

Website

The new **Toronto Public Library website** continues to be available in its beta version with around 7,000 visits a day. Almost 150,000 people have visited the site. Response has been very positive and the customers have posted over 200 customer comments and suggestions. Staff are busy making adjustments and fine tuning in preparation for the site to launch officially this month. The new site brings Library customers a new easier-to-use interface, and a powerful search engine that not only makes it easier to find the titles of books, movies, music and more in the Library's catalogue of over 11 million items, but also helps find information about programs and events, branch hours and locations, as well as Library blogs and related websites.

Partnerships

The ***Toronto Star* short story contest**, which was, this year for the first time, presented in partnership with Toronto Public Library, wound up with a celebration for the winners on April 28 in the Appel Salon at the Toronto Reference Library. The contest drew 1,800 entries, a record number, and the top three prize winners were chosen by a jury made up of Library Board chair Matthew Church, City Librarian Jane Pyper, short story writer Elyse Friedman, and *Star* writers Richard Ouzounian and Geoff Pevere. All winners received cash prizes, and first place winner, Zach Leger, was also awarded free tuition to the Humber School for Writers Correspondence Program. All three top stories will be published by the *Toronto Star*.

The **Toronto Comic Arts Festival**, presented by Toronto Public Library at Toronto Reference Library, was held the weekend of May 8 and 9, drawing comic artists from all over the world, and thousands of comic fans from across the city and beyond. A special pre-festival event at North York Central Library on April 26, featuring Jeffrey Brown, one of the most celebrated autobiographical cartoonists of the past 10 years, was part of KTR's Graphically Speaking series of events.

Capital Projects

The **reopening of Thorncliffe Branch** was an unqualified success, with 5,000 people coming through the doors on opening day, great media coverage, and dozens of enthusiastic comments from customers. Intrepid library blogger Catherine Raine was on hand for the opening, completing her quest to visit and blog about all 99 Toronto Public Library branches. Raine concluded her blog by saying, "May this blog be the wordiest thank you letter ever written to The Toronto Public Library."

Programs

Keep Toronto Reading wrapped up the last week of April, with record attendance at more than 80 events all across the city. The theme, “Share the books you love,” was embraced by Torontonians as they shared their favourite titles in YouTube videos – the Keepin’ It Real book club posted 30 videos in 30 days – and in our “Books We Love” wandering journals. Hunter’s Glen Elementary School chose to celebrate literacy day by filling in a special “Books we Love” journal provided to them by the Library, and by making YouTube videos which are up on the KTR website. At the beginning of the month, the Library also held its first Book Exchange in the Appel Salon, where readers swapped a book they loved for someone else’s treasured tome.

As part of the KTR celebrations, **this year's One Book, Austin Clarke's *More***, was celebrated across the city, with author readings, Caribbean cooking demonstrations, panel discussions and a contest that will give one lucky book club dinner with Austin Clarke at the TD Tower downtown. At the end of April, Austin Clarke spoke to 90 students who were reading his book at Monarch Park Collegiate, where he was treated to original musical performances by the kids. *More* was also highlighted by *Spacing* magazine, which covered Austin Clarke’s Toronto in their blog.

Throughout the month of May, in celebration of **Asian Heritage Month**, Toronto Public Library offers opportunities to experience and explore Asian music, literature, art and dance through the many and varied programs offered free at our branches across the city. The Library is also highlighting its collections for and about the city’s diverse Asian communities, and invites all Torontonians to discover the richness of those collections, both in their original languages and in translation. The kick-off, called Pan Asian Culture and Writing, held at the Appel Salon on May 4, with welcoming remarks by Tina Edan, was well attended as CBC on air reporter Steven D'Souza hosted authors Judy Fong Bates, Phoebe Tsang and Rabindranath Maharaj.

For the first time, the **Make Some Noise** series, in support of the Library's local music collection, will feature a concert in the spring. Taking place on May 28 in the atrium of Toronto Reference Library, the concert will feature two popular Toronto indie bands and is bound to draw a big crowd. Following the concert, a June 2 workshop, also at Toronto Reference Library, will feature CBC Radio 3 host Vish Khanna giving advice to fledgling musicians and music journalists. Makes Some Noise continues to attract an audience of Torontonians who might not otherwise visit the Library, introducing them to Toronto Public Library's strategic goal of promoting culture. By promoting the city's thriving independent music scene, the Library makes itself relevant to people in their 20s and 30s. The Make Some Noise workshops encourage participation in the arts, especially for youth, and can help towards developing employment opportunities through education and awareness.

The fourth annual **June Callwood Lecture**, *A Canadian in the Making*, happens May 13 in The Appel Salon, featuring guest speaker Ratna Omidvar, president of Maytree and advocate for settlement and integration. The annual lecture provides a platform for the exploration and discussion of contemporary social justice issues and has been extremely successful over the years. This year's guest speaker, Ratna Omidvar, will describe her personal journey from exile to belonging, framed in three letters written to Canada. Each year, the lecture has been enlivened by a musical performance by a social activist – Molly Johnson, Jon Brooks and Lorraine Segato, at each of the past lectures, respectively. This year, special musical guest (and author) Dan Hill will bring his unique voice to the annual celebration of Callwood's life.

Out of the Shadows, Toronto Public Library's new mental health programming series, got off to an excellent start with a featured guest speaker, Rona Maynard, on April 8. Maynard spoke candidly about her personal struggles with depression and offered the audience hope. Judging from the capacity crowd, mental health is an issue that affects many people although few are willing to speak up. Out of the Shadows will continue with additional programming in May and June at selected locations.

Recognizing our Volunteers

A number of activities were arranged around **National Volunteer Week** to recognize and celebrate volunteers' important contributions to the Toronto Public Library. The Library hosted its first tutor conference on Saturday April 10 to provide tutors in the Adult Literacy and Leading to Reading programs with an opportunity for enhanced training and networking. One hundred and twenty tutors attended the all day conference which included a keynote address on diversity and intercultural communication as well as workshops hosted by experts in the literacy community. The annual volunteer reception included popular Canadian author Richard Scrimger reading from his newest book at Fairview Library Theatre. Library Board member Adam Chaleff-Freudenthaler joined about 100 youth volunteers on May 1 to celebrate and thank them for their contributions to the Library. With movies as the theme, celebrities from the popular *Degrassi* series attended, a workshop was hosted by the National Film Board, awards were presented, some prizes were given out and lots of food was consumed.