

Chair's Report
September 21, 2009

Toronto Public Library's August 2009 circulation increased 10 percent compared to August 2008, continuing the year's upward trend with a year-to-date increase of 4.2 percent. Several factors contributed to the summer's increase, including the re-opening of two branches after renovation and the continuing demand for Library service related to the economic downtown.

As always, the focus of our summer programming has been children's literacy. This year, the TD Summer Reading Club, with its detective theme, Agent 009, was a big success, partly fuelled by parents looking for activities for their children during the City's labour disruption. Thousands of children read books, visited Library branches, participated in activities and had fun while at the same time maintaining literacy skills. Final statistics are forthcoming.

In addition, this summer was the second year Toronto Public Library ran a teen summer reading club. The club, dubbed Word Out!, kicked off early in July with a Battle of the Books, featuring local media celebrities teaming up with Toronto teens to fight for their favourite books. With expanded presence, both online and in-branch, the program continues to attract teens to participate in Library activities. There were in the neighbourhood of 4,000 posts to the comments pages on the Word Out! website.

We have a busy fall lined up, with great programs for everyone. The centre piece of our cultural programming this year is the opening of The Bram & Bluma Appel Salon at the Toronto Reference Library. The Appel Salon features three versatile natural light-filled spaces which can be used separately or together as one large space; two outdoor terraces and full catering kitchens; and state-of-the-art audio-visual technology to accommodate a wide range of uses. In addition to providing a venue for high-profile Library events, the space will be open to the public and for rental this fall.

Library events at the Appel Salon include The Writer's Room, hosted by award-winning author and journalist Ian Brown conducting a series of interviews with some of the world's greatest literary talent, including Douglas Coupland, who is coming September 23. Other Salon programs include Star Talks, modelled on the *New York Times'* popular Times Talks series; and The City Series, presented with the *Toronto Star* and featuring journalists moderating panels of diverse Torontonians who will explore issues important to the creative, economic and social health of our city.

In addition to putting author visits in branches in all quadrants of the city, this season's The List will have some of our top Canadian authors also visiting the new Appel Salon to read from their latest works.

Another annual event, Word on the Street, will feature our usual presence at Queen's Park Sunday, September 27.

Our tradition of participating in Nuit Blanche continues with an all-night, all-ages dance party at Toronto Reference Library called Dance Dance Evolution on October 3. Featuring instructors from Toronto's top dance studios, the program will include demonstrations of nearly a dozen different dance steps followed by audience participation.

For youth, the annual Make Some Noise concert at North York Central Library, in support of the growing local music CD collection at TPL, will feature two bands – both of them on the shortlist for the increasingly influential Polaris Music Prize. The funds used in previous years for two additional bands at the November concert, will be used for an exciting new Make Some Noise initiative that will put concerts in smaller libraries – right in the branches, among the books. The first of these concerts in the stacks is tentatively scheduled for Bloor/Gladstone in October. The second, on November 5, will feature Grand Analog at College/Shaw Branch. As in previous years, the Make Some Noise team is working on local music workshops that will be held in branches around the city this fall, including one at the newly expanded Kennedy/Eglinton Branch. The workshops allow youth interested in getting involved in the local music scene an opportunity to meet with experienced local music pros.

Another youth-friendly initiative, Young Voices, is gearing up for its busy time of the year. The 2009 edition of *Young Voices* magazine will be launched on October 15, with a party for the magazine's contributors at North York Central Library. Two days later, on Saturday, October 17, the always fully-subscribed Young Voices Writers Conference will take over the second floor meeting room area of North York Central.

On the capital projects front, the summer was busy and successful, with the long-awaited opening of the beautifully renovated and expanded Bloor/Gladstone Branch. Even in the rain, people queued up to get into their sorely missed local Library branch, with over 3,600 people visiting on opening day.

Although Kennedy/Eglinton opened in June, the official launch of the new ProTech media centre was held at the end of July, with the mayor coming out to officially open the innovative media lab for youth, in a part of the city in great need of youth-friendly resources. The new Kennedy/Eglinton Branch is proving to be a much-appreciated part of the neighbourhood, not just by youth, but by everyone.

Both the ProTech launch and the opening of Bloor/Gladstone garnered a great deal of media interest, including coverage in all of Toronto's major and community papers, and much online interest.

As with all our newly renovated branches, both Bloor/Gladstone and Kennedy/Eglinton now provide free wireless internet access. But WiFi isn't restricted to newly renovated branches as we've begun an aggressive campaign to make wireless internet available at all 99 of our branches, hopefully by the time Cedarbrae opens after renovations, next year.

Last fall, the Foundation's Absolutely Vital poster campaign helped spread the word about how vital Toronto's Library is, and it also featured some of the people who found the Library vital to their lives – kick-starting their careers, enabling them to become literate, "saving" and starting their lives anew. This year, four of these real-life stories have been made into 30-second Public Service Announcements and are now playing on City-TV (in English) and on OMNI TV (in English, Mandarin, Russian, Italian, Hindi, Tamil, French). The PSAs will be featured during the Foundation's fall fundraising campaign – where we'll be seeking community support through a direct mail campaign, a tele-fundraising campaign and an in-branch fundraising campaign. The PSAs can also be viewed on the Foundation's website tplfoundation.ca.

Also on the Foundation front, TD Bank Financial has extended their support of Kindergarten Outreach with a \$45,000 commitment for the 2009/10 school year program.

And a final note from the Foundation: James and Karen Griffith Sowell made a significant gift to the American Foundation for Toronto Public Library in support of Karen's grandmother, Grayce Margaret Griffith, who, with advanced age and visual impairment, had come to rely on services like Toronto Public Library's Home Library Service to bring her the joy of reading. This gift will support the creation of an endowment fund for our Home Library Service. The American Foundation for Toronto Public Library, established in 2005, promotes and supports Toronto Public Library and its collections, programs, services as well as outreach activities within the U.S.

In the collections department, eBooks are big news, with a couple of recent events paying tribute to the important role of the Library in providing access to electronic resources. City Librarian Jane Pyper was invited to be part of Sony Canada's launch of their new eBook readers at the end of August at the ROM. Jane spoke about the Library's extensive downloadable collections and emphasized the Library's support of new technologies that increase access to information and create more opportunities to experience the joy of reading. She highlighted the rapidly increasing popularity of our eBook collections, inviting all attendees to try out an eBook via the Library's website.

A few days later, our largest provider of eBooks, Overdrive, parked their 74-foot, high-tech digital bookmobile at Richview Branch as part of their cross-country tour promoting their services. Readers of all ages were invited to experience digital downloading through interactive demonstrations of Toronto Public Library's e-audiobook, eBook, e-music and e-video download services.

Finally, one of our branches celebrates their centenary this fall – Annette Street Branch, Toronto Public Library's second oldest branch, turns 100, and the branch celebrated the occasion on September 12 with a book launch of the Library's most recent updated local history publication, *The Most Attractive Resort in Town: Public Library Service in West Toronto Junction, 1888 – 2009*, live music, a magician and juggler, a kids' craft table, a birthday cake and more.

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