

Breaking Down Barriers to Access, Driving Inclusion

Toronto Public Library continues to work with teens to enhance spaces designated for their use at branches around the city. A large study table and computer with internet access to the teen space was recently added at the Palmerston Branch. As part of the facelift to the space, **Youth Advisory Group members** at the branch unveiled a mural they had created depicting a bookshelf, with words on the book spines that reflect the diverse ways in which teens view the library, including *discovery*, *community*, *inclusive* and *welcome*, to name just a few. Many of the words on the mural were taken from the strategic plan consultation meeting of youth champions that happened last fall.

Expanding Access to Technology and Training

More than 30 branches of Toronto Public Library now offer flatbed **scanners for the public** to scan documents and photos. Scanners, available on a first-come, first-served basis, are attached to computers with internet access, and scanned files can be saved to a USB drive or uploaded. The use of the scanners is free, with black and white printing available at a cost of 15 cents per page.

Frank Tsonis, an interactive media developer and educator, is Toronto Public Library's current **Innovator in Residence** and will offer workshops, lectures, one-on-one appointments and other programs about mobile app development at Toronto Reference Library until the end of July. Tsonis, who develops mobile apps, interactive art installations, data visualizations and web-based software, has taught courses at York University, OCAD University, and InterAccess Media Art Centre. The Innovator in Residence program runs until July 31, 2016 and offers a fun and hands-on way to learn about the technology offered at the Library's Digital Innovation Hubs.

tpl.ca/iir

Establishing TPL as Toronto's Centre for Continuous and Self-Directed Learning

A quick link to **eLearning** is now available to the Library's homepage. The new page features resources that offer online courses, including: Lynda.com which gathers together video tutorials on computer skills, graphic design, multimedia, photography and more; Safari, offering ebooks and video tutorials on technology and business topics; and Mango Languages, with interactive courses in over 70 different languages. The page also provides access to the Library's online resources for practicing the International English Language Testing System exam, and for LSAT, MCAT, GMAT, GRE TOEFL and other standardized tests.

tpl.ca/elearning

Creating Community Connections through Cultural Experiences

Close to 22,000 comic and graphic novel lovers converged on Toronto Reference Library over the weekend of May 14 and 15 to check out one of the greatest assembly of comics authors from around the world, including Canadian cartooning superstars Michel Rabagliati, Faith Erin Hicks and Kate Beaton, as well as international sensations Brian K. Vaughan, Lisa Hanawalt, Rokudenashiko and Shintaro Kago, to name just a few. This is the eighth year of this very successful partnership that sees the Library present the **Toronto Comic Arts Festival** in May each year. At the Toronto Public Library table, staff from the collections department showed off the Library's growing collection of digital comics. Staff in the Digital Innovation Hub at the Reference Library designed a number of 3D printer characters based on this year's TCAF poster art, created by Kate Beaton, and offered customers the opportunity to try out the 3D printers by printing out these characters to take home as souvenirs of the festival.

tpl.ca/comics

A new exhibit in the TD Gallery at Toronto Reference Library, **The Changing Faces of Toronto**, on until July 23, offers a glimpse into the lives of ordinary people who lived and worked in 20th century Toronto. Assembled together, the portraits capture broad changes in fashion and technology, what Torontonians did for work, and how they spent their leisure time. Guest-curated by former Toronto Star archivist Carol Elder, the exhibit features photographs from the Library's Canadian Documentary Art Collection, which includes over a million photographs from the Toronto Star Photographic Archive.

tpl.ca/tdgallery

On the afternoon of April 16, the **Honorable Liz Sandals, Minister of Education** for Ontario, visited the Reading Circle program at Bridlewood Branch. Minister Sandals chose *Polar Polka: Counting Bears in Alaska* by Cherie B. Stihler to read to the nearly 50 children and more than 20 teen volunteers in attendance. The visit was a lead-up to the 10th anniversary celebration of the Reading Circle at Bridlewood on April 23, which saw more than 300 people take advantage of a wealth of activities and snacks available throughout the Bridlewood Mall, where the library branch is located. Bridlewood Branch was presented with a letter from Ontario Premier Kathleen Wynne and a plaque from MPP Soo Wong. Councillors Norm Kelly and Jim Karygiannis were present at the mall. Library programs on the day included a Toronto Zoo demonstration by volunteers, a read-along with Gael Gilbert of Agincourt Community Services Association, and a storytime with library staff member Katherine McGreechan.

The 2015-2016 **Poetry Saved Our Lives** program wrapped up on May 6 at Palmerston Library Theatre as a full house attended the premiere of the documentary film, *Poetry Saved Our Lives*, which follows the story of some of the youth involved in the program, from its early days to a performance at Nathan Philips Square by the winner. The slam teams and their coaches, who have been working together over the past year at library branches around the city, gathered with library staff and members of the public to watch the film and to hear from its producer and director. The event also featured a slam, with 23 youth performing for an enthusiastic audience. The film was supported through a City of Toronto 2015 Pan Am/Parapan Am Games Legacy Fund contribution.

The Library was pleased to host a visit by **His Excellency David Johnston, the Governor General of Canada**, on April 20. Prior to the launch of his book, *The Idea of Canada: Letters to a Nation*, in the Bram and Bluma Appel Salon, Johnston and his wife Sharon stopped by the Marilyn & Charles Special Collections Centre to view a few of the Library's treasures of Canadian history. Highlights of the visit included:

- *Histoire de la nouvelle France*, by Marc Lescarbot. This edition, printed in 1609, included a masque entitled "Le Theatre de Neptune", which was first performed in Port Royal in Acadia on open boats, in 1606.
- *Voyages de decouvertes*, by Samuel de Champlain. The Library's edition, printed in 1620, is a reissue, with a few minor changes, of the 1619 edition.
- *Portrait of Phoebe Baldwin and Her Granddaughter*, artist unknown, c. 1830. This lovely portrait is the first image in Canada that documents a couple reading simply for the joy of reading.

Transforming for 21st Century Service Excellence

Front line staff at Toronto Public Library continue to impress the public with their excellent customer service. The Library has recently received a number of communications from Torontonians expressing **appreciation for library staff**:

Lanrick Bennet Jr. and his son, **Jack Ryan Bennett**, are currently on a mission to tour all 100 branches of Toronto Public Library using public transportation and when they recently tweeted that they would be dropping in at Weston Branch, they were delighted to see a responding tweet from Weston staff expressing excitement about their impending visit. After the visit, according to Lanrick: "Jack has been talking nonstop to anyone that will listen about the buildings he's seen and the books and videos he's taken out. I must put this excitement all on the shoulders of one specific librarian. Christie Paschakis... treated my son like a rock star."

Sandhya Saldanha, a therapeutic consultant working with children who have experienced adverse childhood experiences, wrote: "I was in the North York Public Library today looking for books to use in my work. Janet and Naseem who were at the children's library desk today went that extra mile to help me locate some good resource books to aid my work. They did not just jot down a few numbers on a paper, but patiently helped me throughout my search there. I did appreciate their effort and support in person, but also wanted to commend the Toronto Public Libraries for appointing such pleasant and dedicated staff."

Terry Russell wrote: "Many years ago I conducted much of my research in theatre history at the Reference Library. A week or so ago... I decided to consult some obscure sources at the Reference Library. When I presented myself at the Arts Desk for assistance the lady librarian said, 'Hello, Mr. Russell.' I was totally flummoxed and replied, 'How did you know my name?' 'Oh,' she said, 'I remember you. You used to come here all the time!' Ultimately, I spent the best part of two days reading material brought to me in the Baillie Room. In that time I was attended by several staff, all of whom were without exception extremely helpful and patient. In the course of my researches I have worked in many of the leading libraries in the U.K. and U.S.A. In all

cases one's experience is determined by the quality of their professional staff. You and your colleagues can be proud that the Toronto Reference Library ranks among the very best.”

And finally, a **Taylor Branch customer** wrote: “Kudos to your departing librarian the mighty Renuka who served us so well here at the Taylor branch. And before her, the equally mighty Despina. How fortunate are we in this part of Toronto.”

The Library celebrated **National Volunteer Week** (April 10-16) with two events, one for all volunteers, and the other geared specifically to youth. At the annual volunteer appreciation event on April 11 at North York Central Library, nearly 80 volunteers of all ages from all Toronto Public Library programs – including Adult Literacy, Friends of the Library, Youth Advisory Groups, Leading to Reading and Youth Hubs – heard from special guest speaker Terry Fallis. Fallis entertained the audience, keeping them laughing with stories about his writing and by reading passages from his latest book, *Poles Apart*. And on May 14, also at North York Central Library, the youth volunteer event brought together nearly 70 library volunteers, age 24 or younger, for an afternoon of pizza, prizes, programs and fun! The teens at the event also had the opportunity to hear about this year's TPL Teens Summer Edition program, which will give them the opportunity to read great books and connect with their peers and with local authors. In 2015, more than 3,200 volunteers contributed over 75,000 hours to Toronto Public Library programs. Of those volunteers, 73% were youth ages 24 or younger. In 2016, 168 volunteers received gifts thanking them for two, five, 15, 20, and even 25 years of service!

tpl.ca/volunteer

At the beginning of May, **Agincourt Branch began a renovation** that will allow for some exciting enhancements to its spaces and services. The branch, which will remain open during the renovation, will benefit from an expanded teen zone, two new program rooms, a new attractive and accessible front entrance and a laptop counter for additional study space. Minor disruptions in service will be mitigated by offering programs at nearby community agencies and neighbouring library branches.