

Chair's Report
November 22, 2010

Partnerships

Toronto Public Library is offering **After School Newcomer Hubs** at three branches this fall with funding from Citizenship and Immigration Canada. The program has been running at Albert Campbell, Centennial and Sanderson branches since October. As well as providing newcomer children and teens in grades 7 to 10 with homework help, the program seeks to engage youth in programs and activities that will appeal to areas of their life other than school, and is as much about social integration and community building as it is about academic success. The program is enjoying a good measure of success, with parents responding that they appreciate having a program that allows their children to meet new friends in a safe and character-building environment. In addition to providing a welcoming space for newcomer children, the program adds a new volunteer opportunity at the library, as seniors, adults, post-secondary students and high school students who have been recommended by their teachers are trained to tutor children participating in the program.

The second annual **Library Settlement Partnership Day** took place on October 22, providing Toronto Public Library with an opportunity to highlight, celebrate and publicize the services provided for newcomers through the Library Settlement Partnerships (LSP) program. With nearly 10,000 newcomers served at 19 branches so far in 2010 there is no denying the success of the program, which is a partnership between the federal government, community agencies, and the library. This year, library branches with LSP services celebrated the day with community open houses, special speakers, refreshments and giveaways. The celebration drew in members of the community, government representatives and newcomers.

The first talk in a three-part series of **Opera Talks** took place in the Concourse at North York Central Library on September 16. This is a new partnership between North York Central Library and the Canadian Opera Company and was very well received by the enthusiastic audience of 155 people who came to see Katherine Semcesen, the Senior Manager, Education and Outreach at the Canadian Opera Company. Semcesen talked about the history of opera and about Verdi's Aida in particular. The event was videotaped and may appear on the Library's website as well as on the Canadian Opera Company website. The second talk on December 9 will be a discussion on the evolution of opera, titled Standard Operatic Repertoire vs. Modern Opera: The Magic Flute & Nixon in China.

Branches

Toronto Public Library staff stepped up to the plate to help out during the recent **displacement of residents at 200 Wellesley Street** after a fire in their building. St. James Town Branch stayed open additional hours for several weeks to serve the

residents, and staff from across the system were part of the City's Emergency Human Services response that helped provide assistance to displaced residents.

Programs

On November 6, Toronto Public Library hosted the **Human Library**, a pilot program that allowed library cardholders to borrow “human books”, individuals who were carefully selected because of their unique life experiences. Through positive, personal dialogue, the library hoped to encourage new ideas and ways of learning, to celebrate differences and to promote tolerance. First launched in Copenhagen in the early 1990s, Toronto’s first Human Library provided an opportunity for Torontonians to sign out human books and have brief, one-on-one conversations in a quiet space inside the library. The program made about 10 to 15 “human books” available simultaneously at each of five library branches across the city:

- Toronto Reference Library
- North York Central Library
- Bloor Gladstone Branch
- Lillian H. Smith Branch
- Malvern Branch

After numerous positive media stories on radio, television, in print and online, the program drew over 200 participants and resulted in much positive feedback. The working committee is currently evaluating the pilot program and will soon be making recommendations for future opportunities.

Attendance has been climbing for **recent library events in the Appel Salon**. In September, attendance at events went from 150 for author Jane Urquhart, to 160 for singer David Clayton-Thomas, to 230 for Globe and Mail columnist Doug Saunders, to 250 for a panel discussion celebrating Tarragon Theatre's 40th anniversary. In early November, 420 people attended Antonia Fraser's onstage conversation with Ian Brown, and Margaret Trudeau’s conversation with Susan Delacourt was standing-room only, with well over 500 people in attendance. Similar capacity audiences are anticipated: Salman Rushdie in conversation with Randy Boyagoda, Eleanor Wachtel in conversation with Michael Ondaatje, and Anita Shreve in conversation with Paula Todd.

Make Some Noise, the library’s concert and workshop series in support of the local music CD collection is winding up a successful fall season, with hundreds of people attending concerts at Parkdale, Bloor/Gladstone, York Woods and North York Central Library, two of them in partnership with the JUNO Awards and the Ontario Media Development Corporation. Still to come are two workshops designed to help people who are trying to break into the local music scene by putting them in contact with facilitators who are prominent in Toronto’s music community.

The 2010 issue of **Young Voices magazine** is now available in all library branches, featuring a new, exciting design, and another crop of excellent stories, poems and artwork by Toronto teens between the ages of 12 and 19. The magazine launch on October 14 was MCed by Elaisha Green, a veteran member of the Editorial Youth Advisory Group, the team of teen volunteers who work together to select the work that goes into the magazine

each year. The launch featured an opportunity for contributors to meet the *Young Voices* guest editors (professional Toronto writers, poets and an artist), talk together, and do readings of their pieces in the magazine. One young artist told the audience his piece in *Young Voices* helped get him into the Ontario College of Art and Design.

Following on the heels of the launch of *Young Voices* magazine was **the annual Young Voices Writers Conference** on October 16 in the newly renovated North York Central Library auditorium. As in previous years, the conference was fully subscribed with more than 160 teens participating in poetry, songwriting, blogging and other workshops, as well as an open mic and a writers table with current Toronto Public Library writer-in-residence Allan Stratton.

The **History Matters series** launched at the Yorkville Branch on September 14 with a talk about “Making the Scene in 1960s Yorkville” with historian, musician, pacifist, journalist and professor Stuart Henderson. Part of the library’s newest series “Thought Exchange: Programs for the Constantly Curious”, History Matters has brought consistently large and engaged audiences to programs at Beaches, Bendale, Parkdale, and Bloor/Gladstone branches over the past couple months.

Library Card Registration

A **registration campaign** encouraging Torontonians to sign up for their free library card got underway in April of this year, and has been a great success, with increases over last year of between five and ten percent per month (with the exception of September, a month when registration is traditionally slower). The objectives of the campaign are not only to increase the number of Torontonians who have a library card but also to increase their awareness and overall usage of library services and programs. The campaign has included postcards handed out at high profile library and community events, promotion in library publications, and advertising in transit shelters throughout the city (space that was provided free of charge from the City).

Online

In November, Toronto Public Library will launch the first issue of our *What's On at the Library* e-mail newsletter, which will provide the latest news, upcoming programs, and newest titles from the library. So far, over 1,500 customers have signed up to receive these updates. Our e-mail list is expected to grow quickly in the coming weeks, with the addition of an e-mail sign up form on TPL's website. We are also encouraging TPL's 7,000 Facebook fans and 4,000 Twitter followers to sign up for these updates as well.

Foundation

The Foundation’s Fall Fundraising Campaign is underway, and aims to raise \$130,000 by year’s end, with the committed support of loyal friends and new supporters. The campaign will be carried out by mail and phone appeals, with funds raised

supporting library funding priorities and empowering the library to further enhance people's lives.

This year was the inaugural year for **two new staff awards**, the Pauline Hinch Memorial Award for Staff Development, and the Peter Bassnett Award for Professional Development, which were announced at the Staff Recognition luncheon on November 17 by Foundation president Heather Rumball.

Capital projects

Cedarbrae Branch will be reopening in December after an extensive two-year renovation and expansion. The beautiful new facility features many exciting enhancements, a new layout with more meeting room space available to the community, a 22% increase in public access computers, our fourth KidsStop, express check out, and Toronto Public Library's first automated express check-in and sorter. Cedarbrae is also home to our second Poetry is Public is Poetry installation, an initiative of Toronto's Poet Laureate, and presented in partnership with the City's Culture and Transportation divisions.

A community consultation meeting held on November 3 provided an opportunity for the Mount Dennis community to provide input on the **upcoming renovation of the Mount Dennis Branch**, scheduled to begin in 2011. Senior library staff and architects from G. Bruce Stratton Architects were on hand to listen to ideas. Input for renovation plans can also be made via comment forms available on the library website and at the branch. Focus groups are also underway with various user groups such as youth, children, seniors and newcomers. The renovation will address state of good repair needs, make the facility greener, with enhanced landscaping, a revitalized main entrance, more prominent street presence, a complete redesign of interior spaces, improved programming and community meeting spaces, a revitalized reading lounge, a new teen zone, a new KidsStop, upgraded computer access including laptop lending, increased study space and express check in and check out.

One of Toronto's busiest library branches, **Bridlewood Branch, is relocating and expanding** to become nearly 50 percent bigger. A community open house was held at the Branch on November 19 to inform customers about the relocation plans and temporary closure for the move. The branch will remain in the Bridlewood Mall, but move to a different space that offers significant improvement in terms of location in the mall, height of ceilings, open flexible space and visibility. Expected to be completed by January 2010, the relocation is the first phase in a complete renovation of the new space, entirely funded by the mall owner and developers. The next phase of renovation is expected to commence in 2012.