

REPORT OF THE WELLESLEY FREE LIBRARY BOARD OF LIBRARY TRUSTEES

The Wellesley Free Library (WFL) has had an extraordinarily busy and productive year. It was truly a year of forward thrust – patron visits and use were up substantially, program offerings continued to be expanded at all sites, major technological advances were made for both patron and staff use and finally, intense internal planning looked to the future.

The WFL continues to strengthen its role as Wellesley's community gathering place and cultural destination for our citizens. The role of the WFL as a cornerstone of the Town has never been more evident than during this past year. As the economy went into serious downturn, citizens turned increasingly to the Library for its offerings, from its lending collections to its free programs, classes and technology resources. As usual, the Library administration and staff worked diligently to meet the increased demands and to provide assistance as required.

The Board of Trustees has long understood the value of public/private partnerships to the WFL. Gifts from supporting groups like the Centennial Fund (collection support) and the Friends of the Wellesley Free Library (program support) have provided significant enhancements to the WFL beyond Town tax dollars for years. Now as the scramble for local tax dollars becomes more intense, the Trustees are determined to position the WFL to maximize use of those dollars as well as to seek ongoing funding support from individuals and organizations. These public/private partnerships are a growing trend among public institutions as a means to supplement public funding and allow local institutions to provide enhanced service to their communities.

Wellesley Free Library Foundation

The WFL Foundation received its 501(c)(3) status in January 2009 and is now a supporting organization of the WFL. The Foundation will raise private funds to leverage and stretch public dollars. Funds will be sought to enhance and expand library programs, services and other projects that are identified in the recently completed strategic plan. Supporting the goals and priorities of the WFL and working closely with the Library Trustees and Administration, the Foundation offers a vehicle to garner broad support from individuals and organizations within the community to help maintain the WFL at the level of excellence the Town has come to expect.

Strategic and Long Range Plans

The Trustees of the WFL have spent the past year working on a plan to provide a vision for the future of the Library in an effort to maintain its standing of excellence and reputation for cutting edge programs and services. Through the efforts of a Strategic Planning Committee, extensive work was done to develop the plan. The Strategic Plan, adopted by the Trustees in May 2009, identifies the Library's institutional priorities and creates a roadmap for its direction over the next five years.

Using the initiatives identified in the Strategic Plan as its basis, a subsequent Long Range Planning Committee developed a plan for the next five years. This Committee worked through the spring of 2009 to identify major goals and objectives to be addressed over the period as well as a timeline for their implementation. The Library Trustees approved the new Long Range Plan in July 2009.

Branch Libraries

The success of the Branch Campaign provided private resources to reopen and operate the Branch Libraries for the next five years. After developing a five-year budget, the Library Trustees approved the reopening of the branches for September 2008. All expenses associated with branch

operations are funded without the use of Town funds. Over the past year, the Library staff has worked to integrate the branches and the main library into a strong library system. The branches offer specialized use including specific patron services and programs. In addition to the convenience they offer to Town residents and their value as community gathering places, the Branches (especially the Hills) provide added space for programs and meetings, thus easing the burden on the Main Library building.

Plans continue on new and expanded use of the branch buildings, including rental opportunities to help provide additional income to support operations. The lease between the WFL and the WCCC for space at both branches is now in its third year. This arrangement continues to offer positive benefits for both the WCCC who needed convenient space and to the WFL for the rental income. At the 2009 Annual Town Meeting, a request from the Library Trustees to have rental income from the branches designated for capital improvements at those buildings was approved.

Technology

The Library Trustees and Administration continue to support updating existing technology and introducing new technologies. The WFL website is updated and enhanced on an ongoing basis. The audience for the E-newsletter has expanded over the past year. New databases have been added for patron use. A new Radio Frequency ID System (RFID), purchased with private funds, will be implemented over the next year. This RFID technology is one of the best to automate and speed up manual tasks. Once in place, it will allow the Library to handle increasing demand without requiring additional staff to maintain current levels of service.

Library Usage in FY '09

The Library's Collection

Total Main Library circulation increased to 644,277 in the past year, a 6% increase over last year. This number included 34,170 check-outs on a new self-check machine and 72,722 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 '09 are:

- 461,778 visits to the Main Library
- 30,215 reference transactions
- 10,682 children in attendance at 239 children's programs
- 6,282 people in attendance at general interest programs
- 421,053 visits to the library website www.wellesleyfreelibrary.org
- 16,837 patrons using laptops and wireless connection
- 18,568 Wellesley residents with library cards.

The Library's Collection

In FY '09 total library holdings are as follows:

- 226,240 books
- 15,397 audio cassettes and CDs
- 13,476 video cassettes and DVDs.

The library also offers access to 2,886 audio titles in a downloadable format from the website.

Respectfully Submitted,
Ann Howley
Board of Library Trustees