

URBAN STORIES:

The Next Chapter



Toronto Public Library's Strategic Plan 2004–2007





URBAN STORIES: The Next Chapter

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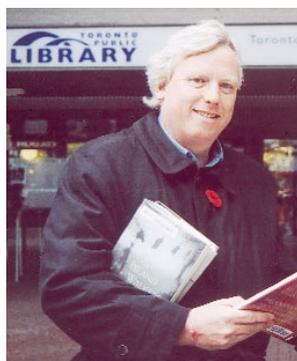
Table of Contents

Message from Mayor David Miller	3
Welcome to Urban Stories: The Next Chapter	4
Our Vision	5
Our First Strategic Plan	6
Engaging Toronto's Citizens	7
Key Priorities 2004–2007	
1. Books and Culture	9
2. Low-Income Neighbourhoods	11
3. Newcomers	13
4. Youth	15
Our Operating Principles	18
Our Mission	20
Our Values	21
Appendix: Achievements from the First Strategic Plan (2000–2003)	22

URBAN STORIES: The Next Chapter



Message from the Mayor



I've always felt that libraries are a civic treasure. They connect people to their communities, inspire imagination, foster culture and support the love of learning.

For over 120 years, Toronto Public Library has served the residents of Toronto, connecting people and communities. During this time, the Library has excelled in the traditional public library role — giving residents access to high quality information and leisure materials. 120 years ago there was no Internet, no electronic databases, no CDs and no DVDs; but the Library has embraced each new technology as it became available ensuring our residents can keep up-to-date in a changing world.

By providing such solid service, the Toronto Public Library has contributed to the strength of our city. But it has done more than that: it has provided opportunities for citizens and communities to engage and participate in our neighbourhoods and it has fostered participation and inclusiveness. In the Library's strategic plan, *Urban Stories: The Next Chapter*, city-building continues to be a high priority, for which, I personally, am grateful.

I am confident that for the next 120 years the Library will continue to support our citizens and help build the city of the future, for the future. Visit your local library branch and see for yourself how *Urban Stories* reflects our common vision.

Mayor David Miller

Spotlight on City Livability

The Canadian Urban Institute (CUI) recently recognized the Library's enormous contribution to the social development, cultural landscape and economic growth of Toronto. On May 26, 2004, CUI announced that the Library had received the inaugural *Urban Leadership Award for City Livability*.

Mayor David Miller, who participated in the event, noted his pleasure at the recognition for the Library. The award recognizes organizations or individuals dedicated to making cities more livable by finding new ways to enhance public places and spaces and by instilling confidence about personal safety and security. The Library was nominated for the award by TD Bank Financial Group, a long-time Library supporter. TD sponsors the Library's annual, citywide Summer Reading Club and the TD Gallery in the Toronto Reference Library.



URBAN STORIES: The Next Chapter

What You Told Us

“Public libraries are the one public forum in which all members of society have equal opportunity to learn, to grow, and to contribute to society.”

“The library is of vital importance to the community. It must be maintained if we are to remain a literate society.”

“The public library is one of the central pillars of a great city. It is a way for citizens to keep growing and learning; a means through which any individual can gain access to information, literature and new worlds, no matter what their economic status.”

“What the city spends on its public library system is an investment in its citizens and its future.”

“Those of us who don't have the money for expensive language classes, for expensive textbooks, for expensive educational services, make use of the library not only for enjoyment, but for learning and activities crucial to our self-improvement and employability.”

Welcome to Urban Stories: The Next Chapter

*I*t was the best of times, it was the worst of times. So begins one time-honoured story of urban life, Charles Dickens' *Tale of Two Cities*. Although Dickens referred to the time of the French Revolution, in many ways his famous first line could apply to contemporary Toronto. We, too, are experiencing a time of great opportunity and great challenge.

The “urban stories” of today are made richer and yet more complicated by an urban landscape where over 100 languages are spoken and over half of our newcomers speak a home language other than English.

We've heard your urban stories and this strategic plan is our response and our blueprint for constructive action. We will continue to make the best of the world's literature available to you — along with the best research and non-fiction materials, free high-speed Internet and a variety of programming for people of all ages. This plan outlines new initiatives to meet your evolving needs.

The Toronto Public Library operates close to 100 branches across the city, serving residents in at least that many languages. Students, newcomers, job-seekers, children, leisure readers, seniors and babies all use the library to meet their information and leisure needs.

And what a challenge to do everything you have asked within the current tight fiscal environment. The Library has felt increasing pressure to provide the same level of service — and more — in spite of the rising cost of books, technology and infrastructure, and limited funds.

To all those Toronto residents who shared with us their vision of the Library, a heart-felt thanks. In addition to confirming the importance of the Library in your lives, you gave us most of the ideas for this multi-year strategic plan. A special thanks also to the Board members who worked so hard with us on making this

Toronto Public Library's Strategic Plan 2004–2007

URBAN STORIES: The Next Chapter



strategic plan a reality: Toronto Public Library Board members William Booth (Vice-Chair), Meyer Brownstone and Mizan Ibrahim; and Toronto Public Library Foundation Board Chair Janet McKelvey.

We can't eliminate the challenges of contemporary urban living, but we can help you access the information and resources you need. With your help, we can continue to build our great Library system, and with it, strengthen our city, our residents and our collective future.

Josephine Bryant
City Librarian

Gillian Mason
Chair, Toronto Public Library Board

Our Vision

Toronto Public Library inspires the spirit of exploration, the joy of reading and the pursuit of knowledge for people of all ages and backgrounds, beginning with the very young.

As cornerstones of our neighbourhoods, our libraries connect people to each other, to their community and to their hopes and dreams.

Our rich resources provide the opportunity for everyone to treasure the past and to create a future that is full of possibility.

The Library promotes and enriches the democratic, cultural, educational and economic life of our diverse and evolving city.



URBAN STORIES: The Next Chapter

Spotlight on Children

Research shows that literacy, learning and success start in the earliest years of life.

That's why the Library puts tremendous resources into delivering thousands of high-quality programs for kids. Programs featuring engaging rhymes, stories and so much more attract youngsters to the Library — and introduce them early to the magic of reading.

Programs, including English Can Be Fun, Kids@Computers, Leading to Reading and Homework Clubs, help kids across the city.

From home, youngsters enjoy Dial-A-Story, 416-395-5400, which now features stories in English, French, Italian, Spanish, Portuguese, Cantonese and Mandarin — with Polish in the works.



Starting in 2003, a remarkable cooperative effort has involved Kiwanis service club volunteers in storytime sessions conducted by Library staff at local agencies in under-served communities.

Our First Strategic Plan

The Library's first strategic plan focused on four broad pillars: supporting children and youth; developing our collections and services; enhancing our branches in recognition of their vital role as community cornerstones; and building the virtual library to reflect the growing emphasis on new information technologies. We worked closely with the City, the Toronto Public Library Foundation and community partners to achieve shared goals.

Going into our second strategic plan, we remain fully committed to defending universal access to high quality library service. We will maintain services for residents of all ages and backgrounds, beginning with the very young. And we will continue to provide our core service — our excellent collection of books and materials — and many of the successful initiatives from our first plan, including the expansion of reading support programs for children, the enhancement to the Library's website and Virtual Reference Library and the improvement of our large branch network. (See Appendix for more about the Library's achievements.)



Storytime introduces the magic of reading to children across the city.

Toronto Public Library's Strategic Plan 2004–2007

URBAN STORIES: The Next Chapter



Engaging Toronto's Citizens

As is most fitting for a public library, this strategic plan was a collective effort of Toronto residents, library stakeholders and staff. In the spring of 2003, the Toronto Public Library Board approved a public consultation plan. It outlined a number of activities to invite and encourage all Toronto residents to participate in planning the future of their library.

Phase One: Understanding Our City

The first step in the strategic planning process was to understand the changes in our city that affect the demand for library service. We conducted extensive research on demographic trends and library usage patterns and interviewed library staff about the changing needs of our users. This research was presented at a planning day with Library Board members. Three major public forums featuring panel discussions were held to generate further discussion on the Library's future direction.



Almost 1,400 Toronto residents attended forums (such as this one at the Toronto Reference Library), participated in focus groups or faxed and emailed us their feedback.

Fast Facts

Toronto Public Library circulates more items and handles more public visits than any other public library system in North America. We are the second busiest library system in the world (second only to Hong Kong!). Consider these fast facts from 2003:

- Walk-in visits: 16.6 million
- Virtual visits: 17.3 million
- Items borrowed: 28.6 million
- Holds filled: 3.7 million
- Number of registered borrowers: 1.55 million

Fast Facts about Strategic Plan Consultations

- 8 public meetings
- 8 staff forums
- 3 stakeholder roundtables
- 92 comments via the Web
- 441 written comments
- 1,384 total participants



URBAN STORIES: The Next Chapter

Spotlight on Seniors

In its first strategic plan, the Library focused on targeted user groups, including seniors. We currently maintain collections at hospitals, seniors homes and other institutions for the aged. We deliver library materials to people who are unable to leave their homes. We are always expanding our collection including books on tape and large print material. We offer enlargeable fonts on our public computers, one-on-one Web training sessions and large screen computer monitors at all our branches.

Toronto Public Library's efforts were recognized recently by the Canadian Library Association. The 2004 W. Kaye Lamb Award for Service to Seniors recognizes a library that has developed an ongoing service, program or procedure of benefit to seniors.

What You Told Us

"The library helps seniors stay actively involved socially and intellectually ...this can be a cruel, lonely City but for the convergence that TPL provides."

"As a senior, I enjoy the library to learn new things that I didn't have time for when I was younger or to travel to places where I would never be able to go."

Phase Two: Responding to the Changing Needs of Our City

In January, the Library Board approved the *Strategic Plan Public Consultation: Big Idea Workbook* as a framework for the second stage of public consultation. The *Workbook* identified four areas of strategic focus:

1. Promoting books and culture
2. Addressing the needs of youth
3. Supporting newcomers
4. Meeting the needs of low-income neighbourhoods.

We posted the *Workbook* on the Library website and made available materials in English, French, Chinese, Tamil, Hindi and Spanish. Because the Library works collaboratively with a wide variety of city and community agencies, we invited stakeholders to attend one of three roundtables to comment on our priority areas and to suggest service strategies where we could work together. Focus groups were held for library staff to review public input and to develop goals and strategies.

Phase Three: Communicating Our Draft Strategic Plan

Our third phase of public consultation involved communicating our draft strategic plan via the website and through five public meetings. Public meetings included an overview of the planning process and the priority areas, followed by discussion.

Through the consultation process for the strategic plan, we heard from almost 1,400 people.

URBAN STORIES: The Next Chapter



Key Priorities 2004–2007

We heard what you had to say about the essential role of libraries, and we developed our four key priorities based on your input. These are:

1. Books and culture
2. Youth
3. Newcomers
4. Low-income neighbourhoods.

Clearly, Toronto residents value our books and branches but also recognize that the Library must respond to the demands of our changing city. Listed below are our goals and the strategies we will implement to meet those goals.

1. Books and Culture

Not surprisingly, books and culture are Toronto residents' first priority for the Library.

GOAL: Increase spending to build collections and improve access

The Library will: build collections that reflect the diversity of interests, cultures and languages in the city; entertain and educate by offering a full range of both fiction and non-fiction; help people learn English, build literacy skills and further education; and offer a variety of formats including CDs, DVDs and large print. Access to all our collections is obviously key; the Library will improve the online catalogue and look for new and creative ways to help users find the materials they need.

With French as one of Canada's official languages, the Library will continue to build our collection of French books, videos and other material, increase the number of French programs and expand outreach to schools. Summer Reading Club materials are already available in both official languages and the Library will actively promote this children's reading initiative to both French and French immersion schools.

Toronto Public Library's Strategic Plan 2004–2007

What You Told Us

"Remember, one of the wonders of the world was the great library at Alexandria! (I learned that in a library!)"

"If we can't go to books and reference materials, how can we learn?"

"In this new information society, the libraries are the playgrounds for the mind."

"With easy access to the Internet, people are getting away from reading books. Library services to promote literacy are essential."

"Entertain and educate — people want the library to build both fiction and non-fiction collections to keep people informed and to support formal education (high school and post secondary) and informal education."



URBAN STORIES: The Next Chapter

Spotlight on Collections

With almost 11 million items in our collection, it's hard to believe that the most common request from our public consultation is "more books." As a public library we are faced with the challenge of satisfying competing interests — meeting the needs of the very young, the elderly, speakers of Canada's official languages, speakers of over a hundred other languages and dialects, leisure readers, job seekers and newcomers to Toronto.

Even within our multilingual audience, there exists a multitude of appetites to whet and to please. Some borrow items in languages other than English because English is not their mother tongue. Others borrow multilingual materials hoping to maintain fluency in a second language.

And buying more books is only part of the solution — you told us you also wanted more in other formats — DVDs, CDs, books on tape. We will continue to monitor changing technologies to best meet your needs.

GOAL: Champion and promote reading; contribute to Toronto's literary culture

More than just a repository of books, Toronto Public Library aims to become a centre for literary events in the City. The Library will encourage reading through innovative activities and events in the branches and beyond. The Library will also offer and support book clubs and book discussion groups.



Toronto residents browse the shelves in search of a "great read."

GOAL: Broaden Torontonians' access to the City's civic and cultural life

Engaging citizens in the civic and cultural life of the City, by holding public forums on topics of interest, has become an increasingly important role played by the Library. Free of any partisan agenda, the Library empowers the City's residents by providing free access to ideas and debates through high profile speakers, authors and cultural events. The Library will forge strong partnerships and participate in cultural events in the City and its neighbourhoods. But we won't abandon the past — the Library will continue to preserve and promote our cultural heritage through the development, digitization and display of our rare and historical Special Collections.

Toronto Public Library's Strategic Plan 2004–2007

URBAN STORIES:

The Next Chapter



2. Low-Income Neighbourhoods

The gap between high-income and low-income neighbourhoods is increasing; Toronto's poor are getting poorer. A Toronto Public Library card is a passport to career and education information and leisure materials well beyond many household budgets. The Library is one of our society's great equalizers, allowing all Toronto residents access to almost 11 million items, free high-speed Internet and a huge range of electronic resources.

- Over 20 percent of Toronto households have incomes below the poverty line.
- Almost 70 percent of the GTA's low-income families live in Toronto.
- The median income in Toronto's 12 poorest neighbourhoods fell from \$43,600 annually in 1990 to \$36,800 in 1999. The median income in Toronto's 12 wealthiest neighbourhoods rose from \$114,200 to \$125,600 over the same period.

GOAL: Provide library service that meets the needs of low-income neighbourhoods in identified areas (high priority branches)

Experience shows that each neighbourhood has a distinct character and distinct needs. Outreach and consultation with the community is a priority to ensure that library services — including hours of operation, collections and programs — meet community needs. We heard that access to quiet study space was important and the Library will make every effort to increase access to public space.

We will extend innovative literacy and reading support programs and collections and enhance our Leading to Reading and Homework Clubs. Providing access to employment-related information, as well as improved access to computers, online information, software and training, will be a priority.

What You Told Us

"With the growing poverty level in the city of Toronto and also the growing cost of books, Toronto Public Library provides an excellent source of reference material."

"I have been going through a really tough period. I have had to do vast amounts of research to upgrade my skills; I cannot afford to "go out," or buy books/magazines/CDs/videos related to achieving my goals. I literally do not know what I would do without the library's resources and comfort."

"No cuts to human services are easy to make, but what a tragedy to make cuts in the one program that targets all members of our community. In the face of all the other challenges so many members of our community face, let's not take away their right to learn."



URBAN STORIES: The Next Chapter

Spotlight on Community Partnerships

Toronto Public Library recognizes the power of collaboration and works cooperatively with government, not-for-profit and private sector organizations.

As an example, in 2004, with financial support from Human Resources and Skills Development Canada, the Library has undertaken a new project in the Flemingdon Park and Thorncliffe communities.

Working Together: Community Library Connections, a three-year project involving libraries in Vancouver, Regina and Halifax, will develop and test models for working with marginalized or economically disadvantaged communities.



The Library's Leading to Reading Program is available to Toronto children experiencing difficulties with reading including this group of kids from homeless families.

GOAL: Increase our contribution to community capacity building

As a municipal institution and community partner, the Library sees city-building as a priority. The Library will contribute to building strong neighbourhoods and help foster a sense of community belonging and identity by expanding outreach to, and partnering with, community agencies. We will be an active player in community networks, resource groups and neighbourhood events. Empowered residents with equal access to resources can break down barriers, ensuring that Toronto is a healthier city.



This 1882 campaign card for the free public library in Toronto shows that the Library has a long tradition of community support and free access to information.

URBAN STORIES:

The Next Chapter



3. Newcomers

Half of Torontonians were born abroad, and eight in 10 new immigrants have neither English nor French as their mother tongue. Successful settlement in this country depends, absolutely, on language skills, finding a job and continuing educational opportunities.

- Forty-three percent of Toronto's population identify themselves as belonging to a visible minority (2001).
- Almost 19 percent of Toronto residents speak a language other than English or French at home. The most common home languages include Chinese (Mandarin and Cantonese), Italian, Tamil, Portuguese, Spanish, Russian, Persian (Farsi), Punjabi and Vietnamese.
- Newcomers face barriers to finding employment as a result of accreditation demands and language.



By partnering with settlement agencies, including CultureLink, the Library provides a safe space for newcomers at this English Conversation Circle program.

GOAL: Contribute to the successful adaptation of newcomers to Toronto

Many newcomers tell us that a trip to the public library is first on their list of things to do after they find housing. The Library will continue to contribute to the successful adaptation of immigrants to Toronto through enhanced outreach to newcomers. We will enhance and expand access to settlement information to meet the needs of newcomers. As well, staff will expand access to services and programs in languages other than English.

Toronto Public Library's Strategic Plan 2004–2007

What You Told Us

"For a newcomer like me, the library not only provides me with books to read and videos to watch, it is also a place that displays social equality in the sense that people, no matter what social or economic class, are given equal access to information. This...distinguishes a democracy from an autocracy."

"It has been a year away from my home but Toronto Library has kept me close to the music, culture and ethnicity of my country."

"As a recent arrival to Toronto, I am struck by this city's cosmopolitan nature, and by the fact that its libraries serve so many populations. I often visit the Toronto Reference Library, and I see people from every walk of life... including so many people who are obviously learning English as a second language."

"I cannot speak good English. But let me tell you one thing — Toronto Public Library means A LOT to us. I am a new immigrant and I cannot live here easily if we do not have the library service like this."



URBAN STORIES: The Next Chapter

More Fast Facts

In 2003:

- 400,000 children and teens attended library programs
- 11 million items, including 7.5 million books
- 1,800 public access computers (1,300 provide free, high-speed Internet access)
- more than 60,000 volunteer hours per year
- 32 Bookmobile stops across Toronto
- 40 active multilingual collections
- 67 percent of children in Toronto have library cards

GOAL: Help to address barriers to employment for immigrants

The Library will provide support to newcomers in gaining proficiency in English through our English as a Second Language collections and a variety of co-sponsored programs. The Library will improve access to Canadian accreditation information and other job-related materials so that newcomers can contribute their skills and experiences to Canadian society as soon as possible. We will continue to promote volunteer opportunities at the Library to help newcomers gain Canadian experience and break down barriers to employment.



Toronto Public Library provides Internet training in other languages (e.g. Cantonese and Mandarin), in addition to English, in order to help meet the needs of newcomers.

Toronto Public Library's Strategic Plan 2004–2007

URBAN STORIES: The Next Chapter



4. Youth

Not only have the numbers of young people in Toronto increased, but youth also face new challenges in education, in the workplace and on the streets. The urban stories of youth in our city depict both challenges and successes but one thing is clear — the Library must work harder to encourage youth to use our resources. Our challenge is to make young people feel welcome.



One public consultation on our strategic plan focused on the needs of youth — and featured young people in a panel discussion.

- The number of Toronto youth aged 15–19 grew by 7.1 percent between 1996 and 2001.
- This group is projected to continue growing — by a whopping 17.4 percent by 2006.
- Toronto youth perform poorly in Grade 10 literacy tests.
- Toronto is faced with increasing youth alienation and violence.

What You Told Us

“The Toronto Public Library is a lifesaver for me. As a student, I depend tremendously on its resources. And its exhaustive collection is so helpful in everything from research to travel to academics.”

“My friends and I stop by the library after school and check out all the new books and magazines. I usually end up taking home a big stack of novels. I lose myself in the stories. It also gave me the opportunity to try something new. I could just pick up a book and learn how to knit or learn about India's history.”



URBAN STORIES: The Next Chapter

What You Told Us

"I think it is ridiculous that (some) libraries are closed Sundays. Sunday is an obvious day for school kids and people who work during the week."

"As a retired teacher who knows firsthand of the devastation of school libraries, I definitely support books and other media for youth of all ages."

"Young people need a place to go to research their studies and feel safe."

GOAL: Create library services that address the needs of youth

The Library aims to increase the number of youth who are regular users of the library and who have library cards. Part of reaching this objective is ensuring that the Library is welcoming and relevant to youth — involving youth directly in the planning, delivery and evaluation of library services is critical. Many Toronto Public Library branches have established YAGs — Youth Advisory Groups — for just this purpose. Such groups have the added advantage that they enable teen YAG members to become advocates and promoters of the Library to their peers. The Library will also increase outreach to agencies serving youth, especially youth at risk.



ramp, the Library's website for youth, offers access to a wide range of topics of interest to teens.

Providing library spaces, designed in consultation with youth, as safe places to read, use a computer or study will contribute to making young people feel that the public library is sensitive to their needs. Finally, the Library will continue to build online services for teens and an online community in recognition of the fact that youth, more than any other group, rely heavily on the Internet for their information and leisure needs.

GOAL: Encourage youth to read

Research shows that adults tend to return to many of the leisure activities of their youth. Getting young people to include reading on their agendas now may well establish a lifelong habit. To encourage teen readers we will enhance our collections, especially those of high

URBAN STORIES:

The Next Chapter

interest to younger people including graphic novels, magazines, comics and electronic formats.

Teen literature will also be promoted through the use of readers' advisory and literary events geared to youth. Strategies to assist youth in increasing their literacy skills will be explored.

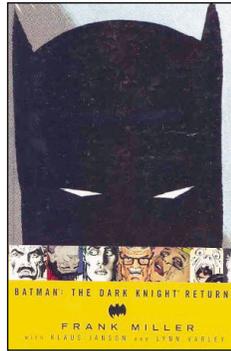
GOAL: Support youth in school, career development and employment

Working with the local school boards, the Toronto Public Library will reach out to junior and high school students, teachers and parents to promote the Library's online services. Helping students develop strong research skills is key to success in later life. The Library will expand access to homework clubs, user education, online librarian assistance and tutoring. Youth have also indicated a need for expanded access to quiet study space in the library and to word processing and the Internet.

By expanding our reference materials on market trends and career information, we will ensure that our supporting role in young people's lives does not stop at graduation — wherever possible, the Library will assist youth in making the transition to adulthood. The Library will also provide direct employment for youth in both part-time and summer programs.

GOAL: Expand access to high quality volunteer experiences for youth throughout the city

Creating and expanding placement opportunities for youth provides young people with employment experience of benefit both to their long-term career development and, potentially, to the Library. Involving youth in branch reading programs including Leading to Reading and Homework Clubs additionally benefits the participating children. The Library will develop programs and outreach events geared to youth in order to ensure that youth volunteer experiences are of maximum benefit to all.



Spotlight on Children

Getting library cards into the hands of children got a boost during the past three years with the launch of an innovative, annual awareness and library card sign-up campaign targeting junior and senior kindergarten children.

Supported, in 2003, by the TD Bank Financial Group, the Start Smart package of information encourages parents to bring their children into the library to register for their own library card.





URBAN STORIES: The Next Chapter

What You Told Us

"I am continually amazed and appreciative of the good attitude of the librarians, despite the lack of resources. They do a great job and are true professionals."

"Librarians perform an essential service of helping members of the community access information."

"The buildings and staff represent a warm place, literally and figuratively, a meeting place, an enriched school day, an opportunity to read in a language other than English, ESL resources and a source of simple human contact with a dignity denied in many other places."

"Support library staff in their efforts to pursue professional development opportunities, extra specialist training, etc. This benefits all of us who use Toronto Public Library services."

Our Operating Principles

Achieving our goals and ensuring that the Toronto Public Library continues to meet the needs of all Toronto residents depends on more than good intentions and effective public consultation. Both budgetary and staffing considerations impact on the implementation of all Library programs and services. Providing up-to-date and well-rounded collections costs money — more every year because of inflation. Knowledgeable and well-trained staff are essential to the effective delivery of programs and services — information is only valuable if one can access the right materials in a timely fashion.

GOAL: Support the essential role of staff in achieving the Library's strategic objectives

The Library will evaluate its capacity to deliver expanded services and programs and work towards implementing changes as necessary. The need for diversity in the workplace as a reflection of the public we serve is a priority already supported; the introduction of a formal employment equity program will further this commitment.

Developing a comprehensive strategy for staff development is critical in enabling staff to reach their full potential and in ensuring that other goals of this plan are achieved. Training and mentoring programs, secondments and career path development are part of the Library's comprehensive staff development strategy.

GOAL: Preserve and maintain the legacy of public buildings and public space

Through consultation, we heard how much residents value their local library and heritage buildings. We will preserve and maintain our buildings in a state of good repair so that they can be enjoyed by residents today and in the future.

Toronto Public Library's Strategic Plan 2004–2007

URBAN STORIES:

The Next Chapter



GOAL: Ensure that the priorities of the Strategic Plan are reflected and integrated with the budget-planning process

The Library will re-allocate existing resources to advance strategic priorities where the opportunity arises. The Library will also take advantage of alternative funding opportunities including grants, corporate and community sponsorships and public donations. The Library will ensure that funding for capital projects matches our strategic priorities by providing appropriate physical space in communities.

GOAL: Ensure governance structures and relationships support the direction and democratic quality of the Strategic Plan

The Toronto Public Library Board recognizes that good governance includes a commitment to the principles of participation, responsiveness, transparency, equity, inclusiveness and accountability. We will develop policies and practices that encourage and facilitate civic engagement and public participation.

Next Steps

Develop action plans for each of our priority areas.

Use the action plans as the basis for our annual budget planning.

Provide an annual report to the public on achievements.



URBAN STORIES:

The Next Chapter

Our Mission

Toronto Public Library provides free and equitable access to library services that meet the changing needs of the people of Toronto.

Toronto Public Library preserves and promotes universal access to a broad range of human knowledge, experience, information and ideas in a welcoming and supportive environment. New technologies extend access to global information beyond library walls. Toronto Public Library upholds the principle of intellectual freedom.

Effective partnerships enhance library service throughout the City. Toronto Public Library is accountable for the effective management of library resources and for the quality of library service offered to the people of Toronto.

URBAN STORIES: The Next Chapter



Our Values

Accountability

Responsible for our actions

Creativity

Encouraging innovation in how we undertake our work

Equity

Accessibility, diversity and fairness in the treatment of all individuals

Integrity

Open and honest in all our dealings

Participatory

Inclusive and involving in decision-making

Respect

Valuing individual needs, experiences and differences

Vision

Looking beyond where we are today

Service Orientation

Providing quality customer-driven services

Intellectual Freedom

Encouraging the free exchange of information and ideas in a democratic society



URBAN STORIES: The Next Chapter

Appendix

Achievements from the First Strategic Plan (2000–2003)

Begin with Children and Youth

In response to the growing number of children in the city, to the rate of child poverty and to public input, the initial pillar of the Library's first strategic plan focused on building and promoting services to children. A primary goal was the promotion of reading among children. 185,000 TD Summer Reading Club packages were made available to Toronto's children and more than 30,000 kindergarten children were encouraged to register for a Library card. As a result, the number of children registering for a Library card increased by 13 percent and circulation of children's materials increased 11 percent.

A second goal was to support and encourage children in learning to read. The number of locations offering reading support programs, including Leading to Reading and Homework Clubs, doubled. More than 8,500 children received intensive one-on-one support in enhancing their reading skills. Another benefit was the considerable expansion in volunteer and summer employment opportunities for youth offered by the Library.

A third goal was to extend outreach to targeted groups of children. English Can Be Fun, a program offering support to newcomer children in learning English, was expanded from 12 to 23 locations, reaching 1,974 children. Children in families receiving social assistance were reached through the Toronto Social Services Kids@Computers Scholarship Program. In addition to the introduction to the electronic services offered by the Library, this initiative provides children with new computers in their home. Over 4,000 children benefited from the program over three years.

Although services to primary school children were emphasized, youth were reached through the high school outreach campaign

Toronto Public Library's Strategic Plan 2004–2007

URBAN STORIES: The Next Chapter



promoting use of the Library's online services to students in Grade 11. More than 33,000 students and 3,500 teachers participated in the program contributing to a 210 percent boost in virtual visits in the years the program ran. A second focus was increasing youth involvement in planning Library services. Youth Advisory Groups were expanded across the city.

The Best in Collections and Services

Expanding collections was a key message generated by public consultation on the strategic plan. The Library Board was successful in increasing the Library's collections budget by 12 percent from \$13.5 million in 2000 to \$15 million in 2003. To provide better access to new and popular materials, browsing collections of materials, known as Best Bets, were introduced. Large Best Bets collections are available at five locations and smaller ones at 25 locations. Material in these collections is available at the owning branch only and cannot be reserved.

Services for newcomers were established citywide with the extension of ESL classes in partnership with the Toronto District School Board and the Toronto Catholic District School Board. The Library entered into a key partnership with SEPT (Settlement and Education Partnership in Toronto). With funding from Citizenship and Immigration Canada, the program places settlement workers from a variety of agencies in schools during the school year and in libraries and community centres during the summer. The number of branches participating almost doubled from 15 to 29 with 5,143 newcomers receiving settlement information in many languages and an introduction to Toronto Public Library.

Your Local Library: The Community Cornerstone

A key theme emerging from the consultation on the first strategic plan was the vital importance of local branches to neighbourhoods. During the life of the plan, the Library Board was successful in increasing its capital budget from \$6.4 million in 2000 to \$9.6 million in 2003, with recognition from the City of Toronto that a

Toronto Public Library's Strategic Plan 2004–2007



URBAN STORIES: The Next Chapter

\$10 million annual capital budget is required to address the Library's ongoing state of good repair requirements.

As a result of the improved capital budget, 68 branches received upgrades including flooring, painting, shelving, roofing and heating and lighting improvements. In addition, three branches were reconstructed: Maria A. Shchuka, Eatonville and Leaside; and two were relocated: Bayview and Black Creek. Local communities were consulted on all changes through meetings and open houses. A customer feedback form was introduced in Library branches and on the website.

The first two floors of the Toronto Reference Library were renovated to include the Toronto Star Newspaper Room, the Digital Design Studio and two Le@rning Centres.

Bookmobile service was expanded in the east and west regions of the City, with an increase in stops from 24 to 32.

The Virtual Library

The number of computers available for public use was increased substantially at all branches. With the Y2K rollout, a grant from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and funding from Industry Canada's Urban Community Access Program, standardized computer equipment was introduced. The Toronto Reference Library introduced the Digital Design Studio and the Information Commons. Five computer classrooms were added as part of branch renovations to extend access citywide. Overall the number of public access computers increased from 1,117 in 2000 to 1,824 in 2003, a 63 percent increase; of those, 1,325 offered Internet access in 2003.

The Virtual Reference Library offers access to subject portals, which guide users to the best sites on the Internet. Several gateways were added including *Ontario History Quest*, *Canadian Theatre Record*, *SmallbizXpress*, *Historicity: Toronto Then and Now* and *NewsConnect*. Usage of these gateways has grown significantly and the Library has received numerous awards for them.

Toronto Public Library's Strategic Plan 2004–2007

URBAN STORIES:

The Next Chapter



The number of licensed databases increased from 40 to 78 with standard offerings at the research and reference, district and neighbourhood branches.

Supporting the Library's Strategic Directions

Over the past four years, the Toronto Public Library Foundation and Friends groups have raised \$6.6 million through donations, sponsorships and grants. Much of this funding directly supported initiatives in the first strategic plan including: programs and services targeted toward children and seniors; expansion of special collections; and enhanced electronic services. The number of volunteer hours contributed by residents of Toronto directed toward these initiatives has increased substantially. The newly amalgamated Library system has built its profile in the city through media, marketing campaigns and participation in literary events.

In 2003, Toronto Public Library helped the SARS recovery effort by lobbying to rescue the ALA/CLA Conference when it was in danger of being cancelled. The conference attracted 17,500 attendees and injected \$30 million into Toronto's economy.

Performance measures and key achievements from the Strategic Plan in 2003 illustrate that Toronto Public Library continues to be one of the largest and busiest public library systems in the world and it is anticipated that this trend will continue.