

Chair's Report
April 12, 2010

Partnerships

Toronto Public Library has leveraged **ServiceOntario funding to provide a series of exciting and well-attended small business programs** at a number of branches over the past year. ServiceOntario provides the funding in support of the self-employed, small business and start-up entrepreneurs, the aboriginal community, youth and women entrepreneurs, immigrant and rural entrepreneurs, and persons with disabilities who start or run small businesses. Twenty-five branches partnered to provide 14 events that attracted over 700 people to workshops on topics ranging from starting a small business for newcomers in a number of neighbourhoods, to small business entrepreneurship for youth, to the launch of a new microcredit loan program in the Black Creek community.

The Toronto Zoo joined Toronto Public Library's Sun Life Financial Museum + Arts Pass program, with five passes to the zoo per week being offered at 32 branches beginning the weekend of March 27. The pass gives free admission to the Zoo for a family of up to two adults and two children. This significantly increases the already considerable access MAP provides to the city's greatest museums, art galleries and attractions. Toronto Zoo Board of Management Vice-Chair Joe Torzsok said, at the press conference to announce the new partnership, "Joining the MAP program helps us to improve accessibility in the communities where it matters the most." Since its inception in 2007, the MAP program has been tremendously popular. There has been great demand for passes across the city, with nearly 10,000 passes borrowed every month. Several program partners offer passes at all 99 Toronto Public Library branches. Sun Life Financial generously sponsors this program, continuing its long-standing commitment to making the arts accessible to all.

Capital Projects

The **reopening of the renovated and expanded Thorncliffe Branch** will take place on April 13. The two-year renovation sees the branch doubling in size from five to ten thousand square feet, and features Toronto Public Library's third KidsStop interactive literacy centre designed to develop pre-reading skills in children; a new community room for meetings, programs and quiet study; a new teen zone; a new adult reading lounge; and express checkout.

Programs

Keep Toronto Reading is well underway, with the One Book kickoff taking place on April 6 in the Appel Salon, with music by Toronto sax giant Mike Murley, dramatic readings of the novel by Trey Anthony and an onstage interview with Austin Clarke. Other events this week that explored and celebrated, *More*, this year's One Book pick, included a Caribbean home cookup at The Real Jerk restaurant, and a talk by Donna Bailey Nurse at Malvern Branch. Upcoming Keep Toronto Reading events include

Books, Food and Wine gatherings at a number of branches, author appearances, events for children with TVO Kids Big Backyard host Gisèle. Full event details are available in the KTR program guide and online at keptorontoreading.ca.

Sightings of the **Books We Love journals** are already surfacing in articles sent by various branches to be included in the online staff newsletter, *@tpl*. The *Toronto Star*, which is inviting anyone who finds any of the journals to send a note or photo to yourstory@thestar.ca, had already clocked a sighting in their March 29 edition, publishing a note from Helen Kennedy, who found one of the books at the Lawrence Heights Community Centre, where she works. And Torontonians continue to post video reviews of the books they love on YouTube, which are then featured on the Keep Toronto Reading website. Thanks to several of our board members who recorded their book review videos at last month's board meeting.

March Break saw well over 15,000 children attend hundreds of programs held at virtually every branch of Toronto Public Library.

The science fiction **Writer in Residence program at Merrill** has been extremely successful. Karl Schroeder had initially agreed to read 40 manuscripts and meet with their creators, but he graciously agreed to increase the number to 45 when the entries continued to climb. His three workshops are all oversubscribed with 20 registrants and 13 on the wait list for each.

The Shakespeare Lecture Series, presented in the Appel Salon, by the Stratford Festival in partnership with the Library, was a great success again this year, drawing over 700 people to the four lectures. The series was initiated three years ago when the Library was approached by U of T professor and Stratford Festival Board member Jane Freeman who was looking for a place to host lectures in Toronto in a non-academic setting open to the general public. Three beautiful costumes from a past production of *The Tempest* were on display during the series, just outside the Appel Salon.

Foundation

During Keep Toronto Reading month in April, customers visiting Library branches are being asked to **donate a toonie for Toronto Public Library**. The initiative is being promoted as an opportunity for customers to help support the Toronto Public Library Foundation's mission to keep Toronto reading, learning and working. Anyone donating \$2 will receive a button with the message, "I love books. I support Toronto Public Library." Customers are also being invited to donate online; by sharing the title of their favourite books when they donate, customers can get their names and the titles of their books posted on the Foundation website during April.