

## Chair's Report January 25, 2016

### Awards

Torontoist readers have named Toronto Public Library the city's **Superhero of 2015**, edging out competitors, including the Toronto Blue Jays and the TORONTO sign in Nathan Phillips Square. In its nomination earlier this month, Torontoist touted the Library's virtues: "On any given day, TPL's librarians can be heard giving tips to adolescents on how to find books and movies about Kareem Abdul-Jabbar, showing seniors how to use the internet, guiding researchers through the archives, and telling homeless people where to find the bathroom with equal amounts of patience and grace." The January 8 post announcing the Library as the city's Superhero for 2015 called the Library "a reliable and beloved institution," and mentioned 2015 highlights, including the opening of our 100th branch, the new green screen room at Toronto Reference Library, and the interactive poetry map we launched this past April. This marks the Library's second Superhero of the Year win, the first being in 2009.

### Partnerships, outreach and other community initiatives

Toronto Public Library has been working with other city organizations to help orient Toronto's newest residents, the **Syrian refugees** who arrived recently. Multicultural services staff from the Library participated in the City of Toronto's information fair for sponsors of Syrian refugees at City Hall in December. There were more than 700 attendees and many expressed their appreciation of the Library's services.

As well, multicultural services and Scarborough area staff attended a "Supporting Syrian Refugees in Scarborough Information and Resource Event" coordinated by the Toronto East Quadrant Local Immigrant Partnership (LIP) with more than 250 people in attendance, including sponsors, potential sponsors, interested residents and thirty new arrivals. Staff at the library table connected with approximately 60 of the attendees providing valuable information about library services. Staff also made great connections with attendees, other agencies and City Departments. The East Quadrant (LIP) is now focusing on developing opportunities for meet-ups both for sponsors and for refugees, and the Library will stay involved with these important initiatives. Similar events are planned at other LIPs across the City with TPL staff participating.

The Library continues to develop and participate in initiatives to support the **Syrian refugees**, including:

- a one-page Welcome document summarizing TPL's range of services was developed to welcome and support Syrian refugees and their sponsors; it was distributed at the information fairs held across the City, to local agencies, and provided to all staff, available in both English and Arabic;
- TPL will present at a workshop at the Ontario Library Association (OLA) Superconference on Thursday January 28, "Serving Multicultural Communities in the 21st Century". A portion of the session will be devoted to audience participation for sharing strategies, tips and ideas on supports to Syrian Refugees;

- TPL worked closely with the Toronto Newcomer Office and colleagues on the City's Interdivisional Newcomers Team to update the City Newcomer Brochure of City Services;
- Plans are underway to customize TPL's Registration Welcome Package to include services and supports to welcome Syrian refugees. Content and translation requirements are being developed;
- A post on the Library's New to Canada blog warmly welcomes the Syrian refugees and has been shared widely on social media, generating enthusiastic response. The post has received more than 2,500 page views and has been widely shared on Twitter and Facebook;
- Danforth/Coxwell Branch participated in an event called Sleeping out for Syrians in December, offering children's programming during the pre-sleepout event. Library staff worked with about 20 children, ranging from two to 15 years old, allowing their parents to freely participate in an information session about the refugees;
- Staff is collaborating with other library systems across the country to share plans for welcoming the Syrian refugees;
- Staff is exploring ways of expanding and promoting the MAP program for refugees;
- The Library is doubling the budget for Arabic material and, as many refugees speak Armenian, increasing that budget too. The challenge will be in sourcing the material and staff are actively looking for additional vendors both in North America and overseas. All items will be designated as "rush" and made available as soon as possible.

**A new and vibrant mural**, which is the work of artists Elicser and Drew Moseley, was unveiled at Bendale Branch in early November. The result of a partnership between Street Art Toronto (StART), the City of Toronto and Toronto Public Library, the eye-catching mural transforms the public's idea of graffiti by creating accessible public art that beautifies the HVAC enclosure on which it is mounted. Diverse people of all ages, and some fantastical animal friends, are depicted reading and interacting, supporting the values of library services. As a component of the partnership, Elicser also visited the branch to speak to two classes of Grade 8 students from Knob Hill Public School engaging them in a lively, interactive discussion about art and its creation.

Phase 1 of the City of Toronto planning study **TOCore: Planning Toronto's Downtown** was approved by City Council on December 9. TOCore is a three-year interdivisional study that responds to the rapid growth and intensification of the downtown, examines how Toronto's downtown should grow and what physical and social infrastructure will be required to ensure that growth positively contributes to Toronto's downtown as a great place to live, work, learn, play and invest. Twelve library branches are located in the study area and the Library is a key participant in the project through membership on the Community Services and Facilities interdivisional team, which is mandated to "develop a community services and facilities strategy for the downtown that is responsive to the needs of a growing and diverse population for recreation, child care, libraries, schools, human services and public health." Staff attended and facilitated public meetings and staff focus groups and provided extensive information, data along with preliminary

recommendation on library service in the downtown core. The Library will continue to contribute as the study moves into Phase 2, Planning & Analysis, in 2016.

<http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2015.TE12.43>

### **Programs and exhibits**

The Library's social media outreach strategy includes sharing videos of high profile programs held in the Bram & Bluma Appel Salon on YouTube. By the end of 2015, **Toronto Public Library's YouTube channel** had received more than one million views. Some of the most viewed videos include recordings of: a visit by Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist, activist and author Chris Hedges this past spring; an event featuring Canadian journalist and bestselling author Malcolm Gladwell in 2012; a 2014 visit by English journalist and author Caitlin Moran; and a program featuring Mike Holmes, Canadian general contractor, television show host and rescuer of homeowners embroiled in home renovations gone wrong.

[youtube.com/torontopubliclibrary](http://youtube.com/torontopubliclibrary)

In partnership with the Toronto Public Library, PEN Canada presents its annual **Freedom to Read Week** event, Embattled Truths, at Toronto Reference Library on February 24. Award-winning journalist and bestselling author Max Blumenthal will speak about the challenges of sifting truth from propaganda when reporting on conflict in the Gaza Strip.

[torontopubliclibrary.ca/freedomtoread](http://torontopubliclibrary.ca/freedomtoread)

Aspiring poets are invited to meet **Toronto Public Library Poet in Residence Brian Brett** on February 18 at a meet and greet at Toronto Reference Library. Poets are also encouraged to submit their work for review and feedback. Prize-winning author and teacher Brian Brett has published collections of poetry and short fiction, as well as novels and memoirs.

[torontopubliclibrary.ca/poetinresidence](http://torontopubliclibrary.ca/poetinresidence)

A **new show at the TD Gallery** at Toronto Reference Library, called Special Collections: A to Z, will showcase an alphabet of curiosities from the Library's special collections, from Arctic Exploration to Zero Gravity. Running from February 20 to April 24, the exhibition will explore an eclectic array of items, including rare first-edition books, original artwork, games, costume designs and much more. The exhibit features materials from the Arthur Conan Doyle Collection, the Baldwin Collection of Canadiana, Special Collections in the Arts, the Merril Collection of Science Fiction, Speculation & Fantasy, and the Osborne Collection of Early Children's Books. The 2016 season of the TD Gallery is generously sponsored by TD Bank Group.

[torontopubliclibrary.ca/tdgallery](http://torontopubliclibrary.ca/tdgallery)

### **Collections**

Toronto Public Library recently issued a press release welcoming Penguin Random House's **reduced ebook prices for libraries**. The new pricing model will help public libraries achieve their goal of providing universal access to ebooks, which is a high priority given booming borrowing rates and high demand for this content. At 3.1 million,

Toronto Public Library had the highest 2015 circulation in the world on OverDrive, the primary vendor of ebooks in the library world. Through our leading role as a member of the Canadian Public Libraries for Fair Ebook Pricing, Toronto Public Library continues to work with other public library systems to advocate for a more reasonable and flexible pricing model with all five multinational publishers (Hachette Book Group, HarperCollins, Macmillan Publishers, Penguin Random House and Simon & Schuster). Since issuing the press release, Penguin Random House has expressed interest in working with Canadian libraries on ebook access and pricing issues.

**[fairpricingforlibraries.org](http://fairpricingforlibraries.org)**

### **Staff training, enrichment and other enhancement opportunities**

As always, Toronto Public Library will have a strong presence at the **Ontario Library Association Super Conference** (January 27-30). Things kick off with a tour on the first day of the conference of Fort York and Scarborough Civic Centre branches, Toronto's 99th and 100th library branches respectively. The tour will also feature the Ellesmere Processing Centre, where participants will get a chance to see how more than 440,000 new items are catalogued and processed every year, and 45,000 delivery items are handled every day. Over the course of the four-day conference, 20 Toronto Public Library staff members will be participating in panels, presentations and workshops on a diverse range of topics, including partnerships with the medical community in support of early literacy, diversity and inclusion, web literacy, community led libraries, merchandising collections and serving multicultural communities. Library Board members Councillor Paul Ainslie and Archana Shah are registered to attend the conference.

**[olasuperconference.ca](http://olasuperconference.ca)**

### **Foundation**

The Toronto Public Library Foundation is happy to be ending 2015 on a particularly high note. **The Catherine and Maxwell Meighen Foundation** has donated an exceptional \$100,000 in support of Mobile Library Services. The donation will accelerate the Vehicle Replacement Fund and enhance collections for the bookmobiles and for Home Library Service.

Throughout 2015, the Foundation invited donors to join in the celebration of the Library's 2015 milestone of 100 branches by becoming patrons of the **Council of 100**. The 45 library champions who responded by committing \$10,000 or more, will be recognized in a half-page ad appearing in the *Toronto Star* and *The Globe and Mail* on January 23.

Prepared by Toronto Public Library staff.