

How a Toronto Public Library Card Changed My Student Life

Published 9/5/2025 by [Rei Tang](#)

Hi, I'm Caroline, an international student at Seneca, and today I want to share one of my best student survival hacks: the **Toronto Public Library card**.

When I first arrived in Toronto, I was shocked at how expensive everything was. Tuition, rent, groceries, transportation: it all added up so quickly. My wallet felt like it had a hole, and my bank account drained faster than I could refill it with my part-time job. Like many of you, I had to figure out how to juggle classes, work, and living expenses in one of the priciest cities in Canada.

I kept asking myself: *How can I save money but still enjoy life here?*

That's when I stumbled on one of the best-kept secrets for international students in Toronto: the **Toronto Public Library Card (TPL card)**.

More Than Just Books

At first, I thought a library card was just for borrowing books. (And yes, I do love a good book now and then.) But the TPL card turned out to be so much more. Honestly, it feels like a student discount pass to the whole city.

Here are some of the things you can get for free with a TPL card:

- **Admission to top Toronto attractions** through the Museum + Arts Pass (yes, even Ripley's Aquarium of Canada, the Toronto Zoo, and the Royal Ontario Museum)
- **Workshops** on everything from résumés to art and DIY crafts
- **Online learning** with LinkedIn Learning, Mango Languages, and more
- **Audiobooks and eBooks** through OverDrive and the Libby app - perfect for reading or listening on the go
- **Digital magazines** are available through multiple different services, offering current issues from around the world in your language!
- **Musical instruments** like ukuleles, guitars, or violins. The library provides care instructions and how-to videos to help you get started (just note there aren't formal

lessons - it's all about exploring and practicing on your own)

- **Free tickets** to the Toronto Symphony Orchestra
- **Movies, music, and comics** online through Hoopla
- **Computer access and low-cost printing** at library branches (scanning is free)

Sounds almost too good to be true, right?

My Own Experience

With my TPL card, I've gone to the Royal Ontario Museum, the Toronto Zoo, and the Bata Shoe Museum with friends - without paying a dollar. (Pro tip: take the free pass early in the morning because they run out fast!)

And yes, I borrowed a ukulele. Let's just say... I wasn't exactly ready for a concert. But it was fun, and they also host occasional free workshops, which kept me motivated to keep practicing.

It honestly felt like I had unlocked a door to experiences I never thought I could afford as a student.

How to Get a TPL Card

If you're a Seneca student living in Toronto, you qualify for a free card. Here's what you need:

- **Photo ID** (passport, driving license, Ontario Photo Card etc.)
- **Proof of Toronto address** (lease, bank statement, or utility bill)
- Apply online at [tpl.ca](https://www.tpl.ca)

From Survival to Belonging

The Toronto Public Library isn't just about saving money. It's also a place to connect. You can find quiet study rooms, conversation circles to practice English, cultural events, or just a cozy corner to escape the stress of school.

For me, the TPL card turned Toronto from an expensive, overwhelming city into a place full of possibilities. It gave me chances to explore, learn new skills, and even make friends along the way.

If You're Looking for a Way Forward...

If you're struggling with expenses or just feeling limited in what you can do as a student, I want you to know: there are free resources out there waiting for you. The TPL card is one of the best.

It's more than a card - it's a lifeline. A little piece of plastic that can open doors (literally) all over Toronto.

So, grab one, and see how much this city has to offer - without draining your wallet.

Find more ways to thrive as a student in Toronto:

- Explore: [tpl.ca](https://www.tpl.ca)
- Connect: Join a [social club](#) at Seneca
- Grow: Check out Seneca's Peer Mentoring & Student Support Groups

Toronto Library and more...

- [Barrie Public Library](#)
- [Brampton Library](#)
- [Markham Public Library](#)
- [Mississauga Library](#)
- [Vaughan Public Library](#)

(Written by Caroline Cheng, Student – Digital & Social Media Marketing)

tags : international-students, international-student-survival-guide