

MOSES GREELEY PARKER MEMORIAL LIBRARY

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DRACUT, MASSACHUSETTS 01826

LIBRARIAN'S ANNUAL REPORT TO THE BOARD OF LIBRARY TRUSTEES--1982

Certainly the most significant advance in the library this past year was the Town's approval of and the library's initiation of an automated circulation system, the potential of which will affect all areas of library services. However, this department's financial limitations continue to frustrate the library's ability to serve in its various capacities as a total resource center for the entire Dracut community. This frustration is reflected in all areas of the library's operations including staffing, programming, and circulation services and is illustrated in the paradox of building a \$700,000 addition, investing \$60,000 in a computerized circulation system, and in receiving over \$63,000 in outside support when viewed against a local funding level that places this library in the lower 10%-15% of Massachusetts' libraries serving communities of Dracut's population. Thus, the very growth of the library in the second year of Proposition 2½ viewed against the library's financial situation made 1982 a year of apparent contradiction.

After achieving a staffing pattern in 1981 that took nine months to complete, library programs and services remained in flux as a result of staff turnover, a situation directly attributable to the library's finances. Early in 1982, Jeanne Roy was employed as Circulation Manager, a position vacated when Claire Withee became the Assistant Librarian/Children's Services in December 1981. At the end of this past summer, Assistant Librarian Donna Donahue resigned to accept the librarian's position at Notre Dame Academy. Subsequently, Ms. Withee transferred to the Assistant Librarian/Adult-Young Adult Services position. In September Ms. Kathleen Hudzik was appointed as Assistant Librarian/Children's Services. Consequently, for the past two years, the positions directly responsible for public services either have been in a state of transition or have been vacant. The interruptions in library services as a result of repeated orientations to positions obviously cost the Dracut community as well as the library in terms of money and service. This past summer the library continued its tradition of supporting youth employment programs, the success of which has resulted in a continued placement through the fall and winter.

Community response to the Parker Library, as reflected in circulation statistics, appears to indicate library use approaching a plateau, a plateau that is directly related to finances. The total circulation figures represent an approximate 5.7% increase from 1981, an increase attributable to the circulation of "popular" adult materials coupled with children's picture books and paperbacks. Early in 1982 the library began to "rent" all fiction resulting in the ability to provide a substantially greater selection of currently published fiction. The following table illustrates the areas of public use of the library's collection of circulating materials.

| | <u>ADULT</u> | <u>JUVENILE</u> |
|--------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Picture books..... | | 10,033 (11% increase) |
| Fiction | 13,753 (12% increase) | 4,303 (4% decrease) |
| Non-fiction | 12,030 (7% decrease) | 6,794 (1% decrease) |
| Paperbacks | 12,399 (3% increase) | 2,795 (37% increase) |
| Magazines | 4,018 (3% decrease) | 257 (8% increase) |
| Records | 1,093 | 422 |

In general a library's circulation figures relate directly to the size of a library's collection, and obviously the size of a library's collection relates directly to the library's purchasing power. State statistics not only reflect the substandard funding level of this library, they also illustrate the size of this library's collection is also in the bottom 10% of Massachusetts' libraries serving communities of Dracut's population. Library circulation also included deposits totaling 725 volumes to the Dracut Housing Authority and the St. Louis School. The deposit of talking books from the Perkins School totalled 223. Requests for materials this library was unable to supply were answered through the interlibrary loan of 502 items, and this library was able to help patrons of other libraries by sending five volumes to those libraries.

While on one hand an inadequate budget compromises the library's ability to provide an adequate collection; library patrons also contribute significantly to this problem. This past year approximately 1,100 items were borrowed and not returned. Of this amount, approximately 700 of these items were hardcover books or records, and this smaller figure represents an approximate \$8,000 loss to the library and the Dracut community. The loss of 1,100 items effectively negates the expansion of the library's collection thus compromising expanded circulation of library materials. This past year the library has developed and maintained a file of delinquent patrons whose materials are more than six weeks overdue. Patrons listed in this file are not permitted to borrow library materials until their overdue materials is paid for or returned. However, the lack of individual responsibility on the part of the library patron is a significant factor that curtails library use. Patrons cannot use materials that are missing from the shelves. Fortunately, the automation of the circulation system will enable the library to institute a stricter loan policy relative to delinquent patrons.

Circulation figures are not the only measure of library use; and despite the turnover in personnel, more library programs were offered and more library programs were attended in 1982 than in the past. Children's programs included preschool story hour (attendance 799), class visits to the library (attendance 209), and weekly films (attendance 529). Children attended other library activities including crafts programs, magic shows, natural history demonstrations, holiday parties, and story hours (attendance 271). The library's summer reading program focused on the fantasy of the medieval ages (attendance 125). The production of a literary magazine highlighted the library's activities for older children and young adults. Thus, over 1,900 children participated in library activities in 1982.

Adult programming during the year included the continuation of the women's coffee hours and the mini-course series. Subjects featured ranged from book discussions to aerobic dance, from the Irish heritage in the greater Lowell area to cardio-pulmonary resuscitation (CPR), and from community psychology to cooking. In other words, library programs ranged from the cultural to the practical, and approximately 1,350 people attended these programs. The library continued to facilitate program attendance by offering childcare services sponsored through the Tot Shop program at the Greater Lowell Regional Vocational Technical School, a library service unique to this area if not in Massachusetts. Special programming events at the library included a full week of activities during National Library Week, a summer's medieval fair, a Halloween party, and a Christmas fair (total attendance 780). Also, this past year the library extended the use of its facilities to various civic groups, community agencies, and public interest groups including the Rotary Club, The Dracut Historical Society, the Dracut Personnel Board, the Dracut Finance Committee, the Dracut Board of Assessors, the Dracut Sewer Commissioners, the Postcard Club, and the Dracut Youth Soccer Association.

The library's collection continued to grow with the addition of 2,263 items, including 873 paperback books, 100 records, and 1,290 hardbound volumes. Approximately 800 volumes of popular fiction made available to library patrons through the library's participation in the McNaughton book rental program, should be added to this number. Thus, the total figure of new volumes available to patrons reflects an approximate increase of 37% from 1981. This increase contributed measureably, see circulation statistics, to the increase in circulation; yet this increase was certainly compromised by the non-return of the previously mentioned 1,100 items. With circulation directly proportional to collection size, reduction in collection growth will reflect in circulation. Registrations continue to increase with 1,361 new patrons registered in 1982, bringing the active registration file to 15,279.

Special recognition and thanks must go to the individuals and groups who have supported the library and its activities throughout the year. The Dracut Friends of the Library have contributed invaluable financial and moral support to the library and to the library staff. Special recognition is extended to the Dracut Arts Council. The Dracut Arts Council has awarded a grant to the library that will enable the library to offer a circulating framed art print collection for public use. This service will be in place in early 1983. Also, a thank you is extended to those individuals who donated materials for inclusion in the library's collection. Finally, as Library Director, I would like to recognize and applaud the abilities and accomplishments of a library staff dedicated to providing the best library service possible. Changes in the technology of library operations coupled with the pressures inherent in an understaffed and increasingly used department made 1982 a year of change, challenge, and frustration, a year in which a commitment to quality service and operation offer the fundamental basis for this library's future.

Thus exists an apparent contradiction: the real growth of, the demonstrated expanded demand for, and the exciting potential for library services are effectively compromised by substandard financial support. 1982 saw the library embark on a program that will result in the computerization of library's circulation system and subsequently the technical services' operations. By the fall of 1983 the circulation system should be "online" and operating, but the implication of automation includes as a priority the real potential for public use of and access to information that in the past has been beyond reach.

Respectfully submitted:
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M. G. Parker Memorial Library