

Shelf life

TORONTO PUBLIC LIBRARY NEWS AND VIEWS

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Canadian Urban Institute breakfast symposium at Toronto Reference Library on November 21, featuring guest speakers Toronto City Librarian Josephine Bryant, left; Bibliothèque nationale du Québec CEO Lise Bissonnette, right; and Toronto Star Editorial Page Editor Emeritus, Haroon Siddiqui.

Library as catalyst for urban revitalization

Urban Institute symposium explores library's place in the urban landscape

PUBLIC LIBRARIES must be treated as an essential ingredient in any modern urban landscape that takes its own vitality seriously. Such was the message at a Canadian Urban Institute breakfast symposium at Toronto Reference Library (TRL) on November 21, featuring guest speakers: Bibliothèque nationale du Québec CEO Lise Bissonnette; *Toronto Star* Editorial Page Editor Emeritus Haroon Siddiqui; and Toronto City Librarian Josephine Bryant.

Each of the speakers emphasized the fact that the modern public library enhances the urban landscape, but more importantly, serves as an anchor, drawing traffic and resulting in continued development and revitalization.

In discussing plans for the new Bibliothèque nationale du Québec, currently under construction in downtown Montréal, Bissonnette commented on the passion people showed for the project. "All the passion was about urban issues," Bissonnette noted. "During three days of public consultation, 46 separate groups presented papers."

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Interview with Alistair MacLeod

"Libraries are a great conduit for getting literature from the writer to the reader."

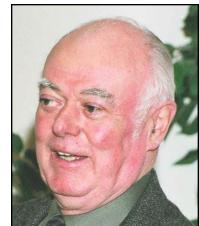
CANADIAN AUTHOR Alistair MacLeod, who recently drew capacity crowds to readings at Toronto Public Library, took time, while in Toronto, to talk to *Shelf Life* about his life as a writer.

"Public libraries have played a great role in my professional life," says MacLeod. "My books have all gone into libraries almost as soon as they were published and they've been checked out and read by a great many people. Libraries are a great conduit for getting literature from the writer to the reader."

Toronto Public Library (TPL), along with the Ottawa Public Library system, nominated MacLeod's novel, *No Great Mischief*, for the IMPAC Dublin Literary Award for 2001. MacLeod won, and came home with \$142,000, the world's richest literary prize for a single work of fiction. MacLeod laughs in acknowledging the library's role in his win: "If these two systems had not nominated me, perhaps I would not be as rich as I am today!"

MacLeod says he uses his library, and his library card, regularly. "I read a lot," he explains. "A lot of fiction, a lot of Canadian and world fiction. I've been reading lately the Irish writer, John McGahern, whom I admire very much.

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Alistair MacLeod

Toronto Public Library architect profile: John Lyle

RUNNymeDE BRANCH architect John Lyle worked throughout his career to establish a national style for architecture, choosing materials and motifs associated with Canada.

Hailing from an Irish immigrant family, Lyle's artistic talents were first fostered as a youth at the Hamilton School of Art. Lyle went on to study architecture at Yale and at the École des Beaux-Arts in Paris. Throughout his career, Lyle remained a proponent of the Beaux-Arts style, with design decisions guided by the function of the building and decorative elements superimposed on the structure.

Lyle carried out many commissions, both public and

residential, in Toronto and across the country. Besides the Runnymede Branch of the library, Lyle's Toronto buildings include the Old Toronto Stock Exchanges (now demolished), Union Station, the Royal Alexandra Theatre and the Masonic Temple.

Runnymede Branch, built in 1929, shows the design hallmarks typical of Lyle's work. From the Credit Valley stone used in the building's exterior, to the steeply pitched roofs characteristic of old Quebec farmhouses, Lyle included Canadian elements through-



Runnymede Branch, built in 1929, shows the design hallmarks typical of Lyle's work.

out. Although the Library Board had reservations initially, native motifs are present in the decorative features on the exterior of the branch. West Coast totem poles are featured in the stonework around the main entrance and native flora and fauna are present as other decorative elements in the stonework.

Historicity

For more about John Lyle, and architecture in general, check out Historicity, TPL's Web page about Toronto and its neighbourhoods: www.tpl.toronto.on.ca
click on Virtual Reference Library
click on Search the Internet
click on Historicity

Public libraries

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In selecting an architect, Bissonnette explained, they looked for a plan that would foster co-existence of all people in the downtown neighbourhood. The building design would take into account the area's diversity, accommodating homeless people, students at the neighbouring University of Quebec, newly arriving urban professionals and people of all ethnic origins.

To accommodate environmental diversity, the library's front entrance will have a feeling of being open to the outside. "We thought students should get out during the winter," Bissonnette said, explaining that the University of Quebec complex, with its adjoining shops and residences, made it possible to exist without ever going outside.

Siddiqui talked about the role of the public library in Toronto, which he described as the most multiethnic city in the world. Fifty-four percent of Torontonians are immigrants, Siddiqui

pointed out, as compared to only 44 percent in New York.

"Toronto is the first living model of Marshall McLuhan's global village," Siddiqui commented. He pointed out that Torontonians tend to be well-informed about world events, and that the library plays an important role in supplying information and enlightenment surrounding events of local, national and international significance.

Siddiqui also congratulated the library on its continuing efforts to create a common space for the people of the city. "If the public schools are the common cathedral of our kids," Siddiqui postulated, "public libraries are the common cathedral of adults."

"Libraries represent the best of our collective strengths and help make Canada the great nation that it is," Siddiqui concluded.

Bryant discussed major library construction initiatives in a number of urban locations, including Vancouver, Quebec, Singapore, Chicago and Nashville. "In Nashville, they went so far as to demolish a shopping mall to clear a site for a new central library," Bryant pointed out.

"They were wagering that a new library – in conjunction with a Country Music Hall of Fame and a new Centre for the Visual Arts – could do what the Gap and Benneton could not: revitalize the downtown core."

Bryant is no stranger to library revitalization. Toronto Reference Library is in the midst of a main floor revitalization that aims to make it a vital part of Yonge Street, with a coffee shop, an outdoor terrace, a gift shop and a reading lounge animating the library's public face and thereby enticing browsers.

Alistair MacLeod

Continued from page 1...

"Canada is a good place for writing because writing has been encouraged by library systems, government and a variety of cultural organizations," says MacLeod when asked why Canada has spawned so many international literary award-winners. "A lot of very, very good writers in Canada have come here from other countries. Canada is a great place to celebrate the diversity of writing."

In brief

Virtual Reference Library "rawks"

Working with Toronto District and Catholic secondary school boards, Toronto Public Library (TPL) is spreading the word about their guided portal to Internet research resources, the Virtual Reference Library (VRL). Since September, librarians have visited 158 school classes, getting the word out to 5,600 students and distributing over 500 library cards. The cards are needed to access TPL's commercial databases, which feature full-text magazine and newspapers articles and information on everything from architecture to zoology. As one high school student put it after seeing the demonstration: "The VRL rawks!"

Helping Torontonians find jobs

A partnership with Human Resources Development Canada is helping Toronto's east enders find jobs. Participants in the Surf & Search Job Lounge, based at the Birchmount Bluffs Neighbourhood Centre, will make a weekly migration to Albert Campbell Branch to avail themselves of the library's extensive array of career and job search resources.

"The space at Birchmount Bluffs provides participants with the opportunity to surf the Web, create résumés and cover letters and check job postings," says library program coordinator Susan Zadek, "but it's a limited space. The library workshops will make the program available to more job searchers."

Besides high-speed Internet and email computers, Albert Campbell boasts a



Zine Scene @TRL

Toronto Public Library has a new and very unique collection, the Broken Pencil Zine Collection, which is being developed in cooperation with *Broken Pencil*, the magazine of zine culture and the independent arts. The collection currently includes about 400 volumes, but is expected to grow.

strong careers and continuing education collection. Surf & Search library visits will run from January 10 to March 31. Topics will include: effective résumés and cover letters; accessing the hidden job market; labour market trends; preparing for a job search; time management; handling stress in a job search; keys for starting a business; filling out an employment application form; and self assessment.

Looking for a new career?

Check out Career Bookmarks, the library's guided tour of Internet job search resources:

www.tpl.toronto.on.ca

click on Virtual Reference Library

click on Search the Internet

click on Career Bookmarks

A million marriages:

good news for genealogists

An ongoing partnership with the Société franco-ontarienne d'histoire et de généalogie (SFOHG) has resulted in

the addition of a million Quebec marriage records to the library's genealogical collection. The Drouin Collection was acquired by SFOHG through a \$10,000 funding partnership with the Ontario Government Trillium Foundation. By making its collections available in North York Central's Canadiana Department, the SFOHG ensures that the public can benefit from this extraordinary reference tool, available nowhere else in Toronto.

For more information about SFOHG email sfohg@iname.com

Fire services joins

Kids@Computers

Toronto Fire Services has joined Toronto Public Library, Social Services and Parks and Recreation to promote the Kids@Computers scholarship program. The first session ran at Riverdale Branch

The Broken Pencil Zine Collection is available for viewing in the Periodicals Department, 4th Floor, Toronto Reference Library, 789 Yonge Street. Or check out the zines in the Merril Collection of Science Fiction, Speculation and Fantasy at Lillian H. Smith Branch, 239 College Street.

on Thursday, October 24 and targeted 14- to 16-year-olds. In addition to hands-on online research training and fire safety tips, the program included a trip to the Fire Academy as part of Fire Services new Firefighter Mentoring initiative that informs teens about the recruitment process.

Kids@Computers recently welcomed its first private sector partner: Microsoft Canada has announced it will donate software worth \$3.5 million to the program over the next three years.

"The digital divide is affecting the future of our children," says TPL Kids@Computers coordinator Amy Caughlin. "It is gratifying to see so many organizations getting involved in a program dedicated to giving children the skills and technology they need to achieve their full potential."



Illustration from Margaret & H.A. Rey's *Curious George Gets a Medal* © and trademark Houghton Mifflin Co.

Calendar of Events

December 2002/January 2003

Tuesday, December 10, 7:30 p.m. Author Series 2002

Michelle Berry reads from *Blur*.
Katherine Govier reads from *Creation*.
Beeton Auditorium, Toronto Reference
Library, 789 Yonge Street

Friday, January 17, 6 p.m. Performing Arts Lecture Series

Stratford Festival artistic director and actor
Richard Monette.
Toronto Reference Library
789 Yonge Street

Saturday, December 7
Exhibit: Celebrating Sixty Years of Curious George
The art of H.A. and Margaret Rey.
December 7-February 2.
TD Gallery, Toronto Reference Library
789 Yonge Street

January 30-February 1
**Ontario Library Association
Superconference**
Metro Toronto Convention Centre
255 Front Street West

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416-393-7117.

The Toronto Public Library Board meets monthly
from September through June, in Committee
Room 2 at Toronto City Hall, 100 Queen Street
West. Meetings are open to the public.

The Library Board includes eight citizen members
and seven City Councillors.

Board Members

Gillian Mason, Chair
Rick Goldsmith, Vice-Chair
Councillor Maria Augimeri
William Booth
Meyer Brownstone
Councillor Olivia Chow
Councillor Mike Feldman
Mizan Ibrahim
Councillor Joe Mihevc
Councillor Denzil Minnan-Wong
Mark Nightingale
Councillor Jane Pitfield
Councillor Kyle Rae
Marjorie Stephenson
Mitchell Weisberg

Library Board Highlights

November 25, 2002

2003 Operating and Capital Budget Requests

On November 25 the Board reviewed the
reductions recommended by the City of
Toronto's Chief Administrative and
Financial Officers, and approved the
following:

- To reduce the operating budget sub-
mission by \$1.297 million, for a total
requested increase of 4.8 percent over
the 2002 base budget.
- To not reduce a further \$987,700 in
Major Service Changes, identified in
the CAO/CFO report on recommended
reductions
- To express the Board's concern to the
Budget Advisory Committee regarding
the Library's gapping target of 3.5
percent
- A capital funding envelope of \$12.468
million gross in 2003 and \$22.977 mil-
lion gross for 2003-2007, based on the
CAO/EMT Recommended Reductions.

City Review of ABCs

City staff, working on a review of
Agencies, Boards and Commissions,
spoke to the Board concerning a
proposal for revising the composition
of the Toronto Public Library Board.
The report, which the Board will provide
feedback on, included recommendations
to reduce the number of Board members
to 11.

Report on cleaning services

The Board received for information a
report on cleaning services, Janitorial
Services – Union Proposal to Contract In
Work, following a Local 416 CUPE pres-
entation. The Board asked staff to report
back on cleanliness levels in West region
branches, and an approach to survey staff
regarding cleaning services.

*Next Library Board meeting:
Monday, December 9, 2002*