

Shelf life

Toronto Public Library News & Views

December 2007

Wireless Internet
access expanded

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St. James Town: Designed by MacLennan Jaunkalns Miller Architects and Zas Architects in Joint Venture, Toronto's 99th library branch, St. James Town, opened in October 2004. Less than a year after it opened, St. James Town Branch was the second busiest of the city's 99 library branches in terms of circulation per hour.

Toronto's answer to the piazza

The library as an investment in public space

"When I came here, I didn't have many friends, but I can meet the people who are from my English school at this library. It's a place where I can meet friends."

— Hiroki Arayama in
Your Stories (see page 3)

THE PEOPLE OF Toronto use their library for a variety of purposes: as a source of pleasure; as a place to learn; as a place to meet new friends; and some people come just because they love libraries and what they stand for. There are almost as many reasons for using the library as there are people who use it.

Every week more than 329,000 people visit Toronto Public Library's 99 branches. In order to maintain its strength as a public space, the

library strives to remain relevant and innovative, anticipating and responding to demographic trends and the city's need for revitalized public space.

In the past five years, Toronto Public Library has completed ten major branch renovations and opened a new branch in St. James Town; and in the process sought, constantly, to find new and innovative ways to accommodate all people, with all their differences, in Toronto's many and diverse neighbourhoods.

"We place a strong emphasis on the quality of public space we create in and around each branch we renovate," according to City Librarian Josephine Bryant. "We continue to work with leading architectural firms to create

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Architecture awards

2007	2005
Ontario Library Association – Library Buildings Award Winner, St. James Town Branch	Toronto Architecture and Urban Design Award Honourable Mention, Building in Context, MacGregor Park Library Reconstruction
Ontario Association of Architects Winner, Design Excellence, Runnymede Branch	Toronto Architecture and Urban Design Award Honourable
2006	Mention, Building in Context, Wellesley Community Centre (Clients: City of Toronto and Toronto Public Library)
Design Exchange Awards presented by <i>The Globe & Mail</i> , Bronze Award, presented to Toronto Public Library for the Wellesley Community Centre and St. James Town Branch of the library	Better Buildings Partnership (BBP) Outstanding Achievement in Building Award, Lillian H. Smith Branch
Ontario Association of Architects, Architectural Excellence Honourable Mention for the project Wellesley Community Centre and TPL, St. James Town Branch	Toronto Architecture and Urban Design Award Buildings Award of Excellence, Eatonville Branch
2002	Ontario Association of Architects Awards Honourable Mention, Eatonville Branch

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Libraries

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libraries that will attract and interest people and contribute to our city in new and innovative ways. And we try to connect the library and its activities to the community around it – be that parkland, streetscape or mall.”

Library branches come in all shapes and sizes, from small — but often very busy — neighbourhood branches, to Toronto’s 17 larger district branches, to its two research and reference libraries.

“I like the fact that this library is so publicly accessible. I like the space. It’s what we’re missing in North America, which is the public meeting space, the piazza of Europe. And this library has that. In a coffee shop you have to buy a coffee, in a restaurant you have to pay for food, but sometimes you just want to meet people and then decide where to go, and this is the greatest place for that. While you’re waiting you have options, there are many different things to do — I think it’s beautiful. Also, I like the waterfall. It’s just a nice space.”

— Alee Aslani talking about Toronto Reference Library in *Your Stories* (see “You told us your stories” page 3)

17 renovated branches and one brand new

In addition to the dozen major capital projects completed in the last half decade, seven Toronto Public Library branches are scheduled to reopen throughout the city in the coming year, after either a major renovation or a relocation and expansion.

The Kennedy/Eglinton Branch, located in one of Toronto’s designated priority neighbourhoods, is



Jane/Dundas Branch: slated to reopen February 2008; Teeple Architects, Inc.; over 11,000 new books, CDs, DVDs and magazines; new teen zone; multipurpose bookable space for programs, meetings and quiet study

slated to undergo a major renovation in 2008, thanks to funding from the City of Toronto’s Partnership Opportunities Legacy Fund.

Cliffcrest Branch, expected to reopen in spring 2008, will stand as an example of the library’s ongoing efforts to manage its resources in a manner that provides maximum benefit to each of the neighbourhoods we serve. Library director Anne Bailey explains: “As well as the physical space, the service mandate at Cliffcrest will undergo a major renovation, as the branch becomes Toronto Public Library’s first ever browsing branch. Books, DVDs, CDs and other material at the branch will not be available for reserves. Everything on the shelves will be available exclusively to members of the community who visit the library in person.”

One of the many service enhancements that will be available at S. Walter Stewart when it reopens in the spring of 2008 is the library’s first KidsStop — a hands-on, interactive literacy centre. One of four to be opened in the next two years, the S. Walter Stewart KidsStop will feature a giant book, about a metre tall, which preschoolers and their parents or caregivers can read together, a table for tracing letters, a talking tube, a wall of spinning

nursery rhyme blocks, and kid-sized computers with games and activities designed to develop early literacy skills.

KidsStops are part of the library’s Ready for Ready initiative, a comprehensive set of programs, services and resources that support parents

and caregivers in helping build early literacy skills in children from birth to 5 years of age.

Like many renovated branches, Jane/Dundas, slated to reopen in February 2008, will feature a new self-serve checkout, a teen zone, comfortable reading areas, bookable meeting and program space and increased space for new books, CDs, DVDs and other material.

“We’re also renovating the virtual space at Jane/Dundas,” says Brigitte Richter, Divisional Support Manager, Branch Capital Projects. “Along with nearly 20 of our branches, the new Jane/Dundas will feature wireless Internet access.” (see **Wireless Internet access expanded**, page 4)

Other renovated branches



Woodside Square Branch: reopened April 2007; G. Bruce Stratton Architects; more than double the original space; new teen zone; new multi-purpose space for programs, meetings and quiet study.



When the Woodside Square Branch celebrated its official opening in April 2007, teens dropped in on their lunch hour to get a look at their new library.

slated to reopen in 2008 include Bloor/Gladstone, Dufferin/St. Clair and Jane/Sheppard.

"When a library branch reopens after a renovation," says Richter, "circulation of books and other circulating items invariably increases by 20 or 30 percent. An extreme and gratifying example of this came when Malvern Branch was rebuilt and circulation increased by almost 80 percent."

"The library was [once] a place of study and quiet contemplation. Now, of course, the library has become a community centre, a gathering place, an extension of the neighbourhood and something that belongs to everyone."

— *Toronto Star* architecture columnist Christopher Hume

Responding to the Community

"We want people to come in and feel relaxed," says Bryant. "We want them to see inside and out. We've learned that architecture is extremely important. Our buildings have to be functional, but they also have to be visionary and responsive to the community."

In order to be visionary within the limits of current fiscal restraint, the library looks constantly for opportunities to maximize the effectiveness of its capital project spending by partnering with other city departments and agencies when developing or redeveloping its public spaces.

For example, the library's newest location, St. James Town Branch, is part of a new multi-purpose complex in St. James Town that includes a recreation facility and a day care centre. And the recently launched Thorncliffe Branch capital project is part of a renovation and expansion initiative, in partnership with the city's Parks, Forestry and Recreation Division and its Children's Division, that will also include the expansion of a day care and of the Jenner Jean-Marie Community Centre, located within the same building as the library.

"The fully realized library functions as a gathering place, a clearinghouse for ideas, a centre for community activism and social integration as well as an example of architectural beauty."

— *Toronto Star* architecture columnist Christopher Hume

You told us your stories

THIS NOVEMBER, as part of Toronto Reference Library's 30th anniversary celebrations, Toronto Public Library published *Your Stories*, a collection of reminiscences about favourite library moments from Toronto Reference Library patrons. The book includes over 50 stories, from patrons of all ages and from all walks of life. Highlights include the jazz fan who met his hero at the library, the aspiring novelist who was first encouraged to write by one of the Reference Library's writers-in-residence, and the young mother who determined the perfect name for her baby in the library's fifth-floor language labs.

50 miles of ideas — and growing!



Toronto Reference Library revitalization: Moriyama & Teshima, the architects who designed Toronto Reference Library 30 years ago, are overseeing the current revitalization. The renovation will provide new and innovative spaces for the public exchange of ideas that positions Toronto Reference Library as a key provider of cultural activity in the city.

THE LARGEST PUBLIC library in Toronto (and, in fact, in Canada) is the Toronto Reference Library, which just celebrated its 30th year at its current location at Yonge and Bloor streets. Home to about 4.5 million items — about 50 miles of shelves that continue to inspire and inform over one million visitors each year — the reference library is in the midst of a long-term revitalization that will renew the entire building.

"The Toronto Reference Library is a fluid space, both visually and socially. The qualities Toronto likes to boast about are actually on display within the library — it's a complex, multi-use, multicultural environment filled with people from a variety of socio-economic categories: the chatter of Japanese students learning English; the homeless people using the library to stay cool or keep warm; the obsessive-compulsives who sift through rolls of microfilm each day, searching for something they will never find."

— Ryan Bigge, *Spacing* magazine, Fall 2007

"The Toronto Reference Library is one of Toronto's landmark architectural buildings and a beloved public space," says City Librarian Josephine Bryant. "The revitalization will create a space where learning will be easier, more rewarding and more interactive. It will also raise awareness of the unique and fascinating books and other items in Toronto Reference Library's special collections by showcasing them to the public."

"One of our goals," says architect Ajon Moriyama, "is to achieve an enhanced street presence on Yonge Street that is open and welcoming to the community. The revitalization will also increase capacity for major cultural events: lectures, readings, panel discussions, concerts, performances, conferences and more."

Wireless Internet access expanded

AFTER A SUCCESSFUL pilot to test wireless Internet access on the first floor of Toronto Reference Library, the service is being expanded. It will soon be available through the entire reference library building. As of the end of November, wireless is also offered at 18 other locations, thanks in large part to a grant provided by Citizenship and Immigration Canada, which is funding wireless at 17 Toronto Public Library locations that provide year-round settlement service. For a list of branches offering the service, check the [Services](#) link on the library website www.torontopubliclibrary.ca.



Calendar of Events

January 2008

Art Under Cover

January 19 – March 30, 2008
TD Gallery, Toronto Reference Library, 789 Yonge St.

Including books from Canada, Europe and the United States, this exhibition challenges our traditional perception of how books tell stories. Whether it is through imaginative design, alternative materials, or three dimensional forms, artist books alter the way in which we read, providing a fresh and pleasurable experience. Be engaged, amused and even puzzled by

this diverse collection from the special collections of Toronto Public Library.



A Brief History of the Quilt. Carol Schwartzott, Lilliput Press, 1996. Used with permission.

Raising a Reader: How to Help your Struggling Reader

Monday, Jan. 7, 7-8:30 p.m.,
Bridlewood Branch, Bridlewood Mall,
2900 Warden Ave.
Tuesday, Jan. 22, 7-8:30 p.m.,
Pape/Danforth Branch, 701 Pape Ave.
Saturday, Jan. 26, 1:30-3 p.m.,
Downsview Branch, 2793 Keele St.

Learn from the experts how to:

- choose reading materials that will interest your child
- find reading-support information at the library
- read effectively to your child
- use the computer during reading time with your child

Space is limited. Please pre-register at the children's desk in the library.

Read to Me: The Importance of Reading

Wednesday, Jan. 30, 4-6 p.m.,
Maria A. Shchuka Branch,
1745 Eglinton Ave. W.

This program is designed for parents who are not strong readers. Learn how to use wordless picture books and how to develop a love of reading with your family, even if reading isn't something you enjoy. No registration required.

Library Board Highlights

December 10, 2007

Materials Selection Policy revised to improve collection development

Toronto Public Library continues to refine its materials selection policy to make sure it is current, responsive and responsible. At its December 10 meeting, the board endorsed revisions to the selection policy that include clarification

of selection criteria that reflect collection department experience over the past few years. The full policy is available on the library's website.

Gifts-in-Kind donation policy to support library's valuable special collections

The new Donations of Gifts-in-Kind to Special Collections Policy was approved by the

board at its December 10 meeting. The policy recognizes that Special Collections differ substantially from the library's circulating collections. Many special collection books and other items are rare, fragile and valuable, and most increase in monetary value over time. The policy addresses these unique concerns, and reiterates the library's commitment

to accepting gifts-in-kind — books, manuscripts and other valuable artefacts that are essential to the development of Toronto Public Library's Special Collections.