

Toronto Public Library Board Meeting – April 20, 2009

Chair's Report

This year's **Toronto Festival of Storytelling** kicked off at Toronto Reference Library on March 27, as an audience of about 150 enjoyed a taste of storytelling, Miami Dade Public Library style. Miami storytellers Lucrece Louisdhon-Louinis, T.J. Chang and Nora Dominguez were in Toronto as part of the Art of Storytelling 2009 International Exchange. Toronto Public Library storytellers Ken Setterington, Mariella Bertelli and Paula Smith-Nadin will be going to Miami from April 26 - May 3 to return the favour by telling stories TPL style.

When Dr. Jane Freeman, a member of the Board of Governors for the Stratford Shakespeare Festival, and Chair of its Education and Outreach Committee, had an idea for a series of lectures on Shakespeare in Toronto, she felt that the Toronto Reference Library, with its central location and renowned theatre collection, was the ideal spot. The first **Shakespeare Lecture Series at TRL** happened last year. This year, there were four lectures, one of them featuring a Ben Jonson play. Each lecture featured a York University or University of Toronto professor and each drew a crowd of 150 to 185. Stratford's production of Ben Jonson's *Bartholomew Fair* will be the first ever professional production of the play in Canada. At each of the lectures, a draw was held for a pair of tickets to this year's Stratford Festival. TPL provided resource lists of books and AV materials on each play as well as a display of stage designs, programs, photos, books and engravings drawn from the library's special collections. Audience favourites: a copy of *Macbeth* illustrated by Salvador Dali, and a 1631 copy of *Bartholomew Fair*, published in Jonson's lifetime.

Keep Toronto Reading and **Lit City** are both well underway, with the first KTR event happening April 1, and the One Book kickoff on April 2. Keep Toronto Reading programs are happening till the end of April at branches all over the city, for people of all ages. Lit City continues into May, with ten Toronto Public Library branches included in the annual Doors Open Toronto celebration, this year happening on May 23 and 24. A full report of Keep Toronto Reading events is forthcoming in the May Board Chair's remarks.

Margaret Atwood inspired **the Foundation's \$30,000 in-branch fundraising campaign** during Keep Toronto Reading month this April; Ms. Atwood wrote an original story about Toronto's Library for this purpose. Beginning on April 1, Library patrons at all 99 TPL branches have been invited to donate a toonie for TPL to "adopt" a word and create Ms. Atwood's original story. Word by word the story will be revealed over the month of April in TPL branches. The final story in its entirety will be unveiled on April 22, both in-branch and on the TPL Foundation's website tplfoundation.ca. A children's illustration contest will complement the initiative with winners posted on the Foundation's website as of April 22.

Keep Toronto Reading finishes at the end of April, but an array of free Library programming continues through the spring. May 1 is the date for this year's **June Callwood Lecture** at Toronto Reference Library. This year's guest speaker, Sally Armstrong, is an Amnesty International award winner, a member of the Order of Canada, a documentary filmmaker, a teacher, an author and a human rights activist, as well as a contributing editor at *Maclean's* magazine.

On May 7, the public launch of the **Foundation's \$10 million private sector capital campaign** in support of the revitalization of the Toronto Reference Library will take place at TRL, and all board members should have received an invitation by now. Questions can be addressed to Heather Rumball in the Foundation.

May is also **Asian Heritage Month** and, as usual, Toronto Public Library will celebrate with events at branches across the city. The kickoff event, dubbed "New Asian Writing," will take place May 7 at North York Central Library and will feature Asian-Canadian authors Kerri Sakamoto, Saleema Nawaz, Devyani Saltzman and Jaspreet Singh, along with a performance by contemporary Indian dance troupe Menaka Thakkar Dance Company.

Also in May, an exciting new partnership with the Toronto and international comic communities will see the annual **Toronto Comic Arts Festival** happening at Toronto Reference Library, on May 9 and 10. Canadian comic and graphic novel makers will mix with their peers from Germany, France, Japan and the United States for a weekend of exhibits, readings, presentations, workshops and signings.

Finally, May is also the month for the **14th annual Fantastic Pulps Show and Sale**, which takes place at the Merrill Collection, at Lillian H. Smith Branch. The Merrill is Canada's major collection of speculative fiction and one of the world's finest popular culture collections.

The eh List Author Series slows down a bit during Keep Toronto Reading in April, with only two readings, but it picks up the pace again in May and June, with readings in all quadrants of the city. The series kicked off in March with eight readings, drawing 450 people in total.

Award-winning Canadian writer Gail Bowen, best known for her 11-volume crime series featuring Joanne Kilbourn, is the **Toronto Public Library mystery writer-in-residence** for May and June. Bowen will be accepting manuscripts and meeting with mystery writers on an individual basis, and also do a reading, facilitate a number of workshops and participate in an online chat session through Book Buzz, the Library's online book club.

The relocated **Jane/Sheppard Branch** opened on April 2 to an enthusiastic crowd of library-goers. The new branch is part of the Library's ongoing branch revitalization program. Project architects Ken Fukushima and Cannon Design created a beautiful, inviting, user-friendly space that, at 7,000 square feet, is twice the size of the old

Jane/Sheppard Branch location. Patrons are able to take advantage of free wireless service within the library, as well as outside in the outdoor reading garden, which will be in full bloom this summer and will make a wonderful place to sit, read, work on a laptop, or meet up with friends. Thanks to a generous donation from Microsoft, Jane/Sheppard will be the first Toronto Public Library branch to loan laptops for use in the library. There are great spaces for children and teens, as well as an express check-out, making it even easier and more convenient to take out library materials.

Local youth in Rexdale participated in a **Forum Theatre Project to highlight the issues of sexual harassment** in their lives. The group gave five performances, including one performance at the Albion Branch that drew an audience of about 100 youth between the ages of 16 - 20. Funding for this project was secured by the North Etobicoke Revitalization Partnership through a Toronto Arts Council grant.

Special Collections has recently received an in-kind donation valued at just over one million dollars by the Canadian Cultural Property Review and Export Board. Dr. Alex D. Bain, professor at McMaster University, in Hamilton, and great grandson of James Bain Jr., Toronto Public Library's first chief librarian, is the most recent Bain family member to make a significant donation to Toronto Public Library, this time in the form of an assemblage of prints and maps. Acting on behalf of his father, James Davidson Bain, Dr. Bain and his siblings have donated cultural property that is truly of outstanding significance and national importance to Canada as a whole, to the various regions in Canada, and to the Toronto Public Library. The donation, consisting mainly of maps and prints, nicely complements the donations of James Bain Jr., made over a century ago, and is a fitting addition to the Library's special collections.