

January 29, 2005

## 2004 ANNUAL REPORT

*Libraries in the U.S. issue more cards than VISA, have more children enrolled in summer programs than Little League, and have more visitors each week than all museums and zoos combined.*

New York Public Library, Calendar of Facts 2000

Honorable Selectmen:

The Bellingham Public Library continued its mission to serve the cultural, informational, educational, and recreational needs of the community. Once again, the library saw more use than in years past, with an overall increase in circulation of over 14.5%, and an increase in the number of patrons with library cards to 8001. 5577 adults under the age of 65 hold library cards, 720 of them senior citizens. 1398 juveniles hold library cards, half of them young adults. Video use, free to the library user, increased by 50%. Materials holdings, or the library collection, increased to 49,118 items, or three for every resident of Bellingham. The library now owns over 930 books on audiocassette, 19 books on CD and 127 movies on DVDs.

In February the library once again instituted its "Food For Fines" program. In lieu of fines owed on overdue items, patrons were encouraged to donate food items to the local food pantry.

In March, the library welcomed its new Children's Services Librarian/Assistant Director, Julie Brown. Julie Brown's experience in children's services, non-profit, and program management lends itself well to expanding the Children's Services offerings at the library. Regular story times were offered for infants, toddlers, and preschoolers. Events included Halloween stories with Carolyn Martino, December holiday stories with Debbie O'Carroll, and the Snow Queen storyteller, Clare Vadeboncoeur. Additionally, movies for children and teens were offered on a weekly basis since July. Gingerbread House and cookie decorating workshops were again offered in cooperation with the Friends of the Library and the Children's Services Department.

The library continued its participation in the statewide Summer Reading Program. This year's theme, "Explore Other Worlds @ Your Library" was celebrated with the "Oceans of Fun" program for children and young adults in preschool through high school. There were numerous events and programs throughout the summer, and all were very well attended. Performers included storyteller Karen Chace, storyteller and puppeteer Charlotte Dore, local science fiction author Walter Hunt, and entertainer Ronald McDonald. Additional activities included evening lullaby story times, six craft events, three children's movie nights, and drop-in play times of finger-painting, coloring, bubble blowing, and drawing with sidewalk chalk. The Book Buddies reading program was a success with twelve children paired with nine volunteers.

The grand finale of the Summer Reading Program included a hands-on traveling tide pool presentation by the New England Aquarium, refreshments from Del's Lemonade and a generous donation of child-friendly snacks and drinks from Whole Foods Market in Bellingham.

The Library Trustees wish to acknowledge the generous funding provided by the Friends of the Library, without which many of the above-mentioned Children's programs would not have been possible.

The library's book discussion group continued to meet once a month throughout the year, and has now been in existence for seven years. Reference librarian Cecily Christensen is the group's facilitator, and it now consists of ten members. The group discusses both fiction and non-fiction works, so that a wide variety of subjects are read and discussed.

Due to its membership in the Central Massachusetts Regional Library System and the C/W MARS automated library network, the library has online access to eighteen reference databases. These provide students, researchers, and other users with access to magazine and newspaper articles, reference book entries, profiles, and statistics on a wide variety of subjects. These databases are available through the library's computers as well as remotely through the home or office computer by typing in the patron's Bellingham Public Library card number. Two additional databases, *Today's Science* and *Issues and Controversies*, are going to be available to library users in early 2005. Access in the library and remotely will be possible for both.

The Friends of the Library continue to be a vital resource for the public library. The organization held two fundraisers, the 13<sup>th</sup> Annual Library Golf classic and a Wine Tasting Social, that enabled them to provide quality programs, museum passes, and furnishings during the past year. A total of \$3,050 was expended on programs for children and adults, while \$2,575 was used to pay for museum and zoo passes to Plimoth Plantation, the Science Museum, the New England Aquarium, Roger Williams Zoo Park, Davis' Farmland, Slater Mill, Providence Children's Museum, Museum of Fine Arts, and two new attractions, the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum and the Woonsocket Museum of Work and Culture. A generous donation of \$675 from Dean Bank funded the pass to the Children's Museum in Boston.

The Friends expended \$6,660 to maintain and upgrade library furnishings including anti-glare shades for the young adult and children's rooms and a new information kiosk.

The ongoing book sale continued to contribute substantially to the Friends' ability to enhance library services. The Friends would like to thank the library patrons who donate their good, used reading material so that new books are continually replenishing the selection. This annual report would not be complete without words of gratitude to the many businesses whose generosity are so vital to our success. Thanks to Dominic's Liquors for another successful wine social, to Steve and Linda Bloch of Schafer Garden Center who help whenever asked, to Bonnie Frechette of Whole Foods Market, the Wal Mart Foundation, UniBank, the Bellingham Playgroup, Dean Bank, and Allied Mortgage Capital Corporation, Milford. These donations are very much appreciated.

The Friends also provided additional funds used for the purchase of videos, special reference materials, and other supplies and furnishings for the library.

Also, mention must be made of the many other community businesses, who, through their generous donations to the Friends of the Bellingham Library, give support to the programs and services mentioned in this report. Among those specifically, the Library Trustees would like to thank Ben Franklin Savings Bank of Franklin, UniBank of Whitinsville, the Wal Mart Foundation, Comcast, and Schafer Nursery of Bellingham for their generous donations to the Friends and the Library during the past year. Through all their efforts, the library was better able to provide quality adult and children's programming, and offered more comprehensive and up-to-date reference service to the community.

During the past year, many improvements were made to the library building itself, making it a safer, more inviting place to visit. In addition to new rockers for the children's room, the library added computers, printers and flat screen monitors to aid in the use of technology and Internet research.

In October, the Trustees accepted with regret, the resignation of its Director, Susan Peterson, who left for the opportunity to become the Director of the East Longmeadow Public Library.

In closing, the library continued to offer its patrons the services and programs they have come to expect and enjoy. It must be mentioned, however, that these services and programs would not have been possible without the hard work of a dedicated library staff and all the others who volunteer their time and energy to the library year after year.

Circulation Totals: 96, 689

Bellingham Library Card Holders: 8001 (does not include borrowers from neighboring towns)

Library materials: 49, 118

Respectfully submitted,

Mary Ambler, M.D., Trustee Chair  
Maryclare Burke, Trustee Secretary  
Kathleen Bartlett  
Pamela W. Perry  
Michael Carr, Trustee

Charlotte Rabbitt, Library Director

