

Municipality Of Chatham-Kent

Community Human Services

Library Services

Information Report

To: Mayor and Members of Council

From: Tania Sharpe, HBA, MLIS
CEO/Chief Librarian

Date: October 19, 2020

Subject: Chatham-Kent Public Library – Library Service Analysis

This report is for the information of Council.

Background

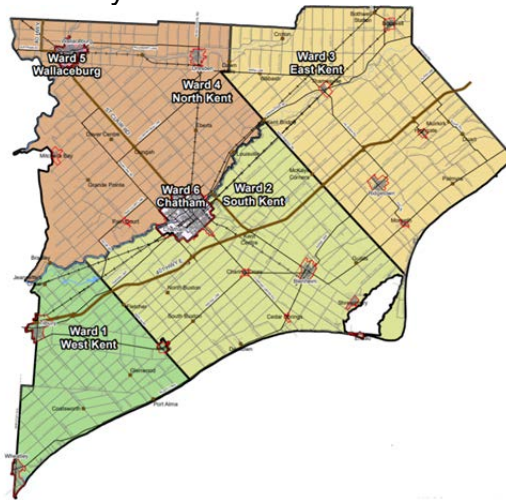
The August 10, 2020 Report to Council, “2021 Budget Opportunities for 0%”, prepared by Gord Quinton, stated that the Chatham-Kent Public Library (CKPL) will review the number of locations and service delivery. CKPL would also review usage, locations, and future needs as well as modern delivery model and opportunities to co-locate with other municipal services (hubs).

This report will examine all eleven Library branches across Chatham-Kent.

Comments

A detailed analysis of each ward and branch has been completed.

Figure 1: Map of Chatham-Kent by Ward

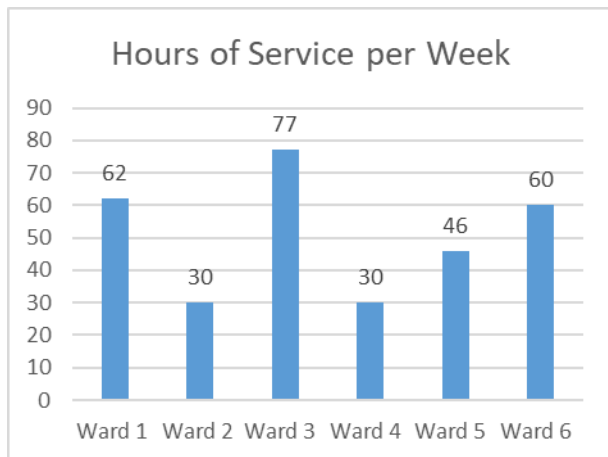


Factors considered when analyzing the service include:

- Demand measured by circulation
- Computer and Wi-Fi usage
- People through the door
- Active patrons
- Programs offered and attendance
- Questions asked
- Density of population in the service area and demographics
- Distance to travel to a library branch

CKPL is an eleven branch rural urban system with 305 open hours over six days a week. There are no branches open on Sundays, however library patrons have shared their desire for library services on Sundays. It is unclear at this time if opening on Sundays would increase the number of patrons or spread circulation and visits out over seven days potentially providing better customer service.

Chart 1: Hours of Service per Branch per Week



Ward 1	Merlin, Tilbury, Wheatley
Ward 2	Blenheim
Ward 3	Bothwell, Highgate, Thamesville & Ridgetown
Ward 4	Dresden
Ward 5	Wallaceburg
Ward 6	Chatham

Chart 2: The Population of Chatham-Kent, by Ward, as of the last Census in 2016:

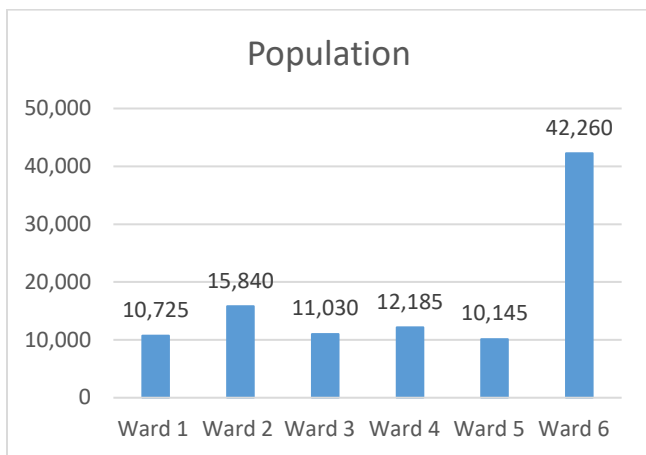
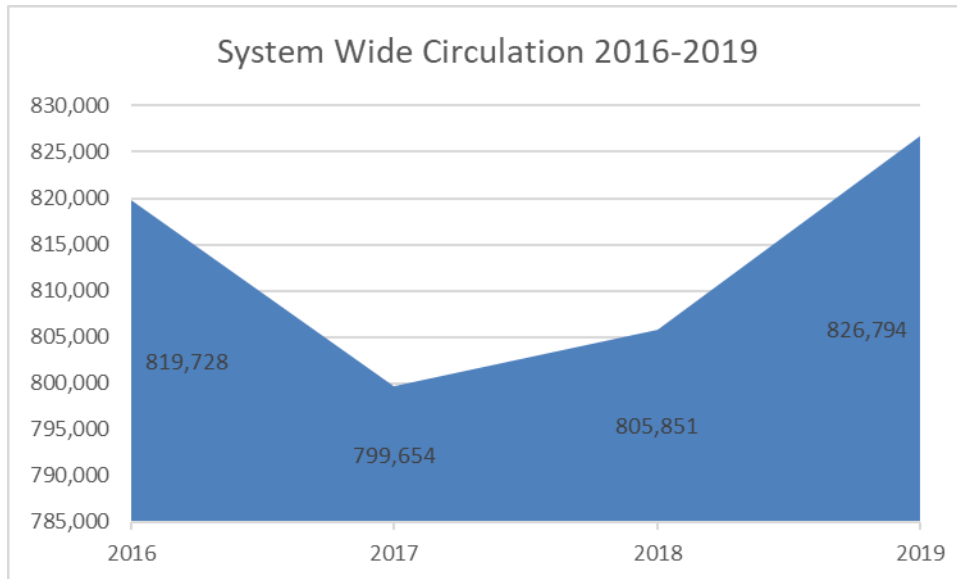


Chart 3 shows that CKPL as a whole is improving in circulation. The chart includes both physical and electronic circulation.

Chart 3: System-Wide Circulation 2016-2019

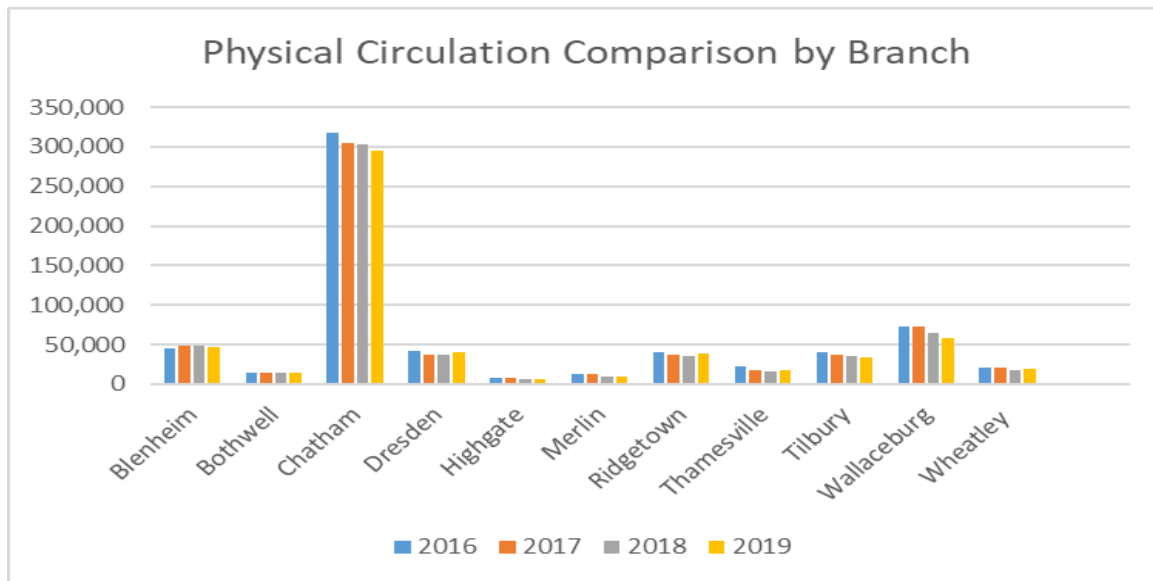


Physical circulation over the last four years has fluctuated as it will in any library system. Factors at play can include closures or reduced hours due to renovations as was the case in Blenheim in late 2016. After re-opening it took a few months for residents to include the library in their regular trips.

Other factors include ease of access to the library. Consider the repeated bridge closures in Chatham and Wallaceburg which made it more difficult to navigate the downtown core.

Weather is another factor that influences whether people will venture out. A particularly cold and snowy winter will reflect in a downturn in physical library usage.

Chart 4: Physical Circulation Comparison by Branch



	2016	2017	2018	2019
Blenheim	45,800	48,604	47,909	47,241
Bothwell	13,815	14,631	15,251	15,171
Chatham	317,977	305,351	303,327	294,219
Dresden	41,578	36,926	37,456	40,536
Highgate	8,424	7,374	6,537	7,169
Merlin	12,060	12,105	10,299	9,532
Ridgetown	40,749	37,669	35,947	38,261
Thamesville	22,948	17,188	16,619	17,860
Tilbury	39,790	36,457	35,671	34,527
Wallaceburg	73,007	72,556	65,253	57,803
Wheatley	20,657	20,287	17,977	19,123

While there has been a decline in physical circulation over the last four years, the increase in electronic or digital circulation has definitely increased. With the increased demand for downloadable materials comes the increased need for assistance and training for library patrons to be able to access the materials. Assistance comes in many ways. Sometimes it is through one to one direct instruction, others are provided through group workshops. More difficult, but often the case, staff provide troubleshooting assistance through phone calls and emails.

Electronic materials are significantly more expensive to acquire than physical items and libraries are not able to retain them for nearly the same length of time. Typically a digital item may be loaned 26 times, at an average cost of \$80-\$100. Once these downloads are complete, the library loses the rights to loan the title. Whereas a physical item,

costing \$20-\$50 can be loaned for as long as the item is in good condition. Which typically is between 35-50 times.

Chart 5: Electronic Circulation 2016-2019

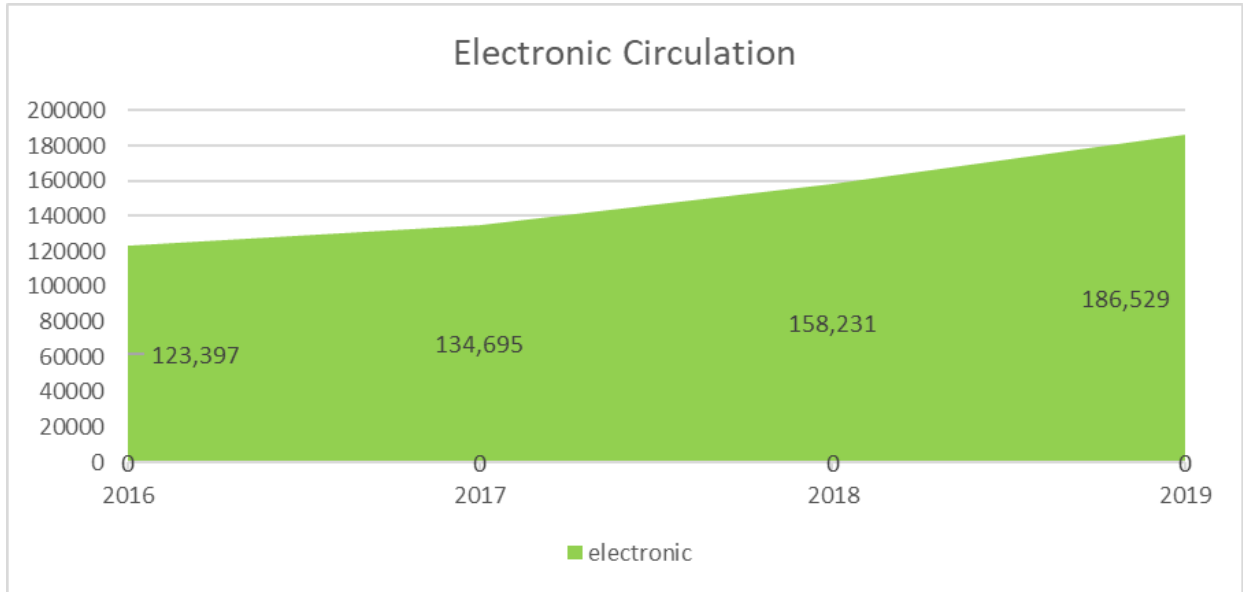
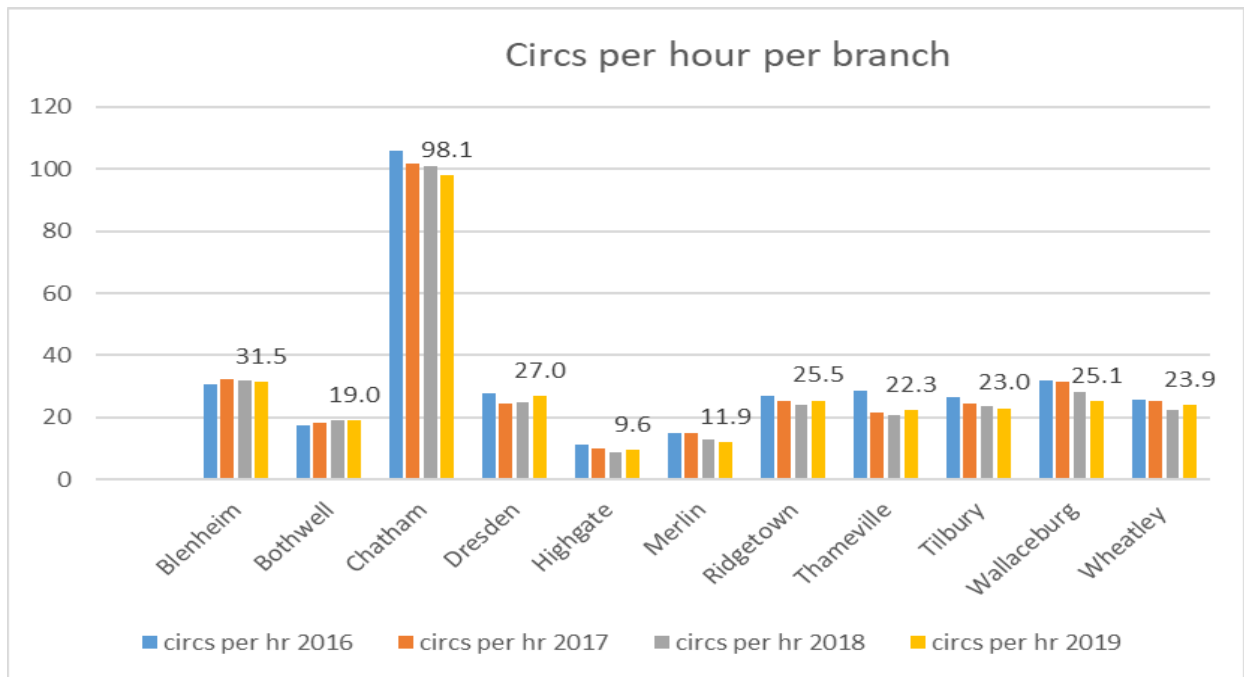


Chart 6: Circulation per Hour, per Branch

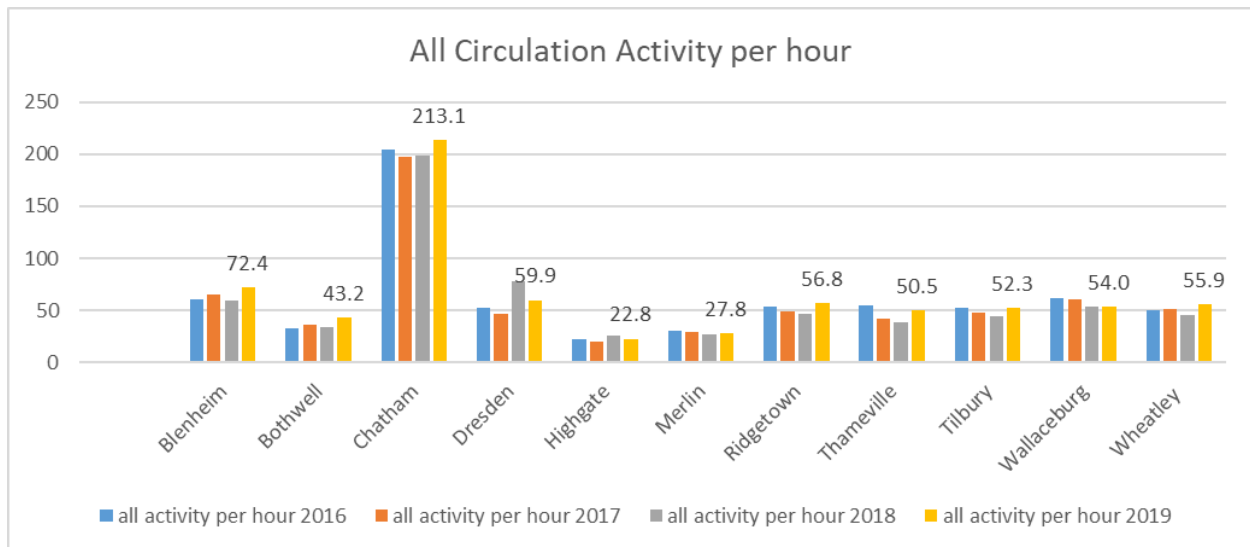


	Blenheim	Bothwell	Chatham	Dresden	Highgate	Merlin	Ridgetown	Thameville	Tilbury	Wallaceburg	Wheatley
circs per/hr 2016	30.5	17.3	106.0	27.7	11.2	15.1	27.2	28.7	26.5	31.7	25.8
circs per/hr 2017	32.4	18.3	101.8	24.6	9.8	15.1	25.1	21.5	24.3	31.5	25.4
circs per/hr 2018	31.9	19.1	101.1	25.0	8.7	12.9	24.0	20.8	23.8	28.4	22.5
circs per/hr 2019	31.5	19.0	98.1	27.0	9.6	11.9	25.5	22.3	23.0	25.1	23.9

In order to accurately depict the busyness of each branch it is necessary to also showcase all circulation activity that transpires across the circulation desks of staff at every branch location. Staff are not just checking out material, they are also checking in materials returned by patrons and new items that are delivered to each branch location every week. As well as, items that have been delivered to the branch to fulfil a patron request or hold, and weekly rotations of materials to keep collections fresh at each location.

These statistics do not capture new library cards or library card renewals at the desk or ongoing information requests.

Chart 7: All Circulation Activity per Hour, per Branch, from 2016-2019



	Blenheim	Bothwell	Chatham	Dresden	Highgate	Merlin	Ridgetown	Thameville	Tilbury	Wallaceburg	Wheatley
all activity per hour 2016	61.3	33.1	204.7	52.6	23.1	30.1	53.5	54.8	52.5	62.1	50.7
all activity per hour 2017	65.1	35.9	197.7	47.1	20.2	30.0	48.7	42.1	48.5	61.2	51.0
all activity per hour 2018	59.0	34.6	198.2	77.9	26.3	27.1	47.0	38.6	44.3	53.7	45.1
all activity per hour 2019	72.4	43.2	213.1	59.9	22.8	27.8	56.8	50.5	52.3	54.0	55.9

The library is known in the community as the place to ask questions and answers will be found. Questions can range from who wrote a particular book, to where to find information on diabetes, to how do I get apps onto my iPad?

The level of need for technological assistance has remained an important aspect of customer service at all branch locations. CKPL staff work with people of all technological capabilities and ages.

Chart 8: System Wide Questions Asked by Category, from 2016-2019

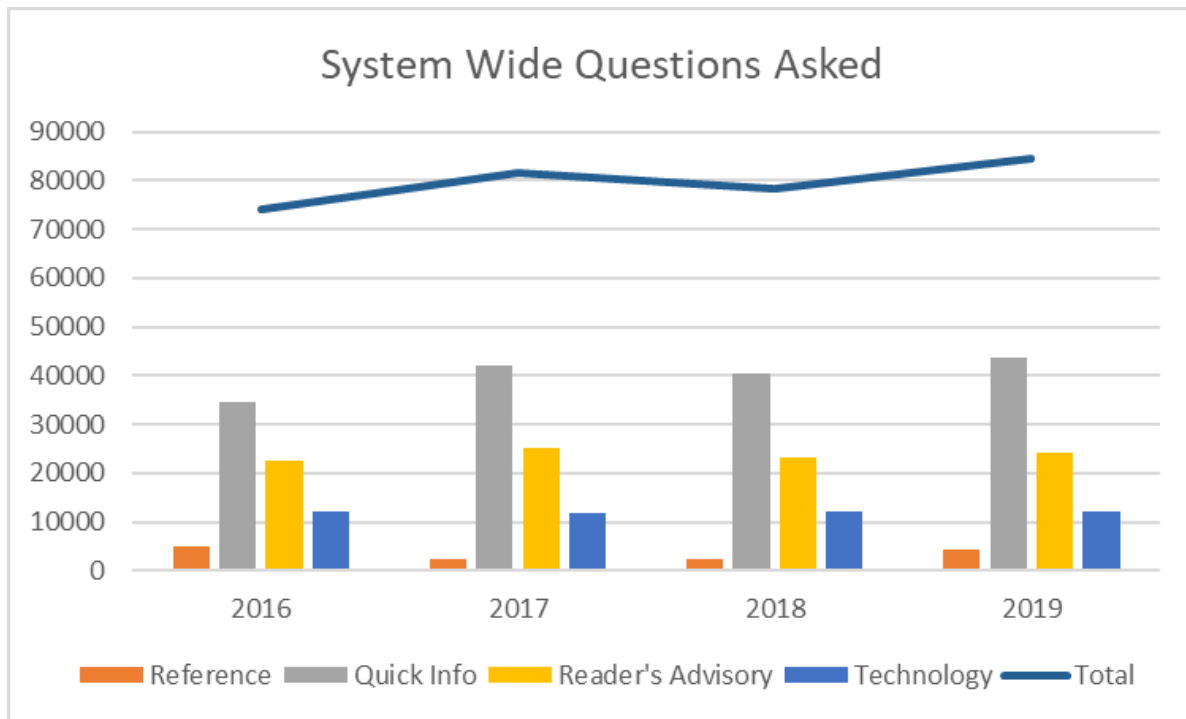
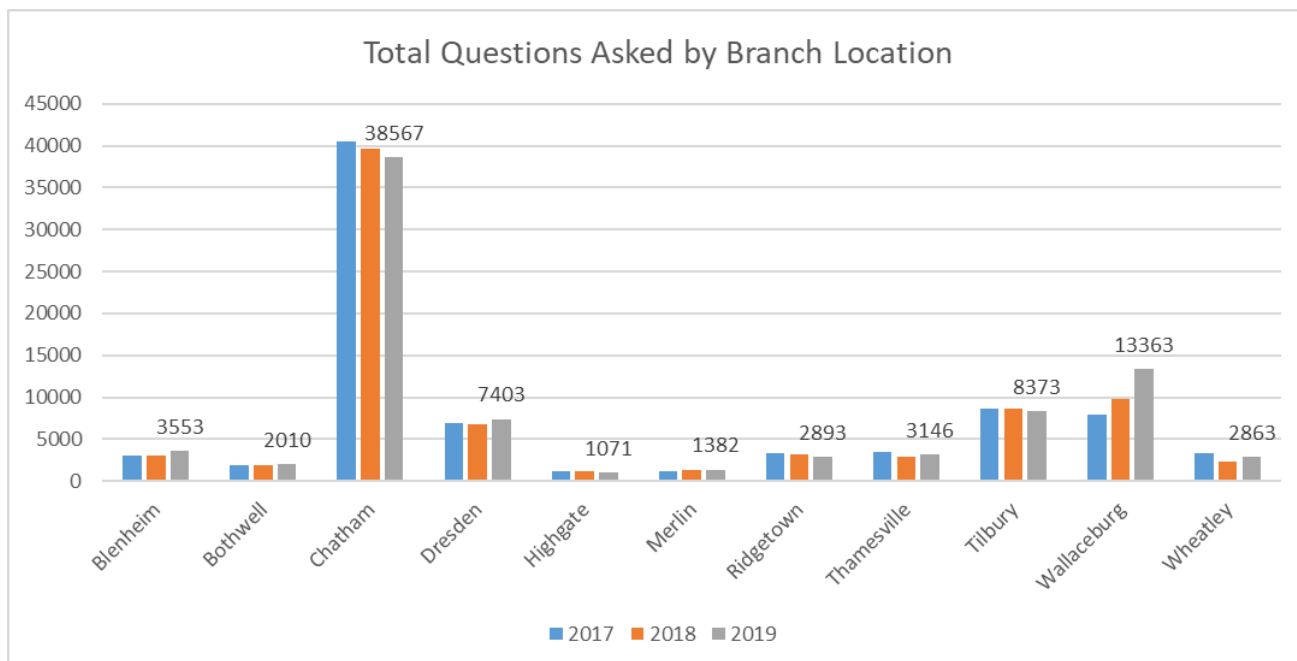


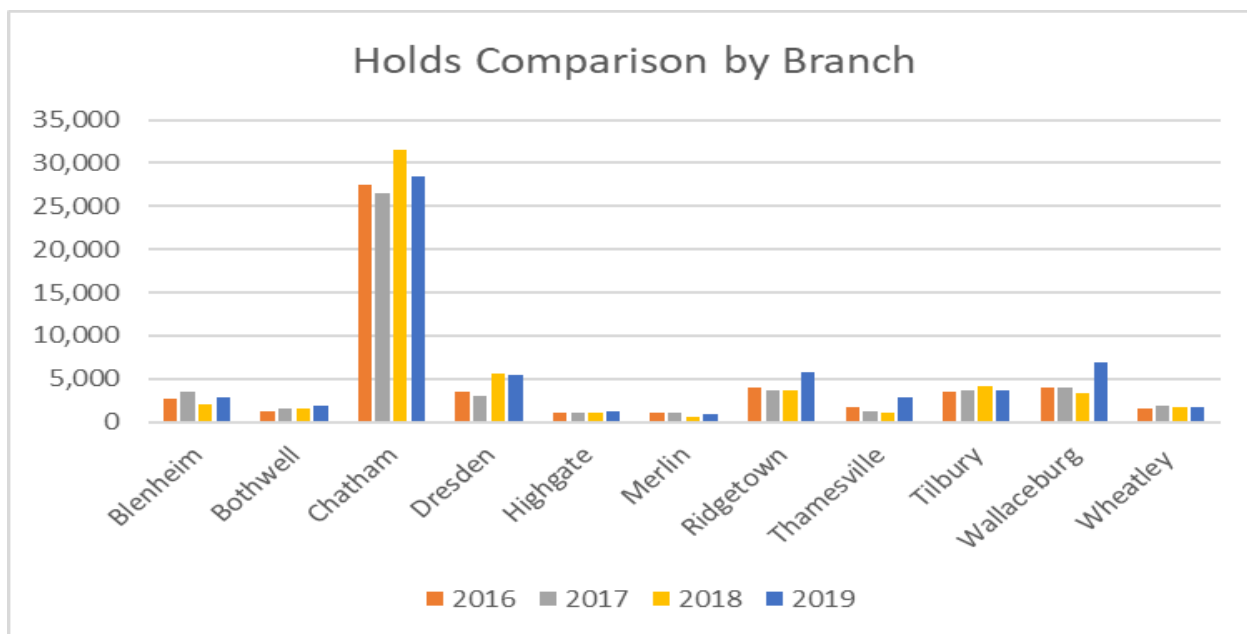
Chart 9: Total Questions asked, per Branch, per Year 2017-2019



Holds are placed by patrons and staff on materials not available in their home branch. The ability to place holds ensures that CKPL’s collection is viewed as a global collection accessible to everyone at any location. Holds based circulation and the movement of materials throughout the system continues to grow.

Utilizing the library courier system enables CKPL to quickly and efficiently deliver materials across 11 locations. Encouraging and placing holds for patrons is a pillar of CKPL’s customer service.

Chart 10: Holds Comparison by Branch from 2016-2019



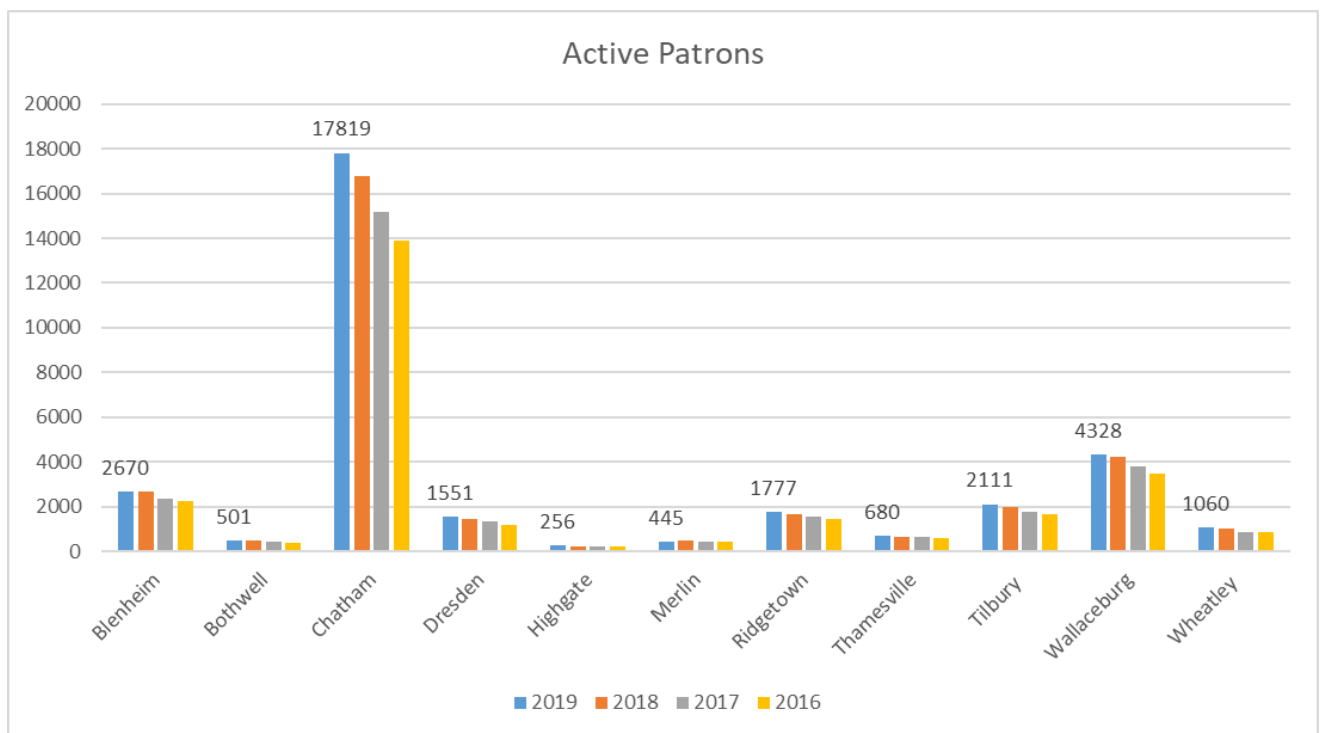
	2016	2017	2018	2019
Blenheim	2,753	3,455	2,056	2,900
Bothwell	1,186	1,472	1,493	1,845
Chatham	27,425	26,524	31,572	28,395
Dresden	3,432	2,984	5,582	5,509
Highgate	1,130	1,128	1,072	1,142
Merlin	1,020	985	592	958
Ridgetown	3,906	3,648	3,587	5,750
Thamesville	1,693	1,269	1,098	2,903
Tilbury	3,426	3,723	4,112	3,580
Wallaceburg	3,938	3,923	3,300	6,869
Wheatley	1,580	1,848	1,631	1,703

An active patron is defined, in the circulation policy as:

- Any patron who has a valid CKPL membership
- Any patron who has used CKPL services in the past two years (i.e. borrowing materials, attending programs, using the internet, accessing databases remotely, etc.)

Staff at CKPL have worked diligently over the last four years to promote the library and its services within the community, reaching out beyond the library walls to introduce the million possibilities at the library. Examples include, card drives in schools, attending seniors fairs, and creating marketing campaigns via radio, news ads, and social media channels. The success is evident with the number of active library cards in Chatham-Kent. It is important to note that the statistics do not reflect the number of people who use the library but decline to have a library card.

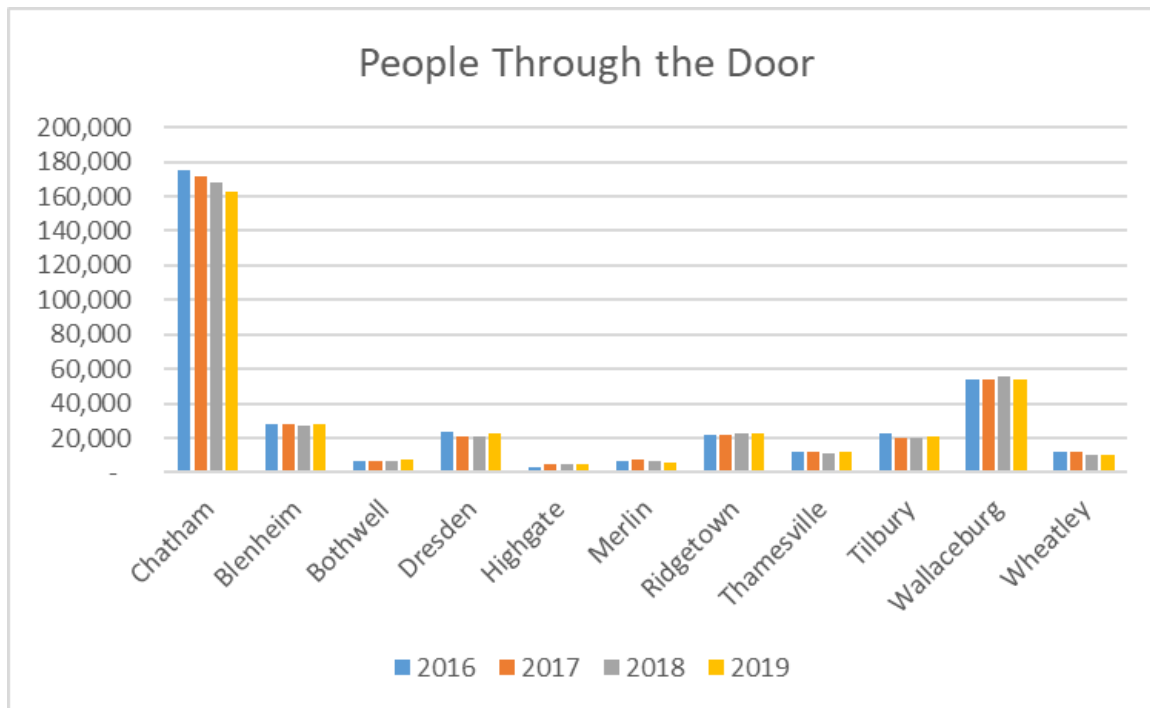
Chart 11: Active patrons per Branch per year from 2016-2019



Statistics on the number of people through the door provides another picture of service at CKPL. The public library is one of the few public spaces where residents can go and stay for long periods of time without having to spend money.

Library branches are used officially and unofficially as warming and cooling stations. People who do not have a library card drop into the library to read the local newspaper and peruse the magazine collections. Others meet friends and stop to socialize with staff. Many people also use the library as a place to study independently and meet with tutors.

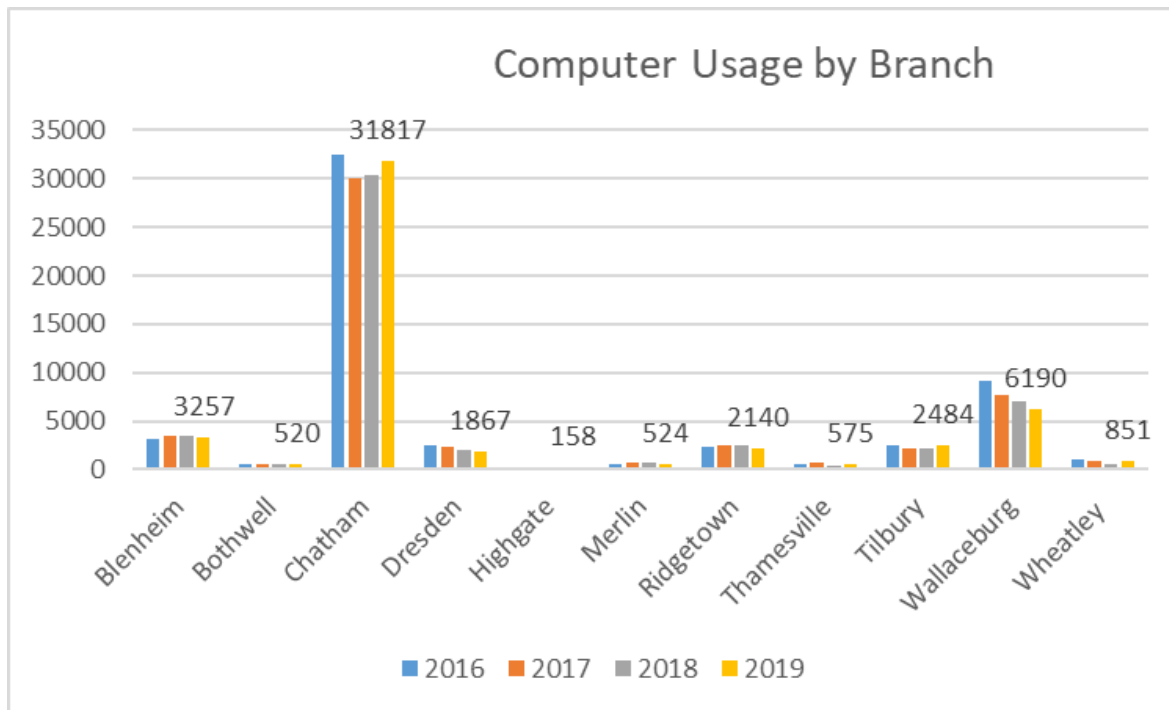
Chart 12: People Through the Door per Branch, per Year from 2016-2019



	2016	2017	2018	2019
Chatham	175,248	171,989	168,072	163,067
Blenheim	27,964	27,897	26,927	28,337
Bothwell	6,625	6,757	7,004	7,074
Dresden	23,684	20,912	21,085	22,365
Highgate	3,368	4,645	4,597	4,871
Merlin	7,060	7,592	6,476	5,758
Ridgetown	22,017	22,220	22,554	22,671
Thamesville	11,787	11,537	10,878	11,764
Tilbury	22,384	20,215	19,754	21,026
Wallaceburg	53,500	53,574	56,072	54,189
Wheatley	12,161	11,611	10,329	10,481
TOTAL	367,814	360,966	355,766	353,622

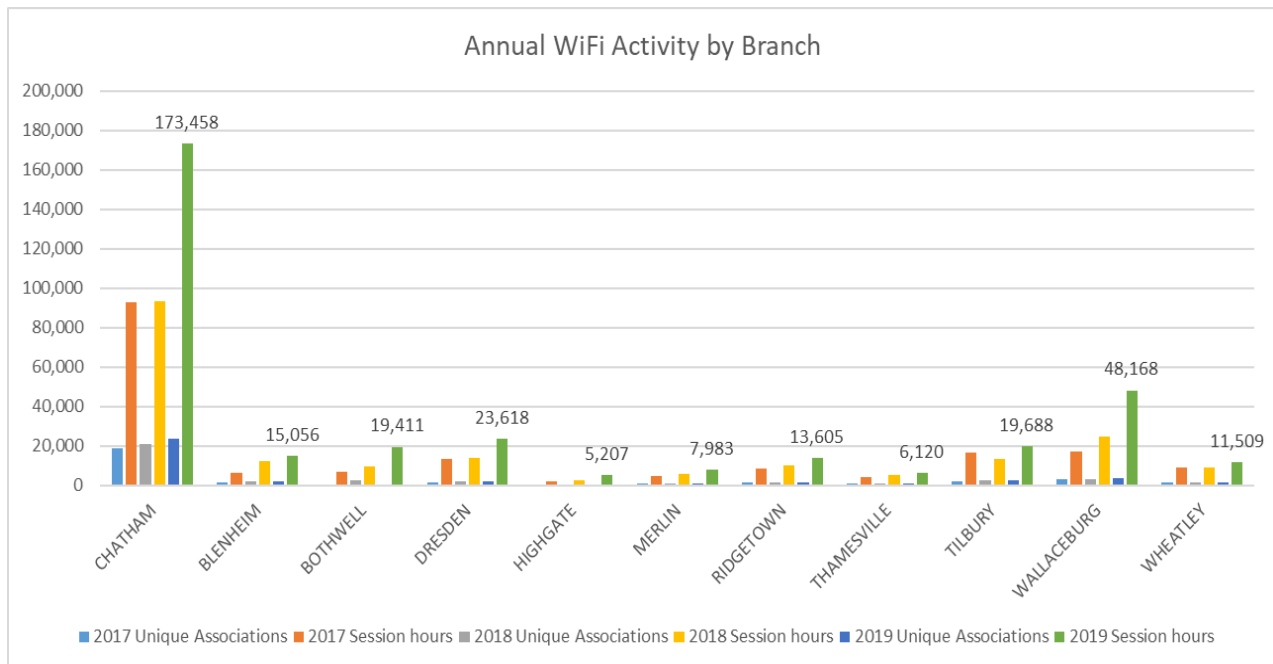
Computer usage has been decreasing across the system and Wi-Fi usage has increased. Recognizing this trend, CKPL has increased the speed of its Wi-Fi and reduced the number of public access computers across the system, putting technology dollars where they will be best utilized.

Chart 13: Computer Usage per Branch, per Year from 2016-2019



	2016	2017	2018	2019
Blenheim	3200	3383	3461	3257
Bothwell	576	497	523	520
Chatham	32465	29998	30377	31817
Dresden	2431	2365	1964	1867
Highgate	232	186	130	158
Merlin	625	785	741	524
Ridgetown	2248	2515	2447	2140
Thamesville	592	652	429	575
Tilbury	2506	2149	2087	2484
Wallaceburg	9164	7682	7110	6190
Wheatley	960	841	542	851
	54999	51053	49811	50383

Chart 14: Annual Wi-Fi Activity per Branch, per Year from 2017-2019



LOCATION	2017		2018		2019	
	Unique Associations	Session hours	Unique Associations	Session hours	Unique Associations	Session hours
CHATHAM	18,766	92,757	21,109	93,180	23,380	173,458
BLENHEIM	1,426	6,495	1,776	12,171	1,906	15,056
BOTHWELL	482	7,025	2,349	9,745	491	19,411
DRESDEN	1,619	13,476	1,797	13,570	1,919	23,618
HIGHGATE	339	2,141	497	2,699	413	5,207
MERLIN	615	4,904	788	5,774	732	7,983
RIDGETOWN	1,222	8,284	1,505	10,014	1,465	13,605
THAMESVILLE	964	4,221	983	5,126	1,075	6,120
TILBURY	1,943	16,444	2,299	13,452	2,421	19,688
WALLACEBURG	2,780	16,926	3,020	24,803	3,828	48,168
WHEATLEY	1,323	9,139	1,162	9,206	1,149	11,509
TOTAL	31,475	181,812	37,284	199,741	38,779	343,822

Summary

Public libraries across Chatham-Kent provide an integral access point to community resources and services. Well trained and passionate library staff connect CK residents to a wealth of resources, whether it is recommending the next great read, curating a relevant and timely electronic collection of books, or enabling someone to access a database to learn a new skill. All while providing topical, timely programs and resources that connect people to information and inspiration.

CKPL staff are ready to assist in meeting the educational, informational, recreational, cultural, and social well-being of all residents of Chatham-Kent.

The Ontario Public Library Week theme this year was **One Card, One Million Possibilities**. CKPL provides access to 6 digital platforms, 32 online databases, access to over 200,000 titles as well as a myriad of programs all designed to engage Chatham-Kent residents.

Conclusion

Libraries add to the social fabric of each community, they are the gathering place that people turn to in times of need. The library team has worked diligently to provide the best services to Chatham-Kent and as statistics and data show, usage of the libraries changes over time. When there are consistent changes in usage, administration must provide the best professional opinion to ensure the ongoing viability of library services across all branches.

In order to increase the efficiency of public library service to East Chatham-Kent, Ward 3, it is administration's opinion that library services should be consolidated from four branches to three. Increasing hours of operation to both the Bothwell and Thamesville branches, and providing more staff support to the Ridgetown branch. Administration does not present this scenario lightly and the team is aware of the impact this suggestion will cause, however, the goal is to improve the overall service the library provides to Chatham-Kent residents.

Other ideas to investigate for efficiencies in Library service and facility usage include investigating co-locating services in Merlin with the fire hall. As well as creating a community hub in the Wallaceburg community where multiple services could be located within the library.

Consultation

The Manager, Support Services; Manager, Public Services; and Manager, Marketing Outreach and Programs were consulted.

Financial Implications

There are no financial costs associated with the writing of this report.

Prepared by:

Tania L. Sharpe, HBA, MLIS
CEO / Chief Librarian

Reviewed by:

April Rietdyk, RN, BScN, MHS, PHD PUBH
General Manager
Community Human Services

Attachments: None