Honorable Selectmen:

The Bellingham Public Library embraces the rich heritage and vibrant future of our community. We aspire to be the best possible library for the residents of Bellingham: a true community center, the destination place residents consult to acquire and indulge in a lifetime love of learning, literature and leisure activities. In this document we will provide information about the library staff, collection, facility, affiliations, services and program activities in 2013.

We look forward to continuing to provide these and many new services to the community in 2014!

Bernadette Rivard Suzanne Garten
Library Director Chair, Board of Trustees

Board Members: Amy Bartelloni, Kenneth Hamwey, Lisa Hanson, Russell Lafond

At a glance...

**Services**

- More than 1/2 of Bellingham residents have library cards.
- Nearly 100K people visited the library in 2013, an average of 317 people per day.
- We answered 28% more reference questions that we did in 2012!
- Volunteers worked an average of over 150 hours per month at the library.
- Nearly 1200 people per month visit the library for a session on our public Internet stations. Many also come to the library to use the free WiFi on their own devices.
- Each month over 50 families received discounted admission to a variety of museums and attractions through our Discount Pass Program.

**Collections**

- Circulation of library materials is steady. Over 124K items were checked out in 2013.
- Ebook downloads continued to grow to an average of 263 per month.
- The library collection includes over 50,000 items including more than: 42,000 books, 3,000 audio books and music CDs, 3,000 movies, 700 magazine issues.
- Materials for people of all ages: Books, movies, audiobooks, video-games, graphic novels, ebooks, etc.
- Free access to online language learning, self improvement courses, assistance for job seekers, newspapers, journal articles and so much more!

**Programs**

- More parents are accompanying children to library programs. Adult attendance at children’s programs grew by 20% this year.
- The library meeting rooms hosted over 1000 meetings and events.
- Each month the library hosts more than 40 programs for children ages 0-12.
- Attendance at our afterschool program for middle and high school students has increased by 50% over 2012.
- The library hosts nearly 10 programs per month for adults of all ages.

The Board of Trustees generally meets on the 2nd Thursday of the month at 7 pm. All are welcome to attend.
Library Staff, Collection & Affiliations

Staff

This year was a stable year for library staff; we had no changes to our staff. We continue to host volunteers from the community, including the 10-12 seniors that work at the library through the Senior Tax Work-Off Program.

In addition, in the spring of 2013 the library hosted a Simmons College Graduate School of Library and Information Science student for a 120 hour internship. Zoe Pechter, a library school student and former children’s bookstore owner on Martha’s Vineyard, worked with Steven Fowler, our Youth Services Librarian to reorganize the library’s picture book collection to a hybrid Dewey Decimal System / bookstore model that is becoming more popular in libraries.

Collection

The size of the library collection has not changed significantly. On a continual basis we are adding new books, DVDs and other materials to the collection, as well as “weeding” titles that are outdated, damaged or no longer in demand. **We add over 400 items to the collection each month.**

In addition to the picture book collection project mentioned above, we also reorganized the Young Adult Nonfiction Collection into categories to be more useful to teens. These categories include: Art & Music, Celebrities, Gaming, Health, Interests, Life, Relationships, Sports, Style and Whatever!

Affiliations

**Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners (MBLC)**

The MBLC is the state agency that certifies libraries and ensures that they meet standards. In order to be eligible for state aid and LSTA federal grants through the MBLC, libraries must meet standards including: meeting the requirement for the number of hours the library is open, the education level of staff, the total municipal budget and the funds spent on library materials.

Although our budget has increased, over the past few years, the 10.4% budget cut from 2009 has again prevented the library from meeting the Board’s Municipal Appropriation Requirement (MAR).

In the fall we completed our state aid and waiver application. All indications are that since the budget did have a small increase, the waiver should be granted.

*Public libraries are required to meet certain spending levels each year in order to receive state aid. Under the current system, a municipality must fund its library at 2.5% above the average preceding three years budgeted amounts... If a library cannot meet this requirement, it may petition for a one year waiver from the Board of Library Commissioners...”*

In the summer of 2013 the library was notified by the MBLC that our application for a federal LSTA grant to implement our “Shaking Up STEM!” program had been approved. Starting in the fall we began purchasing materials and equipment for this program that will start in January of 2014.

Under this program, the library obtained an educational seismograph from the Weston Observatory; purchased a 3D printer and other technology gadgets to facilitate collaborative learning on STEM topics.

**Massachusetts Library System (MLS)**

The library is a member of MLS, which provides access to online magazine, journal, newspaper and reference source materials that our patrons can access from home or in the library.

MLS also provides delivery service for interlibrary sharing of materials. Each day hundreds of items from the Bellingham Library are sent to and received from other libraries throughout the state.

MLS is the primary source of free continuing education for library staff. Library staff attends workshops, webinars and other training at libraries throughout the region with MLS trainers.

This year the library joined with MLS to launch a pilot project to enhance the library’s eBook offerings. One of 51 libraries in the state chosen to participate, through the MA eBook Project, library patrons now have access to additional titles through the Baker & Taylor’s “Magic Wall” and a service called BiblioBoard from a company called BiblioLabs.

**Central/Western Massachusetts Automated Resource Sharing (C/W MARS)**

C/W MARS is our library network. The annual dues we pay to the network fund our use of the shared library database for patron and item records. This database facilitates the sharing of library materials among member libraries. The network also provides our computer network for staff and public access computing and access to a select number of research databases, as well as access to thousands of e-book titles through Overdrive.
Our long-range plan outlines the upgrades needed to the facility, which will be 25 years old in the fall of 2014. During this year, we have addressed some of these needs on a small scale.

**Our major repair project in 2013 was an overhaul of the library’s fire sprinkler system.** The main pipes of the system were replaced. This repair required the library to close for three days in July.

**We also updated areas of the library with a fresh coat of paint.**

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### Facility

**Young Adult Renovation Plans**

*For the past few years, we have been preparing for the renovation of the Young Adult area of the library.*

Since the opening of the new Bellingham High School and the renovation of the middle school, the use of the library by middle and high school children after school has greatly increased. Over the years we have recognized the need to provide dedicated facility space for this age group. In 2013 attendance at our after school program for middle and high school students grew by over 50% with some months nearly 400 middle and high school students visiting the library in the after school hours.

Given the open floor plan of the library, it is very difficult to have a space that has that many people in it and maintain noise levels that are suitable for the rest of the library. Our short-term solution was to move our after school program “After School Café” to the community room. This has been a temporary solution, but has led to staffing challenges as it results in two areas to monitor, and limits the use of the community room by other members of the town during the afternoon hours.

For over five years, there has been discussion about enclosing the Young Adult area, to make it a space dedicated for this age group. With the addition of a Young Adult Librarian with a schedule that mirrors the school schedule, we now have the personnel to staff the room in the busiest after school hours, and are looking forward to moving ahead with the project.

Our plan is to enclose the room, but to keep it open to the main part of the library during less busy hours, with a wide entry double door.

**The room will be equipped with state of the art technology, including:** laptops and tablet computers. It will also highlight our collection of books, DVDs, Music CDs, Books on CDs and other library materials for middle and high school students that will enhance their access to materials to supplement their education and expand their personal interests.

**The space will have separate areas for a variety of activities:** homework and group work spaces; tables and chairs for craft projects and other uses, a tech bar for using and charging tech devices; spaces for socializing; and an audiovisual center for movies, music and video games.

**The renovation plan will include new lighting, carpeting, shelving as well as new technology devices and furnishings.** Our plan is to request funding from the town for the construction costs and to fund equipment and furnishings through state aid or other local sources.

During 2009 and 2010, with grant funding, we were able to provide the after school program 5 days a week. Since 2011 we have been offering the program 3 days a week and in the last year, with Amanda Maclure as our Young Adult Librarian, attendance has continued to increase 50% per year.
Preschool Programs

In an average week the library hosts a minimum of 8 programs for preschoolers, including story times and sing-alongs with such names as Ring-A-Ding; Alphabits, GOT Mail Story Time, Magic School Bus, and Book Babies. Each week we also host a Lego Club called Lego Build for Kids.

In addition, special story times and other events held this year included:

- Stuffed Animal Sleepovers
- Fancy Nancy Party
- Pirate Party
- Visits from Buzz Lightyear, Skippy Jon Jones and Curious George.

Elementary School Programs

In an average week the library hosts an average of 4 programs for those in kindergarten through grade 6.

One of our most unique and popular programs for early readers, is called “Reading with Indy.” Indy is a certified reading therapy dog that visits the library each Monday and children sign up for 15 minute time slots to read to Indy. This year, Indy made his 50th visit to the library.

Some of the special programs in 2013 included: Back in Time (where we highlighted a decade from the 1940s-1980s in the month of February); The Write Stuff; The Bellingham Library Book Awards; and Edible Haunted Houses.

For Families

The library hosts programs for families to attend as a group.

- This year our family events included: Touch a Truck, Stuffed Animal Vet Checkup, Polar Express, Picnic Stories and the Amazing Chase.

Middle & High School Programs

In an average week the library hosts an average of 4 programs for those in grades 5-12.

Three days each week when school is in session, we host After School Café, a program where middle and high school students can socialize, do homework, play games, participate in crafts and use library computers.

There are a group of 7-10th graders that form our Teen Advisory Board that meets at least once a month to discuss and assist in planning library programs and collection purchases for the Young Adult area.

Special programs for this age group in 2013 included: Monthly Mother/Daughter Book Club Meetings; Events at the Youth Center; Discover the Culture of… (China, France, Percy Jackson, Lord of the Rings, Hawaii, India and Mortal Instruments); and a...
Summer Reading

This year’s Summer Reading Theme was Dig Into Reading. For the second year in a row the Summer Reading Kick-off Event, with Alex the Jester as the performer, was held off-site, at the Bellingham High School Auditorium and was attended by over 300 people.

Each time a child came to the library and checked out books or attended a library program, they received a pirate coin. They were able to exchange their pirate coins for books and prizes. More pirate coins, better prizes.

In addition, we hosted a variety of programs throughout the summer including:

- Burrowing Animals
- Computer Camp
- Archaeology Club
- Flushed Away!
- Star Wars Origami
- Battle of the Books
- Animal World Experience
- Paulette Morin, Fossils & Dinosaurs
- Davis & Roger: Earth Rhythms
- Tim Van Emond, Folksinger, Storyteller

Community Outreach

The library hosts meetings of many community groups including:

- Bellingham Business Association
- Bellingham Crafters
- BHS Advanced Placement Testing
- Bellingham DPW Training
- Bellingham Women’s Softball
- Bellingham Youth Soccer
- Girl Scout & Brownie Groups
- Bellingham/Medway Mom’s Club
- High School Mock Trials
- Do Not Knock Citizen Petitioner
- Franklin Art Association
- Massachusetts Library System
- Red Cross Blood Drives
- Realty Executives Easter Egg Hunt
- and Home Buying Seminar
- Retired Educators Association of Mass
- and the following condo groups:
  - Bay Colony
  - Bellingham Estates
  - Bellwood
  - Birchwood Grove
  - Brook Estates
  - Crystal Springs
  - Maplebrook.

This year the library staff made a concerted effort to increase our community outreach.

We continually strive to improve our relationship with the Bellingham school community. Our Young Adult Librarian was a substitute teacher at Bellingham High School. This significantly improved our connection to the school. We continued to collaborate with the schools by visiting the elementary schools to promote summer reading and a variety of other events and promoting all events in brochures at the elementary school.

Other Services

We are also continuing to expand our online offerings to the community. The library website, which is accessed over 5000 times per month, is our main vehicle to connect with the community. We continue to streamline the content of the site to make it easier to locate high-use content. On the website library users can: Reserve and renew library materials online through the online catalog; reserve museum and attraction passes; register for library programs and contact library staff.

We also offer the ability to access the following resources: eBooks through Overdrive, Baker & Taylor’s Magic Wall; and BiblioBoard.

Take an online personal improvement class through Universal Class. Course topics range from Accounting to Yoga.

Learn a new language online through Mango Languages. Over 60 world languages are available including French, Spanish, Chinese, Japanese and even Pirate!

Patrons looking for assistance with job searching can access Career Cruising, our online career assessment and job searching tool.

We continue to “go where our patrons are” and use Facebook to promote library programs and community notices and events. We have over 650 followers on our Facebook page.
The library hosted the following programs for adults:

**Lectures**

- Supernatural Evening with Jeff Belanger;
- College Planning Strategies;
- Long Term Care Planning;
- Planning for Healthcare in Retirement;
- Who's Tracking You Online

**Book Groups & Author Meet 'n Greets**

- Monthly Book Group Meetings
- Meet 'n Greet Amy Kwei
- Meet 'n Greet Martha Peterson
- Meet 'n Greet Steve Ulfelder

**Workshops & Groups**

- Extreme Couponing
- Nutrition Workshop with Sue Makowski
- Personal Finance 101

**Programs for Job Seekers**

- Career Planning for Job Seekers
- Interviewing Skills
- Networking
- Online Social Networking
- Online Job Searching

**Certified Resume Reviewer**

- Bea Hait

**Computer Training**

- Internet Computer Training
- Word Processing Training
- Spreadsheets Training

**Total Programs** 90

**Total Attendance** 720

Bellingham author Jeff Belanger’s Supernatural Evening is always one of our best attended lectures.

Martha Peterson, author of *Widow Spy* and widow of Bellingham resident John Peterson, drew a large crowd when she told her tales of working for the CIA.

The library hosted Bellingham’s 2nd Annual Veterans Day Ceremony honoring three local veterans: Gordon Curtis, Brandon Perella and James Wood.
Summary of Services

Many of the programs that are outlined in this report would not be possible without additional funding from The Friends of the Bellingham Public Library. The Friends routinely fund the museum and attraction passes, the summer reading program and other lectures and events throughout the year.

Our Circulation Staff is the mainstay of our library services. Their daily dedication and exceptional customer service skills, keep library operations running smoothly.

Our Youth Services & Young Adult Librarians show their dedication to serving the children of Bellingham every day. With innovative, fun and educational programs, our youth programs continue to be our most well attended and in demand services.

Our Reference Librarian assists patrons every day in their quest for information, computer assistance, job searching assistance, the referral to that right next book. Her services are what Neil Gaiman is referring to in his quote that begins this report.

The Library Director, Staff and Trustees thank the members of the Bellingham community for their continued support of the library. To quote Laura Bush “I have found the most valuable thing in my wallet, my library card.” We aim to have that statement be the sentiment of the residents of Bellingham.

### Other Statistics

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