

Naming Toronto Reference Library after Jane Jacobs

Date:	December 8, 2008
To:	Naming Committee
From:	City Librarian

SUMMARY

At its September 15, 2008 meeting, the Library Board referred a communication regarding the naming of the Toronto Reference Library for Jane Jacobs to the Naming Committee for consideration (Attachment 1). Several letters and emails in support of the motion were received and are also appended (Attachment 2). This report provides background information to assist the Naming Committee in making a recommendation to the Library Board.

Naming a branch, program or collection after Jane Jacobs meets criteria in the Library's *Naming Policy*. The policy states that the naming of Library branches by geographic location or function is the preferred practice; however, consideration can be given to naming a branch with a gift or after an individual whose contribution to the Library or the City of Toronto *is well documented and is widely recognized and valued*. The policy also specifies that two years must have passed since the individual's death.

The Toronto Reference Library is one of the largest public research libraries in Canada. It is Toronto Public Library's flagship facility with a national and international reputation, and naming a library of this scale after an individual is a very significant tribute that cannot be replicated within the Library system. In addition, naming a major research facility of the stature of the Toronto Reference Library after Jane Jacobs may imply to the public that her archives are located at the facility. Jane Jacobs donated her papers and archives to the Burns Library in Boston. If the Toronto Reference Library were named after Jane Jacobs, careful consideration would be required on how to link the name to other collections or services in the building.

The Library is undergoing an extensive renovation supported by a capital campaign. The option to rename the facility is presented in the context of existing library practice, Jane Jacobs's accomplishments and legacy, and unknown potential impacts on the capital campaign.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The City Librarian recommends that the Naming Committee:

1. considers the request to name the Toronto Reference Library after Jane Jacobs and make a recommendation to the Library Board.

Implementation Points

The Toronto Public Library has not approached Jane Jacobs's family about the proposal and would have to do so formally before it is taken to a Library Board meeting for consideration. Toronto Public Library would have to consult legal counsel regarding any agreement.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

The *Naming Policy* requires details on costs when naming is contemplated without a gift.

Costs of naming a branch or facility would include a launch event, communications, signage and changes in Library publications in addition to changes to the website and catalogue. In terms of publications, a no-waste approach would be utilized (i.e., existing publications would continue to be used until supplies are exhausted) and the TRL capital project has allocated funds for exterior signage for the glass cube and exterior entranceway for implementation in late 2010. A communications plan would also be required to inform stakeholders, such as the City, so that appropriate changes can be made. If the signage implementation coincides with the exterior entranceway renovations in late 2010, it is estimated that the total cost would be \$50,000, including a launch, communications, staffing costs for the website and catalogue changes.

The Toronto Public Library Foundation is actively engaged in a capital campaign to raise funds for the TRL capital project and the impact of the proposed naming on the fundraising campaign is unknown.

The Director, Finance and Treasurer has reviewed this Financial Impact Statement and is in agreement with it.

DECISION HISTORY

At its September 15, 2008 meeting, the Library Board referred to the Naming Committee for consideration, a communication from Library Board member Councillor Adam Vaughan regarding the naming of the Toronto Reference Library. At the October 20, 2008 meeting a communication from Ken Greenberg in support of the proposal was also referred to the Naming Committee.

COMMENTS

Jane Jacobs was a well-known resident of Toronto, an influential academic and urban activist who devoted much of her writing and life to improving the quality of life for residents of cities. A Briefing Note highlighting her major achievements is included in Attachment 3. Jane Jacobs represents values shared by the *library including placing civic buildings in the heart of neighbourhoods*.

In considering the request to name the Toronto Reference Library after Jane Jacobs, the Naming Committee may want to consider public resonance with Jane Jacobs's name; future requests the Board may receive to honour other prominent Torontonians through naming Library branches, and unknown potential implications for the Toronto Reference Library revitalization project currently underway.

Existing Library Policy and Practice Regarding Naming Branches

Toronto Public Library's *Naming Policy* provides for naming branches with and without a gift. The policy states that the naming of Library branches by geographic location or function is the preferred practice; however, consideration can be given to naming a branch with a gift or after an individual whose contribution to the Library or the City of Toronto *is well documented and is widely recognized and valued*. Jane Jacobs's contribution to urban theory and planning is well documented as is her contribution to Toronto and its neighbourhoods. The policy also specifies that two years must have passed since the individual's death.

Within Toronto Public Library there is precedent for naming branches after individuals although none of these names have been established under the new policy. Names without gifts fall into three general categories: branches named after prominent citizens and Library Board members (e.g. Barbara Frum, S. Walter Stewart and Florence Taylor); politicians (e.g. Albert Campbell); and former library staff members (e.g. George S. Locke, and Lillian H. Smith).

At its September meeting, the Board gave concept approval to naming opportunities at the Toronto Reference Library associated with the capital campaign. The Foundation has committed to raising \$10 million through a private sector campaign. The impact of renaming the Toronto Reference Library while the campaign is ongoing and when other parts of the Library may be named with a gift is unknown.

In the broader library world, central libraries are generally named for their city, and in Toronto, there are very few buildings named for the city. The much acclaimed new Seattle Central Branch, lauded as an architectural masterpiece, retained its overall name while naming rooms and services for benefactors. However, there are examples of libraries named after individuals. There are notable exceptions where central libraries are named after politicians, prominent individuals and benefactors. Los Angeles Central Library was renamed in honour of long-time president of the Board of Library Commissioners, Rufus Bernhard von KleinSmid. In 2001, the building was renamed after Los Angeles mayor, Richard Riordan. In June 2006, Los Angeles City council

named a new branch library after library activist Alma Reaves Woods-Watts. In Dallas, Texas, the Central Library was named after John Erik Jonsson, a founder of Texas Instruments and mayor of the city. The New York Public Library's building on 5th Avenue at 42nd Street is to be renamed for Wall Street financier Stephen A. Schwarzman who has agreed to donate \$100 million towards the \$1 billion expansion of the Central Library. The new name will not take effect until the renovation is completed in 2014.

Jane Jacobs's Contribution to Toronto

As outlined in Attachment 3, Jane Jacobs was a prolific author, urban visionary and activist who has received many notable awards both in Canada and internationally. Her central thesis is that healthy urban neighbourhoods are the foundation of successful cities. She believed that post World War II efforts to create expansive suburbs that encouraged use of the automobile had destroyed the most critical element of urban spaces: healthy neighbourhoods. Her most famous work, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* (1961) revolutionized urban planning. Notably, Jane Jacobs was a self-taught researcher, who lacked formal training in urban planning and who used the resources of public libraries.

Within Toronto, Jane Jacobs spearheaded protests to stop the Spadina Expressway and the demolition of historical buildings including Old City Hall, Union Station and the St. Lawrence Market. The success of these initiatives preserved the character of Toronto's neighbourhoods which are arguably the most distinctive and successful feature of the city. The idea of protecting neighbourhoods is imbedded in Toronto's *Official Plan*. She moved to Toronto in 1968 with her family during the Vietnam War and became a Canadian citizen in 1974. After her death in 2006, David Miller proclaimed May 4, 2007 as Jane Jacobs's day and many free *Jane's Walks* are held annually to encourage people to celebrate her legacy and ideas.

Renaming the Toronto Reference Library

The Toronto Reference Library is Toronto Public Library's flagship facility with a national and international reputation, and naming a library of this scale after an individual is a very significant tribute. If this naming is approved, it would recognize Jane Jacobs as an exceptional urban theorist, self-taught researcher and Torontonians. The Toronto Reference Library houses and provides access to important archival material on Canada, Ontario and Toronto, and special collections in many areas. The Library offers sophisticated reference help to support independent researchers and authors like Jane Jacobs. The Urban Affairs Branch, Jane Jacobs's area of expertise and influence, falls under the jurisdiction of the Toronto Reference Library.

If the Toronto Reference Library were named after Jane Jacobs, however, there would have to be careful consideration on how to link the name to other collections or services in the building. Naming a major research facility of the stature of the Toronto Reference Library after Jane Jacobs may imply to the public that her archives are located at the facility. Jane Jacobs donated her papers and archives to the Burns Library in Boston. The preferred practice among archivists is to gather all papers in one location. Therefore,

it is unlikely that the Toronto Reference Library would receive any donation of archival material including two works in progress at the time of her death.

As outlined above, in the broader library context, it is not common practice to name a large reference library after an individual with a few notable exceptions. Jane Jacobs is one of many successful Torontonians including creators and authors who have used the Toronto Reference Library to advance their work. The level of recognition given to Jane Jacobs would not be replicable in the current Library system.

In summary, Jane Jacobs made a significant contribution to Toronto. Appropriate recognition should balance honouring her name and the overall benefits to Toronto Public Library now and in the future.

CONTACT

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SIGNATURE

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ATTACHMENTS

Attachment 1: Councillor Adam Vaughan Communication, September 15, 2008

Attachment 2: Communications of Support (16 in total)

Attachment 3: Briefing Note on Jane Jacobs