

MOSES GREELEY PARKER MEMORIAL LIBRARY

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DRACUT, MASSACHUSETTS 01826

ANNUAL REPORT TO TRUSTEES 1981

Combined with historic minimal funding which places the Parker Library in the bottom 10% of libraries serving communities of Dracut's population, the limitations and uncertainties of Proposition 2 $\frac{1}{2}$ made 1981 a year in which the library strived to maintain the progress achieved in 1980 to realize the potential of an expanded library. Even though the library benefited from this community's increase in local state aid, the entire range of library services and operations were plagued by financial limitations, uncertainties and doubts. 1981 saw expansion in some services and programs with the consequent increase in use, yet this past year also brought the demonstrated frustration in limiting the range of services and operations. This past year marks a crossroads in the library's ability to serve the Dracut community. Despite the financial questions of Proposition 2 $\frac{1}{2}$'s second year, 1982 will be a year in which the library, with the support of the community, will continue to achieve the potential of a greatly expanded facility; or without such support, library services, programs, and operations will decline despite citizens' demands for services.

Staffing difficulties as a result of inadequate funding have been a part of the library's history; yet 1981's fiscal limitations required realignment of this department's staffing pattern, the completion of which continues into 1982. Minimal funding prompted the resignation of Constance Griffin, Assistant Director/Children's Librarian, and further compromised filling the position, thus requiring a change in the staffing pattern. Currently, there are two Assistant Librarians in charge of adult services and children's services respectively. However, as a result of delays in achieving the present staffing pattern, there was no Children's Librarian for nine months of the year. Therefore, children's services, including story hours, school visits, film and puppet shows, and summer reading programs, were virtually eliminated from the library's services in 1981. As part of this change, the part time Preprofessional Librarian position was expanded and was accepted as an Assistant Librarian after a period of prolonged negotiations. In order to conform with the restrictions imposed by Proposition 2 $\frac{1}{2}$, the number of working hours of the Library Aides were reduced and one Page position was terminated during the summer. However, with the receipt of a portion of Dracut's increase in local state aid, the hours and the position were restored. Federal budget reductions have also had an effect in this library's staffing. Traditionally the library has participated extensively in various federally sponsored employment programs; yet with the federal reductions in these programs, the library has been restricted in receiving personnel support from these areas. Consequently, the library is severely understaffed. A cost analysis of the Circulation Department indicates a present need of over five employees to support this service, yet the library has the equivalent of 3.5 employees available for circulation services. Routine, yet critical, operations must now be accomplished by a reduced number of personnel, a situation that compromises other employees' responsibilities.

Worthy of special attention was this library's participation this past summer with the Center for Occupational Awareness and Placement. The program

involved the placement of a special needs student in the library. The student was accompanied each day by his counselor, and his duties included keeping the magazines, records, and paperback books in order. To conclude, Assistant Librarians Donna Donahue and Claire Withee were accepted into graduate programs leading to a Master's Degree in Library Science.

Community response, as reflected in the library's circulation statistics, appear to mirror the library's financial uncertainties and limitations. These figures represent a total decrease of nearly 8% from 1980's circulation figures. Book circulation fell by 2% to the figure of 44,968, including 24,560 adult titles and 20,408 juvenile titles. In addition, patrons borrowed 14,068 paperback titles (an 18% decrease), 4,394 magazines (a 4% decrease), and 1,938 records a (17% increase). Requests for materials which the library could not supply were provided through 685 interlibrary loan requests a (34% increase), and this library was able to help patrons of other libraries by sending three volumes to these libraries. Clearly the library's inability to serve the needs of patrons is increasing. Book deposits to the Dracut Housing Authority and the St. Louis School totaled 654 volumes. Also, this past summer the library initiated a new circulation service of providing talking books to patrons with visual handicaps. To date, 62 tape cassettes have circulated from a rotating deposit provided by the Perkins School for the Blind. However, financial constraints required termination of the library's reserve system. No longer will patrons be able to have this library's materials reserved for them.

Circulation statistics alone reflect the financial dilemma the library faces. The library is literally unable to purchase sufficient materials to satisfy patron demand; thus the increase in interlibrary loans. Library funding must reflect at least a token attempt to keep abreast with inflation and the vast amount of material currently being published. Without the ability to meet such pressures, circulation statistics will continue to reflect a decrease. To conclude, the library must also have the ability to replace heavily used material that is not returned. Approximately 2% of the annual circulation of materials is not returned at a loss of approximately \$10,000. The library desperately needs to replace such items as needed or the means by which to enforce a patron's responsibility to replace such items.

Circulation figures are not the only measure of library use, and 1981 also saw other limitations in public services. As previously mentioned, Constance Griffin resigned in April. However, as a result of numerous delays, the Assistant Librarian in charge of children's services, Claire Withee, was not appointed until December. Through the generous efforts of staff members Donna Donahue, Kathleen Hudzik, and Claire Withee, preschool story hour was continued through May. However, after that date, there were essentially no library services for children through the end of the year, and this delay in providing children's services extends into early 1982. Attendance at various children's programs through June was approximately 1,253, and after that date, 254.

Also, the status of the position responsible for adult services in the library was not settled until December. Consequently, this same sense of uncertainty was present in this area of library service but not to the degree as in children's services. Despite the questions concerning the status of this position, throughout 1981 Donna Donahue structured library services and programs for adults and young adults, the availability of and the response to which this library has not seen in the past. The more noteworthy of these programs

include; 1) a young adult summer reading program; 2) a series of women's hours; 3) Friday morning mini-courses; 4) a young adult series on personal hygiene and appearance; 5) a babysitting workshop; and 6) the availability of an extensive deposit collection of talking books for patrons with visual handicaps. Total attendance through the year for adult and young adult programs was 1,303.

Of special interest was the initiation of child care services sponsored through the Tot Shop program at the Greater Lowell Regional Vocational Technical High School to support and to facilitate library programming for adults. This shared activity is certainly a "first" in the area, and the library has received national as well as regional recognition for this service. At the same time as supporting this library, this activity serves as a true vocational experience for those students participating.

Library finances have always placed a premium on efficiency in operations. Consequently in 1980 the library initiated a recataloging project supported by a CETA grant. In 1981 this project continued although at a slower pace than had been anticipated. With the demise of the CETA program in late 1980, early 1981, the number of available personnel for the project was severely reduced. Therefore the project has slowed, and the Technical Services Department of the library has become overburdened. Yet, the goal of a uniform card catalog that accurately reflects this library's collection of materials is invaluable. By the end of 1981, approximately two-thirds of the library's collection had been inventoried and recataloged.

The other area of improving the efficiency of this library's operations focuses on the need to automate the circulation system. Costs of this very routine, labor intensive, yet critical area of library operation have been identified, and circulation procedures have been modified to maximize efficiency in the library's present system. Automation will achieve substantial savings in the cost of operation, and at the same time will eliminate the present critical need for additional staff. Meetings have been held throughout the year with representatives from various companies, with other librarians whose libraries have automated systems, and with Dracut Officials to price the various systems, to determine the advantages and/or disadvantages of owning a system or joining with another library, and to become familiar with the variety of available systems.

The library's collection continued to grow with the addition of 2,236 items to the collection, including 862 paperbacks, 93 records, and 1,281 hardbound volumes. The total represents an 18% decrease from last year's acquisitions. Inflation combined with mandated inadequate funding frustrate the library's ability to serve the Dracut community. The library cannot give even an appearance of keeping pace with the amount of material currently published that is demanded by patrons; therefore, circulation decreases. The library cannot afford to replace worn or missing volumes from the collection; therefore, circulation decreases. However, registrations continue to increase with 1,455 new patrons registered in 1981, thus bringing the active registration file to 13,918 (an increase of 10%). Thus the apparent contradiction and frustration exists; the demand for library services increases while the library's financial limitations directly frustrate the ability to serve the expanded demand.

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 members continue to provide invaluable moral and financial support. The Friends' activities this year included a combination book fair/flea market plus a day of Mid Winter Magic held at the library. Also, a thank you is extended to those individuals who donated materials for inclusion in this library's collection. Finally, as Library Director, I would like to recognize and applaud the efforts of a library staff dedicated to providing the best library service possible. Only through the efforts and commitment of these people, was the library able to provide quality service throughout a very difficult year.

In view of the progress and the growth this library has achieved, 1981 appears as a crossroads. The financial limitations under which the library has always had to operate in the past have become greatly magnified under Proposition 2 $\frac{1}{2}$. Coupled with the uncertainties in applying such limitations, the financial constraints have served to frustrate the library in its ability to serve the Dracut community. A combined view of circulation, acquisition, and program statistics illustrate the fact that library services were not able to keep pace with demand. An increasing number of Dracut citizens wish to use existing or expanded library programs and services, yet the library simply does not have the financial resources to adequately respond. Consequently, 1981 appears as a year in which the library was able to maintain a holding pattern of past progress. However, 1982, the second year of Proposition 2 $\frac{1}{2}$ appears as a year of decision. The library will be recognized as an essential department serving a very real need in this community and will be supported as such, or the library will be rendered impotent to serve a demonstrated need of and desire for its services through a steady process of erosion.

Respectively submitted:



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