

Shelf life

SPECIAL EDITION

Toronto Public Library News & Views

December 2009



Toronto Public Library boosted career resources in response to uncertain economic times.

Happy New Year!

We're starting it off by taking a look back at some defining moments of 2009 before looking ahead to 2010.

JANUARY

Library use up during economic downturn

Public libraries always play a vital role in ensuring free access to technology, the Internet, job-finding resources and entertainment, and this becomes even more pronounced during these uncertain economic times.

"Toronto Public Library has added 35,000 new books about jobs and careers to its collections this year – more than double its usual purchase in these subject areas. It also started a new jobs section on its website. And it boosted free career-focused programs by 35 percent, reaching more than 6,000 people eager to learn new interview or job search skills. The Toronto library's moves are a response to Ontario's tough labour market."

- Tavia Grant, *The Globe and Mail*

FEBRUARY

Foundation celebrates Toronto's Library at The Book Lovers Ball

Some of Canada's most celebrated authors and dignitaries, book lovers and literati assembled in February at the Fairmont Royal York in support of the Library Foundation's Book Lover's Ball, an annual black-tie fundraiser. We asked literary luminaries to share their library experiences.



card. I would take them home. I would read them. I would bring them back. I would take the streetcar back and forth. It was when kids were still allowed to roam around by themselves. Later, I also did a lot of research on *Alias Grace* at the Toronto Reference

"My first library card, when I was 10 or 11, was for the Deer Park Branch on St. Clair Ave. I read all of the coloured Andrew Lang books of fairy tales using that library card. I would get them out with my little

Library. They had all of the newspapers from the early 1800s, which had the account of the murder."

– Margaret Atwood, from the *Toronto Star*

MARCH

Popular Sun Life Financial Museum + Arts Pass program expands

The Sun Life Financial Museum + Arts Pass (MAP) program rolled out to all 99 Toronto Public Library branches and welcomed two new venue partners – Casa Loma and the Museum of Inuit Art. The hugely popular MAP program offers anyone with a library card the opportunity to borrow a free family pass to any of 10 Toronto museums.

"I went to the Science Centre with my family and some friends, we had a great time. It is such a great program, I am so glad that it is available. I have been in Canada two years and really value the library. My son loves the Science Centre and I loved that it was free for us. I am working only part-time and I spend a lot of time in the library these days."

– Ji Woo Tong

"Access to culture is crucial if we want Toronto to remain a vibrant, creative city that's positioned to stay strong in the current economy. The Sun Life Museum + Arts Pass program exemplifies the way strategic partnerships can improve quality of life for all Toronto's diverse communities."

– Toronto Mayor David Miller

SUN LIFE FINANCIAL
map
MUSEUM + ARTS PASS



Continues...

The eh List

AUTHOR SERIES

The eh List allows authors to connect with community

In March, the library launched a new author series, The eh List, showcasing Canada's best writers and their new books. Over the course of the year, nearly 4,250 people attended readings at library branches across the city, featuring Adrienne Clarkson, Peter Mansbridge, Rawi Hage, Kim Echlin, Jane Urquhart, Linden MacIntyre and many others.



"This kind of programming by the Toronto Public Library is a real boon to the city. For writers, it is a chance to connect with parts of the community that most other literary series never get near. Over the years, I've had some truly magical experiences through readings at library venues, and have come to a much better understanding of the important part that literature plays in so many people's lives."
 – eh List author Nino Ricci



APRIL

The library's annual Keep Toronto Reading celebration springs ahead

In 2009, Toronto Public Library moved its annual month-long celebration of the book in all its forms, Keep Toronto Reading, to April. About 2,700 people attended more than 45 events. The library's second One Book community reads event featured a volume of poetry, *Loyalty Management* by Glen Downie, which was read by many Torontonians, including 24 classes of high school students.

"All across the city, free events are planned, from book sales to storytelling for children to 'Lit Lunches' and wine tasting. Writers, actors and artists participate in 'Lit City' showcasing stories inspired by the city of Toronto. There's no shortage of things to do and with people's pocketbooks feeling the crunch, local libraries are a great, inexpensive place to spend time with the family."

– Scarborough Mirror



Dewey never misses a branch opening celebration.

Relocated Jane/Sheppard Branch welcomed enthusiastically

On April 2, the newly relocated Jane/Sheppard Branch of the library opened in its own, brand new building. The community has responded enthusiastically, with the branch experiencing a 70 percent increase in circulation, a 117 percent increase in program attendance, a 124 percent increase in new registrations, and an amazing 315 percent increase in information requests!

"When is a building more than a building? The answer, of course: When it's a library. The most recent example of TPL enlightenment came last week when an exceedingly modest library opened quietly near the corner of Jane and Sheppard... Simply by addressing Sheppard [Avenue], the library proposes a radically different relationship between buildings and streets and, by extension, buildings and the city. Rather than turn its back on the road and, therefore, the community, it faces out and invites us in."

– Christopher Hume in the *Toronto Star*

MAY

Toronto Comic Arts Festival

In 2009, for the first time, the library partnered with the local comic community to host the Toronto Comic Arts Festival at the Toronto Reference Library.



Toronto Comic Arts Festival drew a huge crowd.

"It's a great way to meet other cartoonists and reach out to readers. Toronto Reference Library is an amazing space and the fact that the comic festival is in a library lends legitimacy to the medium. A comics convention can be a bit insular; you attract comic fans, but not many other folk. But everyone goes to the Toronto Public Library! The library is a great place to find out about something new."

– Dinosaur Comics creator and Toronto Comic Arts Festival guest Ryan North

On May 7, the Toronto Public Library Foundation publicly launched re:vitalize

The Toronto Reference Library Revitalize Campaign, a \$10 million broad-based capital campaign, was the first of its kind in Toronto Public Library's 125-year history.

"The Foundation's goal was to build on the significant investments from the City and the Province to enable the Toronto Reference Library to achieve vital enhancements for library users. We are extremely pleased with how well our campaign has been received and are confident in our ability to achieve our goal. It has been through generous and early support from many individuals, foundations and corporations that we have realized \$5.2 million towards our private sector fundraising goal."

– Richard Boxer, re:vitalize Campaign Cabinet and Vice-Chair, Toronto Public Library Foundation



Kennedy/Eglinton Branch staff.

JUNE

Expanded Kennedy/Eglinton Branch reopens to grateful community

Shortly after the renovated and expanded Kennedy/Eglinton Branch reopened, in August 2009, customer visits were up 77 percent from the previous year, customers were asking nearly 150 percent more questions of library staff, and use of library materials in the branch was up over 30 percent.

"What was once a cramped outpost of learning is now a spacious and handsome establishment that has taken Liberty Square to a much better place. I mentally thanked the Toronto Public Library system for this expanded branch in my neighbourhood... it actually makes the area feel better and safer."

– Catherine Raine on her blog at c-raine.com



Bloor/Gladstone community love their new library.

JULY

Thousands attend Bloor/Gladstone Branch reopening

Nearly 1,000 people showed up in the first hour after the newly renovated Bloor/Gladstone Branch reopened after a long closure for renovations.

"I have very fond memories of Bloor/Gladstone Branch. We lived at Lansdowne and Bloor, and each day of the summer, I would walk along Bloor only to end up at [the library] where I felt safe and amused. I am 40 years old now and I have brought my three young boys here today to experience the warmth and generosity this library holds. Thank you so much for investing in this important public space. The neighbourhood is very lucky to have it. Thank you to all the staff who continue to provide memories and a safe haven."

— from the Bloor/Gladstone guest book on opening day

AUGUST

Love letter to Spadina Branch

In August, blogger Kerry Clare wrote a love letter to her favourite Toronto Public Library branch.

"When my daughter was six weeks old, she joined the library. The library was a destination in an otherwise empty and lonely day, but it was fun to get her card, to select books that I would enjoy reading to her at home. In August, we were invited to join a [library] Baby/Toddler group. The group became the highlight of our week. Being at home all day with my baby is harder than I ever imagined it would be. Your staff is so kind and friendly to me, sweet to my baby, helpful with my requests and I'm always greeted warmly... I hope your staff realize how much value they add to customers' experience."

— blogger Kerry Clare and Baby Harriet



The Bram & Bluma Appel Salon at the Toronto Reference Library.

SEPTEMBER

Beautiful, state-of-the-art event space opens at the heart of the city

The Bram and Bluma Appel Salon, a premiere public space for discourse and community engagement, opened in September at the Toronto Reference Library, meeting with wonderful response. So far, the Appel Salon has welcomed 3,600 people to library events being held in the space.

"This time around, the library is encouraging talking. The new Bram and Bluma Appel Salon at the Toronto Reference Library will host ongoing forums and public debates where citizens join in... The library's central location makes it a good place to gather a mix of people for enlightening discussions and forums."

— Stephen Smysniuk, the *Toronto Star*



Katie Stelmanis Makes Some Noise at the library.

NOVEMBER

Library Makes Some Noise

Throughout November, Toronto Public Library presented Make Some Noise... Take Some Noise, a series of concerts and workshops in support of our local music collection, and part of ongoing efforts to engage youth in ways that are meaningful to them.

"It's eight o'clock on a Saturday night, and I'm exiting the subway at the North York City Centre, excited to spend an evening at the public library. Usually the prospect of spending the evening at

the library is enough to give me the blues. But this evening is different. As part of the Toronto Public Library's "Make Some Noise" series, 2009 Polaris Prize nominees Timber Timbre and Bruce Peninsula are playing (no, your eyes do not deceive you) at the North York branch of the library. As we wait for friends to show up from downtown, my sister whispers to me, 'This is weird. I'm waiting for the books to fly off the shelves!'"

— Natascha Malta in *The Strand*, U of T,

Victoria College Student newspaper

DECEMBER

Free wi-fi service across the city

All Toronto Public Library branches are now equipped with free wireless internet access.

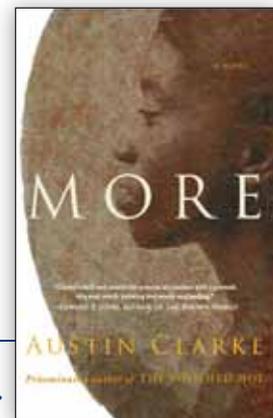
"Often something I find physically in the library will lead me to want to look something up online, and then an online item will lead me to look up a book the library has that isn't available in digital format. That easy, natural back and forth from physical to online wouldn't happen without WiFi. Also, if I'm spending time doing research in the library, I don't have to put everything else on hold. I can still answer emails and keep other things moving."

— *spacing* magazine editor Shawn Micallef

LOOKING AHEAD TO 2010

Toronto Public Library is looking forward to keeping this city's library the busiest and best in the world in 2010. Some exciting developments on the horizon:

- The launch of the library's new and vastly improved website
- A new homework help initiative for newcomer children and the opening of more KidsStop early literacy centres.
- The reopening of two renovated branches, Thorncliffe and Cedarbrae.
- The third annual One Book, encouraging everyone in the city to read and discuss Toronto Book Award winner *More*, by Austin Clarke.





**Library board member profile:
Councillor
Anthony Perruzza**

When library board member Councillor Anthony Perruzza was a child attending St. Jude elementary school, he and his friends used to go to Woodview Park Branch of

Toronto Public Library, which was in a mall next to the school.

"It was the place we went to hang out. We went there to read the paper and magazines and to look for books," says Perruzza. "We'd often hang out for hours. I remember one time the library selected

some art by St. Jude students for an exhibition and I thought that was a really cool experience. I have very fond memories of the library from when I was a child."

As he got older, Perruzza, who grew up in a small house in the city that was very crowded and noisy, found that the library became more than a place to hang out; it became a place of refuge.

"I used the library as a place to study, a place where I went to claim a little space," explains Perruzza. "It was a place where I got my work done. As the city continues to grow and become more crowded, this is a role the library continues to play for many people today."

Perruzza is proud of Toronto's public library system and of his work helping to develop strong library

service in the city, which goes back to the days before amalgamation when the York Woods Library Threatre was being considered for construction by the City and the Library Board, and he helped secure a commitment from then-Mayor Mel Lastman to push the project through.

While Perruzza also has fond memories of using Toronto's university libraries, both at U of T and at York, he believes the accessibility of resources achieved via Toronto Public Library's 99-branch network is something to be very proud of. "Toronto Public Library is a real credit to the city in terms of what it provides," says Perruzza, "and how well it is able to accommodate the many and varied needs of the people of the city with the many resources it has to offer."

**Library Board Highlights
December 14, 2009**

Board approves reduced operating budget request

The Board received a report presenting reduction options for the library's 2010 operating budget request in order to meet the City budget target of \$161 million net (\$174.8 million gross). The Board approved specific budget reductions totalling \$2.6 million or 1.6%, bringing the budget request down to \$167.8 million net, which is a 2.3 % increase to the library's operating budget.

YOUNG VOICES

**POETRY WORKSHOPS
FOR TEENS 12-19**

Malvern Branch

Tuesday, January 26, 4 pm
Kevin Connolly

Centennial Branch

Wednesday, February 17, 4 p.m.
Camille Martin

Bloor/Gladstone Branch

Saturday, March 20, 2 pm
Souvankham Thammavongsa

torontopubliclibrary.ca/youngvoices

COMING SOON TO A BRANCH NEAR YOU

**The eh List
AUTHOR SERIES**

Featuring: John Bemrose · Karen Connelly · Michael Crummey
Guy Gavriel Kay · Jose Latour · Annabel Lyon · Linden MacIntyre
Kate Pullinger · David Rotenberg · Margaret Wente · Jack Whyte



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The Toronto Public Library Board meets monthly at 6 p.m., September through June at Toronto Reference Library, 789 Yonge Street, Toronto. Meetings are open to the public. Board Contact: Nancy Marshall 416-393-7215.

Website: torontopubliclibrary.ca

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