

City Librarian's Report for February 2024

Below is my report for the February 2024 [Toronto Public Library \(TPL\) Board meeting](#). It summarizes key activities in support of the priorities outlined in our [strategic plan](#). This report covers items that are not part of the Board agenda package.

Update on restoration of services

Since the end of January, we have reached [significant milestones](#) in our recovery efforts. We brought back a more familiar version of our website, reinstated public computing, began to return items into circulation and introduce new materials, and resumed holds service.

Opening up our public space

[Dawes Road Library & Community Hub](#) receives the Canadian Architect Award of Merit



Renderings of the new Dawes Road branch, created by Perkins&Will Architects.

In January, TPL staff and the Dawes Road design team from Perkins&Will and Smoke Architecture received the 2023 Award of Merit from Canadian Architect

magazine. The award recognizes the outstanding architectural design of the neighbourhood library and Community Hub which will be located at 416 Dawes Road.

Canadian Architect Awards juror Michael Heeney commented:

"This well-resolved neighbourhood library building explicitly wears its commitment to reconciliation on its sleeve with its Indigenous-inspired façade and rooftop programming area for First Nations. We reviewed a large number of projects attempting to acknowledge First Nations, and this one seemed to do so in a particularly comfortable way."

Construction of the new Dawes Road branch is expected to begin later this year.

Defy Dementia at North York Central Library



Panelists speak at the Defy Dementia event held at North York Central Library.

On January 24, North York Central Library hosted 'Defy Dementia: Empowering You to Reduce Your Dementia Risk,' in partnership with Baycrest Health Sciences Centre. The event featured a panel discussion and Q&A session with Defy Dementia podcast co-hosts Jay Ingram and Dr. Allison Sekuler, and panelists Mary Hynes and Dr. Nicole Anderson. They shared their lived experiences and insightful

evidence-based information with 85 attendees.

Participants had the opportunity to tour information booths on brain health topics and chat one-on-one with the panelists and Baycrest volunteers. During the event, library staff shared library resources on dementia and information about library programs for older adults. Many attendees thanked TPL and Baycrest staff for the event, and several individuals expressed how important the topic was for them.

After School Clubs 2023/2024



After School Club participants enjoying a snack at Albion branch.

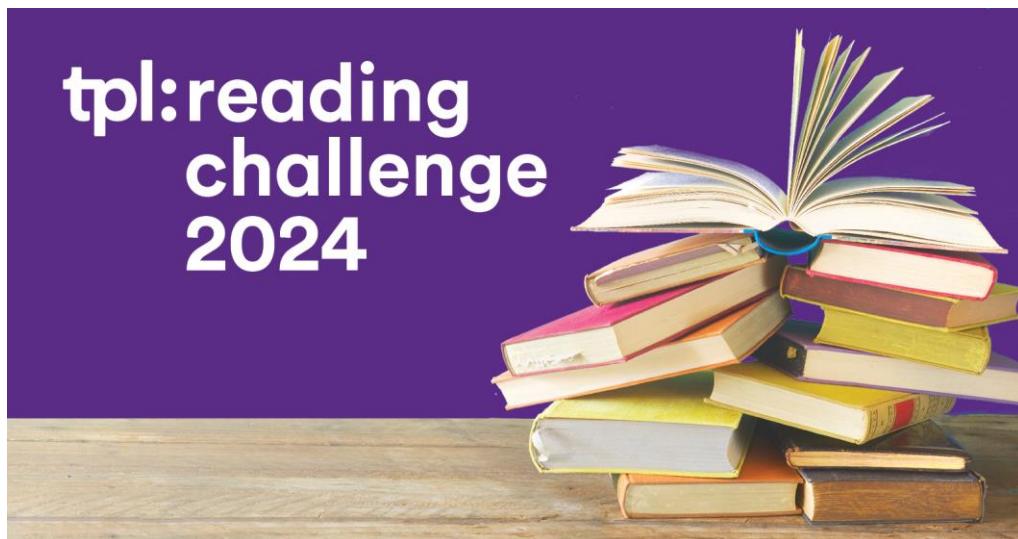
This school year, all 30 TPL After School Club (ASC) locations began to provide healthy snacks through the Feeding Young Minds Initiative established by the TPL Foundation in response to growing food insecurity challenges in our city. Each week, ASC participants enjoy nutritious snacks before participating in club activities such as science experiments, arts and crafts, robotics workshops and more. Since September, thousands of snacks have been enjoyed by hundreds of children.

In October, TPL also began offering a virtual ASC series to make programs more accessible and encourage learning and connectivity. Participants have since

explored topics including thermodynamics, engineering, fossilization, dinosaur species and astronomy. Children are invited to participate in guest-led online workshops twice a month throughout the school year.

The Feeding Young Minds Initiative is generously supported by Lead Donor, Moez and Marissa Kassam Foundation, and Supporting Donors, Phil Cowperthwaite and Sue Hunter, Adrian and Ange Rocca, J.P. Bickwell Foundation, and Linda Dagg and Kenneth Wiener.

TPL Reading Challenge 2024



On January 2, we successfully launched our sixth annual [TPL Reading Challenge](#). Each year, with support from a dedicated staff team, TPL releases new reading categories to encourage Torontonians to read widely and discover new books, authors and genres. A full list of this year's reading categories can be found on the [Reading Challenge webpage](#) and in the [TPL Reading Challenge Facebook group](#) which has more than 3,100 members. Paper copies of the Reading Challenge are also available at library branches.

The TPL Reading Challenge is eagerly anticipated each year and many customers have left excited messages on our social media channels, including one participant who commented, "I love the TPL Reading Challenge. I started participating a few years ago and have discovered different worlds, ideas and perspectives I might not

have considered before." This year's challenge was featured in a [CBC article](#) with contributions from TPL's Readers' Services team.

Broadening Toronto's digital access and inclusion

TPL participates in Data Privacy Week



Data Privacy Week video conference background, courtesy of the Office of the Privacy Commissioner of Canada.

Between January 22 and 26, TPL participated in Data Privacy Week, an international effort to spread awareness about online privacy and highlight the importance of protecting personal information.

During the week, TPL hosted three online programs. Digital Privacy 101 and 102 discussed important topics such as securing accounts and devices, creating robust passwords, understanding online threats, and mitigating privacy risks while using computers and devices. Smart Cities 101 explored the concept of living in a smart

city and the role of technology in enhancing urban efficiency. The program also covered smart city technologies, the foundational aspects of planning a smart city, risk management and the crucial role of data in smart city applications.

Robotics at Barbara Frum branch



Children working together to build a city using planks and blocks during a robotics program at Barbara Frum branch.

On January 19, Barbara Frum branch held a robotics program for children ages six to 12. Children worked in teams to build a city using Lego, KEVA planks and Megablocks. Guided by roads made with tape, participants used a sequence of block coding to lead their Dash robots from one destination to another. The children tested their sequence and watched to see if their Dash robot followed the route envisioned. The program was a huge success with all children fully engaged, including those who were block coding for their first time.

Supporting seniors' digital skills with the City of Toronto ConnectTO Free Wifi Project



Seniors' Digital Literacy graduates celebrating with Community Librarian Elizabeth Sallese.

The City of Toronto's ConnectTO Free Wi-Fi Project has established an agreement with TPL and Toronto Seniors Housing Corporation (TSHC) to enhance digital literacy programming and initiatives for seniors. This year, ConnectTO is installing free public Wi-Fi at select TSHC locations where TPL's community librarians deliver Seniors' Digital Literacy service.

Offering internet access in these spaces will help bridge the digital divide and enable community librarians to provide library services and digital literacy training at the point of need, further supporting [Toronto's Senior Strategy 2.0](#). Together, ConnectTO, TPL and TSHC create connected communities where seniors can stay in touch with loved ones, access valuable online services and remain engaged in wider conversations.

Seniors' Digital Literacy Community Librarians are generously supported by an Anonymous Lead Donor, Richard and Joan Boxer, the Catherine and Maxwell Meighen Foundation, and other donors.

Building pathways for workforce development

Supporting small businesses with WoodGreen Employment Services and Toronto Small Business Enterprise Centre



At the start of 2024, TPL worked with WoodGreen Employment Services and Toronto Small Business Enterprise Centre (TSBEC), offering programs to help entrepreneurs, aspiring entrepreneurs and self-employed individuals with their small business pursuits.

Throughout the year, branches will continue to host one-on-one consultations with TSBEC advisors and programs on tax basics, conducting market research and building a business. These programs boost basic financial literacy skills and support Toronto's small business economy.

Investing in staff and an innovative service culture

Ontario Library Association Super Conference: Get Loud



TPL staff Joseph Lalonde, Joel Babcock, Sepideh Mckensy and Sheldon D'Silva at the Library Impact Ontario booth during the Ontario Library Association Super Conference.

The Ontario Library Association (OLA) Super Conference is Canada's largest continuing education event in librarianship. This year's theme was "Get Loud," which OLA says "symbolizes our commitment to civic engagement, recognizing the significance of libraries in promoting equity, diversity, and truth."

Approximately 300 TPL staff registered for the hybrid event, with the vast majority electing to attend in-person at the Metro Toronto Convention Centre. Staff enjoyed a wide variety of sessions, including featured speakers such as Avery Swartz, Julie S. Lalonde and Eric Klinenberg. TPL also had 18 staff present at the conference, on topics including 2SLGBTQ+ services, intellectual freedom, helping seniors, safety and security, and digital literacy and inclusion.

During the conference, TPL hosted a Library Impact Ontario booth to help library systems demonstrate the impact of their technology services through data literacy support and outcome measurement. Staff from TPL's Policy, Planning & Performance Management division provided information at the booth and presented at the conference's IdeaHUB stage.

The convention centre buzzed with a loud energy over the course of the event, living up to the conference's theme.