

January 27, 2007

2006 ANNUAL REPORT

The richest person in the world - in fact all the riches in the world - couldn't provide you with anything like the endless, incredible loot available at your local library. ~Malcolm Forbes

Honorable Selectmen:

It was another busy year at the library. Once again, some of the faces have changed as we welcomed Nina Hunt, Head of Youth Services, to the staff. Three library assistants, Jessica Charles, Ann Simpson and Marilyn Fuller, joined this excellent staff dedicated to serving the informational, educational and cultural needs of the Bellingham community.

This year it is again important that this report reflect the essential and indispensable role the library plays in this community. The library trustees and staff greatly appreciate the community support that Bellingham offers its library. The library's mission continues to be to achieve exemplary customer satisfaction through service, programming, outreach, communications, marketing and collection development while still maintaining the town's excellent library facility. The library paid close attention to its facility this year updating and repairing tile and exterior paint. This fall the 17-year old library roof needed to be replaced and the town responded quickly and effectively. The library staff, most especially custodian, Don Eldredge, works hard to keep the interior and exterior of our building safe and beautiful.

More new users were welcomed into the library this year. Over half of Bellingham's residents are current library card holders. Each new kindergartener was once again sent an individual invitation to visit the library and apply for a borrower's card. The Library Director visited each classroom in each elementary school in May 2006. She read to the children, introducing the public library and inviting them personally to apply for a library card. Youngsters and students of all ages continue to visit the library afterschool and on weekends. 'Tweens and teens programming continued throughout the year and attendance by middle-schoolers and high schoolers increased all year.

The library had over 94,700 visitors in 2006. This is nearly 8000 visitors per month or 400 per day that the library is open. Our website had over 1,333,000 hits, averaging over 108,000 per month. Through our efficient library website, www.bellinghamlibrary.org, patrons will find answers to a myriad of questions, may request and renew books, access available databases, browse the library catalog, inspect the library's list of newest acquisitions, access their own Reading History, peruse scores of photographs taken of library events, consult the library's calendar, print PDF versions of library policies and forms, read the library's newsletter or find out about past, current and future library events. This year the library purchased *EventKeeper*, software which enables the web visitor to check out our library and community room programs and availability for current and future dates.

Circulation (books checked out, renewed or sent to other town libraries) has risen significantly to over 113,000 items per year. We have added more of those materials most requested by Bellingham patrons: unabridged audiobooks on compact disk, dvds, learning-to-read materials, large-print materials, and second and third copies of bestselling books. Due to its memberships in *C/WMARS*, the library gained access to two new online reference databases in 2006: *Grove Art* and *Facts On File - Science Online*. 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*, the *Central/Western Massachusetts Automated Resource Sharing* network and the *Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners*. (CMRLS, C/WMARS and MBLC, 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 in our C/WMARS consortium for our patrons.

In the fall of 2006, we were very proud to become one of the very few free Wi-Fi (wireless fidelity) access points in the Bellingham area. Library users may access the internet from our facility using their own laptops outfitted with a wireless card. In addition, we offer wireless access in our community room along with the other technical hardware on loan: laptop, projector, VCR, CD and DVD players and an automated projector screen. We offer eleven Internet computers and three word processing computers for public use. During January through December 2006 over 10,660 library visitors signed up to use our Internet computers at the library.

The Bellingham Public Library became more of a community center with each passing month of 2006. 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 2006. The library provides the room and its facilities as a free service to non-profit organizations in the area. The Bellingham Cultural Council hosted two fine art shows during the year in the library's community room. In addition, local residents displayed their personal collections in the library's display cabinets. During the year, Loaves and Fishes, St. Blais' food pantry, collects non-perishable foods in a bin in the library foyer. 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 2006 with articles and photographs highlighting children's, teens' and adult programming. The first edition of the quarterly newsletter (October) was distributed through the mail and reached every home and business in Bellingham. Schafer Garden Center generously donated the funds to print the 8000 copies of this newsletter. In addition, newsletters were distributed through the town offices, senior center and the school system. The library staff attended local educational and community events. Local Cable Access Bellingham-Mendon televised several hour-long sessions with librarians and guests.

Adult programming at the library continued to be a special focus in 2006. Over 45 programs were offered and with nearly 700 adult participants. These included concerts, workshops and lectures. Reference Librarian, Cecily Christensen, continued her role as facilitator of the library's adult book discussion group. Once again in December, Schafer Garden Center and the Friends of the Library held their popular wreath-making workshop for adults.

The library continued its participation in the statewide Summer Reading Program. This year's theme, "What's Buzzin' @ Your Library", included many performances and events throughout the summer. Nina Hunt, Head of Youth Services, joined the library staff in September 2006 to head an energetic youth services team. After school book clubs and cooking and craft classes for elementary school students were added to a full schedule of over nine creative story times for infants, toddlers, and preschoolers each week. Over 206 children's programs were offered in 2006 with well over 3000 participants. 87 of those programs were offered in four months from September through December. In December, the Friends of the Library hosted two holiday craft programs for children

Working and mentoring the library's vibrant and growing preteen and teen population, Roxanne Starkin continues young adult librarian at the library. Japanese lessons, salsa dancing, teen knitting, craft classes and other events were held throughout the year. American Red Cross Babysitters' Training courses were held at the library and over one-hundred more teens received certification in

2006. The library hosted several Babysitters' Job Fairs to introduce the newly certified babysitters to families in the community. In addition to volunteers who work with Bellingham youth, donations of supplies were secured by Ms. Starkin from different local small and national businesses in the community.

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 is a member of the Executive Board of the *Central Massachusetts Regional Library System* and a member of the 2007 Legislative Breakfast and Continuing Education Advisory committees. Rabbitt is also a member of the *Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners* Public Relations Advisory Council. Mandatory state reports were submitted in September and October, 2006: the Annual Report Information Statistics (ARIS) and the State Aid Application. The above submissions make the library eligible for *Commonwealth of Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners* grants and funding. In July of 2006 the library was awarded an LSTA Reader's Advisory Grant in the amount of \$10,000. This is the first LSTA grant the library has been awarded in over six years. In 2006 the Public Libraries Fund was initiated by the *MBLC*. All gift donations between July 1 and December 31, 2006 became eligible for a matching award to be determined in April 2007.

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 \$6,000 for adult and children's programs. Donations from Schafer Garden Center and the WalMart Foundation along with the sale of the Bellingham ornament and other items provided an additional amount that covered most of the expenses of the highly successful Young Adult programs during 2006. Dean Bank generously funded the family pass to the Children's Museum while revenue raised from the various fundraisers make 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 National Library Week refreshments. The Friends of the Library have once again funded the copier for the library. They funded appearances, lectures and workshops throughout the year including the special appearance by the Celtic duo, Tara's Thistle, in March and Alfred Watson, concert pianist, in December. A special thank you needs to be given to Tish Meguire for her annual gingerbread house workshop in December 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. The Director wishes to thank the many community volunteers who work at the library, especially Barbara Lamoreaux, Barbara Selvitella and Yvonne Bartlett. She also wishes to thank Bruce Lord, local resident, who worked hard in 2006 to organize the Local History Room collection. 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,

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Mary Ambler, Trustee Vice Chair
Pamela Perry, Trustee Secretary
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