

# EDUCATION & LIBRARIES

## LIBRARY DIRECTOR AND BOARD OF TRUSTEES

The Robbins Library system continued as in previous years to sustain high usage by the community. The public enthusiastically attended library programs and constantly used the computer workstations for access to the Internet and electronic databases. Professional librarians at the Reference Desk, in the Children's Room and at Fox Branch assisted the public in meeting their informational needs through the library's book and periodical collections and with electronic resources. Residents also accessed the library collections and databases from home. The library system received sufficient funding to maintain existing services although the Robbins Library continued to be closed on Thursday mornings and Sundays.

### Accomplishments

#### *Customer Service*

The library implemented the Customer Service grant received the previous year. Staff attended several in-house workshops on various aspects of customer service including communication, phone etiquette, and sensitivity training for working with people with disabilities. The grant also provided funding for new public relations materials including an updated borrower brochure and floor map. An information kiosk for library announcements and new displays for the newspaper collection and the distribution of materials by local organizations were purchased. Financial assistance for this special project was made possible with Federal funds from the Institute of Museum and Library Services administered through the Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners.

#### *Technology*

The public computers were in constant demand and frequently people needed to wait for these. The library expanded access to library catalogs, online databases and the Internet through the installation of a public wireless network. Funding was through the Friends of the Robbins Library and Board of Library Trustees with a connection provided by Comcast. A time management system for the public PCs was also implemented to more equally distribute computer resources. People can sign up for computer use and be notified at the central station when a computer is free for them. Users are automatically logged off after forty-five minutes which frees up the computers for people who are waiting. The computer network in the Children's Room was also upgraded.

Robbins Library joined with several other libraries in the Minuteman Network to make downloadable audio books available to Arlington residents. Hundreds

of digital audiobooks titles were made available including fiction, non-fiction, young adult literature, and the award-winning Pimsleur language series. After setting up an account from home, residents can access the audio library from any computer twenty-four hours a day seven days a week. Downloading is available without any special software on the computer or portable audio player.

#### *Programs/Outreach*

Library staff continued outreach to the community including an open house for English Language Learners (ELL) and participation in the Chamber of Commerce Business Forward program and the Asian Arts Festival in cooperation with the Arlington Center for the Arts. The ELL collection continued to be expanded with books, videos, CDs, and audiotapes to assist speakers of several foreign languages in their efforts to master spoken English. In November an open house was held to acquaint people with the collections and the services of the library. In May the library offered a display on Asian arts including popular films from India, China, and Japan plus books on origami, calligraphy, kites, folk crafts, Chinese porcelain, religious art, Manga, and children's books. In June the library again served as a program site for the Chamber of Commerce's Business Forward and offered workshops on business databases.

The library established a Young Adult Advisory Board to assist with planning services and programs for middle and high school students. The very energetic committee met several times and made a list of all the programs they would like the library to offer for their age group. They also planned an Oktoberfest celebration for young children which was very successful. The committee will continue to meet on a monthly basis.



Arlington residents enthusiastically participated in the fourth annual Arlington Reads Together program which promotes closer ties among community members through reading the same book and coming together at book discussions and other programs. *Mountains Beyond Mountains* by Tracy Kidder chronicles the efforts of Paul Farmer to cure infectious diseases and to bring lifesaving tools and modern medicine to some of the world's poorest populations. Farmer began in Haiti with a single clinic and expanded his work through the funding of the Boston-based public charity, Partners in Health (PIH).

The library was fortunate to have Dr. Serena Koenig, a clinician from PIH, speak at Town Hall in November on her experiences in Haiti. Students in their junior year at Arlington High School read *Mountains Beyond Mountains* as their summer reading requirement and two students were so motivated by the book that they formed a club to raise money for PIH. The Board of Selectmen and the School Committee held discussions on the book and a group of students participated in a sharing session with three staff members from PIH. Other programs included discussions of several books at the Robbins and Fox libraries, movie night, Haitian Festival with Yanvolu Drumming and Dance Ensemble, Haitian storytelling, arts and crafts, food, displays in the library, and thematic booklists for adults and children. The Community Read project is sponsored by the Board of Library Trustees, Friends of the Library, and the Diversity Task Force of Vision 2020.

This year there was increased participation in the library's annual summer reading program for children, young adults, and adults.

### **Services for Adults and Young Adults**

Adults and young adults of middle and high school age utilized the services provided by the librarians in the Adult Services Department for school, work, and personal life. The library continued to staff the Reference Desk whenever the library was open to the public and tried to provide two librarians whenever possible during busy hours. Twenty-two online databases were provided through the library's participation in the Minuteman Library Network and the Metrowest Regional Library System with municipal funding for fifteen others. With the public workstations in almost constant use, the staff assisted patrons in the use of the Internet and electronic databases and with troubleshooting equipment. The library recorded 66,092 visits to its web site.

Staff created book and audiovisual displays to highlight the collections and assist citizens in their pursuit of life-long learning. A summer reading club for adults and young adults was again offered with a raffle for gift certificates funded by the Friends of the Library. Many local organizations also took advantage of the library's exhibit space in the lobby to publicize their or-

ganizations and to present informational displays. Adult Services staff selected materials to increase the English Language Learning collection and actively promoted these as well as expanding the Chinese language collection. Staff also offered services to the business community by participating in Business Forward, offering a workshop on business databases, hosting a breakfast for Chamber of Commerce members, and sponsoring a workshop on How to Prepare a Successful Loan Package. Packets with information for new residents to the town were compiled and distributed by the Adult Services Department. With the new Speed Read collection, residents had the opportunity to browse this small collection of new and popular materials for which there was a significant demand. Staff decorated the walls along the Mass. Ave. stairway with art prints to promote their availability for public borrowing. Adults were encouraged to participate in the library's celebration of National Poetry Month by attendance at the open mike session in the Reading Room, display of poetry books, and the booklist of favorite library staff poems.

Young adults in grades six through twelve continued to make use of the facility and services. The Reference Desk staff assisted students with class assignments and bibliographic instruction. Young adults enjoyed several programs appealing to that age group including a book group for middle school girls, domino physics, Latin-African drum program, and an author visit at the Ottoson Middle School. Young adults also participated in the National Poetry Month celebration with an incredibly moving and inspirational open mike event at which twenty teens read their original poems after listening to the music of a high school jazz-fusion band. Artwork from Arlington High School was displayed in the Young Adult area of the library throughout the year. In June the first meeting of the Young Adult Advisory Committee was held. The library staff coordinated with both Arlington High School and the Ottoson Middle School on the summer reading lists. Teenagers participated in the summer reading program and had the opportunity to win raffle prizes funded by trust funds and local businesses.

The Community Room and Conference Room were used by eighty-five local organizations for a total of 677 meetings. In addition, the two study rooms were in constant demand by students and tutors. The Local History Room was used eighty-nine times by researchers with Independent Research Cards.

### **Services for Children**

Children from infancy to fifth grade enjoyed the materials and programs offered by the Children's Department. Materials included books, magazines, books on tape, music and spoken word on cassette, video-cassettes, CD-ROMs, puppets, and educational toys. Children and parents participated in 296 activities at

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the Robbins and Fox Libraries including storytimes in English and foreign languages, sing-a-longs for infants and toddlers, craft times, craft fair with the Recreation Department, toddler programs, animation workshops, and various performances. The Children's Department participated in Poetry Month with open mike poetry readings, a poetry wall to display students' writing and favorite poems, and Poetry in Your Pocket. Students could pick up a poem in the Children's Room and if a volunteer bard approached a child and asked them if he had a poem in his pocket and the child showed/read the poem, he would receive a book from the library.

This year several children and library staff marched in the Patriot's Day Parade dressed as their favorite literary characters. The library cooperated with the organizers of the sister city of Teosinte project who did a story and craft program. Over 1,000 children participated in the summer reading program with a theme of What's Buzzing. Funding from the trust funds, Friends of the Library and local businesses enabled children who participated to choose a free book to keep and to win small prizes. The children's librarians offered assistance to children, parents and teachers in researching homework assignments, and for general use of the book collection and the Internet. The public continued to request the very popular graded and subject booklists that are updated annually by library staff and several new booklists were prepared. The library continued to prepare Quick Pick boxes with thematic picture books to assist parents who do not have time to browse the shelves.

The library is very fortunate to have the Anne A. Russell Children's Educational and Cultural Enrichment Fund which sponsors many special programs for children that could not be afforded through the municipal budget. In 2006 these included a magic show and workshop, author visits, Arlington Philharmonic Concert, domino physics, pirate's life, crafts, Colonial Day, bugs science, picnic concerts, African drumming, knitting, Haitian Festival, international games, musical theatrics, and poetry. The fund also finances the very popular infant-toddler sing-a-longs. The Russell Fund continued to provide kindergarten packets to children to introduce them to the library and baby bundle packets to new parents with information on library services for infants and toddlers.

The public and school libraries continued their cooperative efforts, although the lack of elementary school librarians continues to negatively impact this partnership. The public library maintained collaboration with the schools through letters to teachers, assignment support for teachers and students, extended loan periods for teachers, library tours, preparation of curriculum kits, and suggestions for the summer reading lists. The children's librarians at the Robbins and Fox presented book talks in the schools and instruction for classes

at the library. The Russell Fund continued to sponsor authors chosen by the elementary schools to visit their facility. As in previous years, the library considered the needs of the curriculum frameworks when selecting materials for purchase. The Children's Department sponsored a program at the library for parents with children entering kindergarten in conjunction with the School Department and English Language Learners. The library was delighted to be presented with a fantastic mural of children's storybook characters made by the Arlington High School Advanced Ceramics students.

## **Edith Fox Library and Community Center**

Children and adults in East Arlington continued to enjoy the services that a branch library provides. The municipal budget funded the three days that the library was open. In February, Page Lindsay retired after almost twenty years of dedicated service. Children and parents enjoyed story times, lap-sit programs, sing-a-longs, craft programs, and the summer reading club. Elementary and nursery schools brought classes to the library for stories and instruction. All ages enjoyed the monthly book displays that highlighted the collection and exhibits from community groups and the schools. The new branch librarian re-organized the collections, upgraded the configuration of the computers and re-decorated. Several programs were also introduced in the evenings with a small but enthusiastic audience and more will be held next year.

## **Behind the Scenes**

Library staff worked diligently to offer quality services to the community. The number of items borrowed for library patrons from other libraries and loaned to other libraries for their patrons continued to increase. Despite the fact that the public can request items electronically, the staff must still locate the materials and process them for loan and return. The Adult Services and Technical Services Departments selected, ordered, cataloged and processed 16,036 new items including books, magazines, music compact discs, books on CD, videocassettes, DVDs, CD-ROMs, puppets, and educational toys. The Circulation Department checked out and returned 525,791 items to the shelves. The Local History Librarian received sixty-five requests for research assistance in person, by phone, by letter, and by email. The Adult Services Department continued to order various tax forms and serve as a distribution center to assist patrons in filing their state and federal income taxes. Library administration maintained all state mandated standards to receive \$56,803 in a state aid grant that was used for participation in the Minuteman Library Network and library materials.

The library collected \$64,558 in overdue fines and lost book money that was returned to the general Town fund. Library administration updated the public

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policy manual for staff. The Adult Services Department successfully submitted a federal grant application to provide training sessions for the public on the library's online databases and this will occur in 2007. Arlington organizations were encouraged to submit information to the Minuteman Library Network's Community Information Database. The online scheduling of museum passes was implemented for the public. Library staff in all departments attended the Public Library Association's National Conference that was held in Boston in order to learn about new trends in library service.

Library staff prepared the monthly children's newsletter and the quarterly newsletter for adults to keep the public aware of services available to them. Staff also updated the library's web page to keep it timely. Other staff activities included selecting, weeding and updating the collection, responding to local history questions of which many were from out-of-state patrons, updating the periodical list, shifting collections, creating booklists and displays, scheduling the meeting rooms, purchase and processing of the rental book collection, and processing books that need re-binding.

The library attempted to meet patron demands for new audiovisual materials. The Friends of the Library's DVD rental collection continues to prove very successful and the proceeds from the rentals will allow for the further expansion of the collection.

In order to raise revenue for the library, the Reading Room and lobby was made available for rentals by groups and individuals for private functions. Two very successful receptions were held this year and the library will do extensive marketing in 2007.

Maintenance of the building continued to be a high priority. Three concerns were studied this year and will be addressed in 2007: a need for better space for the new book and expanding audiovisual collections, improved exterior lighting, and moisture problems in the basement.

### Board of Trustees

The Board of Trustees continued its commitment to: sponsor a twice-yearly authors program, administer the trust funds for the optimum benefit of the community, raise private funds to augment the municipal budget and advocate for adequate staffing, and delivery of essential library services. The Board approved funding in FY06 for reference books, books on tape and CD, music CDs, non-fiction DVDs, literacy and multicultural materials, art prints, young adult books, children's materials, programs for children, materials for the Fox Library, Community Read, author program, public relations, volunteer appreciation, and staff development. The public enthusiastically received the two author programs sponsored by the Trustees; Anita Diamant and Gail Caldwell. The second annual Arlington Authors panel was also very well received and will be held again

next year. The Board conducted a mail solicitation of individuals and businesses to raise funds for the collections. Board members also participated in Town Day by staffing a table providing information on library activities and resources.



*Board of Library Trustees*  
Standing (l. to r.): Patricia Deal, Katherine Fennelly, Francis Murray,  
Susan Cronin Ruderman, Barbara Muldoon.  
Seated: Joyce Radochia, David Castiglione.

### Friends of the Library

The Friends of the Robbins Library membership continued to grow with a current roster of 405 members. This support group raises supplemental funds for materials and equipment at the Robbins and Fox Libraries not provided through the municipal budget. They also sponsor the family museum pass program. An acquisition this year was a free parking pass for Massachusetts state parks and beaches. The winter doldrums book sale in March and the Town Day sale in September brought out book lovers and brought in much needed revenue. Many visitors also perused and made purchases from the ongoing book sale on the fourth floor of the library. The rental DVD collection is stocked with new releases and has many users.

Fundraising began early in the year with a benefit performance of Agatha Christie's *The Unexpected Guest* by the Arlington Friends of the Drama, with audience members partaking of a wine and cheese reception prior to the show. Attendees at the annual meeting in April were treated to a slide/lecture on the Boston Post Roads by Paul Hogman of the Arlington Historical Society. June brought a visit by author and librarian Jeanne Munn Bracken who entertained participants with tales of family life from her book *Some Day We'll Laugh About This*.

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An Antiques Appraisal evening in December rounded out the Friends programming. In an entertaining and informative style, Stuart Whitehurst of Skinner, Inc. evaluated "treasures" brought by audience members. The Friends hope to make this an annual event. Administrative Coordinator Amy McElroy joined the team this summer and has become involved in all Friends of the Library activities.



*Stuart Whitehurst evaluates 'treasures.'*

### Volunteers

The library staff is grateful for the contributions made by volunteers who donated over 1,500 hours assisting with several aspects of library operations. Special recognition is due to Beverly Brinkerhoff, who continues to coordinate the homebound delivery program. She and the other program volunteers are able to bring the library to those who cannot come to it. Books, music, videos, and companionship are provided weekly to appreciative residents. Margarida Mapletoft has lent her talents to many tasks, large and small. Bill Bradley spent many hours each week shelving materials and keeping the shelves in great order. Other volunteers helping at the Robbins Library were: Carolyn Archer, Aniq Ayaz, Susie Barbarosa, Joanne Burns, John Gearin, Mary and Catherine Gryniewicz, Kim Haase, Debbie Hayes, Morris Keesan, Marion Kranefuss, Helen Krikorian, Page Lindsay, Debbie Minns, Sally Naish, Judi Paradis, Dave Pienta, Nancie Richardson, Steve Scott, Ellen Shearer, Skye Stewart, Marcie Theriault, Sophie Travis, Barbara Wagner, Wendy Watson, and YuJia Xiao. Aply assisting the Fox Branch Library staff were: Joe Cook, Michel Jackson, Gert Kovar, and Beth Lanigan. The Children's Room staff acknowledges the efforts of three Arlington High School students who volunteered this summer in the children's room: Alex Long, Katherine Smith, and Katy Wassam.

### Donations

Citizens, businesses and organizations donated over \$33,000 to the library in FY 2006. The library ac-

knowledges with appreciation these gifts which allow for the purchase of books and audiovisual materials which could not be afforded through the municipal budget. As in previous years the programs and services of the Anne A. Russell Educational and Cultural Enrichment Fund have enriched the community. The library is also grateful to Arlington resident Richard Duffy who donated the profits from the sale of his book, *Arlington Then and Now* to the library.

The Friends of the Library donated \$32,975 to the library for membership to five museums, reference books, books on CD, young adult materials, DVDs, materials and a computer for the Fox branch wireless project, raffle prizes for summer reading program, and other supplementary materials.

### Looking Ahead

The administration and staff of the Arlington Library System (Robbins and Fox) strives to provide high standards of professional service and facility upkeep. In 2007 the library will continue to face the challenge of providing quality library services within the context of limited municipal resources. Despite the successful override in 2005, the library did not receive funding to restore all services that were cut back due to reductions in the municipal budget in fiscal 2004. The Robbins Library continues to be closed on Thursday morning and Sundays. The Fox Library was restored to opening three days.

With limited financial resources, the library will continue to face the challenge to maintain and expand its book and audiovisual collection, keep pace with technology, introduce new media and provide the residents of Arlington with a high-quality contemporary library system. Library administration and the Board of Trustees will endeavor to provide funding for the continued expansion of the very popular collection of music CDs, books on CD and DVDs. The library will maintain its commitment to high quality children's services through the financial support of the Anne A. Russell Children's Educational and Cultural Enrichment Fund. Staff will continue to work with the Young Adult Advisory Committee to plan programs and services that appeal to middle and high school youth. Participation in the Minuteman Library Network will continue to provide access to the Internet and electronic databases. The library will continue to replace and upgrade network equipment, PCs and peripherals connected to the Minuteman Library Network as well as office automation as long as capital funding is maintained.

The library will use its Long-Range Plan for FY2006-2008 in formulating its goals and objectives for FY2008 and will update the plan for the following years. Future activities include: the installation of a self-check-out station for patrons to ease the pressure of long lines at the Circulation Desk, the development of a market-

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ing campaign to insure that residents of the town are aware of all the services the library has to offer, provision of training classes for the public on the Internet, online databases and the catalog, encouraging feedback from the community to insure that the collection meets community needs, survey of patron interests to guide in program development, and the co-sponsorship of events with other Town organizations. The library will also continue to work with the Minuteman Library Network to explore and evaluate service enhancements. To raise additional funding, library administration will publicize the availability of the Robbins Library Reading Room for rentals when the library is closed and continue to support the Trustee's annual solicitation of private funds. The administration and Board of Trustees will explore funding opportunities to meet the community's desire for the restoration of Sunday hours. Representatives from the library will continue to work with the Town Manager and Board of Selectmen to explore ways to raise revenue to make the Fox Library and Community Center as self-supporting as possible in anticipation of the financial deficit facing the town in FY 2011.