City Librarian's Report
January 30, 2017

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Breaking Down Barriers to Access, Driving Inclusion

An enthusiastic reader at one of the detention centres where Toronto Public Library (TPL) is piloting the **Embedded Librarian Project** told the onsite librarian that he was eager for his upcoming release from the centre, because he wanted to get a copy of the book he'd been reading, finish it, and join a book club. Successes such as this have led to the pilot's extension to August 31, 2017. The project places librarians in communities such as Toronto Employment Social Services, The Spot – Jane-Finch Community Family Centre, and Toronto South and East Detention Centres, where they focus on reaching vulnerable individuals at their point of need, and connecting them with relevant library service. Among other successes, the project has led to the use of targeted fines forgiveness and the piloting of a library card profile for persons who are precariously housed. Many clients have followed up with their local branch after meeting an embedded librarian. Now as the pilot heads into its second phase, attention will turn to building staff capacity and competencies for this type of outreach, and integrating the service into library operations.

The Library's continued support of **Syrian refugees** is playing a significant role in helping them get settled, particularly as many of the privately sponsored and government assisted newcomer families are no longer receiving financial assistance as of the end of 2016. On November 23 and December 9, TPL participated in two information sessions hosted by the Toronto Newcomer Office, with the goal of informing Syrian newcomers, settlement workers, and private sponsors about municipal supports and services available. Library staff engaged and informed over 65 participants about library resources and services, fines reduction, job search information, and Library Settlement Partnerships. And on December 10, the Library participated in a resource fair, specifically targeted to Syrian newcomers who would be transitioning from financial assistance, hosted by the Islamic Institute of Toronto (IIT). Seventy-five newcomers learned about card registration, library services and job search resources.

Establishing TPL as Toronto's Centre for Continuous and Self-Directed Learning

The 2017 **Personal Finance** campaign kicked off in January and runs through to March, with over 75 free programs in branches throughout the city. The campaign features some familiar faces as well as new speakers presenting on a wide range of topics from tax planning to estate planning, index investing to unconventional ways to save money. Authors and industry experts who will be presenting include Gail Vaz-Oxlade and Victoria Ryce, co-authors of *CEO of Everything*; Ellen Roseman, personal finance columnist and consumer affairs columnist with the *Toronto Star*; Kerry Taylor, consumer expert and Canada's top money blogger; and David Trahair, *CPA Magazine* columnist. TPL is also partnering with Woodgreen Community Services to offer a variety of financial literacy presentations, including income tax clinics at select branches serving priority neighbourhoods. Session topics include Benefits, Supports and Tax Credits for Persons Living with Disabilities and Credit and Debt Management.
tpl.ca/personalfinance

Building on previously successful **Family Literacy Month** celebrations, TPL expanded on ABC Life Literacy Canada's national Family Literacy Day initiative again this year. Library branches across the city presented fun programs in January to encourage and inspire families to read and engage in literacy-related activities together. Programs included puppet shows, storytelling, game nights, exciting crafts and building projects. The Family Literacy Day launch, featuring a Barbara Reid clay art program, took place at Cedarbrae Branch and was streamed to York Woods Branch via telepresence. Also new for 2017 was a puppet show delivered first in English and then in French at Palmerston Branch. A Family Literacy Month booklet, combining a recommended reading list and a TPL-wide bingo contest, was available in branches and online. The booklet encouraged families to spend time together reading and completing fun literacy-rich activities for a chance to win books and games. Thanks to the Friends of Toronto Public Library, South Chapter, for their generous support.
tpl.ca/familyliteracy

TPL is pleased to announce its annual **First & Best Booklist for 2016**, a selection of the very best in Canadian books for children from birth to age five. First & Best books have been selected because they are fun to read and also help build early literacy skills. All the books in this year's First & Best list are available for holds through the Library's website and at library branches across the city. First & Best is part of Ready for Reading, a set of free, high-quality library programs and services, founded on extensive research and designed to help build reading readiness.

Creating Community Connections through Cultural Experiences

World-famous authors, an award-winning screenwriter, and a feminist icon headline the **new season in the Bram and Bluma Appel Salon** at Toronto Reference Library. Fourteen events featuring high-profile artists and thinkers will include Canadian favourites like Eden Robinson, Heather O'Neill, Margaret Atwood and Elan Mastai, and international literary superstars like Paul Auster, Etgar Keret, Roxane Gay and Mohsin Hamid. Current issues and relevant hot topics that will be explored include a discussion on Toronto's untouchable real estate market featuring Toronto's chief urban planner Jennifer Keesmaat, founder of Westbank Projects Corp; and the complicated ethics of hacks and leaks, debated by Anonymous expert Gabriella Coleman, Mozilla Foundation's Executive Director, Mark Surman, and Fortune writer Mathew Ingram, at an event presented in partnership with the McLuhan Centre at the University of Toronto.
tpl.ca/appelsalon

Celebrate **Black History Month** at the Library this February. With a sponsorship from TD Bank, we are pleased to bring fun and thought-provoking events to library branches around the city. Kicking things off, a candid discussion on the achievements of Toronto's Black communities and the Black Lives Matters movement on February 1. Other events throughout February will include Canada's Poet Laureate, George Elliott Clarke honouring the work of the late Austin Clarke; Toronto Mass Choir performing their cutting-edge gospel sound; discussions on Toronto's hip hop trailblazers; and stories of "difficult women" with Roxane Gay. Plus dance, art exhibits and films for the whole family.
tpl.ca/blackhistory

Writers of fiction are invited to submit manuscripts for review and feedback from TPL's latest **writer in residence**, award-winning author Pasha Malla. Manuscripts will be accepted for consideration up until February 16. In addition to meeting one-on-one with authors, Malla will lead workshops in February, March and April that will included discussions about creating strong fictional openings, the writer-editor relationship, dialogue in a story, and literary agents. Pasha Malla is the author of five books, including *The Withdrawal Method*, shortlisted for the Commonwealth Prize and winner of the Trillium Book Award. He is a frequent contributor to Newyorker.com, *The Walrus* and *The Globe and Mail*.
tpl.ca/writerinresidence

Transforming for 21st Century Service Excellence

In response to a **call to action by The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada**, TPL has engaged the Ontario Federation of Indigenous Friendship Centres (OFIFC) to provide training to library staff. Call to Action #57 calls upon federal, provincial, territorial, and municipal governments to provide education to public servants on the history of Aboriginal peoples, including the history and legacy of residential schools, the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, Treaties and Aboriginal rights, Indigenous law, and Aboriginal-Crown relations. The OFIFC provides cultural competency training to a wide range of organizations, and will help staff explore how TPL can strengthen engagement with urban Indigenous people and organizations to provide relevant services; understand how to interact with Indigenous communities; and better understand the Toronto Indigenous people's context. Two sessions were conducted in 2016 with a positive response from staff. Further sessions are planned for 2017. The training is mandatory for all staff.

The **OLA SuperConference** takes place again at the Metro Toronto Convention Centre, this year from February 1 to 4. This event, which is the largest library conference in Canada, serves as an excellent opportunity for library staff and trustees to share and learn about developments in the field and to network with colleagues. This year's theme is "All In" which speaks to the core library values of inclusiveness and diversity. TPL staff will not only be attending this four-day event, but also contributing as presenters on such topics as middle childhood, prison outreach, and advancing digital inclusion. Library Board members Paul Ainslie, Dianne LeBreton and Archana Shah are registered to attend.

TPL's relationship with the **Open Data Institute of Toronto** is continuing to generate exciting activities in the aftermath of a couple of very successful hackathons. Library staff and a group of participants from the second annual hackathon, held at Toronto Reference Library in the fall of 2016, continue to meet weekly to create a booking calendar app that will improve access to the unique equipment and spaces found in the Library's Digital Innovation Hubs. In addition, two post-hackathon programs were developed to continue the conversation around open data and poverty. On November 9, John Roberts, Chief Privacy Officer and Archivist of Ontario, discussed how privacy issues arise in a data-enabled approach to tackling policy. And on November 23, an engaging workshop on the many ways citizens can participate in local politics was

delivered at Toronto Reference Library. Plans are also underway to host the third annual Hackathon, and to develop targeted staff training, as well as introductory open data workshops for the public.

Agincourt Branch reopened at the end of 2016, with exciting enhancements to the second floor that include light-filled spaces, an expanded teen zone, two new programming rooms, a new staff workroom, more laptop counters and study spaces, and a new welcoming public lounge area.

In keeping with the City of Toronto's direction, using data-driven performance measures to inform service and budget decisions in 2016, TPL completed the work of installing **People Counters** at the public entrances and exits of all branches. Accurate daily and hourly visit counts allow us to measure more precisely branch use, trends, and traffic patterns, including peak periods, in order to better understand customer needs and service preferences. In 2016, April was the busiest month and Tuesdays were the busiest days of the week. Analysing People Counter data along with circulation and computer reservation data allows us to determine what in-branch activities customers engage in during particular times, and the distances customers travel to get to a branch. TPL will utilize this data to help refine the services available at a given location – including everything from the number of seats in a branch, to the number of computers, to wireless capacity. We continue to explore innovative ways to use this data, including reporting on after-hours use, and plans are underway to install People Counters in specific areas of branches, such as program spaces, teen zones, and auditoriums, to further refine our understanding of in-branch activity.