

Chair's Report January 6, 2011

2010: THE LIBRARY YEAR IN RETROSPECT

Toronto Public Library experienced another successful, record-setting year in 2010 as job seekers, small business owners and students of all ages, families and older adults accessed library services in branches or through the Library's new website resulting in a 3.3% increase in circulation over 2009.

JANUARY

Young Voices Winter Writing Workshops get underway

Beginning at the end of January and winding up in April, the Library held its annual series of *Young Voices* Writers Workshops across the city, at library branches and community agencies such as North York youth shelter Eva's Satellite.

"It's pretty awesome that the Library is sending me to places like Eva's Satellite. Thanks to the Library for understanding that literacy and promoting reading/writing needs to go out beyond the walls of actual libraries to engage the most under-served communities."

— Emily Pohl Weary, Toronto writer, *Young Voices* magazine guest editor and workshop facilitator

Appel Salon at Toronto Reference Library

The Bram & Bluma Appel Salon is a place where writers, thinkers, movers and shakers come together for discussions, debates and more, and 2010 saw a lot of movers and shakers come through the doors of Toronto's newest cultural hotspot. The year started off with a bang as humanitarian author Greg Mortenson visited to promote *Stones into Schools*, his follow up to *Three Cups of Tea*. Over 900 people attended the event, with the overflow crowd watching on closed circuit TV in the Toronto Reference Library atrium. Most Library events at the Appel Salon are free, but this was a fundraiser with proceeds to be split between the Library Foundation and Mortenson's cause of building schools in Afghanistan. At the end of the evening, Mortenson cited his deep respect for libraries when he donated his portion of the proceeds back to the Library.

"I love librarians. Librarians and teachers are my heroes. And Toronto has the biggest library system in the world. So I'm really excited."

Family Literacy Day

Family Literacy Day is a national program held on January 27th. Branches throughout TPL participate in the program each year by hosting activities to promote and encourage family literacy. The theme was "Sing for Literacy", and programs included intergenerational storytelling and sing-alongs.

The Library's Adult Literacy program develops and promotes literacy programs, services and collections that support adult learners. One-on-one tutoring is offered by volunteers to assist adults whose literacy skills are at levels one and two, the lowest levels of literacy. The tutoring covers basic reading, writing and math skills. The number of learners in the program increased by almost 10% in 2010 with 305 adults participating.

FEBRUARY

Book Lover's Ball gathers lit lovers in support of Library

The Toronto Public Library Foundation's annual Book Lover's Ball, supporting Toronto's Library, saw over 550 library and literary lovers gather at the Fairmont Royal York, mingling with over 50 of Canada's leading authors including Lawrence Hill, Catherine Gildiner, Graeme Gibson, Linwood Barclay, Wayson Choy and Linda McQuaig.

MARCH

Sun Life MAP program expands

The Toronto Zoo, one of the city's most popular family attractions, joined the Toronto Public Library's Sun Life Financial Museum + Arts Pass (MAP) program, upping to 18 the number of city museums, galleries and cultural institutions offering families free access.

"Joining the MAP program is a tremendous opportunity, helping to improve access to educational and cultural opportunities in the communities where it matters most. It's great to be able to give more children and their families a chance to visit another beautiful attraction in Toronto that they might not otherwise have an opportunity to experience."

— City Councillor and Toronto Public Library Board member Paul Ainslie

APRIL

Thornccliffe Branch reopens

When the Thornccliffe Branch reopened on April 13 after an extensive renovation and expansion, along almost 5,000 members of the community who came on opening day to celebrate having their library back, library blogger Catherine Raine visited so that she could complete her quest to visit, and blog about, all of Toronto Public Library's 99 branches.

"[Through the libraries], I found a point of community and contact for myself. Going to the library is an important part of becoming a citizen of Toronto, of Canada... I don't think anything can replace the unique aspect of home that a library has; whatever you are doing, even if you aren't talking, you are still a part of something when you are there." —library blogger Catherine Raine, quoted on [Torontoist.com](http://torontoist.com)

Keep Toronto Reading Festival

In April, Toronto Public Library hosted the fifth annual Keep Toronto Reading festival, attracting thousands of people to share the books they love through programs and gatherings at library branches all over the city. Here's what customers had to say about a Keep Toronto Reading program at Pape/Danforth Branch called Taste of the Caribbean, which celebrated one of the themes of this year's One Book Community Read, *More*, by Austin Clarke.

"The library is a community. Usually you don't talk in a library but today, we were able to sit, eat and talk to people of many nationalities. This is fascinating!" — Noel Farrell

"This event emphasizes the good ethics of Toronto. If we keep focusing on the good things of Toronto, Toronto can be an even better city." — Lisa Morthy

"It's a fabulous event! The library has always been very valuable to me. I'm very grateful for the library service." — Sophie Popielak

A Keep Toronto Reading day, held at Hunter's Glen Junior Public School in Toronto, had teacher Debbie Firestone very excited:

"The day was magical. Every single student and teacher left the school transformed: smiling, talking to each other, vowing to read all weekend... I would love to make this an annual event."

MAY

Toronto Comic Arts Festival at Toronto Reference Library

For the second year in a row, Toronto Public Library partnered with the city's comic arts community to host the Toronto Comic Arts Festival at Toronto Reference Library.

"TCAF was the number three trending topic on Twitter in Canada for much of the Sunday of the show, even beating out Canadian supercrush Justin Bieber. It's a heartening example of how many people TCAF speaks to, and to their affection for the event. By incorporating the gorgeous new Bram & Bluma Appel Salon into the TCAF floor plan, we were able to comfortably more-than-double our footprint for 2010, expanding to more than 200 exhibitors and honoured guests, and dozens of comics-related readings and symposiums. A record high 12,000 attendees visited the Festival over the weekend (a 10 percent increase over 2009)!" — TCAF organizer and proprietor of The Beguiling comic book store Christopher Butcher

"We have to say it: the Toronto Reference Library was the coolest place to be on Saturday and Sunday afternoon, as the requisite comic nerds and a myriad of intrigued newbies descended on a small army of comics artists from around the world at the Toronto Comics Arts Festival." — **Torontoist.com**

Make Some Noise at Toronto Reference Library

When Toronto Public Library's award-winning Make Some Noise local music concert and workshop series featured a concert with Polaris Prize winners F**ked Up and alt-country darlings One Hundred Dollars, over 600 people showed up at Toronto Reference Library to enjoy the bands and to mosh in the atrium of Toronto Reference Library.

"And let me thank the TPL for doing such amazingly cool stuff, makes me proud to be a Torontonians with a library card" — Frank Yang, editor **chromewaves.net** music blog

"The Toronto Reference Library is one of the most beautiful places in the entire world, stacked full of wonder and knowledge." — Singer Simone Fornow of One Hundred Dollars

JUNE

York Woods BRANCH

Arts Hub opens

On June 29, vibrant performances by several well-known artists from the Jane-Finch neighbourhood helped launch a new Arts Hub at York Woods Library Theatre.

"The Arts Hub is an investment in both the neighbourhood and in the lives of artists in the Jane and Finch community and will nurture talent, encourage creativity and grow skills. Today the Jane-Finch arts community moves into a facility that is befitting the wealth of artistic talent in the neighbourhood. No more practising in hallways, parking lots and facilities far outside the area." — former Mayor David Miller

JULY

TD Summer Reading Club

The annual TD Summer Reading Club launched in July, offering children the opportunity to have fun and maintain literacy levels while out of school for the summer.

"Today was the first day of sign-up though you can sign up at any time during the summer. My kids wanted to get a jump on collecting their stickers so we signed up today. The kids each received their poster (where to place their stickers) and an activity book full of puzzles and colouring and even recipes based on this year's jungle theme. The activity guide also recommends some great jungle themed books the kids can read but you don't have to stick to the jungle. The whole point is getting the kids reading. It can be hard to find something to occupy the kids during the summer, but the Toronto Summer Reading Club program keeps them entertained and reading and it's FREE." — from the blog *Another Day, Another*

Thought... or Two, by a library customer who works from home and raises a young family

Word Out teen summer reading continued to evolve in its third year, with 1,744 participants registering online and over 22,000 web site visits, more than double the visits in 2009. The program offers teens an opportunity to interact with other readers and with teen services staff in online discussions. All branches of Toronto Public Library participated this year, with programs in many parts of the city, including the opportunity to "read down" any fines they might have on their library card, thereby encouraging teens to return to the library who might have been staying away because of fines they could not pay.

AUGUST

BOOK BASH! Canadian Children's Literature Festival

Thanks to an endowment fund honouring retired president of Scholastic Canada Lawrence Muller, Book Bash, a festival to celebrate the magic of Canadian literature for children brought children, their families, teachers and all those who delight in creative endeavours to North York Central Library in August. The celebration featured Eric Walters, Kenneth Oppel, Barbara Reid, Sarah Ellis, Itah Sadu and other Canadian luminaries in the world of children's literature.

"I love Toronto Public Library's energy and vision, and I am sure that we will see wonderful things happening in the years ahead." — retired president of Scholastic Canada Lawrence Muller

SEPTEMBER

Library launches powerful user-friendly new website

After extensive beta testing, the Toronto Public Library's new website was fully launched, bringing a more powerful and easier to use interface to the Library's digital assets. Users helped tweak the beta version, providing hundreds of comments and suggestions between March and August.

"The search update is GREAT! Much needed! I can tab out on books that I'm interested in rather than having to deal with one at a time. The advanced search function is great for searching library to library. This is a fantastic update and makes searching for books much better." — Dave

"OMG!!! This is sooooo much better... I LOVE IT.... Good Job, guys!!! Amazing... the page looks so easy to browse through... easy to find 'location and hours'... easy to find 'your account'... easy to find 'sign in'... It's JUST AMAZING... LOVE IT!!! Thanks." — Shirin

OCTOBER

Riverdale turns 100

When Riverdale Branch reopened (after a brief closure for renovations) to celebrate it's 100th birthday, Maggie Fung and her children, who generally use the library once a week, were pleased to see the library back open to the public.

"I think reading is important for starters, and the library has just such a welcoming environment and it is a great place for the kids to grow up. There is just so much more to a library than books. There are programs, seminars and other activities for anyone who comes here. It is extremely important for the library to be here because it brings the community together. You just don't see kids here, you see people of all ages here."

— Maggie Fung quoted in *Riverdale-East York Town Crier*

NOVEMBER

Human Library premieres in Toronto

More than 200 Torontonians took advantage of the opportunity to check out a human book from Toronto Public Library's unique collection during its first Human Library event on November 6.

"I signed out my very own human book at the Bloor/Gladstone Branch. Brandon Hibbs... is a 12th grade student living with cerebral palsy. Other than the obvious limitations of movement, he lives a life much like any 12th grader of this generation. For Brandon, the program provided an opportunity to tell stories that were meant to be shared. For me, it offered a chance to walk in someone else's shoes. It seems to me, that on a much bigger scale, a human library could really contribute to a harmonious and productive city as diverse as Toronto. I think we'd find that we're not really that different, after all... Brandon and I found common ground as citizens of a city we both love." — Dayna Winter for **blogto.com**

DECEMBER

Cedarbrae Branch reopens

The beautifully renovated Cedarbrae Branch reopened on December 6, showcasing a redesign that has created an accessible, welcoming environment with improved customer service and more access to technology and collections. Renovated branches typically see a significant increase in usage after reopening to the community and Cedarbrae is shaping up to be a strong example of this, with more than a thousand visiting the branch during its first few hours after reopening.

"The library looks amazing, inside and out. I loved the new children's section [KidsStop], the new teen's section, the fact that there's more study rooms than the previous library and basically just about everything. It's great to know there's self check outs which will just make taking books out a lot easier. It was well worth the wait!" — library customer Rubina Patel

Branch open hours increase

As the year wound to a close, everyone was pleased to note that throughout 2010, branch open hours had been increased by 120 hours per week at 15 branches across the city, including both Cedarbrae and Thorncliffe. Through a one time capital investment in self-service check out, the Library continued to maximize opportunities to operate as efficiently as possible to extend branch open hours. Longer hours make library services and important public spaces more accessible to the benefit of the entire community at a time when library use is rising and people are relying on the library more than ever for help in their daily lives and businesses.

"Anyone will tell you: Centennial Library is one of the first places people visit in the neighbourhood. And people keep coming back. The committed workers at Centennial have made the library an incredibly valuable source of community space, information, vibrant programming, warmth and, of course, a fantastic place for reading and learning. In survey after survey, when we ask what people appreciate about the neighbourhood we hear: the library. We also hear that community members would like the library to be open more often." Amy Katz, library customer and network facilitator, Bathurst-Finch Network

