

# Hip library is down with technology

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## Columns

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Recently I ventured out of my cool cubicle in City Hall to meet with Leona El-Hage, the library's promotion specialist at Queen's Square, the main library branch in Cambridge.

I had a preconceived image of libraries, from a childhood of visiting these temples of free knowledge: dusty, carpeted floors and visible cobwebs on the ceiling while an old librarian prowled the aisles, shushing patrons who dared to speak.

By the time I walked into the main entrance of the library, I knew that the dusty libraries of my past didn't exist in Cambridge. A quick look around revealed a modern arts gallery, a dozen upgraded computer terminals with internet and Wi-Fi access, and a colourful book display on *How to Live with Less*.

I was amazed that Queen's Square is a technologically updated, "hip" library. Cambridge Libraries and Galleries has worked hard to upgrade technology in their four branches to appeal to users of all ages. With a library card, any Cambridge resident can choose from a collection of thousands of audio books, and download them onto their iPod or MP3 player. Whether it's a popular audio book like *Twilight* or a classic like *Huckleberry Finn*, the library gives unlimited, free, fast downloads.

"The best part of it is, this can all be done at home, you can stay in your pajamas," says Leona.

The library is hoping to further develop their technology to allow movie downloading in the near future.

"We take the best technologies and make them work for us," Leona declares. As I was walking on my tour of the library, I saw further evidence that the library is dynamic and technologically relevant. A sizable wall of DVDs proudly stood on the second floor, easily visible to people in the library.

A quick scan of titles revealed a large number of new releases with a collection of classics, similar to the display that would be seen in a video rental store.

"Our library is quick to get new releases. Whatever our members want, we try to get," says Leona.

The library DVD system allows members to borrow new releases for one day, which significantly reduces the time that eager members have to spend on the wait list. The new slogan of the library is: "Get your card and go!" If you look at all these great services provided to members, it's smart to make a quick trip to the nearest Cambridge library and join the 45,000 cardholders already signed on to this free service.

“You don’t have to use your card everyday, but it’s great to have it when you need it — whether it’s for research or entertainment,” says Leona.

A number of exciting programs are coming to Cambridge Libraries and Galleries.

For the Book Shelters program, the library hires a dozen students to organize and arrange books.

“It’s a great first job,” says Leona. “Some shelters even get hired back to the library after they graduate.” If your teenager is looking for a first job send a resume to the library.

As for children, the Agent 009 program this summer will be an action packed, mystery-filled adventure for kids at the library. The Agent 009 program will have your children solving mysteries, winning prizes and reading! The program is free, and registration begins on June 20. Any child under 13 years and under can participate.

Aside from Agent 009, Cambridge Libraries and Galleries runs drop in programs for kids all year around. Go to the nearest branch or visit [www.cambridgelibraries.ca](http://www.cambridgelibraries.ca) to find out more.

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