

State of the Library January 2017

From Director Dan Weiss to the Fanwood Council and FML Board of Trustees

In 2016, the library continued to successfully address the goals outlined in the **Fanwood Memorial Library Strategic Plan 2013–2018**, as well as other significant operations objectives.



I. Strategic Plan Accomplishments

A. FLIP Library Redesign Project

The board continued to work with council, our architect, library staff and the public to address the needs and explore solutions that were presented to Council in the detailed feasibility study. We will note that in December, the Fanwood council passed a resolution in support of FLIP (the Fanwood Library Improvement Project) that also empowers the library board to begin to raise funds for this capital project. This is a significant step towards realizing the library revitalization project that will provide for all Fanwood residents an ADA-compliant and increased-space solution to our facility.

B. Materials Purchased

We provided books and DVDs, iPads and Kindles for public use, access to online databases, encyclopedias, digital magazines and increased access to e-books and audiobooks, despite the fact that market prices continue to outpace our tight budget. Through careful and strong budget management we added 3,749 items to the collection in 2016.

C. Technology

Completed goals in 2015 - 2016 and described in the State of the Library January 2016

D. Staff

2016 saw more staff changes as individual staff responsibilities were reshuffled and operations streamlined. Regular staff meetings continued with an emphasis on providing excellent customer service and coordinated integration between the Children's and Adult departments. Staff training and development opportunities, both on site and regionally, continue to be a priority.

The library's dedicated full-time and part-time staff members developed engaging, well-attended programming events for all age groups, selected and processed materials, maintained our patron and materials databases, checked out over 42,000 items, and helped hundreds of patrons with technical issues and reference questions, as well as providing excellent customer service and contributing daily to the success of library operations. Children's librarian Susan Staub delivered a compelling calendar of events for families and kids and engaged in a number of professional development opportunities. Although Mandy Richards left at the end of 2016, she made significant contributions throughout the year with her monthly newsletter, social media postings, and programming for teens and adults.

As director, I continued my dedicated commitment to strong leadership throughout 2016. With oversight, creativity, and attention to details both large and small I ensured excellent day-to-day library operations, budget and facility management, staffing, services, and programming. Additionally, I continued my work with the award-winning *Libraries and Autism: We're Connected* project, which has had a broad national impact, and highlights the need for universal, welcoming and inclusive library service and access for all users.

II. Promotional Campaigns and Community Awareness

A. Communications Plan Continues

While we made great strides to completing these Strategic Plan goals in 2015 – 2016, our efforts to celebrate and promote the library’s assets and goals are ongoing. We will continue to focus on increasing engagement between the public and the library by providing services, soliciting information and fostering cooperation among the community, trustees, staff, patrons, and community organizations and businesses.

B. Internet Presence Expanded and Improved

Completed goals in 2015 - 2016 and described in the State of the Library January 2016

C. Community Engagement Extended

Being aware of, and responsive to the Fanwood community’s needs and expectations is critical to the library’s success. Throughout 2016 we continued to explore ways to reach out and gather information that would help us serve our users most effectively.

- We held **two public information meetings** regarding the FLIP (the Fanwood Library Improvement Project).
- To gauge the public’s interest and opinions regarding the project we undertook **a project to gather signatures in support of that project on a widely circulated petition**. This petition drive was immensely successful as we gathered signatures online and in-person, often going door to door. The results, which were presented to council in December, were impressive with over 750 signatures from Fanwood residents.
- We **staffed a table at Fannywood Day**
- We continued the very successful and popular **MuseumPass program** jointly underwritten by the Friends groups of both the Fanwood and the Scotch Plains libraries. In 2016 there were 405 circulations of membership cards (with a conservative estimate of each card being used by an average of 3 people) and 1,276 day passes sold, making for an estimated 2,491 total uses of this program. **This is a 14% increase** in use compared to the 2015 total of 2,188.
- We **spoke to, and polled seniors** to see what services were of specific interest to them and responded with a whole series of services and programs.
- We **increased our presence and postings on social media** (Facebook, Twitter and Instagram), continued our regular monthly e-newsletter and added a **new weekly ‘What Should I Read Next’ feature** on our website with staff recommendations for books.
- We **reached out to downtown businesses** with staff visits and to all of the newly hired teachers in the district.

III. Outside Funding Initiatives

In 2016, the library continued to seek alternative, supplemental funding. The following grants were secured:

\$7,500	Union County Freeholders (Book Bike, programming, materials)
\$1,250	SP-Fanwood Service League (online materials)
\$4,000	Friends (DVDs and travel book updates)
\$12,750	This additional funding is equal to almost 16% of the library’s total 2016 operating budget.

In addition to the materials noted above, the Friends of the Library also provide significant ongoing financial support for our robust programming offerings as well as other necessities not provided for in the municipal budget.

IV. Shared Services

We maintained our successful shared-services relationship with the Scotch Plains Public Library, which provides technical and cataloging support, a shared on-line catalog, popular programs like MuseumPass and Tutor.com, and allows residents of both communities to benefit from access to both libraries.

V. Statistics

- The library **increased the hours** we are open to the public by revising our Tuesday opening schedule from 1:00 pm to 9:30 am.
- We maintained our **active level of loaning materials** with a total circulation of 42,329 items.
- eBook and audiobook circulation rose again in 2016 by 4% with 2,474 checkouts by over 430 Fanwood cardholders.
- Our **free broadband, Wi-Fi capability** provided 10,647 individuals with secure and fast access to the internet.
- With 8 months of service in 2016, **access to digital magazines through Zineo**, allowed over 60 users to download 528 online magazines.
- With 7 months of service in 2016, and in partnership with the Scotch Plains Library, 107 students made use of our **free online tutoring service through Tutor.com**.
- Our level of **on-site service increased by 1% with over 42,094 library users through our doors**.
- We had another **good year in programming**, with a broad spectrum of well-attended, free events for all ages. There were the usual rich offerings for kids that included storytimes and crafts, and regular weekly opportunities for adults like our Scrabble Club and Knitting and Crochet group. Other highlights included a lecture by Catherine Nicholson of Kean University on Rosa Parks: The Bus and the Memory of Politics, a Jedi Academy, A Star Wars Fan Fiction event, a Maker Day series, a family concert with Stillhouse Serenade, our regular Mondays are Special Summer Series, a fall Storytelling Festival for kids and teens, and more. And we began planning for 2017 with series like Bagels and Coffee with the Director, Lunch and a Movie and Tech Topics drop-in sessions.
- Our **website** was viewed 36,666 times by 12,586 visitors.
- Our **monthly e-newsletter** reaches 1,845 subscribers, with over 300 of them receiving monthly updates about our successful MuseumPass program.

VI. Looking Ahead

We thank the Mayor and Council for their support, and will continue to work to meet the goals outlined in the Strategic Plan. In order to continue providing world-class library services now, and into the future, we will maintain our focus on securing an expanded, renovated and universally accessible facility for all of the residents of Fanwood. We will seek to increase our outreach to community groups, retailers, schools and clubs, expand our use of media to promote our services, further staff development, and actively identify and pursue alternative funding opportunities.

As always, we embrace the task and responsibility of being the most used public building in Fanwood and will remain responsive to the library and information needs of all Fanwood residents through a broad selection of programs, materials, and universally inclusive services.