

City Librarian's Report for April 2024

Below is my report for the April 2024 [Toronto Public Library \(TPL\) Board meeting](#). It summarizes key activities in support of the priorities outlined in our [strategic plan](#). This report covers items that are not part of the Board agenda package.

Opening up our public space

Grand opening of the Ethennonnhawahstihnen' Community Recreation Centre and Library



TPL Board Chair Alim Remtulla, City Librarian Vickery Bowles, Mayor Olivia Chow, City Councillor Shelley Carroll, Chief William Romain of the Huron-Wendat Nation, along with other Indigenous dignitaries, community representatives and guests.

On March 23, TPL and the City of Toronto celebrated the grand opening of the Ethennonnhawahstihnen' Community Recreation Centre and Library. Mayor Olivia Chow was joined by Councillor Shelley Carroll, Chief William Romain from the Huron-Wendat Nation, Elder Valarie King from the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation, Chief Sherri-Lyn Hill from the Six Nations of the Grand River, TPL Board Chair Alim Remtulla and other distinguished guests.

The name Ethennonnhawahstihnen' (pronounced Etta-nonna wasti-nuh), meaning "where they had a good, beautiful life" was a gift from the Huron-Wendat Nation to the City of Toronto. The community centre and library are located within 800 metres of a significant Huron-Wendat archaeological site, the Moatfield Ossuary

and village where findings show that Indigenous peoples lived long and healthy lives in relative peace.

The name was officially approved in 2022, making it the first City community recreation centre and library branch in Toronto to be named in collaboration with the Huron-Wendat Nation. The library branch has been open to the public since July 2023.

Etobicoke Civic Centre breaks ground for TPL's 101st branch



Mayor Olivia Chow, Councillor Anthony Perruzza, Councillor Vincent Crisanti and Deputy Mayor Amber Morley at the ground-breaking ceremony for Etobicoke Civic Centre.

On April 10, TPL reached a new milestone with the ground-breaking ceremony for Etobicoke Civic Centre (ECC), a development that will include TPL's 101st branch. Located at 3755 Bloor St. West, ECC will also have office towers, public health facilities and recreation spaces.

The ceremony was attended by Mayor Olivia Chow, Deputy Mayor Amber Morley, Councillor Stephen Holyday, Councillor Vincent Crisanti and Councillor Anthony Perruzza. Moe Hosseini-Ara, Director of Branch Operations and Customer Experience, and Jan Dawson, Area Manager responsible for the library, attended on behalf of TPL.

TPL's ECC branch will span approximately 27,000 square feet across two floors and will include a [Digital Innovation Hub](#), [Youth Hub](#) and [KidsStop](#). It will also have a dedicated program space and spaces for co-working, studying, relaxing and connecting with the community.

The Etobicoke Civic Centre marks the city's first civic centre development in five decades. The centre aims for sustainability, housing a district energy plant and aligning with Toronto's green initiatives. Stay tuned for updates on this transformative project!

March Break programs and activities for children



Children and their families attend Magic Mel's magic show during March Break at Albert Campbell District branch.

During March Break, TPL offered opportunities for children and families to make the most of their week with a variety of fun programs and activities at branches across the city.

In-person programs included Science Technology Engineering Art and Math (STEAM) workshops, magic shows and French language events. To extend our reach to families, TPL's Crowdcast channel presented three virtual programs throughout the week: Sharks in the City with Ripley's Aquarium, a magic show with WonderPhil and Les destinations françaises "spooky" avec Touralingo.

Fun online activities launched on [TPL Kids](#) at the start of the week, including a [new book emoji guessing game](#) and [updated digital puzzles](#) featuring some of this year's [Design-a-Bookmark Contest winners](#). TPL Kids received 12,614 visits throughout the week, successfully engaging many children during March Break.

Solar eclipse programs and activities



Ilana Macdonald from the Dunlap Institute leading a solar viewing program at Goldhawk branch.

Leading up to the solar eclipse on April 8, TPL hosted eclipse-related programs and distributed approximately 41,000 free eclipse glasses at branches across the city, in partnership with the University of Toronto's Dunlap Institute for Astronomy and Astrophysics.

Astronomers from the Dunlap Institute led 37 programs aimed at adults, helping customers understand the science behind eclipses and how to view them safely. Programs offered the opportunity to look at the surface of the sun through solar telescopes, create models of solar eclipses and construct pinhole solar viewers.

TPL staff also led a variety of programs leading up to and on the day of the eclipse, including eclipse themed movie screenings, workshops and crafts for children. Jane/Sheppard branch offered a button-making activity where customers created 237 commemorative eclipse buttons!

Customers of all ages were excited to receive free solar eclipse glasses and learn about the eclipse. Thank you to the Dunlap Institute for sharing their expertise and

providing eclipse glasses to help Torontonians safely witness the rare celestial event.

Albert Campbell District recognized for design excellence



The renovated Albert Campbell District branch. Photo credit: Doublespace photography.

The Ontario Association of Architects (OAA) [announced](#) Albert Campbell District branch as a winner of its 2024 Design Excellence Awards. Winning projects were carefully evaluated based on criteria including creativity, context, sustainability, good design/good business and legacy.

Albert Campbell District branch reopened in 2022 after a major renovation in collaboration with LGA Architectural Partners Ltd. The project involved renovating a 1971 brutalist building and repurposing back of house areas into new public space, expanding the available space for public use by approximately 8,000 square feet without a building addition.

The entrance of the branch features an Indigenous medicine garden and mural, and inside, there are expanded quiet study areas, flexible spaces for collaboration, reimagined spaces for kids and teens, and more.

Broadening Toronto's digital access and inclusion

March Break digital literacy workshops for teens with CryptoChicks



Teens learning how to create and develop functional apps at the Build Your Own Mobile App workshop held at Kennedy/Eglinton branch.

TPL, in partnership with [CryptoChicks](#), ran March Break programs for teens at Kennedy/Eglinton, Parkdale and Woodside Square branches. CryptoChicks, in collaboration with the Government of Canada through Information and Communications Technology Council ([ICTC](#)), offered two digital literacy workshops for teens ages 13 to 17: “Build Your Own Mobile App” and “Entrepreneurship Essentials and Graphic Design.”

Attendees enjoyed the program and were excited to customize and publish their apps. One teen commented, “The program was very informative and I think this program has helped me in many ways.”

These workshops support the ongoing programming initiative that resulted from the Youth-Focused Digital Literacy Programming pilot project, one of the successful submissions from the 2019 City Librarian’s Innovation Challenge.

Showcasing TPL's innovative programs at the Public Library Association Conference

Earlier this month, TPL staff presented innovative initiatives at the 2024 Public Library Association Conference in Columbus, Ohio. The conference highlighted themes such as digital equity, mentorship and fostering digital literacy in communities.

Fiona O'Connor, Senior Services Specialist of Digital Literacy Initiatives, presented "Activating AI Education and Algorithmic Literacy at Toronto Public Library." Fiona spoke about TPL programs and initiatives that build knowledge and skills for customers and staff in areas of emerging technologies such as artificial intelligence, digital privacy, safety and citizenship.

Nan Davies, Manager of Learning and Community Engagement, presented "Seniors Digital Literacy Community Librarians at Toronto Public Library," covering TPL's digital literacy initiatives for seniors in support of the City of Toronto's Seniors Strategy 2.0. Nan shared about TPL's community librarians who serve residents in seniors housing buildings through digital literacy classes and one-on-one assistance.

Over 600 attendees attended both presentations and TPL's AI programming was featured in the conference's [wrap-up newsletter](#).

Building pathways for workforce development

TPL at the Youth Job Fair



Librarian Surya Maraj at the Youth Job Fair held at Scarborough Civic Centre.

On March 14, staff from Scarborough Civic Centre branch and Youth Services participated in a Youth Job Fair at Scarborough Civic Centre, hosted by community youth outreach workers. Staff engaged with over 200 youth about job opportunities and resources at TPL.

Attendees were curious and amazed by the jobs and volunteer opportunities available, as well as the abundance of job and career resources offered. When asked how they felt about the day, several attendees expressed that they were initially intimidated but were happy to see TPL's presence at the event. One individual commented, "I go to my local library a lot. You're the first table I wanted to visit!"

Providing the vital ingredients for a democratic society

What's at stake when queer and trans stories are silenced

On March 26, a panel of experts came together at Toronto Reference Library to discuss how libraries, authors, educators and communities can work together to defend against the attacks on 2SLGBTQ+ materials.

The panel featured children's book author Dylan Glynn, TPL's Director of Collections and Membership Services Lisa Radha Vohra, Executive Director of The ArQuives Raegan Swanson, and TDSB's Shauna Thomas. They joined moderator James Turk, Director of the Centre for Free Expression, to discuss the intersections of intellectual freedom and 2SLGBTQ+ written works. They also spoke about how society can ensure queer and trans stories continue to thrive to protect the voices of marginalized people.

This event is part of TPL's [new programming series](#) that explores what's at stake when intellectual freedom is threatened. Over 40 guests attended the discussion and engaged in a lively Q&A with the panel. [Watch the discussion on YouTube](#).

Celebrating our volunteers



TPL volunteers featured on social media during National Volunteer Week. From left to right: Liren, Evita and Ramya.

National Volunteer Week, April 14 to 20, celebrates and recognizes volunteers for their incredible contributions to our communities. Volunteers are essential to the work we do at TPL. Last year, more than 1,470 volunteers contributed over 44,750 hours of service in support of library programs across the system. We also re-introduced our Seniors eConnect program, which pairs tech-savvy teen volunteers with seniors who are looking to learn new digital skills. Our volunteers continue to show their dedication and adaptability.

During National Volunteer Week, we highlighted a few of our long-serving volunteers in a social media campaign, including Liren, Evita and Ramya. Each of these volunteers have collectively supported TPL for over 20 years, by sharing their time, skills and creativity in support of programs like Adult Literacy and Leading to Reading.

Learn more about [Volunteering in the Library](#).

Reinstating tpl:map



On March 14, [tpl:map](#) was reinstated following a cyberattack, allowing customers to experience Toronto's arts and cultural attractions for free with their library card. Nearly 10,000 customers accessed the tpl:map site on the first day and made approximately 4,000 reservations to attractions across the city. We are thrilled to offer this popular service again.

Rare acquisition for the Arthur Conan Doyle Collection

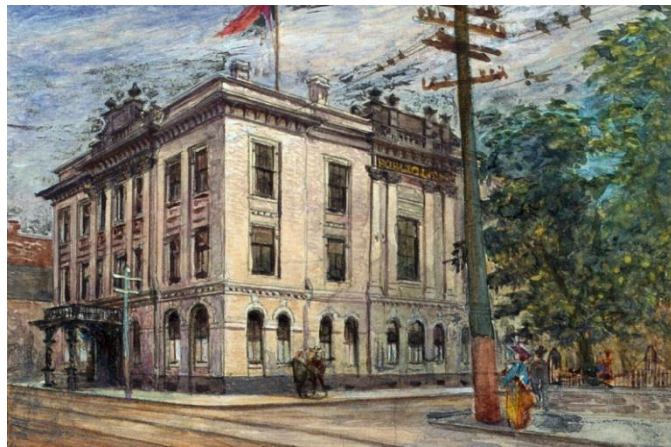


The first edition in book form of A Study in Scarlet by Arthur Conan Doyle.

TPL acquired a rare first edition in book form (second impression) of the 1888 novel [A Study in Scarlet](#), with significant contributions from the Friends of the Arthur Conan Doyle Collection. A Study in Scarlet is Conan Doyle's first Sherlock Holmes story which sees Holmes and Watson meeting and solving their first case together. This item is of particular interest as it is the only edition featuring six illustrations by the author's father, Charles Altamont Doyle.

Bound without original wrappers and advertisements, this item is well preserved and has an interesting history having once belonged to prominent Sherlockian Lord Donegall of the Holmes Society of London. This acquisition fills a long-standing gap as it is one of the only first editions TPL's Arthur Conan Doyle Collection has been missing.

Celebrating TPL's 140th anniversary



*Church Street location of Toronto Mechanics' Institute, the building that would become TPL's first branch.
Painting from 1904.*

March marked 140 years of library service for TPL, which opened its first branch on March 6, 1884. We celebrated the milestone with [a new blog post](#) on the birth of free libraries in Toronto — showcasing rare items from our vaults. One of these rarities was a set of newly-discovered petitions in support of a free library in the city. They're inked by nearly 2,000 men and women.

A video of the petitions and the blog post were shared on our online channels. The social media posts had more than 113,000 views and resonated with many of our customers. One customer commented, "This is a deeply powerful, beautiful and genuinely inspiring reminder that cities didn't magically obtain the progressive/urban/community-centered elements that so many now take for granted. It took work, sometimes across many lifetimes, to achieve infrastructure like this which benefits us all, for generations to come."

Investing in staff and an innovative service culture

Authentic Trans Allyship session with The 519

On March 27, TPL Pride Alliance organized a staff learning session in collaboration with The 519 to honour International Trans Day of Visibility. Held annually on March 31 since 2009, this day celebrates the lives and contributions of trans people and raises awareness about the discrimination and violence the community faces.

Staff learned about being informed, proactive and supportive allies for trans colleagues, friends, family members and customers. TPL Pride Alliance is an employee resource group that helps foster and support an inclusive environment for 2SLGBTQ+ staff. By promoting trans happiness and inclusivity through advocacy, staff can contribute to building stronger communities where everyone can thrive together.

Strategic planning with TPL staff



Staff gathered at a Strategic Plan Staff Consultation Forum held at Toronto Reference Library.

From February to March, Toronto Public Library hosted six Strategic Plan Staff Consultation Forums. The forums were used to gather ideas and input from library staff to help shape [TPL's Strategic Plan for 2025-2029](#).

Over 400 staff members across the organization attended the consultation forums, which were designed to be interactive and collaborative. Through fun activities and conversations with their colleagues, staff brainstormed new ideas and provided valuable input. The forums were also an opportunity to recognize the accomplishments of the current Strategic Plan and reflect on the successes and resilience of the past five years.

Staff Consultation Forums were part of the first phase of our Strategic Plan development. Additional opportunities for the public and staff to provide input will be available throughout the year.

United Way Ambassador of the Year Award



TPL staff at Metro Hall with Deputy City Manager and United Way Co-Patron Jag Sharma.

Earlier this year, a number of TPL staff received the City of Toronto Ambassador of the Year Award for the 2023 United Way Campaign. All of our Ambassadors worked extremely hard on last year's campaign, raising approximately \$98,000! Award recipients were recognized at a United Way celebration event held at Metro Hall. Their dedication and contributions to United Way Greater Toronto have made a tremendous impact on our community.

The 2023 Ambassadors celebrated were Angie Yuen, Mike Rego, Daisy Chia, Matthew Chan, Annie Ku, Vyktorya Pollard, Maria Russo, Catherine Wang, Debby Chan, Sheron Ramlingum, Kosmas Moutis, Karen Booth, Mary Cruz, and TPL's Treat-a-Gram reps—Silvia Fernandes, Rosanna Crupi, Mary DeToma, Sandra Piluso, Morgan Gariepy, Amber Burkholder, Shakira Rasul, Danielle Lum and Charanya Sivbalan.