

January 19, 2001

## 2000 ANNUAL REPORT

*Libraries are not made; they grow.*

Augustine Birrell (1850-1933)

Honorable Selectmen:

The year 2000 was marked by both expanded services to the community and changes within the library. Throughout the year, however, increases in services resulted in more library involvement in the community, while changes provided new opportunity for growth.

Reference Librarian/Assistant Director, Cecily Christensen continued offering computer workshops. Besides basic computer use, she offered workshops in advanced word processing and advanced Internet searching techniques.

The library's book discussion group, also led by Mrs. Christensen, met once a month throughout the year. The group celebrated their third anniversary in September. There are currently eight members who participate on a regular basis.

Mrs. Christensen, in conjunction with Ernest Taft, Chairman of the Historical Commission, began an Historical Discussion Group. The group consists of longtime Bellingham residents who are interested in what life was like growing up in town. Group meetings were tape recorded, and this oral history record of the town is kept in the library's Local History Room. The group met five times, once a month, from July through November. Participants enjoyed sharing memories so much that they plan to resume their meetings in the spring of 2001.

Due to its membership in the C/W MARS network, the library now has access to NoveList, a readers' advisory database that helps readers find new books based on books they have read or about topics in which they are interested. The number of state-sponsored reference databases has also increased over the past year. In addition to providing access to magazine and newspaper articles online, they now include an academic health database, several additional business databases, and Info Trac One File, which allows patrons to search for information on both general interest and academic topics, as well as on law and politics.

In Youth Services, the "Living Library" television program enjoyed a successful year involving both young adults and local Girl Scouts in the taping of programs. The program, aired monthly during the school year on Bellingham's local access Cable 8, promotes literacy and public library use to young viewers. Two other Youth Services programs were especially well-attended: "Halloween at Hogwarts", inspired by the popular "Harry Potter" books; and a "Care of Magical Creatures" class taught by a naturalist from the Organization for Bat Conservation.

As evidence of the library's desire to foster communication and cooperation between the public library and the schools, Children's Librarian, Paula Dugan, attended Educational Fairs at Stall Brook, Macy, and South Elementary Schools, as well as an Early Education Resources Day Fair held at Stall Brook School. The library's participation in "TV Turn-Off Week", in conjunction with Stall Brook was a success, also. Once again, the state-wide Summer Reading Program was a hit with our younger readers. This year's theme, "Open Books, Open Frontiers", found children reading about different aspects of life in the American West. Children signed up for the library wagon train to "Readsville, USA", used a map to track their

progress, and enjoyed numerous programs offered throughout the summer. Each week brought an exciting performance to the library. In addition to a demonstration of Western tack and riding given by the Hopkinton 4H Club and stories presented by members of the Eastern Massachusetts Native American Indian Council, the library hosted storytellers Mary Jo Marrichank, Skip Gorman, and Bob Thomas. A carnival held on the library's grounds featured "Granny Gigs", a country western granny, and marked the close of an eventful and exciting summer. A generous donation of food and refreshments was made by Bread & Circus, and the Disney Ice Cream Truck.

In addition to the regular Toddler Times for 2 and 3 year-olds, and Storytimes for 4 and 5 year-olds, other programming and activities this past year included a Valentine's Chocolate Party, a Teen Make-Over, Teen Read Week, both Gingerbread Cookies and Houses, and a Santa's Village Puppet Show to close out the year. The 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.

Finally, a presentation on rainforests at the Bellingham Barnes & Noble book store resulted in a generous donation of books and rights to a public showing of the "Reading Rainbow" episode "The Shaman's Apprentice".

The Friends of the Bellingham Library continued to be an important base for funding programs, museum passes, and the purchase of additional materials for the library. Although their ongoing book sale generates money to provide quality children's programs throughout the year, the organization would not be the success it is without the generous donations of books from the community. In addition to its book sale, the Friends held another profitable golf tournament in July, and a very well-attended wine tasting social in October all to benefit the library.

Because of these events, the Friends were able to expand their funding of museum passes made available to the public through the library. A family pass to the Massachusetts Audubon Society's 37 statewide attractions was added in 2000. The Friends also provided funds for passes to the Providence Children's Museum, Boston Museum of Science, Plimoth Plantation (including the Mayflower), Roger Williams Park Zoo, and Capron Park.

Other community sponsors of museum passes were: Strata Bank for the New England Aquarium, Dean Cooperative Bank for the Boston Children's Museum, the Quilt Guild of Mendon for the Quilt Museum of Lowell and in cooperation with the Friends, the Bellingham Cultural Council helped to purchase the pass for the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.

In addition to hosting fund-raising events and providing funds for museum passes, the Friends provide additional funds used for the purchase of videos and special reference materials. Through their efforts, the library is better able to provide quality adult and children's programming, and offer more comprehensive and up-to-date reference service to the community. The Friends also designed a new library tote bag, proceeds from the sale of which directly benefited the library.

During the past year, the library building was treated to a complete repainting of its exterior, and a new outside bulletin board was erected in order to publicize library events. Purchase of the latter was made possible, once again, by the Friends of the Library. The Trustees would also like to thank all those who have donated books, magazine subscriptions, and equipment to the library over the past year.

The library was not immune to change during the past year, however. In September, the Trustees accepted with regret the resignation of its Director, Laura Einstadter, who left the area to pursue other employment opportunities after six years of loyal service to the Bellingham library community. While the Trustees conducted a national search for a new Director, the library's Assistant Director, Cecily Christensen, was appointed Acting Director in the interim. In November, the Trustees appointed Susan M. Peterson as the library's new Director. A Rhode Island native, Ms. Peterson was most recently Director of Library Services of the East Bridgewater (MA) Public Library. With more than twenty years' experience in both public and academic libraries, Ms. Peterson brings to the Bellingham Library not only a demonstrated commitment to public service, but an enthusiasm for the latest library technologies.

The library's membership in our regional automated network, C/W MARS, continues to enhance our patrons' ability to search for and obtain the information they need. Since November, patrons now have access to the resources of more than sixty local libraries (totalling more than six million items), all through a regional Inter-Library Loan delivery system. The number of requested items for last November and December alone have increased by 50% compared to the period from July to December in 1999.

As evidenced by the quotation at the beginning of this report, the library continued to grow in many ways. Throughout its growth, however, it strove to maintain a high level of service to the community. In closing, it must be mentioned that this service would not have been possible without the hard work of a dedicated library staff, and all the others who volunteered their time and energy to the library over the past year.

Circulation Totals: 99,000

Library Card Holders: 13,929

Library materials have decreased from 48,000 to 42,000\* over the past year.

\* (decrease reflects a revision in state statistical reporting of periodical holdings)

Respectfully submitted,

Lea Kraus, Trustee Chair  
Linda Lord, Trustee Vice Chair  
Ed Migneault, Trustee Secretary  
Maryclare Burke, Trustee  
Pam Perry, Trustee

Susan M. Peterson, Library Director