



2008 Annual Report of the Mountainside Public Library

Michael D. Banick, Director

Thank you for your interest in the Mountainside Public Library. Libraries have always been regarded as an open and accessible source of information. To that end, this review of year 2008 highlights the activities and occurrences within the MPL during the last twelve months.

Personnel

There were two retirements in 2008: Circulation desk clerk Mary Maresca and librarian Jim Willey. Both were long-serving part time employees of the library and we thank them for their many years of dedicated service. Searches were conducted and two new employees were hired to fill the vacancies. In April, Gail Bauer joined our staff, and in November, Marilyn (Lynn) Favreau was hired.

Personnel costs are an important concern for any organization. In order to help reduce total personnel costs, two measures were implemented in 2008. Effective 1/1/08, only new employees working 35 hours per week are eligible for health benefits. And effective 9/15/08, our long term disability policy was modified to reduce the duration of supplementary salary payments to employees out on disability, tying the period to the employee's years of service.

Collection Management

Our collections consist of books, DVDs, audiobooks, CDs and periodicals. Our collections continue to improve in two ways: through the acquisition of new material and through the careful selection of items for withdrawal. In 2008, we added 5,527 items to our collection and withdrew 5,055 items, bringing our total holdings to 62,128 items.

Circulation

Our total circulation for 2008 was 75,902 items. While this represents a slight decline over 2007 (-1.3%; -1,028 items), it should be noted that our 2007 circulation was skewed by the temporary closure of the Westfield Library from July – November of that year. A change in periodical reporting (details noted in the table below) also accounts for the change. Furthermore, due to variations in our operating calendars, we were actually open three fewer days in 08 than in 07. With an average circulation of 262 items per day, more than half the difference in circulation would be accounted for by those three days.

Some circulation highlights:

<u>COLLECTION</u>	<u>TOTAL '08</u>	<u>Total '07</u>	<u>Difference</u>	<u>% Change</u>
ADULT				
Books	25654	26715	-1061	-3.97%
Audiobooks	2478	3350	-872	-26.03%
CDs	4134	3980	154	3.87%
DVDs	15760	14858	902	6.07%
Periodicals	744 *	2017 *	-1273 *	-63.11% *
Other	4	0	4	-
<i>subt - Adult</i>	48774	50920	-2146	-4.21%
JUVENILE				
Books	19241	18126	1115	6.15%
Audiobooks	508	582	-74	-12.71%
CDs	335	485	-150	-30.93%
DVDs	7044	6817	227	3.33%
<i>subt - Juv</i>	27128	26010	1118	+4.30%
TOTAL	75902	76930	-1028	-1.34%

* It should be noted that, prior to 2008, in-house use of periodicals was counted in the total circulation figure. In order to get a more accurate picture of *circulation*, we now only count periodicals that are actually checked out. Beginning in 2009, the comparisons will be more even.

Reference Interactions

There were 4,200 total reference interactions for 2008, representing a 16.8% increase over 2007 (+606) and a 61.5% increase over 2006 (+1,598). There are several factors behind this continued increase: pro-active service by librarians; approachability among the professional staff; dedication to reference desk coverage; and an increase in visitation.

Programs

In 2008, 3,859 people attended 239 programs at the Mountainside Library. This represents a 17.7% attendance increase over 2007 (+580) and an overall increase of 26 programs for the year (213 programs in 2007). This is particularly significant in that

2007 itself represented a 38% attendance increase over 2006. Our two-year increase in program attendance now stands at +63.4% (+1,498).

Our average attendance increased 9% in 2008 to 16 per program (15 in 2007).

The 2008 Summer Reading Program for children, one of the most important undertakings for any public library, was the best one ever for Mountainside. In total, 43 students (grades K-8) read for a total of 56,490 minutes; 30 families (pre-K) read 974 books together; and 851 children attended a total of 31 summer reading special events at the Mountainside Library.

Patron Registration

In 2008, we registered 457 new patrons, bringing our total patron count to 6,143. While this is fewer than we registered in 2007 (782), we had a huge spike in out-of-town registration that year due to the aforementioned Westfield closure. Mountainside Public Library continues to have very good library card penetration (number of cards in relation to the population) in the community. We currently have 5,374 resident cardholders. In 2006, our resident card penetration rate amounted to 71%; today it is 81.4%. This is the second highest rate in Union County.

Building Projects

Three significant building projects were undertaken in 2008. In January, the library boiler was replaced. The new unit is more efficient than the old one, which was original to the building (1967) and was beginning to rust and leak, creating an emergency situation. Our new boiler should provide many years of reliable service.

In October, the old asphalt shingles on the library roof were torn off and replaced. The new shingles have a 30-year warranty and a 15-year workmanship guarantee.

And, in November, all of the library ductwork was professionally cleaned and sanitized. This will further improve the efficiency of our HVAC system and improve the overall hygiene of the building.

It should be noted that it is not customary for a public library to take on capital projects out of its operating budget. But because of the circumstances, and with special approval from the New Jersey State Library, we were able to undertake these capital projects, and without compromise to public service.

Friends of the Mountainside Library

The Friends continue to be active supporters of the MPL. In 2008, the Friends held two book sales and a community yard sale. All three events were a success, as was the September membership campaign, which was the most successful drive in their history.

Through generous financial support from the Friends, we were able to offer many special programs and events in 2008, including the Story Time Theatre series for young children, the popular summertime “Plays in the Parking Lot,” the new Folk Music Café series and many other lectures and presentations.

Anyone who has been to the library lately will have noticed the large flat screen display behind the circulation desk. This electronic message board was a gift from the Friends of the Mountainside Library, paid for with a grant from the Watts Mountainside Community Foundation. Many thanks to the Friends – and to the Watts Foundation – for their continued support.

Grants

In January 2008, the Mountainside Public Library received funding from the Watts Mountainside Community Foundation for the purchase of an automated external defibrillator (AED). This unit was installed in February and all staff received training in its use. While we hope to never need it, it is reassuring to know that this potentially lifesaving equipment is on hand.

In the fall of 2008, the MPL received another grant from the Watts Foundation for the purchase of a digital magnifier. This unit was delivered in December and is installed near our large print collection. The magnifier, a ClearView+, was chosen for its ease of use. It will enable any user to zoom in on text from 2X – 50X. The magnifier is available during all open hours. Special thanks to the Watts Foundation for their continued support of the Mountainside Library.

Looking Ahead

2009 represents the 75th anniversary of the establishment of the Mountainside Public Library. Our slogan for the year is “Remembering the Past, Part of the Future.” We invite you to be part of the year-long celebration as we work together to keep our good momentum going.

Finally, public libraries are uniquely positioned during these challenging economic times as an important resource for a town’s citizens – especially those who might be researching jobs, preparing resumes, borrowing (as opposed to purchasing) new books or just enriching themselves through local programs. More than ever, the public library is a critical municipal service, and one that a community should be rightly proud of. We at the Mountainside Library are glad to be here for you and look forward to the chance to be of service. If you have any comments or suggestions, please share them with us. We are always happy for your input.

Accepted by the Board of Trustees -- January 26, 2009