

A REVIEW OF LONDON PUBLIC LIBRARY SUSTAINABILITY BUSINESS CASE

The London Library's Sustainability Case document was reviewed with specific attention to the case made for a **40% reduction** in the hours at Carson and other small branches. Comments are made on the data presented and the recommendations that flow from it.

It is the position of the Old East Village Community Association and the Old East Village Business Improvement Area that the reduction in hours at the Carson branch as proposed is not supported by the data presented. Moreover, the **strategy of reducing hours** at Carson is **unnecessary** to meet the Library system's sustainability needs, it is **insensitive** to the community of Old East Village, and **inconsistent** with the Library's philosophical and operational principles. **We therefore ask that it be removed as an option not only for Carson but also for all the smaller branches.**

An alternative scenario to accommodate Monday openings is presented.

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We have taken some time to review the document entitled **London Public Library Sustainability Business Case** that was tabled at your meeting in October. The document was downloaded from the library website and all comments refer to that version. Included here are observations on the data presented and comments on some of the recommendations made based on that data. We also raise some questions that we believe have an important bearing on the decisions that must be made by the Board. Our review has not been exhaustive but rather has focused on issues related to reducing hours at branch locations (Library Service Access under the section Budget Needs for Service Sustainability pp. 5 – 9).

General Observations on the Data Provided

There is no consistently clear, objective, logical and substantive argument that flows from the data/statistics provided to the seven options or the proposed recommendations.

The **data** presented is **not complete**.

- no budget figure has been attached to Library Service Access (p. 9)
- there is no data provided on the focus groups that were conducted (p. 19)
- comparison data for costs related to provision of services is not provided (p.29)
- the data presented in Appendix 3 is presented in general terms – more details are needed for this data to be informative
- reference is made to a work sampling survey (p. 19) but no data is provided

The **data** provided **needs further analysis** than it has been given.

- the data presented in Appendix 2 was not analyzed for year to year changes and % changes
- cost comparison data for provision of service vs. Sunday and Monday openings is not considered – some figures are presented (pp. 9 & 29) but they are not given any detailed treatment
- the data in Appendix 3 is not presented in enough detail to determine whether analysis was vigorous enough

The **data** provided is **not sufficient** to support the recommendations.

- the data in Appendix 2 should include figures for more than two years (p.33)
- the attendance data should include figures for more than one year (p. 34)
- the Circulation Trends – 2006 should include data for more than one year and should be broken down according to branch in order to be more useful (p.35)
- analysis of the survey data (Appendix 3) has not been provided and no concrete linkages to the alternatives or recommendations have been explained

The **data** provided **does not support** the reduction in hours at the smaller branches so that other branches can be open on Monday (p. 29, “Resources from rationalized services will be applied to support the service needs at these branches on Mondays” (please refer to the section on further analysis of the data p.6).

Comments on Specific Issues

It is our understanding that when **circulation numbers** are tallied for a particular branch that they do not include material that has been reserved electronically. For example, at the Carson Branch many people have books sent over from the Central branch using the computer system to put holds on them. This then is counted as circulation that occurs at Central not at Carson. This would skew the circulation figures and make it appear that Carson is less busy than it actually is. **Could you confirm that this is the practice?** If it is, then all the smaller branches where this is common practice are actually busier than suggested by the figures presented in Appendix 2. In addition, any statistics that are computed with circulation figures in the formula will be inaccurate (for example statistics given on page 29 on the average cost/circulation for smaller branches).

How are attendance figures collected and how do they differ from circulation figures?

Alternatives 1, 3 and 5 recommend a **reduction of hours** at the smaller branches. The rationale given is that “[c]hanges in service hours reflect the statistical use of the branches” (p. 29, 3rd paragraph). **But these statistics are not made explicit.** For example, alternatives 3 and 5 recommend that Carson be closed on Wednesdays and Fridays. No rationale is presented for why those days have been chosen. We have been told that Wednesday is in fact the busiest day at Carson (can your staff provide us with data on this?). This seems to have been an arbitrary choice without any substantive basis. Logically, if hours are to be reduced then these should be when the branch experiences its least activity not its most activity. The table presented on page 35 “Circulation Trends – 2006” lists Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday and Saturday as the highest usage times for full circulation. Wednesday is also listed under highest usage days for per hour circulation. How then can a Wednesday closing be justified? **The data presented in this table is composite data for one year only. Including data for a number of years would be more helpful and breaking the data down according to individual branches would also be useful.**

And statistics aside, the reduction of hours at small branches certainly does not fit with the vision statement of the library as “**the Community Hub that strengthens individuals, families and neighbourhoods by connecting them to people and to relevant information, collections, programs and resources**” and the stated strategic principle that the library “is the place I can go in my community to ignite my imagination,” (Appendix 1).

Comments on Specific Statements from the Document

On page 9 a case is made for Monday and Sunday service based on “a historical gap in our library’s service plan” compared to other similarly sized urban libraries and “a desire by respondents (in the survey) to have branch access to service available on Mondays and Sundays”. No detailed data is presented in a fashion that connects the request to a specific geographical area or areas that in turn would identify a specific branch or branches. It goes on to say that “during the summer months the most important days for the library to be open are Saturday, Friday and Monday (tied with Saturday and Wednesday).” Again no specific data is presented that demonstrates opening on Sunday or Monday at any specific branch is warranted.

The recommendation for Monday opening at the identified branches may have been based on gross circulation numbers. However, if this were the case Westmount (325,769), Masonville (320,928), and Jalna (265,721) would be selected (2006 figures). Westmount is second in circulation for the two years for which statistics are provided. It should be noted that Monday is listed under the lowest usage category in the data presented in Appendix 2 (Circulation Trends – 2006, p35).

It states on page 29 that “[w]e are confident that attendance at these branches will be viable on Mondays These branches are ideally located close to malls, community centres and other key community services.” This is speculation. East London is also close to malls as may be other branches.

On page 9 it states that “Sunday service is very expensive and labour intensive to offer and manage.” No data is presented. Given this and the fact that Sunday is one of the lowest usage days why isn’t Sunday closure considered as a strategy?

On page 18 it is stated that “despite considerable efforts to optimize service [at Glanworth] usage of the branch is very low.” The statement goes unsubstantiated and in fact contradicts the branch’s performance in terms of % change for the data presented in Appendix 2 (see our analysis below).

On page 18 it is stated that “[t]he service capacity for the small branches, Carson Northridge and Lambeth, is underutilized. Therefore, hours of service will be reduced at these locations” There is no definition of service capacity given and no statistical information is provided to substantiate this statement.

On page 19 second paragraph in relation to the focus groups it states that “. . . their valuable feedback is incorporated into the key findings as well.” Where is the information obtained from these groups and how has it been incorporated?

On page 20 the last sentence states that “Monday access to service must be considered as it is a demonstrated need based on the customer research study.” Where is the information to support this? No statistics are provided that show the number of requests or their distribution. There should also be a **distinction** made between a “**request**” and a “**need**”.

On page 21 reference is made to Community Needs in the context of decision-making criteria. It states that “alternatives are analyzed . . . in response to current and emerging community and individual needs, expectations and unique circumstances.” No substantive information is provided to show that there was any work done to uncover the community and individual needs of any specific area.

On page 29, paragraph 4, statistics are presented for average cost/circulation and average cost/attendance for the Glanworth branch. No explanation is given for how these figures were computed and there is no data presented that can be reviewed. We would want to know the **time period** from which the figures were gathered, **the ratios for each branch** and **how each branch compares to the average**, how these figures have **changed with time**, and whether these ratios **typically differ** in relation to the size of the branch regardless of the City in which they are located.

Further Analysis of the Data

The statistical information presented in Appendix 2 needs closer scrutiny than it seems to have been given in the report. Despite the claim on page 33 that “(t)his data has allowed us to make decisions related to staffing, hours of service, collection needs, and more”, we did not see any evidence of a logical, systematic and objective relationship between the data presented and the recommendations made. Two shortcomings of the data are readily apparent. **One**, the data given is only for two years and we would suggest that in order to make well-informed decisions more data is needed. Five (5) to ten (10) years would be more appropriate based on typical research time frames. **Secondly**, the data that is given has not been thoroughly analyzed. No mention has been made of the **percentage change** in attendance and circulation. These changes are as important as the overall data as **they might be indicative of trends at the branch level**.

Using the information that is given in Appendix 2 we have done an analysis of the percentage of change in circulation (table **A**) and attendance (table **B**) for each branch for the years 2004 – 2006. We then did a further analysis of the percentage change for each of the two years separately (tables **C** and **D**). The branches are listed in order of best performance to worst performance in each of the two variables. The branches that have identified as underutilized are in bold. The intention here was to determine if any trends emerged from year to year.

TABLE A		
<u>Percentage change in CIRCULATION</u>		
<u>2004-2006</u>		
<u>In order of Best Performance</u>		
1.	28.81%	Glanworth
2.	14.7%	East London
3.	13.7%	Jalna
4.	9.0%	Sherwood
5.	6.9%	Northridge
6.	5.0%	Lambeth
7.	-0.7%	Landon
8.	-3.8%	Westmount
9.	-4.2%	Byron
10.	-5.0%	Masonville
11.	-6.0%	Carson
12.	-7.4%	Cherryhill
13.	-9.0%	Pondmills
14.	-11.5%	Central
15.	-16.5%	Crouch
16.	-21.1%	Beacock

TABLE B		
<u>Percentage change in ATTENDANCE</u>		
<u>2004-2006</u>		
<u>In order of Best Performance</u>		
1.	31.3%	Glanworth
2.	8.9%	Lambeth
3.	4.2%	Northridge
4.	2.0%	Jalna
5.	0.4%	Byron
6.	-0.5%	Masonville
7.	-2.2%	East London
8.	-2.4%	Cherryhill
9.	-3.4%	Beacock
10.	-5.2%	Carson
11.	-6.3%	Central
12.	-8.6%	Westmount
13.	-15.3%	Crouch
14.	-15.4%	Landon
15.	-27.8%	Sherwood
16.	-49.3%	Pondmills

Looking at the data arranged in this fashion in tables A and B some significant findings emerge with regards to how the smaller branches are doing. It is surprising to see that **Glanworth**, the branch that has been identified for closure, significantly outperformed everyone in both **circulation** (+28.8%) and **attendance** (+31.3%)! Notwithstanding the need for physical improvements to the branch, this data may indicate that its growth potential has not been realized and indeed the Board should be looking at expanding services there.

For **circulation** (A), **Carson** (-6.0%) performed better than five other branches including Central (-11.5%) and Cherryhill (-7.4%) and did only 1% worse than Masonville (-5.0%). **Northridge** (+6.9%) and **Lambeth** (5%) performed considerably better than Central (-11.5%), Cherryhill (-7.4%) and Masonville (-5.0%). For **attendance** (B), **Carson** (-5.2%) did better than six other branches including Central (-6.3%). **Northridge** was third overall (4.2%) with **Lambeth** (8.9%) second and **Glanworth** (31.3%) first..

Of the branches where extended hours are being recommended in the form of Monday openings only Jalna has produced positive figures, placing third (13.8%) for **circulation** and fourth (2.0%) for **attendance**. Masonville placed tenth (-5.0%) for **circulation** and sixth (-0.5%) for **attendance**, and Cherryhill placed twelfth (-7.4%) for **circulation** and eighth (-2.4%) for **attendance**.

Tables C and D show that the performance for most branches varied from one year to the next. Landon going from 16th or last place to first place experienced the most dramatic swing. We would want to know if there was some variable that contributed to this.

Carson's performance improves from 13th to 8th for circulation but worsens from 6th to 12th for attendances. We would want to know if any reason for this drop could be identified; for example does it coincide with previous reduction in hours at Carson. **Glanworth** moves from 1st to 7th for circulation and 1st to 4th for attendances.

These tables demonstrate how more data could give us a picture of how performance changes from year to year and whether it does so in any particular trend. What we do see with this limited data is that **the smallest branches are not the worst performers**. In fact, the smaller branches identified on page 18 as underutilized (Carson, Lambeth and Northridge) performed better than at least three and up to nine other branches in the statistics presented in tables A, B, C, and D.

TABLE C
Percentage change in CIRCULATION
In order of Best Performance

2004 – 2005		2005 - 2006	
1.	19.91% Glanworth	1.	54.97% Landon
2.	9.17% Lambeth	2.	35.21% Byron
3.	7.76% Northridge	3.	11.58% East London
4.	4.97% Sherwood	4.	10.65% Jalna
5.	2.95% Cherryhill	5.	5.04% Beacock
6.	2.49% Westmount	6.	3.45% Sherwood
7.	2.42% Masonville	7.	3.04% Glanworth
8.	1.65% Jalna	8.	-0.05% Carson
9.	1.40% East London	9.	-1.43% Northridge
10.	-1.82% Central	10.	-4.81% Lambeth
11.	-3.50% Pond Mills	11.	-6.19% Pond Mills
12.	-5.28% Crouch	12.	-6.65% Westmount
13.	-5.86% Carson	13.	-7.90% Masonville
14.	-33.44% Beacock	14.	-11.02% Central
15.	-61.15% Byron	15.	-11.28% Cherryhill
16.	-123.60% Landon	16.	-13.66% Crouch

TABLE D
Percentage change in ATTENDANCE
In order of Best Performance

2004 – 2005			2005 - 2006		
1.	26.62%	Glanworth	1.	54.47%	Landon
2.	12.32%	Crouch	2.	35.69%	Byron
3.	10.76%	Lambeth	3.	8.48%	Beacock
4.	8.47%	Northridge	4.	6.31%	Glanworth
5.	3.12%	Westmount	5.	2.81%	Jalna
6.	1.54%	Carson	6.	2.72%	East London
6.	1.54%	Cherryhill	7.	-0.61%	Masonville
7.	0.16%	Masonville	8.	-2.08%	Lambeth
8.	-0.84%	Jalna	9.	-4.01%	Cherryhill
9.	-1.47%	Central	10.	-4.73%	Central
10.	-5.07%	East London	11.	-4.99%	Northridge
11.	-12.50%	Sherwood	12.	-6.81%	Carson
12.	-12.95%	Beacock	13.	-12.12%	Westmount
13.	-27.84%	Pond Mills	14.	-13.65%	Sherwood
14.	-54.85%	Byron	15.	-16.81%	Pond Mills
15.	-142.71%	Landon	16.	-31.53%	Crouch

Hours of Operation

Table **E** (see below) summarizes the hours of operation in order of least to most hours. In options 3 and 5 of the Sustainability Case it is recommended that Carson, Northridge and Lambeth be closed on Wednesdays and Fridays. This would remove **14 hours per week** from each of these branches or **40%** of the hours of operation! **Such a drastic reduction would severely compromise the viability of these branches.**

With the above reductions the total number of hours removed from the system would be 42 and if we add to this the 4 hours saved if Glanworth is closed that gives us a total of 46 hours per week. If we wanted to take a similar amount of time out of the system by spreading the reductions over **15 branches** while keeping Glanworth at its current level it would require **each branch to sacrifice 3 hours per week** for a total of 45 hours. That's **8.57%** for the smaller branches and **5.66%** for all the others except Central which would have a reduction of **4.34%**. If these hours were taken from the **12 branches** that already have longer hours of operation, it would require **each branch giving up 3.75 hours per week** for a total of 45 hours. That's **7.1%** of total hours for each branch and only **5.34%** for the Central branch. This seems like a more rational and equitable approach.

Table E – Hours of Operation

	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Total
Glanworth	Closed	Closed	7-9	Closed	Closed	Closed	10-12	4
Carson Lambeth Northridge	Closed	Closed	1-5 6-9	9-12 1-5	1-5 6-9	9-12 1-5	9-12 1-5	35
Beacock Byron Cherryhill Crouch East London Jalna Landon Masonville Pond Mills Sherwood Westmount	Closed	Closed	9-9	9-9	9-9	9-6	9-5	53
Central	1-5	9-9	9-9	9-9	9-9	9-6	9-5	69

We are not clear about the connection between the proposed Monday openings of Cherryhill, Jalna and Masonville and the proposed number of hours removed from the system. Assuming that Monday hours would be from 9 – 9, it would require an additional 36 hours. The hours being taken out by reductions at the smaller branches and the closure of Glanworth would be 46 hours. **Why the 10 hour discrepancy?** If those 36 needed hours came equally from the 12 branches that currently have the most hours it would mean a reduction of **3 hours** per branch per week or **5.66%** of current hours for each branch and **4.35%** for Central. That is a minor reduction of 0.5 hours per day per branch! And, **each of the three branches with the new Monday opening would enjoy a net gain of 16.98%** of their current hours.

It seems that Monday opening, if it is deemed to be that important, can be achieved without the smaller branches, Carson, Lambeth, Northridge and Glanworth having to make the biggest sacrifice. Indeed, it can be done with relatively little sacrifice made by the branches that already have many more hours of operation.

The Carson Branch in Old East Village

Learning about the community in which a branch is located can provide insightful and useful information that can in turn guide decision-making. Such information was provided by research projects undertaken by students in the Geography Department at the University of Western Ontario¹. One project looked at the mode of transport used by people attending the Carson branch. Table F shows that the vast majority of people using the library (76%) walked or rode their bikes (from Carson Library: Focus on Mode of Transport).

Table F - Mode of Transport (n = 112)

Mode of Transport	Percentage of Users	Average Time Spent
Foot	60	35 minutes
Foot with stroller	6	55 minutes
Foot – unaccompanied child	5	38 minutes
Bicycle	3	8 minutes
Bicycle-unaccompanied child	2	17 minutes
TOTAL	76%	
Car	24%	28 minutes

Having 76 % of people accessing the library without using cars or public transit is an ideal situation. It is healthy, environmentally friendly, and in keeping with attempts by the City to have people adopt alternate means of transportation to the automobile. The City’s Master Bicycle Path plan is a case in point. Moreover, it is congruent with the current wisdom in urban design as espoused by Larry Beasley² world-renowned urban planner. In his talk given in London he outlined what he believed to be essential elements of good urban design. One of these that he emphasized was getting it “right” in the basic urban structure. Characteristics of that structure included **de-emphasizing the car** and the **inclusion at the neighbourhood level** of amenities like parks, schools and **libraries**. We have it “right” in Old East with Carson library!

Old East Village is a core community that is rising from neglect to a vital, exciting place to live. Carson library is one of the ingredients needed for this revival. Its importance is identified in the Planners Action Team (PACT) report of April 2003 entitled “Re-establishing

¹ Wood, Fiona; “Carson Library: Focus on Mode of Transport”, Geography 328 Land Use & Development Issues, Department of Geography, University of Western Ontario, 2007, unpublished.
 Coward, Jody & Lines, Jessica, “Carson Library”, Geography 328 Land Use & Development Issues, Department of Geography, University of Western Ontario, 2007, unpublished.

² Beasley, Larry C.M., B.A., M.A., Hon. L.L.D., F.C.I.P., Public Presentation and Forum, Aeolian Hall, London, Ontario, November 7, 2007.

Value: A plan for the Old East Village.”³ In section 2.0 Major Findings they say that “[p]ublic investment in the community appears to be low” and that “Carson library is small, not well maintained, and is generally inadequate” (p. 5). Later in the report under the proposed action plan for Old East Village **they recommend that Carson Library be improved** (p. 21).

In context of Old East Village’s revitalization efforts and in keeping with the Library’s basic philosophical principles the Board should be asking, “what can we do to help in this community?” We don’t believe that cutting hours at our local library by 40% would be or needs to be part of the answer.

Request to the Library Board

We request that the Library Board **not reduce** hours at Carson library and the other smaller branches as outlined in options 3 and 5. If hours need to be removed from the system then it should be done in an equitable fashion. The section Hours of Operation above (p. 9) outlines how this can be done to allow for Monday opening. Our recommendations are as follows:

- **Option 1.** Remove hours from the **12** branches that already have longer hours. That would require each branch to give up **3 hours per week or 0.5 hours per day** for a total of **36 hours**. Glanworth maintains its hours. The branches that would then be open on Monday would have a **net gain** of **16.98%** of their current hours.
- **Option 2.** Remove hours from all branches except Glanworth. Each of the **15** branches would sacrifice **2.4 hours per week**. The branches that would then be open on Monday would have a **net gain** of **18.11%** of their current hours.

³ Ontario Professional Planners Institute, Planners Action Team, “Re-establishing Value: A Plan for the Old East Village, April, 2003.