

# absolutely vital

A newsletter from  
The Toronto Public Library Foundation

## Welcome back to Fairview Branch

Fairview branch recently re-opened following an extensive 3<sup>rd</sup> floor renovation and revitalization, transforming its spaces to reflect feedback from the community. Reimagined as a modern, inclusive space built for learning, connection and community, the branch's flexible design and vision is meeting the needs of customers of all ages and abilities.

Current features include a new Digital Innovation Hub and Audio Visual Studio, study pods and additional meeting spaces, a Virtual Interview Room, and expanded custom-built spaces for teens, including a Youth Hub. A donor-funded reading lounge on the main floor, with support from the Holdbest Foundation, welcomes the community in.



## Meet Paula Costa-Kuswanto

### Senior Branch Head, Fairview Branch

Paula has been in this exciting role since 2019. She loves working with the talented branch staff and helping customers with their information needs. The new Audio Visual Studio is her favourite part of the renovation, where library customers can film videos, create podcasts, or even record a song – all for free using new equipment. It's a wonderful resource for students to use for a school assignment or anyone with a creative idea in mind! Paula says, "It's exciting to play a small role in these amazing projects."







## Annual Fundraising Gala Biblio Bash raises over \$1M in support of Toronto Public Library

Co-presented by Fitzrovia and CIBC, this year's unforgettable event hosted 425 guests and 37 of Canada's notable authors for a sold-out black tie gala and raised \$1,070,100 for Toronto Public Library. Together, Toronto's business leaders, philanthropists, city builders and library lovers raised unprecedented funds for programs and partnerships that support teen social health and mental wellness.

For photos, videos, news coverage and social media highlights visit, [bibliobash.ca](https://bibliobash.ca) or search #BiblioBash on Instagram.

## A family friendly event with Literary Circle members Kids Event with Chef Sang Kim

As our first Literary Circle event of the year, the Foundation hosted a family sushi-making workshop with Chef Sang Kim at the Parkdale branch. We were honoured to work with Chef Sang Kim, a celebrity in Toronto's culinary world who regularly hosts food making workshops at the Library to set up future generations for success. We had a blast celebrating the history and culture of sushi while learning how to perfect different kinds of rolls.

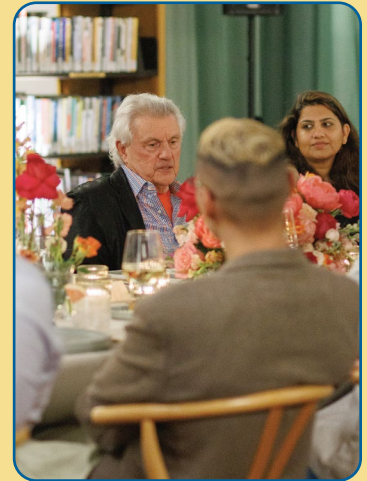
“I truly enjoy teaching young people in Youth Hubs how to make a dish better, but really to teach them a life skill.”

- Chef Sang Kim



## A Literary Feast Donor dinner with author John Irving

The TPL Foundation had the pleasure of welcoming guests of the Mantella Corporation to the Toronto Reference Library for an exclusive after-hours dinner in the stacks with award-winning author and screenwriter, John Irving. The one-of-a-kind dinner was a silent auction prize featured at our Biblio Bash gala, and we are so grateful to John Irving for donating his time, and to Sylvia Mantella for her winning bid and longstanding support of Toronto Public Library. It was a magical night made possible thanks to Claire & Tyler MacNamara, The Food Dudes and Element Event Solutions.



### Welcome!

## New Toronto Public Library Foundation Board Members



### Paul Bennett

Retired criminal defence lawyer,  
Director of The Bennett Family  
Foundation



### Jen Grant

Entrepreneur



### Jamie O'Born

CEO, The Printing House  
Ltd. (TPH)



**Congratulations!** Adrian Rocca newly appointed as Vice Chair along with Vice Chair Alaina Aston to the TPL Foundation Board of Directors.



### Adrian Rocca

CEO, Fitzrovia Real Estate Inc.



## TD Summer Reading Club Setting Kids Up for Success

For more than 25 years, the TD Summer Reading Club (TDSRC) has helped over 10 million kids strengthen their literacy skills, improve confidence in reading, and avoid the “summer slide” of a two-month break from school. This national, bilingual program demonstrates the shared belief in the transformative power of libraries.

Register at: [tdsummerreadingclub.ca](https://tdsummerreadingclub.ca)



**TD Summer Reading Club**  
Runs from June 21 to August 30  
[tpl.ca/reading-club](https://tpl.ca/reading-club)



**TD READY  
COMMITMENT**

## TPL's 2025-2029 Strategic Plan

Toronto Public Library's Strategic Plan (2025-2029) is the result of incredible collaboration. Thousands of residents, along with staff, community organizations and partners, came together to help TPL create a shared vision for the future.

It's an exciting step forward, with four strategic priorities that will shape and guide the Library's work, allow them to plan for the long-term, and be more responsive in the moment to change.

To learn more, visit [tpl.ca/strategicplan](https://tpl.ca/strategicplan)



## Celebrating The Catherine and Maxwell Meighen Foundation Keeping Communities Connected

We are grateful for the longstanding partnership with The Catherine and Maxwell Meighen Foundation, a community leader and visionary in our city providing sustainable, long-term supports that meet Torontonians where they are. This unwavering commitment for the past 27 years has enabled a scope of programs and services like: TPL's Mobile Library Services (MLS), which includes Home Library Service and Bookmobiles that provides out-of-branch services, resources and collections and is a lifeline to residents who are homebound; the Community Librarian Project that supports seniors at home at their point of need; and After School Clubs that offer weekly activities and learning opportunities across 39 library branches for children ages 6-12 years.



**Thank you to the K.M. Hunter Charitable Foundation**  
**Proudly supporting**  
**The Pride Collection**  
**at TPL**

For nearly two decades, the K.M. Hunter Charitable Foundation has played a vital role in growing Toronto Public Library's Pride Collection—the largest circulating 2SLGBTQ+ collection in Canada. With their support, the Library is expanding its physical collection at the Yorkville branch as well as digital offerings through the OverDrive platform. This longstanding partnership has ensured that 2SLGBTQ+ communities feel welcome in our spaces, see themselves reflected in our collections, and can access the writings and works that educate, celebrate and amplify these voices. Thank you for helping to build visibility and expanding the reach of this vital collection.

## Empowering youth to strengthen their physical health and resilience

*Improving Well-Being Through Sport* is a new program in partnership with the City of Toronto's department of Parks and Recreation, designed to enhance health, education, and social well-being of youth aged 13–17. It provides equitable, barrier-free access to sports instruction and skills-based workshops to promote physical and mental wellness and social connections. We are grateful to our lead supporter, Barça Foundation.





## ask an expert

**Claire Argyropoulos**  
District Manager,  
Northern District branches



I met Arden as a teen in 2018 at the Maria A. Shchuka branch when I was the Youth Advisory Group (YAG) facilitator. The Library was a safe, supportive space he felt comfortable in. In the YAG youth volunteer group that we were a part of, I encouraged him to open up and listened to him and his ideas without judgement. We reconnected this year during a video project for the Biblio Bash gala.

**Q: Why is it so important for the Library to have spaces, programs and services for teens?**

**A:** Libraries serve as valuable community hubs where teens can learn, grow, find support from staff and connect with peers. Our branches provide a free and caring environment where young people can be themselves, access our services and hangout. There are so few places and spaces in the city where teens can go and just be themselves.

**Q: How did it make you feel to reconnect with Arden?**

**A:** I was so proud to see Arden again, and how he followed his dream and is flourishing as a pediatric nurse. Toronto Public Library had a special role in helping him overcome his challenges early on. It's amazing what librarians can do to help young people grow.

With reports of loneliness and poor mental health on the rise among Toronto teens, the Library's focus is on investing in opportunities that support connectedness and build resilience. From programs and workshops to building relationships with peers and trusted staff, TPL provides access to information and resources that empower youth — just like Arden! Watch his story to learn more.



Watch  
Arden's story  
to learn more

## Our Spring Campaign was a smashing success!

This spring, we raised an impressive **\$50,000** for Toronto Public Library's highest priority needs, with a focus on programs and partnerships that support the social health and mental well-being of teens. Thank you to all who donated, and a special thanks to Biblio Bash gala supporters for providing a matching gift.



As the need to support the healthy development of teens in our city continues to grow, we're raising funds this summer to make a lasting impact on youth in Toronto. Join us in making a difference.

Donate at: [tplfoundation.ca/summer](https://tplfoundation.ca/summer)

## Donor ♥ for Vickery Bowles, TPL's City Librarian

“

Vickery Bowles and TPL staff kept the libraries functioning during the pandemic. An absolute lifeline for thousands of Torontonians.

“

This donation is in support of Vickery Bowles' brave stance on free speech at the library. I support everyone's right to free speech, even if I don't agree with them.

“

Vickery Bowles is an absolute legend. Her courage in the face of intimidation is an inspiration.

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## Thank you, Vickery Bowles!

This summer, Vickery Bowles is retiring after 10 years at the helm of our world-class library system as City Librarian. She has been a tremendous partner with TPLF, contributing to our Governance and Nominating Committee, attending numerous events and meetings with donors, and collaborating on our strategic priorities and TPL's recent Strategic Plan. On behalf of the staff at the TPL Foundation and our Board of Directors, we wish her all the best!

Join the Conversation



#ImLibraryPeople

## Fundraising News

# Toronto Public Library receives over \$3 million with support from Google.org to launch AI upskilling initiative

On June 4<sup>th</sup> 2025, Google Canada announced a **\$13 Million** Google.org AI Opportunity Fund to strengthen Canada's AI workforce and TPL is proud to be one of four Canadian organizations receiving support.

Google.org



Hon. David Piccini (Ontario Minister of Labour, Immigration, Training and Skills Development), Sabrina Geremia (VP & Country Managing Director, Google Canada), Kim Henderson (First Nations Technology Council), Vickery Bowles (City Librarian, Toronto Public Library), Surranna Sandy (Skills for Change) and Cam Linke (Alberta Machine Intelligence Institute) at the Google.org AI Opportunity Fund Launch Event.



Ab Velasco, TPL manager of innovation (AI services) at Google Canada launch event.

"As AI rapidly transforms our world, it's crucial that members of society understand and have the skills and abilities to shape and leverage these changes. Through Google.org's generous funding, we will launch an AI Upskilling Initiative, focused on the responsible and ethical use of AI and bring tools, resources and learning opportunities to TPL customers."

Vickery Bowles  
City Librarian, Toronto Public Library

## Bridging the digital divide.

TPL's AI upskilling initiative will provide valuable training to 11,000 community members and offer all Torontonians access to free tools and resources to support employment, boost productivity and encourage safe, informed use of AI. This new program is made possible with support from Google.org.

[tpl.ca/learnai](https://tpl.ca/learnai)