

The year in review

This past year, the Montreal West Children's Library has maintained the commitment to its mission, and has remained a vibrant part of the Montreal West community and Elizabeth Ballantyne school, by offering an exemplary service and quality programming, in spite of the challenges and restrictions imposed by the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. We have risen to the task to reinvent programmes, activities and services, and maintain popular ones. Creative programming has been, and remains our mandate. Overall, the operations have been reduced in comparison to the pre-COVID period, but the Library has managed to successfully engage the community in educational and recreational initiatives thanks to its devoted staff.

In anticipation of the even broader reopening, we implemented a project that has been started before 2020 – improvement of the access to the Library. A ramp has been constructed in front of the outside doors to facilitate the access for parents with strollers or wheelchairs. The Vohra-Miller foundation is the generous sponsor of this project and we are greatly appreciative of their financial assistance.

The Board evaluated the importance to update the by-laws of the Library. They have not been reviewed since the registration of the Library as a non-profit organisation in the 1970s and needed a substantial revision. As part of this process, the Board has also legalised the name *Bibliothèque des jeunes de Montréal-Ouest/ Montréal West Children's Library* as our official name. The by-laws have been voted by the membership in March 2022 and are now official.

Adhering to the world movement 'No Late Fees', our Library definitely abandoned charging fees for overdue items. Even though fees were waved since the beginning of the pandemic in March 2020, we have resolutely transitioned to this new trend in inclusive library service.

Ever since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic the Library has provided continued services in a reinvented manner. In March 2022, we moved one step ahead again by opening the Library for study and leisure time. The study corner has become available as well as a sitting arrangement for families who are willing to spend time at the Library, and not limit themselves to only browsing the shelves and borrowing.

Our Library has become member of *l'Association des bibliothèques publiques de Québec (ABPQ)*. We have joined the big family of this Québec public libraries organization, and have gained access to different resources ABPQ offers. ABPQ has undertaken a new program - a diagnostic of public libraries, called *BiblioQualité*, for which we have submitted statistics. This initiative provides an invaluable benchmarking data, useful for comparing our library and allowing focused decision-making.

The report provides details on statistics and description of achievements. The statistics cover the period April 26th 2021 - April 24th 2022.

**The last four years in numbers
(April 26 – April 24)**

PARAMETERS	2021-22	2020-21	2019-20	2018-19
Active membership (Montreal West community)	381	447	404	397
New community member accounts created	137	54	165	126
Total loans	26 379	20 261	35 355	35 350
Average daily loans	78	68	104	97
e-book loans (Tumblebooks)	942	256	<i>NA</i>	<i>NA</i>
Community visits	5 989	1 840	6 330	6 402
Participants in activities	802	1 356	764	884
Book bags requests	67	249	216	<i>NA</i>
Acquisitions	1 359	1 447	1 288	1 216
Items weeded	2 352	1 117	1 035	1 188
Reference questions (Including EBS teachers requests)	448	<i>NA</i>	<i>NA</i>	<i>NA</i>

Collection Development



Collection development has been ongoing through the year, as according to the Collection development policy of the library.

With the aim of diversifying the offer of services, anticipating the needs of the patrons of the library and satisfying their needs, we have started a new type of collection – children's costumes. After an announcement to the community in November 2021, donations have been received. The launch of the costumes collection took place in February 2022. The actual collection of 30 costumes is entirely built from costumes donated by members of the community. New costumes are being added, as we continue to receive donations. The collection has seen an enormous success with the members of the Library.

In March 2021, an application has been submitted, for the first time, to the *Ministère de la culture et des communications*, for the Collection Development Grant administered by the Ministry on annual basis. This application was done in partnership with the Montreal West Public Library and the assistance of Town of Montreal West.

Services, Programs, Activities and Initiatives

All through the year, we have maintained a stimulating array of services, programs and activities to educate and entertain the young in the context of a pandemic. This called for a creative approach to keep the children engaged all by observing the COVID-19 government regulations.

Travel the World

Travel the World was the name of the initiative launched in April 2021 which consisted in preparing a selection of various documents on different countries of the world. Fictions books, pictures books, non-fiction books, DVDs, a recipe – all allowing children to explore a given country and prepare a thematic event at home. 26 bags have been borrowed. Due to its popularity in 2021, we offered this activity again in 2022.

Birdwatching

The library invited children to pick up a notebook – prepared by the staff – and accompanying documents in order to learn to recognize the different birds in the nature around us.



StoryWalk®

The Story Walk was back last year: as part of the Summer Reading Program, we displayed the book '*Les hauts et les bas d'Amanda*' / '*What Lou Couldn't Do*' by Ashley Spires (bilingual panels). Right after the Summer Program was over, we installed another StoryWalk® – the book '*Hello Moon*' by Julie Downing. In order to engage the children, a question was posted on the last panel, and children were invited to come inside the Library to give us an answer. A draw was organised, and the winner received a copy of the book.

Montreal West Children's Writing Contest

From April to June 2021, children were invited to submit a text on a subject of their choice, in English or French, illustrated or not, as part of the Montreal West Children's Contest. We received 15 entries. An independent jury composed of Sarah Brunel, Linda Wishart and Isabella Byrne selected three prizes and two honorable mentions. The announcement of the winners took place on September 10th, in Strathearn Park. The winners were: 1st place- Simon Kuchinsky, 2nd place – Clara Chapman, 3rd place – Autumn Watson. The writing Contest was back in February 2022, and was renamed in memory of our long-term and beloved volunteer Bill Foster. The Bill Foster Writing Contest has seen the same success as in 2021, with results coming up in May.



Pop-up Libraries



From June 25th to August 30th, in collaboration with the Montreal West Public Library, we set up two Pop-up Libraries: some children's books were available to borrow from the Public Library, and a selection of books for adults were made available at the Children's Library.

Escape Game

In September 2021, the Library offered an Escape Game in Strathearn Park. The activity was conceived and animated by Elizabeth Barnes. The participants solved riddles, puzzles and more to arrive at one final clue. The activity promoted reading through the riddles which were all derived from popular children's books.



Halloween

For Halloween, the Library distributed pumpkins to sixty children, together with a small loot bag. Some children responded to our request and sent pictures back. We produced a video-collage which can be viewed at this address: <https://youtu.be/JmZUBmFCUFs>

La lecture en cadeau



Like previous years (with a break in 2020), we took part in the initiative of the *Association de l'Alphabétisation* to collect new books donated by visitors to the Library. These books are distributed, by the Association, to children from disadvantaged environments in the following year. The Montreal West community is taking this initiative at heart, and the donations were most generous.

Surprise Books

For the end of the year holidays, we offered new library books wrapped up as gifts, for families to borrow. This way, children could experience the thrill of opening a package and finding a brand-new library book, thus being the first to browse its pages and read it.



Community Puzzle

A collaborative initiative, the community puzzle gave children the option to make a drawing onto a big piece of puzzle, on the theme of 'Winter'. The puzzle pieces brought back were assembled onto the Library board for everyone to admire the common effort in creating an original piece of art.



March Break

In March 2022, the pandemic context was still preventing us from organising a safe in-person program for the school break. In spite of that, we came up with a seven-day online series of challenges sent to the membership and engaging the children to participate at their own convenience and availability during the week, solving riddles, building projects, accomplishing challenges.

Scratch Programming Course

Being on stand-by for the implementation of an in-person activity, we did not waste time and re-introduced Scratch programming, in mid-March 2022. The first session of six weeks was successfully led by a young animator who used to be part of the Scratch group in the past. Due to the maintained interest, a second session has started in April.

The following programs have been maintained:

- Take and Make (monthly activity): parents take craft supplies from the Library; children create a project at home, following the instructions' video prepared in advance.
- Parent-child Book Club – regular monthly online meetings (on Zoom).

Services to daycares have been resumed in the Spring of 2021, with attendance outside the library, in Strathearn Park. Little Red Playhouse and Curzon daycare have both benefited from story-times in the in the open air, for as long as the weather was permitting.

Summer Reading Program 2021

In 2021, we offered an engaging, stimulating and enjoyable Summer program, under the auspices of the TD Summer Reading Club. The theme – *Game On!* – allowed the staff to use their creativity, implement different activities and reading challenges allowing children to maintain their reading habits and create a long-lasting relationship with the Library. We offered 10 different activities and programs, and counted a total of **145 participants**. We counted **91 registrations** (compared to 93 in 2020), and **892 books read** (compared to 740 books in 2020). The popular 'Take and Make' craft activity was offered on a bi-monthly basis. We maintained 'Mother Goose in the Park'. By-weekly games were organised in Strathearn park and around. By-weekly quizzes were sent by e-mail to the membership with questions on the theme of the week. The Friday Book Talks in the Park were attended by those willing to share their reading experiences. The Closing Party was a huge success with **22 children** participating in an array of games. The readers with highest scores in their summer reading passports were rewarded, as well as those who have participated in the other reading challenges.





Volunteering at the Library

Volunteering is a vital part of our operations. However, the volunteers team has been significantly reduced during the pandemic. We worked with only two volunteers on regular basis, all through the year - Véronique Belzil-Boucher and Janet King. Véronique covered all the new books that needed to be prepared, and Janet was doing repairs on damaged books. 1 237 books have been prepared by Véronique; 12 general rebinding and 16 quick repairs have been done by Janet. We received volunteering help occasionally for circulation duties, as well as for the Book Sales.

As soon as circumstances allowed it, we started receiving help from a student volunteer on a weekly basis. In April 2022, five students were accepted as volunteers in order to help with various tasks, and complete certain number of hours as required by the schools they attend.

Fundraising

We received a grant from Canada Summer Jobs toward one position for the Summer of 2021 and received \$3 725 toward salary expenses for the Summer Reading Program Assistant.

Two book sales have been organised – in May and in September 2021, which raised a total of \$1 094.

We have also received donations from a certain number of organisations and individuals for which we are very grateful.

Elizabeth Ballantyne School

The ongoing partnership with the school has continued in 2021. Class visits resumed in September 2021. The students were able to enjoy story-time in English and in French, in alternating weeks. We have maintained our service to the teachers by responding to their requests for materials on various subjects. The distribution of bins of books to every classroom,



with different loan periods – depending on the teacher’s preference - was maintained. The books are intended for classroom use, or take home to the teacher’s discretion. The EB students were invited to participate in the Writing Contest. The library contributed towards the EB Holiday initiative of Book Exchange in December 2021, by donating more than 70 new books.

Publicity

The web-site is updated on regular basis. E-mail messages are being sent to the community for upcoming programs and activities. The Facebook account is updated with posts on forthcoming Library events, and information of interest on authors, books, literacy programs etc. **New:** in May 2021, the Library started maintaining an Instagram account – an excellent opportunity to reach out to a different target audience and advertise the activities of the Library at a new level.

