

Chair's Report April 28, 2014

Visitors

Toronto Public Library recently hosted **researchers from the University of Dusseldorf** who are investigating the role of libraries in creating informational world cities. Informational cities, of which Toronto is considered a case study, are the new centres of world power according to these researchers. Consisting of creative clusters, with spaces for personal contact to stimulate the sharing of information, informational cities support financial services, knowledge-intensive high-tech industries and enterprises, and e-governance activities. The researchers toured the Toronto Reference Library and the Digital Innovation Hub, and visited the Bloor/Gladstone and Brentwood branches; they also investigated the role of libraries in supporting information literacy as the foundation of education, meeting with information services, high school outreach and user education staff to learn how Toronto Public Library is supporting information literacy.

Two **staff from the Stockholm Digital Library** spent a day with Toronto Public Library staff, exploring the Digital Innovation Hubs, web accessibility and digital services for children and youth. These visits also offer the opportunity for Toronto Public Library staff to learn about service innovations happening around the world.

Partnerships, outreach and other community initiatives

The Toronto Reference Library will be partnering with Ryerson University in the **CanadianCity Initiative**, a program that seeks a new era of engagement between universities and the cities they inhabit and enhance. The Toronto- and Montreal-based initiative will work toward collaborative action and seek to achieve social and economic innovation. Under the direction of faculty, a small group of fourth and fifth year students will gain experiential learning and course credit as they investigate a week in the life of the Digital Innovation Hub, its users and uses, its market penetration and other aspects of the service. This information will be useful to staff in fine tuning Hub services and developing new Hubs that will be coming on stream in the near future. If the pilot is successful, there are other areas Ryerson would be interested in examining, such as the role Fort York will play serving new, vertical communities.

More than 300 people, 250 of them youth, attended Poetry Saved My Life, a program held at the Bram and Bluma Appel Salon on April 10, as Toronto Public Library kicked off its **Pan Am legacy initiative**. Funded in partnership with the City's Host Showcase Initiatives, Poetry Saved My Life is slated to branch out into poetry slam programming for youth in Library branches across the city, with open mics and poetry slam workshops. The project parallels experiences in the athletic world, as local poetry coaches work with branch teams to support and develop the creative process. The teams will be trained to compete in poetry slams beginning early in 2015. Winners from the slams will perform during the Pan Am Games, receiving international attention and experience.

Twenty youth, ages 18-25, had an opportunity to show off their newly learned skills in lighting, sound, house and stage management, during a recent session of Freedom Fridayz at York Woods Library Theatre. The students were part of **Lights, Sound ACCESS**, a 12-session workshop series offered through a partnership between Toronto Public Library and the West-Side Arts Hub and funded through a Cultural Strategic Investment Fund grant. Freedom Fridayz, held on the last Friday of every month, allow everyone in the Jane/Finch Community to come together and showcase their talent, whether it be poetry, spoken word, art, graffiti, fashion, dancing or any other cultural endeavour. Audiences learn more about the diverse cultures within their community. The program has been running for over four years and is well appreciated in the community and embraced by the youth.

Toronto Public Library was recognized and joined in the celebration for the launch of *Moments*, an anthology of work by participants in the **Scarborough Seniors Write** initiative. The result of a partnership between the Library, Scarborough Arts, Tropicana Community Services (through the ProTech Media Lab at Kennedy/Eglinton Branch) and Phase One Studios, Scarborough Seniors Write engaged seniors through a variety of activities, from storytelling and writing, to audio recording and public events. The program was funded by a Government of Canada New Horizons for Seniors grant. The Library is ordering copies of both the print and CD versions of the book for its collections – much to the delight of the creators!

Programs and exhibits and services

A new bookmobile stop at the West Mall was launched at the beginning of April with a special event planned in cooperation with the local school. A total of 255 children from 11 different classes visited the bookmobile, with many registering for library cards and borrowing material. The stop is well situated for children attending the school and day care, and by all accounts, the bookmobile is going to be very popular.

The Library is on track to launch its **new print-on-demand service** in early May, with the recent installation of a new Espresso Book Machine adjacent to the Digital Innovation Hub at the Reference Library. This service initiative was in the Toronto Public Library Board's approved Strategic Plan work plan for 2013/2014 under the priority area of delivering excellent library service and the goal of diversifying revenue streams to support sustainable library services. The service will support writers and responds to the growing demand for self-publication capacity; the service is expected to be popular. A demonstration for the Board will be arranged prior to the May meeting.

Magnetic North, a new exhibition at the TD Gallery at Toronto Reference Library, will open on May 17, featuring a study in contrasts — rooted in different media and time, with views of the Arctic from both home and away. The exhibition will feature interpretations by artists, explorers and academics from TD Bank Group's collection of contemporary Canadian art, and Toronto Public Library's special collections of Arctic art and artifact. In addition to co-curating the exhibition, TD Bank is also generously sponsoring it.

The eighth annual June Callwood Lecture, The Politics of Water: Is Water a Human Right or a Tradable Commodity, will take place on May 21 at Toronto Reference Library. The event will feature Maude Barlow, the National Chairperson of the Council of Canadians and chair of the board of Washington-based Food and Water Watch. She is the author of 17 books, including her latest, *Blue Future: Protecting Water for People and the Planet Forever*. The annual June Callwood Lecture honours the life, work and legacy of journalist, author and social activist June Callwood (1924-2007). It provides a platform for the exploration and discussion of contemporary social justice issues.

The **Keep Toronto Reading Festival** is coming off another successful year of celebrating the joy of reading across the city. This year's programming has been inspired by the Library's One Book selection: Steven Galloway's national bestseller, *The Cellist of Sarajevo*. In the book, a cellist performs Albinoni's Adagio for 22 days to commemorate the lives of 22 civilians killed while waiting in a bread line during the siege of Sarajevo. Recreating this act of bravery, Toronto Public Library, in partnership with the Toronto Symphony Orchestra, staged 22 performances across 22 consecutive days in iconic locations across the city, including the CN Tower, Union Station, Evergreen Brickworks, Scarborough Civic Centre, and numerous Library branches. The campaign was extremely well received, reaching over 1,000 people at the performances, creating sustained buzz on social media, and generating media coverage by Toronto Star, Global and City TV, Torontoist, and other media outlets. A compilation video of some of the performances is on our festival website (keptorontoreading.ca). Keep Toronto Reading events in the Bram and Bluma Appel Salon have also been well attended, most notably the Siege of Sarajevo panel with Margaret MacMillan, which sold out. Our branch programming has included lectures, discussions about art and war, writer panels as well as children's events. Our partnership with the TDSB continues this year, with over 1000 students reading the book, along with a cello workshop and a visit with author Steven Galloway.

Spaces

Barbara Frum Branch underwent a two-phase renovation in February and March 2014, funded by \$100,000 in Section 37 funds and funding from the Library state of good repair budget, along with a generous donation of \$100,000 through the Toronto Public Library Foundation from the late Dr. Murray Frum and his family designated for refurbishments. Phase 1 reorganized the second floor to create a Learning Centre, which gives customers the opportunity to attend computer classes and access bookable computers. An updated teen area, with enhanced study space, will encourage group work. The information desk has been redesigned so customers can work with staff to address information needs, and a stand-up information desk has been added to the opposite end of the floor so staff can assist customers who are browsing the collections. Phase 2 created a new main floor staff workroom that accommodates a sorter, enabling staff to efficiently process materials. The book drop has been relocated so returns enter the staff workroom, also supporting staff efficiency. The urban living room, refreshed with new carpet, has been reconfigured with new shelving, lounge and study space.

Fairview reopened on Thursday, April 17, 2014 at 9:00 am. A steady stream of customers returned to the branch and were thrilled that their branch is available again. While most of the library is open, the theatre and part of the first floor is still closed for restoration. Customers are pleased that most of the collections, study space, the study rooms and computers are available. The first customers through the door included newcomers seeking library cards, students looking for study space and library users looking for new materials. Programs including children's storytimes, user education and teen homework help are restarting or returning to the branch. In June, the rest of the first floor and the program rooms on the first and fourth floors will reopen and remaining programs, including Leading to Reading, and Adult Literacy classes will return to Fairview. During the closure, hours were extended at neighbourhood branches and staff visited schools, community groups and daycares to provide programs and keep the public informed of the progress towards reopening.

Awards

The Ontario Association of Architects recently announced that the Mount Dennis Branch has been awarded a **2014 OAA Design Excellence Award for projects demonstrating the Best in Architectural Design and Innovation**. Out of the 170 project submissions, 15 projects were selected for a Design Excellence Award. Mount Dennis Branch of Toronto Public Library was the only public library to win an award. This is the second architectural win for G. Stratton Architects Inc. and Toronto Public Library, who were honoured in the fall of 2013 with a City of Toronto Urban Design Award for public buildings in context.

Prepared by Toronto Public Library staff