



Library Director and the Board of Trustees

The Robbins Library system experienced a very successful year with the expansion of its Community Read program, receipt of a public relations award, grant funding for a customer service project, recognition of the branch librarian by the New York Times, completion of the 10th anniversary celebration, and continuing high usage by the public. As in previous years, the public enthusiastically attended library programs and constantly used the computer workstations for access to the Internet and electronic databases. Residents also accessed the library collections and databases from home. Professional librarians at the Reference Desk, Children's Room, and at Fox Branch assisted the public in meeting their informational needs through the library's book and periodical collections and with electronic resources. The library received sufficient funding through the passage of the proposition 2 ½ override in June to maintain existing services, although it was not able to restore any of the seven hours lost in FY2004. This funding also enabled the library to meet state aid requirements for the municipal appropriation so that a waiver was not needed to remain certified by the MA Board of Library Commissioners as was the case in the two previous fiscal years. During fiscal 2005, the Friends of the Fox Branch Library raised sufficient private funds to keep Fox open a third day; with the passage of the override, municipal funds would be available in FY06 for this.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Community Read Program



This was the third year that the library co-sponsored a Community Read with the Diversity Task Force whereby all residents were encouraged to read the same book and share their impressions of it. The library was fortunate to receive grant funding to

publicize the program and purchase multiple copies of the book, *Snow in August*, by Pete Hamill. Financial assistance for this special project was made possible with Federal funds from the Institute on Museum and Library Services administered through the Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners. With this funding, the library was able to hire a graphic designer to create a logo design and bright orange, six-foot banners proclaiming "Arlington Reads Together" to hang every year on the light posts in Arlington Center for this annual event. A total of eight programs were enthusiastically attended by the public including a Shirim Klezmer Concert that filled Town Hall; a video of the Big Bands, Irish and Jewish Folktales with Award Winning and Grammy nominated storyteller, Sharon Kennedy; a Comic Book workshop, Music of the Irish and Jewish Immigrant Experience featuring Robbie O'Connell; and "A Besere Velt" of the Yiddish Community Chorus of the Workmen's Circle. Several book discussions and a showing of the movie were also held. The Board of Library Trustees and the Friends of the Library provided additional funding for the project.



Community Read Event: Shirim Klezmer performance

10th Anniversary Celebration

In May, the library ended a yearlong series of events that began in June 2004 to celebrate the tenth anniversary of the completion of the library building project. The final events included a program with Lou Gorman, former general manager of the Boston Red Sox, and a two-evening Arlington Author Series with a panel of fiction and non-fiction writers from the community. A highlight of the celebration was an "Afternoon with Arlington resident Christopher Castellani," who won the Massachusetts Book Award for Fiction for his novel, *A Kiss from Maddalena*. The library also invited residents to submit a list of their ten favorite books from which a master list was created and the books displayed for the public to borrow.

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Public Relations Award

The library was awarded second prize by the Massachusetts Library Association for its quarterly newsletter. The library staff wrote and designed the newsletter with the printing financed by library trust funds and the Friends of the Library.

Customer Service Grant

The library successfully applied for a Customer Service Grant from the Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners to offer staff training/workshops in various components of customer service to serve the public even better. Another aspect of the project will be public relations efforts to make citizens aware of the services and collections available at the library and from home. The grant will provide funding to create a new borrower brochure and an improved signage/directory to make the library's collections more visible and accessible. This project is being funded through the Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners with funds from LSTA (Library Services and Technology Act), a Federal source of library funding provided by the Institute of Museum and Library Services.

New York Times Award to Branch Librarian

Page Lindsay, Branch Librarian at the Fox Library, was recognized by the New York Times for her outstanding contributions to the Fox Branch Library. This award honors librarians who have provided outstanding public service and influenced members of the community. She was one of twenty-seven librarians to receive the award chosen from more than 1,200 nominations nationwide.

Usage

Residents continued to make heavy use of library facilities and resources. Circulation rose two percent over the previous fiscal year despite no increase in hours or staffing. The DVD rental collection, funded by the Friends of the Library, continued to prove very popular. Staff also handled an eight percent increase in interlibrary loans to Arlington citizens and other libraries.

Services For Adults And Young Adults

Adults and young adults of middle and high school age utilized the services provided by the librarians in the Adult Services Department for school, work, and personal life. The library continued to staff the Reference Desk whenever the library was open to the public and tried to provide two librarians whenever possible during busy hours. Nineteen online databases were provided through the library's participation in the Minuteman Library Network and the Metrowest Regional Library System with municipal funding for eleven others. With the public workstations

in almost constant use, the staff assisted patrons in the use of the Internet and electronic databases and with troubleshooting equipment.

Staff created book and audiovisual displays to highlight the collections and assist citizens in their pursuit of life-long learning and reading enjoyment. A summer reading club for adults entitled "Oh the Places You Go" received an enthusiastic response from the public and funding from the Friends of the Library for a number of raffles. Many local organizations also took advantage of the library's exhibit space in the lobby to publicize their organizations and to present informational displays. The library actively promoted the town's Diversity Month in October through the distribution of booklists and book displays and the sponsorship of the town-wide "Community Read." The library offered a Literacy Open House at Drake Village to publicize its expanded collection of English as a Second Language materials. Library staff continued to expand the Chinese and Russian language collections to meet public interest. The library participated in the "Business Forward Expo," sponsored by the Town and the Arlington Chamber of Commerce, by staffing an informational table at Town Hall. The table served as a site for workshops and offered a course on using the library's online databases for marketing a business. The library also co-sponsored a program with the Chamber and the U. S. Postal Service on using e-Bay to promote businesses. A revised brochure on the Local History Collection was printed and a catalog created for the Local History Postcard Collection.

Young adults in grades six through twelve continued to make use of the facility and services. The Reference Desk staff assisted students with class assignments and bibliographic instruction. Programs on comic book making and art were again offered because of their popularity the previous year. Author Jack Gantos gave a fantastic presentation to students at the Ottoson Middle School and also visited with students over lunch. Several new booklists were created for young adults including *Too Good to Miss*, *Science Fiction and Fantasy*, and *Outstanding Books for the College Bound*. Artwork from Arlington High School was displayed in the Young Adult area of the library. Teenagers participated in the summer reading program and had the opportunity to win raffle prizes funded by trust funds and local businesses.

The Community Room and Conference Room were used by over 100 local organizations for a total of 658 meetings and programs. The two study rooms continued to be in constant demand by students, tutors, and those using word processing and spreadsheet programs. The Local History Room was used 105 times by researchers with Independent Research Cards.

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Services For Children

Children from infancy to fifth grade enjoyed the materials and programs offered by the Children's Department. Materials included books, magazines, books and music on cassette and CD, videocassettes, CD-ROMs, puppets, and educational toys. Children and parents participated in 279 activities at the Robbins and Fox Libraries including storytimes, sing-a-longs for infants and toddlers, craft times, toddler programs, Chess Club, and various performances. The library promoted the annual summer reading program for children, with a theme of "Explore Other Worlds." Funding from the trust funds and the Friends of the Library enabled children who participated to choose a free book to keep and to win small prizes. This year, a new program was implemented to promote an appreciation of poetry called "Poems in your Pocket" which awarded prizes to children who could read a poem when asked. The children's librarians offered assistance to children, parents, and teachers in researching homework assignments and for general use of the book collection and the Internet. The public continued to request the very popular graded and subject booklists that are updated annually by library staff. Several new booklists were also prepared this year including Trains, Fairies, Summer Reading, and Community Read. The staff also prepared "quick pick" kits with thematic picture books to assist parents who do not have the time to browse the shelves.

The library is very fortunate to have the Anne A. Russell Children's Educational and Cultural Enrichment Fund which sponsors many special programs for children that could not be afforded through the municipal budget. In 2005, these included a program on Martin Luther King Day, Exploring Music and Movement, puppetry, theatre, Colonial Days, and picnic concerts. The Russell Fund again sponsored the family concert by the Arlington Philharmonic Orchestra and this year the Head of Children's Services, Marianne Uttam, narrated *Peter and the Wolf* at the concert attended by over 500 people at Town Hall. The fund also finances the very popular infant-toddler sing-a-longs as well as kindergarten packets for children, to introduce them to the library, and baby bundle packets for new parents, with information on library services for infants and toddlers.

The public and school libraries continued their cooperative efforts. The public library maintained collaboration with the schools through letters to teachers, assignment support for teachers and students, extended loan periods for teachers, library tours, preparation of curriculum kits, and suggestions for the summer reading lists. The children's librarians at the Robbins and Fox presented book talks in the schools and instruction for classes at the library. The Russell Fund continued to sponsor authors chosen by the elementary schools to visit their facilities. This

remains a popular program with students and those involved with the town-wide Enrichment Committee. A highlight was the performance at Hardy School by an author/storyteller from the Eastern American Indian Cultural Center. As in previous years, the library considered the needs of the curriculum frameworks when selecting materials for purchase.

Edith Fox Branch Library And Community Center

Children and adults continued to enjoy the services that a branch library provides. The library was open on Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday. Funding for two of the three days in Fiscal 2005 was provided by the municipal budget and one day was provided by private donations through a dedicated and energetic group of volunteers who coordinated the fundraising campaign. Children and parents enjoyed storytimes, lap-sit programs, sing-a-longs, craft programs, and the summer reading club. Elementary and nursery schools brought classes to the library for stories and instruction. All ages enjoyed the monthly book displays that highlighted the collection and exhibits from community groups and the schools.

Behind The Scenes

Library staff worked diligently to offer quality services to the community. The number of items borrowed for library patrons from other libraries and loaned to other libraries for their patrons continued to increase. Despite the fact that the public can request items electronically, the staff must still locate the materials and process them for loan and return. In the summer and fall of 2005, the Minuteman Library Network experienced severe problems with the state funded delivery system of these materials. The delivery vendor could not keep up with the volume, and audiovisual loans had to be suspended for several months. Audiovisual loans were re-instated with the exception of new DVDs and videos. In its role as an education support center, the library continued its efforts to support the curriculum needs of the schools. The Adult Services and Technical Services Departments selected, ordered, cataloged, and processed over 16,572 new items including books, magazines, compact discs, audiocassettes, books on tape, videocassettes, DVDs, CD-ROMs, puppets, and educational toys. The Circulation Department checked out and returned 535,653 items to the shelves. The Local History Librarian received sixty-seven requests for research assistance in person, and by phone, letter, and email. The Adult Services Department continued to order various tax forms and serve as a distribution center to assist patrons in filing their state and federal income taxes. The library collected \$66,620 in overdue fines and lost book money that was returned to the general town fund. Library staff

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wrote a new Collection Development Policy and updated the Internet Policy.

Library staff prepared the monthly children's newsletter and the quarterly newsletter for adults to keep the public aware of services available to them. Staff also updated the library's web page to keep it timely and completed the revision of the web page. Other staff activities included selecting, weeding, and updating the collection, updating the periodical list, shifting collections, creating booklists and displays, scheduling the meeting rooms, purchase and processing of the rental book collection, and processing books that need re-binding. All library staff attended an in-house workshop on customer service and visited local libraries for ideas on how to improve signage and access to the collections.

The library continued to attempt to meet patron demands for new audiovisual materials. The Friends of the Library's rental DVD collection continues to prove very successful and the proceeds from the rentals will allow for the expansion of the collection.

The library experienced significant turnover in all departments. Stella Shen who was a librarian in the Technical Services and Adult Services Departments retired after over 30 years of service. One of her accomplishments was the creation of the very popular Chinese language collection with funding from a federal LSTA grant, trust funds and Friends of the Library.

Several building and equipment issues proved to be problematic. The microfilm reader printers broke down several times and it was very frustrating to both the public and the staff that the service vendor could not quickly resolve the problem. The air conditioning system experienced significant trouble during the summer months and several costly repairs resulted. Capital funds will allow for the replacement of major parts prior to the 2006 summer season. The elevator also needed repairs several times and became inoperable for safety reasons at the end of December. New parts were immediately ordered for installation the first week in January.



Board of Library Trustees
Standing (l. to r.): Patricia Deal, Katherine Fennelly, Francis Murray, Susan Cronin Ruderman, Barbara Muldoon. Seated: Joyce Radochia, David Castiglione.

BOARD OF TRUSTEES

The Board of Trustees continued its commitment to sponsor an authors program, administer the trust funds for the optimum benefit of the community, raise private funds to augment the municipal budget, and advocate for adequate staffing and delivery of essential library services. The Board approved funding in FY05 for reference books, books on tape, music CDs, videocassettes, multicultural materials, local history preservation, young adult books, children's materials, circulating art prints, programs for children, materials for the Fox Library, author program, Community Read, public relations, volunteer appreciation, and staff development. The Board conducted a mail solicitation of individuals and businesses to raise funds for the collections and took steps to establish a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization so that individual donations would qualify for matching funds by employers that offer such a program. Board members also participated in Town Day by staffing a table providing information on library activities and resources. At the town level, one Trustee participated in the Trust Fund Policies Committee representing the library trust funds.

Friends Of The Library

The Friends of the Robbins Library, a citizen support group for the Robbins and Fox Libraries, remained active, with 375 new and renewing members. In April, the Friends presented a program of Irish and Scottish folk songs with the duo of Bruce and Sandy Hedman, otherwise known as Tara's Thistle. The program was enjoyed by a large audience. The great Highland pipes were particularly impressive. The Friends also co-sponsored activities related to the library's Community Read project. The semi-annual book sales, in February and September, were profitable. The Friends' ongoing book sale remains

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popular and, along with the DVD rental collection, provides financial support for the Friends' activities. The group provides supplemental materials and equipment for the Robbins and Fox libraries as well as sponsoring the family museum pass program. The Friends have planned their first fundraiser of the new year for January 2006 with a benefit performance of Agatha Christie's "The Unexpected Guest" by the Arlington Friends of the Drama.

The Friends of Fox continue to remain active and hope to plan future fundraisers to support the branch library.

Volunteers

Several volunteers once again contributed time and expertise to the Robbins and Fox Libraries this year. The following people spent 1,294 hours shelving books and materials, stamping date due cards, and performing a variety of support duties in the Circulation Department: Carolyn Archer, Bill Bradley, Joanne Berstell, Andy Blanchard, Justin and Ryan Connor, Andrea Giuliani, Kim Haase, Marion Kranefuss, Drew Laughland, Michael Passanisi, Nancie Richardson, Steve Scott, Ellen Shearer, and Barbara Wagner. Assisting with the work of the Technical Services Department were: Debbie Minns, Morris Keesan, Tung Liu and Wei Qingrong who processed materials for the increasingly popular Chinese collection. The Fox Branch library benefited from the efforts of Joseph Cook, Michel Jackson, Gert Kovar, and Beth Lanigan. Several members of the Friends of the Robbins Library participated in the group's semi-annual book sales, with Catherine Gryniewicz, Mary Gryniewicz, Wendy Watson, and Helen Krikorian contributing many hours to sort and prepare materials for the sales. Special recognition is given to Susanne Blair who expertly organized these sales in addition to maintaining the ongoing sale on the fourth floor of the library. Alice Seelinger and Beverly Brinkerhoff again brought reading materials and companionship to many residents through the homebound delivery program. The library staff is grateful for the work of all of the volunteers.

Donations

Citizens, businesses, and organizations donated \$23,650 to the library in Fiscal Year 2005. The library acknowledges with appreciation these gifts which allow for the purchase of books and audiovisual materials which could not be afforded through the municipal budget that has been especially restricted in recent years.

The Friends of the Library donated over \$20,000 to the library for membership to five museums, audio books in CD and cassette formats, music CDs, DVDs, reference books, multicultural/ESL materials, young adult books, book and prize giveaways for the

children's department, programs for the Community Read, and books, a book bin, and shelving trucks for the Fox Branch.

The Friends of Fox raised \$20,000 during Fiscal Year 2005 to keep Fox Branch open an additional day per week. Municipal funds will be used for FY2006.

Looking Ahead

The Arlington Library System (Robbins and Fox) is greatly prized by the local citizenry because of high standards of professional service and facility upkeep. However, when a fiscal crisis reduced library funding eight percent in FY 2004, the immediate impact was (1) to reduce total Library hours/availability from sixty-seven to sixty hours per week; (2) to close the Library doors on Sunday year-round, as opposed to only in the summer months; and (3) to reduce significantly municipal funding for materials and other library vitals, thus jeopardizing state aid for lack of municipal support.

In Fiscal Year 2007, the library continues to face the challenge of providing quality library services within the context of limited municipal resources. Despite the successful override, the library could not receive funding to restore the services and seven hours that were cut back due to reductions in the municipal budget in Fiscal Year 2004. It will also become increasingly difficult to meet the state requirement on expenditures for library materials without additional municipal funding.

With limited financial resources, the library will face a challenge to maintain and expand its book and audiovisual collection, keep pace with technology, introduce new media and provide the residents of Arlington with a high-quality contemporary library system. Library administration and the Board of Trustees will endeavor to provide funding for the continued expansion of the very popular audiovisual collection. The library will maintain its commitment to high quality children's services through the financial support of the Anne A. Russell Children's Educational and Cultural Enrichment Fund. Participation in the Minuteman Library Network will continue to provide access to the World Wide Web and electronic databases. The library will continue to replace and upgrade network equipment, PCs, and peripherals connected to the Minuteman Library Network as well as office automation as long as capital funding is maintained.

The library intends to use its Long-Range Plan for FY2006-2008 in formulating its goals and objectives. The plan specifies five service roles to concentrate on: Commons, Current Topics and Titles, General Information, Information Literacy, and Lifelong Learning. Due to the tight budget, it may not be possible to implement all the services planned. However the library is committed to the implementation of wireless technology for the public,

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introduction of a time management system for the public computers, the development of a master plan for shelving the expanding collection, review of the need adaptive technologies and equipment to facilitate access to library resources for citizens with disabilities, enhancements to the library website, and continued efforts to meet the needs of special constituencies including teens, senior citizens, business community, and English as Second Language Learners. The library will also continue to work with the Minuteman Library Network to monitor the delivery system of interlibrary loan materials to ensure that the system is not overloaded.

To raise additional funding, library administration will publicize the availability of the Robbins Library Reading Room for rentals when the library is closed and continue to support the Trustee's annual solicitation of private funds. The Board of Trustees hopes that financial improvements over the next several years will allow the library to return to the level of service offered in FY 2003. Specifically, the community has expressed a desire for the restoration of Sunday hours. With additional funding, the library would be able to move in this direction.