

(a).

October 29, 2006

Memo to: Board of Directors, Toronto Public Library

From: Kate Wilson, Board Member

Re: Learning in Libraries: A National Call to Action
Urban Libraries Council Conference
New York City, October 20, 2006

I had the pleasure of being one of four TPL team members attending a one-day conference, organized by the Urban Libraries Council, of which TPL is one of two Canadian members. The event was funded by the Wallace Foundation, a private US foundation that supports institutions, in this case libraries, which shape individuals and communities. The Wallace Foundation funded the TPL delegates, as well.

My teammates were Elizabeth Glass, Manager, Planning and Development, Cheryl Skovronek, Chair, Children and Youth Services and Lisa Heggum, Youth Collections Librarian. Denise Campbell, Manager Community Development for the City joined the TPL team as well.

We had a panel from the New York Libraries group - a few of my notes:

- Telling of the success of the “Out of School Time” program Mayor Bloomberg has taken personal interest in – and runs out of his office. His management style is “if you can’t measure it, you can’t manage it” so he’s taking a close look at the statistics of how kids are doing over the long run – and intends to have programs in place not only after school but throughout the summers so there is no back sliding academically. Not a needs-based program – every library has the same program, every library is entitled to and expected to have an active dedicated space for student activity.
- Telling of the program in Brooklyn, Queens and (didn’t catch it) where they have a K to 12 homework program where they work with the school board to have the curriculum recourse materials organized and available for the kids on line, they help kids navigate sites to get to the material, they have “dial a teacher” to chat on line with a teacher, They have text books on line for kids who have forgotten their books at school, etc etc.

(pause for reflection ...)

Listen folks ...those were notes from part of page one – and I’ve got 12 more pages of notes. Basically the makings of a small book.

So I would like to end this report now, while I'm ahead, by saying that I would be happy to talk to any one of you about what I heard. I have suggested to Elizabeth and Cheryl that they put a presentation together around some of the programs some US libraries are doing and request the opportunity to show it to the Board. I think you would find it interesting.

I learned a lot at this conference. Including how many things TPL is already doing in the field of after school support and community outreach. When the team met after each session to debrief and see what we could take home and apply – while there certainly were exciting ideas and things to learn from – often there was some TPL initiative already in progress, or at least on the back burner, pending budget availability. But we could be doing more outreach to young people, and the challenge will be how to use the resources we have in a way that will engage the youth who need it most. Partnering with the City and the Not for Profit groups takes work, but will lead to the client group that can most benefit from all our libraries have to offer.

One of the speakers mentioned the important connection with youth when he was talking about budgets and shortfalls and reminded everybody to emphasize the critical role libraries play in serving and supporting this segment of the population. We need to remind our funders about what the library does for young people and what value it has in their lives.

On a lighter note, Elizabeth and I arrived so early in NYC on Thursday that we were able to visit the New York Public Library and then go for a tour of Central Park in a carriage. And then we looked at purses. All in all, a wonderful two days.

Thank you for the opportunity to represent TPL

Respectfully submitted

Kate Wilson