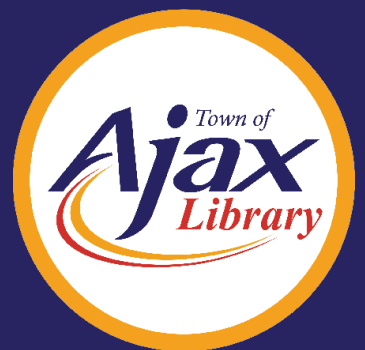




# Collections Review Report 2021-2025



# Table of Contents

<b>Executive Summary</b> .....	1
<b>Purpose</b> .....	2
<b>Methodology</b> .....	2
<b>Quantitative Evaluation</b> .....	3-9
Statistical Overview.....	3-4
Age of Collection.....	5
Turnover Rate.....	6
Circulation.....	6-9
<b>Qualitative Evaluation</b> .....	10-13
Bestsellers Lists 2025.....	10
Literary Awards Lists.....	11
Ontario Public Library Guidelines.....	12
Collection Appearance & Maintenance.....	13
<b>Collection Challenges</b> .....	14-17
Spacing.....	14
Multilingual.....	14
Young Adult Collection.....	15
Cost of eContent.....	16
Future Evaluations.....	17
<b>Evaluation Status</b> .....	18
<b>Recommendations</b> .....	19
<b>Conclusion</b> .....	20
<b>End Notes</b> .....	21

# Executive Summary

Ajax Public Library undertook a comprehensive evaluation of its collection for the period of 2021-2025, as required every five (5) years by the Library Board. This review ensures the collection remains current, relevant, and responsive to community needs. Using both quantitative data from the Integrated Library System (ILS) and qualitative analysis of bestseller and literary award lists, the review provides a balanced assessment of collection performance, use, and alignment with the Ontario Public Library (OPL) Guidelines.

Overall, the Library demonstrated strong performance and continued growth. Collection size has increased, with per capita rising from 1.96 in 2019 to 2.1 in 2025, while total circulation reached over 5.3 million, a 24% increase from the previous review. Turnover rates have improved, reflecting a more strategic, demand-driven acquisitions approach. Qualitative findings further indicate strong alignment with customer demand, with 88% coverage of bestseller titles and a balanced approach to incorporating diverse and award-recognized works.

The Library meets and, in many areas, exceeds OPL Guidelines for collection management, policy, and access. Key advancements include the implementation of Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) informed acquisition practices, and innovative service models such as floating collections and unlimited renewals. Collectively, these factors demonstrate a collection that is thoughtfully managed to balance currency, depth, a range of formats, and evolving community needs.

**Per capita collection  
size increased from  
1.96 to 2.1**



# Purpose

Ajax Public Library embarked on a collection evaluation to assess the Library's holdings from 2021 to 2025. This evaluation ensures the collection remains current and meets the needs of the community by providing relevant, reliable, and appealing materials. It also offers an opportunity to review the Library's procurement and maintenance practices and to identify areas for improvement.

The last evaluation was completed and presented to the Library Board in March 2022. That review was conducted internally, drawing on in-house expertise, following the framework established in previous evaluations (2011 and 2016). The 2021-2025 evaluation was also completed internally and highlights areas for refinement and improvement based on the findings of the previous review, with particular enhancements made in the circulation section of the report and more broadly throughout in response to changes in OPL Guidelines.

# Methodology

Both quantitative and qualitative methodologies were used to provide a snapshot of the current collection.

The quantitative evaluation consisted of a statistical assessment and general overview of the collection derived from the Integrated Library System (ILS). Collection data was captured at the end of December 2025, and circulation statistics were analyzed to identify use trends. Due to the impact of the pandemic on Library use, and in an effort to avoid skewed results, the 2016-2020 collection review used 2019 circulation data for comparison with previous and current evaluations.

The qualitative evaluation encompassed two (2) aspects. First, the collection was compared against literary award shortlists and bestseller lists from Canadian, U.S., and international sources to assess its breadth, depth, diversity, and selection practices.

Second, benchmarks established by the OPL Guidelines were applied. As noted in the Guidelines, they “facilitate an organized, objective approach to the evaluation of local library service” and “ensure that a local evaluation process is a fair and comprehensive review of the whole spectrum of services and operations.”<sup>1</sup> Since the last review, the OPL Guidelines have been updated, and some recommendations are no longer explicitly stated. However, selected elements have been retained in this evaluation to preserve consistency across review periods. Any departures from the Guidelines used in 2016-2020 are clearly identified.

Finally, a physical review of the shelves was conducted to evaluate the condition and composition of the collection.

# Quantitative Evaluation

## Statistical Overview

With a population of 126,666<sup>2</sup>, Ajax continued to grow over the past five (5) years as a diverse, multicultural, and multilingual community within Durham Region.

The OPL Guidelines outline benchmarks for collection size and notes the common utilization of per capita (volumes to population) as a measure “to compare the effectiveness of library collections”<sup>3</sup>. For a population of 100,000+, the Guidelines recommend a benchmark of 2.3 volumes per capita. In 2025, the Library had a total of 191,834 physical materials and an additional 79,950 digital collection items, for a total of 271,784 holdings, resulting in a 2.1 per capita. This is slightly lower than the suggested guideline of 2.3. The per capita in the previous evaluation was 1.96, thus there has been an increase of 0.14 volumes per capita over the last five (5) years.

Evaluation Year	Ajax Per Capita
2016	1.82
2019	1.96
2025	2.1
<b>OPL Guidelines Benchmark</b>	<b>2.3</b>

In 2019, Ajax had the smallest per capita of all Durham Region libraries. Improving this metric was identified in the Library’s 2023-2028 Strategic Master Plan. As a result of that strategy, this most recent data from the annual Ontario Public Library statistics show that Ajax is now closely aligned with bigger systems when looking at the per capita of physical holdings.

Municipality	Population	Physical Holdings	Per Capital Physical	Electronic Holdings	Combined Holdings	Combined Per Capita
Ajax	126,666	191,834	1.5	79,950	271,784	2.1
Brock*	12,567	38,640	3.1	132,364	171,004	13.6
Clarington*	110,891	126,343	1.1	218,955	345,298	3.1
Oshawa	186,375	300,564	1.6	16,907	317,471	1.7
Pickering*	105,995	161,392	1.5	151,780	313,172	3.0
Scugog*	22,430	42,897	1.9	132,364	175,261	7.8
Uxbridge*	21,410	62,326	2.9	132,364	194,690	9.1
Whitby	150,700	242,563	1.6	29,676	272,239	1.8

\*Members of the Ontario Library Service (OLS) provincial OverDrive consortium.

## In 2025, the Library had a total of 271,784 holdings, resulting in a 2.1 per capita

As was the case in 2019, the Library continues to maintain the highest number of electronic holdings among the Lakeshore libraries, with the collection growing significantly from 27,873 items in 2019 to 79,950. This demonstrates continuing demand for digital content and the Library's investment in building collections based on community interests.

Libraries which are members of the Ontario Library Service (OLS) provincial OverDrive consortium, pool resources to share access to a larger, collective digital collection. As a result, the number of available copies attributed to these libraries is significantly higher, reflecting shared ownership and access rather than individual collection size. Ajax, like Whitby and Oshawa, does not participate in the consortium as we exceed population eligibility requirements. This distinction is important when comparing digital collection sizes.

Collection distribution by audience was presented statistically in earlier versions. Previously, OPL Guidelines recommended two-thirds (2/3) allocation for adult materials and one-third (1/3) for children's and young adult (YA) holdings. While this requirement is no longer in the current Guidelines, it has been retained as a best practice to support consistency across review years.

	Adult	Juvenile	Young Adult
2016	45%	45%	6%
2019	53%	40%	7%
2025	52%	40%	8%

The 2025 data reflects a stable distribution across audience groups, despite notable changes to the physical collection. First, music CDs were removed March 2023 due to declining use, reduced availability, and compatibility. While a substantial portion of these materials served both adult and children's audiences, this change had minimal impact on overall audience distribution. This outcome reflects the effectiveness of the Library's weeding practices, which strategically identify under performing formats and reinvestment in more relevant materials for the same user groups.

Second, YA non-fiction was reclassified into adult non-fiction. This decision reflects the information-seeking behaviours of teens, who may perceive children's non-fiction as too elementary while simultaneously experiencing barriers to engaging with adult non-fiction, despite significant overlap in content and subject matter. The "teen" designation can, in some cases, deter engagement, and this adjustment aims to improve accessibility and usability of the non-fiction collection for this audience.

# Age of Collection

To gauge the age of the collection, a report identifying the acquisition year of various collection types was used. Previous reports on the age of the collection were consulted as well.

The Administrators of Rural and Urban Public Libraries of Ontario (ARUPLO) recommends that library collections have “an up-to-date collection, with a minimum of 50% of the materials purchased or published within the last five (5) years.”<sup>5</sup>

Previous evaluations analyzed the age of the collection by branch. Since 2020, the Library has implemented a floating model across most of the collection. In this model, materials are shelved at the location where they are returned rather than being sent back to a designated “home” branch, allowing the collection to shift based on community use. For this and for future evaluations, age of the collection will be assessed at a system-wide level rather than by branch.

Year Range	2019 Evaluation	2025 Evaluation
0 to 5 years	118,616 (61%)	87,121 (45%)
6+ years	75,110 (39%)	107,345 (55%)

While the proportion of newer materials (0-5 years) has decreased from 61% in 2019 to 45% in 2025, this shift should be considered within the broader context of collection development and external factors influencing the data. The previous evaluation coincided with the opening of a new branch, resulting in a significant one-time increase in acquisitions. This created a concentration of new materials with a 2019 acquisition date, which continues to skew the comparison.

Additionally, acquisitions were impacted in 2022 by vendor performance challenges, which resulted in a temporary decline in purchasing volume. Since then, the Library has secured three (3) new vendors, leading to improved performance, stronger purchasing capacity, and a better ability to meet demand for physical materials.

The Library has also strategically reallocated a small portion of its physical collections budget toward digital resources in response to increased demand for eContent following the 2020 pandemic. While this shift has resulted in a modest reduction to investments in physical materials, it reflects a responsive, user-focused approach to collection development.

Importantly, the collection continues to meet the Board’s requirement that the average age did not exceed seven (7) years. As of 2025, the average publication year is 2019, representing an average age of six (6) years.

Finally, ongoing weeding efforts have played a key role in maintaining the overall health and relevance of the collection. Without this active management, the proportion of older materials (6+ years) would be significantly higher.



**The collection continues to meet the Board’s requirement that the average age not exceed 7 years.**

# Turnover Rate

The OPL Guidelines updated their recommended turnover rate in 2023 from 4.8 to 5.3 for libraries serving populations over 100,000. This represents a significant increase and should be considered when comparing changes in Collection Review reports. Previous reports will have used the original guideline from 2013; this report considers the updated recommended turnover rate.

In 2019, the Library’s physical collection turnover rate was 3.2. By 2025, this rate has increased to 4.08, demonstrating notable growth in the use of the physical collection. This sustained increase reflects an evolving use of the physical collection and a strategic shift in the Library’s acquisitions approach. Rather than purchasing titles arbitrarily, the Library relies on a carefully curated Automatic Release Plan (ARP) that aligns with global trends while remaining responsive to the specific interests and needs of Ajax residents. When physical and digital collections are considered together, the overall turnover rate is 3.84, up from 3.5 in 2019.

It is important to recognize that the OPL benchmark is derived from annual survey data and represents an average across library systems in the population category, including significantly larger systems. For example, Ottawa Public Library is within the 100,000+ population group, serving over 1,000,000 residents and reports a physical turnover rate of 6.44. Inversely, Toronto Public Library has a physical turnover rate of 1.26, highlighting the variability within this category and reinforcing that turnover rates should be interpreted within the context of local service models, collection strategies, and community demand.

The chart below demonstrates that while the turnover rate does not meet the OPL benchmark, Ajax Public Library demonstrates strong regional performance, ranking second among Durham Region libraries in both physical and combined turnover. Regional comparisons should be considered in context as well, as some systems utilize automatic renewals, which can significantly increase reported circulation.

Municipality	Physical Holdings	Annual Circulation	Turnover Rate Physical	Electronic Holdings	Annual Circulation <sup>7</sup>	Combined Turnover
Ajax	191,834	782,355	4.08	79,950	260,499	3.84
Brock	38,640	39,838	1.03	132,364	16,501	0.33
Clarington*	126,343	749,163	5.93	218,955	196,975	2.74
Oshawa	300,564	761,424	2.53	16,907	195,215	3.01
Pickering	161,392	565,983	3.51	151,780	97,315	2.12
Scugog	42,897	78,325	1.83	132,364	39,653	0.67
Uxbridge	62,326	91,638	1.47	132,364	30,945	0.63
Whitby*	242,563	817,951	3.37	29,676	306,176	4.13

\*System offers automatic renewals.

# Circulation

The 2016-2020 Collection Review introduced the analysis of circulation statistics to better understand the borrowing patterns across age groups and certain formats. This approach provided a useful snapshot of customer behaviour, helping to identify both areas of strength and opportunities for growth or reassessment within the collection.

The current evaluation incorporates additional formats such as multilingual, graphic novels, and magazines, and introduces an “All/Family” category to reflect the Library’s expanded offerings of non-traditional items that appeal across multiple age groups and platforms.

The statistics below serve as a benchmark for future evaluations, with the caveat that, over a five (5) year period, certain formats may be retired, as was the case with music CDs in 2019. This overview of item types provides a critical framework for assessing collection performance, clearly identifying areas of high circulation as well as those that may require targeted development, re-balancing, or strategic reconsideration.

Between January 2021 and December 2025, a total of 5,349,254 items circulated across physical and digital collections, including downloading, streaming, and databases. This is a 24% increase from 2016-2020’s total circulation (4,297,198).

	Adult	Young Adult	Children	All/Family	Total
Audiobooks	2,144	0	12,937	0	15,081
Books, Fiction	83,366	14,839	314,776	0	412,981
Books, Non-Fiction	68,102	0	61,625	0	129,727
DVD and Blu-Ray	58,371	0	20,774	0	79,145
French	994	255	19,476	0	20,725
Graphic Novels	6,577	25,357	57,083	0	89,017
Large Print	16,062	0	0	0	16,062
Magazines and Comics	12,232	1,578	4,421	0	18,231
Multilingual	11,891	0	2,864	0	14,755
Other*	1,828	471	2,842	2,249	7,390
Video games	20,570	14,114	18,852	0	53,536
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>282,137</b>	<b>56,614</b>	<b>515,650</b>	<b>2,249</b>	<b>861,791</b>

Note that in the table above, unless specifically indicated, categories include both fiction and non-fiction where both exist. Language collections include a variety of formats (i.e. books, media).

\*Other includes: Book Club Kits, CNIB collections, in-house devices, kits, passes, public hardware, quick tech, technology, and toys.

First, key collections identified in the 2016-2020 evaluation are revisited to provide updated insights into their performance, use trends, and ongoing relevance.



DVD and Blu-Ray use reflects broader industry trends. While these items do not have a distinct Young Adult category, teen users likely access materials across both adult and children's collections. The removal of age-based restrictions on DVD and Blu-Ray loaning, in alignment with Ontario's Film Content Information Act, 2020, has further supported equitable access. Despite these efforts, circulation has declined by 59% since 2019, mirroring the shift to streaming platforms and the increasing exclusivity of digital releases. At the same time, vendors have been unable to fully supply physical media, resulting in unspent budget allocations, as production companies continue to reduce investment in these formats.



The Library will continue to monitor use patterns and community demand and will consider sunsetting the format(s) if data supports this approach, similar to the retirement of music CDs. At present, the Library offers physical media as it remains an important resource for customers who do not have access to subscription-based streaming services.



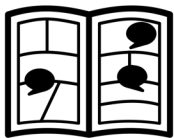
Audiobooks and Large Print continue to be identified as outliers due to their low circulation. However, their importance has been reinforced by the discontinuation of the Canadian National Institute for the Blind (CNIB)'s deposit CD audiobook collection service in 2025. Loss of this service removed a key access point for individuals with low vision, particularly seniors. While the Library will continue to house a CD deposit collection until materials are removed due to condition/use, it will not longer be updated by CNIB.



Similarly, availability of physical audiobooks has declined as publishers produce them at reduced levels. Despite this trend, the discontinuation of CNIB's deposit service underscores the importance of continuing to offer large print and audiobook collections, as their role in supporting accessibility and equitable service extends beyond circulation metrics.



Video games continue to show strong growth and evolving use patterns. While no distinct Young Adult category exists, cataloguing practices have been refined so “E for Everyone” rated titles are classified within the adult collection, improving access and discoverability, and better aligning with actual use by teens and adults. As part of ongoing collection maintenance, the Library retires older console formats that are no longer supported by manufacturers (ex. PlayStation3) to ensure the collection remains current, functional, and relevant. Circulation reflects this shift, with video game use increasing by 31% since 2019. This sustained demand highlights the Library’s role in supporting access to high-cost recreational activities and meeting user expectations for emerging formats.



Graphic novels remain a high-performing format and demonstrate strong diversity and engagement across audiences, with particularly high use among children and young adults. Graphic novels are one of the most actively used collections and a key area of ongoing success.



Children’s fiction continues to be the most significant area of use within the collection, including the circulation of picture books, chapter books, board books, and leveled readers. This exceptionally high level of engagement reflects sustained demand and the Library’s success in supporting early literacy and recreational reading. This use is reflective of community demographics: Ajax is home to 23,805 children ages 0-14, representing 18.8% of the population; an estimated 18,000-19,000 of those are children under age 12<sup>7</sup>. This substantial youth population contributes to the high circulation of children’s materials and underscores the importance of maintaining a robust and responsive collection for this audience.

Overall, these findings demonstrate a collection that is responsive to changing formats and user behaviours, while continuing to prioritize accessibility, equity, and strong engagement across key audience groups whose needs remain central to collection development.

**Between January 2021 and December 2025, circulation across physical and digital collections is up 24%**

# Qualitative Evaluation

A qualitative evaluation, conducted through the examination of literary booklists, allows the Library to assess whether customers can find the items they want within the collection. The Library continued the approach used in the 2016-2020 review, analyzing bestseller and literary award lists to assess their representation in the collection.

In the previous report, the Library established a benchmark of holding 90% of cumulative titles. With respect to bestsellers, the collection has continued to approach this target, achieving 88% representation of the titles examined, up from 83% in 2020. Literary award lists continue to present a known tension. These lists often include lower-demand literary works that may not align as closely with community interest. While the Library held 76% of the assessed award titles, the results indicate that the collection effectively balances breadth and demand, supporting a diverse and actively used collection. Maintaining representation from literary award lists remains important, as it supports discovery and ensures exposure to a broader range of voices and works that may fall outside immediate demand.

## Bestsellers Lists 2025

Bestseller lists represent current trends and highlight materials that both the Library and its customers are most likely to seek. At present, the Library holds 88% of the titles from the 2025 bestseller lists below, reflecting a 5% increase from 2020.



The Library has updated its acquisitions policies to prioritize customer demand, incorporating tools such as bestseller lists, holds data, customer purchase requests, and interlibrary loan reports. The lower representation of the 2025 New York Times' bestsellers reflects the prevalence of niche, American-focused non-fiction works that remained on the list but fell outside the primary interest areas for our Library customers. High acquisition of CBC Books and The Globe and Mail bestsellers indicate a response to customer needs and provision of materials with strong local demand.

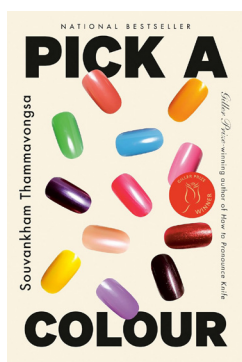
# Literary Awards Lists

Literary awards provide a valuable benchmark for ensuring the Library balances trending materials with multicultural, internationally recognized works. The shortlist titles consulted reflect a wide range of diverse voices and experiences, with a strong emphasis on Canadian creators. The Library encourages its vendors to consult key literary awards annually. However, purchasing decisions also take into account factors such as print runs, popularity, and format.

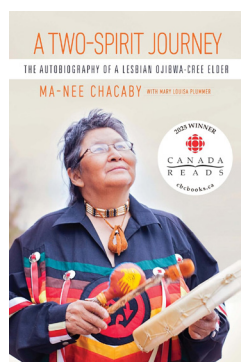
Award	% of Listed Titles in Collection
Governor General’s Literary Awards, 2021-2025	63%
Giller Prize Short List, 2021-2025	100%
Canada Reads Short List, 2021-2025	100%
Booker Prize Short List, 2021-2025	96%
Women’s Prize for Fiction Short List, 2021-2025	93%

Overall, the Library has a weighted average of 76% of the shortlist titles consulted between 2021 and 2025. These percentages are consistent with the findings of the previous review. The percentage is influenced by the Governor General’s Literary Awards, which represents the largest annual list and includes numerous categories such as poetry and drama, which historically demonstrate lower circulation. As a result, the Library does not pursue comprehensive acquisition of these formats. When controlling for poetry and drama, representation of the Governor General’s Literary Awards increases to 80% and the overall weighted average across all consulted shortlists rises to 88%.

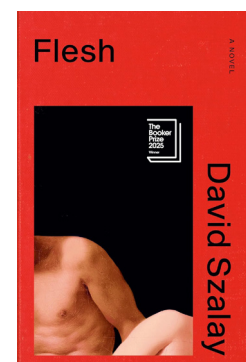
While the Library previously established a target of acquiring 90% of cumulative titles from literary award lists and bestsellers, findings from the past two (2) reviews indicate that this benchmark is not fully reflective of community demand. Customer feedback consistently demonstrates stronger interest in awards such as the Giller Prize, Canada Reads, and the Booker Prize, and this preference is accounted for in purchasing priorities. It is recommended that future benchmarks be refined to better align with observed use: maintaining a 90% target for bestsellers, while establishing a 75% target for literary award titles.



Giller Prize 2025 Winner **Pick a Colour** by Souvankham Thammavongsa



Canada Reads 2025 Winner **A Two-Spirit Journey** by Ma-Nee Chacaby



Booker Prize 2025 Winner **Flesh** by David Szalay

# Ontario Public Library Guidelines

The OPL Guidelines, developed by the provincial library community, support the improvement of public library services. They serve as a framework for accreditation and tool for boards, CEOs, and staff to assess governance, management, services, and collections against best practices to guide ongoing improvement.

OPL Guideline		Notes/Comments
Collection Development Plan	✓	Collection Development Policy updated in 2024, adding statements on intellectual freedom, Indigenous awareness and reconciliation, and equity, diversity, and inclusion.
Tools to Measure Collection Size, Content, and Use	✓	Annual review of RFP profiles, development of the Diversity Audit and EDI ARP, and regular review of collection data including items in/out and circulation.
Collection Maintenance/ Weeding Procedures	✓	Work instructions on how to complete material review and withdrawal which are reviewed and updated annually.
Collection Inventory Every Five (5) Years	✓	Annual inventory is conducted, with additional spot checks on key collections as needed.
Reference and Advisory Aids/ Resources	✓	Staff receive training in delivery of reference and Reader's Advisory services, and the Library offers supplemental resources such as NoveList.
Children's and Early Literacy Resources	✓	Robust children's physical materials and online resources such as LOTE4Kids and Tumblebooks.
Non-English Materials	✓	Physical materials are available in 10 languages, plus multilingual online resources such as PressReader and LOTE4Kids.
Alternative Formats	✓	Alternative formats of traditional materials available include Large Print, CD and Playaway audiobooks, and integrated audio-print books for children.
Access to Physical/Digital Collections and Holds	✓	Holds are available at all Library locations for all physical material types and digital collections are available 24/7.

**Adult non-fiction circulation has increased 74%**

# Collection Appearance and Maintenance

Ajax Public Library uses a well-planned collection maintenance and development approach to ensure the currency and relevance of its collection.

Observations across the four (4) branches indicate that shelving is well spaced and materials are generally in good condition. Children’s collections, while also in fairly good condition, show visible signs of high use, as reflected in the Circulation section of this report. Over the past five (5) years, front-line staff have been trained not to return items in poor condition to the shelves, instead routing them for repair or replacement. This has helped reduce the presence of damaged materials and maintain overall visual appeal of the collection.

In 2020, most new, high-quality materials were concentrated at the Audley Branch (newly opened in 2019). Since the introduction of floating collections, new materials are now more evenly distributed across all locations. Monthly transfer lists further support collection balance across branches. The introduction of unlimited renewals has also contributed to improved shelf space management, allowing customers to retain items without holds for extended periods.

The Library completed several large-scale weeding projects to remove outdated and low-use materials. Select withdrawn items were redistributed to the community through donations and free book sales, ensuring continued value to taxpayers. The Library also sunset low performing formats, creating space and enabling the reallocation of funds towards materials and formats with higher demand. The previous report identified that Main Branch’s adult non-fiction collection appeared dated. Since then, significant weeding, updating, and merchandising efforts have been conducted in this area. This work has been successful, with adult non-fiction circulation increasing by 74% since 2019.

Overall, the Library’s sustained investment in collection maintenance and development has resulted in a more current, balanced, and highly used collection across all branches.



# Collection Challenges

The Library has made some progress addressing collection challenges identified in the previous report. The following outlines these ongoing challenges alongside key advancements and strategies implemented to mitigate their impact.

## Spacing

Limited physical space limits potential growth and the ability to meet per capita targets.

Implementing floating collections and unlimited renewals helped create additional capacity by improving the internal movement and external circulation of materials. In 2025, the Library came close to achieving its zero-growth target, recording only a 1% increase in collection size. The Library has also expanded space through innovative partnerships and service models, including the opening of the Grandview Kids Express Branch in late 2024. While modest in size, this location has allowed for targeted growth in children's materials, curated adult non-fiction, and kit-based collections. Further extending access, the introduction of the NovelBranch vending machine in the Ajax Community Centre in summer 2025 provides an additional access point to the collection. This service point helps reach under-served areas and reduces barriers while effectively expanding the Library's collection footprint.

## Multilingual

Aligning multilingual holdings with evolving community demographics remains a challenge, with opportunities to better target high-demand languages through data-informed selection and internal collaboration.

The development of an EDI ARP has strengthened data-informed decision making by directly incorporating census data on the predominant languages spoken in Ajax. The Library has also secured a new vendor, Whitehots, to enhance its multilingual collections. This vendor works directly with publishers in regions where these languages are spoken, ensuring access to translated works but also to popular titles originally published in key languages.

The previous report recommended expanding beyond print resources. Since, the Library has broadened its multilingual offerings across digital platforms. These include:

- **LOTE4Kids:** digital children's picture books in over 65 languages (including American Sign Language) with English translations and native-language narration.
- **hoopla:** various digital materials in more than 115 languages.
- **Kanopy:** a diverse multilingual online film collection and language learning content across more than 20 languages.
- **CBC Corner:** supports French-language engagement through a range of audio and video resources.

## Young Adult Collection

Young Adult (YA) collection users move fluidly between children's and adult materials, making it difficult to clearly define scope and meet needs. The absence of established benchmarks further limits performance assessment, highlighting the need to develop a local metric to guide evaluation and growth.

The YA collections are unique and appealing to both teen and adult readers while remaining distinct from the larger children's and adult collections. The previous review identified key areas for development, including collection growth and investment in formats beyond traditional print that would better engage tween and teen users.

Over the past five (5) years, the Library has specifically targeted to expand its YA offerings. In addition to ongoing expansion in print materials, new teen-focused resources have been introduced, including an in-house PlayStation 5 (PS5) at the Audley Branch and access to Solaro, a student learning resource supporting grades 3-12 curriculum. Since its introduction, the PS5 has recorded over 1,500 uses, demonstrating strong engagement and a clear value as a dedicated teen resource.

High-interest areas such as manga and graphic novels have been incorporated into ARPs, contributing to the strong circulation of YA graphic materials noted earlier. Findings from the Library's Diversity Audit further highlighted that YA collections demonstrate particularly strong representation across racial, cultural, and experiential perspectives. In response, the Library has continued to prioritize YA acquisitions to support its broader EDI commitments.

As cardholders are not restricted by collection boundaries, teens can borrow freely across children's, YA, and adult collections (with limited exceptions such as age-rated video games). Blended use and access is also the case with YA non-fiction materials being integrated into the adult non-fiction collection. This blended use makes measurement difficult: teens may access materials across other collections, and non-teen users may access YA materials.

**YA collections demonstrate particularly strong representation across racial, cultural, and experiential perspectives.**

Although an industry benchmark for YA collections is absent, the Library's current approach of combining responsive purchasing, diverse representation, and unrestricted access supports strong engagement with tween and teen users.

# Cost of eContent

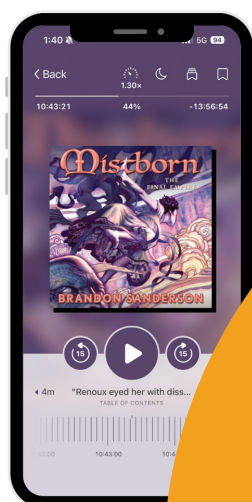
eContent growth is constrained by high costs and Ajax's position outside consortium models, limiting purchasing power compared to peer libraries. This is further complicated by the need to balance digital expansion with equitable access across physical collections.

Overall, this challenge remains largely unchanged and continues to present ongoing pressures. The Library faces increases in digital spending in order to keep pace with demand. Ajax experienced a notable shift in user behaviour since COVID-19, where physical copies of a title may carry relatively low hold counts and digital versions of the same title can have significantly higher demand. In many cases, customers are willing to wait for eContent even when a physical copy is available sooner. This trend reflects a clear preference among mostly adult users for digital materials, particularly digital audiobooks, which account for consistently high circulation across both OverDrive (Libby) and hoopla.

To manage rising costs, the Library is strategic when purchasing, avoiding duplication of titles across multiple platforms to ensure funds are used as efficiently as possible. The Library has also explored alternative solutions, such as The Palace Project, which aims to consolidate eBooks and digital audiobooks from multiple vendors into a single, seamless user experience. While promising in concept, many high-demand titles are either unavailable on the platform or offered at a comparable cost to existing platforms, limiting effectiveness. While the goal remains to provide a streamlined and intuitive digital user experience, it cannot be at the cost of current digital collections or limited access to expected popular and in-demand materials.

In response to continued increasing eContent costs, Library leadership has actively participated in advocacy efforts related to eContent pricing and access. This includes engaging with publishers through provincial campaigns and working with Town of Ajax Council on a motion regarding the price of eContent for libraries in January 2022.

Despite ongoing efforts to manage costs and improve access, rising demand and structural limitations make eContent a persistent challenge. Balancing affordability, availability, and user experience will remain a key focus moving forward.



**Customers are willing to wait for eContent even when a physical copy is available sooner.**

# Future Evaluations

Overall, the majority of planned deliverables were successfully completed, with a small number of exceptions. As outlined previously, the original benchmark for bestseller and award list acquisition has been reassessed based on findings from the previous and current reviews. New targets will be incorporated into the next work plan.

The proposed collection media survey was cancelled in recognition of survey fatigue among both customers and Library staff, given concurrent surveying initiatives undertaken by both the Town and Library. At this time, proceeding with an additional survey is not expected to yield meaningful value and will not be advanced into the next planning cycle.

Establishing a standard collection size and developing a YA collection metric requires additional analysis and will not be carried forward into the upcoming work plan. It was determined that a more comprehensive approach to evaluating digital resources would be beneficial. Rather than reviewing individual platforms in isolation, the Library will develop a standardized assessment tool to evaluate all eResources collectively.

The Library's NovelBranch, a vending machine located inside the Ajax Community Centre, opened in summer 2025. It creates an additional access point and houses collection items in an underserved area of the community.



# Evaluation Status

Status of items set for the 2021-2025 work plan, including some items that have been reconsidered based on updated information and items that are deferred to the 2026-2030 work plan.

Deliverable	Completed	Deferred	Cancelled
Continuous system wide weeding in line with established guidelines.	✓		
Assess and adjust ARPs as interests, trends, and community needs change.	✓		
Identify subject gaps in collection, purchase items.	✓		
Floating collection for high performance parts of collection.	✓		
Unlimited renewals.	✓		
Conduct and complete Diversity Audit to further ensure collection is inclusive and diverse.	✓		
Expand Audley Branch's collection holdings.	✓		
Audiobook usage review.	✓		
Complete 2021-2025 Collection Review.	✓		
Review eResource platforms.		✓	
Create standard size of the collection based on availability.			x
Increase bestseller and award list titles in the collection to 90%.			x
Conduct collection survey (use of media).			x
YA Collection metric.			x

# Recommendations

Based on the findings of this report a brief outline of potential projects to improve the collection from 2026-2030 have been identified below.

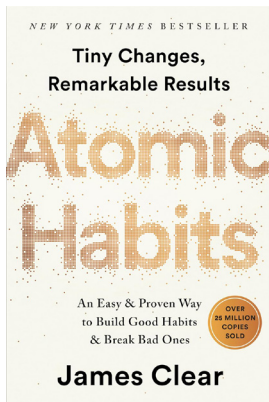
Timeline	Deliverables
<b>Ongoing</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continuous system wide weeding in line with established guidelines;</li> <li>• Assess and adjust ARP as interests, trends, and community needs change;</li> <li>• Identification of any subject gaps in collection, purchase items.</li> </ul>
<b>2026</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Report and present final Diversity Audit findings;</li> <li>• Increase investment in “other” collection items, prioritizing attraction passes;</li> <li>• Review and update the Library Collection Management Plan as required.</li> </ul>
<b>2027</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review and update the Library Collection Management Plan as needed, incorporating best practices for the weeding and maintenance of digital collections and non-traditional items (ex. technology) as well as consideration of each item's estimated useful life (EUL);</li> <li>• Investigate the feasibility of moving away from the Dewey Decimal Classification (DDC) system for non-fiction materials toward a bookstore-style or subject-based classification approach, with the goal of improving user navigation and engagement.</li> </ul>
<b>2028</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fulsome review of all online resource platforms</li> </ul>
<b>2029</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review and evaluate library materials vendor purchasing agreements to ensure cost-effectiveness, accountability, and alignment with collection development goals.</li> </ul>
<b>2030</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase the bestseller list titles to 90% and award list titles to 75% based on the findings from the 2021-2025 review;</li> <li>• Collect year-end data to support the completion of the 2026-2030 Collection Review in 2031.</li> </ul>

# Conclusion

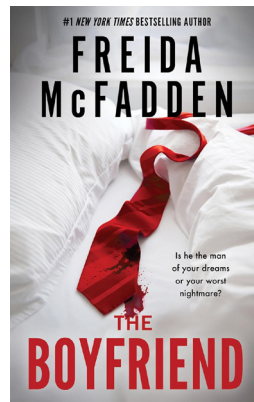
The Library is able to meet the needs of its community with the current collection and through ongoing maintenance practices. As noted, there are areas for continued improvement as the Ajax community grows, many of which are addressed through deliverables scheduled for 2026-2030. Most notably, space constraints associated with housing collections and the cost of eContent will remain the most challenging to mitigate. While there are areas where the Library has limited availability to effect change independently, ongoing advocacy for the needs of the community and how the Library can support them through collections work will continue.

Through the past five (5) years, the Library has demonstrated a proactive and adaptive approach to collection development and management, using data-informed decision making, strategic investment, and innovative service models to enhance access and responsiveness. Continued focus on these strategies will be critical to ensure the collection remains relevant, accessible, and aligned with the evolving needs of Ajax residents.

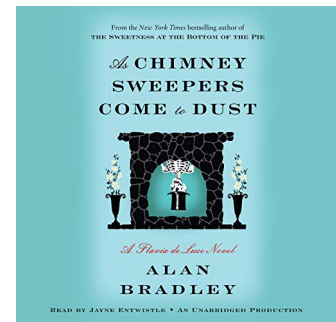
## Top Circulating Items 2025



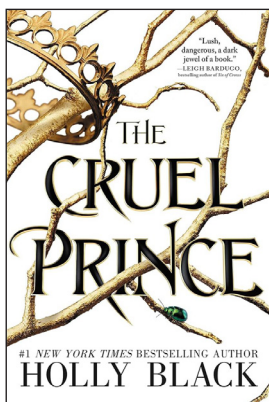
Adult Non-Fiction



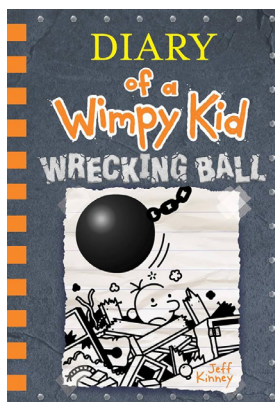
Adult Fiction



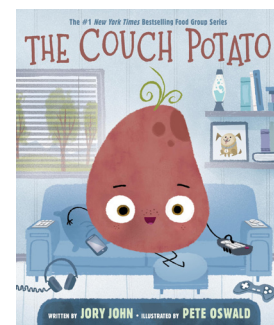
Adult Audiobook



Young Adult Fiction



Junior Fiction



Junior Picture Book

# End Notes

1. Ontario Public Library Guidelines Introduction, 2026 Revision.
2. Census Profile, 2021 Census of Population, Profile Table, 2016.  
<https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2021/dp-pd/prof/details/>
3. Ontario Public Library Guidelines, 6th edition, For Municipal and County Libraries
4. 2024 Ontario Public Library Statistics.  
<https://www.ontario.ca/page/ontario-public-library-statistics#2024>
5. ARUPLO, Guidelines for Rural/Urban Public Library Systems, 4th edition.
6. 2024 Ontario Public Library Statistics.  
<https://www.ontario.ca/page/ontario-public-library-statistics#2024>
7. Census Profile, 2021 Census of Population, Profile Table, 2016.  
<https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2021/dp-pd/prof/details/>
8. Ontario Public Library Guidelines Monitoring and Accreditation Council.  
<https://ontariopubliclibraryguidelines.ca>



# Stay Connected

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