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Chair's Report April 4, 2011

Partnerships

In the Fall of 2010, with grant funding support, Toronto Public Library entered into a partnership with Toronto Employment and Social Services (TESS) to reduce barriers to service for families who are part of their Investing in Families (IIF) initiative. Caseworkers were provided with Library welcome kits and fine forgiveness coupons to distribute to families so that they would be encouraged to take advantage of library services. Various branches including Centennial, Albion, York Woods, Parkdale, New Toronto and Gerrard Ashdale participated in the project, helping to organize and host open houses, employment and other programs as well as client meetings. As a research study component, a temporary part-time outreach librarian was hired through the grant to work intensively in the Centennial Branch community. The study's evaluation will assess the impact of the librarian on library service utilization among IIF clients in this community as compared with other parts of the city.

Toronto Public Library is partnering with the University of Toronto Cities Centre in a project called **We're not asking, we're telling: building on good practices in services for homeless women**. Project staff approached the Library to provide space in four branches for women to meet. The women identified libraries as a neutral space where they would feel comfortable meeting and having these discussions. Bendale, Bloor/Gladstone, Parkdale and Parliament were chosen because of their proximity to women's shelters and services. The meetings are peer-led, by women with lived experience.

Programs

After last spring's highly successful **Make Some Noise concert** that drew well over 600 people to Toronto Reference Library in May, the Make Some Noise team is gearing up for an April 16 show, also at TRL, featuring Toronto's alt-country psychedelic surf-rock wizards The Sadies.

The deadline for submissions to **the 2011 issue of *Young Voices***, the Library's annual magazine of teen creative writing and visual art, was April 2. Over the next two months, about 30 teens will work with six professional Toronto writers and one artist to select the best 80 or so submissions to be published. Last year, *Young Voices* received well over 700 submissions. This year, for the first time, the magazine will include black and white photography.

Toronto Public Library's annual **Design a Bookmark Contest** winners will celebrate together at North York Central Library on May 4. Every year, children up to the age of 13 are invited to design their own bookmark and submit it to the contest. Sixteen bookmarks are chosen and each of the winners receives a book prize and 100 copies of the bookmark they designed. The highly popular bookmarks are distributed in Library branches across the city.

For **Asian Heritage Month** this year, eight branches will host programs celebrating a variety of Asian populations in their respective neighbourhoods, including China, South Asia, West Asia and East Asia, in what are being dubbed Homelands Festivals. The festivals feature cultural touchstone performances of music, dance, story and cooking. Bhangra, Belly and Balinese dances mingle with Chinese Opera, Arabic cooking and Turkish folk tales.

The eh List is back with an exciting spring line-up of top Canadian writers everyone is reading, including Andre Alexis, Peter Robinson, Gail Bowen, Sylvia Tyson, Dany Laferriere, David Bezmozgis, Terry Fallis, and Scotiabank Giller Prize winner Johanna Skibsrud.

April was officially declared **Keep Toronto Reading** Month at a fun event at Hunter's Glen School in Scarborough last week. Councillor Sarah Doucette read the proclamation on behalf of City Council; children's author and illustrator Robin Muller worked some magic; and attendees were treated to a flash Rap mob extolling the joy of reading. On April 1, author Judy Fong Bates read from this year's One Book selection, *Midnight at the Dragon Café*. The evening was hosted by CBC Radio's Laura Di Battista, and featured a sampling of Cantonese Opera (a theme in the book). It was the first of more than 80 events celebrating the transformative power of books that will take place all across the city this month. Of particular note is greatly increased school participation this year, with 14 high school classes reading the One Book selection, 15 Scarborough primary schools holding a Keep Toronto Reading Day on April 29 and, for the first time this year, the University of Toronto holding a public lecture on the themes of *Midnight at the Dragon Café*.

Foundation

Applications are now available online for the **Foundation Staff Awards**, the second annual Pauline Hinch Memorial Award for Staff Development, and Peter J. Bassnett Award for Professional Development. Both awards are intended to encourage staff pursuing a career in public libraries.

Capital projects

A number of **capital projects are progressing** over the next few months. Mount Dennis Branch will have its second public open house, this one to review the design concept with G. Bruce Stratton Architects. Closure to start construction is expected to begin before year-end. The two public open houses for the new Fort York/Bathurst Branch, with construction slated to begin in 2012, will be held on May 10 at Fort York and on May 19 at Sanderson Branch. Renovations at Richview Branch are nearing completion and the renewed and renovated main floor space will be celebrated this month with a community appreciation open house to thank customers for their patience while the branch has been under construction.