

Director's Report 2015

Highlights

- New strategic plan adopted
- 826,217 people through the doors, setting a new record
- Attendance at children's, teen and adult programs set new records
- Friends Foundation support exceeds \$1,000,000 over five years

The downtown library building was busy, busy, busy during fiscal year 2015. More than 825,000 people entered the building. The summer months showed the highest number of visits with more than 20,000 counted in the average week. Many visitors were coming in to attend library programs. New records were also set for program attendance: 29,156 for children's; 6,103 for teens, and 3,670 for adults. Meeting room use was also up slightly (1.3%). Circulation was 1,391,482, down 1%, while reserves placed increased more than 10%.

New Plan

The Library Board of Trustees adopted the new strategic plan in July. It was created during the previous year with a panel of community and library leaders following extensive community input through surveys and focus groups. The theme of the new plan is Connect-Engage-Enrich.

The mission statement reads: The Iowa City Public Library is a center of community life that connects people of all ages with information, engages them with the world of ideas and with each other, and enriches the community by supporting learning, promoting literacy and encouraging creativity. For the next few years we will be focusing on ways to:

- Connect people with information and offer opportunities for enjoyment and personal growth
- Engage people in discovery, learning and the community
- Enrich the quality of life in Iowa City through diversity, imagination and creativity

The new plan provided the framework for development of the FY16 budget and specific tasks identified to be implemented in FY16.

Collaboration

One of the values highlighted in the new plan is collaboration, and partnerships, new and old, were a significant part of Library activities this year. The most significant partnership is our new formal collection sharing agreement with the Coralville Public Library and the North Liberty Community Library. We will share a collection of downloadable electronic books for both reading and listening, using Overdrive as a vendor. This means residents of our three communities and all of our contracting areas will have access to the same electronic

collections. We have been sharing these collections between Coralville and Iowa City on a less formal basis for several years.

We also continued our joint Summer Reading Program meetings and discussion between the three libraries and the Iowa City Community School District. Increasing participation in the Summer Reading Program for young elementary age students is a shared goal of the coalition.

We were fortunate to partner with the University of Iowa in many ways, to strengthen existing collaborations and add new ones to benefit the community. Low income residents continue to benefit from the income tax filing assistance provided free of charge by accounting students from the University of Iowa Business School.

Almost 950 families received tax return preparation assistance at the Library. The UI Delta Center offered us a new opportunity this year and the Library is now the second location for the *Playing is Learning* initiative developed by UI professor John Spencer. The project's goal is to demonstrate to parents how play is an essential element of early learning and help them to guide children in productive play. A team studied how children play in the Library and developed displays, posters, and activity cards specifically for our space.

Creating stronger partnerships with the ICCSD and other schools to provide children with library cards and sign them up for the Summer Reading Program was another important project. We worked with each school in Iowa City to provide a process that meets their needs. Sometimes we travelled to schools during the day or visited a family centered event in the evening to issue cards; sometimes we provided information for school personnel to distribute. Iowa City Transit is also an important SRP partner, ensuring children have a way to get to the Library. We worked with Transit to promote the Summer Library Bus along with their "Ride Right" program.

Service clubs provide us with many partnership opportunities. We continued the Kidsight program sponsored by the Noon Lions Club to identify vision problems in young children. Noon Lions Club also supported the purchase of a new large format scanner this year. Two gifts from the Pilot Club of Iowa City funded Sensory Storytime Kits, designed for children with autism, sensory disorders, or other special needs, and *Tales and Travel Memories* kits, designed to engage persons with dementia through regional folktales, interesting facts, and illustrated books. The Iowa City Noon Rotary is drawing attention to the work of three area public libraries: Iowa City, Coralville, and North Liberty, as part of their 100th anniversary celebration in 2015 by making the libraries the beneficiaries of a fundraising raffle. The Downtown Rotary provides regular volunteers for help setting up for big book sales.

The Iowa Department of Transportation reached out to us this year to ask whether we would like to host one the new service kiosks being installed at multiple locations throughout the state. We agreed that it would be convenient for many people to renew their driver's license with a new photograph at the Library by visiting the DOT kiosk any time the Library is open.

These are just a few examples of the many partnerships that contribute to improving library services for everyone. We are fortunate to be in a community with so many people and groups who want to work together toward common goals.

Making collections easier to use

Several changes were implemented last year to connect people with materials more quickly and simplify complicated rules and procedures. Collection Services worked to get materials on the shelf more quickly, have more copies on hand to meet high demand for new items, and to pull and process items with reserves more often. The number of holds increased more than 10%. The number of holds a person can have at one time increased from eight to ten and this, combined with the relatively new service which enables reservations of items that are on the shelf so they will be held for them, accounts for the increase. One patron offered this compliment, "I just want to thank you folks for letting people request books that are in the library. It is so hard for me to go through the stacks and find books with my little kids. I really appreciate being able to pick books up at the front so I don't disturb other people. This service you offer makes my life so much better and easier."

Improved technology also made it easier to find and check out materials. A change to the library catalog improved searching for single word titles (think *Frozen!*), and new message options enabled cardholders to receive an email message letting them know their card was about to expire and explaining how to easily keep it active. This allowed users of electronic collections to continue to download and patrons in the building to use self check out stations without missing a beat. The self check equipment was improved with customer service in mind and at year's end the percent of items checked out at the self-service stations had reached 70%.

Technology

Technology continues to be an important component of library services as we provide access to the internet through public access computers as well as a free public wi-fi network. Many people do not have this access at home and it is increasingly the only option to accomplish basic day-to-day functions such as applying for a job, filing taxes, communicating with a child's teachers, or completing school assignments. Last year library computers were used more than 100,000 times to access the internet.

The Library offered more than 40 classes last year and provided instruction in areas such as iPad use, genealogy, online music access, and tips to help purchase of an e-reader, as well as regularly scheduled Drop in Tech-Help four days a week. Technology offerings in the Children's Room are aimed both educational and fun options. The four AWE early learning computers for very young children have been well received. Older children have six internet stations with large touchscreens. New apps are continually researched and regularly added to the iPads available for children to use in-house. The large interactive table is also popular, as

are the regular Minecraft programs. Teens also have a variety of options for technology including computers, iPads, and gaming consoles in the Koza Family Teen Center.

One area that saw major improvements last year was printing and scanning. The old “add value” card system to pay for printing was replaced by a simpler process that uses coins or bills at the print release system. Scanning options were greatly improved with the addition of a very well received express scanning station that allows a document to be quickly scanned and saved to a flash drive or emailed. A new large format scanner can produce archive-quality scans and convert slides to digital images, offering services most people would not typically have access to at home.

There was a lot of planning work this year to prepare for major upgrades to our Meeting Room technology. The equipment is more than ten years old and much of it can no longer be supported by our vendors. The new system, scheduled for installation in August will convert all systems from analog to digital, and provide a more user-friendly experience. It will also provide new capabilities such as web conferencing and making presentations from a mobile device.

Community Center

The meeting rooms were busy this year as use increased to more than 1,500. That’s an average of 300 public meetings in each of our five meeting rooms. The Library also used the meeting rooms to offer more programming. Most children and teen programs take place in their designated spaces, but most adult programs and larger children’s programs utilize the main meetings rooms. Following national trends, library circulation is down although people still appreciate a “live performance” and being in a room with others to learn or be entertained.

Our emphasis remains on children’s programs (495 last year attracted more than 29,000 attendees); but teen and adult programming has increased in recent years. Much of our programming relies on partnerships and the generosity of people and groups to support library programming is very special in this community. Before our Children’s Services Coordinator, Vickie Pasicznyuk, left in May to join her husband at his new job in Colorado she said that one of the extraordinary things she found about Iowa City was the many, many people who helped with children’s programs for free. She has worked in several communities with good libraries, but never experienced so many people ready to volunteer their talent for children’s programming.

Our community is extraordinary. We celebrated a milestone this year with our “Thanks a Million” recognition for the over \$1million dollars donated by the Iowa City Public Library Friends Foundation to library collections, programs, and facilities in the last five years. Time-Talent-Treasure, we are very fortunate to receive each of these from our very generous community members.

Every Hero Has a Story

Every Hero Has a Story is the theme of our children's summer reading program and it brings to mind two personal heroes who have contributed so much of their time, talent and treasure to our Library. This year, Ellen Buchanan recorded her last interview with local residents. Since 1989, and through two series, "Tell Me Your Story," and "One of a Kind," Ellen shared the stories of more than 140 people, creating her own one of a kind legacy. In November, long time Iowa City resident, pioneering female journalist, and radio show host, Dottie Ray received the Benjamin Franklin Award of Association of Fundraising Professionals (AFP) Eastern Iowa Chapter. We nominated Dottie for this special award to acknowledge her contributions to the success of every fundraising event hosted by the Library Friends Foundation and as one of the initial organizers of the Foundation. These women are two of my heroes and they have contributed greatly to our story.

Susan Craig, Library Director
August 2015