



2015-2016

Annual Report

Hamden Public Library



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HAMDEN PUBLIC LIBRARY

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Personnel

The library staff said goodbye to veteran librarian Irene Nolan on November 30th. Irene was employed at the library for over thirty years, most recently holding the position of Head of Public Services. A recruitment led us to Elisabeth Angele, a Librarian I currently on staff. Ms. Angele accepted the newly-revised position of Head of Information and Patron Services and began her tenure in May 2016.

The addition of two 15-hour Librarian I's allowed for the opening of each branch on Saturday mornings from September through June. The new staff members also provide additional coverage during the week at both the branches and at Miller, allowing for more outreach and some fresh programming, including evening computer classes for adults.

Plusses

For the first time in the history of the Hamden Library system, the Miller Library remained open for full days on Saturdays throughout the year. This meant that patrons could now use the library on weekends during the summer months. Promotion for the new summer Saturday hours was widespread, and patron feedback was very favorable. Computer use, family visits to the new children's area, and a respite from the heat were some of the reasons given for the steady flow of traffic that we experienced.

The Miller Library continued to be cleaned/renovated. Big projects included the completion of the duct cleaning. This was a major effort to rid the ducts of 30 years of dust, heavy particulate, and construction debris. Delivery of new computer chairs for public use and a new loveseat for the early learning center were welcome additions to replace old furnishings. Re-laminating of the OPAC counters and the long-awaited carpeting of the second and third floor office spaces, hallways, and staircases was also completed.



We created a Lucky Day Collection. This collection offers additional copies of high demand titles, with no holds or renewals allowed. The collection is improving patrons' chances for finding popular items on the shelves, ready to check out. The collection is receiving high marks from patrons who are pleased with the easy access to bestsellers.

PLUSSES

Arts for Learning Connecticut, in conjunction with ION Bank, secured \$2000 to fund some summer programs at Miller and the two branches. Three performers were chosen—one each for June, July, and August. This is a real gift, as performances for children have greatly increased in price.

The new Job and Career Center was instituted in order to house the library's large collection of printed materials dealing with these topics. New computers were added to the area, and one-on-one help sessions for people who want to improve their computer skills were added to our program agenda. In order to highlight some of the library's business and career databases, we hosted a Chamber of Commerce Women in Business luncheon, during which an overview of the Job and Career Center, along with a demonstration of one of the library's most powerful online tools for businesses—*AtoZ Database*—was given. A few months later, a lunchtime seminar at Eli's on Whitney was co-sponsored by the Library and the Chamber of Commerce where a more in-depth demonstration was given.

The Thornton Wilder Essay Contest that had been put on hold was re-launched for high school students in New Haven County. The library took the lead and solicited help from the Arts Commission and some of the former Wilder Committee members. Over 150 entries were judged by an expert panel. All winners were present to receive their prizes, listen to their work read aloud, and hear comments from the judges at the awards ceremony held in April. The library will continue this tradition until funding is no longer available.

PLUSSES

The Circulation Desk staff has been receiving great feedback on the new library cards and key cards that accompany them. They have also been weathering the storm of the crippled DeliverIT shuttle system and its inconsistent deliveries and pick-ups of materials to and from other libraries.

Responsibility for teen services has been given to one of our new librarians. By winter she brought about the first Teen Advisory Board meeting and during the spring, the first Teen Summer Reading Program was created. Several successful programs were held for this target audience. The first special event—*Cupcake Wars*—was a great success, and we can only anticipate that this service will continue to grow.

As we step up our program offerings and add services, we need to get the word out. We continue to rely on our quarterly newsletter (now routinely printed in full color, 1200 copies distributed throughout Hamden, 1800 sent via email to subscribers), press releases to print publications and Facebook, Constant Contact and library website postings along with printed fliers and brochures available within the 3 libraries as the main sources for publicity with the addition of flier distribution through the Chamber of Commerce mailings for special events.

The Friends of the Hamden Library consists of about 80 paying members. The Friends main source of income is the Second Hand Prose Bookstore that is managed and staffed by volunteers. Located on the lower level of the library, the store has a stock of thousands of gently used books and media for sale. Any money earned by the Friends from the bookstore and membership dues is then generously given to the library. This funding allows for much of our programming efforts, as well as the museum and attraction pass

PLUSSES

program, book discussion titles and other items not covered in the library's town operating budget. During the year we have worked hard to find creative ways to promote the bookstore to the Hamden community.

Technical highlights included the addition of *LibraryInsight's* online calendar that allows patrons to print out museum passes from home and for users to register for library programs online as well. Within the LION system, an e-commerce function was instituted, which affords patrons the option of paying fines and fees online with their credit or debit card.

Programming

In adult programming, this year's fall programs included: Mark Twain in Hartford with Craig Hotchkiss, paranormal author Sydney Sherman, three programs focusing on the 150th anniversary of the publication of *Alice in Wonderland* including a 2-part creative writing program that spawned the inception of a writer's group. Our annual Cabin Fever Readers' program attracted over 150 participants who read for prizes during January, February and March. Programs offered to ease the tedium and stress of the New England winter included a presentation by author-humorist Sandi Kahn Shelton, a collage workshop with artist Kim Larkin, "Couponing 101" with Gina Juliano and a talk by historian Diana McCain entitled "It Happened in Connecticut" citing little-known facts and tales of the Nutmeg State.

Spring programs offered a presentation by naturalist and explorer Mark Seth Lender, a salute to George and Ira Gershwin by the musical duo Julie Harris and Stephen Roane, and a new presentation on women artists by Artscapades. Total attendance for these 12 programs was 326. Along with this roster of programming we offered several movie series highlighting recent releases during the year for both adults and children.

Programming for children is one of the most important services a public library can provide to its residents, and the Hamden Public Library is no exception. The summer reading program for 2015 was **Every Hero Has a Story**, a theme that was wildly popular with children. A total of 544 children worked on it during the summer months by reading and earning incentive prizes along the way. A record 320 people attended the kick off program with Chinese acrobat Li Lui, who was a hit with children and adults alike.

PROGRAMMING

Overall, the Children’s Department offered 253 programs for the fiscal year with over 4000 patrons in attendance. The weekly storytime sessions continue to fill each month. Lynn Lewis’ music programs continues to be very popular and are an important extension of the storytime programs. We continue to host many class visits from the public schools. The goal is to have every child entering kindergarten receive a library card and visit the library.

Whitneyville Branch hosted 1731 patrons at 78 programs. Their weekly storytime is the bedrock of their programming, bringing in new faces all the time, and supporting our goal of early, positive exposure to the library, reading, and books. Summer Reading 2015—with a superhero theme—included programs such as “Animal Show on the Go: Animal Super-Powers!” and “Drawing Superheroes with T.C. Ford.”

Brundage Community Branch hosted 1303 patrons at 91 programs. Unfortunately, the branch lost an important funding source this year. This branch had been a recipient of the national PACK (Parents and Communities for Kids) grant for the past twelve years. It provided excellent monthly programming which drew large crowds who came to see professional performances, have dinner, and leave with children’s books based on the theme of each program. This funding ended in early 2016.

Both branches and the main library were able to begin to offer one-on-one computer classes. Patrons register to meet with a library staff member to learn a variety of computer topics such as basic computer skills, internet searching, downloading, creating resumes, and becoming proficient with social media. These tutoring sessions are in high demand and we plan to continue them in the future.

Problems

The state of deterioration of the interior and exterior of the Brundage Community Branch is a continuous source of concern. The driveway is now in dire need of repaving, the ivy and shrubs cover the building—including the windows—and the peeling paint is a safety hazard. The condition of the building and the grounds is remarked upon almost daily by patrons. There were times during the year when the branch had to be closed due to lack of heat caused by a failing boiler. Sewer back-ups happen on a regular basis, creating large puddles of water, forcing the shut-down of the public restrooms and additional closures of the branch. Clearing of ice and snow on the sidewalks rarely occurs prior to early afternoon, creating a hazard for half of the day the branch is open to the public. A laundry list of needed improvements continues to be submitted for review by the Town.

The condition of the Whitneyville Branch is not much better. During the first six months of the fiscal year, the Library Director, the Branch Library Manager, and the Mayor met with members of the Whitneyville Civic Association on various occasions regarding the dismal condition of this facility to discuss how a viable plan could be drawn up to address some of the issues. The Capital Improvement request that had been submitted to the Town by the Library Director was shared with them. The Association formed a Library Committee which produced a scaled-down plan for action that was submitted to Town administrators.

In January, due to budget cuts on the State Library level, the materials delivery system (a shuttle that is routed to every library in the state) was scaled back considerably, causing huge backlogs of undelivered materials that severely affected services to our patrons. This model of statewide resource sharing is the single most important service that had

PROBLEMS

been offered to libraries in CT. As the months went by, the service became less and less reliable. Now, we continue to struggle with the system. Library administrators across the state are working within their consortia to try to help rectify the problem.

As the town building that is open the most hours, including evenings until 9pm and weekends, the library continues to struggle with the lack of security measures for staff and patrons. We have no security guards, panic buttons, or any other safety measures in this large building.

Overall, adult program attendance is hampered greatly by our facility. We are not able to accommodate more than 40 people in the Friends' Room and Thornton Wilder Hall is not always available when we need it. For a town this size, the library should be able to attract larger audiences to its programs without worrying that there is no place to seat the audience. Our only other alternative is to use the rotunda, which presents challenges in sound projection, does not allow for visual presentations and may disturb other patrons who are in the library with the objective of finding a quiet place to study. Ironically, each of the branches has much greater capacity for program seating in their small buildings.

During final budget preparations, the Legislative Council considered cutting an additional \$50,000 from the Library's materials' line. A \$40,000 cut had already been recommended by the mayor and approved by Council. Memos and calls were quickly dispatched, explaining the crippling effect of a cut of over 1/3 of the line. Major cuts of books, DVDs, databases, magazines, and more would have been the result of such a cut. At the final hour, the \$50,000 was restored.

Professional Participation

In June of 2015, the library's Staff Development Day featured a workshop with consultant Noreen Reilly. We were duly impressed with Ms. Reilly's work with us that day, so the Library Board approved our request to invite her back to continue her work with us.

She held three assessment sessions for staff in December. Each staff member was asked to answer questions related to their work here at HPL, their ideas for improvement, and their thoughts on the future. An all-staff morning session was held in January, as well as a coaching session for administrators. She returned in February for three sessions with administrators, supervisors, and "key" team members. The subject areas of concentration were communication and conflict resolution. The work continued through the winter, wrapping up in April. Staff communication has improved and a more positive attitude toward each other and our work is evident.

Staff Development Day on June 22nd was, from all accounts, a productive and inspiring day. Our favorite computer professor, Wayne Spies, was on hand to allay our fears about Excel, and author and octogenarian Jan Mann spoke about her life, the crossroads she faced, and the decisions she made in order to make change in her life. Teams of staff held roundtable goal-setting sessions, and every staff member had a project (or two) to work on to round out the day. Thanks to the Board for the refreshments and lunch.

Planning

In June 2016, the staff together began the task of setting goals for the coming fiscal year. The result of their hard work is a document that will take us through the year and beyond, and we set the bar high. Staff will begin their work at the start of the 2016/17 fiscal year as together we work through the tasks associated with our ambitious goals to make the Hamden library the best library for the Hamden community.

Some highlights include:

- Complete building projects that are currently in progress, such as renovation of the Technical Services Room, interior signage project at Miller Library.
- Improve current fiction collection scope, depth, relevance and accessibility.
- Improve office and file organization and storage.
- Increase training for Information Desk staff.
- Improve patron access to information by developing pathfinders and other promotional and instructional materials.
- Increase participation in the Children's Summer Reading Program.
- Rejuvenate the shut-in service that the library offers.
- Work with both the State Library and the LION consortium to help solve the DeliverIT CT shuttle service.
- Create a staff WIKI.
- Improve the library's web presence by reviewing the webpage and involving more staff with this and other social media.
- Identify branch-specific stakeholders and develop an outreach plan.
- Pursue funding and support for improvement of physical space and branch services.

CONCLUSION

Conclusion

It was difficult to cull through a year's worth of reports in order to choose "highlights" of yet another busy and productive year for the Hamden Public Library System. This report could easily have given the reader several more pages of accomplishments!

I thank the hard working and loyal staff members who embraced more change and became part of a team that is working together to make this library shine in so many ways. I thank the Board of Trustees for their wise counsel and support.

I look forward to another year of good work as we bring more and more Hamden residents into the library for their educational, recreational, and cultural needs.