



## Wadleigh Memorial Library

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## LIBRARY 2014 Annual Report

Last year at this time we had drafted the library's first Strategic Plan. Our renewed Mission Statement had the library as the "educational, cultural, technological and social center supporting lifelong learning and improving quality of life by connecting the community to resources and services. One of four Vision Statements was for the library to be "a place which is accessible to all, welcoming, visually stimulating, transformative, and comfortable and showcases the vibrant sense of community."

While we made great strides in 2014 in living up to our mission statement—providing access to one of the state's first 3D printers in a public library and presenting a vast array of educational and cultural programs for all ages—just to give a few examples—we did so in an aging, dated facility that is not accessible to all, not particularly comfortable and less than transformative or visually stimulating.

With nearly 11,000 visits a month this year, the library is the most heavily utilized town facility outside of the schools. Joel Trafford, our Facilities Manager, has done a fantastic job in the past decade to keep the building and its various systems running as efficiently as possible. The facility was last renovated 30 years ago next year and its structure and systems have long ago begun to fail or otherwise show their age. We've spent tens of thousands of dollars in years past to repair roofs, replace boilers and air handlers and most recently, an AC compressor for an unexpected \$12,000. While we've been able to make short-term fixes, planning for the library's future has never been more imperative.

As we planned for our future, however, we also had another busy year full of great programs and new services as well as two staff retirements.

### Services

By way of the Wadleigh Library Development Fund, we were extremely fortunate to acquire the long-term loan of a 3D printer and a generous grant and thus be able to offer 3D printing as an innovative, new service for our patrons. We were only the second public library in the state to offer 3D printing and its launch generated quite a bit of buzz. We were featured in local newspapers and on NHPR and even interviewed for a story which appeared in the *Christian Science Monitor*. Foot traffic increased dramatically as curiosity seekers came to see cutting edge technology at work in their library. We have since taken it on the road for appearances at the Souhegan Valley Expo as well as for presentations at the Milford Rotary Club and an area



assisted living facility. Residents are printing all make and manner of things from replacement latches for toolboxes to entire chess sets, cell phone cases and cookie cutters.

Based on a quarterly sampling, our staff was asked over 15,000 questions for help finding information. The queries ran a broad range of topics: fire code information; election day procedures in town; police scanner codes; circular knitting; health insurance; how to renew one's driver's license online; local history; and history of the Middle East. We also provided technical assistance to many using our computers or wireless system as well as those having trouble with e-readers and other devices. The library continued to work with the AARP in providing free income tax assistance. Additionally, we were able to partner with Harbor Homes and ServiceLink in providing access to ACA/Healthcare application assistance.

Subscription database searches increased dramatically due to content now linked within our catalog. Our databases provide access to information on a multitude of topics including genealogy, language learning, auto repair, investments, business and corporation data, and practice tests for civil service and professional education exams.



### Collection

For the fourth year in a row, the number of books, DVDs and other items we checked out to patrons remained relatively flat from last year. Interestingly, while nearly 10% of our overall circulation is made up of items we bring in from other GMILCS libraries to fill requests, this number decreased by 10% from 2013 to 2014. Hopefully this means we're getting better at anticipating what is going to be popular in Milford and subsequently fine-tuning the items we purchase for the collection.

Although total circulation has remained relatively flat, we saw significant increases in four areas:

- Downloadable audiobook checkouts increased by 37% last year. While the increase was significant, with 3,436 downloads, it accounted for only 1.4% of overall checkouts.
- E-book checkouts increased by 30% and accounted for slightly less than 3% of total circulation.
- Magazines made a comeback with checkouts increasing by nearly 5% after several years of slight decreases.
- Museum pass checkouts rose by 11%. The most popular passes included the New England Aquarium, Museum of Science and Zoo New England. A recent exhibit of M.C. Escher at the Currier Museum of Art also made that pass much more heavily used than in previous years. We remain grateful to the Friends of the Wadleigh Memorial Library who purchase nearly all of the museum passes

we provide. We were able to add two additional passes to our offerings thanks to generous donors: Jaiden's Angel Foundation donated passes for the Boston Children's Museum and Tandem Injury Management, LLC donated passes for Worcester's Ecotarium.

The top three categories of materials checked out most frequently last year:

- Children's books topped our list with a circulation of more than 61,000. Checkouts accounted for 26% of total circulation.
- For the first time ever, DVD checkouts of nearly 57,000 edged out adult book circulation; checkouts made up nearly 25% of all circulation were DVDs.
- Adult and large print book checkouts—55,000—made up 23% of all circulation.

### Programs

Throughout 2014, over 15,000 attended one or more of our 800 programs. As a whole, program attendance increased by a healthy 10% over last year.



The library held over 300 adult programs on topics such as Community Supported Agriculture (CSAs); the use of heroin and other opiates in our community; New Hampshire's Civil War monuments and memorials; and solar energy. We were honored to host Harvard Law professor and one of Scientific American's 50 Top Visionaries Lawrence Lessig as he gave an extended presentation of his wildly popular TED-talk on grassroots efforts

towards campaign finance reform. Reference Librarian Sue Amann won a grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities and the NH Humanities Council to hold a book and film series on "Making Sense of the Civil War;" this proved quite popular and led to the formation of a new history book group.

Weekly Spanish language conversation groups, a biweekly knitting group, and adult book groups continued to be well-attended and our Acoustic Café series began its 15<sup>th</sup> season. For the second year in a row, attendance for adult programs rose sharply by nearly 20%. After several years of decreased adult program attendance, last year saw numbers equivalent with those from 2010.

Our Young Adult Services Librarian, Katie Spofford was busy again this year planning more than 80 programs for our teen patrons. The Anime and Doctor Who Fan Clubs, the Pizza & Pages Book Club and gaming/Wii Wednesdays remained popular. Our Summer Reading Program's theme in 2014 was "Spark a Reaction" and we certainly did with programs to

make and race bristle bots; deconstruct electronics; and making it snow in July. Our Teen Advisory Group was resurrected and we formed a Teen Tech Squad whose volunteers held “office hours” to help people troubleshoot their devices, program a phone or even just use a computer.

The Children’s Department saw an increase of 10% in program attendance. We continued to offer baby lapsits and story times for all ages as well as regular Lego parties; our Mad Science and Art Afternoon program series; book groups for grades 2-6; and our “Paws to Read” series where children practice reading aloud to certified therapy dogs. We added Wadleigh Writer Wednesdays to encourage budding authors; held a fairy tea party complete with fairy dust; and a library luau where our pint-sized patrons could hone their hula skills. Magician Peter Boie returned to help us kick off the Children’s Summer Reading theme of “Fizz, Boom, Pop!” Other programs introduced children to basic botany and the science behind both weather and sound. We also welcomed Creature Teachers and Lindsay and her (very popular) puppet pals.



We continued our summertime story times at Keyes Field as well as our partnership with Milford Middle School’s art classes to feature an ongoing, rotating display of selected student artwork.

Our Summer Reading Program was made possible by a generous grant from the Wadleigh Library Development Fund. We remain grateful for their unflagging support!

### **Facilities & Grounds**

Even with the recent addition of community meeting room space in the Ambulance Department, use of our own meeting rooms by local groups remained heavy with more than 500 bookings. Once again, there were times when even the library trustees and the library Development Fund had to meet in the Police Department’s community room due to a “full house” at the Wadleigh. Over half of our bookings last year (317 or 60%) were near daily requests for quiet study. We began tracking this particular statistic in 2012 in order to get a better idea of the need for quiet spaces in a noisy facility. It rose sharply by 50% from 2012 to 2013 and seemed to level off in 2014. The use continues to demonstrate a very clear need for smaller, quieter spaces for individuals or small groups to study or work on projects.

The Keyes Room, our largest meeting room, has a fire code capacity of 40 people and very thin doors between it and a smaller conference room which seats 8-10. When a library program is planned for the Keyes Room and either a noisy and/or large attendance is expected, we reserve both rooms. This, of course, limits the available rooms for community groups to meet, but it's not uncommon for some of our adult programs to have standing room only. The photo shows a standing room only crowd that spilled out into the hallway and an adjacent meeting room. For larger children's programs and at least one adult program this year where the anticipated attendance was over 100, we held them off-site, defeating the purpose of drawing people into the library. For our Acoustic Café series where attendance is typically in the range of 60-100 people, we have to clear the Children's Room of all furniture and set up staging, seating and lighting (and then take it all back down and re-assemble the entire room afterwards).



Our Teen area has never been big enough to accommodate its collection or its patrons. As shown in the adjacent photo, there is no space for seating other than at two computer stations—and the floor. The room is small enough that it becomes uncomfortably crowded when more than 6-7 teens are browsing the shelves. In 2013, our Facilities Manager relocated two of the four pc workstations which used to be in the Teen area and created new shelving to provide more space for the collection; the shelves allowed more than 2000 volumes to spill around the corner by the Circulation Desk. That space all too soon proved inadequate and in 2014, we had to relocate the entire teen manga book collection out of the Teen area to the Reference Area.

The Children's Department long ago outgrew its space. Nearly 30% of its collection—approximately 6000 items—spills outside of the Children's Room into the adult section of the library. Furthermore, the large majority of Children's programs must be held on the next floor in order to contain mess, noise, and of course children! Program supplies are stored in various locations throughout the building.

Parking remained a thorn in our sides; there's just not enough—especially when it comes to handicapped spots. Unfortunately due to town-wide budget cuts, we had to remove the funds we had hoped to use to create an additional handicapped parking spot in 2014. Plans to greatly expand our parking are incorporated into the building project.

We made great strides towards our building project this year. Library Trustees and key members of Milford's Facility Committee met frequently with Ron Lamarre of Lavallee Brensinger Architects (LBA) in evaluating various choices presented in a design and cost

analysis. Design options were discussed in minute detail with the following caveats forming the framework: (1) What is the project price tag? (2) What are the operational and maintenance costs going forward? (3) Are previously identified program and community needs addressed? (4) Are space and workflow inefficiencies addressed? Following much deliberation and careful examination, the Board of Trustees voted unanimously to build an addition in front of the existing building to bring the library in line with the rest of the streetscape as well as to allow for vastly expanded parking in the rear of the property. After the addition was built, our existing building would be demolished and reconstructed on the existing footprint. The one stipulation was that the new facility would mirror the architectural aesthetics of the current streetscape, bring the facility into the 21<sup>st</sup> century but at the same time, evoke the character of the 1950 structure which many longtime residents hold dear.

The new library building design stresses open, flexible spaces to allow for changes in the community's use over time. It will remedy all current handicapped accessibility issues and addresses all needs previously identified by a space needs analysis and community and staff focus groups: a larger Children's Department with programming space; a bigger area for the Teen Department that will be glassed in to ensure supervision but allow teens the ability to work/talk with friends without disturbing others; a larger meeting room with after-hours access to hold our more heavily attended programs; several small group/quiet study rooms; an IT/business center where residents and business owners can access and learn to use current and new media and technology; and an expanded parking lot with ample handicapped spaces and nearly double the current capacity.



The overall taxpayer's cost of the project is \$4.96 million; the total building project cost is \$5.46 million. The project cost will be offset by a significant Library Trustee contribution of \$500,000 in reserved trust funds. It is important to note that the project price tag would have been much higher if not for an additional \$500,000 of trustee funds already spent in recent years on various building project, architectural and engineering consultants; the purchase of both 91 Nashua and 29 Nashua; the subsequent demolition and landscaping of 91 Nashua; the purchase of furnishings for nearly all public areas of the building; and the current architectural design and cost benefit analysis.

For the final months of the year, we began a campaign to inform the public of the pending warrant article. We had tables at school open houses, gave presentations to town groups, boards and committees, had Granite Town Media produce an informative but brief video

and held a series of Open Houses where residents could get behind the scenes tours of our present facility's deterioration and ask questions of Library Trustees, our Facilities Manager and architect.

### **Staff**

We bade farewell to two staffers this year--both in the Technical Services Department. In May, part time Library Assistant Regina Short retired after 5 years and in December, long-time staff member Judy Hohenadel began her retirement after 25 years of service. They will both be missed and we wish them well in the next chapter of their lives.

### **Summary**

It was a challenging and exciting year in which library staff and trustees were able to bring forth a viable plan to address the shortcomings of an aging and failing facility, all while working hard to continue to offer the great services and programs residents have come to depend on. We continue to be grateful for a community that utilizes and supports their public library. On behalf of the library staff, thank you.

Respectfully Submitted,

Michelle R. Sampson  
Library Director