



## ACCREDITATION AT THE BARRIE PUBLIC LIBRARY



The Barrie Public Library received its accreditation from the Ontario Public Library Guidelines Monitoring and Accreditation Council during Ontario Library Week in the year 2000. This was one of the final steps in the fulfillment of the Library's strategic plan.

The Barrie Public Library Board adopted its first formal strategic plan in September 1994. A major target of the plan for 1995 was "the defining and adoption of levels of service appropriate to a public library serving the needs of the Barrie community and the communication of these to the community." Staff began the process of conducting an extensive literature search on library standards, levels of service and measurement. The search revealed some information and standards available in the United States and Great Britain. Relevant Canadian standards were minimal and those that were available were dated.

Staff attempted to use the available standards and information to produce a level of service document that would have been applicable to the Barrie Public Library. Both the Board and staff struggled with the identification of levels of service. It was difficult to find a set of standards that would address all the components of good public library service. In April 1996, the Board received the Ontario Public Library Guidelines: A Developmental Tool for Small, Medium and County Libraries. Senior staff conducted an internal audit of existing services of the Library against the preliminary edition of Ontario Public Library Guidelines. The report to the Board identified shortfalls in meeting the guidelines and recommended action and costs to meet the guidelines. At its meeting of October 24, 1996, the Barrie Public Library Board accepted the Ontario Public Library Guidelines as their Level of Service for the Barrie Public Library.

Since that time, the Barrie Public Library Board has reviewed the level of service of the Barrie Public Library against the Ontario Public Library Guidelines on an annual basis as part of the setting of goals and objectives and the final establishment of its annual budget.

The areas where the library has identified a failure to meet the guidelines are addressed both through the goals and objectives as well as the budget. The largest challenge for the Library was the lack of space for study and collections and the overall issue of staffing. Each year since 1997, the Library budget has recognized the need to meet the guidelines.

The opening of the new library in November 1996 made it possible for the Library to build its collection and deal with the lack of study space. Staffing issues have been receiving attention on an ongoing basis since 1996 and remain a priority with the Board. Issues of policy, governance and services have been dealt with over time.

Based on the annual review of the level of service of the Barrie Public Library, the Board determined during the 2000 budget process that it was time to seek accreditation through the Monitoring and Accreditation Council. The peer accreditation process using the Ontario Public Library Guidelines was undertaken over the summer of 2000.

On Friday, October 20, 2000, the Barrie Public Library received its certificate of accreditation from the Ontario Public Library Guidelines Monitoring and Accreditation Council. The Barrie Public Library has met or surpassed over 100 guidelines dealing with policy, planning, resources and services. Barrie Public Library achieved a grading of 97.6%. Work still needs to be done in the area of collections and staffing, and the staff and Board look forward to renewing the accreditation in 2005 with a score of 100%.

When the Barrie Public Library Board first adopted the Ontario Public Library Guidelines the population of the City was about 79,000. Barrie Public Library now services a population over 100,000. The Ontario Public Library Guidelines have enabled the Library to respond to the growing population with the building of a new facility, the development of the collection, the introduction of advanced technology and the deployment of staff. The Library has completed a capital fundraising campaign, introduced planned giving and promoted a wide range of extended services and opportunities. The Barrie Public Library is delighted to have been the first large library in the province of Ontario to be accredited.

Adele Kostiak, CEO

OPL Guidelines Council