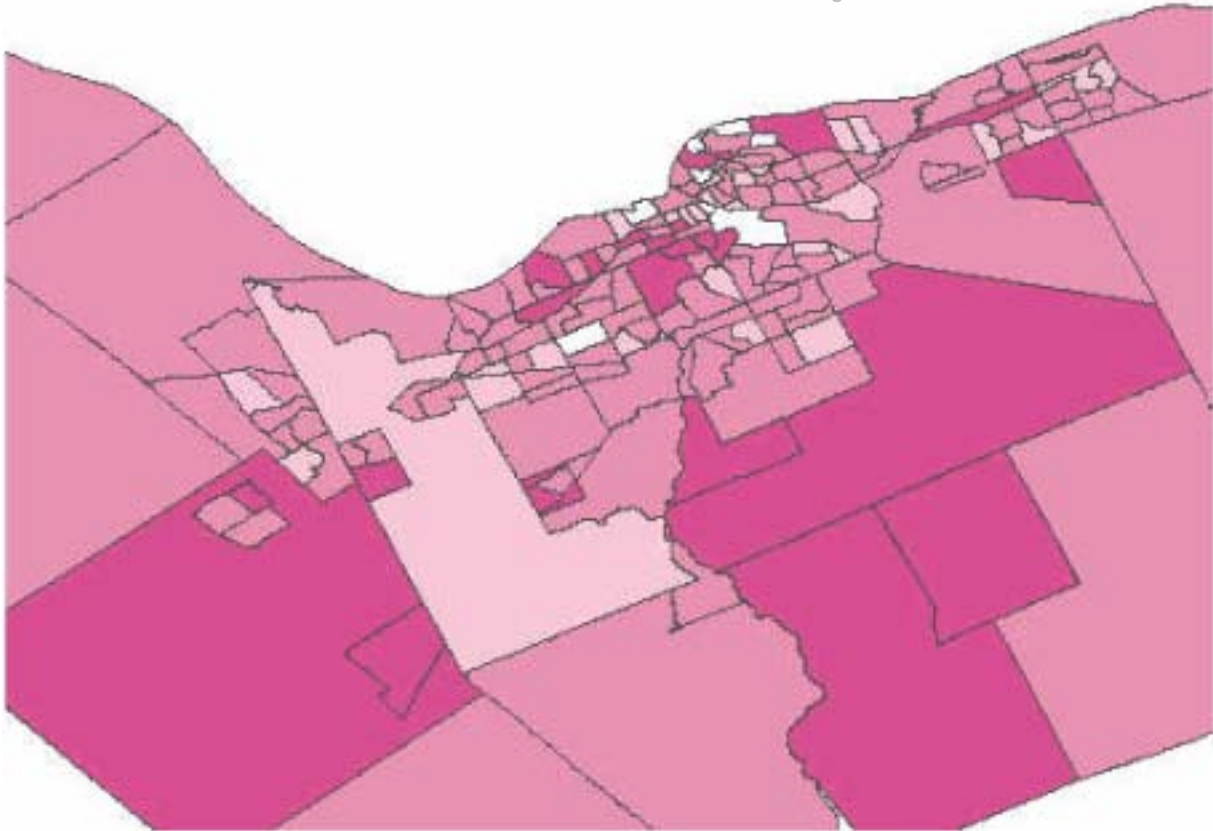


# Putting Literacy in Ottawa on the Map



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## Conclusion

This research has brought together a variety of data in order to reveal a picture of what learner participation looked like in 2002, how this fits within the socio-economic and demographic characteristics of the City of Ottawa in 2000 and 2001, and includes feedback from social service agencies in some targeted neighbourhoods from 2003. So how can all of this be of use to literacy service planning?

The goal of this research project was to produce a resource containing tools useful for on-going planning of literacy service delivery for the City of Ottawa. This research has revealed seven neighbourhoods that had high-density concentrations of learners attending adult literacy programs in 2002: Pinecrest/Queensway, Carleton Heights, Centretown, Lowertown, Vanier, Overbrook and Hunt Club.

This report allows the reader to see the relationships between these neighbourhoods and the socio-economic and demographic characteristics taken from the 2001 census through a series of thematic maps. Additionally, as a continuation of previous OCCL project efforts to make connections with social service agencies, nine new contacts have been made with agencies located in the targeted neighbourhoods.

The agency survey revealed how little literacy information is passed on, and how few client referrals are made by some of the social service agencies in the neighbourhoods with the highest concentrations of participating LBS learners. The findings from the survey present a tremendous opportunity for outreach initiatives for programs, and the information in this report can be used to inform on-going literacy service delivery planning.

Finally, an additional outcome of this work has been the development of a complex, yet effective research model which can be repeated again at regular intervals, as part of the LPCC's ongoing research strategy.

### Challenges Faced During This Project

Planning and carrying out research such as this was not without challenges. Below are the obstacles encountered and suggestions for improvement should this research model be repeated.

**1)** One of the first obstacles encountered was in the collection of the learner data from the IMS database. Staff at AlphaPlus Centre provided step by step instructions to follow when using the query program. Unfortunately it was not clear to the researcher that the *Microsoft Access 2000* database program was required for this query to work. This posed a problem because many of the participating agencies did not have *Microsoft Access* installed on their IMS computer. Furthermore, many agencies did not even own

a copy of that software, so they couldn't even install it on the machine to do the data collection.

To work around this challenge the researcher did a number of things: 1) re-wrote the step by step instructions to include instructions on how to install *Microsoft Access*; 2) assisted some agencies with installing the needed software over the phone, and visited others to do it in person; 3) provided step by step instructions on using *WinZip* software to compress a copy of the agency's LBS Reporting database and send it to the researcher by email; 4) personally retrieved the database from some agencies (the researcher then used her own copy of *Microsoft Access* to run the query to retrieve the learner data for those agencies). As a result of these challenges the actual time required to collect the IMS data was considerably longer than originally anticipated.

**Suggestion for next time:** It is now known that *Microsoft Access* is required to carry out the data collection from the IMS system. Therefore, any future data collection will have improved written instructions for agencies to follow. This does not solve the problem of agencies that are without *Microsoft Access*, however. The ideal solution to this dilemma would be for MTCU to make collated IMS data available to all agencies and networks in another form, such as a *Microsoft Excel* worksheet or similar flat-file.

2) The integrity of data collected from the IMS was questionable in some instances. For example, some learner ages were calculated as being between 134 and 937 years! This can only be explained by data entry errors on the part of the agency. Also, there was some question as to whether all learners were correctly extracted via the query since more than one agency reported surprise when told how many learners they saw in 2002—many felt the numbers collected by this research were too low. Some agency reports also included repeated entries for learners. Duplicate entries had to be located and removed before the data was analysed. Another data quality issue arose where learner postal codes were not available so the LBS delivery agency postal code was substituted instead, since it was a required field for IMS. This practice does not allow for accurate locating of learners by address.

**Suggestion for next time:** Avoiding data entry errors, and ensuring all information is accurately entered into the IMS will assist future research to be more reflective of the true learner situation. Additionally, the IMS query should be re-examined to ensure that all registered LBS learners are in fact captured in the query without duplication or omission. As a further check, learner names could be an additional field retrieved by the query and used to cross-check against separate agency records to ensure an accurate learner count, and then the names would be deleted afterwards so anonymity would be guaranteed in the analysis.

3) A third challenge was in finding a suitable base map to use for locating learners by their postal codes. Canada Post Corporation does not publish a map of the full six-character postal code areas; they only have Forward Sortation Area (FSA) maps which show the first three characters. This project intended to locate learners precisely using the full six characters so additional software was purchased to allow for this level of

detail. The researcher was able to pre-process the postal code information in *Microsoft Excel* and then use *Microsoft MapPoint 2002* to generate a map showing the exact location of each postal code. It was noted, however, that this software did not account for duplicated postal codes – so if there was more than one learner located at a postal code (i.e. in an apartment building) the researcher had to keep track of this fact separately.

**Suggestion for next time:** It is now known that *Microsoft MapPoint 2002* is a useful tool for finding exact locations of six-character postal codes and could be used again in the future.

4) Data from the most recent *2001 Canada Census of Population* was only partially available at the outset of this project, particularly at the point in time when census data collection was scheduled to take place. Therefore there was much discussion about whether it would be better to use readily available, but older 1996 census data, or instead delay the project by waiting for the new 2001 data to be released for the socio-economic characteristics of interest to this project. The decision was made to extend the project timeframe so as to include new 2001 data.

**Suggestion for next time:** It is now known that Canada Census socio-economic data takes approximately two years to become full available, thus any future projects wishing to make use of this type of data from a recent census should not be attempted sooner than two years following the census (i.e. plan to use 2006 census data in 2008). (Note: Technological advancements in the future may hasten the data availability time. Check with Statistics Canada for distribution and release details at that time.)

5) Accessing GIS software to map the census data was another obstacle in this research. Algonquin College was approached about using their facilities, and they suggested perhaps a student could take on the project, but none was available to do so at that time. Combined with the issue of having to wait for the 2001 census data to become available, the timing just did not fit with Algonquin's schedule. Alternatively, the researcher had access to the GIS facility at Lakehead University in Thunder Bay for a short time in August and was able to analyse the census data at that time. Unfortunately, after discussions with the working group in September, revisions were required to the output maps, which meant that suitable software would again be required. For this reason and others, *ArcView 8.3* GIS software was purchased by OCCL and used to complete this project.

**Suggestion for next time:** This project developed the base map layers for Ottawa census tracts and FSAs in *ArcView* format, therefore future projects can re-use these layers as a starting point and will not have to worry about creating them from scratch again, unless the geography changes. With the purchase of *ArcView* software OCCL can carry out future analysis in-house with relative ease since the tool is now available and the base maps and census data have been acquired. Additionally, the thematic map series presented in this report is available electronically and can be modified or updated with this software and re-printed as needed.