

Director's Report

March 2009

ADMINISTRATION

March was a busy month.

Council Tree Library

On Friday, March 27, The City of Fort Collins closed with Bayer Properties on the Council Tree Library. Immediately following, the District closed with the City on the property, transferring ownership of the Council Tree Library to the Poudre River Public Library District.

That evening the Library Trust's fundraising preview event, hastily rescheduled from the previous evening due to a late season snowstorm, had 125 in attendance. The Trust presented a special award to Austin's Grill for their generous hosting of library storytimes at their Harmony Road location for the past five years.

The next morning, Saturday March 28, the Council Tree Library opened to the public. Grand Opening ceremonies included speeches by Mary Atchison, Melissa Moran with Bayer Properties, Larimer County Commissioner Kathay Rennels, and Fort Collins Mayor Doug Hutchinson. Opening day events included a performance by CSU's Ram Nation Drummers, storytelling, crafts, and tours, and an evening guitar concert by Jeff Wahl.

The opening day was a success. 3,600 visitors checked out nearly 10,000 items, approximately 16% of the library's collections. Sunday saw over 1,100 visitors and another 3,100 items checked out. All told, opening weekend saw 4,800 visitors, 334 new library accounts, and over 13,000 items, or approximately 21% of the collection, checked out.

We are pleased that the library materials are circulating so well immediately. Given the focus of Council Tree's collections on multiple copies of the most sought-after, useful and current materials, we anticipate that Council Tree's "float rate" (percentage of the collection checked out) will approach 40% or even 50% over time. A high float rate in a library emphasizing multiple copies indicates a healthy balance between the materials in the hands and the homes of our residents and the materials on the shelves available for check out. Our approach with Council Tree is experimental, new to the District (although very successful in other library systems), and we will learn as we progress through the year what refinements we need to make to provide the best services to our Council Tree customers.

The same weekend as the Council Tree grand opening, the Friends of the Library made over \$8,000, the most ever for their annual March book sale at Harmony.

Community engagement

On March 4, Currie Meyer and Millie Kridler, Lead Librarian and Children's Librarian for Council Tree, attended a meeting of Timnath's town council. They introduced themselves, discussed the Council Tree opening, and invited council members and staff to attend the grand opening.

Subsequently, Mary Atchison and I met with Becky Davidson, Timnath's Town Manager, on March 23. We shared ways the District is serving Timnath's residents currently and how we are expanding area services with the addition of Council Tree. We discussed recent outreach efforts, our community survey, our facilities master plan, and ways we can reach Timnath residents most effectively. Ms. Davidson expressed her and Mayor Benson's desire to have a joint work session of District Trustees and Timnath's Council in the near future, and established a possible date of Wednesday, May 13.

On March 13, Mary Atchison and I presented to the Local Legislative Affairs Committee (LLAC) of the Fort Collins Area Chamber of Commerce. We fielded questions on a wide range of topics, including our budget, recent planning efforts, and how the District is employing new technologies such as RFID and downloadable audio books to improve efficiency and serve our residents better.

On March 24 Trustees and staff attended a work session with the Fort Collins City Council. Topics discussed included our facilities plan, our strategic plan, our emphasis on fostering early literacy, and a continuation of the capital expansion fee the City currently collects for library facilities. Council members appeared generally supportive of continuing the fee provided that similar fees were implemented on a more regional scale throughout the District. Council members discussed the importance of including Timnath in discussions of impact fees, and City Manager Darin Atteberry offered to help facilitate conversations about potential fees with Timnath. We submitted our 2009 Annual Report to the City Council as well.

On March 30 Trustees and staff attended a work session with the Larimer County Board of County Commissioners. Lu Benke described the District's sustained efforts to gather information about County residents, and current and potential service options throughout the District. Jeff Barnes presented on the District's budget, planning efforts, and on impact fees. Commissioners asked how much of our current budget is devoted to serving residents outside of Fort Collins and the City's Growth Management Area. District staff agreed to work toward an estimate of that number. Commissioners supported further research and discussion about establishing a County impact fee for the District, again contingent on a broad regional approach involving Fort Collins and Timnath. We submitted our 2008 Annual Report to the Commissioners as well.

Two Soapbox columns appeared in the Coloradoan in March. One regarded our new District name, and the other, which ran on March 24, was a thank-you to our residents, the City of Fort Collins, and Bayer Properties for making Council Tree Library a reality.

COMMUNICATIONS OFFICE

The Communications Office finalized the following projects:

- Coordinated all aspects of Council Tree Grand Opening
- Coordinated all aspects of Trust VIP Event
- Created March programming calendar media and e-mail releases
- Sent out 20 press releases and made 14 media follow up calls
- Updated website weekly
- Met with new Council Tree employees to go over marketing implementation and Strategic Plan, grand opening speaking points
- Wrote March District Employees News Update
- Helped the Friends with promotion of their March 27-29 Book Sale

- Set up CT photo shoots with 4 different photographers
- Produced shelf end-panel displays for CT
- Finalizing Main Library “refresh”
- Worked with City, County & Bayer to coordinate grand opening speeches
- Produced press packet for grand opening and volunteer docents
- Produced 2008 Annual Report
- Finalized launch strategy and activities associated with the name change. Working on disseminating the new logo and prioritizing placement efforts, such as nametags, forms, swag, etc.
- Produced advertising for MyCitySafari.com, “The Map”, Rocky Mountain Parent

The following projects have been started:

- Promotion for LSTA grant “Book Express”
- Programming coordinated effort for 2009 Summer Reading Program
- 2009 All –staff meeting coordination
- Coordinating PFR competencies calendar for dissemination
- Emergency procedures and Crisis communication guidelines
- Planning for National Library Week – April 12-18
- Chamber Business Before Hours Event at Council Tree – April 14, 7:30-9 am

Naming/Branding efforts update:

- Worked with ToolBox on new business cards and letterhead
- Worked with ToolBox, Rocket Jones and SA on website redesign
- ToolBox contract should be finished after April

CHILDREN’S SERVICES

Council Tree preparations continued this past month with more training from Children’s Services staff, troubleshooting of furniture problems in the new Children’s area, planning for outdoor programs in the Council Tree parking lot, planning for soft openings, visiting of schools in the southeast and reaching out to children in need right next door to Council Tree. Irene Romsa, Bilingual Library Assistant was able to secure a new site at Harmony Road Mobile Home Park just west of Council Tree where the Storycorner outreach storytelling program will occur every other week. Word is back that the fire code capacity in the “Garage” at Council Tree has been set at 130 allowing Programming Librarians to figure out the best type of events for the new library. Finally, plans to say goodbye to Austin’s Grill across the road from Council Tree where the Southeast Family Storytime has been held for the last three years are underway. The final storytime will be held there on Friday, March 27 with several from Children’s Services staff planning to show their appreciation to the restaurant by enjoying lunch there after storytime. It will also feel very fitting to honor Austin’s Grill at the Library Trust function the evening of March 26 when the Trust recognizes the local restaurant’s contribution to the community with a plaque and awards ceremony.

Remember the BookExpress pilot project? It starts next month! This LSTA (Library Services and Technology Act) grant which will mail books to children living in the remote northwest area of our district is gearing up with the book catalog being prepared by Graphics Coordinator Cydney Clink using

cover illustrations from the books Collection Development Librarian Marian Sawyer ordered. Internet postage services are being purchased, an empty office upstairs is being prepped as the location, Peggy Shaughnessy is creating a web presence, and the participation by the remote schools is being clarified. Another aspect moving forward is the working with Red Feather Lakes Community Library to see if they would like to contract for the extension of the BookExpress program to the 30-50 children in their district. Project Director Lu Benke and Red Feather Lakes Library Director Sarah Meyers see this as an opportunity to explore how neighboring library districts can cooperate to the benefit of both.

On the services to outlying areas front, Lu Benke attended County Commissioner Steve Johnson’s meeting with citizens that was held at Vern’s Place in LaPorte. Around sixteen county residents attended this morning meeting, sharing their concerns and getting updates on county issues from Commissioner Johnson. Lu shared at the beginning of the meeting the Library District’s desire to hear about issues that concerned its customers and gathered several email addresses of those willing to serve as contacts for the LaPorte area. Several meeting attendees stayed after the meeting to share ideas and questions with Lu. Lu is planning on attending several of these meetings as they occur in or near our Library District but outside the City. Lu also contributed GIS information and a listing of different options for library services to outlying areas to the Facilities Plan that is underway.

Wonderful news from Barbara Crandall, Volunteer and Homebound Service Coordinator comes in the form of 2008 statistics on volunteer participation.

	<u>2005</u>	<u>2006</u>	<u>2007</u>	<u>2008</u>
Volunteer Hours:	15,553	13,765	13,778	17,060
Number of Volunteers:	700	600	660	789
FTEs:	7.5	6.6	6.6	8.2

Volunteers are playing an important role in preparing for the opening of Council Tree, helping with everything from putting books on the shelves, to preparing giveaways for the Grand Opening, to helping at the opening events themselves.

When Council Tree opens, storytime schedules have to change to make room for the additional storytimes. Staff have taken a proactive approach to inform our customers. Flyers, word-of-mouth sharing, and special visits from Curious George following storytime have provided positive reminders to parents that Council Tree Library will be opening soon what additional storytime options they will have available.

The District offered four all-ages concerts during Spring Break. The featured performer was vocalist/guitarist Katherine Dines. We had maximum-capacity crowds at three of the four programs and the Coloradoan ran two photos from the event.

We are glad of our participation in the area-wide Spring Break Passport program with 12 other organizations such as the Museum and the Discovery Center which was also held during Spring Break. Children have been able to pick up a passport at either library, get it stamped, and drop off their "traveler's information" slips to enter prize drawings.

CIRCULATION SERVICES

Things have been popping in Circ/Shelving/ILL-Prospector this past month! It is not unusual for Prospector to receive 27 crates of material being loaned to our patrons at least once a week. Kim Doran's "Question of the Month" for staff had an extra credit question about the number of crates received in the month and how much they weighed, and the answers were: 297 crates received weighing in at approximately 50 lbs each for a total weight of approximately 27,050 lbs! Needless to say, Nancy & Lori work hard to keep up and are kept very busy.

In March we started working with staff to return Prospector materials in a more efficient manner by separating the "power" users (Denver Public Library, Jeffco & Arapahoe Library District) into separate crates. This is working really well and Lori appreciates not having to handle all those things a second time.

Everyone has been working really hard to get supplies and forms ready for Council Tree (CT). Crystal and Judi went to CT one day to program the cash register and get a list of all the Circulation forms they thought they might need. On the 25th a pallet of courier crates, forms, and newly received library cards made its way to CT. Staff at both the Main and Harmony Libraries have been busy training the newly hired hourly crew for CT and the Lead Material Handlers have been trained at Main by Carol Hanlon.

Several months ago we "silently" released Courtesy Notices. These notices go out the day before items are due and only go to those patrons with email addresses in their registration records. The response thus far has been very positive. Some of our patrons are worried that this will cut into the fines we receive and then they chuckle!

In checking stats for several curious member of the Library Management Team, we discovered that we are up 11% over this same time frame last year. Historically, we will see an annual increase of 4%-6%, so we are off to a great start this year. Then of course we needed to look at the self-check stats for the first couple of months in 2009. Both libraries are steady at 70%; this reflects a 14% increase for Main and a 17% increase for Harmony over this same time last year! So far 2009 is off to an explosive start!

REFERENCE AND TECHNICAL SERVICES

With Council Tree opening on the 28th, staff from all departments has been working to get the materials on the shelves. Selectors have submitted their last orders on the Opening Day Collection accounts. Volunteers and staff from Reference, Children's and Circulation helped Technical Services staff push out a big order of media and Juvenile non-fiction materials. The magazine collection was delivered to Council Tree on March 23rd. Staff is having some mixed feelings, a little relief to have the project coming to an end; excitement for the library to open; and a little sadness that the project is ending.

The Main Refresh project continues with chairs being reupholstered. Most chairs being reupholstered will be seen downstairs. Upstairs will be reupholstering a few chairs in bad shape and cleaning others. Shelving will be moving around upstairs to reallocate space to different collections; open up site lines to windows; and allow staff to market the collection more. We will continue to make little improvements as time and budget allow.

Parking has always been a challenge around the Main Library. It is becoming more challenging by the day. Library and Museum staff have noticed that many downtown employees and carpool vans are parking around Library Park and walking to work. Parking between the Museum and Library has become a problem. People are starting to park on the grass, double-park and block the driveway. Museum and Library management have established guidelines for using the back parking lot. The six spots facing the Museum will be for Museum staff and volunteers. The four spots facing the shed and two spots by the sidewalk will be for Library staff and volunteers. Library staff and volunteers may park in the back after 4 pm Monday through Friday; with supervisor permission; for durations under an hour and on the weekends. LMT is in the information gathering stage in finding other alternatives to our parking challenge such as, rewards for using alternative transportation, changing time limits, and/or leasing space.

Another challenge we have been facing this spring is the increase in incident reports at the Main Library. LMT has decided to institute extended security coverage by Fleming Security. Coverage will be from 11am to ½ hour after closing, Monday through Saturday and 1-5:30pm on Sunday. The guards will be in our zone which includes the library building and park. The extended coverage will continue at least until the end of the year.

HARMONY & TEEN SERVICES

Harmony

The West harmony Road construction project, while inconvenient for customers, has seemed to have little effect generally on library business. A major exception was the closure of the entire FRCC-Larimer Campus, including Harmony Library, on Monday March 30. Both Campus and Library administration expressed our displeasure at the closure, and the very short notice we received about the work necessitating the closure on a water pipe.

Teen Services

Staff hosted the IRS meeting at the Harmony Library from 11-1:30. 26 teens attended this meeting. Sue-Ellen Jones talked with the teens about reviewing books for School Library Journal and that the money earned by doing this would likely go into a special fund for teen programming. They were enthusiastic about doing this since they are already reviewing so many new books. Teens will be attending the Teen Literature conference in Denver on Saturday, April 4th. Billie Higgins also attended the meeting and got 8-9 teens to volunteer for the Friends of the Library winter book sale. The meeting concluded with book sharing.

Sue-Ellen Jones hosted the Mother-Daughter book discussion on *Shabanu* on Thursday, March 12th. Eleven people attended and enjoyed French silk pie and cheesecake. Even though the group was small, the teens and their mothers really liked this book and responded very thoughtfully to many of the issues in this book.

Sue-Ellen conducted a 2-hour workshop on Readers' Advisory training at the Harmony Library on Tuesday, March 10th, for approximately 17 new Council Tree staff members. She showed them how to "beef up" their skills in starting a conversation with library customers about what they like to read and what they would like read next.

There is an upcoming poetry slam on April 18th at Harmony.