

State of the Library January 2018

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

In 2017, the library continued to successfully address the goals outlined in the **Fanwood Memorial Library Strategic Plan 2013–2018**, along with other significant operations objectives. A new strategic plan will be developed this year to outline the library's goals and services and guide us in most effectively serving the needs of the Fanwood community into the future.



I. Strategic Plan Accomplishments

A. FLIP Library Redesign Project

Significant progress was made this year in realizing the library revitalization project that will provide all Fanwood residents with an energy efficient facility that looks to the future service needs of the community and provides ADA-compliance and increased-space.

- In November voters approved the Library Bond Construction Act, which will provide one-to-one matching funds for library capital projects. Significant efforts were made by the Friends of the Library to help ensure passage of this referendum.
- A building committee was formed that includes representation from council, library board, friends and staff. It was determined with input from the committee and the mayor that, with the prospect of getting a share of the funding from the state, a project that replaced the existing structure with an all-new facility would be the most effective approach.
- The board and director presented the project's progress to council at the December meeting and confirmed council support for the project.
- A final plan was developed with John Veisz, the project architect that will be approved by the building committee, the board and council early in 2018 to be able to continue to make the necessary preparations to submit a successful grant application when the submission process begins.
- Preparations were begun by the board and Friends with the formation of a Fundraising Committee to undertake a capital campaign that will add to the private-side support of the project. Kathleen Smythe, a local resident with a professional background in development and fundraising, has agreed to help guide us in this fundraising effort.

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 challenge and outpace our tight budget. Through careful and strong budget management we added 3,406 items to the collection in 2017. We added Kanopy film streaming service to our online offerings, and are now providing access to selected online book titles for Fanwood residents only (to minimize wait-time) with our participation in RBdigital's OneClick service. This is in addition to the Friend's supported eBook access via eLibraryNJ. We also continued with the popular Tutor.com and RBdigital's Zinio online magazine collection.

C. Technology

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

D. **Staff**

2017 saw fewer staff changes than the previous year though we lost Anita Wallden and Jill Dodman to retirement, and some additional part-time employees were added. Individual staff responsibilities and training continue to be addressed and efforts are ongoing to streamline operations.

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 continued to serve the public with a high standard of customer service. They 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, reference questions, computer sessions and faxing 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. Meredith Scheiner shifted to a full-time position in January 2017 and has proven to be an invaluable asset to the library. Her responsibilities include all administrative work, staff supervision, the monthly e-newsletter, social media postings, and programming for teens and adults.

As director, I continued my dedicated commitment to customer service, community involvement and strong leadership throughout 2017. With oversight, creativity, and attention to details both large and small I continued to ensure 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 – 2017, 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 responsive to the Fanwood community's needs and expectations, and being able to anticipate future needs, is critical to the library's success. Throughout 2017 we continued to explore ways to reach out to all of our users so as to serve them most effectively.

- We **staffed a table at Fannywood Day, and debuted our new branded canopy tent**, with special appearances by Piggy & Elephant.

- **We debuted our new BookBike LibraCycle** with appearances around town at Rockin’ for Autism, the Memorial Day Parade and Fannywood Day. When not out and about, the bike makes an eye-catching display in the library.
- **With the cooperation of Eagle Scout Michael Fleck, and the support of the Friends, we unveiled two new Little Libraries** (take a book – leave a book) in the Fanwood parks, which have proven to be very popular.
- We continued the very successful and popular **MuseumPass program**, jointly underwritten by the Friends groups of both the Fanwood and the Scotch Plains libraries. Use of this program by cardholders in both communities continues to rise. In 2017 use of this program remained strong with 398 circulations of membership cards (with a very conservative estimate of each card being used by an average of 3 people) and the sale of 1,288 day-passes, making for an estimated 2,482 total uses of this program. These totals are similar to the strong usage in 2016.
- We maintained our **focus on effective use, 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 and local home-based business owners**, as well as all of the newly hired teachers in the district.

III. Outside Funding Initiatives

In 2017, the library continued to seek alternative, supplemental funding. The following grants were secured:

\$7,500	Union County Freeholders (sound system, programming, materials)
\$1,250	SP-Fanwood Service League (online materials)
\$2,262	Friends (eLibraryNJ)
\$11,012	This additional funding is equal to approximately 13% of the library’s total 2017 operating budget.

In addition to the eLibraryNJ support 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.

2017 saw the formation of a Fundraising committee to begin to address the upcoming capital campaign that will help support the library improvement project. With the leadership of Kathleen Smythe, a local resident with a professional background in development and fundraising, we will develop plans for a local fundraising and, in addition to applying for matching funds from the state’s Library Bond Construction Act, we will seek grants from other sources.

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 continued our **increased the hours** by opening to the public on Tuesdays at 9:30 am.
- We maintained our **active level of loaning materials with a total circulation of 42,329 items.**
- We have **5,125 active registered cardholders.**

- **eBook and audiobook circulation rose yet again** in 2017 by an impressive 7% with 2,682 checkouts by over 490 Fanwood cardholders.
- **Through RBdigital's OneClick platform, eBook access has been expanded** with popular titles now provided for Fanwood residents only, which decreases wait-times and broadens the available collection. Starting in June of 2017 we circulated 83 titles. At the same time, **we also started offering RBdigital's Comics Plus: Library Edition**, which offers thousands of downloadable comics and graphic novels; close to 100 comics have been viewed.
- **We started accepting credit cards to collect fines and fees using Square** on March 16, 2017. In nine and a half months we took in a total of \$726.07 and netted \$707.27 (total fees equaled \$18.80). These are funds which may likely have not have been collected otherwise.
- **In October we began offering Kanopy** for Fanwood residents. This online streaming service provides access to over 30,000 feature films, documentaries, foreign language, & training videos. In the first three months of service we had 69 registered users who watched 67 films.
- Our **free broadband, Wi-Fi capability** provided more than 10,701 individuals with fast, secure access to the internet.
- **Access to online digital magazines through RBdigital's OneClick (Zineo)**, allowed Fanwood cardholders to download 498 online magazines.
- In partnership with the Scotch Plains Library, we provided 457 tutoring sessions to students from both communities who made use of our **free online tutoring service, Tutor.com**.
- Our level of **on-site service increased again by 3% with over 43,389 library users through our doors**.
- We had another **busy year in programming**, with a broad spectrum of well-attended, free events for all ages. There were the usual rich offerings for kids from 18 months and up that included storytimes and crafts, and regular weekly opportunities for adults like our Scrabble Club and Knitting and Crochet group, and a monthly visit from the Union County Division of Aging with advice and information on the services they provide. We started loaning our new telescope, which families can borrow for a week, with a kick-off family Moon Gazing Party and also had American Eclipse activities in July. **Other program highlights included:**
 - The ABCs of Candy, Guided Chess Play on Saturdays, a Teen Photography Contest
 - Music – Christine & Elliot Speo play Laura Nyro; a Bollywood dance program
 - Drama – A Streetcar Named Desire; Macbeth
 - STEAM activities – Coding Unplugged; Code Combat; Circuits on Paper, Coding for Kids, family STEAM activities on NJ Maker's Day
 - We provided a free series of SAT Math Tutoring classes
 - We celebrated Jane Austin Day in July, had our first Art Exhibit with local artist Kim Eckstrom
 - Author Sarah Lohman spoke about her book, "Eight Flavors: The Story of American Cuisine"
 - Kids enjoyed Peter Rabbit and Friends puppet show, Imagination Playground with Big Blue Blocks, Sharpie Art, a visit from the Mrs. Claus Holiday Celebration
 - The summer reading theme was Build it Up, and there was a wonderful series of Monday night programming in support of this year's summer reading program.
 - We started a new Sensory Storytime offering on Saturdays, and had a visit from the Story Pirates who hosted a writing workshop along with their show.
- Our **website** was viewed 31,342 times.
- Our **monthly e-newsletter** reaches 1,987 active subscribers, with 306 of them receiving monthly updates about our successful MuseumPass program.

VI. Looking Ahead

With thanks to the Mayor and Council for their support, we 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; a 21st century library that residents can take pride and one that contributes to the community's current and future economic stability and growth. We anticipate that passage of the Library Construction Bond Act last November will help galvanize support for the library improvement project and 2018 will see matching funds secured and the project started.

We continue to seek to increase our outreach to community groups, home-based business entrepreneurs and tele-commuters, retailers, schools and clubs, and to sharpen and expand our use of media to promote our services, continue to 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, literacy and information needs of all Fanwood residents through a broad selection of programs, materials, and universally inclusive services.