

North America's Largest Library Honors Sawyer

*Canadian Author Receives Award for
Lifetime of Achievement*



Thursday, February 15, 2007: Science-fiction writer **Robert J. Sawyer** has just received the **Toronto Public Library Celebrates Reading Award**. Established in 2001, this is one of Canada's top book-related honors.

The award, which includes a cash prize of \$2,500 and a crystal sculpture, was presented in front of a sold-out audience of 640 at the second annual Book Lover's Ball, a gala, \$350-a-plate black-tie event held at Toronto's Liberty Grand on Thursday, February 15, 2007. Among those on hand were Toronto Mayor **David Miller** and legendary Canadian authors **Peter C. Newman** and **Allan Fotheringham**. The master of ceremonies was **Seamus O'Regan**, co-host of *Canada AM*.

Margaret Atwood joined the proceedings from the Canadian Embassy in Tokyo via LongPen — the remote-controlled autographing and video-conferencing device she helped invent. Atwood was last year's winner of the TPL Celebrates Reading Award and, by way of passing the torch, she used the LongPen to autograph a copy of her latest novel to Sawyer. Other previous winners include authors **Dennis Lee** and **Kenneth Oppel**, and the provincial educational television network, **TVOntario**.

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The Toronto Public Library is the largest and busiest library system in North America, and the second largest in the world. “The Award is one of the key means by which we strive to re-emphasize the importance of literacy and reading, and the continuing relevance of the Library,” says **Josephine Bryant**, the Chief Librarian, who presented the award to Sawyer.

Says Sawyer: “Science fiction still struggles in some places for respectability, but that’s never been the case in Toronto. The Toronto Public Library is known world-wide for its support of the genre.” **The Merrill Collection of Science Fiction, Speculation and Fantasy**, one of TPL’s special collections, has the largest SF holdings of any public library in the world. “If someone who writes about the future might be termed a prophet,” adds Sawyer, “then the old adage about a prophet not being honored in his own country is false, at least here.”

According to *Maclean’s*, Canada’s weekly newsmagazine, “By any reckoning, Sawyer is among the most successful Canadian authors ever.” *The Ottawa Citizen* calls him “the dean of Canadian science fiction,” and *The Montreal Gazette* has dubbed him “Canada’s answer to Michael Crichton.”

The Book Lover’s Ball program book had this to say about Sawyer: “From haunting the stacks of the North York Central Library in the 1960s, through working at a Toronto independent bookstore in the 1980s, to being writer-in-residence at various Ontario libraries (including TPL’s own Merrill Collection) in the 21st century, Rob has devoted his life to reading and writing. He has served on literary advisory boards for the International Festival of Authors at

Harbourfront and the Toronto Olympics bid committee. Rob frequently mentors emerging authors, and has taught writing at the Banff Centre, Humber College, Ryerson, and the University of Toronto.”

Sawyer is one of only seven writers in history (and the only Canadian) to win all three of the world’s top awards for best science-fiction novel of the year: the Hugo (SF’s “people’s choice” award, which he won for *Hominids*); the Nebula (the field’s “academy award,” for *The Terminal Experiment*); and the John W. Campbell Memorial Award (SF’s major juried award, for *Mindscan*).

A full table of representatives from Tor Books, Sawyer’s New York publisher, and H.B. Fenn and Company, Tor’s Canadian distributor, were on hand at the Book Lover’s Ball to cheer Sawyer’s award, as was his wife, poet Carolyn Clink. Sawyer’s seventeenth novel, *Rollback*, comes out in April 2007.

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The Robert J. Sawyer web site: www.sfwriter.com

The Book Lover’s Ball web site: www.bookloversball.ca

The Toronto Public Library web site: www.tpl.toronto.on.ca

This press release, plus Sawyer’s acceptance speech: www.sfwriter.com/tpl.htm