

Aurora Public Library aims to 'inspire' during Ontario Libraries Week



By Chris McGowan

Libraries are more than just places to find vital information or grab a copy of the latest bestseller – they can also serve to inspire their communities.

That is the message driven home by the Aurora Public Library in October during Ontario Public Libraries Month. The Aurora Public Library (APL) hosted an open house on Monday evening to mark Ontario Public Libraries week, alongside community partners the Literacy Council of York Simcoe, Family Services York Region, the Diversity & Cultural Resources Unit of the York Regional Police, and York Region Public Health (Healthy Lifestyles & Addiction Unit).

'This is a moment to reflect on the many contributions that public libraries make to literacy, education, and lifelong learning,' said Jill Foster, CEO of APL. 'This also provides libraries the opportunity to thank our community, our partners, our volunteers, and our elected officials for their strong support over the years.'

Stressing the importance of public libraries to their communities was Newmarket-Aurora MPP Chris Ballard, who arrived at the Library on the heels of a significant announcement from the Province that a further \$10 million in funding would be allocated to Ontario's libraries.

'My children spent many an hour here,' said Mr. Ballard. 'It was always a wonderful, safe place for them to come and study. I was never worried when they said, 'We'll be at the Library,' because (a) they were most likely going to get their homework done, and (b) that it was a very safe place to be.'

'I also note something that is very important and evolving and that is the role a library plays today. When I was a little kid growing up in King City, we had a Mechanics' Hall as our library. There was maybe 400 – 500 books and I got through most of them, and that began to become a larger facility. Now we have the importance of the digital economy and the digital connectiveness that allow us to go online and use resources facilitated by the Library.'

Mayor Geoffrey Dawe also underscored the evolution of a library's role to the community.

'It is really becoming very much a focal point as we move into our digital economy,' said Mayor Dawe. 'It is still a place where people like to come, learn and be inspired, and use some really nifty new technology. Whether it is through books, internet, educational classes or insightful presentations – our library is at the forefront of learning for residents of all ages; a very compelling environment which undergoes constant change, activity, and progress, but still remains a warm and friendly place for all of us to come together.'

Matt Maddocks, Chair of the Aurora Public, added that libraries are experiencing an ongoing transformation, transitioning to 'more democratic platforms', and playing the role of 'facilitators and collaborators' in an ever-changing digital universe.

'Libraries are in a unique position to support the needs of their communities, whether it is as maker spaces with cutting edge technology such as 3D printers, as incubation centres for small business, or to support new citizens, libraries continue to take the leads in their communities,' he said.

These 3D printers are one of the ways Ms. Foster says APL plans to inspire the community in the months ahead. In addition to their primary printer, the Library recently added a smaller, portable model to their collection that they plan to take out to schools and give kids hands-on experience in computer aided design.

They are also laying the groundwork for a second annual One Book One Aurora campaign, based on the success of the inaugural event which wrapped up last month. They also plan to expand the program in the early months of 2015, reaching young readers with an additional One Book One Aurora Campaign built around a picture book targeted to schools and daycares.