



## STAFF REPORT ACTION REQUIRED

### Naming for Peter J. Bassnett at Toronto Public Library

<b>Date:</b>	December 8, 2008
<b>To:</b>	Naming Committee
<b>From:</b>	City Librarian

### **SUMMARY**

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At its October 20, 2008 meeting, the Library Board referred a communication regarding the naming of a room and an award for Peter J. Bassnett to the Naming Committee for consideration (Attachment 1). The group of supporters proposes naming a meeting room in Goldhawk Park branch and the naming of an award to assist Library staff in furthering their library education. This report presents background information to support the Naming Committee in developing a recommendation for the Library Board. The local councillor has been consulted on this proposal.

Naming a meeting room after Peter Bassnett meets the criteria in the Library's *Naming Policy*. The policy states that consideration will be given to naming a room in honour of a Toronto Public Library staff member provided that at least two years have passed since the individual's death or their separation from the Library. Mr. Bassnett retired from Scarborough Public Library in 1995. His contribution to Ontario public libraries and to Scarborough Public Library in particular is documented in supporting letters. (Attachment 2)

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

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**The City Librarian recommends that the Naming Committee:**

1. considers naming options below for Peter Bassnett and makes a recommendation to the Library Board :
  - a. naming a meeting room at Goldhawk Park Branch after Peter Bassnett;
  - b. naming an award, in principle, to assist Library staff in furthering their library education, provided the funds raised meets a minimum of \$10,000 net; or in the event that less than \$10,000 net is raised, using the funds to supplement the Library's tuition reimbursement program.

## **Implementation Points**

The Toronto Public Library has not approached the Bassnett family about the proposal and would have to do so formally before it is taken to a Library Board meeting for consideration. The naming of the meeting room and the raising of the funds to sponsor a Library staff award can proceed independently of one another. However, it is argued in the letter from supporters that fundraising for the award could be better promoted at an event announcing the official naming of the meeting room.

It is suggested that if a named award is recommended by the Naming Committee, that the award be approved in principle pending a minimum of \$10,000 net being raised, and that the Foundation act in an advisory capacity for fundraising initiatives and as a trustee for the funds. If an award is established, the terms and conditions of the award would need to be determined by the Foundation in consultation with the family. Subsequently, a list of selection criteria and a process would need to be developed to determine how the recipient would be chosen among Library staff.

In the event that \$10,000 net is not raised, the funds could be used to supplement the Library's tuition reimbursement program, provided the family and supporters agree to this approach.

## **FINANCIAL IMPACT**

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The *Naming Policy* requires details on costs when naming is contemplated without a gift. Funds raised to commemorate Peter Bassnett have been identified for a named award, not for the naming of a room at the Goldhawk Park branch.

Costs of naming a room in a branch may include a launch event and signage. It is estimated the cost for these components is \$2,500 which would be covered by the funds raised.

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

## **DECISION HISTORY**

At its October 20, 2008 meeting, the Library Board received a communication regarding commemoration for Peter Bassnett. The communication was referred to the Naming Committee for consideration and consultation with supporters of the request.

## **COMMENTS**

Peter Bassnett was Chief Executive Officer for Scarborough Public Library 1975 to 1995. A Briefing Note highlighting his major achievements is included in Attachment 3. A number of letters have been received in support of the proposal and are also attached. In considering appropriate recognition for Peter Bassnett, the Naming Committee might

consider public resonance with Peter Bassnett's name, future requests the Board may receive to honour former employees and overall benefits for the Library.

### **Existing Library Practice Regarding Naming for Staff Members**

There have been different ways of recognizing staff within the former library systems and the Toronto Public Library. In July 2006, former Parkdale librarian, literacy program founder and renowned storyteller Rita Cox was honoured with the renaming of the Black and Caribbean Heritage Collection, although in this incidence recognition was based on her role as Library staff member and her contribution to the broader community. Library branches, meeting rooms and auditoriums have also been named after staff members (e.g. George S. Locke, Evelyn Gregory, Lillian H. Smith, and Maria A Shchuka Branches; Jean Orpwood, Janet MacDonald and Elizabeth Beeton Rooms). In other cases, plaques have been mounted to commemorate the efforts of former Chief Librarians (Nancy Hall and Betty D. Hardie).

### **Peter Bassnett's Contribution**

As outlined in the appended Briefing Note and letters of support, Peter Bassnett was a strong voice for effective public library service in Ontario. He was appointed to oversee the Ontario Public Libraries Review in 1980 and travelled across Ontario. His recommendations laid the ground work for the 1984 Ontario Public Libraries Act which is in place today. Supporters of the award describe him as "forward thinking" in that he believed that to be effective, Ontario public libraries must work together and connect their technologies in order to share information.

Peter Bassnett worked for both North York and Scarborough Public Libraries. In Scarborough, he was the Chief Executive Officer from 1975 to 1995, and managed during a period of growth. He oversaw the opening of seven new library branches. During his tenure, new technology and the provision of multilingual services in 28 languages were offered to Scarborough residents. He also saw the development of a Chinese-language catalogue that was used across Canada. In addition to supporting multilingual collections, Mr. Bassnett established a staff position to develop multicultural services and programs for immigrants.

### **Naming Options for Peter Bassnett**

The Library Board received a letter from individuals connected with the former Scarborough Public Library including both former Board members and staff requesting consideration for two proposals to commemorate Peter Bassnett.

- **Option 1:** Naming the meeting room at Goldhawk Park Branch for Peter Bassnett.

The letter includes a request to consider naming the meeting room at Goldhawk Park Branch for Peter Bassnett. The reasons for choosing the Goldhawk Park Branch are outlined in the proposal. Mr. Bassnett oversaw the opening of the Goldhawk Park Branch in July 1992. His family lived in the Goldhawk Park community for many years. The naming of a meeting room would recognize his contribution to the Scarborough

Public Library. The proposed room is used for programs, quiet study and other library services and events.

There is precedent in the former systems for naming meeting rooms after Library staff members, although this is the first such recognition after amalgamation and since the approval of the Naming Policy. Currently, the Library is considering possible changes to the configuration of the room which would have to be described to supporters of the proposal.

- **Option 2:** Naming an award, in principle, to assist Library staff in furthering their library education, provided the funds raised meets a minimum of \$10,000 net; or in the event that less than \$10,000 net is raised, using the funds to supplement the Library's tuition reimbursement program.

The proposal also includes the idea of naming an award after Peter Bassnett to assist Library staff in furthering their library education. As outlined in the proposal, education was important to Mr. Bassnett and therefore the award is appropriate.

From the Toronto Public Library perspective, a staff award to support further education is appropriate provided a minimum of \$10,000 net is raised. This minimum is based on administrative costs for overseeing such an award combined with having an amount that makes a named award viable. Approving the naming of the award could further the Library's strategic focus on fostering diversity and succession management. Many staff members are currently enrolled in both part-time and full-time library and information science courses, and such an award is a positive incentive.

The proposal suggests that fundraising for the cost of the award could be undertaken by supporters of the award with the advice of the Toronto Public Library Foundation. It is suggested in the proposal that fundraising could be better promoted when a room is named in cooperation with supporters of the award.

Toronto Public Library staff has consulted with the Foundation which has confirmed its willingness to assist in this capacity. It is suggested that if a named award is recommended by the Naming Committee, that the award be approved in principle, and that the Foundation act in an advisory capacity and as a trustee for the funds. Subsequently, the terms and conditions of the award could be determined by the Foundation in consultation with the family and supporters.

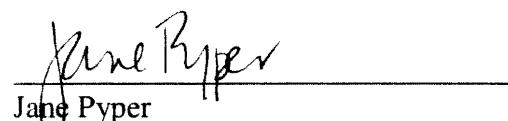
In the event that less than \$10,000 net is raised, the funds could be used to supplement the Library's tuition reimbursement program. The number of requests for tuition reimbursement is such that each applicant receives approximately \$500. As tuition costs are rising annually, supplementing tuition reimbursement so additional funds are available could be an important support to staff enrolled in library education programs. The Library would need to consult the family and supporters on this approach.

## **CONTACT**

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## **SIGNATURE**



Jane Pyper  
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Jane Pyper  
City Librarian

## **ATTACHMENTS**

- Attachment 1: Proposal
- Attachment 2: Letters of Support
- Attachment 3: Briefing Note



October 6, 2008

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Dr. Kathy Gallagher Ross, Chair  
Toronto Public Library Board  
789 Yonge Street  
Toronto, Ontario  
M4W 2G8

Dear Dr. Ross and Members of the Board:

We are writing to you on behalf of individuals connected with the board and staff of the former Scarborough Public Library. Our purpose is to solicit the Toronto Public Library Board's co-operation in commemorating the late Peter J. Bassnett, who passed away in February of this year.

Peter Bassnett served as Chief Executive Officer of the Scarborough Public Library from 1975 until his retirement in 1995. His tenure spanned almost half the life of the Board, which was founded in 1955 and dissolved at the end of 1997. For people in Scarborough who had some connection with its library system during the 1970s, 80s and 90s, Peter's name was synonymous with public library service.

Peter's influence in the development of public library service extends beyond the municipality of Scarborough. In 1980, he was seconded by the Province of Ontario to lead a program review of public library service. In the course of his work, Peter travelled to every municipal library in the province and consulted widely within the public library community. His report formed the basis of substantial revisions to the Public Libraries Act of 1984, which continues to provide the legislative and regulatory framework for public library service in the province.

Scarborough was a rapidly expanding suburban municipality when Peter was recruited from North York to take charge of Scarborough Public Library. Peter brought order to the process of managing this growth with the publication in 1978 of *Framework for the Development of Library Service in the Borough of Scarborough*. This planning and policy document conveyed a clarity of purpose which was appreciated not only by the library board but also by municipal council. Indeed Peter's calm, reasonable, straightforward approach to his work was acknowledged and appreciated among municipal councillors and administrators. He was the first CEO of the library to participate regularly in municipal department heads' meetings and was able to use this opportunity to gain recognition for the important contribution of public libraries to the life of the municipality.

When Peter addressed staff meetings, he frequently introduced his remarks by saying, "Libraries are firstly about people." He made it a priority for the library to reach out to and engage the community. For example, a number of public libraries had established staff positions to develop multilingual collections to better serve growing immigrant populations. Peter took the idea one step further by establishing the first staff position to develop not only multilingual collections but also multicultural services.

It is the desire to recognize Peter's remarkable role in the development of public library service that has inspired us, his former friends and associates, to come to you with a proposal to honour his memory.

We are proposing that Peter's memory be honoured in two ways:

1. That Peter's contribution to Scarborough be commemorated in one of the library branches in the former municipality of Scarborough, and
2. That Peter's career-long commitment to the development of public library service be recognized through sponsorship of an award to assist library staff in furthering their public library education.

These preferences have been discussed with Peter's widow, Ann Bassnett, who has indicated that the family approves of this approach and may wish to participate in any fundraising that is undertaken.

It is our view that the naming of a meeting room in one of the Scarborough branches would be an appropriate form of commemoration and would be in keeping with the Toronto Public Library's Naming Policy. The Bassnett family lived in the Goldhawk Park community for many years. The meeting room in that branch would be our first choice.

To raise funds for sponsorship of an award, we need a registered charity as a partner. We have met with the President of the Toronto Public Library Foundation, Heather Rumball, who has indicated the Foundation's willingness to work with us in this endeavour. The objective of fundraising will be to create an expendable fund, i.e., the money collected will be spent for the designated purpose until the fund has been exhausted.

The naming of a room and the raising of funds to sponsor an award can proceed independently of one another; however, we believe that the fundraising will be more successful if they are linked. The dedication of a meeting room would create an event to which potential contributors would be invited, and fundraising for the award could be promoted at that time.

We understand that this proposal may be forwarded to the Board's Naming Committee. We would be pleased to meet with the committee, discuss the proposal in greater detail and answer any questions they may have.

Yours truly,



Marjorie Daw  
Chair, Scarborough Public Library Board, 1988

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August 27, 2008

Dr. Kathy Gallagher Ross, Chair  
Toronto Public Library Board  
789 Yonge Street  
Toronto, ON M4W 2G8

Dear Dr. Ross and Members of the Board:

I am pleased to write this letter expressing my support for the proposal to commemorate the contribution of the late Peter Bassnett to the former Scarborough Public Library.

Peter was involved with the Scarborough Public Library for twenty years. I sat on the board as a member during Peter's tenure as Chief Executive Officer and knew him well since 1988.

Peter was an excellent Chief Executive Officer, with a great commitment to public service and a tremendous instinct for knowing how to use the public library system to build a sense of community in our rapidly growing and evolving Scarborough neighbourhoods. He is credited with providing the leadership that led to the successful development of a network of libraries in Scarborough that continues to benefit residents today.

I hope you will consider honouring Peter's memory by dedicating a library meeting room to him, and by sponsoring a staff award in his name. I believe these memorials would be particularly fitting for an individual who made such a significant contribution to the public library system in Scarborough.

Yours sincerely,

Bas Balkissoon, MPP  
Scarborough-Rouge River

Memorandum to: Gillian Mason

From: Wil Vanderelst

Date: August 19, 2008

I am very pleased to support an undertaking by the Toronto Public Library Board to acknowledge the contribution of Peter Bassnett in the development of public library service in Toronto, and the Province.

I first met Peter in 1983 when I became the Director of the Libraries and Community Information Branch. As the new Director of "the Branch" I was immediately confronted with the Ontario Public Library Review - aka the "Bassnett Review". Peter had been seconded from the Scarborough Public Library by the Province to define how Ontario's public library system could be rejuvenated and, equally important, how best to prepare for the technological and other challenges which were then rapidly becoming apparent.

The Bassnett Review involved Peter consulting with over 200 communities over a two and a half year period. There were 14 Task groups each with six or seven members feeding into the process. There were few aspects of public library service, the Public Library Act, and Branch programs which were not dissected and analyzed. The result was the "Bassnett Report", a coherent set of recommendations which formed the basis of a new Public Library Act as well as a myriad of new initiatives by the Government. Although many changes have occurred to the administration of public library service in Ontario, the Public Library Act with its regulations has remained essentially unchanged since 1984.

Other than the vision that Peter identified in his report for Ontario's public libraries, the review under his careful guidance motivated Ontario public libraries to act as a "community" in a way not seen before. The result was the development of various province-wide strategic planning initiatives such as "One Place to Look" and the various coordinated strategies regarding a utilization of information we see today. From my perspective these initiatives can be traced back directly to Peter and his review.

Throughout the period of the review and its immediate aftermath Peter was always a kind and patient force. Whether confronted by frustrated library board members in the North claiming that Toronto did not understand their situation or the madcap antics of opposition members in the legislative committee debating the draft Public Library Bill, Peter never lost his "cool". He was always the gentleman exuding quiet confidence that eventually other would see it his way. And they usually did.

In stating all this I want to emphasize the personal relationship I had with Peter. We met regularly over lunch during my tenure. Frequently our lunch would be followed by Peter touring me through one of the Branches in the Scarborough system. Usually the visit was to show case an initiative that his Board and staff had undertaken. The pleasure and pride he took in showing me these initiatives was wonderful to see. Many of these initiatives were either groundbreaking or far in advance of what most other libraries had undertaken.

Over the years, as usually happens, I lost touch with Peter and I was saddened to hear of his death. I owe him much for his kind advice freely given. I truly believe the Toronto Public Library Board owes him much for what he achieved in Scarborough. I know that the Province has benefitted from his dedication and experience. For these reasons I heartedly support the Toronto Public Library Board in acknowledging Peter Bassnett's contribution.

Wil Vanderelst

Director, Libraries and Community Information Branch (1983-89)  
President, OLA (1989-90)  
Toronto Public Library Board (1990-95)



**Supporters of the Proposal  
to Commemorate  
Peter J. Bassnett**

Bas Balkissoon, M.P.P.	SPLB Council appointee, 1991-1994
Ahmed Bhalloo	SPLB Chair, 1992-1993
Sheila Churchmuchi	SPLB Chair, 1980-1981
Justice Paul Cosgrove	SPLB Council appointee, 1973-1975
Marjorie Daw	SPLB Chair, 1988
Lois DeGroot	SPLB Chair, 1974-1975
Sandy Douglas	SPLB Chair, 1996-1997; TPLB 1998-2001
Richard Goldsmith	SPLB Chair, 1988-1991; TPLB Chair/Vice Chair, 1998-2002; TPL Foundation Chair/Vice Chair 2001-2006
Susan Hunt	SPLB Chair, 1985-1987
Fred Johnson	SPLB Council appointee, 1995-1996
Flora McKinlay	SPLB Chair, 1983-1984
Ron Moeser	SPLB Vice Chair, 1996
Karen Moloney	SPLB Vice Chair, 1985
Edith Montgomery	SPLB Council appointee, 1983
Maureen Prinsloo	SPLB Council appointee, 1986-1988
Drucilla Travnicek	SPLB Vice Chair, 1997
Ron Watson	SPLB Chair, 1995

Heather Carmody	SPL Manager, 1976-1997
Daphne Cheng	SPL Librarian, 1973 -1997
Ann Eddie	SPL CEO, 1995-1997
Nancy Hall	SPL DCEO, 1976 -1979; Etobicoke Public Library CEO, 1979-1990
David Reddin	SPL DCEO, 1995-1997

And other friends and colleagues of Peter J. Bassnett



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## BRIEFING NOTE

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### About Peter J. Bassnett

#### Life

Peter Bassnett was born on November 16, 1933 in Sutton Coldfield, England. He survived bombing raids during the Second World War and was shipped out of the city with other children in order to be boarded in safer country homes. His childhood experiences instilled in him a sense of determination and perseverance. He won a scholarship to a boarding school. One of his first jobs was working as a construction cost consultant. Later he worked briefly as a reporter's assistant on Fleet Street in London. Peter loved books and learning. He earned a Fellow of the Library Association of the United Kingdom by working and studying at the same time. In London he met his wife Ann. After the birth of their first daughter he moved his family to Alberta in 1966 and became a reference librarian at Calgary Public Library. He continued to work and complete his professional qualifications by writing a thesis on large municipal library boards. After the birth of his second daughter the family moved to Toronto and Peter worked as a director of North York Public Library. His career flourished and in 1975 he became the Chief Executive Officer of Scarborough Public Library. Mr. Bassnett retired in 1995. During retirement he enjoyed travelling, listening to classical music, reading, gardening and appreciating nature. He was an avid book collector and donated a large collection of books, letters, articles, videos and manuscripts on Welsh author John Cowper Powys to McMaster University in January 2005. Peter J. Bassnett died on February 23, 2008 in London, Ontario at the age of 75. He had two grandchildren.

#### Contributions to public libraries in Ontario

As outlined in supporting letters, Peter Bassnett played an important role in the development of public library services in Ontario. He loved books and learning and was a strong supporter of public libraries from an early age. In 1980 at the request of the Ontario government he was chosen to examine the structure of the numerous library boards and to clarify the province's role in providing public library services. He travelled to over 200 communities in Ontario during 1981-1982 and consulted widely within the public library community. There were fifteen task groups. More than 50 of his 70 recommendations were accepted. They formed a major part of Ontario's new Public Libraries Act in 1984. This Act continues to provide the legislative and regulatory framework for public library service today. The review brought together the public library community in Ontario. In addition, the review led to the development of many province-wide strategic planning initiatives such as the digitization of information. He was seen as being progressive in that he advocated for the electronic connection of all public library systems in Ontario in order to better facilitate the exchange of information.

## Contributions to Toronto Public Library

In 1972, Peter Bassnett moved to Toronto and worked as a library director for North York Public Library. In 1975 he became the Chief Executive Officer of Scarborough Public Library. He managed the library system through a period of rapid growth and oversaw the opening of seven new branches. He was the first Chief Executive Officer in Scarborough to regularly attend municipal department heads' meetings thereby raising the profile of the public library among municipal council. During his tenure, new technology and the provision of multilingual services in 28 languages were offered to Scarborough residents. He also saw the development of a Chinese-language catalogue that was used across Canada. In addition to supporting multilingual collections Mr. Bassnett established a staff position to develop multicultural services and programs for immigrants.

As outlined in supporting letters Mr. Bassnett's approach was about "going out into the community and talking about how the residents see the service and what they expect of it". The number of card holders and circulating items rose during his tenure. In 1998, the former public library systems amalgamated and the Scarborough system became part of Toronto Public Library.

## Publications

- Scarborough Public Library Board. *A framework for the development of library service in the Borough of Scarborough*. 1978
- *Ontario public libraries: the provincial role in a triad of responsibilities: the report of the Ontario Public Libraries Programme Review. Public Libraries Programme Review for the Minister of Citizenship and Culture*. 1982

## Further Reading: Sources Consulted

1. Peter James Bassnett Obituary. A. Millard George Funeral Home  
<http://www.amgfh.com/condolences/obituary.aspx?id=171342>
2. Bassnett, Madeline. "Peter Bassnett." *Globe and Mail*. Toronto, Ontario: Sept 1, 2008. p L6 in Proquest eLibrary Canada
3. Taylor, Sterling. "Chapter closes as library director to retire after 20 Years, the quiet perfectionist recalls 'figuring out communities needs.'" *Toronto Star*, June 16, 1995. p SC3. Proquest Canadian Newsstand
4. "In Brief Library link-up studied." *Globe and Mail* December 5, 1980, p. 46 in Proquest Canadian Newsstand
5. "OLA People Here and Now" March 2, 2008.
6. Letter from Marjorie Daw, Chair, Scarborough Public Library Board, 1988, to Library Board Member Dr. Kathy Gallagher Ross dated October 6, 2008.
7. Memorandum to Library Board Member Gillian Mason from Wil Vanderest, Director, Libraries and Community Information Branch (1983-1989) dated August 19, 2008.
8. Letter to Dr. Kathy Gallagher Ross, Chair, Toronto Public Library Board, from Bas Balkissooon, MPP Scarborough-Rouge River, dated August 27, 2008.
9. *Ontario public libraries: the provincial role in a triad of responsibilities: the report of the Ontario Public Libraries Programme Review. Public Libraries Programme Review for the Minister of Citizenship and Culture*. 1982