

Library plans to open up a conversation between users



By Brock Weir

The key to any great book is great writing ? but without good word of mouth, or a good recommendation, the best of books might remain gathering dust on shelves.

The Aurora Public Library set out to make word of mouth second nature for library users this week as part of Ontario's annual Public Libraries Week. To mark the occasion, the Library is rolling out BiblioCore, a new computer system for users that promises to create an online community and network for everyone who loves to read.

?'It's going to bring interactivity and the ability to be able to increase ownership of your account,?' says Reccia Mandelcorn of the Aurora Public Library. ?It's going to allow for connectivity between users and their ability to rate materials they are reading and share their comments.?

Library users had a chance to take the new system for a test drive last week at a reception to kick start Library week festivities. Ms. Mandelcorn, however, had plenty of opportunity beforehand to become familiar with the new system and she says she believes it will open up new doors for the library community.

?'People are going to be more engaged with their reading,?' she says. ?People who are readers love to share, whether they work in libraries, or are chatting with their neighbours. People love to be able to comment about their books and this is part of the strength of sites like Good Reads and Amazon. If you read a really good book, you're going to want to tell people about it. Maybe you read something that is not so good and you'll want to tell other people as well.?

The new system won't just be a way to ?check out? a book before you actually check it out of the library. You will also be able to get a handle of other library users (under customized usernames) who might have similar tastes. If you see someone who might be reading similar types of books, or watching and listening to similar DVDs and CDs, you can follow them and track their reviews and, perhaps, start up a dialogue.

Additional new features include keeping track of books you have already returned, should you like to revisit an old friend at some point but can't remember the author or title, and create virtual bookshelves of what you've read, what you're currently reading, and what you hope to read in the future.

?'Somebody asked me the other day, ?Have you read anything good lately?' I don't know about you, but when somebody asks me that, it's like I never read anything in my life!?' says Ms. Mandelcorn with a laugh. ?I said, ?Wait, just a second' and I went to our test site, looked at my recent returns, and I was able to give some fabulous recommendations.

?'People will also be able to see what staff at the Aurora Public Library is enjoying and I think we're all going to have a lot of fun with it. It is going to be bringing a new interactivity to the use of our catalogue that we never had before and we are really excited about the possibilities.?

Ms. Mandelcorn stresses though that library users will be allowed to share as much ? or as little ? of their information, reads, and recommendations as they see fit. They can pick or choose their features, their level of interaction, and whether other readers can follow their reads.

?I'm going to turn all of this on because I love to share everything!?,? says Ms. Mandelcorn, noting they hope to have a full launch and get everything up and running before Christmas.