

Reduced Barrier Library Cards

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Outline

- Library Cards Broadly
- Homeless People as a User Group
- Library Association Policies
- Canadian Case Studies
- Managerial Considerations

Library Cards



Related Issues

- Late fines and other fees
- The use of library cards as identification
- Parental consent for library cards
- Academic and Special Library reciprocal lending agreements
- Overrepresentation of Aboriginal populations among the homeless

Homelessness in Canada

An estimated 200,000 Canadians access homeless emergency services or sleep outside in a given year, including at least 30,000 every night.

Statistics

The following groups are over-represented in Canadian homeless populations:

- Single adult males
- Youth between the ages of 16 and 24, and particularly queer youth
- Indigenous people

Range of Circumstances

1. Unsheltered
2. Emergency Sheltered
3. Provisionally Accommodated



From Sandy Berman's *Classism in the Stacks*

"Especially during the day, the library is filled with the homeless, who sometimes bother other library patrons with their odor, intoxication, or noise level. And while librarians stress they don't want to ban the homeless from the building, they also don't want leery residents to be fearful of enjoying the city's pristine new library. In search of a solution, the city library system is launching a new civility campaign designed to teach the homeless, children and others how to behave while in the library."

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Library Association Statements



- *Library Services to the Poor* policy statement



- *Code of Ethics*

- *Diversity and Inclusion* position statement

Access Cards

Why Bother?

Working Together: Community Led Libraries Toolkit

- "Libraries view themselves as the 'living room' of the community," but **"the whole community is not using the library.** Usage statistics were particularly troublesome in urban areas with high concentrations of poor, immigrant, and socially excluded individuals." (Brian Campbell 2008)
- **Access barriers and social exclusion "can affect any stratum of our society,** including people who are poor or live in poverty, people who are unemployed or underemployed, and people who are part of ethnic or cultural minorities. [This] can include new immigrants, refugees, the working poor, and groups that have been historically isolated such as African Nova Scotians and First Nations people. **For some people, being excluded can stem from, or bring about, drug addiction, mental illness, and homelessness."** (Annette DeFaveri 2008)
- **"Many socially excluded people do not feel welcome in the library, and the reality is that they are often not welcome."**

What is a Reduced Barrier Card?

- Essentially a library card with low or no residential address identification required.
- Allows access for insufficiently housed or homeless individuals who may not have been able to access the library under more strict address requirements
- Generally have stricter borrowing limits but make concessions for financial need by reducing or eliminating late fines and other fees

Comparison of Access Cards Across Canada

	Vancouver Public Library	Fraser Valley Public Library	Edmonton Public Library	Toronto Public Library
Main Users	"any patron who requests it" "homeless or inadequately housed"	"socially excluded populations" "underserved populations" -minors in foster care or similar situations -recently combined with Internet Card	"underserved communities" -used instead of temporary internet passes	-individuals living in temporary housing such as hostels and shelters
Age Requirements	-14 and older	-no limit	-18 and older -independent juvenile card for those younger than 18	-18 and older
ID Requirements	-one piece with name required -no proof of address needed	-none required -one piece with name preferred	-none required -must orally provide one of mailing address, email address, or telephone number	-one piece with name required -letter from current hostel/shelter required
Borrowing Limit	-5 items	-5 items -5 holds	-1 item	-5 items
Fines/Fees Applicable	-no late fines -no replacement charge -no lost item charge or processing fee	-no late fines -replacement fee for materials charged but waived when materials returned	-same fine structure as regular cards -no fees charged for obtaining or replacing any lost cards	-same fine structure as regular cards -no fee to obtain -\$2 replacement fee charged for lost cards
Policy Publicly Available	Yes	No	Yes	Yes (for cards in general rather than for access cards in specific)

Information current to December 2014

Why Bother?

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Vancouver Public Library

Homelessness in Vancouver

Homeless Category	Adults and Youth (16+)	Accompanied Children	Total Homeless
Grubbed-out	1,741	75	1,816
Sheltered	1,035	10	1,045
Unsheltered	70	1	71
Unsheltered - rough sleepers	381	1	382
Unsheltered - others	319	0	319
Total Homeless	3,156	86	3,242

Table from Metro Vancouver Homeless Count, published July 31, 2014.

Vancouver Public Library's Low Barrier Card

- Available to anyone who asks for it, but only advertised at shelters or similar locations
- Strong focus on reducing all barriers to access: both literal, such as fines, identification requirements, and age, and psychological barriers such as a lack of information about the card's existence or negative past experiences of the library
- Desire to avoid having a "fear of fines" become a "fear of books:" no fines or fees charged, including for materials replacement
- Available to people 14 or older

Concerns in Official Policy

- Need to make sure that card holders satisfy residency requirements, even if they are not currently housed
- Strong desire to assist those lacking even personal ID to obtain some
- Awareness of the risk to the library: individuals without stable housing are more vulnerable to theft and loss, which must be balanced against the library's desire to provide them access. There will be some financial impact on the library.
- Need to address any possible stigma associated with the card: it needs to look and behave the same, within limits

CLAYTON PERRY PHOTOGRAPHY

Homelessness in Vancouver

Homeless Category	Adults and Unaccompanied Youth		Accompanied Children		Total Homeless	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Sheltered Homeless	1,741	65%	79	90%	1,820	66%
Shelters/Safe Houses	1,465	54%	39	44%	1,504	54%
Transition Houses	76	3%	40	45%	116	4%
No Fixed Address	200	7%	0	0%	200	7%
Unsheltered Homeless	948	35%	9	10%	957	34%
Total Homeless	2,689	100%	88	100%	2,777	100%

Source: Survey data and Shelter Statistics forms provided by shelter facilities to the Homeless Count team.

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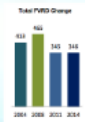
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Fraser Valley Public Library

Homelessness in the Fraser Valley

Community	2011 #	2011 %
Aboriginal	174	14
Visible	84	18
Ch. Abuse	111	32
Family Violence	125	8
Home	42	12
Single Sheltered	0	0
Total	240	100.0



Fraser Valley Public Library's Courtesy Card

- Combined card to include the former Community Card and Internet Card options
- Intended for use by "socially excluded populations," "underserved populations," minors in foster care, dependent adults, and newcomers, but also used as an internet pass card
- No fines or replacement fee charged; a lost item fee is charged, but waived when the item is returned
- Borrowing limit is 5, with 5 holds allowed at a given time
- Available for patrons at any age

Concerns in Official Policy

- Policy notes that the card does not need to be available for non-foster care minors as the FVPL's current teen card does not have address requirements
- Card expires every six months: this is more stringent than regular cards and is intended to increase interaction with these users
- The card does not give users access to inter-library loans

Homelessness in the Fraser Valley

Community	2011 n	2011 %
Abbotsford	117	34
Mission	54	16
Chilliwack	111	32
Agassiz-Harrison	20	6
Hope	43	12
Boston Bar/North Bend	0	0
Total	345	100.0

Total FVRD Change

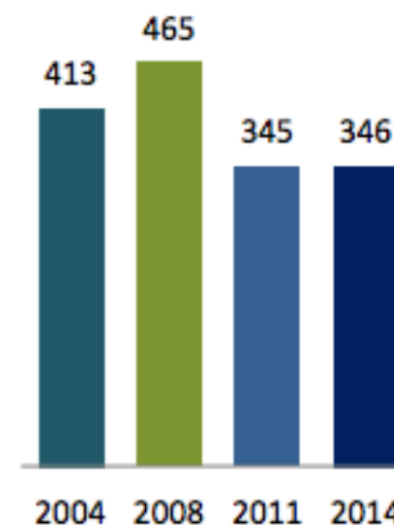


CHART 2: Municipal Homeless Count Totals 2004-2011

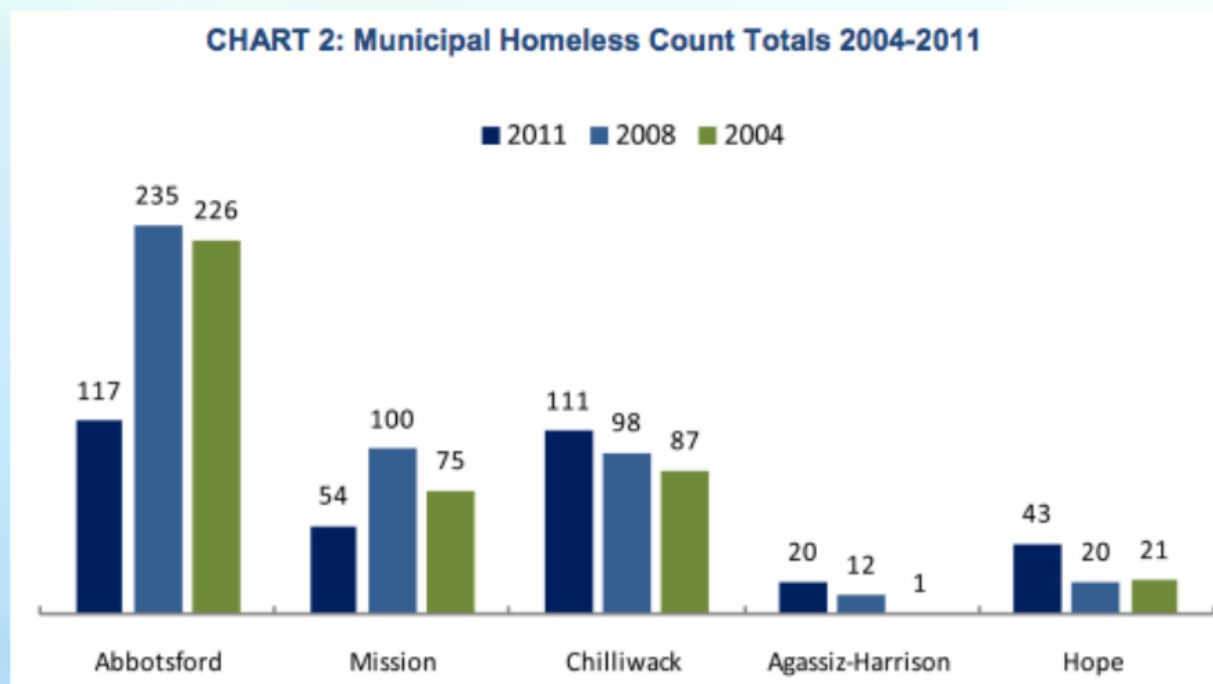


Table from "Homeless in the Fraser Valley: The Continuing Challenge" (2014)

Tables from "Homeless in the Fraser Valley: Report on the 2011 Fraser Valley Regional District Homelessness Survey"

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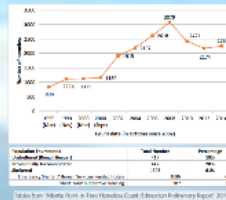
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Edmonton Public Library

Homelessness in Edmonton



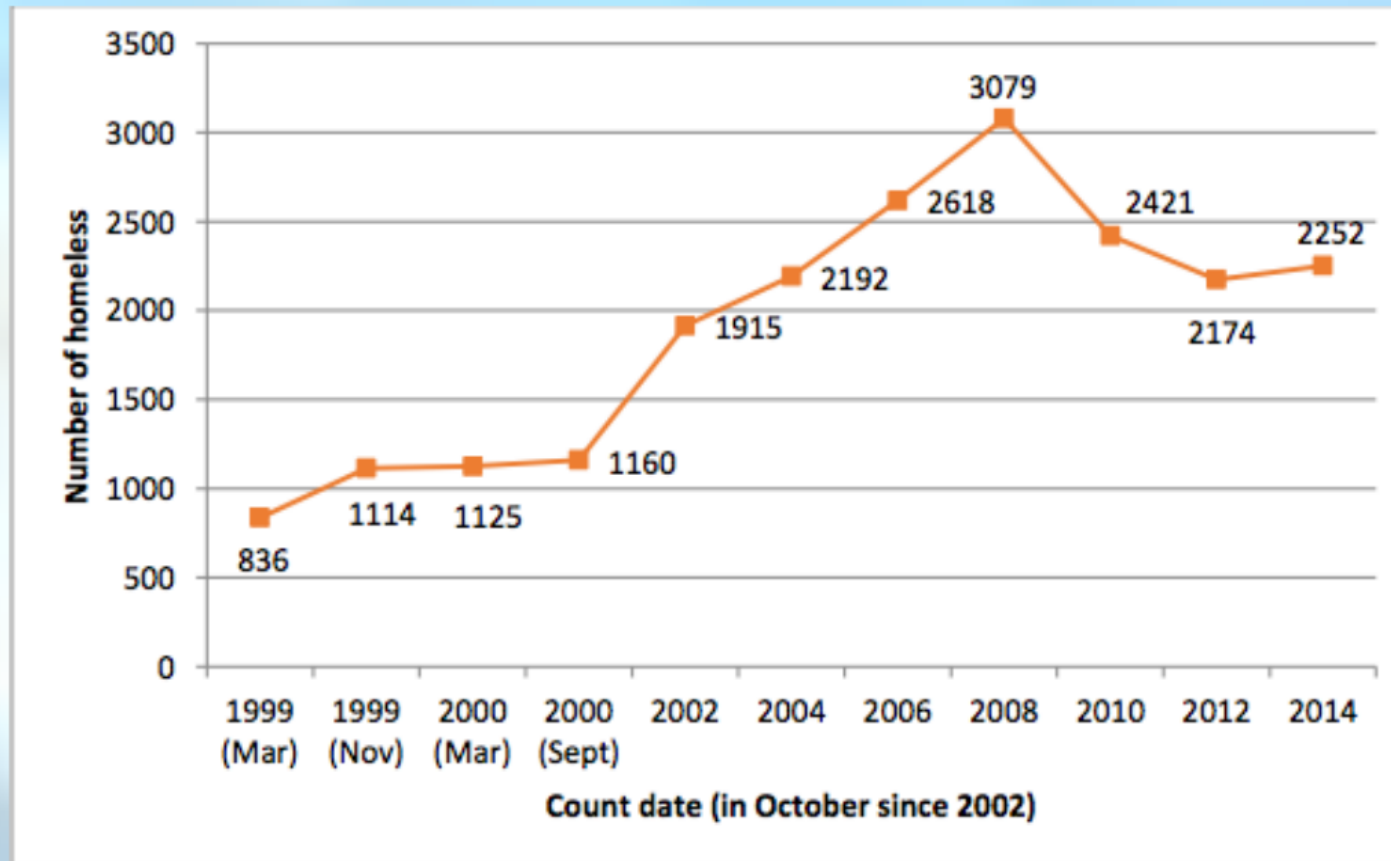
Edmonton Public Library's Access Card

- Intended for "underserved communities," and other used instead of temporary internet passes as a method of collecting statistics
- Fines and fees the same as regular cards
- Two cards in the system function as reduced barriers cards: the Access Card for adults and the Independent Juvenile card for teens living without adult support
- No physical ID of any kind is needed, but one of a mailing address, an email address, or a telephone number must be supplied
- Borrowing limit is only one item

Concerns in Official Policy

- 11 very different populations were identified as potential users of the card, including aboriginal persons, at-risk teens, low income adults and families, the geographically isolated, and University of Alberta students
- Desire to focus on people as individuals within communities
- Awareness of the relationship between perception and stigma
- Attempt at balance between risk and access: all fees older than three years waived
- Awareness that staff perception and application is equally important to the written policy

Homelessness in Edmonton



Population Enumerated	Total Number	Percentage
Unsheltered (Rough Sleeper)	417	19%
Provisionally Accommodated	442	20%
Sheltered	1393	61%
Emergency Shelter / Human Services-Funded Hotels	1086	48%
Short-Term Supportive Housing	307	13%

Tables from "Alberta Point-in-Time Homeless Count: Edmonton Preliminary Report" 2014

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Toronto Public Library

Homelessness in Toronto

Homeless Category	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Sheltered Homeless	1,471	1,502	1,472	1,421	1,476
Unsheltered Homeless	1,134	1,188	1,171	1,101	1,134
Total Homeless	2,605	2,690	2,643	2,522	2,610

Source: City of Toronto, 2015 Street Needs Assessment Results

Notes: The above figures are based on the 2015 Street Needs Assessment Results. The figures are based on the 2015 Street Needs Assessment Results. The figures are based on the 2015 Street Needs Assessment Results.

Toronto Public Library's Temporary Address Card

- Intended for use by individuals living in temporary housing such as a hostel or shelter
- Fines and fees are the same as regular cards
- 5 item borrowing limit
- Only system where the card is included on the library's card information web page

Our Concerns

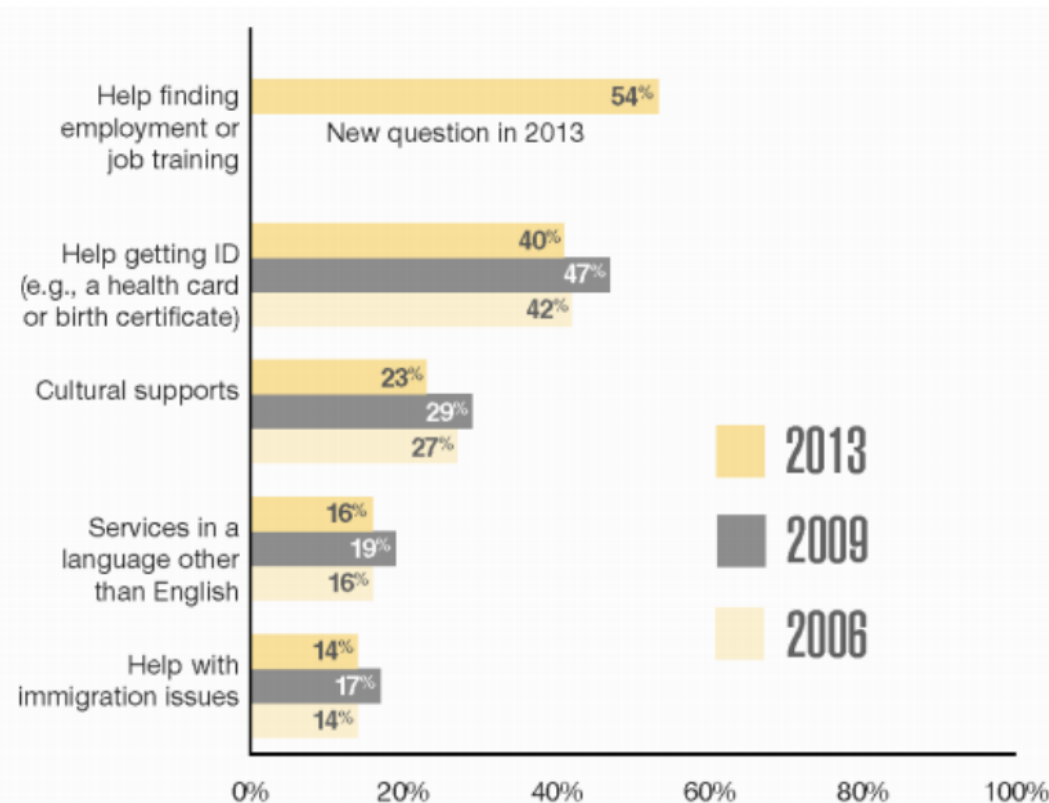
- The card is only available to sheltered individuals with a letter from the shelter proving their temporary residency--no options are available for unsheltered individuals
- Of the four, this is the only card with absolute ID requirements; all the others have official language allowing for users with no personal ID
- No language around fine or fee forgiveness
- Expires every three months



Homelessness in Toronto

Surveyed Groups	2006		2009		2013	
	Count	Share of Total	Count	Share of Total	Count	Share of Total
Outdoors	735	15%	362	7%	447	9%
City-Administered Shelters	3,649	73%	3,990	77%	3,970	76%
VAW Shelters	171	3%	306	6%	356	7%
Health & Treatment Facilities	275	6%	223	4%	236	4%
Correctional Facilities	139	3%	288	6%	244	5%
Total	4,969	100%	5,169	100%	5,253	100%

FIGURE 12 TRENDS IN NEED FOR NON-HOUSING SPECIFIC SERVICES



Tables from Toronto's "Street Needs Assessment 2013 Results"

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Still Barriers to Overcome

Harris & Simon, 2009

- Studied barriers at 22 Libraries in Wales
- 19 required ID to join
- 71% of staff disagreed to loaning books without proof of address
- 30% refused an opinion on an increase of homeless patrons
- No libraries provided special services for the homeless

Managerial Considerations

"A library card is in effect a credit card issued by the library that allows holders to borrow up to approximately \$400 worth of library materials at any one time. Reasonable protection from loss or damage to materials is a genuine consideration in transient housing situations. Emergency shelters and hotels are noted for poor security and the loss of personal possessions to theft is a frequent complaint of homeless persons using these facilities. Also, there is a better return rate when a borrower receives a timely notification of overdue materials."

(Landgraf, 1991)

Managerial Considerations

- Other Populations Affected
- Funding Risks
- Staff Training and Buy-In
- Affordance Theory
- Digital Literacy Components



Conclusion

"The best thing that libraries can do for the homeless is to treat them with the same status afforded to all other library patrons....the library has been a focal point of my homelessness."

(Barbieux, 2010)



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