

New prez Gallop: Things are looking up at Atwater Library

By MARTIN C. BARRY

Although Mark Gallop always had a keen interest in libraries (his mother was a librarian), until six years ago, he had never walked through the doors of the Atwater Library.

Gallop, who grew up in Westmount and has lived for years in St. Henri, had strolled by the library hundreds of times. Then about six years ago, he was invited to become a board member.

The first time he walked through the doors was a revealing experience. "It's a nice building outside, but when you walk in, with that atrium inside, it's just incredible," said Gallop, who recently became the library board's president.

Privately-funded libraries like the Atwater face especially daunting challenges these days. For reasons rooted in this province's unique history, an independent library system supported by private benefactors sprang up in Quebec starting in the early 19th century. However, by the end of the 20th, the generous funding that many of them depended on had largely evaporated.

rated.

When Gallop, an investment advisor, first joined the Atwater Library board as its treasurer, the situation wasn't nearly as assured as it is today. However, after a year of operating in a deficit, the board managed to reverse things, and the library today runs in the black. Nonetheless, Gallop acknowledges there are still a few hurdles ahead.

"It will always be year to year," he says. "As an English non-profit organization in Quebec, we're never going to be able to put our feet up and just coast. We have to keep working at it."

While Gallop says private donations to the library have been growing at a steady rate, much more helpful has been an injection of financial support from the federal government. Ottawa awarded the Atwater Library a \$425,000 in-

frastructure grant to be used for repairs and maintenance on the building. However, it is conditional on the library being

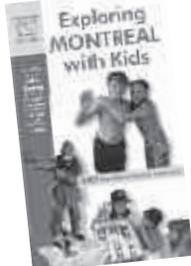
able to raise matching funds from private sources.

Gallop hopes to use part of the money to install something the library (which has facilities on three floors) has long needed: an elevator. "A lot of our clientele are older," he said. "It's a rare week when I go in, and I don't hear from somebody who's attended a lecture, complaining about how they had to struggle with the stairs. I can't wait for the day when we cut the ribbon on that elevator, and access is much more assured for people with limited mobility."



Mark Gallop

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