

Operating Hours Recommendation

Date:	November 23, 2016
To:	Waterloo Public Library Board
From:	Laurie Clarke, CEO lclarke@wpl.ca ; 519-886-1310 ext. 123

Purpose

This report provides the results of our study of the operating hours of the three locations of the Waterloo Public Library. At its meeting on October 26, 2016, the Library Board directed the library administration to review library operating hours in light of the Friday and Sunday closures of the John M. Harper Branch, effective January 2016.

The report includes:

- Background
- Funding Model
- Decision guiding framework
- Research
- Framework Options
- Recommendation
- Data Summary (Appendix)

Background

The widely anticipated John M. Harper Branch opened its doors on October 22, 2011. Funded through the Funding Agreement with the City, at four days a week plus Saturday, its operating hours were Monday through Thursday 10 a.m. to 9 p.m. and Saturday 10 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. The branch was closed on Fridays and Sundays. Due to heavy public demand, we made it possible using existing funding to open on Friday and Sunday beginning in January 2012. Over the next 3 years, financial pressures steadily increased and brought us to the point where it was impossible to continue these extra opening hours without additional funding. Effective January 2016, we returned to the originally funded operating hours and closed on Fridays and Sundays.

Fridays were originally chosen as the closed day because of the shorter open hours and also because the McCormick Branch was open Fridays, while closed Mondays. The McCormick Branch has never been open Sundays.

The Main Library is open every day of the week, with Sunday service provided for 26 weeks of the year, October to May. Best practice in the field would not recommend closing at a central library in order to provide service at a branch. The function of a central library is to be the hub of the system. It is usually the largest and busiest and acts as a resource and support to the branches.

Funding Model

The Funding agreement with the City of Waterloo is a three year agreement, which establishes a base dollar amount by placing WPL at the 50th percentile in comparison to 8 comparator libraries. These libraries include Barrie, Brantford, Cambridge, Guelph, Kingston, Kitchener, Niagara Falls and St. Catharines. These municipalities serve as comparators for establishing the City's salary grid, and as such they chose the libraries from these cities also.

In addition to the base, an amount is calculated for population growth for the three year period. And to the base number, each year sees a percentage increase equal to the Consumer Price Index. (CPI)

Prior to the signing of the current agreement, the Board Chair and CEO presented to Council the financial pressures of trying to absorb the funding requirements of the John M. Harper Branch, with never having received funding for its operation. Also outlined were the many cost savings the library had achieved overall. The ask for additional funding for the John M. Harper Branch was turned down and Council voted on Budget Day to advance all the 3 year CPI increases in 2016.

With no additional funding granted, the Board decided to cease operation of Fridays and Sundays at the John M. Harper Branch in order to ease the financial pressures on the library. This became effective in January 2016.

Decision Guiding Framework

At the October 26, 2016 WPL Board Meeting, the Library Board directed administration to review opening hours within the existing budget using the following guidelines and principles:

- Foster long-term funding/fiscal sustainability for the entire library system.
- Look for long-term, sustainable solutions, instead of short term, temporary fixes.
- Be transparent about the process and share with our community/city council.
- Keep the current status quo as an option for consideration.
- Don't leave anyone behind. Be mindful of the difference between equity and equality. Keep the role of the public library and the diverse needs of our library patrons in mind.
- Look for ways to distribute the "pressure" between branches.

Research

Operating hour options were developed through the analysis of data collected by the library. Data used to inform our considerations includes quantitative data required by the Ontario Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sport (Public Library Act) and qualitative data that better captures the value of the library to the community.

Quantitative data gathered includes the movement of customers and the usage of library resources, collections and services. This data is captured by our Integrated Library System software, RFID, Computer and Wireless technology. Qualitative data gathered includes unstructured observations of staff who know customers and the community best and are adept at observing traffic patterns and changes in borrowing behavior.

The data presented measures key performance indicators relative to location. Knowing the level of activity at the Main Library, the John M. Harper Branch and the McCormick Branch was key as we developed operating hour options and analyzed them within the decision guideline framework given to us by the Library Board.

Framework Options

“Be transparent about the process and share with our community/city council”. This guideline is not included in the framework options as such, but is inherent in the process as a whole.

Foster long-term funding/fiscal sustainability for the entire library system	Any option that is reviewed must consider the financial impact on the library and the impact must remain neutral until the new Funding Agreement is in place in 2018. At that time, WPL will be able to review all location hours once again for maximum benefit to our community in all locations.
Look for long-term, sustainable solutions, instead of short term, temporary fixes	Decisions made for the operating hours for all locations, must strive to provide operating hours that meet the needs of the many different groups who use our facilities – babies, children, parents, students, newcomers, job hunters, marginalized groups, homeless, seniors, life-long learners, entrepreneurs, etc. etc. We may not fully meet all the needs with the realities of funding available, but we want to satisfy our community’s voices. Whatever change we make cannot be of a temporary nature, but sustainable.
Keep the current status quo as an option for consideration	<p>Main Library Monday through Thursday 10:00 a.m. – 9:00 p.m., Friday and Saturday 10:00 a.m. – 5:30 p.m. Sunday 1:00 p.m. – 4:00 p.m. Mid -October through Mid-May</p>

	<p>John M. Harper Branch Monday through Thursday 10:00 a.m. – 9:00 p.m. Friday CLOSED Saturday 10:00 a.m. – 5:30 p.m. Sunday CLOSED</p> <p>McCormick Branch Monday CLOSED Tuesday through Thursday 10:00 a.m. – 9:00 p.m. Friday and Saturday 10:00 a.m. – 5:30 p.m. Sunday CLOSED</p> <p>Supports the current level of funding with no additional financial pressures.</p>
<p>Don't leave anyone behind. Be mindful of the difference between equity and equality. Keep the role of the public library and the diverse needs of our library patrons in mind</p>	<p>Options do exist when considering the two branches. The McCormick Branch could be closed on Fridays to allow the John M. Harper Branch to be open. Usage statistics would support this option. However, this branch is already closed on Mondays, and it would not be equitable to burden this location with another fully closed day. This branch is a destination to the many newcomers in this community, and for many citizens with less access to the resources which the library can provide to them.</p> <p>Another choice to consider is closing the McCormick Branch for a ½ day on Fridays and opening the John M. Harper Branch for a ½ day on Fridays. Based on overall use, the suggestion would be to open the McCormick Branch from 10 to 1 and the John M. Harper Branch from 1 to 5:30.</p> <p>The McCormick Branch has a very successful Friday child and parent morning program, which should not be eliminated due to closure. Afternoons on Fridays are slow at this location. On the other hand, Friday afternoons can be seen as busy at the John M. Harper Branch.</p> <p>There is an impact on scheduling staff in order to close at one location and open at another with overlapping hours. It is complicated to do so with the skeleton staffing model on Fridays, and it may have a small financial impact on the staffing budget, with the possible need for a few additional part time hours.</p>
<p>Look for ways to distribute the "pressure" between branches</p>	<p>In an effort to restore Friday hours at the John M. Harper Branch, all locations could be closed 1 hour earlier during the weekdays. In order to analyze the impact of this change, various weekly data was collected during the 8 – 9 p.m. period, including visitors in the library, wireless use, computer use, reference questions and circulation.</p> <p>It is clear from the summary of results (included) that there would be a significant negative effect on all locations, as each is well used in various ways during the 8 – 9 p.m. period.</p>

Recommendation

There is no perfect solution at this time to the dilemma of reverting to the original service hours at the John M. Harper Branch, as defined in the Funding Agreement. Reducing hours is the opposite of what a public library strives to do. Ideally WPL wants to be open at all locations, existing and proposed, for 59 hours per week. However, the reality of the funding available cannot be ignored.

In this examination of hours, we acknowledge the proposed East Side Library. Presently the City has capital funds available for its possible construction, but there are no operating funds designated. The matter of funding the ongoing operations of the proposed branch and the appropriate funding for the John M. Harper Branch will be part of the discussions during the next Funding Agreement process. We are looking for a financially sustainable 4 branch funding model. The new Funding Agreement is to be in place by the end of 2018. Therefore any decision made now must suffice for two more years, and must be financially maintainable.

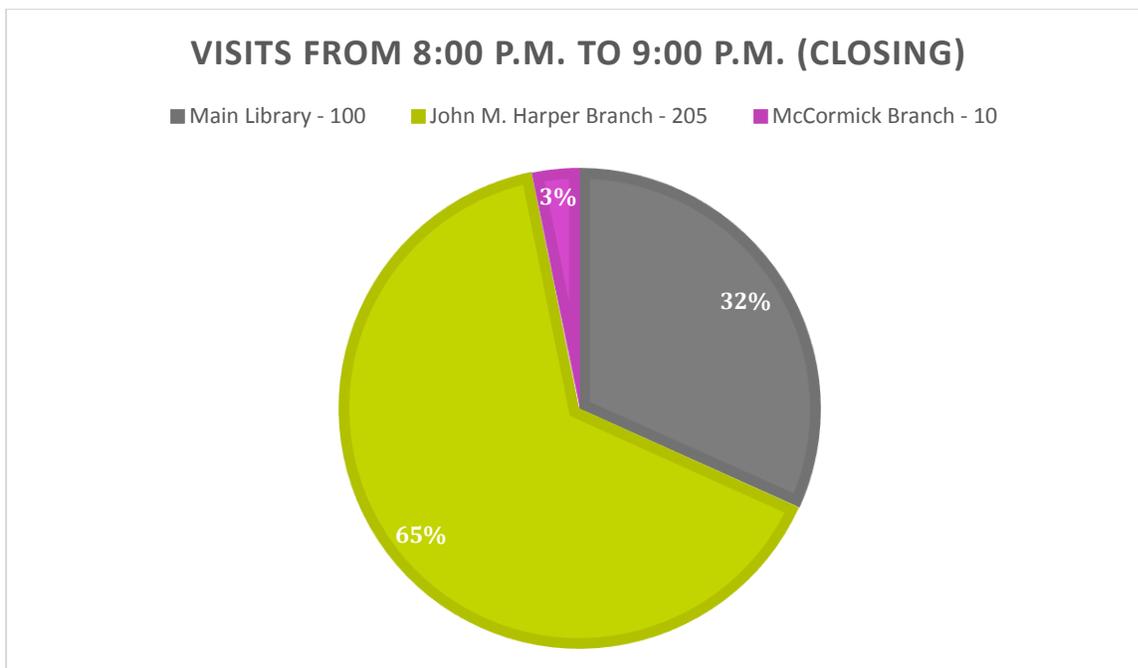
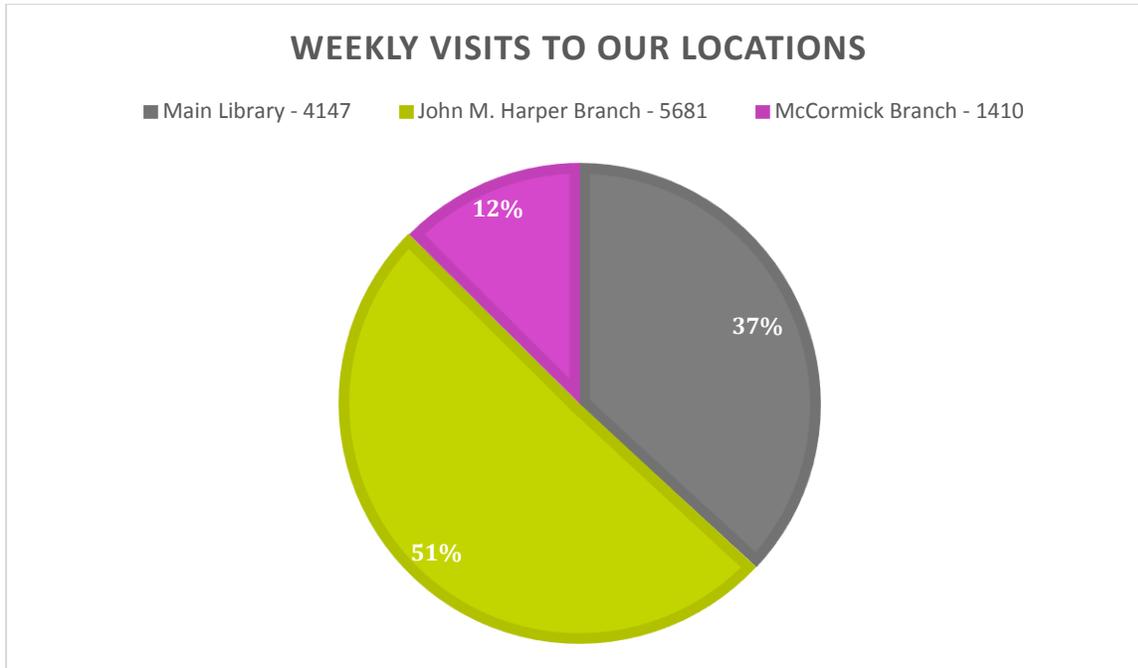
This study has focused on endeavoring to provide Friday service at the John M. Harper branch, and not Sunday service. In addition to listening to our users, we would choose Fridays as preferable the service day is longer as is the service period.

In conclusion, following the creation of options using the Board supplied framework, and based on our research and consideration, we would recommend to the Library Board that we choose the option of *closing* the McCormick branch from 1 – 5:30 on Fridays, and *opening* the John M. Harper Branch from 1 – 5:30 on Fridays, beginning January 6th, 2017.

Respectfully submitted,

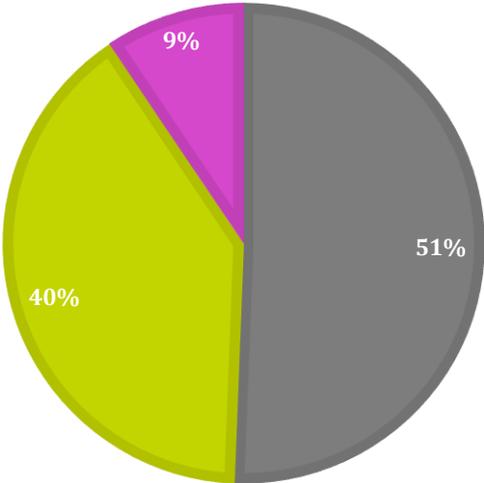
Laurie Clarke
CEO

Appendix - Data Summary



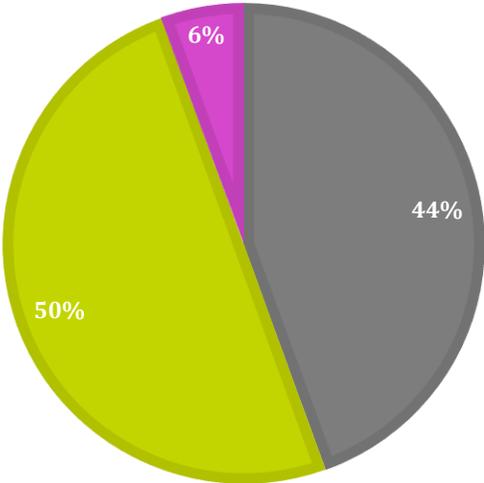
WEEKLY CIRCULATION OF OUR COLLECTIONS

■ Main Library - 15501 ■ John M. Harper Branch - 12253 ■ McCormick Branch - 2872



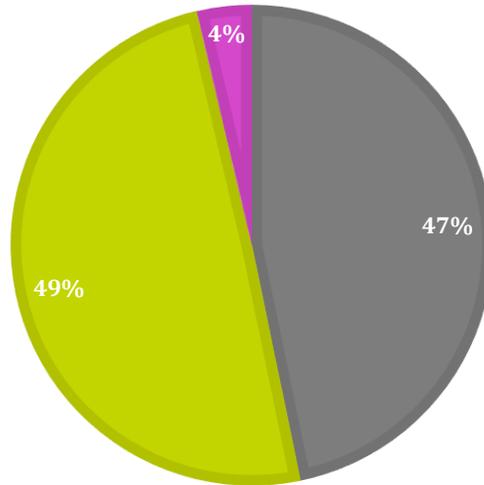
CIRCULATION FROM 8:00 P.M. TO 9:00 P.M. (CLOSING)

■ Main Library - 688 ■ John M. Harper Branch - 773 ■ McCormick Branch - 86



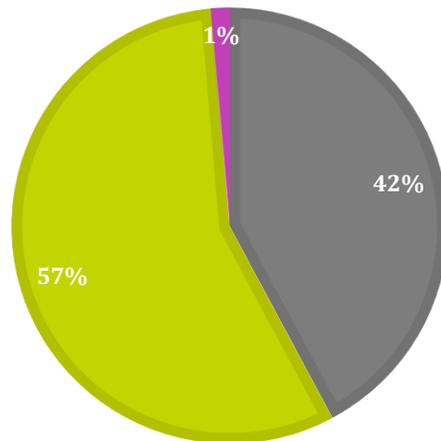
WEEKLY WIRELESS ACCESS

■ Main Library - 1886 ■ John M. Harper Branch - 1999 ■ McCormick Branch - 148



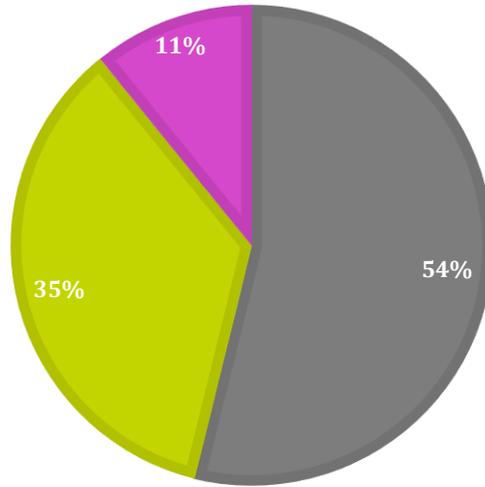
WIRELESS ACCESS FROM 8:00 P.M. TO 9:00 P.M. (CLOSING)

■ Main Library - 62 ■ John M. Harper Branch - 83 ■ McCormick Branch - 2



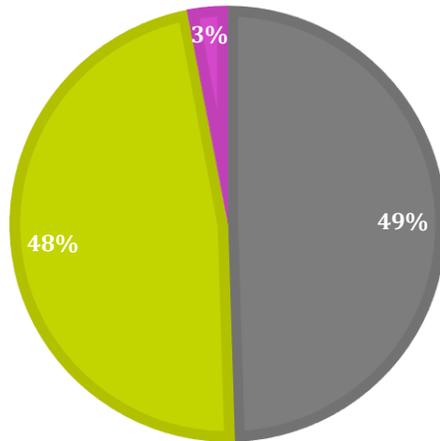
WEEKLY PUBLIC COMPUTER ACCESS

■ Main Library - 754 ■ John M. Harper Branch - 495 ■ McCormick Branch - 152



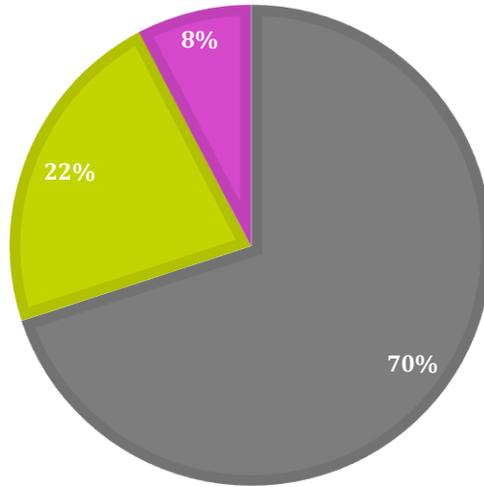
PUBLIC COMPUTER ACCESS FROM 8:00 P.M. TO 9:00 P.M. (CLOSING)

■ Main Library - 50 ■ John M. Harper Branch - 48 ■ McCormick Branch - 3



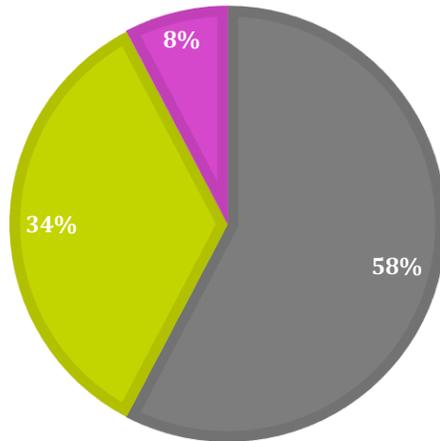
WEEKLY REFERENCE QUESTIONS ASKED

■ Main Library - 669 ■ John M. Harper Branch - 214 ■ McCormick Branch - 73



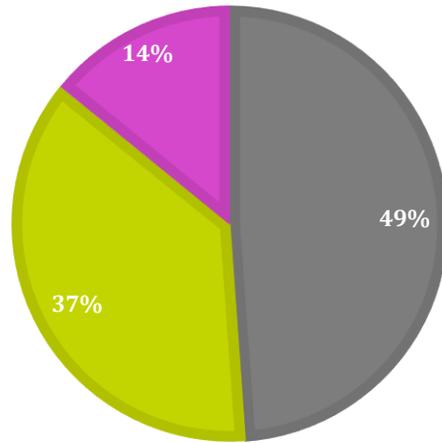
REFERENCE QUESTIONS ASKED FROM 8:00 P.M. TO 9:00 P.M. (CLOSING)

■ Main Library - 30 ■ John M. Harper Branch - 18 ■ McCormick Branch - 4



FRIDAY VISITS TO OUR LOCATIONS IN 2015

■ Main Library - 822 ■ John M. Harper Branch - 622 ■ McCormick Branch - 238



FRIDAY CIRCULATION OF OUR COLLECTIONS IN 2015

■ Main Library - 1869 ■ John M. Harper Branch - 1066 ■ McCormick Branch - 358

