

MOSES GREELEY PARKER MEMORIAL LIBRARY

26 ARLINGTON STREET

DRACUT, MASSACHUSETTS 01826

Director's Annual Report to Trustees

1984 was the end of an era for the Moses Greeley Parker Memorial Library in many ways. It was the end of the days of a manual circulation system; it was the end of Michael Grazier's tenure as Library Director; and it was the last year of this Department's being able to regard itself as a "small-town Library." When the 1985 State census certifies Dracut as having more than 25,000 residents, the Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners will thereafter place Dracut in a new bracket as pertains to library services, the bracket for municipalities between 25,000 and 49,999. This new status will require the Library to be open a minimum of 63 hours per week, including 6 service days per week, in order to remain a member of the Eastern Massachusetts Regional Library System and to continue receiving State Aid.

Loss of membership in the Eastern Region would mean an immediate cost to the town of \$16,785 per year in State Aid and County Library support, representing 10% of the Library's operating budget; the State would deny access to the Bookmobile, the I.L.L. programs, and to the Boston Public Library's database. Dracut's membership in the Merrimac Valley Library Consortium, through which the automated computer system operates, would be brought into question; loss of this membership would entail the writing off the investment of tens of thousands of dollars of equipment purchases, maintenance services, and personnel time. If Dracut refuses to move forward, we will be forced to move a long ways back.

Public libraries, because they are held accountable to the taxpayers, include performance statistics in their annual reports in order to provide information about their activities during the year, and to offer some basis for their budget requests. Positive performance statistics point to the cost-effectiveness of library operations. Community use of the Moses Greeley Parker Memorial Library increased in 1984, as reflected in circulation statistics. This is the second year since the Library hours had to be cut due to a reduction in the budget for staff. The Library is now the only town department that has not had funds restored to it which were cut because of Proposition 2 1/2.

The budget appropriated for the Library Department in FY84 was again shy of fulfilling the 1% obligation agreed to by the Town in 1922. The total circulation was 71,838, a 4% increase over last year, representing 3.38 items per capita. The total cost of library services per capita was \$6.36, far below the state average for towns of this size. Attendance at library programs rose again to a approximately 3,515, a 12% increase from 1983. In terms of personnel, the hourly average coverage was 3.49 staff/hours- barely above the minimum possible to operate. Our budget for wages & salaries as a percent of the total was 59.6, well below the state average for towns of this size. We cannot avoid the conclusion, based on this data, that this is a high-performance department relative to funding, and a bargain for the community of Dracut.

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Many groups benefitted from use of the Library's resources, including the Rotary Club, the Post Card Club, the Drug Task Force, the Fire Department, the Cub Scouts; the Library also benefitted in turn from the help and support of several groups, including the Friends of the Library, the Dracut Arts Council, and the Boy Scouts.

During National Library Week, April 9-14, the Library offered a film program, an author talk, three babysitting clinics, a craft class, a storyhour, a bicycle workshop, a puppetshow, and a tax shelter workshop; the Library also hosted meetings of the Boy Scouts, Aerobics class, the Chamber of Commerce, and the campfire girls. These activities are typical of those available at the Library in any given month, but which could be held more often given sufficient funds.

In the coming year the Library plans to pursue, if possible, the following priorities:

- conduct a community survey of reading, for the National Library Week theme, 'A Nation of Readers';
- complete implementation of the automated circulation system;
- improve the diversity and utility of the collection in several areas, especially those of business services, local information, and town government;
- better marketing of library services and resources through cooperation with cable television;
- increase circulation per capita.

The Library staff and Director are also planning in 1985 to provide, as much as possible, the same or better quality of service in each library program. Included in this will be our collections of circulating fiction and nonfiction, the weekly storytimes, the author talks, craft classes, our information and referral services, and the outreach services, such as deposit collections in schools and to the Housing Authority, that bring Library resources to the community.

The Long-Range Plan of the Moses Greeley Parker Memorial Library shall continue to be to fulfill the mission of service defined in the General Policy Statement as being "to organize, preserve and provide significant books, materials, and information which will provide education and recreation for all residents of the community." We shall pursue this mission through the objectives of service set forth in the same document: "to continuously study and evaluate our services...; to understand and anticipate the changing needs and demands of the community; to maintain a fresh and topical supply of materials; to provide effective access to necessary information in any format; and to pursue these objectives in close cooperation with other Town departments, other service agencies, and cooperative networks..." At present, we understand this mission to be best served by seeking an effective balance between information service and recreational reading, and by targeting for collection development and service those groups in the community whose information needs are not sufficiently met at the Library.

As of the beginning of 1985, a new situation prevails for the community of Dracut in relation to its Library. Like a family going into another tax bracket, the community must sit down with

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going into another tax bracket, the community must sit down with the Library and consider its priorities, as we humbly ask for a larger slice of the pie.