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BELLINGHAM PUBLIC LIBRARY

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BELLINGHAM, MA 02019

www.bellinghamlibrary.org

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2008 ANNUAL REPORT

"A library is not a luxury but one of the necessities of life." ~ Henry Ward Beecher

Honorable Selectmen:

The library played a crucial role in the community of Bellingham in 2008. This report will show that the library is not just a place to read and borrow books, but a community center that offers services to Bellingham residents of all ages. The facility enables us to provide state of the art services to the community, from book groups to craft making workshops; from Girl Scout Sleepovers to bi-monthly meetings of the Polish Conversation Group.

Staff

In April the Trustees welcomed Bernadette Rivard as our new Library Director. Charlotte Canelli resigned in January and in the interim the library was managed by Barbara Selvitella, a retired MLS librarian. Our excellent staff continues to be dedicated to providing exceptional services to meet the informational, recreational and cultural needs of our community.

Facility

This year we began some cosmetic improvements to some areas of the facility, which after 20 years of use, were showing their age. With generous funding from the Friends of the Bellingham Library we were able to renovate the Community Room Kitchen. The renovation included the installation of additional cabinets and a pantry, which will enable us to store the growing amount of materials we need to support the programming that is done using the kitchen. Also, the sink and countertops were replaced, walls were painted, and soon the flooring will also be replaced. The project has transformed the room from a tired, worn space to a bright organized kitchen in which everything has a place. In early 2009, we will be doing a facelift of a similar nature on the Children's Program Room.

General Statistics

As has been widely publicized recently, libraries become busier places in times of economic downturns, and the Bellingham Library is no exception.

During 2008 we had an increase of 735 new cardholders, a 9% increase. 8,785 people now have Bellingham Library cards; more than half the town's population.

Not only is the number of people holding cards increasing, their visits to the library and circulation of library materials is also increasing, as well as their ability to access library services online through our website. Patrons are also turning to the library for increased public Internet access, be it through our wired or wireless networks. The library had over 110,000 visitors in 2008; the first year visits have surpassed 100,000. This is up 13% from the 2007 number of visitors of 98,000; averaging nearly 400 people per day. Circulation (library materials checked out, renewed or sent to other town libraries) increased 8% to 132,857. Website visits were up 4%. The library's wired Internet access computers were used for 13,704 sessions during the year, up 2% from the previous year.

CMRLS, CW/MARS and MBLC Affiliations

Integral to the services we provide are agencies with which the library is affiliated.

The Central Massachusetts Regional Library System (CMRLS) provides access to online databases that our patrons can access from home or in the library. These databases provide access to magazine, journal, newspaper, and reference source materials. The benefit of these databases is that they are known good sources to which we can refer patrons doing research for educational, information or recreational purposes. CMRLS also provides the delivery of library materials. Through their services, between 1,000 and 1,500 items per month are shared between Bellingham and other libraries. Through the delivery system, if a Bellingham patron requests a book that the Bellingham Library either does not own or our copy is not available, the book is received, usually within a couple of days, from one of hundreds of other libraries in the shared database.

The Central/Western Automated Resource Sharing (CW/MARS) is our library network. The annual dues we pay to CW/MARS enables our use of the shared database that facilitates the sharing of library materials among member libraries. CW/MARS also provides our computer network for both staff and public access computing and access to a select number of research databases.

The Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners (MBLC) is the state agency that supports, improves and promotes library services in the Commonwealth. The MBLC certifies that libraries meet standards in order to be eligible for state aid and Library Technology Services Act federal grants. These standards include a variety of metrics, such as the number of hours the library is open, the education level of staff and funds spent on library materials.

Services offered in 2008

Throughout the year the Bellingham Library has provided *free wireless Internet access* for patrons. This service is used daily by patrons using their own laptops and wireless devices to access library services, their own email and the Internet. In addition, the wireless service is available to groups that use our Community Room to make presentations, and conduct educational seminars and workshops.

The library has continued to be a gathering place for numerous community groups. In 2008 our *Community Room* hosted groups from all aspects of the community, including the Town of Bellingham, Boy and Girl Scout groups, sports groups of all ages, the Bellingham Arts Center and Cultural Council, local businesses and business groups, school groups, Mom's clubs, playgroups, home schooling groups, the Polish Conversation Group, ten different condo associations, and the Bellingham crafters. The room was used by 14% more groups in 2008 than in 2007.

Library staff worked hard to gather *publicity* to promote our programs and services. Each week we submit an article to the Country Gazette keeping the community apprised of library events. The Bellingham Bulletin does a wonderful job of covering library events. In addition to the upcoming event schedule that we provide to them on a monthly basis, their reporters are proactive in covering library sponsored programming and events. In the fall of 2008 the library began distributing a monthly informational flyer along with the monthly calendar. Previously the calendar had been distributed only in the library. We began distributing the flyer and calendar on a monthly basis not only in the library, but on the library website and through an email sign up with our "Google Group." The library also published a newsletter in the summer of 2008 that was distributed to every home in Bellingham in the Bellingham Bulletin. We hope to publish two newsletters in 2009. Each month we send updates to the local cable television station so they can promote our programs on the Cable 8 Community Information Bulletin Board.

In 2008 the library provided a variety of *programs for adults*. We hosted lectures on topics including: taxes, real estate, health issues, financial planning, college financial aid, and the supernatural. We also hosted music events including a presentation from Steps Off Broadway and a jazz concert by Too Human. We hosted the Cultural Council's annual Art and Photography shows, and in December featured a hands-on workshop with Greg Maichak, a pastel artist. Numerous times throughout the year library staff served distance-learning college students as proctors for their tests and exams. In 2008, as we do every year, the library was the local facility where community members could pick up state and federal tax forms.

Our **Reference Librarian**, Cecily Christensen's hours were increased by 3 hours per week to enhance the service offered for homework help in the after school hours. This has resulted in an 81% increase in the number of reference questions asked and answered. Cecily is on the reference desk 25 hours per week providing top-notch reference and information services to the patrons of the Bellingham Public Library.

Our **Circulation Staff** is the backbone of the daily operation of the library. Their exceptional customer service skills keep the library operating on a smooth basis every day. Whether it is answering phone calls, assisting patrons in locating library materials, working the check out desk or maintaining order in the library, the value of their contribution cannot be overestimated.

Children's programming continues to be the library's most well attended, and in demand service. Nearly every day Nina Hunt, our Youth Services Librarian, has events planned for children of all ages. Programming in 2008 included three to five weekly sessions of Ring-A-Ding-A-Sing Thing. It is our most popular program, which has attracted as many as 72 people with an average of 40 people attending each session. Also, periodically throughout the year, Rhythm & Rhyme time story time is offered once a week. Nina has also offered 5 week courses for home schooling families, exercise classes for mothers and children, family fun time activities, interactive movie days, and pumpkin painting for Halloween.

Every holiday or special event, usually at least once a week, the library holds a craft making event for children, often as part of a party to celebrate the holiday or event. Some of the craft events are gift making sessions for children to make gifts for parents, grandparents, or siblings. This year we held the first annual Harvest Festival on Halloween. Children came to play carnival type games, bob for apples and compete in our pie eating contests.

In June of 2008, Nina Hunt visited the elementary schools in town to promote the library's **Summer Reading Program**. The theme for this year's summer reading program was "Wild Reads." Throughout the summer, to support our effort to increase summer reading by children, the library offered many events to encourage summer reading. The summer kicked off with an early July magic show with Steve Rudolph. Other programs included a "Winter in July" afternoon of ice skating, sledding and snowball fights; numerous craft events; an Animal Adventures program, a Harry Potter Birthday Party, an Unbirthday Party; Pumpnickel Puppets show; and a 6 week Movie Makers program in which the children filmed and produced their own movie with the assistance of the technical staff at the Bellingham Cable Access station.

Our **Young Adult Programming** also increased during 2008. With the support of funds from an LSTA "Teens & Tweens" grant, the library was able to offer after school support services to the middle and high school students of Bellingham. Every Monday through Thursday, when school is in session, the Community Room is transformed into "Teen Zone," a supervised after school program where there are numerous activities for middle and high school student participation. Not only is there homework help, a place to socialize with friends and a supportive environment, there is fun! Funding from the grant has enabled us to purchase video game equipment. We now have an XBOX, Wii and Playstation 2 for the teens to play fun, educational and competitive games. In addition to the regular after school programs, Leslieanne Lavalley, our Young Adult Librarian, has offered numerous other programs of interest to these middle and high schoolers. These included an Unvalentine's Day Party; craft making events; Japan Club; Teens Cook; Teen Game Nights; Guitar Hero Tournaments; Red Cross Babysitting Training Courses; Magic the Gathering Club Nights; Teen Yoga Classes; and Henna Tattoo Painting.

In addition, Leslieanne has instituted a Young Adult Advisory Board, a group of teens who meet monthly to participate in decision making not only for the focus of the "Teen Zone" program, but also to assist with selection of library materials that are of interest to teens.

The librarians and library staff continued their **professional development** by attending workshops held by CMRLS and CW/MARS. In addition numerous staff members attended annual conferences of the Massachusetts Library Association and the New England Library Association. The Director participated in a NELINET Leadership Conference focusing on preparing the next generation of library leaders. Bernadette

Rivard, the library director, serves on the CMRLS Continuing Education Committee and the Simmons College Graduate School of Library & Information Science Alumni Board.

In 2008, the Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency (MEMA), the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and the MBLC started a pilot project to select public libraries to serve as ***Disaster Recovery Centers*** in the event of a disaster. The library director attended a workshop led by MEMA and FEMA representatives to explain the program. She then met with Jim Haughey, our local emergency manager, to discuss the workshop. FEMA representatives then did a site survey of the library to determine if the facility met FEMA standards. FEMA and MEMA will meet with the local emergency management team to determine what role the library would play in the event of a community disaster. Even if the library is not chosen as a Disaster Recovery Center, the FEMA and MEMA representatives stated that public libraries will be used as the place for the community to get information about disaster recovery services, especially after the immediate emergency is mitigated and the Disaster Recovery Centers close.

Two ***mandatory state reports*** were submitted in 2008. The Annual Report Information Survey (ARIS) was sent in mid-August; the State Aid Application was sent in October. These reports make the library eligible to receive state aid and grant funding from the MBLC.

In 2008 The ***Friends of the Library*** funded programs, activities, museum passes, a public copy machine and the kitchen remodeling project. The Friends of the Library funded \$1,445.99 for costs of programming; \$3,450.00 in museum passes; \$1500 for the copier lease; and \$7,590 for the kitchen renovation. Without this funding, many of the wonderful programs we offer to the community would not be possible. We thank the members of the Friends for their hard work raising funds for the library year-round.

In 2008 the library expanded its ***volunteer program*** to a more formal process. In addition to creating volunteer position descriptions, the library instituted a program where all volunteers undergo a CORI background check before beginning service. The library has added 6 additional volunteers this year. We have a total of 11 volunteers; seven volunteers who work through the town's senior tax write off program and four other community volunteers. Our volunteers work an average of 85 hours per month. In this time of increased demand for our services, having reliable volunteers enables our staff to concentrate on library projects requiring specific skill or knowledge, and allowing our volunteers to contribute to the smooth running of the library.

In closing, the Library Director, Library Staff and Library Trustees wish to thank the community for its continued support of the library. Everyday we see how the library opens doors to new worlds for children learning to read; teens learning their way in the world; adults looking for new opportunities; and seniors exploring educational and creative ways to use their free time. It is a pleasure to serve you!

Respectfully submitted,



Bernadette Rivard, Library Director

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