

January 17, 2002

2001 ANNUAL REPORT

*Books are the treasured wealth of the world
and the fit inheritance of generations and nations*
Henry David Thoreau (1817-1862)

Honorable Selectmen:

The year 2001 could be summed up as one of change and stability; generosity and economy. Throughout the year, however, the library continued its mission to serve the cultural, informational, educational, and recreational needs of the community.

Reference Librarian/Assistant Director, Cecily Christensen continued offering computer workshops to the community. These included workshops in World Wide Web Searching Techniques, Word Processing for Beginners, and Computer Basics.

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

Mrs. Christensen also conducted meetings of the local Historical Discussion Group. The group consists of longtime Bellingham residents who share memories of what life was like growing up in Bellingham. Group meetings were held in April and October and were tape recorded, thus providing an oral history record of the town. These tapes are kept in the library's Local History Room and are available for public study and enjoyment.

Due to its membership in both the C/W MARS automated library network and the Central Massachusetts Regional Library System, the library has access to several new reference databases. In addition to databases providing access to magazine and newspaper articles online, new databases now include *netLibrary*, providing electronic books available through the Internet, *Wilson Biographies Plus Illustrated*, which gives access to more than 100,000 biographical profiles and obituaries, and contains more than 28,000 images, *AccessScience@McGrawHill*, an online encyclopedia of science and technology, and *Grove's Dictionary of Art Online*, which contains over 45,000 articles on the visual arts, from prehistory to the present day. These databases are all available through the library's computers and some may be accessed through one's home, school or office computer as well.

In Youth Services, the "Living Library" television program enjoyed another 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 during School vacation week in April: a "Quidditch Tournament" inspired by the popular Harry Potter books; and a program on earth-worms presented by Matt Schoeffler of "Nature and Nurture".

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.

Once again, the state-wide Summer Reading Program was a hit with our younger readers. This year's theme, "Famous Firsts", found children reading about famous "firsts" in history, sports, science and travel.

They also had an opportunity to discover "first facts" in the Children's Room and report on their own personal "firsts" throughout the summer. Each week a special event was held to coincide with a Famous First: a Pirate's Party, featuring New England's first pirate, Dixie Bull was followed by a "Readers' Track to Success" foot race. Children also enjoyed meeting a Pawtucket Red Sox player, a "Reading Fun Cook-Off Contest", a First Steps Dance Program, and a Tae Kwon-Do demonstration. The grand finale of the six-week program included tethered rides in a hot-air balloon, an awards ceremony, and plenty of food and refreshments generously donated by Bread & Circus and the Disney Ice Cream truck.

In addition to the regular Toddler Times for 2 and 3 year-olds, and Story Times for 4 and 5 year-olds, other programming and activities this past year included a Valentine's Chocolate Party, a Mardi Gras Party with Michael Lynn, Jr. as "The Party Animal" in February, and Gingerbread Cookies and Gingerbread House workshops held in December. 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.

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 November, all to benefit the library.

Because of these events, the Friends were able to continue funding of discount museum passes made available to the public through the library. They 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, special reference materials, and other supplies and furnishings for 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.

Also, mention must be made of the many 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 Trustees would like to thank Wal Mart of Bellingham, Ben Franklin Savings Bank of Franklin, and UniBank of Whitinsville, for their generous donations to the Friends and the Library during the past year. Through all 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 library was not immune to change during the past year, however. In the spring, Lea Kraus decided not to seek re-election after serving on the Board of Library Trustees for more than 10 years. Her dedication to the library and experience as Trustee will be missed. Her vacancy on the Board was filled by Mary Ambler who ran for the Board position in the spring election. In October, the Trustees accepted with regret, the resignation of its Children's Services Librarian, Paula Dugan, who left to accept a similar position in Rhode Island. While she was in Bellingham, children and adults were treated to many programs throughout the year and benefited from a selection of books and other materials purchased under her guidance. As of this writing, a national search is underway for a new Children's Services Librarian.

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. With an economy of town resources, the library continues to provide a wealth of resources and services to its residents.

Circulation Totals: 78,084

Bellingham Library Card Holders: 5396 (does not include borrowers from neighboring towns)

Library materials: 40,360

Respectfully submitted,

Linda Lord, Trustee Chair

Edward Migneault, Trustee Vice Chair

Pamela W. Perry, Trustee Secretary

Maryclare Burke, Trustee

Mary Ambler, M.D., Trustee

Susan M. Peterson, Library Director

