

Toronto Public Library Board Meeting – March 23, 2009

Chair's Report

Love was in the air as more than 600 guests crowded the Fairmont Royal York this past February 12th for the **fourth annual Book Lover's Ball** in support of Toronto Public Library Foundation. The success of The Book Lover's Ball proved, once again, that Toronto loves its Library. More than 600 guests showed their support for the Foundation through silent auction and raffle ticket purchases and an energetic live auction. Foundation President Heather Rumball reports this year's Book Lover's Ball was the most successful in the event's four-year history and anticipates raising \$360,000 this year with \$50,000 more going towards Toronto Public Library Foundation than in 2008.

On February 19, at the beautiful new Art Gallery of Ontario, Library Board Chair Matthew Church joined Mayor David Miller and Chief Librarian Jane Pyper to announce the **expansion of the Library's Sun Life Financial Museum + Arts Pass (MAP) program** to all of our 99 branches, and the addition of two new program partners – Casa Loma and the Museum of Inuit Art. As of March 7, the MAP passes can be borrowed from any Toronto Public Library branch using a valid Library card. The pass provides full admission to a family of up to two adults and five children (admission restrictions vary by venue) to the Art Gallery of Ontario (AGO), the Gardiner Museum of Ceramics, the Bata Shoe Museum, Black Creek Pioneer Village, the Textile Museum of Canada, the Toronto Historic Museums and the Museum of Inuit Art. Thirty-two Library branches, including several in neighbourhoods in the downtown core, offer passes that provide access to the Royal Ontario Museum, the Ontario Science Centre and Casa Loma in addition to the venues listed above. The launch event generated some excellent, very positive media coverage including articles in *The Star*, *The Sun* and *The National Post*.

Freedom to Read Week was the last week of February and once again the Library partnered with PEN Canada, and this year also with HarperCollins Canada, to present the annual Freedom to Read Week celebration at Toronto Reference Library on February 27. The program, dubbed Closer to the Land, featured some of Canada's most outspoken champions for our natural environment. Three award-winning Canadian authors known for their positions on particular environmental issues, Taras Grescoe, Trevor Herriot and Ken McGoogan, were joined by Canadian singer-songwriter Sarah Harmer, also an outspoken advocate for better environmental custodianship. CBC Radio One's Matt Galloway hosted a lively and memorable discussion. The annual PEN Canada event, now in its twelfth year, gives Torontonians an opportunity to hear from distinct Canadian voices in support of freedom of expression.

March Break finished up just last week. There were programs at virtually every branch of the Library. More information, including program statistics, should be available for the April Board meeting.

The eh List author series kicked off at the beginning of March with Lee Gowan, award-winning author of *Confession*, appearing at S. Walter Stewart Branch on March 3. Stephen Leacock Medal for Humour author Bill Richardson appeared at Toronto

Reference Library on March 5 and at Richview Branch on March 6. The series continues into June with many more top Canadian authors, including former As It Happens host Mary Lou Finlay, Peter C. Newman, Miriam Toews and others. The series brings “eh list” Canadian authors to branches across the city, giving Torontonians the opportunity to meet Canada’s best writers and hear them read from and talk about their newest books. The full series line-up is available in branches, in What’s More and on the Library’s website at torontopubliclibrary.ca/ehlist.

The Shakespeare and Jonson Lecture Series, which had its start last year as the Shakespeare Lecture Series, is underway again this year, with programs about Shakespeare’s *Macbeth* and *Julius Caesar* having taken place at Toronto Reference Library in the first few weeks of March. The series continues tomorrow night with a lecture about Shakespeare’s *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, and winds up with a talk on Ben Jonson’s *Bartholomew Fair* at the end of March. The lectures are presented in partnership with the Stratford Shakespeare Festival.

Keep Toronto Reading was moved from February to April this year. Once again, the program is an ambitious mix of events for all ages, mixing literature with wine, food and fun at branches all over the city. Incorporated into the month-long celebration of the book in all its forms are:

- Lit City, which celebrates the City of Toronto’s 175th anniversary and features writers, actors and artists inspired by the city and its stories;
- Books, Food and Wine, including our very popular Lit Lunches and wine-tasting programs;
- Books, Art and Fashion, which include an anime costume party and some other programming geared to youth;
- Keep Toronto Reading for Kids, this year featuring Kids’ CBC host Patty Sullivan.

Also part of Keep Toronto Reading is the second annual **One Book** program, this year featuring author Glen Downie’s Toronto Book Award winning volume of poetry, *Loyalty Management*. Designed to foster community building, the One Book initiative this year includes a poetry slam, a pub crawl, an art bar poetry series, and discussions with Glen Downie, both in person and online.

For its annual “**Toonies for TPL**” fundraising initiative as part of Keep Toronto Reading, this year the Foundation has added a new twist: for their donation of a toonie, patrons will be able to “Adopt a Word to Create a Story” written especially for this purpose by Margaret Atwood. Branches will compete to see who can “reveal” the full story first; the story will also be revealed later in April on the Foundation’s website. A contest for children to illustrate Ms. Atwood’s story will also take place.

More details about programs this spring, including Keep Toronto Reading and One Book, are available in the spring issue of *What’s More*, which is available in Library branches. More than 250,000 copies of *What’s More* were distributed for free by the *Toronto Star*, to all their Toronto subscribers and via a number of newsstands in Toronto and the GTA, on March 7.

As part of our ongoing branch revitalization program, **Jane/Sheppard Branch** closed for relocation at the end of January. The new branch, which will open to the public on April 2, about a half kilometre from the previous location, will be double the size of the old branch, at 7,000 square feet. Attractive outdoor landscaping and a new outdoor reading garden, a new large reading lounge with comfortable seating, an open and attractive children's section, a new teen zone, a room for quiet study and Library programs are some of the features of the relocated branch. Electronic resources include nine computers with high speed Internet access, a special preschooler friendly computer, new wireless Internet access, both throughout the Library and in the outdoor reading garden and a new in-branch laptop loaning service.

The City of Toronto will again this year be a partner city for **Earth Hour**, on March 28 at 8:30 p.m., and the Library is participating.

In February, the Foundation worked with The Cookbook Store, across the street from Toronto Reference Library, and with HarperCollins publishers, to bring infamous **celebrity chef Gordon Ramsay**, of TV's *Hell's Kitchen* fame, to the Toronto Reference Library. As well as drawing a capacity crowd of 450 people, a portion of the proceeds in the amount of \$1,000 was donated to the Foundation by the partner organizations.