

Chair's Report April 2, 2012

Services

Ready for Reading Outreach

Results of our Ready for Reading Outreach activities in 2011 demonstrate that great strides have been made in reaching children and caregivers outside traditional venues. Our Ready for Reading Services Specialist (hired with funding from an anonymous donor) connected with thousands of children and caregivers through visits to workplace locations such as hotels, factories, the Toronto General Hospital and Woodbine Entertainment Group – reaching nearly 10,000 employees – and through visits with new parents and teen mothers at shelters and other community locations. Toronto Public Library also took part in “My Kids’s CBC Day”, which attracted 15,000 people over two days.

Partnerships

Business Inc

Business Inc, part of an important new partnership with the Toronto Business Development Centre (TBDC) and the City of Toronto’s Economic Development and Culture Division (EDCD) started in 2011, and continues to gain traction this spring. The Business Inc series helps new and early stage businesses develop skills necessary for long-term success through a nine-week series led by TBDC instructors and by TPL staff. The program is made possible though a donation received in 2011 from the Estate of Norman G. Hinton. The program and partnership helps the Library build awareness within the business sector about the extensive library resources available in-branch and online to support local business success.

Information sessions about the Business Inc program held at Northern District and Maria A. Shchuka branches during the week of March 5th attracted standing-room-only crowds at each location, including many women, newcomers and young people under the age of 35.

Library Settlement Partnerships & Afterschool Newcomer Hubs

Partnerships have assisted Toronto Public Library in achieving its goal to address the needs of specific audiences such as newcomers. In 2012, Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC) will continue to fund Library Settlement Partnerships (LSP) at 18 branch locations and After School Newcomer Hubs at two branches.

LSP, a three-way partnership between CIC, the Library and local community agencies, provides settlement workers in the 19 Library branches to assist newcomers with their immediate needs such as housing or employment. TPL provides the space for the workers and coordinates the administrative structure of the program with support from CIC.

The After School Newcomer Hubs provide academic support to newcomer youth in grades 7-10 by offering homework help in math, science, English, French and other subjects. CIC funds staff support for the Hubs.

The success of the two programs is borne out in their 2011 results, with the LSP program serving 25,609 newcomers through direct referrals to a variety of settlement services and by offering 982 programs across the city; there were also 13,771 visits by youth to the After School Newcomer Hubs in 2011.

Toronto Public Health and Living and Learning with Baby

The Library continues to partner with Toronto Public Health to deliver their Living and Learning with Baby program, which provides early childhood support to parents. In 2011, the Library participated in 56 sessions, reaching almost 1000 participants. This is up from 38 sessions in 2010.

Anniversary Celebrations

Downsview

On March 6, 1962, Downsview Branch opened its doors and became the third branch of the former North York Public Library. Originally 10,000 square feet, the new branch opened with a collection of 50,000 books. Fifty years later, the branch is double the size, has a collection of more than 84,000 items and the staff continue their ongoing commitment to make the branch a major community hub. To mark the 50th anniversary of the branch, on March 6, 2012, branch staff hosted an anniversary party for the community featuring a guest speaker from the North York Historical Society, and a special archival photo display.

100 Years of Children's Services

It was 100 years ago this year that Toronto Public Library hired Lillian H. Smith, “the first professionally trained children’s librarian in the British Empire.” By the time Miss Smith retired in 1952, Toronto children’s libraries were in 16 branches, 30 schools and two settlement houses, and Boys and Girls House stood as the first library in the British Empire devoted to children. Many things have changed since then, but the Library still focuses on the same important children’s services that Lillian advocated in her day: promoting the joy of reading, helping young students succeed at school, and providing children and their families with spaces in which to play, learn and thrive.

This spring, Toronto Public Library is celebrating 100 Years of Children’s Services with great books and exciting events. Highlights include special events during March Break, Keep Toronto Reading and Canadian Children’s Book Week, and a keepsake booklist, featuring “100 Books for 100 Years.”

Capital Projects

Toronto Reference Library

The Toronto Reference Library’s revitalization program continues to make the building and its extensive resources more accessible and user friendly to its thousands of

customers. In mid February five new subject departments were restructured with staff and collections in place; renovations to each floor will follow as the revitalization of the building continues. The new subject departments are:

- Humanities & Social Sciences (second floor)
- Business, Science & Technology (third floor)
- Languages & Literature (fourth floor)
- Arts (fifth floor)
- Special Collections (fifth floor eventually, but remaining on the fourth floor until the fifth floor renovation is complete)

Fairview

Plans for the renovation of Fairview branch are under way and were reviewed with customers at an open house held at the branch on March 7, 2012. The renovation will improve the library's street presence along Fairview Mall Drive, and improve access to the building through the creation of separate entrances to the library and theatre.

Washrooms in both the library and theatre will be expanded. An automated check-in area with a sorter will be added for the return of library materials to improve overall efficiency of operations. The project is expected to go to tender this spring, with construction beginning in late summer or early fall and wrapping up in September 2013.

Volunteer Programs

In 2011, Library volunteers continued to play an important role in supporting Toronto Public Library and in helping to enhance the programs and services that we deliver. Over 3,700 volunteers contributed a total of more than 100,000 hours to the organization, a 6% increase in the number of volunteers, and an 8% increase in hours. And once again, teens were an active and important part of our volunteer core, accounting for 75% of all volunteers.

In appreciation of the important contribution that our volunteers make, the Library holds annual volunteer appreciation events which are very well attended and much appreciated by our volunteers. In 2011 the Youth Volunteer Event saw more than 150 youth in attendance; the Adult Literacy Volunteer Party recognized the 120 volunteers in attendance; the National Volunteer Week Author Visit had 50 in attendance, and Tutor Conference saw almost 150 youth and adult volunteers attend.

2012 Provincial Budget

There is no specific mention of public libraries in the 2012 Ontario Budget. However, in the Addendum to the Budget, the Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sport, like most ministries, is planning to reduce spending over the next three years. We do not know at this time if there is any effect on the provincial household operating grant funding for public libraries (currently \$4,059,355), but there will likely be a reduction in the availability and amount of one-time grants available through our Ministry. More information will be provided as it is known.