (Polaris).

The way the Library tracks active memberships is acceptable as stated in correspondence from Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Gaming:

"A1.14 Number of Active Cardholders doesn't specify how a card must be used in order to count as active, just that it be used: *"State the number of library cardholders who have used their library card in the past two years."* We recognize that there are many ways that a library card can be considered to be "used" (checking out materials, renting a room, etc.) and that processes vary from library to library.

We understand that Newmarket PL has opted to use the number of unexpired cards in its Integrated Library System to calculate A1.14 Number of Active Cardholders. As you have set your cards to expire every two years, then you are counting everyone who has used their card in the last two years as

well any patrons who have received a card in the last two years but haven't yet used it in a way that is formally counted (e.g. participating in a drop-in program). We have no concerns with this method or the integrity of the data.”

-Douglas Davey, Library Services  
Advisor,  
Culture Policy and Services Unit

Currently, the system can only track physical item checkouts from the main location and vending machines. Other forms of usage occur across multiple platforms that are not integrated, making it impossible to report a complete picture of engagement based on the Ministry's definition. While a member of the public has suggested that reporting on cardholder usage, limitations in our systems means that any data provided would reflect only a portion of the ways patrons interact with library services.

Library staff will be adding the 2025 Active Membership figure to “Report to the Community 2025”.

The member of the public also requested that Newmarket Library report on library card renewals and membership lapses. At present, Library staff are not aware of any method to extract renewal data from the Integrated Library System (Polaris). To confirm, the IT Department contacted Polaris directly to determine whether this functionality exists. Polaris has responded with:

“Polaris does not currently have a way to track or report on patron library card renewals. There isn't a specific transaction type logged for patron card renewal (or patron expiration date being updated) within the Polaris transactions database, and as such there isn't an easy way to see how often this may have occurred within a given date range”

- Re: Assistance with Integrated Library System response from Polaris

At the time of this report, Library staff are actively exploring an option to accurately track and report expired cards on a monthly or quarterly basis. Updates on progress and potential solutions will be shared with the Library Board as they become available.

As part of the next round of strategic planning the Library Board and staff can consider the capabilities of Polaris when developing or refining metrics for organizational performance. This will ensure that reporting expectations align with what the system can realistically deliver and support informed decision-making.

While the current statistics provide a strong foundation, there is an opportunity for the Library Board to offer input on what data should be reported quarterly. This collaborative approach ensures reporting remains relevant, strategic, and aligns with Library priorities.

### **Financial Implications**

There are no immediate financial implications