

## Chair's Report March 1, 2011

### Capital projects

After a brief closure for a major retrofit and reorganization, **Northern District reopened** its doors to hundreds of happy library customers last Thursday, February 3. Features of the retrofit made the interior of the branch more accessible and will allow the staff to provide the community with improved customer service. Other features include more access to technology for research, learning, working and recreation. The new shelving, furnishings, flooring and service zoning will make the branch more welcoming for everyone.

### Partnerships

A significant service enhancement to the newly renovated Northern District Branch is **The Studio, a youth space featuring computer and media arts equipment**, located on the lower level of the library building. The space, a partnership between Toronto Public Library and Delisle Youth Services, opened a few weeks after the branch itself reopened and is a youth-friendly, youth-led studio space that will serve as a gateway or conduit to the Northern District Branch and Delisle Youth Services. With planned programming to include reading and writing groups, media and arts programs, and computer instruction, youth engagement will be a cornerstone of the development and implementation of this service.

The final in a series of free **Opera Talks** at North York Central Library, presented in partnership with Canadian Opera Company, happens March 3. The talks feature COC staff and special guests presenting multi-faceted talks that explore the fascinating world of opera. More than 120 people braved a stormy night in December to attend the second Opera Talk, featuring Katherine Semcesen, Senior Manager of Canadian Opera Company's Education and Outreach Department, and a performance by COC Ensemble Studio member and bass Michael Uloth and pianist Topher Mokrzewski performing two arias from Mozart's opera *The Magic Flute*. The first Opera Talk, an introduction to opera in September, drew more than 150 people.

The Library's annual partnership with **PEN Canada during Freedom to Read Week** (February 20-26) featured a panel of distinguished thinkers discussing What We Talk About When We Talk About Hate, at Toronto Reference Library on February 25, led by moderator Steve Paikin, host of TVO's The Agenda.

### Branches

**Pedometers**, which have been available for borrowing at a number of branches since 2008, are now available at 12 more branches: Agincourt, Bloor/Gladstone, Cedarbrae, Evelyn Gregory, Fairview, Humberwood, Oakwood Village, Parliament Street, Sanderson, Main Street, Thorncliffe, and Woodside Square. The pedometers, provided in

cooperation with Toronto Public Health, can be borrowed for up to 21 days at a time and are intended to act as an incentive to healthy living.

### **Programs**

On February 28, Toronto Public Library celebrated its **2011 One Book** selection with a fun event on the TTC. To raise awareness of and encourage participation in this annual community reads event, riders on the Queen streetcar were given free copies of *Midnight at the Dragon Café* by Judy Fong Bates, the 2011 One Book selection. The streetcar itself has been wrapped with eye-catching One Book promotional art which will remain in place throughout the month of March, as a lead-up to the Keep Toronto Reading Festival in April. Copies of the book were handed out by three teams of local celebrities from the CBC and the *Toronto Star*. Matt Galloway, Laura Di Battista and the duo of Anne Marie Mediwake and Dwight Drummond were there from the CBC; *Star* celebrities were Catherine Porter, Geoff Pevere and Richard Ouzounian. Five hundred copies of the book were generously donated by publisher McClelland and Stewart for the giveaway and the streetcar wrap promotion was made possible through generous donations from the Toronto Public Library Foundation, and McClelland & Stewart.

One Book, as always, is part of **Keep Toronto Reading**, which happens in April every year. Now in its sixth year, the 2011 Keep Toronto Reading Festival will feature Books That Transform You, inviting Torontonians to share the books that have had an impact on them. With more than 80 events, the opportunity to write book recommendations in travelling journals, and several online activities, there's something for everyone – author readings, panel discussions, storytelling, performances and hands-on activities for kids.

Feature February programming centred around **Black History Month**, generously sponsored by the RBC Foundation. One of the events focused on Haiti, One Year Later. The Library's partnership with Caribana artists explored African oral traditions from griot through hip-hop at six branches. Critic and impresario Donna Bailey Nurse provided six interviews with a veritable who's who of black Canadian authors and wordsmiths. Authors of books for younger readers were also in evidence, and with Maestro Fresh Wes filling the arena at Centennial branch, and CBC's Dwight Drummond appearing at community branches, the 2011 Black History Month was full of surprises and delights. Also in February, the highly successful annual **Toronto Celebrates Canada Reads partnership with CBC** saw over 350 people at Toronto Reference Library on February 4 to see CBC Radio's Mary Ito interview several of the finalists for the CBC's annual battle of the books.

### **Toronto Public Library Foundation**

Almost 600 literary and library lovers attended the Book Lover's Ball on February 10, 2011, to enjoy a delicious gourmet meal, meet celebrity authors, and enjoy the Toronto Public Library Foundation's now-famous novel-inspired fashion show at the Fairmont Royal York hotel. Authors attending this year included Andrew Pyper, Barry Callaghan,

Camilla Gibb, Joy Fielding, Lawrence Hill, Linwood Barclay, Micah Toub, Sylvia Tyson and Terry Fallis, to name just a few of the more than 50 authors attending.

### **Staff**

The Annual **Ontario Library Association Super Conference**, February 1-4 at the Toronto Convention Centre, benefited from much TPL staff involvement, both at the conference and the pre-conference. In all, more than 20 TPL staff members participated in a dozen presentations and poster sessions, on topics ranging from downloadable e-content, to user education, to a national reading strategy, to children and youth services, to responding to media inquiries. As part of the pre-conference fun, delegates participating in the annual tour of TPL branches got a look at recently renovated Cedarbrae, Northern District and Thorncliffe branches.