



:. ontario library association



Administrators of Rural and Urban
Public Libraries of Ontario (ARUPLO)

Libraries Strengthen Rural Communities

Libraries are an integral part of any community, regardless of size. However there are unique opportunities libraries offer rural communities as well as unique challenges.

Rural Public Library Services:

Economic Development:

- Agri and business development resources and workshops to support rural entrepreneurs.
- Local fundraising, for example 'Food for Fines' to support rural food banks

Business Retention and Expansion:

- Pre-screening for Ontario works to avoid job seekers travelling to a larger city.
- Exam proctors and space (examples include real-estate exams, and Agri business courses).
- Partnerships with agencies such as the YWCA (babysitting, programming)
- Libraries are a significant community youth employer/provider of Ontario student volunteer hours (OSSD hours).

Immigrant Retention:

- Settlement services for newcomers in partnership with the Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration (resources, immigration and citizenship forms, access to government documents).
- Sunday wifi access from the library is heavily used in some communities by migrant workers contacting their family.

Downtown Revitalization

- Access to the Internet, free 24 hour Wi-fi, and specifically broadband access. Many rural communities have limited household broadband access. In some rural communities the library is one of the only places for broadband access.
- Community meeting space.
- Leaders and facilitators of cultural mapping for regional townships.
- Key contact point for government services via Service Canada outlets and county dissemination of information.
- Municipal Information Desks and Services: provision of municipal services such as tax payment, dog tags, marriage licenses, water sample drops off, burn permits, and a multitude of other services.
- Gallery space for local artists.

Challenges:

- Funding to support employment and government related services at the library has diminished yet these services are very much in demand.
- Digital citizens in rural communities: rural libraries are more heavily used for computer and broadband access than in non-rural communities. There is an opportunity to create and fund a province wide program specifically targeted to broadband/computer access for rural communities.
- Infrastructure: 24 library systems (10%) have an inadequate distribution of service outlets (i.e., residents are required to travel more than 30 minutes to reach the nearest public library).
- The estimated public library capital infrastructure obligation in Ontario for all communities is \$1.4 billion at present. If not properly addressed, this obligation will grow to \$2.1 billion by 2021.
- French digital information resources for rural libraries serving franco-ontarians (funding and selection).
- Few rural schools have a resourced school library program. This negatively impacts reading engagement and digital media skills for students in rural communities.

About the Administrators of Rural and Urban Public Libraries of Ontario (ARUPLO)

ARUPLO represents multi-branch public library systems that serve upper or single tier municipalities encompassing rural communities that may also include larger urban centres. Generally speaking, ARUPLO libraries are constituted within the boundaries of current and former counties in Ontario with a mission to be “leaders in fostering coordinated library services over dispersed geographic areas.” ARUPLO is the leading voice for rural public libraries in Ontario.

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About the Ontario Library Association (OLA)

OLA is a non-profit, charitable organization representing 5,000 members who work with or for public, academic, school, special, and government libraries. The association delivers professional development and networking opportunities, and advocates for excellence in library services.

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