

Chair's Report
January 20, 2014

Spaces

Fairview Branch reopened on January 10 at 1 pm to an enthusiastic crowd with a greeting line, ribbon cutting and a celebratory open house with entertainment provided by the George Vanier School Band, two local musicians, a strolling magician, and a mounted police officer and fire engine outside. The branch has been redesigned to create an accessible, welcoming environment with improved customer service and more access to technology and collections. The Fairview Branch Theatre reopened earlier in September 2013. Designed by Makrimichalos Cugini Architects, the renovated Fairview Branch features many exciting enhancements including:

- a redesign of the existing 14,805 square feet on the first and second floors and expansion of the entrance areas by 2,672 square feet, improved lounge and casual reading spaces, a new teen zone, new study space, and a new KidsStop interactive early literacy centre, to open later in Spring 2014;
- express check-out and check-in to help the library provide more efficient and personalized customer service;
- improved programming and community meeting space, including an additional program and community meeting room;
- dynamic and prominent street presence, revitalized main entrance with high visibility into the library, and enhanced exterior landscaping;
- new theatre entrance and lobby, additional washrooms and new hearing assist system.

Further enhancements are planned for the second and third floors.

Toronto Public Library's first Digital Innovation Hub will open at Toronto Reference Library in early 2014, followed soon after by a second hub located at the new Fort York Branch. The Digital Innovation Hubs are new digital learning, collaboration and creation spaces for users of all ages, backgrounds and skill levels that will cultivate people's knowledge about new and emerging technologies. The Hubs support Toronto Public Library's strategic objective of providing spaces and technology that stimulate and support creativity, encourage collaboration and spark experimentation for our city's creators, innovators and entrepreneurs. With a Toronto Public Library card, customers will get access to current and emerging technologies that will allow them to create a broad range of digital media. The Digital Innovation Hub at the Reference Library will be launched to the media and public on Tuesday February 4 at 10 am. The event will feature brief remarks from the City Librarian, a special announcement about an important new innovation partnership, and demos in the atrium and the Hub, showcasing all the exciting new technology available. A presentation and tour of the Digital Innovation Hub at the Reference Library will be provided for Board members at the February 10th Board meeting.

Partnerships, Outreach and other community initiatives

In celebration of Weston Branch's centenary, TPL has partnered with the Weston Historical Society to secure a grant to film local history interviews about the library and the role it has played in the development of its community. The resulting Weston Centenary Project, funded by the federally administered New Horizons Seniors Program, pairs youth from the community with seniors to conduct and record local history interviews on video. In addition to the interviews, a historical walking tour, lectures and training sessions will be offered and relevant documents and ephemera will be digitized. The edited interviews and digitized documents will be posted to an interactive website by the end of March 2014 when the grant-funded project formally concludes. The website will be officially launched as part of the Weston Library centenary celebrations later in 2014.

A group of students from Western University's Ivey business school has joined forces with Toronto Public Library to help with the development of the **Digital Innovation Hubs** that the Library will be launching in 2014. As part of their fourth-year curriculum assignment, students work with businesses or organizations to assist with a strategic initiative. The group of students that approached the Library, specifically to work on the Digital Innovation Hub, were drawn to the initiative because they felt it provided the community with an opportunity to learn about new technology in an innovative manner. The students are using the development and implementation of the Digital Innovation Hubs at Toronto Reference Library and Fort York as case studies. Their research will result in an analysis of the Library's implementation strategy, goals and success in order to make recommendations on how the Library can expand the Digital Innovation Hub strategy.

In another technology-related partnership, Toronto Public Library recently participated as a community partner in the **IBM Community Hackathon**. The Hackathon is a proof-of-concept software development competition, where IBM developers have two days to develop a concept solution and prototypes for a real-world challenge using emerging technology. This year's competition focused on app development, and the Library requested that IBM programmers develop a mobile app that would allow customers to reserve study rooms and equipment that will be available in the soon-to-be-opened Digital Innovation Hub at Toronto Reference Library. Two teams competed to develop the app and in the end the IBMers were successful. The app will be given to the Library for further investigation and development.

Toronto Public Library is partnering with the Toronto Arts Council for an **artist in residence pilot program** called Artists in the Library. Residencies will be held at five branches around the city and will provide opportunities for artists to engage with public spaces and communities outside the core art scene. Downsview, Mimico Centennial, Fairview, Cedarbrae and Oakwood branches will each offer the program for a three-to-four-month period at the end of 2014, with resident artists delivering free programs such as creative workshops and community-engaged activities or events. A jury, including a representative from the Library, is currently considering proposals from artists in the five disciplines supported by the Toronto Arts Council: visual arts/media; theatre; dance; music; and literary.

Programs

The Appel Salon wrapped up its 2013 programs with two sold-out events in December – 820 people came out for Chris Hadfield (470 in the Salon, and an overflow audience of 350 in the atrium, where the event was simulcast) and almost 400 for Michael Ignatieff. Meanwhile, the winter season in the Appel Salon has been announced and will be kicking off with a hot Argentinean import in the form of the trio behind the sexy dance musical *Arrabal*: Tony award-winning director Sergio Trujilo, Oscar-winning composer ("Brokeback Mountain") Gustavo Santaolalla and writer John Weidman. Also coming this winter, American writers Anna Quindlen and Gary Shteyngart, each with a new book. CBC Radio is bringing back its popular Canada Reads event that features some of the nominated writers and champions. A look at the Toronto music scene from the 60s to the present day will feature singer/songwriter Murray McLauchlan and Brendan Canning from the band Broken Social Scene.

The always-popular **annual Design-a-Bookmark contest for children** is back. Until February 1, budding young artists 13-years-old and younger can pick up entry forms at any Toronto Public Library branch or bookmobile, and let their creativity and imaginations run wild on the page. In the end, 16 grand prize award winners will have their designs made into bookmarks that will be distributed at branches across the city.

Staff training, enrichment and other enhancement opportunities

Staff training on the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act was an important focus in 2013 in order to meet compliance expectations. Staff hired and volunteers recruited after the Customer Service Standard deadline of January 1, 2010 were trained on the Customer Service Standard. In addition, staff at all levels were trained on the Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation (IASR) and the Ontario Human Rights Code. The sessions were offered in smaller modules that featured a video and an online quiz that staff could complete as branch service needs permitted. Completion of the online quiz provided a tracking mechanism in order to meet compliance of the standard. All three training modules will continue to be offered for all new staff and volunteers.

Reports

In December, the Library announced results of ***So Much More: The Economic Impact of the Toronto Public Library System on the City of Toronto*** via a news release, social media and direct communication with all city councillors and library industry stakeholders. Coverage appeared in several media outlets, including CBC Radio, Yonge Street Media, Inside Toronto and Novae Res Urbis. The announcement was well-received by the library community, which actively supported the release via social media and industry publications. The Library will continue to communicate study results to key stakeholders in 2014.

Collections

In the acknowledgements section of his book *A Great Game*, Prime Minister Stephen Harper included thanks for the support of Toronto Public Library staff. When the Prime Minister visited the Library in 2009, he brought more than the federal government's gift to support the Toronto Reference Library revitalization project – he also brought a keen knowledge and passion for the subject of Toronto's early hockey history. Mr. Harper was impressed with the Library's special collections during that visit, and corresponded with the city librarian and special collections staff a number of times during the preparation of his book, just released, *A Great Game*. Library staff were able to help him track down some unsolved mysteries – e.g. who were some of the key people behind the scenes at the Mutual Street Arena – and to provide high quality digital images from the Library's collections to illustrate the book.

The Library received a boost to its **e-book collection** in December with the addition of 15,000 titles from Penguin Group and more than 5,000 titles from McGraw-Hill, including many of this year's bestsellers and popular science, business and learning materials. Penguin Group and McGraw-Hill join Random House Canada, HarperCollins, Hachette Book Group, Macmillan, and many Canadian independent publishers making available a growing selection of e-titles to the Library. The Library's growing e-book selection is keeping up with customer demand. In 2013, there were more than two million downloads of e-titles. While e-books are experiencing significant growth, demand for print materials remains strong. Of all materials borrowed from the Library in the last year, approximately six percent were e-titles. The Library recently issued a news release about these e-content developments, including mention of the Board's advocacy efforts for improved access to e-content from all publishers.

Online

In response to customer requests, Toronto Public Library now offers an **online payment service**, allowing Library card holders to pay fines and charges associated with their accounts online using Visa, MasterCard or American Express credit cards. An FAQ is available to the public on the Library website. There is a charge of 50 cents per transaction, to offset the cost of providing the service. Customers can make payments 24 hours a day, seven days a week by signing into their account.