



Schenectady County Public Library Annual Report 2013

A CHANGING LANDSCAPE

“The only way to make sense out of change is to plunge into it, move with it, and join the dance.”

~ Alan Watts, philosopher and author

2013 has been a time of tremendous change for the Schenectady County Public Library system. Late in 2012, the Library Board of Trustees was given the charge by the Schenectady County Legislature to reduce the overall budget for 2013 due to the effects of the New York State 2% tax cap on our County government. A Restructuring Work Group comprised of members of the Board, Library Director and Assistant Director, community, and County completed the work begun in late 2012 on this assignment. In April, 2013 the Board of Trustees approved the Action Plan document. The plan outlined efficiencies that allowed for compliance with the direction from the County Legislature and at the same time maintained programs and services to the residents of Schenectady County. This plan was received by the Legislators at their May meeting.

The \$521,000 budget reduction required us to refocus, adapt, and transform our programs, collections, and services to provide equitable access to information and meet the priorities of the communities we serve. The American Library Association’s 2013 national campaign, the Declaration for the Right to Libraries, reminds us that “Our libraries serve people of every age, education level, income level, ethnicity and physical ability. For many people, our libraries provide resources that they could not otherwise afford – resources they need to live, learn, work and govern.” Our challenge for 2013 was to determine how we could best continue to do so, with a far leaner budget.

The Board of Trustees Restructuring Action Plan was implemented on July 1, 2013 which resulted in a reduction in library hours and the implementation of a two person staff model for branch libraries, other than during children’s program times. The hours of operation were evaluated through our automated Polaris circulation and management tool, looking at the data on circulation statistics and utilization of library resources. This system allowed for the review of the high and low activity times at each branch, for each day of the week, so that we could make decisions that would least impact the public that we serve.

At the Central Library the technical services department was eliminated by increasing the purchase of pre-processed library materials and reallocating workflow to other departments. Our library materials budget was significantly reduced which resulted in fewer copies of new and bestselling books and DVD’s, fewer periodicals and the elimination of some databases. In order to help alleviate this situation, we instituted the floating of New and Popular materials.

Beginning July 1, 2013 an increase in fines and fees was instituted to raise revenue. This included the opportunity for businesses, who had not been allowed to schedule meeting space in the past, to rent a room for a fee. Non-profits continue to use our space for free.

In 2013, the final phase of the Central Library renovation included the full conversion to **Radio Frequency Identification (RFID)** system. A committee was formed to include county personnel, joint-automation and system staff, the library architect and library staff to plan for and implement this massive project. We worked closely with our vendor, 3M, to help us select equipment



and phase in the various components. A major task was installing the new materials handling system, which fully automates the process of returning materials. Circulation staff had to adjust work flow to accommodate this new and efficient equipment. Our patrons had to learn the new system as well. A concurrent task was to begin the massive project of tagging all of our materials with an RFID antennae tag. We were able to contract with a tagging coordinator, thanks to funding by our Board of Trustees. The coordinator recruited volunteers, planned training and quality control measures and started tagging materials in early September. Central was mostly completed by the end of the year, and plans were put in place to start tagging at the branches. RFID implementation will continue into the next year, with hopes for a June 2014 completion.

Board of Trustee member Dr. Clifford Tepper retired from the Board after many years of dedicated service. Rory Fluman also left after a successful campaign for a County Legislature seat. We appreciate all the time and energy they devoted to the Library over the years of their tenure.

We are grateful to our resilient and hardworking staff for weathering the many changes, to our loyal patrons for bearing with us through the changes and to our Friends of the Library who have reached out and repeatedly asked what they can do, within their bylaws and parameters as an organization, to help us with the challenges before us.

Respectfully submitted,

Karen Bradley, Library Director and Cheryl H. Cufari, President, Board of Trustees

ADULT SERVICES

Our goal at SCPL is to connect readers and information seekers to the resources they need. We accomplish this goal in a variety of ways, providing both traditional and 21st century library services. Community members and organizations connect at all SCPL branches through programs, discussions, classes, and by the use of meeting rooms, public spaces and technology services. They may involve electronic communication and resources via e-mail, the SCPL website, downloadable content, or our FaceBook page. No matter how you choose to connect with us we strive to provide the most relevant collections and programming to our community.



Book discussions, book talks, author events, and writing groups are core services provided by the Library, primarily through the generous funding of the Friends of the Library. Our seventh *One County, One Book* program featured **Garth Stein's *The Art of Racing in the Rain***, with a variety of program offerings. Our adult summer reading club went forward as usual although participation was down over previous years. The loss of the programming librarian was felt with a decrease in the number of adult programs offered which resulted in a reduction in attendance.

Demand for e-content continues a slow but steady increase and we have responded by expanding offerings from both of our content providers. Approximately 3,800 downloadable titles from **OverDrive** circulated more than 35,000 times. Roughly 400 titles circulated over 2,200 times from **OneClick Digital**.

We applied for and received a **Workforce Literacy** grant through the Mohawk Valley Library System to implement a "Getting Ahead" center at the Central Library. The focus for 2013-2014 is to promote recent changes to high school equivalency exams in New York State. The grant allowed us to train staff, prepare pathfinders, and create a special collection of test-prep materials for the new TASC exams.

Digital literacy remains a service priority, and we reallocated staff to better accommodate requests for assistance in the use of the various technologies used in education, job searches, communication, accessing government services, health care and entertainment. Two new technology instructors joined us this year, thanks to funding from the Friends of the Library, and we have begun to offer additional classes in social networking, iPads and apps, and productivity software to meet patron demand.



YOUTH SERVICES



One of the 2013 goals of the youth services department was to increase the number of programs and the attendance at programs throughout the system. We did accomplish that goal by utilizing the librarians in more efficient ways and by adding programs to underserved age groups and new locations. We also began to contract with several community program partners who provide wonderful, professional programs that supplement our own efforts. These partners included **Capital District Child Care Council**,

Parson's Early Head Start, **School Media Specialists**, **YMCA**, **Red Cross**, **Tang Museum**, **MiSci**, **WMHT** and more.

The results are impressive. Overall, we offered 22% more programs than we did last year, and attendance grew by 15%. Pre-school programs were up 17%, with attendance up 12%. That is particularly significant, as we continue to make early literacy support a top priority. Very popular were the new “**Under 3's**” programs, which combined baby and toddler ages into one lively group. Several of the branches are now offering programs requiring no registration, making attendance more convenient for some of their patrons. Programs for ‘tweens and teens was a big priority for youth services, since these ages were underserved at Central and the larger branches. We started to offer new monthly programs for this age group, as well as expanded summer choices. We now have a good core of kids who regularly attend programs. Reading promotions such as Family Reading Month in March and the summer reading program for all age readers are popular, incentive based programs that highlight the importance of reading as a leisure time and family activity. Over 27,000 people enjoyed a program through the Youth Services department, both in and outside of the library, in 2013.



The **Schenectady Foundation** funded a second summer of the innovative reading support program at the Duane branch, called **Dream Big, Read**. Librarian Kaela Wallman worked closely with reading teachers from the city schools and the **Child Care Council** to improve the program by adding a parent engagement piece, computer support and incentives for the kids who participated. Year 2 of the MVLS funded **Comics Connect** with Central, Rotterdam and Mont Pleasant had librarians speaking to school PTO groups about the use of graphic novels to promote reading and also provided \$750 for programming at each participating library.

Staffing in youth services remains stable, if inadequate. We welcomed the additional presence of branch librarians at the Children's Room desk and for increased programming. We are all aware of program needs and services that we would like to provide for our library children and families. We currently have 4 youth services specialists providing programs, collection development and reference assistance at 9 libraries. It is a challenge to meet the needs and expectations of our communities. The hard work and dedication of the staff is commendable as we continue to move forward into a new year.

BRANCHES

2013 was a tumultuous year for our 9 branch libraries. The implementation of the library restructuring plan resulted in reduced hours and restrictive staffing at every location. Staff members who retired were not replaced; full time branch librarians added more hours at Central; substitute hours were limited and everyone was asked to do more.

One absolute that was gleaned from completing the Action Plan and after many key conversations: SCPL is looked upon as a convener for literacy in its broadest definition. Within the plan is the merging of the Duane and Hamilton Hill branches into a newly constructed branch library with a strong literacy focus. Unfortunately, due to the closure of the Carver Center in late December, we ended 2013 with the closure of the Hamilton Hill branch library. The biggest branch news of the



year is the green light to build a new city branch library with a strong literacy focus, one that will combine Duane and Hamilton Hill resources. A site was secured on State Street and plans for new construction were developed by a committee. Library administration spent a great deal of time developing a concept for the branch, one that will make family literacy a priority. Developing partnerships with community agencies, securing the support of community members and developing ideas for supplemental grant funding was an important focus that will continue into 2014.



The Mont Pleasant branch got a wonderful face lift and reorganization, just in time for the summer. New paint, furniture, a new location for computers and programs, a refurbished circulation desk and staff room was a welcome project for staff and patrons alike. The Scotia branch had a porch renovation completed. The rest of the branches did receive some requested new furniture, display units, universal library signs, book carts and other needed items from branch funding sources.

CEO, Bob Moritz, stated “As in any period of change, winners and losers will be determined by leadership’s response to these and other challenges we are seeing. The losers will be those that hold on to the status quo and allow sweeping change to overwhelm them. The winners will be those that “join the dance” by embracing change and adapting to a new environment.”

We have plunged into change, moved with it, and joined the dance. None of this would be possible without the dedication of our library staff and the support of the grateful community members we serve!

Thanks to the Friends of the Library, recipients of the DSIC 2013 Building Block Award, for all their help and support!



Circulation Statistics

	2012	2013	%Change
Central Library	463,411	438,965	-5.28
Duane	43,805	37,864	-13.57
Glenville	122,394	114,201	-6.7
Hamilton Hill	14,680	9,923	-32.41
Mont Pleasant	45,998	41,499	-9.79
Niskayuna	205,236	198,150	-3.45
QS/Duanesburg	49,610	42,179	-14.98
Rotterdam	163,973	158,242	-3.5
Scotia	44,714	39,293	-12.13
Woodlawn	60,873	56,421	-7.32
Subtotals	1,214,694	1,136,737	-6.42
Electronic Materials	31,043	37,410	20.51
Totals	1,245,737	1,174,147	-6

Program Statistics

Adult	2012	2013
Number	526	324
Attendance	10,584	6,617
Children's	2012	2013
Number	1,178	1,337
Attendance	24,698	27,210

2013 At a Glance

	2012	2013
Circulation	1,245,737	1,174,147
Inter-Library Loan	118,134	114,925
Registered Borrowers	93,977	95,137
Reference Questions	100,381	108,247
New Borrowers	6,899	5,910