

Director's Report

April 2009

ADMINISTRATION

As April draws to a close, the Council Tree Library approaches the one month mark of being open to the public. Business is impressive. Story time attendance is strong. Door count averages over 600 visitors a day at Council Tree, and on some Saturdays is over 1,000, exceeding Harmony and Main. More importantly the overall door count for all three libraries is almost 3,000 visits a day. As of April 24, Council Tree staff had answered over 2,100 informational, directional and computer questions for customers of all ages for the month thus far. The "roving" model of service at Council Tree, where staff meet and assist customers primarily on the floor, seems to be working well and meeting the needs and expectations of Council Tree users. I will review Council Tree's circulation statistics during the Board meeting.

As it was in March, the weather was a major player in April at the library, as a number of events had to be canceled or postponed. Our volunteer recognition brunch, the Asian/Pacific American Fest, and a number of other events were canceled.

Despite the occasionally uncooperative weather through the month we were able to host a "Chamber Business Before Hours" event in cooperation with the Chamber of Commerce at Council Tree Library on the 14th. Anne MacDonald, our Business Librarian, provided an overview of the impressive array of business resources the District makes available. An additional Chamber event is scheduled at the Main Library in June.

An exciting event this month is the launch of the BookExpress for Kids pilot project. Lu Benke is coordinating the project. BookExpress is our first foray into experimenting with books by mail. I anticipate that we will gather much valuable information during this partially grant-funded pilot as we provide a unique service to children in the northwest area of the District. Please read more about the project in the Children's Services report below.

Influenza and Planning

With the sudden, widespread outbreak of an infectious and dangerous form of influenza, the District is closely monitoring events, communicating with the City of Fort Collins, Larimer County, Poudre School District, and other libraries, and working to develop a basic response plan. While the flu does not present an immediate risk to our operations, we need to be prepared. We are monitoring communications from Larimer County's Health and Environment Department, reviewing the pandemic influenza web site the County maintains, and using the online planning resources of the Larimer County Pandemic Influenza Planning Partnership as we develop a basic response plan.

Public Libraries and the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009

With the recent passage of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, (ARRA), there is much discussion about opportunities for public libraries to play a role in reinvigorating their communities through available funding. I recently heard Colorado's State Librarian, Gene Hainer, discuss the status of the process. In short, there seem to be many more questions than answers at this point regarding the processes for learning about what funds are available for libraries and how libraries will apply for available funds. Even the basic mechanisms of distribution are not yet determined. However, there is an ALA web site, www.ala.org/knowyourstimulus, which is serving as a clearinghouse for libraries on the most current information available. I am including the excerpt below to provide a general idea of the types and amounts of funding. Staff will monitor developments and determine appropriate opportunities.

What librarians should know about ARRA

We have compiled a list of the programs that libraries can benefit from included in the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act. More information will be posted on each section as it becomes available.

An additional \$50 million for the National Endowments for the Arts

\$13 billion for Title I

\$650 million for Enhancing Education Through Technology

\$7.2 billion for Broadband

\$53.6 billion for the State Fiscal Stabilization Fund

An additional \$120 million for the Senior Community Service Employment Program

An additional \$130 million for the Rural Community Facilities Program

\$4.24 billion & \$1.33 billion for Military Libraries

Sample Progress Reports on our Strategic Plan

One of the initiatives identified in the Organizational Competencies section of our current, three year strategic plan is Initiative 8.2: "By May 31, 2009, develop methodology to regularly update the Board of Trustees on progress on all objectives included in the strategic plan. "

To that end, I am including two sample reports in your packet. One is a status report of progress on the twelve Organizational Competencies identified in the plan. The second is a potential monthly status update, providing a summary of recent and upcoming District activities in support of the seven broad Service Responses identified in the plan. It is not intended to be a comprehensive summary of monthly activities but rather to provide a snapshot of how our major efforts align with our Service Responses.

If the Board is amenable I plan to provide a detailed, mid-year Strategic Plan report at the July meeting. This report would include statistics showing progress on the metrics identified in the plan to gauge our success.

COMMUNICATIONS OFFICE

The Communications Office finalized the following projects:

- Created final reports on Trust Event and coordinated thank you's and follow-ups
- Created April programming calendar media and e-mail releases
- Sent out 14 press releases and made 10 media follow-up calls
- Produced emergency closure notices for cancellations of activities due to snow
- Updated website weekly
- Wrote April District Employees News Update
- Finalizing Main Library "refresh"
- Produced advertising and name change for Parent Pages, Qwest Dex, Resort Maps, etc.
- Promotion for LSTA grant "Book Express"
- Programming coordinated effort for 2009 Summer Reading Program
- National Library Week – April 12-18, promotion, food & fun
- Council Tree, BOT and other website updates
- Met with CAL Marketing Committee members for quarterly meeting
- Chamber Before Hours event

The following projects have been started:

- Communications portions of Strategic Plan
- 2009 All-staff meeting coordination
- Coordinating PFR competencies calendar for dissemination
- Emergency procedures and Crisis communication guidelines
- Chamber Business Red Carpet Event, Main Library – June 30, 9 a.m.
- Partnership & Sponsorship negotiations
- Outreach schedule of summer events
- Annie Walk activities
- Investigation of social networking tools for the web as part of the Communications and Branding efforts
- Investigation and research for a viral marketing campaign next year

Naming/Branding efforts update:

- Finalizing ToolBox contract of deliverables. Additional efforts for the year will be prioritized and expensed out to see if they fit into the budget.
- 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. Initializing next phase of branding efforts for internal and external usage.

CHILDREN'S SERVICES

The Grand Opening of Council Tree Library took center stage this past month keeping a lot of staff, volunteers, and customers occupied. Over one hundred volunteers joined staff in helping to make all the Grand Opening events successful. About two dozen former Library Pals, volunteers from Grades 5-9, assisted with opening day fanfare. They helped younger children complete crafts, distributed bottles of bubbles, and dressed up in the ever-popular library mascot costumes as well as in book character costumes including Curious George and Mouse from If You Give a Mouse a Cookie. Almost seventy adult volunteers were recruited by Special Services Coordinator Barbara

Crandall to help out with the putting of books on the shelves and work as tour guides and helpers at the Library Trust event and Opening Day festivities.

After the grand opening, customers with young children continue to come back to visit, explore the Play & Learn Space, check out materials and attend storytimes-in great numbers! A look at the uncrowded picture book shelves at Council Tree clearly shows that we were right when we predicted young families would love their new library. Now we focus on adding materials to continue meeting the demand at Council Tree.

Other tweaking to Council Tree can be found in the Play & Learn Space where Burgeon Group is checking in regularly to find out how our unique installation is working for us. Already, they have shipped additional materials and sent out staff to install them so that the few problems that arose with keeping children from climbing on it unsafely was addressed in child-friendly, easy-on-staff ways. (Did you know they actually make a "tummy-poker" to discourage unsafe climbing on top of the structure?) Meanwhile, kids, parents-even teens-are continuing to explore and enjoy the many levels of literacy interactives in the Children's area.

There has been a learning curve as staff, children, parents, and caregivers get used to the new building, schedule, and overall change in our program offerings. Large, record-setting crowds have been attending storytimes at our new branch. Over the last four weeks, attendance at Peek-A-Boo Times has averaged 28 people; 2s & 3s Storytime averaged 55 people, and 4 & Up Storytime has averaged 32 people. In fact, the first two days of storytimes at Council Tree had over two hundred in attendance each day!

Thanks to the Friends' generosity, the festivities and excitement of the opening of the new branch will be able to continue during May and early June. The funding they provide will allow for six weeks of special storytimes at Council Tree only. This is during the time of year when staff usually cancel storytimes because of heavy planning and promoting of the Summer Reading Program. This special program called "Stories with Fisher" will include the usual storytime fun and also a surprise visit from Fisher, Council Tree's raccoon mascot. "Peek-A-Boo Time" will also be offered for the birth through age two group in this six-week period. The continuation of these programs should help patrons adjust to Council Tree and keep the enthusiasm going for the new branch.

The monthly parenting series hit a snag with the March "Boredom Busters: Inexpensive Things to Do in the Fort Collins Area" program having to be rescheduled for May due to a snowstorm. In fact, the weather-induced cancellations/reschedulings of several different programs kept things very hectic, especially for Barbara Crandall who quickly had to let volunteers know that they were not needed (or needed to be rescheduled) for at least four different events, including, unfortunately, the annual Volunteer Appreciation Brunch which was scheduled for Saturday, April 18. Barbara and staff are now brainstorming and evaluating different alternatives for showing our 2008 volunteers our appreciation.

Jean Gullikson attended the CLiC Spring Workshops in Greeley and the Mountain Plains Library Association Annual Conference in Wichita this past month. Sessions attended

included safety and security in libraries, computer tips and shortcuts, and trends in youth services with plenty of good information she will be sharing with staff.

After Council Tree opened, it was back to the heavy-duty planning of the Summer Reading Program, the launching of the BookExpress for Kids grant, further addressing of the needs of the outlying areas and other matters that have been stacking up waiting for our attention. Changes to this year's Summer Reading Program such as new SRP web pages, new online registration, recruiting new volunteers to help with Summer Reading Programs for all three age groups at all three locations, and a new blogging option for children (not to mention the addition of a new location in every stage of the planning) have all staff members working hard to get everything ready.

April included the launching of the BookExpress for Kids pilot project of sending books by mail to children in the more remote northwest areas of district. Lu Benke, Project Coordinator, visited Cache La Poudre, Stove Prairie and Livermore Elementary School staff meetings to share the specifics of the program and get buy-in from the teachers, initiated and coordinated new library card drives at each school, and worked with Systems' Peggy Shaughnessy to create the BookExpress web presence. Cydney Clink created over 500 eye-catching, full-color catalogs full of over 200 titles carefully selected for their popularity and appeal by Children's Collection Development Librarian Marian Sawyer. Lu is still in the process of distributing the catalogs to the students in the involved schools, but we have already started receiving requests and sending out the books. Library Assistant Erin Senseman is working out the kinks in the book request and mailing process so that shortly it can be turned over to a special crew of Circulation Staff. This project will teach a lot about needs of our outlying customers and the possibilities of sending materials by mail.

Lu also worked further on reaching out to the outlying areas this past month, starting with a PowerPoint presentation to the Larimer County Commissioners and followed by working to get maps from the GIS department of the City to display the legal boundaries of our district and setting up appearances at Commissioner Kathay Rennel's meetings with the public and at a Livermore Craft Fair.

CIRCULATION SERVICES

I don't know what folks were thinking when they said things would calm down once Council Tree (CT) was open! Circulation is working on sorting and smoothing out the various changes necessary with the courier to ensure that materials get where they are going, not to mention the ongoing training for staff in all three buildings to get materials in the proper crates and off to the right library. Kim Doran has been working with CT to answer questions and adjust workflow and with Main and Harmony staff on the additional crates and space issues. All in all things are running pretty smoothly and bumps and hiccups are less noticeable as time passes.

As of Wednesday morning, April 22, we have e-commerce on self-checks district wide. Staff is excited to work with patrons on this new function. Given the numbers of folks

that have been using the online payment option and the self-checks for fines at CT, Main and Harmony should be well received and used -- especially with Circ staff working the self-checks wearing their new name tags and "Ask Me" buttons! Circulation supervisors are anxiously awaiting the arrival of a brand new folder/sealer. After 5 years our original machine has given up the ghost and all but died. Supervisors have been feeding the daily batch of notices in the old machine three at a time, and with as many as 200 notices on some days it is no picnic. The new folder/sealer promises to be faster and quieter...we shall see about that!

The response to the new library cards, especially the key fob cards, has been unbelievable!

Nancy and ILL/Prospector are on the "green" patrol once again. Nancy has started sending out invoices to borrowing libraries via email whenever possible. Recently, she received a request for a dissertation that was some 200 pages long and would have cost the patron \$20 to have the loaning library make a copy for us. The loaning library was able to provide us with a link to the PDF file that the patron would be able to access for 2 weeks. The patron was extremely appreciative of the effort as this was her grandfather's dissertation and no one in the family has a copy.

Last but not least, shelvers have been working with Adult Services at Main to relocate collections to better facilitate patrons and staff. That's it from Circ/Shelving/ILL-Prospector for the month of April!

REFERENCE AND TECHNICAL SERVICES

The shelf rearranging on the second floor has been completed. By condensing the newspaper and magazine collection, we were able to make more room for the overflowing Spanish collection. It also allowed us to lower a range of shelving to open up the view to the windows. The media, fiction and reference shelves have been rearranged and removed to create wider aisles to better handle the increase in customer traffic. Shelving in the Business Reference and Teen areas were exchanged to allow for more collection space in the Teen area. It also opened up the line of sight to windows. We hope these little changes will help create a more open and inviting atmosphere.

The Refresh project is moving outside this spring. The Parks department is working hard to refresh the grass with extra seed. It is a challenging task because of all the activity in the park. To help handle the increase in bike traffic and clean up the outside entry way, the juniper bushes in the front will be replaced with a bike parking lot. To encourage safe use by bicyclists using the diagonal sidewalk that runs through the park, the District and City are coordinating changes to signage.

Due to the April 17 snow storm, we had to cancel the Asian Cultural Fest and the History Comes Alive program about Enos Mills. The Enos Mills program has been rescheduled to be part of the Summer Reading Program. In May, a series with 3 programs will present ideas on how to vacation locally and economically. Planning for the Summer Reading Program is in full swing. It is going to be a fun and exciting summer.

SYSTEMS ADMINISTRATION

Council Tree Library

Our multi-year project to design and implement all technology for the new Council Tree Library is complete, save a few minor odds and ends. Technology systems are robust, and even handled the crushing opening day crowds without a hiccup. 'Nuff said!

My hat is in my hand in reverence to the SA staff who made this happen. Carol Gyger, Ling Zhao, and Chris Bauman – you have again set the bar high for speed, accuracy and effectiveness!

Web Freshening Project

Equal in intensity to the Council Tree Project is the web freshening project. With very little time, as well as an unforgiving deadline, Peggy successfully translated the graphic elements from Toolbox Creative into an html (web) environment. Nice job, Peggy! Doing so is no small feat – although a web page looks much like a printed page at first glance, they are really two completely different things, and require great care to make sure the web environment not only looks good, but is fully functional and as accessible to as wide of a range of users as possible.

Other than the new look, one of the most exciting aspects of this project was creating one “front door” for our patrons on the World Wide Web, instead of the two doors we had in the past. This single change made things easier for staff and patrons who use our web resources outside of our buildings.

As with all new designs, we will receive feedback and continue to refine it and will work with Paula on a follow-up effort to test its usability with real people.

Web Site Project and Technology Planning

The marketing makeover of website is complete and successful, and will provide for our immediate web needs as we take some time to consider a number of factors that would go into an overhaul of our web structure. In the meantime, we will continue to refine the sites, and experiment with different methods of gathering statistics to help make our web site the best it can be without any major changes for a while.

It's key to consider the web site within the context of our overall technology effort – the web is one piece of what we do with our technology resources.

We have added a technology plan to our Planning for Results tasks list, with the aim of producing a written plan by the end of 2009. This timing will allow for adequate input from all stakeholders, including our incoming Executive Director.

Domain Change

The most visible part of the web project was the new look, but we also have a new domain as well – <http://poudrelibraries.org>. This is a project Carson kicked off with City

MIS partners late last year, and the cut-over was performed to coincide with the new web look.

The project involved a whole new server environment for our pages that allowed us the freedom to create the new look and feel for the web, as well as some geeky routing changes to mount the new domain, and automatic "redirects" from our old site to let everyone know about our new web address.

E-commerce

Self-check has been a smashing success at Council Tree – by design we wanted most folks to use self-service options at CT and to help them have a more powerful experience we debuted e-commerce at the stations. With Lynda reporting self-check percentages in the mid-90s, we scored!

In late April, SA upgraded self-checks at Harmony and Main with credit card readers and the e-commerce module. It's our shared expectation that these additions will increase the use of self-checks across the District.

Email Project

Directly on the heels of the web freshening project is our project to change the domain name for our email addresses to user@poudrelibraries.org. The process is designed to have minimal impact to staff, but it does require some time – each account must be manually moved in a process that takes 15-30 minutes each. With about 130 accounts to move, it will take some time to fully move folks over.

One benefit to our approach is that all library staff can now receive email at their new address – even if their account is not moved over yet! Since the user name before the "@" symbol will not change, reaching library staff at their new address is as simple as changing "fcgov.com:" to "poudrelibraries.org" and allows us to proceed with things like new business cards while the transfer process is in play.

A final schedule hasn't been completed as of the writing of this report, but we expect it to wrap up by the end of May.

Patron Database Cleanup

This may sound a bit boring, but it's an important project vital to making good decisions. To have the best understanding of our patron data, we need to give it a "scrub" once in a while. Small variances in the way that it's collected have left us with a lot of manual work in the past, and even with the manual work it was not always as clean as we wanted it to be.

Our project in this area, spearheaded by Carol Gyger, uses a vendor who performs a batch-process to make address data conforms to US Postal service standards. This scrub, which we plan to perform frequently (perhaps as often as monthly) will help us create the most accurate GIS maps possible. We have a growing trend of using GIS, and this "behind the scenes" project will ensure that the data we use to make important institutional decisions is the most accurate possible.

State ILS Committee

Carson has been invited to serve on a state-wide committee (formed by the Colorado State Library) investigating options for what is arguably the most important electronic resource for all libraries – the Integrated Library System, or ILS. As well as being an “electric card catalog” the ILS also helps us acquire and catalog materials, access electronic databases, manage patron accounts, and more. We call ours Dalva, our vendor is Ill, and we’re currently quite happy with it. Across library land, however, that is not universally the case. Mergers and acquisitions in the ILS market, combined with the rise of open-source options have many libraries in the “wanderlust” stage – looking for a ILS that gives the library more control over how well this important resource works, what it costs, and how well it plays with others.

Despite our current happiness with Ill, our involvement in the committee is important to help form local options in case we find ourselves in a situation where our ILS vendor is not working well for us. Along the way, it's a golden opportunity to influence a direction nationally in this area – one that is a win-win-win for libraries, vendors and open source advocates alike by helping create a standards-based approach to the ILS paradigm.

This effort is moving fast – we're likely to see an LSTA grant request this year for startup funds for this project, and there are at least two libraries in Colorado ready to take the first steps in this direction. As well, it's a bit complex to fully explain in the Director's Report – if anyone wants to know more, let's grab a cup of coffee together!

HARMONY & TEEN SERVICES

Harmony

There is much current and impending construction on and near the campus. Other than the Harmony improvement project, impacts on access to and operation of Harmony should be minimal.

Due to spring storms, the May 25th completion date for the West portion of Phase 1 of the road widening project has been extended until June 12. West Harmony will remain under construction in the section near the library until that date. Signs along the route are being updated and the new date is posted at www.fcgov.com/westharmony.

Progress on the new Science Building is progressing. FRCC staff, the architect and contractor continue to work on design, schedule, and budget.

The Longs Peak Student Center is being remodeled this summer. Work is tentatively scheduled for June 1 - August 16. Some days the café will not be available. The Student Center Conference rooms will not be available most of the summer. Due to popular demand and many requests to the City, a left-turn signal has been added to the new traffic signal into the campus drive at Shields. Staff and customers have commented very favorably on this new addition to the traffic signal.

The Secret Garden installation adjacent to Harmony Library has begun. The Natural Resources Department will maintain this garden as an ongoing educational project.

Teen Services

- Sue-Ellen supervised the *Slammin' @ Your Library: Teen Poetry Slam* at the Harmony Library. Sixty-two people attended this program *and there were lots of boys!* There were 18 readers. A CSU student working on her master's degree in English attended the poetry slam to observe. She was writing a paper on how poetry slams encouraged 21st century literacy. She interviewed several of the readers afterwards (they and their parents signed consent forms). She also interviewed staff.

Diane planned and prepared the programming for the slam, including recruiting and training IRS teens to play instrumental roles, getting prizes and other materials, handling publicity, etc. Unfortunately, she was not able to attend the actual program on April 18th, due to adverse weather. Sue-Ellen provided the refreshments, made last minute contacts with contestants, communicated with staff about the program, and ran the actual program on April 18th. Thanks to both Diane and Sue-Ellen for a successful event.

- Diane coordinated the voting for IRS's participation in the 2009 nomination process for YALSA's Teens' Top Ten/YA Galley project. The 15 groups from around the country (including IRS) all voted on their top choices from the list of about 100 titles to narrow the list to 25. This list of 25 is now posted on the YALSA web page for Teen Read Week so that librarians and teens nationwide can read and promote the books. Final online national voting for the "Top 10" books will be done in October from the YALSA web page, during Teen Read Week, as a result.

Teen Outreach

- Sue-Ellen did booktalks for two 6th grade classes at Moore Elementary for 43 students. She talked about the Summer Reading Program and told them about the Council Tree Library. She showed them the new library card and explained how they could get one. Both classes really love fantasy though they also seemed very interested in the mysteries discussed. Several students asked if they could learn how to book talk.
- Diane presented five booktalks to 7th grade Reading classes at Preston Middle School on April 6th.
- Diane presented four booktalks to groups of 6th, 7th, 8th, and 9th graders at Kinard Middle School on April 8th.
- Sue-Ellen did booktalks for three groups of 7th-9th graders at Leshar Junior High for 119 students. The Leshar media specialist, Jennifer Flippen, scheduled "booktalks and pizza" to celebrate National Library Week. This is the second year that we have done these. Again, fantasy books have a big appeal to many of these students but many of them were interested in the suspense and horror titles discussed.