

Branches

The very popular **annual tour of recently renovated Toronto Public Library branches** was offered again this year in conjunction with the **Ontario Library Association Super Conference** at the Metro Toronto Convention Centre. As in previous years, the tour offered OLA delegates an opportunity to take a look at a broad range of recent renovations. The tour was at capacity again this year, with 56 delegates on each of two buses, for a total of 112 participants. Along with many delegates from smaller library systems around Ontario, there were a couple from further afield, including visitors from Victoria, Regina and Halifax. As in previous years, delegates have emailed us after the conference, saying how much they enjoyed the tour, and many come back each year to do the tour.

Awards

Toronto Public Library was presented with a number of **awards at the Ontario Library Association Super Conference**, February 24 – 27, in Toronto. The Make Some Noise initiative, which promotes the Library's local music collection by putting rock concerts and local music workshops in Library branches, won the **OLA Media and Communications Award**. The award recognizes communications initiatives that garner positive media coverage that successfully challenges stereotypes about libraries and librarians. The Make Some Noise campaign garnered widespread attention from the media, in everything from specialty music blogs to more mainstream outlets like torontoist.com and the *Toronto Star*. **OLA Library Building Awards**, created to encourage excellence in the architectural design and planning of libraries in Ontario, went to four Toronto Public Library branches:

- Dufferin/St. Clair Branch, Makrimichalos Cugini Architects;
- Jane/Sheppard Branch, Cannon Design;
- Bloor/Gladstone Branch, rounthwaite dick & hadley architects inc. in association with Shoalts and Zaback Architects Ltd. and E.R.A. Architects Inc.;
- S. Walter Stewart branch, Philip H. Carter, Architect & Ellen Vera, Architect - in joint venture.

Capital projects

Thorncliffe will be reopening in April after an extensive, two-year renovation that sees the branch doubling in size from five to ten thousand square feet. Other features of the renovation include:

- a new community room for meetings, programs and quiet study;
- a *KidsStop* interactive centre designed to develop pre-literacy skills in children;
- a new teen zone;
- a new adult reading lounge;
- express check out.

Web

In the first week of March, **public beta testing was broadened for the new Library website** [<http://beta.torontopubliclibrary.ca>]. In order to monitor website performance, beta promotion was rolled out slowly, initially making it visible to just 25 percent of catalogue visitors. After about a week, the new site was promoted to all users through the catalogue and from the Library's homepage. Beta testing was also promoted through TPL's Facebook and Twitter feeds, with the news being instantly spread by many Twitter users, including Mayor David Miller, Torontoist, other library organizations, and TPL customers. TPL's web team blog continues to serve as the official feedback channel for the public during the beta testing period. Great feedback and suggestions have already been received, with many customers liking the new search experience and visual design. In anticipation of the new website's full launch this spring, website training will be offered to all staff members during April and May.

A new Ontario History Quest, the award-winning learning resource designed for both teachers and students in Grade 7, 8, 10 and 12 history, is now better at supporting curricula requirements through classroom-ready teaching activities and digitized primary sources. Some of the new and improved features of Ontario History Quest include:

- a new user interface;
- updates to reflect the latest Ontario curricula;
- an additional Grade 7 module covering 1780s-1820;
- more than 1,200 new images;
- two new interactive learning features – The Loyalist Adventure Online and Curator's Showcase;
- a new discussion forum for teachers;
- a new French website with two Grade 7 modules and The Loyalist Adventure Online in French.

Library use stats

In the wake of last year's record-breaking circulation statistics, the Library is on its way to another very busy year, with **circulation up in the first two months** by 4.5 percent, with over five million items circulated throughout January and February.

Programs

Thank you to Okeima Lawrence who attended the Design-a-Bookmark Contest event on February 24th. Okeima welcomed the audience of approximately 100 people and presented prizes to the 16 contest winners.

The Keep Toronto Reading Festival 2010 was kicked off on March 5 at the Toronto Reference Library as Mayor David Miller and City Librarian Jane Pyper introduced this year's theme, Sharing the Books You Love, and launched a unique "viral" book-sharing campaign designed to encourage Torontonians to share the books they love. As part of the launch of the festival, the Library will release 99 specially created journals from its

branches to roam the city during Keep Toronto Reading month in April. Torontonians are also being invited to share the books they love by:

- filling out bookmarks that have space on the back to write mini-reviews, returning them to Library staff, who will then slip them into others books, so readers can be surprised by someone else's thoughts on a book they love;
- posting online book reviews on Facebook, Twitter, or by recording and posting a 30-second book review on YouTube, which will be played on the TPL YouTube channel and might also appear on our KTR website.

The kick-off also featured a preview of the over 80 free programs planned for the Festival, and launched this year's One Book community read, Austin Clarke's *More*. Clarke was on hand for the launch, as was last year's One Book author, Glen Downey. Also at the launch was TVO Kids Big Back Yard host Giselle, who will be visiting branches in April as part of KTR's Kids stream of events. Keep Toronto Reading details are online at keptorontoreading.ca. KTR will also be promoted throughout the city in subway, print and online ads; through media and blog coverage; and on Facebook and Twitter. KTR will also be promoted through a special KTR guide and in *What's More*, which will be distributed as inserts in the *Toronto Star*, and *The Globe and Mail*, respectively.

Thousands of kids participated as **March Break** (March 13 to March 20) saw us feature some of the GTA's top children's teen performers, as well as a wide variety of arts and crafts programs and entertainment at almost all Toronto Public Library branches. Featured programs ranged from magic shows, to musical performances to science fun.

Toronto Public Library Foundation

Foundation fundraising initiatives during Keep Toronto Reading will include:

- Toonies for TPL, with donations of \$2 or more being collected both in branches and online for the entire month of April
- Buy a Book in the Subway will see the Friends of TPL selling used books for \$1 and new books for \$5 on Monday, April 12 and 26 at Yonge-Bloor Station and on Monday, April 19 at Finch Station from noon to 6 p.m.