

Media Release

For Immediate Release:

Edmonton Public Library marks 100 years

Mayor proclaims “Edmonton Public Library Day” as Edmontonians get surprise gift

Edmonton, March 12, 2013 – Edmontonians were given a surprise birthday gift at City Hall today when the Edmonton Public Library (EPL) kicked off their centennial celebrations. Library cards will be free during EPL’s centennial year to make sure all residents have access to the incredible resources available through EPL.

“A library card is a small but powerful way to enrich, educate and entertain. It is the gateway to a lifetime of endless possibilities and we want every Edmontonian to have one,” said Ellen Calabrese-Amrhein, EPL Board Chair. “As hundreds of thousands of people already know, EPL is a sanctuary that lives up to its founders’ ideals, and to the words they had carved over the front door of the grand old library that once stood on MacDonald Drive – Free to All. We are proud to keep their dream alive 100 years later.”

As part of the launch celebrations, Mayor Stephen Mandel presented EPL officials with a proclamation from the City of Edmonton marking March 13, 2013 as “Edmonton Public Library Day.”

“Congratulations to Edmonton Public Library on their centennial! For the last 100 years, EPL has been diligently serving our city as a centre of learning, enjoyment and community,” said Mandel. “Libraries are for everyone, and are a key component of a vibrant and inclusive city. Edmonton looks forward to the next hundred years of success and innovation from EPL!”

Much has changed since 1913 when fewer than 20 staff over two branches served a population of 67,000 Edmontonians and books were all you could find on the shelves. Today 600 staff across 17 locations offer 12,000 free programs and events each year, and over 6.5 million physical and digital items in their vast collection.

“EPL continues to evolve with the world around us while remaining a cornerstone of our community,” said Linda Cook, EPL CEO.

Local author Todd Babiak gained an intimate knowledge of the Library’s past while researching his forthcoming book *Just Getting Started: A Look at EPL’s First Hundred Years*, to be published by the University of Alberta Press this fall.

“EPL has been one of the most progressive forces in the city’s history. It has been our intellectual public square, a place to meet,” said Babiak. “The library has poked and challenged us. It has highlighted our failures and has inspired our successes.”

Spread the words.

Under Cook's leadership since 1997, EPL has seen an incredible evolution of its services, collections and programs, which have been recognized locally, nationally and internationally. Cook credits EPL's success to embracing change and constantly looking for ways to provide services needed by Edmontonians. Innovations include North America's first streetcar bookmobile in 1941 and Canada's first computerized circulation system in 1979. EPL continues to break new ground more recently with Canada's first off-site lending machine at the Century Park LRT station and the first library in Canada to open an outreach office inside a public library in 2012.

"We are very proud to partner with an organization that responds to community needs with programs and services that improve the quality of life for all Edmontonians," said David Berger, Deputy Director of Boyle Street Community Services. "By opening Canada's first outreach office within a public library, EPL demonstrated their commitment to sharing their knowledge and support with our most vulnerable citizens."

To set the course for their second century, EPL plans to further enhance access to the Library by exploring flexible service delivery models and expanding partnerships. New initiatives include Welcome Baby in the Community, an expansion of EPL's partnership with Alberta Health Services to deliver services for babies through public health clinics at two-month immunization visits, and Literacy Vans to bring the latest technology, library programs and services to those in new or underserved communities.

As a registered charity, EPL relies on donations to support such service enhancements. With Ruth Kelly, President and CEO of Venture Publishing, as the Honourary Chair of their Centennial Fundraising Committee, EPL aims to raise \$3.5 million over the next three years to fund these projects.

The launch of the centennial marks the kickoff of a year of special events, starting with birthday parties at all EPL locations all day on March 13. Find out about more upcoming events and EPL history on the centennial website www.epl.ca/100.

- 30 -

About the Edmonton Public Library

In 2013 the Edmonton Public Library (EPL) celebrates 100 years of service to our great city. We've come a long way since 1913 when books were all you could find on our shelves... and we're just getting started! Today EPL carries everything you care about. We are Edmonton's largest lender of all manner of information and entertainment. Our professionally trained staff take you beyond Google with the knowledge, discernment and desire to help you navigate a universe of information. The second most visited place in Edmonton, every year we host over 14 million in-branch and online visits across our 17 branches and website. We deliver our incredible content to you everywhere - in the library, at home or on your handheld device. Unmatched access and unrivalled value - that is today's EPL. EPL is a registered charity and relies on donations to enhance services. Tax receipts will be issued for donations over \$20. Spread the words. www.epl.ca/donate.

For more information contact:

Monica Walker
Senior Marketing Communications Consultant
Edmonton Public Library
780-819-4337

Spread the words.