



To: Toronto Public Library Board – February 4, 2002

From: City Librarian

Subject: **School Outreach Initiative**

Purpose:

To provide the Toronto Public Library Board with information concerning the continuation of the outreach initiative to Toronto area high school students.

Funding Implications and Impact Statement:

Projected costs for the program until June 2002 are \$57,200 for staff, equipment and supplies. The program will be fully funded by the interest generated by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation grant to Toronto Public Library in 2000. These interest funds cannot be used as general revenue and their expenditure must be approved by the Gates Foundation for projects that are in keeping with the intent of the original grant. There are no impacts on the operating budget in 2002.

Recommendation:

It is recommended that the Toronto Public Library Board receive the *School Outreach Initiative* report for information.

Background:

In 2000, the Toronto Public Library was successful in its application to Industry Canada's Urban CAP program for \$1.7 million to undertake a number of significant initiatives related to electronic services. One of the components was an outreach program to students in Toronto secondary schools. The program goals were to:

- build awareness among the youth and educators of Toronto about the online services available at TPL;
- make services more accessible to youth and educators;
- increase the number of students with library cards;
- develop a positive working relationship with school board representatives;
- develop a fast, fun online tour of the Virtual Reference Library.

From fall 2000 to May 2001, two outreach librarians took a portable, flexible multimedia presentation of the Virtual Reference Library and TPL's electronic resources into Toronto secondary schools. Since library cards are necessary to access the databases made available by

TPL via the Internet, a user registration drive was conducted simultaneously with the outreach campaign. The project reached 8,600 high school students and 1,750 educators by May 2001.

Comments:

The impact that the outreach program had on the use of TPL and VRL resources from within the school boards was tremendous. The average monthly increase of hits coming directly from within the Toronto District School Boards was 652 percent. Surveys completed after the presentation indicated that 95 percent of the students and educators were unaware of the VRL prior to the presentation. An overwhelming 98 percent of those surveyed indicated that the VRL would be "extremely useful" for their school assignments. The increased awareness results in greater use of the Internet in the Library and will ultimately help to develop effective Internet skills among its users.

The registration drive resulted in 32 percent of the attendees of the programme receiving a TPL library card during the outreach initiative. Overall, youth registration in 2001 increased 60 percent over the 2000 level. TPL continues to receive requests from the education community to provide this outreach program.

The outreach program proved to be one of the most successful means the library has used to reach large numbers of high school students. Because the outcomes were so positive and there is a new target audience each year, there has been a keen interest in continuing the program. Approval from the administrators of the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation to use the interest accrued from the original grant to TPL for continued Internet training has afforded an opportunity for TPL to offer the program again this year with no impact on the operating budget.

Early in 2002, the outreach program to high school students will be re-introduced based on the successful model of 2000-01. An interim assessment will be conducted in July, with a view to continuing the program in the fall term.

Contact:

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City Librarian

List of Attachments:

Not applicable.