

REPORT OF THE WELLESLEY FREE LIBRARY BOARD OF LIBRARY TRUSTEES

This year Wellesley celebrated the 5th anniversary of the opening of the new Main Library. The Board of Trustees are gratified that their vision of what a new library could become has been realized. The Library serves as a cultural destination and Wellesley's community gathering place, with innovative programs, services, and free and convenient access to information both within and beyond our walls. Since 2001, the last year of operation of the old main library, library circulation has increased over 34%.

Branch Libraries

In FY '08, Trustees embarked on a Branch Campaign to raise \$325,000 as the first goal necessary to re-open the Branch Libraries. A Branch Committee of Wellesley residents formed under the direction of the Library Trustees, ran an effective grassroots campaign, and successfully exceeded the campaign goal. The campaign came to fruition due to the deep commitment of many participants. The Trustees are developing budgets that will maximize the use of the private funds and re-open the branch Libraries with a target date in September 2008.

The Trustees also entered into leasing arrangements with the Wellesley Community Children's Center to provide for an after-school program at the Fells Library and office space at the Hills Library. Trustees negotiated 3-year leases for both facilities that were approved by Town Meeting. This ensured that during the time the buildings were closed as libraries they were still being occupied and maintained.

Development

Trustees realize that for the WFL to continue its success, it cannot rely only on the tax-impact budget to meet the demands of the Wellesley community for library services. Public/private partnerships need to become the norm for libraries everywhere to survive in the 21st century. Because of this, Trustees have hired a Director of Development who will oversee the Library's ongoing efforts to ensure that services and programs continue to thrive.

Wellesley Free Library Foundation

As part of the vision for the Library, Trustees explored the possibility of creating a foundation that would serve the Library as we move forward in these fiscally challenging times. Trustees invested considerable time and energy investigating the best option that culminated in this year's establishment of the Wellesley Free Library Foundation as the supporting organization for the future success of the Library system that includes a main library and two branches.

Marketing Plan

The Marketing plan, created by Trustees in FY '07, provides the road map for the Library's strategies for communicating with library customers. This year, a digital bulletin board was installed in the back lobby as a way to announce programs and items of interest to the public. Participation in an e-newsletter continues to grow. The WFL website is heavily visited, providing virtual services; this year also saw the development and kickoff of a new, more easily navigated Library website at www.wellesleyfreelibrary.org.

The Library has also hired a part-time communication coordinator to help disseminate important information to the community through a variety of media outlets.

Strategic Visioning Process and New Strategic Plan

Trustees embarked on a broad-based strategic visioning process that began with a facilitated session to identify what the future of the Wellesley Free Library may be. Throughout the year, Trustees have met to discuss and plan for the future of the Wellesley Free Library. The visioning process will include many stakeholders in the community, including various other boards, committees, and citizen groups. This strategic planning process will culminate in a new 5-year Strategic Plan.

Library Usage in FY '08

Total Main Library circulation increased to 606,640 in the past year, or a 5.3% increase over last year. This number included 30,259 check-outs on a new self-check machine and 61,798 renewals by people accessing their accounts through the library's website.

The circulation statistics reported above only describe one piece of the picture in measuring library use. Other statistics of interest for FY '08 are:

- 409,555 visits to the Main Library
- 29,941 reference transactions
- 11,842 children in attendance at 244 children's programs
- 4,466 people in attendance at general interest programs
- 294,076 visits to the library website www.wellesleyfreelibrary.org
- 11,586 patrons using laptops and wireless connection
- 18,744 Wellesley residents with library cards.

The Library's Collection

In FY '08 total library holdings are as follows:

- 220,030 books
- 14,309 audio cassettes and CDs
- 12,435 video cassettes and DVDs.

The library also offers access to 2,594 audio titles in a downloadable format from the website.

Respectfully Submitted,
Mary Ann Cluggish
Board of Library Trustees