

January 17, 2006

2005 ANNUAL REPORT

Perhaps no place in any community is so totally democratic as the town library. The only entrance requirement is interest. ~Lady Bird Johnson

Honorable Selectmen:

2005 was another busy and successful year for the Bellingham Public Library. This year was marked by changes in library personnel. In January, Charlotte Rabbitt arrived from New Hampshire to begin her work as Library Director. In April, two part-time library assistants, Carol Bonnell and Barbara Pacak, joined the staff. In June, Roxanne Starkin, a recent graduate of Simmons College Graduate School of Library and Information Science, began work as Bellingham's first Young Adult Librarian. Ms. Starkin is the fourth professional librarian currently on staff, joining three other MLS librarians: Director, Charlotte Rabbitt; Assistant Director and Head of Children's Services, Julie Brown; and Head of Reference Services, Cecily Christensen. In July, Library Technician Alice Pultz retired from the library after more than thirty years of service. Alice's responsibilities included collection development, customer service and technical service; she departed with a wealth of experience. In September, newcomer Barbara Pacak was promoted to the position of Library Technician and she joined fellow technicians Pauline Krajcik and Anne Kuncewicz with over thirty-five combined years of library service to Bellingham. At the same time, Bellingham resident Chris Christo was hired to the assistant librarian staff and joined Janice Simmons, Renee Milliken, Anne Spont and Elizabeth Wingert, with their many years of library experience. Don Eldredge, library custodian, continued his many years of excellent maintenance of the library facilities and grounds. Though some of the faces have changed, the excellent staff of the Bellingham Public Library has remained steadfast in our mission to serve the informational, educational and cultural needs of the Bellingham community.

It is once again important that this annual report reflect the essential and indispensable role the library plays in this community. From providing passes to museums and attractions throughout New England to offering reader's advisory, the Bellingham Public Library reaches all ages of patrons in Bellingham. Under the new directorship of Charlotte Rabbitt, the library's mission has been to achieve exemplary customer satisfaction through service, programming, outreach, communications, marketing and collection development while still maintaining the town's excellent library facility.

Many new users were welcomed into the library this year. In an effort to reach out to its youngest readers, the library connected with students in kindergarten. The library sent each new kindergartener an individual invitation to visit the library and apply for borrower's cards. Every elementary school teacher was sent a poster recognizing his or her significance to a reading child. Youngsters in Bellingham attended the first 'tweens and teens' programming in June and the number of patrons in the 9-14 age bracket who are attending library programs is growing each month. High schoolers were welcomed by Bencorp, a group of community volunteers from Ben Franklin Bank, in a financial program they had developed. During National Library Week in April all members of the community were invited to join with the library staff in celebrating what the library has to offer with additional library hours and free refreshments.

The Bellingham Public Library became more of a community center with each passing month of 2005. On September 11th the library opened its doors on a Sunday to over one-hundred visitors in recognition of the open doors to information and freedom that libraries symbolize. From local mothers' groups,

toddler and infant playgroups, Girl Scout, Brownie, Daisy and Boy Scout troops to business networking organizations, town committees, volunteer organizations and homeowners associations, the library's Community Room has seen greater and greater use in 2005. The library provides the room and its facilities as a free service to non-profit organizations in the area. The Bellingham Cultural Council hosted over four fine art shows during the year in the library. In addition, local residents displayed their personal collections in the library's display cabinets. During February the library continued the 'Food for Fines' tradition of waiving library fees in return for canned food donated to the Bellingham Food Pantry. In October the community donated over \$259 in waived fines to the American Red Cross Hurricane Katrina Relief. In December the library was a depository for Santa's Elves, collected by the Bellingham Women of Today.

The library splashed the local news many times in 2005 with articles and photographs highlighting children's, teens' and adult programming. Director Rabbitt wrote a monthly column in the Bellingham Bulletin designed to champion the library's diverse services. An article about the library's new Vision Center was published in Public Libraries, the magazine received by all public libraries in the United States. A new library brochure was developed with desktop publishing, a library user survey was conducted in the month of April, and a new and comprehensive library web presence hit the Internet in February 2005. The library staff attended local educational and community events. Local Cable Access Bellingham-Mendon televised three hour-long sessions with librarians and guests during the months of July, September and October.

As part of our ongoing children's services, regular story times were offered throughout the year for infants, toddlers, and preschoolers. Events included a children's dance party with Mr. DJ in February, music and storytelling with Brian Arel in April, participation in the Pumpkin Stroll in the Town Common in October, storytellers Mark Binder and Clare Vadeboncoeur in December and the showing of family movies January through October. The library continued its participation in the statewide Summer Reading Program. This year's theme, "Going Places @ Your Library" was celebrated with the "Book' a Cruise" 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 Lisa Manning, magician Steve Rudolph, musician and storyteller David Polansky, local science fiction author Walter Hunt, a live animal program with Animal Adventures, a concert and sing-a-long with the Caribbean Kids band, entertainer Ronald McDonald, and magician Ed Popielarczyk. Additional activities included a party to celebrate the release of the sixth *Harry Potter* book, family story times, two karate demonstrations, eight craft events, seven 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 paired children at risk of dropping a reading level during the summer months with local teen and adult volunteers. In December, the Friends of the Library hosted two holiday craft programs for children.

In support of the library's vibrant and growing preteen and teen population, the Library kicked off its first SummerTeens program in June. From June to August over 200 young patrons enjoyed the variety of programs offered which alternated between a "Cooking and Craft" Night and a "Game Café" Night. The Cooking and Craft night fell in line with the Summer Reading Program theme of "Going Places @ Your Library" as it focused on international foods and crafts. Other special events included Japanese Cartooning (Manga) and Japanese Animation (Anime) workshops presented by professional artists Andy Fish and Veronica Hebard of UndercoverFish, a Yo-Yo trick demonstration and interactive workshop by Yo-Yo Mama and the Spinheads, and a Creative Writing Workshop with Walter Hunt. Four American Red Cross Babysitters' Training courses were held at the library each Friday during the month of August; 54 teens received certification. Due to the popularity of the summer courses, another training course was held in November. The library provided a Babysitters' Job Fair in both September and November to introduce the newly certified babysitters to families in the community. Fall programming also included regular weekly programs such as Yoga and Meditation, Kung Fu, Vegetarian Cooking Lecture/ Demonstration, and two holiday craft programs. Also in the fall a "Teens

and "Tweens" Knitting Club began and grew in size with each week following four initial weeks of instruction by Paula Mane, an instructional assistant at the Bellingham Memorial middle School. In addition to volunteers, donations of supplies were secured from different local small and national businesses in the community such as gift certificates from Regal Cinemas and McDonalds, and food from Whole Foods Market.

Adult programming at the library became a special focus during the fall of 2005. These included a genealogical workshop, a cartooning workshop, a local author visit and a concert. Reference Librarian, Cecily Christensen, continued her role as facilitator of the library's adult book discussion group, which has now been in existence for eight years. The group of nine members met once each month throughout the year. Both fiction and non-fiction books were selected to discuss, providing a variety of reading choices over the course of the year. In December, Schafer Nursery and the Friends of the Library held their popular wreath-making workshop for adults.

Due to its memberships in the Central Massachusetts Regional Library System, the library gained access to two new online reference databases in 2005, *Today's Science* and *Issues and Controversies*. *Today's Science* covers secondary curriculum subjects, which include the environment, health and medicine, math, physics, chemistry, technology, history of science, archaeology, genetics, and a focus on scientists. *Issues and Controversies* is a comprehensive source of current, in-depth and objective information on the most prominent and hotly debated issues of the day. The library also has access to a number of other online databases, which 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 computers as well as remotely through the home or office computer by typing in the patron's Bellingham Public Library card number. Access to these databases is made possible through the library's membership in the Central Massachusetts Regional Library System and the Central/Western Massachusetts Automated Resource Sharing network (CMRLS and C/WMARS, respectively.) Membership in the automated network and the regional system also makes possible the requests and delivery of library materials from all other libraries to Bellingham patrons. Over 7,000 items a year are received from other libraries for our patrons.

The library added a dozen new magazines in 2005 for public reading. Duplicate copies of bestsellers, digital video discs (DVDs), and audio books on compact disc (CDs) were made collection priorities this year. Additionally, the library added hundreds of new titles each month in the children's, young adult and adult collections in the form of picture books, early-readers, school resources, adult fiction and non-fiction, videos, CDs, DVDs, and reference materials. This year as members of C/W MARS we were proud to announce the arrival of digital Audio Books and eBooks. Patrons in Bellingham and across the network can browse and search hundreds of great titles and download them to computers, transfer them to portable devices, or burn them onto CDs for reading and listening anywhere, anytime.

The library paid close attention to its seventeen-year old facility this year and updated tile, carpet and paint in several areas. Updates were made to the alarm and security systems. Improved signage and furnishings were added. A compact disk displayer was designed and built by our town carpenter and patrons and librarians are thrilled with the efficiency and ease in shelving and locating music CDs. In February the library was the recipient of a generous gift made by Eagle Scout Bobby Dickinson in the form of a Vision Center which will enable low-vision patrons to read materials that are otherwise impossible to view.

In addition to the Vision Center, the library was the recipient of various gifts, including a donation from UniBank. This donation made possible a new library server and LAN (local access network.) The library streamlined its technological capabilities, installed a state-of-the-art laser printer, and updated its Internet and word-processing hardware and software. A library media center was designed and installed with photographic, web design and desktop publishing capabilities. An efficient new Web site was designed as a means for patrons to find answers to a myriad of questions, to request and renew

books, to access available databases, to browse the library catalog, to inspect the library's list of newest acquisitions, to access their own Reading History, to peruse scores of photographs taken of library events, to consult the library's calendar, to print PDF versions of library policies and forms, and to find out about past, current and future library events. A new library Web site, www.bellinghamlibrary.org, made its first appearance on the Internet in February of 2005 and thousands of hits are made each day by Internet users.

Public librarians in Bellingham continued their professional development with memberships in national, state and local associations and attended workshops, meetings and conferences held across Massachusetts. Director Charlotte Rabbitt was a speaker at the annual meeting of the Massachusetts Library Trustee Association and is a member of two regional committees, the Central Massachusetts Regional System Strategic Planning committee and the Legislative Breakfast 2006 committee. Director Rabbitt submitted both mandatory state reports in September and October, 2005, the Annual Report Information Statistics (ARIS) and the State Aid Application. The Long-Range Plan Committee submitted the library's Five-Year Plan, 2006-2010 in October. All the above submissions make the library eligible for Commonwealth of Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners grants and funding in the coming year.

The Friends of the Bellingham Public Library continue to fund programs, activities, library materials and furnishings, and museum passes for the public's enjoyment. Revenues from the ongoing book sale covered the expenditure of \$4,665 for adult and children's programs. Donations from Schafer Garden Center and the Wal Mart Foundation along with the sale of the Bellingham ornament provided an additional \$1,345 that almost covered the \$1,537 in expenses of the highly successful Young Adult programs during the summer of 2005. Dean Bank generously funded the \$675 family pass to the Children's Museum while revenue raised at the Wine Tasting Social made it possible for the library to offer passes to the New England Aquarium, Boston Science Museum, Slater Mill, Museum of Fine Arts, Isabella Gardner Museum, Davis Farmland, Roger Williams Park Zoo, and the Museum of Work and Culture in Woonsocket, RI. With thanks to the many business and individual tee sponsorships and prize donations, the Annual Library Golf Classic held in July at the New England Country Club made it possible for the Friends to purchase reference books, audio visual materials and fund a week long series of events during National Library Week in April with expenditures totaling \$4,250. The Friends of the Library have funded a new copier for the library. Finally, the Friends made possible a special appearance by Mr. Alfred Watson, concert pianist, in November who lectured and performed the works of Chopin and other Polish composers. A special thank you needs to be given to Tish Meguire for her annual gingerbread house workshop in December; to Dominic's Liquors and new owner, Tom Fields, for hosting the Wine Tasting Social; and to Dean Bank for funding the Children's Museum pass.

The Library Trustees wish to acknowledge the substantial funding provided by the Friends of the Library, without which many of the above-mentioned Children's, Young Adults and Adult programs would not have been possible. This report proves that the library is not just a place to borrow books; it is a state-of-the-art facility with capable and experienced staff that provides enrichment to the cultural, educational and leisure lives of Bellingham residents.

Respectfully submitted,

Kathleen Bartlett, Trustee Chair
Mary Ambler, Trustee Co-Chair
Michael Carr, Trustee Secretary
Pamela Perry
Edward Migneault
Charlotte Rabbitt, Library Director