

A photograph of a library interior. In the center, a wide staircase with light-colored steps and white balustrades leads upwards. The staircase is flanked by two large, white, fluted columns. To the left of the columns is a curved wooden service desk with a computer monitor. To the right is a long wall of wooden bookshelves filled with books. The floor is made of large, light-colored stone tiles. A large, ornate chandelier hangs from the ceiling. The background shows more of the library's interior, including more bookshelves and a bright area at the top of the stairs.

Restoration & Renewal

THE FERGUSON LIBRARY
ANNUAL REPORT 2009 – 2010

Message from the Chair

The 2009 – 2010 fiscal year was, without a doubt, an extremely demanding one. For the first time in recent memory, we were forced to contemplate layoffs to balance our operating budget. Because of significantly reduced city funding, the Library did not fill a vacant administrative position, offered a retirement incentive program and imposed various other savings. With that, we were able to achieve about half of what was needed. The remaining savings were made up of staff salary and benefit reductions, agreed to in part to save jobs. This gave the Board of Trustees an opportunity to forestall a reduction in public service hours at the branches and avoid the layoff of five full-time employees in order to close the budget gap. The book budget had already been underfunded over the past several years, and there was no room to make further cuts there. Salaries and hours were the only choice.

As the year progressed, and a new city administration took office, it quickly became clear that our problems were far from over. More cuts were on the horizon that would severely tax our ability to provide the library services needed by the community. Consequently, a significant amount of time was spent trying to determine how to cope with an overall 15% reduction in city funding for 2010 – 2011, and what other funding sources should be developed to offset the anticipated impact. While a dedicated staff tried to maintain a business as usual attitude, our Board of Trustees and management worked to find a resolution to an increasingly difficult fiscal situation. Although additional fundraising efforts may help, they are by no means the answer to the problem.

The Ferguson Library must be principally supported by public funding, because like education, health and public safety, it is a “public service.” This year, close to 900,000 people visited the Library, and we circulated more than 1,100,000 items. Ferguson librarians answered 184,000 reference questions, 221,000 people visited us remotely through our website, and 45,000 people attended programs. Despite such heavy use, libraries in neighboring communities enjoy far greater per capita government support than we do. This must change if a lasting solution to our funding is to be found.

It has indeed been a challenging and interesting year. Through it all, the Library has continued to serve the citizens of Stamford with distinction. Our highly skilled, professional staff has carried on through the uncertainty of cutbacks and potential layoffs without missing a beat. We are lucky, indeed, to have such a dedicated team. We are also indebted to the support of our community leaders and library volunteers, especially our Trustees, Citizen Advisers, Foundation Board and Friends of The Ferguson.

Whatever the coming year may bring, I am confident that Ferguson will emerge healthy and stronger as Stamford’s center of information, learning and community. Our beautifully restored building is emblematic of the Library’s vitality and renewal. Hard times come and go, but there is no question The Ferguson will remain vital to our city, as it has been for generations.

– George B. Harvey
Chair, Ferguson Library Board of Trustees

Message from the President

It would be easy to let the Library's financial difficulties this year overshadow all our achievements. There is no question we are enduring some of our biggest operating challenges in recent memory, but at the same time, we have much to celebrate.

At the end of the fiscal year, the Main Library renovation was almost complete. The building is magnificent—restored to its original grandeur, but updated for the 21st century, with a spacious new computer lab, expanded children's and teen areas, and plenty of quiet space for reading and studying. Most gratifying is the way the public has embraced the changes; people constantly tell us how thrilled they are with the renovation and the new use of space in the building. That said, the city eliminated our 2010 – 2011 capital budget, which included \$1.2 million to complete the renovation. Primarily remaining are internal lighting and the purchase of some furniture and equipment, as well as repairs to the building's exterior wood trim. We are hopeful the funds will become available so we can finish the project.

The Ferguson reached another milestone this year. For the second year in a row, our circulation topped one million. The Library circulated 1,107,352 items this year, surpassing the previous year's record of 1,031,000. Clearly, in a time of economic difficulty for so many people, library services are more important than ever. People come to us to use computers, get help with job skills, find information and so much more.

The Library's central role in the community was abundantly clear this past March when a huge storm knocked out power to much of the city for the better part of a week. The Library was one of the few places people could come for lights and heat and power. And come they did! Visitors recharged cell phones, used laptops and connected with each other in the warmth and safety of the Library. It was a vivid reminder of how much more a library is than a repository for books.

Even with reduced city funding, and the likelihood at year's end of further reduced hours, we will continue to serve the Stamford community to the best of our ability. I am grateful to the many people who made it possible for us to continue our high level of service during this difficult year. I am particularly indebted to our dedicated Board of Trustees, Citizen Advisers, Foundation Board, and Friends of The Ferguson, for their leadership and support. And we couldn't do any of it without our staff. They are a talented and resourceful group of people, who always have a smile for customers, and enthusiastically go the extra mile.

There is no question this coming year will be another difficult one. Nonetheless, given the constraints of significantly reduced city funding, we are committed to providing the highest level of public library service we possibly can.

– Ernest A. DiMattia, Jr.
President, The Ferguson Library

Our Mission

The Ferguson Library, Stamford's public library, provides free and equal access to print, audiovisual and evolving electronic resources, and supports childhood education and lifelong learning through reading and other forms of communication by addressing the informational, educational, cultural and literacy needs of the Stamford community.

Our Vision

The Ferguson Library will remain the community's leading choice for information access, educational materials, and lifelong learning by continually and effectively adapting to technological and other changes in the environment.

"I love the library, and hope I have passed that love and appreciation to my children, who come here frequently. The library is one of our greatest assets."

– Alissa Siegal, library user.

Our Core Values

Accelerate Promotion of Reading

Beyond providing resources – support outreach, basic literacy and lifelong learning habits.

Access

Provide convenient hours for the Stamford community and 24/7 access via the "virtual branch."

Accountability

Responsible to our community.

Creativity/Innovation

Introduce and/or adopt new technology, services and work styles.

Diversity

Embrace the numerous cultures, races and ideas in the community.

Equity

Freedom from bias or favoritism.

Intellectual Freedom

Encourage the free exchange of information and ideas in a democratic society.

Safety/Security

Create a safe and comfortable haven that is conducive to reading, studying and browsing. Provide quality customer-driven services.

Technology Leadership

Use the latest technological advances to help provide better services.



Main Library Renovation

Function and Beauty

What a difference two years makes! At the close of the fiscal year, the Main Library renovation was nearly complete. The project, which was accomplished in five stages to minimize disruption to the public, began in August, 2008 with the fourth floor administrative and business offices. Work progressed to the first floor and lower level, which meant temporarily relocating the children's department to the third floor and the Friends Book Shop across the lobby. Despite a lot of dust, staff and public took it all in stride, and when the children's and circulation departments moved back to their permanent locations, work began on the second, and then finally, the third floor. The result is a breathtaking library, which integrates the grandeur of the original 1909 building with the changes necessary to accommodate modern library service. Most gratifying is the community response – our users are thrilled with the lovely New Materials room off the lobby with its natural light and comfortable seating, the study carrels in the adult and children's areas, and the up-to-date computer space on the second and third floors.

The project was funded mainly with capital grants from the city and some support from the state and other sources. Unfortunately, the city cut our capital funding for the 2010 – 2011 fiscal year, so some of the finishing touches, such as furniture for the third floor, may have to wait.



New This Year

Self Check-Out

Self check-out came to the Harry Bennett Branch in August. We began with one machine on a trial basis, then as interest grew, we plunged in with two self check-out stations in October. Usage has steadily increased to about 20% of circulation at the branch.

Email Newsletter

Our weekly e-newsletter has a whole new look thanks to Constant Contact. For a modest annual fee, we now subscribe to this email marketing service which allows us to customize sharp, visual emails to our subscriber base. We are able to include links in the messages and track how many people open them, so we can get a better feel for what our users are interested in. The service is also a great tool for getting an important message out quickly.

Our Collection

The Library circulated 1,107,352 items this year, surpassing the previous year's record of a little over a million.

Books are only the beginning these days. People are reading in all kinds of ways now – whether it's downloading an ebook to a Kindle, or listening to an audio book on their iPod. The world of books is changing fast, and we are enthusiastically embracing digital media, with our growing collection of ematerials that library users can download and borrow. Our digital materials have become more popular than ever as the public becomes comfortable with this technology, and ereaders become increasingly more affordable. While these formats are still a small part of our collection, we recognize that there is great interest in this evolving technology, and we will do our best to meet the demand.



**"Nothing can beat holding a book in your hand."
– B. Brecht, library user.**

Technology

Social Media

We have become active users of social media such as Twitter and Facebook to increase the Library's visibility and communicate with our users. Facebook, especially, is a great way to promote upcoming events, share press coverage, suggest good books and find out what our public is thinking about all these things. We love the dialog with our users!

New Catalog Interface

The Ferguson made the switch to a new open source catalog system called Koha at the end of April. This new system offers users greater control over patron accounts, allowing them to see which items are currently checked out, what fines are owed and what they have on reserve. Customers can see reviews from a number of sources, including Amazon, and even add their own reviews to items in our catalog. They can also tag items and create personal lists, which can be shared or private. Koha is a much more interactive interface that is making the user experience more intuitive and rewarding.

Computer Classes

With the economy in a downturn, we had more demand than ever for computer training. This year we experimented with new four-part courses on Microsoft Word and Excel at the Main Library. These lengthier classes, which proved to be very popular, were able to cover the material in greater depth.

Our Excel and Microsoft Word series at the Harry Bennett Branch were also fully subscribed.

"We adore the library! This is an affordable, educational, great place to come for the whole family."

– Sara Jamison, library user



Special Events

Anniversary Celebrations

This was a milestone year for two of our branches. The South End Branch celebrated forty years of service to the South End community, and the Harry Bennett Branch marked ten years in its beautiful new building on Vine Road. True to Ferguson form, we celebrated both anniversaries with great enthusiasm.

The Harry Bennett Branch, which has served more than 2,700,000 users in ten years, hosted a celebration in January, and Harry Bennett's son, Fred Bennett, spoke eloquently about what the Library meant to his father.

The South End Branch, always lively, threw a spirited party in April with jazz and food and heartfelt speeches from patrons who feel like this small branch is a home away from home.



Snapshot Day

The Ferguson was one of 136 libraries in Connecticut to participate in the Connecticut Library Association's first ever Snapshot Day, collecting information to capture the impact that libraries have on their communities on a single day. What we found was impressive: On February 18, 2010 over 5,000 people visited The Ferguson Library, and borrowed nearly 4,000 books and other materials. More than 900 people came to one of our facilities to use the public computers, and another 1,100 visited us online. Best of all, we received many heartfelt comments from our users.



"The Library is a large part of our life. We come at least once a week to take out books, movies, meet friends and look through the book store."

**– Susan Bolognino,
library user**





Wimpy Kid Ice Cream Truck

The Wimpy Kid Ice Cream Truck rolled up to the Library in August to promote the newest title in the popular Wimpy Kid series. Excited fans consumed nearly 500 ice cream pops, and hundreds of kids entered the raffle for autographed books. It was great publicity for the Library!

Mayoral Debate

Our auditorium was packed in October for the final mayoral debate between candidates Michael Pavia and David Martin. The event was sponsored by the League of Women Voters and *The Advocate*.



Reigning Cats and Dogs

It was 'Reigning Cats and Dogs' in Stamford the summer of 2010, and the Ferguson was lucky enough to have a big blue pup right outside the Library. The sculpture was created by artist Kathy Hirshon, and featured some very famous dogs from literature. Of course, we got into the swing of things, with dog-themed displays and children's programs.

"It is a great resource for information. The staff takes the time to help us find what we need, be it books or online resources."

**– Kushal Yerra,
library user**

Programming

Adult Summer Reading Clubs

Our 2009 Adult Summer Reading Club, Rediscover Reading, was a big success with 385 registrants systemwide. We began with a couple of wonderful author programs and offered films and book discussions throughout the summer. An end-of-summer concert, slated for the Weed Memorial & Hollander Branch, was moved to Harry Bennett because of weather, but Cookie Thomas is always a big draw no matter where he performs. In fact, Cookie was back in February for Black History Month, and packed them in at the Main Library then too.

English Conversation and Networking

Our Let's Talk English Conversation Groups continue to be very popular with English language learners who are looking for a non-intimidating learning environment. Nearly 1,000 students participated in the weekly volunteer-run classes at the Main Library and South End Branch.

A new Art of Networking series, geared to people who have lost their jobs or are looking for a change, proved to be very successful. A total of 170 people attended a series of six classes to learn how to network, or take their networking skills to the next level.

Book Discussions

Book discussions are a long running tradition at the Ferguson Library. This year marked the 10th anniversary for the Main Library book group, the 14th year for the Weed Memorial & Hollander book club, and the 15th anniversary of the book group at the South End Branch. The longest running program is at the Harry Bennett Branch, (formerly Turn of River) which has been holding book discussions for over twenty years! We have also added a French language book discussion at the Main Library in the last couple of years, which has developed a strong following.

Other Special Programs

The South End Branch hosted its 10th annual Haitian Book Festival in October, with over 120 people attending. The Library's 4th Annual International Film Festival was also a great success, and this year, we expanded the tax help offered through AARP to the Weed Memorial & Hollander Branch as well as the Harry Bennett Branch. 623 people received help on their taxes from February to April.



Just for Kids

From our hugely successful summer reading club to storytimes for the youngest library users, our innovative children's programming educates and excites young readers. Our 2009 Children's Summer Reading Club, 'Super Readers Summer,' drew 2,653 participants and the Main Library and Branches were bustling all summer with little super heroes!

We reached a new milestone for book discussions with the October discussion of Neil Gaiman's wildly popular *The Graveyard Book*. Our intrepid children's staff led the talk in Stamford's historic St. John's Graveyard, the resting place, as it happens, of Ferguson Library founder John Day Ferguson.

In November, renowned children's author/illustrator Mo Willems packed the auditorium for the annual Jeanne Rinehart family program and a Thanksgiving turkey craft program at the South End Branch whet our appetites for that holiday.

We celebrated Chinese New Year in style with a family program at the Main Library and for the first time were able to print a Chinese language newsletter, thanks to new software acquired by the Library.

Our annual "I Have a Dream" writing contest honoring Dr. Martin Luther King drew 163 entries, and an April collage program with artist Carin Berger was also a big success.

Our bilingual storytimes and new '123 LI-BRA-RY' playshops serve the diverse community at the South End Branch, and grant-funded storytimes for children with sensory processing disabilities continue to draw raves from families who appreciate this special programming.

Teens

The Library has become a happening place for teens, especially with the newly renovated teen space on the lower level, which gives these young adults a place of their own in the Library. The numbers show how active our teen program is: the 2009 Teen Summer Reading Club, Power Up @ the Library, drew 657 participants, a 13% increase over the year before. Our teen volunteers are indispensable – we couldn't manage our youth summer reading programs without them. Last year, 301 teens put in a total of 2,540 volunteer hours at the library!

Ferguson teens are now active on the social media front, with their very own Facebook page and Twitter account. And our city-funded teen tech program offers technology-minded students real world experience, while providing us with valuable tech help in the Main Library and Branches.



Community Partnerships & Support

The Library has always enjoyed strong partnerships with the Stamford community, and we are grateful for the generous support of so many of our neighbors. Once again, the Pitney Bowes Literacy & Education Fund made it possible for the Main Library to stay open summer Sundays with a \$35,000 grant. In addition, the First County Bank Foundation, Stop & Shop and the North Stamford Association all donated funds to help the Library buy materials.

Connecticut Light & Power continued its sponsorship of the Enlightening the Mind child/adult book discussion series at the South End Branch, and The Ferguson joined with the Stamford Partnership and other agencies in a U.S. citizenship workshop in November, providing information about our passport and ESL services.



"I can't imagine a week without going to the library."

**— Marcia Wright,
library user.**



Passport Office

The difficult economy continued to take a toll on our passport business. This year, we processed 6,743 passport applications at our two offices at the Main Library and Harry Bennett Branch, down 10% from the year before. Our photo business declined 11%.

The Bookmobile & Purple Bus

Even though it is on the road just one day a week, the Bookmobile is still a visible presence in Stamford, bringing library service to preschools, senior centers and neighborhoods throughout the city. This year 4,084 people visited the Bookmobile, including 2,266 children who participated in storytimes while on board. At the end of the year, the Library received a \$5,000 grant from Citizens Bank to help fund Bookmobile service.

The Purple Bus continues to ferry school children to the Library. For some of the youngest, it is their first visit to the Library. This year, 2,866 preschool and school age children visited the Library on the Purple Bus.



No Power? Not a Problem The Library Was Open!

A massive storm in March brought Stamford to its knees and closed schools for a week. With thousands of customers without heat and electricity, the Library became a refuge for people and families looking for a place to go. Cell phones were plugged into every outlet as storm weary residents recharged, and children and adults used our computers to do homework or just stay in touch. In the children's department alone, reference and readers' advisory statistics soared 37% for March.



Friends of The Ferguson Library

The Friends of The Ferguson is the Library's tireless volunteer support group. The Friends' Book Shops at the Main Library and Harry Bennett Branch do a robust business selling quality used books at extraordinarily low prices. Despite the challenging economy and construction at the Main Library, revenue at the shops rose slightly this year to \$206,000. In addition to the book shops, the Friends generously fund all Library programming, including the summer reading clubs. This year, the Friends made several other gifts, donating a total of \$338,000 to the Library.

Book & Author Luncheon

Stamford writers Lou Aronica, Lyla Blake Ward and Jerry Zezima were the guest speakers at the Friends 29th Book & Author Luncheon in June. It was the first time in its history that the Book & Author Luncheon featured all Stamford authors. *The Advocate* returned as a sponsor this year, a partnership we hope will continue.

Literary Competition

Some of Stamford's most talented young writers were honored at the Friends' 25th Annual Stamford Literary Competition awards in May. An unprecedented 656 students in grades 3 – 12 entered the competition, submitting original fiction, nonfiction and poetry. Ninety-six winners were recognized at the awards ceremony, with proud families and teachers looking on.

Book Shop Volunteer Featured on News 12

Long time book shop volunteer Micaela Dockendorf was featured on a News 12 Hometown Heroes segment in June. Micaela, who is 91, has logged more than 530 hours in the book shop in her eleven years as a volunteer! Thank you to Micaela and all our many other volunteers.



**"We love the library! The used book store is great!"
– Dianne Vara, library user.**

Ferguson by the Numbers

Operating support from the city of Stamford	\$7,841,360
Revenue from Library activities	\$748,225
Salaries and staffing-related cost	\$6,537,208
Purchases of books, electronic resources and other materials	\$823,704
Items circulated	1,107,352
Visitors to the Library	892,495
In-house computer use	237,018
Offsite Internet users	221,626
Reference questions answered	184,514
Total program attendance	45,482



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