



ROCKINGHAM
FREE PUBLIC
LIBRARY

ANNUAL REPORT July 1, 2013 to June 30, 2014

The Rockingham Free Public Library went through many tumultuous changes during Fiscal Year 2014, including operating out of a very small temporary location, completing the building renovation, and most notably, in September 2013, Céline Houlné being let go as Director by the Library Board of Trustees. Ms. Houlné contested the action and the following March she and the newly constituted Board entered into mediation which resulted in her reinstatement in June 2014.

Services continued to be popular despite the many challenges the Library faced: thousands of visits were made to the Library during which 35,517 items were borrowed, 15,810 sessions were held on the public access computers and WiFi, and 174 programs were attended by a total of 4,280 people.

Each week hundreds of people visited, in person and online for a wide range of purposes as indicated above. Others used the Library's online services to find information, download eBooks and audiobooks, and take classes. The highly trained, professional staff assisted with everything from readers' advisory and reference help, to teaching people how to use technology, presenting programs, and more. The Library has always been about much more than books; it's a place where the community gathers for many reasons, and where information comes alive through learning and personal interactions. With so many programs, services, and resources available to the community, it's easy to see why the Library was so well used even while it was undergoing a challenging renovation.

Building and Renovation. In the summer of 2013, Library services were being provided out of a temporary location on the Square while the renovation work was being completed. Library staff enjoyed seeing many new patrons who visited the Library while doing errands downtown. In September renovation work wrapped-up and the staff began preparations for the move back.

Library services continued in the temporary location through the third week of October at which point the Library was closed for a week to allow the move out of the temporary space, as well as the unpacking of several trailers worth of items that had been in storage. The completion of the renovation and the move back into the Library building was a huge undertaking made possible with the assistance of Municipal Manager, Chip Stearns, who oversaw the renovation work; the Highway Department, who anchored shelves, transported furniture and unpacked trucks; and a group of volunteers who assisted the staff in re-shelving all of the materials. The Library staff is extremely grateful for the help received during all stages of the renovation project.

In the absence of the director, the Youth Services Librarian, Samantha Maskell, and the Reference and Historical Collections Librarian, Emily Zervas, stepped in to lead the staff. Then, as a team, they were able to successfully bring to completion the daunting task of moving back into the renovated Library. On November 1, 2013 the Library re-opened in the historic 1909 Carnegie building. Through the winter the staff worked to settle back in and the public returned to enjoy the beautiful, healthy, clean, energy-efficient, and handicap accessible building.

On May 8, 2014 the Library held a three-day Grand Reopening Celebration with programs, events and activities to mark the completion of the renovation project. Library staff and trustees, *Friends of the Library*, and community members filled the building during the ribbon cutting. The successful completion of the renovation ensured that this architectural treasure is preserved for the community to enjoy for decades to come.



State Librarian Marti Reid, Regional Librarian Amy Howlett & Library Board Vice-Chair Carolyn Frisa cut the ribbon at the Grand Re-opening Celebration held last May. (Photo by Allegra Maskell)

Technology. The Library was able to provide a high-speed fiber optic connection due to the federally funded Vermont FiberConnect grant. Many people visited for the purpose of accessing this high-speed Internet via the computers or wireless network. This public technology was used for educational activities such as homework and college classes, employment needs such as applying for jobs and filing for unemployment, emailing family and friends, and building and maintaining social networks. The Internet and reference databases were heavily used for research to access information of all kinds, including genealogy, health, and medical needs. Many patrons relied on the librarians for assistance with technology, and for help locating information and resources. All of this indicates how much the community depends on the Library's ability to sustain the quality technology services that help to provide opportunities for everyone.

Programming. Disruptions caused by the renovation meant that fewer programs were offered over the summer and fall, and the Library relied heavily on collaboration with outside groups. The Youth Department's Summer Reading Program, "Dig into Reading," took place almost entirely outside of the Library. Storytimes were held in various locations in Saxtons River and Bellows Falls, such as Parks Place and area childcare providers. Family programs were held at the Recreation Center and the Middle School, and teen programs were held at the Middle School and in the temporary Library space after hours. The Youth Dept also launched "Little Lit" in partnership with the Windham Northeast Supervisory Union Early Education Services with grant support from the VT Department of Library's Early Literacy Initiative. "Little Lit" provides early literacy training and materials to parents and caregivers with children through age five.

Once the Library was re-established in the renovated building, two new rooms became available for use: the Youth Program Room adjacent to the Youth Department, and the Meeting Room on the top floor which can accommodate many more people. These rooms were put to use right away for a diverse range of programming. The Library partnered with the Greater Falls Prevention Coalition to provide a film screening and discussion forum around the topics of bullying and substance abuse. Other popular programs included a "History of the Guitar in America," "Miriam Foster's Boston & Maine Railroad," nature programs, writing workshops, a monthly genealogy program, a monthly reading program, and a weekly chess group. The Youth Department offered winter-into-spring programs, which included regular storytimes for babies and preschoolers, family programs, afterschool programs for middle schoolers, and programs for teens.

Community Support. The *Friends of the Library*, a non-profit organization whose members work to enhance Library services by providing funding and volunteers, sold historic calendars, note cards and book bags, and held fundraising activities, including holding a raffle at the Holiday Open House, holding the May plant sale, and helping with the Library's Annual Spring Book Sale. The *Friends'* donations helped to fund programs, book carts and tables. They also matched a generous donation from *Village Square Booksellers* to purchase new chairs for the renovated meeting rooms. Thanks to the efforts and generosity of the *Friends*, staff, donors, and the many volunteers who tirelessly offered their services during the long renovation, the Library successfully served the community throughout the year.

In Fiscal Year 2015 the Library will continue to welcome all and to find new ways to serve the community. Please stop by to visit the Library, and visit the Library's Facebook page and website at www.rockinghamlibrary.org, where you can sign up for the Library's newsletter.

Céline Houlné, Director



Library as seen from Fall Mountain, New Hampshire (Photo by Doug MacPhee)

Address:

65 Westminster Street, Bellows Falls, VT 05101

Phone: 802-463-4270

Hours Open:

Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday 10-7

Thursday & Friday 10-5:30,

Saturday 10-2

FISCAL YEAR 2014 STATISTICS

Catalogued Collections

Books	39,182
Magazines & Newspaper Subscriptions	75
Audio & Visual Items	3,369
Online AV – Listen Up VT	17,717
Online Databases	61

Services

Hours open annually	2,346
Number of Library visits	32,130
Number of Library card holders	4,520
Total items checked out	48,598
Inter-Library Loans with other libraries	1,141
Number of hours volunteered in Library	2,193
Number of adult programs	53
Attendance at adult programs	863
Number of children and teen programs	121
Attendance at children and teen programs	3,417
Number of <i>weekly</i> uses of computers / WiFi	310
Number of <i>weekly</i> reference transactions	429
Number of <i>weekly</i> remote uses of website	1,689