

OLITA 2015 Annual Report

This year, more than half of OLITA Council was new, and we seized the opportunity to reevaluate our practices, reach out to our membership, and explore our *raison d'être*. While our divisional membership has declined from a high of 2,010 members in December 2014 to 1,848 in December 2015, we are confident that we are serving our members.

Over the years, OLITA has supported efforts to build technical competencies across a broad range of communities. This year we made progress on a number of fronts.

In May, Digital Odyssey's theme of *Open Data, Open Heritage* brought together a broad range of panelists and facilitators to engage attendees in workshops exploring effective ways to capture, use, and transform open data and heritage. Aure Moser inspired the audience through her origin story: a mapmaking librarian driven to improve the world through open source, open data, and open maps. We had 63 attendees this year, and the feedback we received from was universally positive.

OLITA revitalized the Technology Lending Library with the addition of new kits aimed at younger Makers, such as the Makey Makey and Squishy Circuits, as well as some more esoteric items including the Intel Edison and Grove kits, and a BKON "physical web" bluetooth beacon. Our efforts went beyond simply making items available for loan upon request and began outreach efforts, bringing a mobile "tech petting zoo" of library items to events such as Digital Odyssey, the First Nations Fall Gathering, the Child and Youth Expo, and the SuperConference to encourage attendees to get hands-on and play with the technology.

Council continued OLITA's tradition of working towards addressing imbalances in demographics of technology communities this year. This summer, we quickly rallied to support a girl who was excluded from taking part in a robotics program at her public library due to her gender. That policy decision was reversed, but the incident led us to draft a position statement on "Inclusiveness in Public Library Programming" that supports and encourages library programming that welcomes all individuals, in the hopes that future incidents will be averted.

This year's recipient of the OLITA Project Award, based on the criteria of problem solving, innovation, impact, timeliness, and contribution to the library community, was Kitchener Public Library for their "Borrow the Internet" initiative--an experiment based on data showing that almost a quarter of people living in the Waterloo region lacked access to the internet, and offering wifi hotspots as a means of addressing that inequity. The program proved to be very popular with residents, and challenged common conceptions of the role libraries play in a community.

A huge thanks goes out to Stephanie Orfano and Ana Vrana, the planners of the technology track for SuperConference this year. We are delighted to have been able to run a Hackfest for the second year in a row, and to be able to cap off a solid, diverse set of technology

sessions with a spotlight session by Avery Swartz ("Nobody Knows What They're Doing: Insider Stories from a Tech Entrepreneur").