



**STAFF REPORT
ACTION REQUIRED**

**Biblio Bash at the Toronto Reference Library – Thursday,
April 25, 2024**

Date: June 19, 2023

To: Toronto Public Library Board

From: City Librarian

SUMMARY

The purpose of this report is to place before the Toronto Public Library Board a request from the Toronto Public Library Foundation (TPLF) to hold Biblio Bash at the Toronto Reference Library (TRL) on Thursday, April 25, 2024.

The Foundation's request is described in the attached memorandum. It sets out the anticipated advantages for both the Foundation and the Library in hosting the event at TRL and the impact it would have on service to the public.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The City Librarian recommends that the Toronto Public Library Board:

1. Approves the request from the Toronto Public Library Foundation to host the 2024 Biblio Bash gala fundraiser at the Toronto Reference Library on Thursday, April 25, 2024, including full closure of the branch on April 25, 2024.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

Proceeds from Biblio Bash will be used to enhance and expand library services as per TPL and TPLF's agreed upon fundraising priorities. TPLF will cover all the event costs as well as costs for additional cleaning and additional security (as needed) other than the direct TPL staffing costs including branch, venue rentals, digital services and facilities staff who will be required to support the event. Costs for these staff, including extra hours or overtime as required, will be paid for by TPL from the approved 2024 operating budget.

The estimated revenue projection for Biblio Bash 2024 is \$1,000,000.

The Director, Finance & Treasurer has reviewed this financial impact statement and agrees with it.

ISSUE BACKGROUND

While the landscape of fundraising events in Toronto is competitive, TPLF believes there is a tremendous opportunity to differentiate this event from other not-for-profit galas and deliver a meaningful and memorable evening including hosting it in a unique space; the Toronto Reference Library.

Biblio Bash 2023 was met with great enthusiasm, raising an unprecedented \$1,025,400 in support of the Toronto Public Library with a significant portion of funds raised directed to supporting Leading to Reading.

- In 2017, \$604,000 was raised with a portion of proceeds supporting digital innovation at TPL;
- In 2018, \$704,000 was raised with a portion of the proceeds allocated to supporting youth programs and services;
- In 2019, \$755,000 was raised with a portion of proceeds directed to two fundraising priorities: after school clubs and a new bookmobile; and
- In 2022, (after a two-year hiatus related to the COVID-19 pandemic), \$837,000 was raised with a significant portion of proceeds directed to supporting Internet Connectivity Kits.

This event continues to sell out early and attracts some of Toronto's high-profile philanthropists, bringing in many new and strategic supporters to the Library. Given the positive profile of TPL, there is an opportunity to build on this momentum and attract even more supporters to the Library.

COMMENTS

Holding Biblio Bash at TRL is a unique opportunity for both the Library and the Foundation. It is a chance to showcase TRL as a premier venue destination, and demonstrate, in a very visual and experiential way, what today's vital and vibrant library is capable of.

The goal of the gala is to:

- increase net funds in support of Toronto Public Library;
- design a beautiful, memorable and awareness-building event that connects guests to the Library;
- demonstrate the critical role TPL plays in supporting the residents of Toronto and leave attendees wanting to know more about the Library;
- generate relevant print and digital media coverage about TPL and TPLF; and
- attract a new audience of philanthropists, city builders and entrepreneurs in order to provide them with meaningful ways to invest in the Library and the health and well-being of Toronto.

Service Impacts

Hosting Biblio Bash at TRL will have unavoidable service impacts on Thursday, April 25, 2024, including a full closure of the branch for which the public will be provided with advance notice. The Foundation has identified its broadest anticipated needs for space and closures. As more detailed plans are developed, adjustments may be made where possible to further reduce service impacts.

Service Hours & Service Implications

The Foundation has requested that TRL close for the entire day on April 25th, 2024, in order to complete the set-up for the event itself and ensure there is as little disruption as possible to staff and users. In 2019, 2022 and 2023, a 12:30 p.m. closure time was approved, as the Foundation required additional time to complete the complex setup. Prior to 2019, the branch closed at 3:00 p.m.

Closing for the entire day mitigates the impact of event set up on branch operations on the days leading up to the event. The library will remain open and fully accessible up until closing on Wednesday, April 24. This revised plan allows additional time required for an efficient and seamless gala setup on the day of the event while minimizing the impacts on the library & the public during the week leading up to Biblio Bash.

Services will be fully reinstated by branch opening, 9:00 a.m. the following morning, with the exception the first floor terrace computers in the Information Commons which will be made available by 1:30 p.m.

Staffing Implications

Staff would normally be scheduled to work until 8:30 p.m. on the proposed night of the gala. Within the provisions of the Collective Agreement, and given two weeks' notice, staff schedules will be adjusted to have staff relocated and/or to work a day shift finishing by 5:00 p.m. at the latest. While staff would not be serving the public on April 25th, 2024, there are many activities and training that they could usefully perform while the library is closed. Pages and part-time staff normally scheduled to work that evening and not able to work during the day will have their hours rescheduled at an alternate and mutually agreed upon time. Staff would also be able to use vacation for all or part of the period of closure if that is

their preference. Staff in the Answerline Department will continue to work onsite until 8:30PM and leave by staff exits, or will work remotely where feasible.

CONCLUSION

With 15 years of experience hosting this event (Book Lovers' Ball and Biblio Bash), TPLF and TPL staff anticipate that the gala will achieve the outcomes of attracting current and new philanthropists, raising both funds and awareness of the brand, and creating an enchanting and memorable experience for all. TPLF and TPL staff will be working in concert to ensure that there is minimal impact on service beyond what is stated in this report and look forward to a successful gala.

CONTACT

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SIGNATURE

Vickery Bowles
City Librarian

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment 1: Memorandum from Will Scott, Toronto Public Library Foundation dated June 19, 2023 requesting approval to hold the Biblio Bash at the Toronto Reference Library in 2024.

MEMO

Date: June 19, 2023

To: Vickery Bowles, City Librarian

From: Will Scott, Chief Executive Officer, Toronto Public Library Foundation

RE: **Toronto Reference Library as venue for Biblio Bash**

SUMMARY

This Memo requests that Toronto Public Library (TPL) approve the use of the Toronto Reference Library branch as a venue for Biblio Bash - the Foundation's annual fundraising gala.

The event would take place on Thursday, April 25, 2024. For set-up purposes, the Toronto Public Library Foundation (TPLF) would require full closure of the Toronto Reference Library as of 8:30pm on April 24, 2024.

Hosting Biblio Bash at the Reference Library provides an opportunity to tell a compelling story of the transformation that TPL is going through from being 'just' about books to being a library of the future and attracting philanthropists and city builders to connect with this institution that remains as relevant today as it did 100 years ago.

BENEFITS OF HOSTING BIBLIO BASH AT THE TORONTO REFERENCE LIBRARY

The goal of this fundraising event is to elevate the TPL brand amongst philanthropists and city builders; to demonstrate it is a critical civic institution that plays an essential role in the health and prosperity of this city; to showcase TPL as the great equalizer where everyone has free and equitable access to library resources to maximize their economic and social potential; to highlight TPL's impact in helping the city re-build post-pandemic.

The gala objectives are:

- Revenue target \$1,000,000
- Attract 40-60 new donor prospects to the Library
- Create local and national media buzz
- Increase social media followers

The event will be designed to attract the group of individual philanthropists that represent the diverse audience we serve. This will include well-known Toronto philanthropists and will be expanded to include new Canadian communities, entrepreneurs in technology and health and leaders in business. Hosting the event at the Toronto Reference Library also provides the opportunity to showcase its spaces and collections, and to highlight what donor support helps make possible, thereby encouraging potential future donations.

While 2024 plans are not all yet confirmed, the aim is to highlight major elements of the Reference Library by using them to host components of the event. In 2023, the cocktail reception and a silent auction were hosted on the second floor of the Toronto Reference Library, dinner and entertainment took place in the atrium, and a popular photo studio was housed in the Digital Innovation Hub. It is understood that there are potential impacts of the TRL renovation set to happen in 2023-2024, that should be anticipated. The renovation schedule will not be deferred or temporarily suspended to accommodate Biblio Bash. TPLF appreciates that TPL will do what it can to mitigate, however TPLF will anticipate some level of impact.

SERVICE IMPACTS

The Foundation appreciates the importance of minimizing the service impacts of hosting a major event in the Reference Library and has consulted with senior Library management and Venue Rentals staff. At the same time, TPLF is striving to contain event set-up costs and are in the process of consulting with outside suppliers. Set-up for and hosting of an event of this scale will necessitate full closure to the public of the Toronto Reference Library as of 8:30pm on April 24, 2024. Based on explorations to date, the Foundation is confident the public service impacts detailed in the following staged set-up will be the maximum required in order to contain costs and ensure the greatest possible amount of fundraising revenue from the event:

Tuesday April 22, 2024

- Atrium & 2nd floor balconies – AV and production set-up, including rigging and staging install, partial load in of décor, ensuring access to service points, collections, washrooms and exit/entrances remains unaffected; Toronto Reference Library (TRL) Facilities staff to ensure all installations meet Heath & Safety standards (after 8:30 p.m.)
- Space to be determined with TRL where to best store AV equipment overnight **on the first floor**; (after 8:30 p.m.)
- Novella – reserved for deliveries, power, storage, etc. of AV equipment and 2nd floor furniture; (after 8:30 p.m. and following any teardown of events booked earlier on this date)

Wednesday, April 23, 2024

- Continue Atrium & 2nd floor balconies – AV and production set-up, including rigging and staging install, partial load in of décor, ensuring access to service points, collections, washrooms and exit/entrances remains unaffected; TRL Facilities staff to ensure all installations meet Heath & Safety standards (after 8:30 p.m.)
- Bram & Bluma Appel Salon – reserved for deliveries, power, storage, etc. of AV equipment and 2nd floor furniture; setup of Prologue and Novella for volunteers and room for gala guests and staff to observe Ramadan (after 8:30 p.m. and following any teardown of events booked earlier on this date)
- TPLF will use one of its date allocations, per TRL shared use models, to reserve, Beeton Hall, Founders Room, and Sonnet Room for the day by TPLF and key vendors (event management agency and caterer).
- Space to be determined with TRL where to best store AV equipment **on the first floor** (available all day).

Thursday, April 25, 2024

- Full closure of the Toronto Reference Library to the public with signage posted at least one week in advance advising patrons of the change.

- Removal of the first 8 computers on the ground floor of the Information Commons
- Administration area – to be used by catering team to transport food from shipping/loading dock to Beeton Hall; extra security to accompany catering team at all times

Friday, April 26, 2024

- Bram & Bluma Appel Salon and public areas on 1st and 2nd floor cleaned and restored by 6:00 a.m.
- Beeton Hall to be cleaned and restored by 6:00 a.m.
- 2nd floor Info Desk to be restored to normal by 9:00 a.m.
- Information Commons computers restored to normal by 1:30 p.m.

FINANCIAL IMPACTS

Branch, venue rentals, digital services and facilities staff are required to support the evening event and will be supported by TPL's operating budget. As a result, there may be extra hours offered to staff.

The TPL Foundation will cover all the event costs as well as costs for additional cleaning and additional security (as needed) other than the direct TPL staffing costs including branch, venue rentals, digital services and facilities staff who will be required to support the event. Costs for these staff, including extra hours or overtime as required, will be paid for by TPL from the approved 2024 operating budget.

REQUEST

It is requested that the Toronto Public Library Board:

1. Approve, in principle, full closure of the Toronto Reference Library on April 25, 2024, as well as closure of select other spaces during open hours as detailed in this report.

BACKGROUND

For 10 years the Book Lovers' Ball was the premier fundraising event of the Foundation. Since the inaugural event in 2006, the Foundation has raised over \$4 million through sponsorship, table/ticket sales and onsite fundraising, all in support of Toronto Public Library.

Following its 10th year, a decision was made to skip a year and pause to consider its future and the event was re-imagined with a re-invigorated volunteer committee. In 2017, the first Biblio Bash was held at the Toronto Reference Library. To date, Biblio Bash has raised over \$2.9 million in support of TPL.

While TPL and the TPL Foundation will always honour the legacy of books (and the continued love of books!) we are looking forward to celebrating the future of libraries and the role that technology and other innovative programs and services play in serving the needs of our customers and their communities. In the context of the pandemic's impact on vulnerable communities, this message is ever more important.

The gala's goal is to attract current and new philanthropists to the event; design a beautiful and memorable evening that showcases the Toronto Reference Library; enable a powerful connection to TPL; leave attendees wanting to know more about the Library and its future; secure media coverage to help build local/national awareness about giving to TPL; turn attendees into advocates and/or donors, and attract philanthropists and city builders to connect with an institution that remains as vibrant and relevant as ever.

Will Scott
Chief Executive Officer
Toronto Public Library Foundation
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