

Meeting Summary

Digital Neighbourhoods and Digital Literacy

May 22, 2019

Overview

On May 22, 2019, Waterfront Toronto and the Toronto Public Library co-hosted a public meeting about Digital Neighbourhoods and Digital Literacy. The purpose of the meeting was to share and discuss information about how digital technologies are influencing how cities work.

At the meeting, Waterfront Toronto presented its history in working with digital technologies and asked for feedback about Draft Digital Principles it developed to inform its consideration of any proposals related to the use of digital technology in emerging neighbourhoods on the waterfront; and, the Toronto Public Library presented and sought feedback about its Digital Literacy Programming to support awareness, understanding, and inclusion around digital technologies.

The meeting included opening remarks from Michael Geist, Chair of Waterfront Toronto's Digital Strategy Advisory Panel¹, and presentations from Kristina Verner (Waterfront Toronto) and Pam Ryan and Alex Carruthers (Toronto Public Library). After a brief plenary discussion about their experiences with digital technologies, participants moved through discussions at four concurrent, rotating stations:

- Digital Literacy (hosted by the Toronto Public Library),
- Digital Justice & Digital Equity (hosted by the Digital Justice Lab and Tech Reset Canada),
- Digital Neighbourhoods (hosted by Waterfront Toronto), and
- Digital Principles (hosted by Waterfront Toronto).

At each station, subject matter experts shared information and asked participants for feedback about the topic being discussed. After the rotating, concurrent discussions, facilitators from each station reported back feedback highlights to the whole room, followed by a final, plenary discussion. Please see Appendix A for a detailed Meeting Agenda.

This summary was written by the facilitation team from Swerhun Inc., based on the notes taken at each of the discussion stations. It captures key themes from the discussion and is not intended to serve as a verbatim transcript. A draft of this summary was shared with participants for review before it was finalized.

Detailed summary of feedback

The summary below organizes participants' feedback into the four topics discussed at the meeting: Draft Digital Principles, Digital Neighbourhoods, Digital Literacy, and Digital Justice.

1. Feedback about Draft Digital Principles

At the Draft Digital Principles station, Kristina Verner, Vance Lockton (Waterfront Toronto), Jutta Treviranus (Waterfront Toronto's Digital Strategy Advisory Panel), Dave Dame (Waterfront

¹ Dr. Michael Geist is also a law professor at the University of Ottawa where he holds the Canada Research Chair in Internet and E-commerce Law and is a member of the Centre for Law, Technology and Society

Toronto's Digital Strategy Advisory Panel), Chantal Bernier (Dentons Canada LLP) presented draft digital principles intended to inform Waterfront Toronto's consideration of any proposals related to the use of digital technologies in emerging neighbourhoods on the waterfront.

The draft Digital Principles include:

1. Inclusivity, accessibility, and shared benefit
2. Innovation, agility, flexibility
3. Transparency, accountability, responsibility
4. Privacy, data protection, cyber security and resiliency
5. Architecture, ownership and technological sovereignty

The following topics emerged through discussion:

How will Waterfront Toronto use these Digital Principles? Waterfront Toronto explained that it will use the digital principles to: evaluate proposals it receives from Sidewalk Labs, or other entities, related to digital technologies in emerging neighbourhoods; inform evaluation of proposals and commercial agreements, and; tell partners what the community might be comfortable with in any digital proposals. Participants suggested that Waterfront Toronto ensure these Principles complement the Federal government's recently launched Digital Charter.

The role of education. Some said that public education is very important to helping people understand different options and choices related to digital technologies in neighbourhoods. Others were skeptical that education could keep pace with the kind of technological innovation and range of data that could be collected as part of a digital neighbourhood.

Importance of protections around privacy and data collection. Participants asked how the digital principles would address privacy in digital neighbourhoods, such as Quayside. Waterfront Toronto responded that, in addition to principles that reference the importance of privacy and security, both federal and provincial governments have jurisdiction and regulations that would help protect privacy related to data collection on the waterfront.

Participants also suggested additions and reinforcements to the Draft Digital Principles, including:

- **Language that speaks to the importance of “redundancy” in any digital systems** since digital systems can and do fail.
- **Language that would help prevent facial recognition technology.** Waterfront Toronto responded that the Digital Principles create the mechanism by which sensitive data collections such as facial recognition can be closely examined. It is possible that, for instance, the use of facial recognition in CCTV cameras would never satisfy this level of scrutiny.
- **Principles relating to bias against, or marginalization of, individuals or groups should extend** beyond the use of aggregate data and algorithmic transparency.

2. Feedback about Digital Neighbourhoods

At the Digital Neighbourhoods station, Michael Wolfe (Waterfront Toronto), George Takach (McCarthy Tetrault LLP), Michael Geist (Waterfront Toronto's Digital Strategy Advisory Panel), and Natasha Apollonova (Toronto Region Board of Trade) engaged participants in a wide-ranging discussion about digital neighbourhoods, covering topics like: examples of digital neighbourhoods, potential roles and responsibilities of different actors in a “digital neighbourhood eco-system,” privacy considerations, and how money and value move through

digital neighbourhoods. Participants also discussed some of the specifics of the Waterfront Toronto / Sidewalk Labs project being explored for Quayside. The following topics emerged through the discussion:

Defining digital neighbourhoods. Participants and presenters discussed whether it's possible to define when a neighbourhood becomes digital, including whether there is a threshold of technological integration that needs to be passed. Generally, everyone agreed it's difficult to define: there are older parts of the City that have had new digital technologies added to them (such as on King Street, where there are a range of digital traffic counters being used) and potentially emerging neighbourhoods, like the one at Quayside, designed with digital technologies in mind from the beginning.

Excitement about the potential of digital neighbourhoods. Participants gave examples of different possible applications of digital technologies in digital neighbourhoods that they thought were exciting, such as: traffic lights that hold a walk signal longer if an elderly person or a person with a disability is crossing the street; sensors that help people in wheelchairs more easily navigate; and sensors that help people with asthma understand real-time outdoor air quality. Generally, participants were excited about the potential for digital technologies to help people make more informed decisions, like how smartphone map applications help navigate. A few suggested it would be okay to begin building digital neighbourhoods as long as we go in with eyes open about the potential benefits and risks.

Concerns about digital neighbourhoods. Some participants said that, while technologies being explored in digital neighbourhoods are exciting, they are concerned about the security, hacking, and the manipulation of those technologies. They referenced the use of social media to hack elections and the lack of transparency about who is collecting what information from big tech companies as reasons for concern. Many participants said it's important to know "what is going on behind the scenes" and how to know, or learn about, who is collecting what data for what kinds of uses. They also said that it's important for existing regulations to be stronger and updated, especially around enforcement. Finally, some were concerned about the potential of LIDAR technology — which takes images of surroundings to inform data-driven services — to have the potential to personally identify people.

The importance of data stewardship. Participants discussed the importance of there being some kind of body to oversee the stewardship of data, saying there needs to be an institutional approach that defines laws and regulations around digital neighbourhood data (including who manages data, where it resides, how data is de-identified, and how/where data flows). Participants discussed the Toronto Public Library or a "digital trust" as examples of this kind of body. Generally, participants said there is value in a neutral, public entity overseeing data stewardship in digital neighbourhoods.

Need to be ever-vigilant. Given that technology is evolving at a rapid pace, it's important that policy and regulation keep pace to ensure that, in digital neighbourhoods, public interest and privacy are always being protected.

Feedback about Waterfront Toronto / Sidewalk Labs project. Some comments focused on the project being explored by Waterfront Toronto and Sidewalk Labs at Quayside. Some participants said this project represented an opportunity to explore digital neighbourhoods and get policies and regulations right for Toronto and Canada. Participants wanted to understand how Toronto might benefit from being a "testbed" for this project, saying the proposal from Sidewalk Labs should identify what exactly is being tested (and what the benefits are).

3. Feedback about Digital Literacy

Pam Ryan, Alex Carruthers, Kimberley Christmas, and Ab Velasco (Toronto Public Library) presented the Library's digital literacy programming and asked participants to share advice about issues or challenges they, or their community, might be facing in the next five years and what the Library could do to help them. Participants said they liked the Toronto Public Library's services and its programs that aim to build and support digital literacy. In particular, they liked the Library's online catalogue of e-books, audiobooks, and self-directed learning programs (such as for computer programming and Photoshop). Several said they enjoyed hearing about the programs and services offered by the Library, saying they were not aware of the amount and variety of services and programs it offers.

Relationship to Waterfront Toronto, Quayside, and data trusts. Participants asked about the Toronto Public Library's relationship with Waterfront Toronto and the project at Quayside. The Library explained that it has a history working with Waterfront Toronto and that both have a commitment to innovation. The Library was not involved with the Toronto Region Board of Trade report that suggested the Library could be a steward of data in Quayside, but it is happy to discuss data trusts and bring the Library's values to those discussions.

Suggested services / programming the Library could offer to address issues or challenges that might arise in the next five years. Participants suggested ideas for the Library to consider in its digital literacy services and programming:

- **How to read Terms and Conditions** when using digital tools, especially how user data is being used. This programming could also explore ways to make Terms and Conditions more user-friendly and accessible.
- **User rights and consequences of using programs, applications, tech, and/or other digital tools**, particularly what rights (if any) users give up when using a given tool. For example, while it is possible to turn off your smart phone, it could be difficult to disconnect from data collection in a digital neighbourhood.
- **How data is a commodity.** People should be made aware of the implications of how personal data can be used as a commodity and monetized.
- **Providing context on civic/open data collection**, including why data is being collected in the city (to alleviate concerns and increase public awareness).
- **How to identify truthful sources on the internet.**

Participants also shared other, broader advice about digital literacy programming, including:

- **Identify specific audiences that could benefit from digital literacy programming**, including seniors, children, new Canadians, non-English-speaking populations, low-income populations, and incarcerated people (so they can better integrate with society).
- **Launch a survey on the digital literacy of Library users and/or general public.** Library staff responded that the Library recently launched an online survey called "Bridge" to assess the use of the Library's technological resources.
- **Do more marketing about the digital literacy services/programs the Library offers**, including non-digital outreach methods.
- **Collect and present stats on digital resource (e-books and audiobooks) usage.** This data could add to the Library's prestige and illustrate the impact of these services.

- **Continue to explore opportunities to co-locate in malls, community organizations, and other local destinations.** Bringing the Library to the people may be an effective tool in engaging with residents. Eglinton Square Mall is a good example.
- **Continue to expand online resources and potentially offer instant online translation services.**
- **Explore a “rent-an-expert” service/program,** where people could “rent” a skilled person to teach about relevant, related topics.

4. Feedback about Digital Justice

Nasma Ahmed (Digital Justice Lab) and Bianca Wylie (Tech Reset Canada) engaged participants in discussions about digital justice and digital equity. At this station, most participants said they were there to listen and learn, saying it’s important to be inclusive and not leave people behind when it comes to digital literacy and education. They said that, since technology connects to health, education, justice systems, and is part of our everyday lives, it’s important to recognize that there can be large benefits and consequences to how it’s deployed. Topics that came up in the discussion included:

The challenge of staying in the loop given the speed of technological innovation.

Technology develops so quickly that it can be difficult to have meaningful engagement. The speed of development of technology also means it’s difficult from someone to have good, up-to-date information and be able to participate without coming from a place of fear or inadequacy.

Unequal distribution of internet infrastructure. There are places in the GTA and Ontario (especially rural Ontario) where people cannot access the internet, which can influence people’s ability to learn and participate in these kinds of discussions. An overview on Waterfront Toronto’s partnership with Beanfield Metroconnect was provided (by a member of the public who was involved in the project), which gives waterfront residents and employees access to high quality, open-access broadband network for a fixed fee for 10 years after the completion of the last condominium. This partnership also includes deeply subsidized connections for affordable housing units.

The importance of sovereignty. While providing broadband network access is helpful, it’s important for people to be able to “create the internet” (not just read it). People need to have sovereignty over data and the technologies that use that data rather than just being objects of data-driven exploitation.

Concerns about digital technology embedded in physical tools and environments.

Participants were concerned about the justice implications of “internet of things” products, including objects embedded with pervasive internet connections like smart thermostats, smart speakers, and smart watches. The normalization of always-on, always-connected devices can create justice issues since the way these products collect and use data can be used to disproportionately impact racialized minorities. For example, voice recognition software sometimes cannot detect “strong” accents and cameras can be used to monitor people on streets and support racism (if it detects certain people as “unwanted”). Some products/services do not capture or store data, like TTC CCTV footage that is deleted every 7 – 14 days and DuckDuckGo search that does not track users. Non-technology driven solutions — like having humans delete data — can help centre humans in digital literacy conversations.

Safe infrastructure and global standards. Participants suggested that global nonprofits are needed to set standards — right now, standards setting processes are volunteer-based,

creating access and implementation barriers (since only people have the time/resources to volunteer have a voice in setting standards). Just like how engineering and construction standards define and regulate how roofs should be built, there's a need for standards to define and regulate how digital technologies should be used in our cities. The internet and digital technology shouldn't be regulated by confusing "terms of agreement;" no one should have to worry whether their data is safe (just like how we don't worry whether the roofs over our heads are safe). For example, there should be transparency about the supply chain, including where our data is sent and how it is used (and whether our data has been deleted or secured).

Defining innovation. Rather than thinking of new technology as innovative, bringing inclusive models to already-existing technologies should be seen as innovative. This approach would be a contrast to the "move fast and break things" approach of some technological innovation. An important question to think through is "who gets to see themselves in the prosperity of society?"

Next steps

Waterfront Toronto and the Toronto Public Library thanked participants for their feedback and committed to sharing a draft summary in the coming weeks. They also invited participants to share any additional feedback after the meeting.

Appendix A. Meeting Agenda



Digital Neighbourhoods and Digital Literacy

LEARN | ASK | TELL US WHAT YOU THINK

May 22, 2019

6:30 – 9:00 pm

Westin Harbour Castle — Metropolitan Ballroom East

Meeting Purpose

The purpose of this meeting is to share and discuss information on how digital technologies are influencing (and will continue to influence) how cities work. Both Waterfront Toronto and the Toronto Public Library are presenting and seeking feedback on ideas related to the role of digital technologies in cities.

Waterfront Toronto is seeking feedback on Draft Digital Principles developed to inform its consideration of any proposals related to the use of digital technology in emerging neighbourhoods as part of waterfront revitalization.

The Toronto Public Library is seeking feedback to inform Digital Literacy Programming that supports awareness, understanding, and inclusion around digital technologies.

Proposed Meeting Agenda

- 6:30 **Welcome, introductions, agenda review**
Nicole Swerhun, Swerhun Inc., Lead Facilitator
Michael Geist, Chair, Waterfront Toronto's *Digital Strategy Advisory Panel*
- 6:40 **Digging into digital**
Kristina Verner, Waterfront Toronto
Pam Ryan, Alex Carruthers, Toronto Public Library
- 7:00 **What's your experience with digital?**
- 7:30 **Discussion at four concurrent, rotating stations**
Digital Literacy: Toronto Public Library
Digital Principles: Waterfront Toronto
Digital Neighbourhoods: Waterfront Toronto, Toronto Region Board of Trade
Digital Justice & Digital Equity: Digital Justice Lab & Tech Reset Canada
- 8:30 **Plenary re-group**
- 8:55 **Wrap up**
- 9:00 **Adjourn**