

Breaking Down Barriers to Access, Driving Inclusion

The second phase of the Toronto Public Library (TPL) **Wi-Fi Hotspot Lending Pilot** launched on February 1, 2017 with an upgraded unlimited data plan. Participants were recruited at pilot locations and all hotspots are currently loaned out. The program will be evaluated after the completion of phase two and recommendations, including possible expansion, will be made at this time.

TPL's new bookmobile has arrived and it will be on the road soon, serving areas that are not close to library branches or where there is a physical barrier that makes getting to a library more challenging. New features include wifi service, technology to support electronic resources, digital sign boards, along with a wide selection of popular materials for borrowing. Collections will be customized to reflect the needs of the various communities served. The 30-foot vehicle is wrapped in an eye-catching design, which will serve as a great promotional tool for TPL as it travels around the city.

tpl.ca/bookmobile

Funded by Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC), Toronto's **Library Settlement Partnerships (LSP)** program consists of partnerships with seven local settlement agencies, providing year-round information, referrals and group activities for newcomers at 13 library branches across the city. This past fall was busy – in October and November alone, LSP served 4,345 newcomers; and more than 1,100 people attended TPL LSP Week special events at 11 branches. The theme was Dance from Around the World, celebrating newcomers' contributions to dance in Canada through a variety of multicultural performances. Staff recently participated in two "After the First Year: Municipal Supports for Syrian Refugees in Toronto" information sessions, organized by the City's Toronto Newcomer Office. And in December, Fairchild TV, a popular Chinese TV station, aired a segment on LSP, with multicultural senior services specialist Elsa Ngan and three LSP settlement workers discussing the program. The Library also conducted outreach about LSP to future librarians at the University of Toronto's Faculty of Information Science iSchool. IRCC has tentatively approved LSP funding for 2017 to 2020.

tpl.ca/newtocanada

Expanding Access to Technology and Training

Six **Innovation Intern Librarians** began a six-month project in January to research the digital literacy needs of Torontonians. With new Digital Innovation Hubs planned for locations across the city, more Pop-Up Learning Labs, Enhanced Learning Centres, and exciting new equipment for programming rolling out in 2017, the work of the Innovation Intern Librarians will help ensure we are providing the technology access and training that our communities most need. The Intern Librarians are consulting with staff across the system for advice and insight on customer needs and preferences. Then they will be

heading out of the Library, equipped with 3D printers, Arduinos, MaKey MaKeys, Snap Circuits and more, and using community outreach and engagement strategies to learn from the people themselves. The projects will culminate with reports on the digital literacy needs of each district.

The Pop-Up Learning Lab (PULL) is a kit that consists of a collection of emerging technology that moves to different branches each month. Each kit has a dedicated Digital Design Technician who is responsible for delivering programs, staff training and outreach. In April 2016, TPL launched three kits with great success and followed up with three more at the beginning of 2017. Staff help animate the equipment by offering new and free programs across the city. Programs include experiences in 3D design, computer programming, robotics, game development and electronics. As PULL expands into the new year, not only are the number of PULLS around the city being increased, but new equipment such as robotics and virtual reality is being included.

tpl.ca/popuplearning

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

Toronto Public Health (TPH) has agreed to expand the **Your Health Matters partnership** with the Library. The current partnership is a pilot between the Chronic Disease and Injury Prevention directorate and the Library to develop and promote programs, collections, services and access to information through displays in ten branches that serve neighbourhood improvement areas (NIAs). A wide variety of TPH programs and services are held in libraries and the partnership extends into communities, particularly through interagency networks in priority and NIA areas. There are public health nurses reaching out to vulnerable adults at TRL and several other branches; TPH staff meeting in libraries with pregnant and new mothers to provide coaching on nutrition; and nurses working with youth in our Youth Hubs. TPL and TPH have a long history of working together to improve access to health information and services for Torontonians, dating back at least to the 1918 Spanish Flu epidemic. Discussions are underway to determine how this new expansion will proceed.

tpl.ca/yourhealthmatters

Creating Community Connections through Cultural Experiences

From February 26 to March 4, TPL is celebrating **Freedom to Read Week**, an annual event that encourages Canadians to think about and reaffirm their commitment to intellectual freedom. By providing universal access to knowledge, ideas and opinions, public libraries are a true force for democracy, which can only flourish with an informed electorate. This is truer than ever in today's information age. Seventy percent of Torontonians use the Library regularly, borrowing more than 30 million items every year and attending thousands of programs that give people uncensored access to a wide variety of topics, beliefs and opinions. We've created a web page to mark Freedom to Read Week, which includes links to programs like Intellectual Freedom in the Surveillance Age, an Uncensored Writing Workshop, librarian blogs about freedom to read, and examples of library materials that have been challenged in Toronto. Library staff will also

be hosting an AMA (Ask Me Anything) on Reddit on March 1 as part of the week. Freedom to Read Week content will be widely promoted on TPL social media channels. tpl.ca/freedomtoread

TPL will be celebrating the **150th anniversary of Confederation** online and in branches during 2017, through a number of innovative and engaging programs. Sesquicentennial activities will include a speaker's series in the Bram & Bluma Appel Salon and a March/April exhibit at the Toronto Reference Library focussing on the Arctic, both cosponsored by the U. S. Consulate. The TD Gallery will feature two sesquicentennial-themed exhibits: Destination Canada (May 20 to July 30), in partnership with Passages Canada and The Ward Museum, exploring the diverse experiences of migration, arrival and finding a place of belonging in Canada; and I am Canada (November 11, 2017 to January 21, 2018), in partnership with Scholastic Canada, celebrating what it means to be Canadian, through Canadian Children's book art. Library branches around the city will offer programming, in partnership with groups such as Parks Canada, City of Toronto Museum & Heritage Services, and other community partners. A website with 150 digital narratives of significant events, people and places in Canada's history will also be developed – each with a Toronto connection, and featuring the Library's rich Special Collections.

A series of sculptures created by Canadian artists and inspired by four Canadian books, **Sculpting New Reads**, will be on display in the Browsery at Toronto Reference Library from January 28 to April 22. The works include installations by artists W. W. Hung (*Children of Earth and Sky* by Guy Gavriel Kay, January 28-February 17); Mark Laliberte (*Job Shadowing* by Malcolm Sutton, February 18-March 10); Shannon Scanlan (*13 Ways of Looking at a Fat Girl* by Mona Awad, March 11-31); and Diana Hosseini (*The Pain Tree* by Olive Senior, April 1-22). The sculptures were also featured at Toronto's Word on the Street festival this past fall.

On January 9, the Youth Hub at York Woods Branch, in partnership with Girl Talk Empowerment, a GTA-based movement empowering thousands of girls across Canada and the U.S., hosted **an afternoon workshop of song, dance and art creation** to introduce youth to the impact of social change through artistic expression. Rapper Rosie Monday teamed up with youth mentor and educator Jarratt Best to lead 30 youth in creating powerful free-style rap based on their life experiences; developing an expression board filled with inspirational thoughts; and choreographing and executing a dance that sent a strong message of youth empowerment. Monday and Best plan to return to collaborate with the youth to teach them how to create a music video using digital equipment, including audio and video tools, and editing software.

A new interactive technology, **telepresence**, was used at the January 25 launch of Family Literacy Month to stream a clay craft program led by award-winning author/illustrator Barbara Reid so that children and families at two TPL branches could participate. The program took place at Cedarbrae Branch and was streamed to York Woods Branch through telepresence, allowing Reid to interact with the families at both locations. After circulating among the children at Cedarbrae Branch and commenting on their creations,

Reid used the telepresence technology to ask each child at York Woods to show her what they were working on. Thanks to ABC Life Literacy for co-sponsoring this event, and to Barbara Reid for donating her time.

Transforming for 21st Century Service Excellence

TPL's participation in the **2017 OLA Super Conference** (February 1-4) included 10 staff members presenting at six sessions on the topics of community collaboration, wifi hotspot lending, embedded librarianship, literary speed dating, library services for middle childhood, and measuring benchmarks, outcomes and impacts. More than 280 TPL staff were registered to attend this year's conference, held as always at the Metro Toronto Convention Centre. Also at OLA, former Director, Branches Anne Bailey received the Larry Moore Distinguished Service Achievement Award, awarded by the OLA Board of Directors, bestowing "an honorary life membership on a member who has made an outstanding contribution to the libraries of Ontario through his or her work within the Association." Also in attendance at the Conference were Library Board members Paul Ainslie, Dianne LeBreton and Archana Shah attended.

On January 31, as part of The Role of the Librarian staff training series, librarian Jessamyn West of MetaFilter moderating fame, presented a lecture, **Social Justice Roles for Libraries and Librarians**. Her focus was on the complex role librarians can play in social justice issues within their communities. West's presentation spoke to technology, literacy, building connections through community engagement, advocacy, and increasing opportunities for all Torontonians, with a special emphasis on marginalized and poorer communities. Participants gained insight into the crucial role they play in breaking down barriers, while enriching the greater community. Jessamyn West's blog, librarian.net, which has been "putting the rar in librarian since 1999," advocates for a public library "where people can read what they want, be who they are, and inform themselves about what interests them." She was the project leader at the Internet Archive's Open Library project, and is an active contributor to Wikipedia.

TPL is now offering a number of **unique venues for premium cultural experiences** at affordable prices, managed by experienced and expert event staff. The Library's beautiful buildings and distinctive spaces, in desirable, easy-to-access locations across the city, are perfect for special events, business meetings, conferences and weddings, just to name a few of the possibilities. In addition to the Bram & Bluma Appel Salon, which opened at Toronto Reference Library in 2009, the Library now offers additional spaces at the Reference Library, as well as at three branches for after-library-hours events: Bloor/Gladstone Branch, Fort York Branch and Scarborough Civic Centre Branch. Revenue from the rental of these new premium spaces will go toward supporting library programs and services.

venuere rentals.tpl.ca

Runnymede Branch is closed as of Monday, January 30 for a four to five month renovation. Customers are being advised that, while the book drop at Runnymede will be closed during the renovation, Swansea and Annette branches will have extended open

hours and holds can be picked up at Annette Branch. Programs will continue to be offered at nearby library branches. The renovation will create more open, flexible spaces that respond to customer needs for quiet study and reading spaces, group study, computer use, collaboration, and program attendance.

Library customers who suffer from Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD) and other light deficiency disorders will have the opportunity to try out **light therapy lamps** at two TPL branches, Brentwood and Malvern, starting in February. The six-month pilot project aims to provide access to light therapy lamps for Torontonians who might not otherwise be able to afford it. The lamps will be non-circulating items, to be used in-branch, available on a first-come, first-served basis. Results of the pilot will be assessed to determine if the service should be expanded.