

# Shelf life

Toronto Public Library News & Views

November 2008



## Renovated library meets changing community needs

Dufferin/St. Clair Branch offers something for everyone

THE ROLE OF the public library in the lives of Torontonians continues to evolve, and the newly renovated Dufferin/St. Clair Branch of Toronto Public Library, which reopened at the end of October after an extensive 16-month renovation, addresses the changing needs of library users on many levels.

“Dufferin/St. Clair meets the goals of the library’s new strategic plan by ensuring that it continues to function as a community hub that meets the needs of all Torontonians,” according to Toronto Public Library Board Chair Kathy Gallagher Ross, “seniors, newcomers, youth, children, job seekers, academics, artists, authors – indeed, everyone in Toronto who values knowledge and culture and believes it should be accessible to all free of charge.”

“Dufferin/St. Clair Branch is certainly a cornerstone of this community,” agrees Toronto Public Library’s Chief Librarian Jane Pyper. “It’s wonderful how each of the different spaces within the library fits the needs of those it serves – from quiet study spaces and comfortable reading areas, to the more lively interactive spaces like the teen zone, the program room, and our beautiful hands-on early literacy centre for preschoolers, KidsStop.”

But Dufferin/St. Clair takes library service beyond the traditional, bringing it into the 21st century. As the Internet and other digital environments continue to develop, Toronto Public Library continues to incorporate those developments into their services.

“Along with an increase in computer



workstations,” explains Pyper, “Dufferin/St. Clair has joined the growing list of Toronto Public Library branches providing users with free wireless access to the Internet. We’ve also included self-serve checkouts.”

With 14 branches renovated in the last half decade and four more poised to open in 2009 after extensive renovations, Toronto Public Library is increasingly becoming a place where people can participate in neighbourhood and city-wide initiatives, and collaborate on topics that matter to them.

Among service upgrades resulting from the renovation are: the library’s second KidsStop, part of the Ready for Reading initiative promoting early literacy skills in

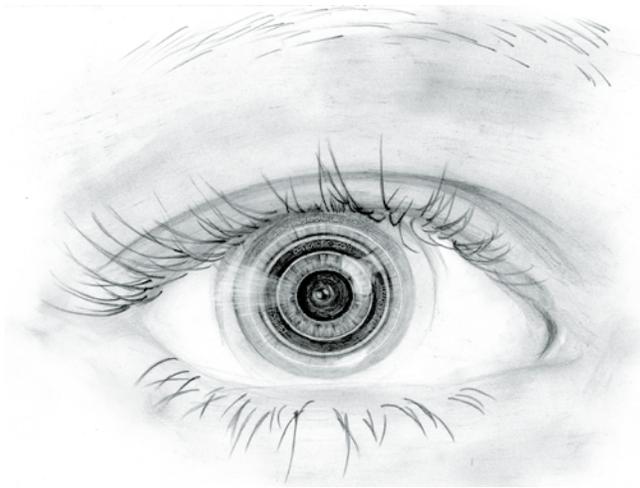
preschoolers; an attractive program room providing authors and performers with a local place to share their work; and the restoration of murals from the 1920s and ‘30s that were painted over in the 1960s.

“I’m really pleased we were able to integrate the elements of the past that the community told us were important to them,” says Library Director of Branches Anne Bailey.

“Dufferin/St. Clair stands as a beautiful example of what can be accomplished through the re-invention and re-imagining of public spaces and places,” concludes Pyper. “Creative renovation of our branches allows us to maintain the high level of public library service Toronto communities have come to expect.”

## Publication of poem momentous for Toronto teen

*Young Voices*, library magazine of teen writing and art, opens doors to the world



Photographic Eye, from *Young Voices* '08,  
by Jason Chuan-Der Shum

TORONTO PUBLIC LIBRARY youth services librarian Susan Kernohan was delighted by the response she got when she called the Lewin family to let them know that 19-year-old Eric Lewin's poem, 'Rose, where did you get that red,' would be published in *Young Voices* magazine, the library's magazine of teen writing and art.

"Eric's mom announced the news to the family while I was still on the phone," says Kernohan. "I heard all these voices in the background calling out – and then Eric

burst into song! I've phoned about 100 families over the years to share the good news, and everyone is always thrilled, but Eric's house was definitely the happiest house full of people I ever called."

Eric has Fragile X Syndrome, a genetic disorder resulting in developmental delay and autism. "Eric is less mature than a normal teenager and much less sophisticated," according to his mother, Myra Sourkes. "Often his view of life is refreshingly simple and straightforward."

*Young Voices* publishes the work of Toronto teens between the ages of 12 and 19, an age at which publishing opportunities are limited.

"Two years ago we also formed the Editorial Youth Advisory Group," says Kernohan, "a team of teen writers and artists who work with our guest editors to make selections from the hundreds of submissions we get annually.

"We got a letter with Eric's submission," continues Kernohan, "saying that he was a special needs student at Drewry School. We decided not to alert the editorial team to this fact, so Eric's poem was selected based solely on its merit."

"Eric was obviously thrilled," Eric's mom explains. "He went into the next room and started writing a journal entry about this event. This was momentous, and he knew it."

More than 18,000 free copies of *Young Voices* are distributed annually through library branches, schools and community agencies.

"The fact that this is a library magazine has great significance for Eric," says Sourkes. "The library is a cornerstone in his

universe. He talked about it for weeks afterward, clearly proud of his achievement."

Eric enjoys writing poetry because of the freedom of the form, according to his mother. "Eric is profoundly shy. He is interested in interacting with people, but is afraid and doesn't know how to approach them. So he needs a topic with which he is comfortable and familiar, as an ice breaker. Often, his poems provide that vehicle."

*Young Voices*, which has been published annually for nearly 45 years, is launched every October at a celebration to which contributors and their family and friends are invited.

"The magazine launch was a fabulous evening," comments Sourkes. "Eric really looked forward to it and was impressed with the ceremony of it. My husband, Richard Lewin, and I invited Eric's brother, his most important childcare worker, his aunt, and two of his teachers, one of whom had submitted Eric's poem to the magazine."

Eric's father organized a party a few days after the launch, to celebrate the publication of Eric's poem, and invited close friends and family who love him.

"We made a poster with the program and photos from the

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## Library list offers discerning advice on Canlit for kids

Second *First & Best* booklist for preschoolers released



TORONTO PUBLIC LIBRARY'S second annual booklist of *First & Best* books for preschoolers, part of the library's *Ready for Reading* early literacy initiative, is now available in bookmark form at all 99 branches of the library, and on KidsSpace, the library's website for children, [torontopubliclibrary.ca/kidsspace](http://torontopubliclibrary.ca/kidsspace).

"As the largest public library in Canada," says child and youth

advocate for library services Ken Settrington, "part of our role is to offer discerning advice on Canadian children's literature."

The library's *Ready For Reading* initiative includes storytime sessions for young children at many branches, as well as yellow stickers on the covers of a wider selection of good books for preschoolers. The library is also creating KidsStop hands-on literacy centres in several branches, the latest of which opened last month at Dufferin/St. Clair branch.

### 10 books to engage preschoolers

*A Visitor for Bear*, by Bonny Becker  
*A Pocket Can Have a Treasure in It*, by Kathy Stinson  
*Chicken, Pig, Cow*, by Ruth Ohi  
*It's Moving Day*, by Pamela Hickman  
*Little Panda*, by Renata Liwska  
*One Watermelon Seed*, by Celia Barker Lottridge  
*Ready for Winter (and Spring, Summer, Autumn)*, by Marthe Jocelyn  
*The Sweetest One of All*, by Jean Little  
*Thing-Thing*, by Cary Fagan  
*Time is When*, by Beth Gleick



Paladin, from *Young Voices '08*, by Muzhda Hakime

launch, and it is still standing on an easel in our front hall," concludes Sourkes. "This will be part of his self-image and will increase his confidence. It is gratifying for him and for us to know that he can create something that others value. Even though he will always have limitations in terms of work and other adult activities, it is clear that writing poetry will be a key for him to open doors to the world."

Get a free copy of *Young Voices 2008* at any one of Toronto's 99 library branches.

## Rose, where did you get that red?

by Eric Lewin  
reprinted from *Young Voices '08*

magic spells could  
say make it work  
paint it yellow orange  
green pink red  
we need paint brushes with  
long brown handles  
we need brushes and paint cans  
we need to open the cans  
mix the paint  
swimming oceans of red  
we need long brushes  
we need paint to make it pink  
we need 60 paint brushes and  
long strokes of red on the rose  
the rose is marvelous  
the rose is exquisite  
the rose is perfect

# Toronto's Library. Absolutely Vital.

## A star in the Library Foundation's books

*Toronto Star* supports Toronto Public Library Foundation

THE *TORONTO STAR*, through their partnership with the Toronto Public Library Foundation, has done much over the past decade to support Toronto Public Library and the vital work the library does in supporting a socially and economically vibrant city, with a highly literate and culturally engaged population.

"Like the library, the *Star* has long strived to promote reading and literacy among all age groups," says Sandy MacLeod, Vice President of Consumer Marketing and Strategy at the *Star*. "Our relationship is an ideal way for both the library and the newspaper to help achieve that goal, especially through our involvement in the Toronto Star Newspaper Centre at the Toronto Reference Library."

The Toronto Star Newspaper Centre, which opened in 2001, was just the beginning of an extensive partnership, however. In 2008 alone, the *Star* helped support: the library's annual Keep Toronto Reading celebration of books and reading; the One Book program that calls on all Torontonians to engage in a community of culture surrounding

the experience of reading a single book during Keep Toronto Reading each year; the Foundation's annual gala fundraiser, *The Book Lover's Ball*; the annual TD Summer Reading Club for primary school children; and the Toronto Book Awards.

"Most recently," says Foundation president Heather Rumball, "the *Star* has stepped up to help the Foundation promote the library's impact on individual lives, and the need to support the library, through our "Toronto's Library. Absolutely Vital." advertising campaign. Through the ads in the *Star*, tens of thousands of people can read inspiring personal testimonials about the importance of library service to the people of Toronto."

"The *Star* believes this partnership is an important way that the newspaper can demonstrate its commitment to literacy," says MacLeod, "and to the people of Toronto and to their library, which is a major educational institution in our city."

"The *Star* and the library share many of the same values," says Foundation president Heather Rumball, "and they continue

to demonstrate their commitment to the city's educational and cultural health by supporting the library's efforts through their work with the Toronto Public Library Foundation. We at the Foundation look forward to many more years of partnership with the *Star*."



## Bell supports Hear-a-Story

Bell has generously supported the library's Hear-a-Story initiative – and also the perennially popular Dial-a-Story – through \$90,000 in funding over three years starting in 2006. This summer, a three week Hear-a-Story Internet scavenger hunt drew 1,000 entries from children across the city. Pictured, l-r, TVOKids host Ryan Field, author Loris Lesynski and Bell Associate Director, Community Investment, Joanne Shore.

Your library. Vital to you. Vital to support.  
Donate to Toronto Public Library Foundation today.  
[tplfoundation.ca](http://tplfoundation.ca)

**TORONTO PUBLIC LIBRARY**  
Foundation

## Board Highlights

### Board reviews City request to reduce 2009 budget request

In considering the City of Toronto's operating budget target of minus two percent, the Board considered options that would include major service impacts for library hours and collections. The Board recommended minor budget reductions which do not impact service for a revised budget request of 6.6 percent, and that the City be requested to fund the sick leave payout pressure from a reserve.

### New hours at five branches part of library open hours vision

The Board approved changes in branch open hours for Jane/Dundas, Alderwood, Urban Affairs, St. Lawrence and Thorncliffe branches. Alderwood will stay open late Thursday nights, instead of Tuesday. The other four branches will see their hours increased, with St. Lawrence and Thorncliffe increases pending approval of the 2009 budget.



### Profile: Library Board member Eman Ahmed

TORONTO PUBLIC LIBRARY board member Eman Ahmed moved to Canada from Pakistan seven years ago, arriving first in Vancouver, where she studied for her master's degree in publishing at Simon Fraser University. From there, she moved to Ottawa, where she worked for the Canadian International Development Agency. She moved to Toronto about five years ago.

"During my first year in Toronto, I was unemployed,"

says Ahmed. "I spent a lot of time at North York Central Library. It was a welcome refuge when I wanted to get out of the house for a bit. I could sit and read – it was a very welcoming environment."

Much of the work Eman does now involves research and advocacy on issues related to women's rights and multiculturalism. "I work primarily for the Canadian Council of Muslim Women, at the moment," explains Ahmed. "But a few years ago, I was working with settlement agencies in Scarborough, and it became apparent that in some neighbourhoods there were no library branches nearby and people were having problems getting access to library services. We worked with the library to get bookmobile service in these neighbourhoods."

Ahmed joined the Toronto Public Library Board in March of 2007 and says she has, "learned so much. I already

knew that the library was providing much in the way of settlement services, but the library offers so much more. It's really a community hub."

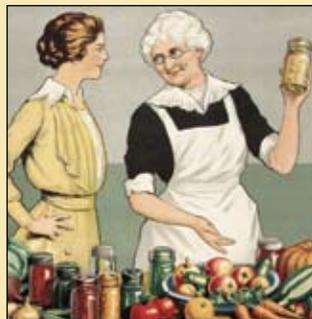
Ahmed admits she doesn't visit her local library branch as often as she used to. "My life is a lot busier than it was when I first arrived in Toronto," she explains. "Now I use the online resources the library offers. They have an amazing array of databases and I use the online magazines and journals a lot."

Ahmed, who was involved in the community consultations held as part of the process for developing the recently released Toronto Public Library Strategic Plan, says, "One thing that struck me in that consultation was how well loved and well respected the library is within the community."

"I see my work with the library board as an opportunity to give back to an organization that has done so much for me," concludes Ahmed.

### Calendar of Events December 2008

#### TD Gallery



Canada Food Board. *Waste Not – Want Not (detail)*, Hamilton: Howell Lithography, 1914-18. Toronto Public Library (TRL)

#### On to Jan. 11, 2009

#### Local Flavour: Eating in Toronto, 1830-1955

The exhibition of cookbooks, advertisements and photographs from Special Collections looks at 125 years of culinary history in Toronto. TD Gallery, Toronto Reference Library, 789 Yonge St.

#### Canada Council Heritage Series: Hindsight

Tuesday, Dec. 2, 2 p.m.

Morley Torgov, Allan Levine and Jan Rehner

on Historical Mysteries. Barbara Frum Branch, 20 Covington Rd.

#### Thursday, Dec. 4, 2 p.m.

Steven Galloway

author of *The Cellist of Sarajevo*.

Northern District Branch, 40 Orchard View Blvd.

#### Youth Author Visit

Thursday, Dec. 11, 4:30 p.m.

Christine Walde

author of *The Candy Darlings*

North York Central Library, 5120 Yonge St. ages 12-19

