

M.G. Parker Library
Annual Town Report
2008

The Library continues to be an extremely busy location in the Town of Dracut. Teens, adults, young children, and community groups are utilizing the Library building and its affiliated services at unprecedented rates. While fiscal crises both on local and national levels have contributed to elevated unemployment and an overall tone of conservative spending. Ironically, these unfortunate circumstances make for an environment which lends itself to Library growth as patrons would now choose to check out a book at the Library rather than incur the purchase price of new material; moreover, locals who are out of work conduct job searches on the internet-access computers and hone their resume writing skills and increase their visibility through computer networking while here at the Library. Patron attendance for calendar year 2008 was 141,928, up nearly 12% from the previous calendar year. A 13.51% increase from 2007 or a total of 237,907 number items circulated was witnessed by a faithful and hardworking, underrepresented number of Library staff with little hope for an increase in assistance for the next coming year.

In January 2008, a reading program for home bound patrons welcomed its inaugural participation with five patrons expressing serious interest. While the program is still available, we continue to actively seek out those who are in need of such a service and help to fulfill their Library needs. The circulation department embraced the arrival of a third check-out station which was installed prior to summer reading. Quicker and more efficient circulation interactions allow for a greater number of patrons to access materials while minimizing the amount of time spent waiting in lines, particularly during the extremely active summer months.

Lack of bandwidth in the Library continues to be an ongoing problem and the disparity is anticipated to grow wider as larger files, media-laden web pages, and social networking sites become more commonplace. Computer usage expanded to 23,064 total usage events from calendar year 2007 with each session lasting over 2 minutes longer on average than the previous calendar year. Technological advancements were in harmony with collection development trends as seen with the advent of MP3 format Overdrive book selections. This newly released acquisition affords greater access to the electronic format Overdrive titles for such devices as iPods and other proprietary electronic devices, for which the original WMA format was not compatible. Collection development continues to be largely driven and influenced by the needs and trends of the local patrons for example, the large print collection, with a focus on currency and wide reader appeal,

persists as a favorite among Dracut patrons with the influx of the latest fiction available for the visually impaired and the more mature readers.

A concerted effort was made to increase the number of titles as well as the caliber and substance of DVD's available at the Library and this lofty goal is well on its way to reflect a more robust collection than a year ago; however, this project will continue to be a work in progress. Healthy and steady growth was evidenced in the non-fiction, feature film, and children's DVD titles during 2008 and is reflected in the large statistical circulation increase for these collections. An analogous campaign was started with new music available on CD's which has been as well received as the new DVD collection and also models favorable increases in the usage statistics.

Friends of Dracut Library further bolster the Library with monies for adjunct programming and purchases, mostly through successful fundraising events such as the annual book sale, and through revenues generated by selling specialty items that include but are not limited to Dracut book bags, novelty t-shirts, and raffles. Also, through the generous support of the Friends, museum passes offered via the Library have bloomed to support 11 different venues, including 3 new outings, namely, Ecotarium, Sports Museum, and Decordova Museums.

The children's room remains the hallmark of the Library with tremendous growth in all areas such as books, cd's, and media materials. An increase in the number of participants in the school grade ranges of 2 through 6 for the summer reading program was captured in 2008. Furthermore, attendance at infants and toddler programs rose the greatest amount of all the age ranges which are most closely associated with children's room and children's programming.

As a means of reaching the greatest number of patrons and serving their needs most effectively, several physical changes were made concerning "real estate" within the Library; most notably the new paperback books were placed in the lobby of the Library so as to make readily available the latest arrivals for the patrons. The young adult or YA area of the building on the second floor witnessed movement of furniture, the addition of comfortable accoutrements specific for that age group, the acquisition of board games, and most notably, a special section dedicated for the YA tastes in music. The observed and documented number of teens visiting that section of the Library has seen measureable growth. Furthermore, the latest collection of music CD arrivals now find their home on the first floor lobby, garnering vastly more attention than their former residence on the Library second floor. This change of environment is justified by the surge in circulation statistics for this area of the Library's collection.

Respectfully submitted on behalf of the Board of Trustees,

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