

MOSES GREELEY PARKER MEMORIAL LIBRARY

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LIBRARIAN'S REPORT TO THE TRUSTEES FOR JANUARY-DECEMBER 1980

Whereas 1979 marked the opening of the expanded library, 1980 was a year of concentrated effort to strengthen and expand library services to the Dracut community. Notable progress was made towards fulfilling the potential within the new facility for offering residents a broad range of quality library services. During 1980 the library has been able to achieve a staffing pattern which reflects and supports service goals; it has broadened the scope and number of programs and services; and it has analyzed and streamlined operations in order to maximize efficiency and service and minimize expense. The community's evolving recognition of these efforts, as well as the evolving awareness of the importance of information and library services on a day-to-day basis have been demonstrated by a substantial increase both in library use and support. Unfortunately, 1980 also brought the realization of Proposition 2½, which will probably result not only in a curtailment for future growth and improvement, but which may well dictate a severe cut in the existing services which the library worked so hard to achieve in 1980.

Staffing difficulties due to inadequate funding have always been a part of the library's history, and they continued through more than half of 1980. Started in 1979, the LSCA project to initiate young adult services and expand children's services continued through June. However, as a result of action taken at Annual Town Meeting, Dorothy Natoli, the preprofessional librarian hired with LSCA funds for adult and young adult services, was terminated. Ms. Natoli, however, was accepted into the Graduate program in Library Science at Simmon's College prior to her termination and exemplifies this library's commitment to encouraging the staff's professional growth and development. In the course of the year, the library also lost three CETA sustainment slots which resulted in the loss of all library aides. Fortunately, however, the community offered financial support at a Special Town Meeting held in October, thus enabling the library to initiate a staffing pattern better suited to the expanded services and facility. Three part time aides were hired; Circulation Manager, Donna Donahue was promoted to the Preprofessional Librarian position; a new Circulation Manager, Claire Withee was hired, and Mike Rizzo, a part-time work-study student from Simmon's College, was added to the library staff. Assistant Director, Constance Griffin, received her Master's Degree in Library Science in December. Consequently, in the course of the year, this library's personnel structure was beginning to reflect the goals of providing expanded quality library services to the Dracut Community.

Community response to the expanded library and its services can be seen in the increase of circulated materials; all total, the library circulated 71,077 items, representing a 40% increase in circulation. Book circulation alone increased by 25% to the figure of 45,679, including 26,112 adult titles and 19,567 juvenile titles. In addition patrons borrowed 17,322 paperback titles, 4584 magazines, and 1645 records. Requests for materials which the

library could not supply were provided through 513 interlibrary loan receipts, and this library was able to help patrons of other libraries by sending 83 volumes to these libraries. Book deposits to the Dracut Housing Authority, Dracut Day Care Center, and St. Louis School were also part of this library's circulation services totaling 1135 volumes.

Community response was evident not only in circulation statistics, however, for in 1980, the library demonstrated its ability to serve the Dracut community beyond circulation services by expanding its programming services to reach all ages. This year saw the development of both special programs to meet a specific interest, as well as the development of series of programs to learn or enrich a particular skill. For adults and young adults these programs included programs featuring Andy Johnson of the Boston Patriots, Stan Jonathan of the Boston Bruins, a local candidates night, and an open house for Dracut's Senior citizens. Total attendance at these programs was 430. Series of programs included a photography work shop, crafts classes, and a James Bond film series. Total attendance at these programs was 300. On a broader scale the library continued to expand its support to the Dracut Community. Town boards, public meetings, and civic organizations have increasingly found the library supporting their meetings and programs. The library has also continued its displays supporting local artists and organizations.

Renovation work to the existing building was completed in June, the result of which is a two level children's area within the library. Children's services continued to expand, although still focusing on the goals of providing motivation for reading, developing an informed awareness of self and the world, and an openness to new experiences and ideas. Preschool story hour remained a popular program, with a total annual attendance of 2,053 children. 409 children attended film programs throughout the year, 55 participated weekly in the summer reading program, and a total of 293 children attending the four puppet shows presented during the year. This past year approximately 233 children visited the library from neighboring schools, and 48 children participated in a Christmas crafts program. However the highlight of children's programming this past year was the production of the musical version of The Wizard of Oz over a period of three months. This program was an entirely new concept at this library supported by the entire library staff. The response was overwhelming. With a cast of 90 children two performances were presented to an audience of 250. The concept of presenting theater to children was certainly well received by both the community and the participants. This past year marked the first time the Dracut Community provided financial support for the library's programming efforts. Over 4,000 people participated or viewed library programs at a cost of approximately \$2,000, a minimal expense. The response to this library's programming is overwhelming given the resources of this library. Activities and story hours are overcrowded, and library staff are over extended to meet this response. The paradox in the coming year is represented in the contradiction of Proposition 2 $\frac{1}{2}$. The concern of the Board of Library Trustees and of the Dracut community must focus on the response to these services in view of the limitations imposed by Proposition 2 $\frac{1}{2}$.

As part of expanding library services this library also improved its organization; for organizational efficiency leads to efficiency in delivering services. The library has always been committed to providing services at the minimum cost

to the community, and the past year has seen two major accomplishments in the library to achieve this end.

First, a recataloging project was developed to be the focus of a CETA grant application. The library was awarded a \$37,000 CETA grant in February to weed, inventory, and re-catalog the library's collection. At the end of the project this library's card catalogs will accurately reflect the library's collection, and catalog cards will be of a uniform format. No longer will patrons be looking for books that may be missing from the collection or long overdue, nor will the confusion of catalog cards with varying formats exist. Consequently, library patrons will have improved access to materials. The importance of such a project cannot be overstated from an organizational view.

Secondly, the library's circulation system was changed. This library's circulation system evolved from a two week loan period with book cards filed by author, to a ~~two~~ week loan period with the book cards filed by date due, to a fourteen to twenty day loan period with the book cards filed by date. However that due date changes only once each week instead of every day. Consequently, the best features of each of the first two systems were retained in structuring the third. Thus the efficiency both the system for reserving materials for patrons and the system of identifying overdue materials was improved. Reserves are an integral part of library services, and overdues represent an actual cost to the library as well as community. Presently, costs of this system have been identified from an operational cost analysis, a process which has identified a substantial potential savings on a long term basis using a computerized circulation control system.

The library's collection continued to grow with the addition of 2720 volumes to the collection, including 1393 paperbacks, 1098 hard bound volumes, and 229 records. As one can see from last year, inflation and minimal funding have compromised the library's ability to serve Dracut. Library use suffers when a collection is unable to keep pace with the demands for use coupled with the amount of information being published. An important fact to remember, however, is that one needs to make an investment in order to achieve returns. For example, 17,322 paperbacks were circulated this year, or approximately twice the amount circulated in 1979. This is a direct result of investing book monies in the expansion of the paperback collection. The library's hardcover book collection desperately needs a similar investment. The library continues to gradually expand its record collection and microfiche files of back issues of magazines. Registrations continued to increase with 1,518 new patrons registered bringing the active registration file to 12,678.

Special recognition and thanks must go to the individuals who have supported the library program throughout the year, especially The Dracut Friends of the Library, whose core group of members continues to provide invaluable moral and financial support. Also, a thank you is extended to those individuals who donated materials for inclusion in this library's collection.

In 1980, the M. G. Parker Library has striven to provide maximum services to the community on a minimal investment of tax dollars, and the residents have demonstrated an increased use and support of the library. Consequently, the

spectre of Proposition 2½ gives rise to the prospect of defeat to the progress achieved in 1980. Quite simply, any reduction in funding will result in reductions in service. With the demonstrated community response to library services in Dracut, to curtail library services in this community is to contradict the apparent will of the community.

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