From the Director

We spent much of September finalizing Caddystacks—planning hole decorations, publicity, ticket sales, catering, raffle prizes, and securing sponsors and scorecard ads. The event was fun for all, and we’ve had many requests to repeat it next year (or sooner!)

Dr. Nicholas Nickou, who was responsible for the beautiful design of the library’s landscaping with rare specimen trees, passed away this month, and the library received donations in his memory.

Staff were able to attend several professional development workshops in September. Kathy Oxsalida and I attended a project management and capital planning workshop offered by the State library. Kathy also attended a human resources management program. I attended an advocacy workshop with Libby Post offered by the State library (Libby is also presenting at the ACLB workshop in November).

Several board members attended the Chamber of Commerce Nonprofit Council’s workshop on board development with Anne Yurasek, and we are scheduled to attend part two in October.

At the end of the month, Carly, Katy and I attended a two-day forum called MakerSpace 3.0 at the Westport Library. The event was very fast-paced, where we learned about sewing with conductive thread, Arduino programming and circuitry, Makey Makey & Scratch, and other up-to-the-minute maker tools.

The keynote speaker was David Lankes, and we were especially privileged to participate in a small breakout session with him, where we explored the idea of our community as our collection. Along with books and other traditional sources of information, this way of thinking incorporates partners in our community to engage in hands-on learning opportunities. During our two days at the Westport library, we felt the space alive with activity—patrons are making, sewing, inventing, learning and transforming. Some programs are led by library staff, and many more are initiated by community partners. The first day ended with a maker showcase—library members displayed items that they had designed in the maker lab, talked about their inspiration, and in some cases were able to relate how they were bringing their inventions to the market. The three of us who attended talked for a long time afterwards about how we could shift to a collaborative, transformative community space. Stay tuned!

Karen Jensen
Library Director
Summer Reading in the Youth Services Department

The Branford Schools, James Blackstone Memorial Library and Willoughby Wallace Memorial Library have built a strong collaborative relationship over the past five years, through projects that promote reading and hands-on learning opportunities.

The most recent partnership between the libraries and schools happened this summer with our summer reading program. Librarians from both Branford libraries were able to demonstrate the Evanced Summer Reader software to the school’s reading specialists, who were immediately on board. All Branford students were enrolled in the program before school ended. Parents also received instructions on how to log in and record their books on the last day of school, creating a smooth transition from school to the public libraries.

Librarians from the Blackstone Library and the Willoughby Wallace libraries promoted the program in all three elementary schools with a superhero-themed skit starring Book Lady and her arch nemesis Dr. TV. Both characters required costumes and were played by school employees which the students thoroughly enjoyed. As a matter of fact, the librarians were asked to return in the fall to congratulate everyone on their efforts and bring Book Lady and Dr. TV back for a final summer reading act to celebrate students’ reading achievements.

Incentives are an important component of all summer reading programs. In Branford, children were able to set personal goals as to the number of books they would read, and they were able to post reviews and comment on reviews posted by others.

Children also checked in with their local library on a weekly basis to receive small prizes and marbles for our marble machine. Built by Joe Kobylnski, a school employee, the incredible magic marble machine is a replica of the original 1896 iron library stacks that are still present in the Blackstone library reference department. The stacks are enclosed in plexiglass with chutes entering on all sides, which funnel the marbles into large tubes. The tubes are marked with numbers that reflect the amount of books read by Branford students over the summer. Despite 24/7 access to technology, the children were ecstatic to see the marbles roll down the chutes to the tubes.

When children completed the goal they had set for the summer, they were invited to stop into the library and print a prize on our new 3-D printer. This was a real treat for all or our participants, especially elementary school children, since most of our 3D printing classes are meant for middle school students and up.

One of the advantages of the online reading program using Evanced Summer Reader software was the ability to produce individualized reports for each school, in order to track the number of books read by each grade. Based on sheer numbers, the program was a huge success—a total of 1,942 readers who completed 12,927 books! In comparison, we saw 259 children read 5,000 books last summer. Having the teachers embrace the program and support our effort by empowering students to register for the program before school let out for the summer made all of the difference. Letting the software do the work of tracking freed up our library staff to interact in meaningful ways with the students, giving them more time to make recommendations and talk about what they had read. The incentives of the marbles and small prizes were another way to encourage visits to the library; staff remarked that they met many families who were new to the Blackstone.

Through these shared experiences the James Blackstone Memorial Library, Willoughby Wallace Memorial Library and the Branford Public School District are able to highlight our offerings, pool our resources and expand awareness to benefit the community. We are excited to continue to expand our partnership through new services and projects.

Carly Lemire
August was a month filled with summer reading, genealogy, stack maintenance and new projects. The Reference Department is nearing the end of its section-by-section weeding and collection development project. Once completed, we will have enough room to shift the nonfiction DVDs downstairs, to be shelved by call number.

As we prepare for that move, we are also spearheading a DVD inventory and replacement project. The circulation staff has been extraordinarily helpful in completing this project, which involves inventory lists, checking the shelves, verifying checkout dates, and much more.

One of the greatest strengths we have as a library is the extraordinary cooperation and participation of all employees, across departments. The Youth Services department is also working on their collection development and inventory and we share ideas and strategies with them.

This cross-department cooperation fosters a closer bond among employees in different departments and enhances our knowledge of the entire library collection. The Reference staff is very grateful for the assistance and we look forward to completing more projects together.

Deborah Trafatter
Children’s Programs:

- Babies (0-2) - 8 programs/138 attendance
- Preschool (3-5) - 6 programs/119 attendance
- School-age (6-11) - 9 programs/161 attendance
- All Ages - 2 programs/70 attendance
- Teen Programs (12+) - 5 programs/40 attendance

Total Children’s Programs: 25
Total Attendance: 488

Teen Programs (12+):

- 5 programs/40 attendance

Total Circulation: 17,071
ConnectiCard: 3,451
Adult programs
24 programs/482 attendance

Lucy Hammer Room
58 meetings/222 attendance

Computer Sessions: 2422

Facebook: 1192 Likes

Constant Contact: 4999

Average Daily Visitors: 516
Days Open: 26