

Episode 11 Summary — The Straight Download

In this episode, Ann Ford and Jeff Jankowski sit down with Moe Hosseini Ara, City Librarian and CEO of Toronto Public Library, for a wide-ranging conversation on equity centered leadership, digital transformation, and the challenges shaping modern public libraries.

Moe discusses TPL's five-year strategic plan focused on civic engagement, digital equity, modern community spaces, and reducing barriers to access. He explains how TPL reaches patrons through more than 100 branches, 28 Bookmobile stops, and expanding community librarian programs that take library services into seniors' homes, newcomer communities, and partner organizations across the city.

The discussion highlights how libraries help patrons navigate today's complex information landscape including misinformation, AI generated content, and increasingly siloed digital environments. Moe shares details about TPL's AI upskilling initiative supported by a 3-million-dollar Google grant along with longstanding work in media and digital literacy.

The conversation also explores major industry pressures such as unsustainable metered digital licensing models, shrinking collections that leave libraries with nothing to show once licenses expire, and leadership responsibility to understand the shifting economics of digital collection development. Moe also addresses rising community challenges including mental health needs, housing instability, and safety concerns that show up first and most visibly in public library spaces.

Despite these challenges Moe expresses optimism about city building opportunities, TPL's growth of physical spaces, and the evolution of libraries into inclusive community hubs featuring youth spaces, digital labs, study zones, and expanded program areas

The episode concludes with an exchange on what everyone is reading, watching, and listening to. Moe shares that he is reading *Enshittification* by Cory Doctorow and listening to *Far and Wide* by Neil Peart. He mentions he enjoys a mix of music including rap and rock. Ann shares she is reading *Lincoln's Lady Spymaster* by Jerry Willis. Jeff is listening to *The Night Agent* by Matthew Quirk on Hoopla. They also recommend shows including *Shrinking and Brassic*.