

Ypsilanti District Library Community Report 2004

Love Letters



“When the Michigan Avenue Library reopened, it was like coming home. The children’s section is so cozy and contained. My daughters feel as if this is their place and their stuff.”

— ALTHEA WILSON



During National Library Week, we asked users of all ages to write and tell us what they loved about the Ypsilanti District Library. With crayons and computers, pens and pencils, our patrons sent us a clear message: that staying in touch with their needs is at the heart of what we do. Their letters—and a year’s worth of comment cards—inspired the theme of this year’s report.

In terms of physical space, YDL’s Whittaker Road and Michigan Avenue libraries are very different—one is contemporary, the other historic. Each beckons to different patrons: some love the expansive scale of Whittaker Road, while others favor the more intimate feel of the downtown Library.

Althea Wilson and her three daughters—Domnique, Gabryel, and Alexys—are devoted downtown patrons. “A trip to the Library is part of our weekly routine,” she says. “It’s easy to go to, and easy for my kids to find the things they want. I don’t have to be their exclusive resource—they ask the librarians for help and pull the books they want off the shelves. My 5-year-old even checks out books with her own Library card.”

Althea, who grew up in Jamaica, didn’t have regular access to a Library until the third grade, but she quickly learned to love a good story. She nurtures the same delight in her children, a job made easier by YDL’s wealth of youth programs that set the stage for reading and learning. “The storytimes, crafts, music and other activities hold my kids’ attention,” Althea says. “Where else could a mother of three find so many resources except at the Library?”

The Wilson family is one of many hooked on YDL storytimes. “When we drive by the Library, Anna starts chanting ‘Lori story, Lori story,’” writes one parent about the *Baby Brigade* session hosted by Lori Coryell, Head of Youth Services. YDL offers separate storytimes for infants, toddlers, preschoolers, as well as alternating bilingual sessions in Spanish and French.

At YDL-Whittaker Road, Marlena Shuler often dresses the part of her storybook characters. One week she’s a ladybug, the next she’s an Elizabethan lady.

"What will Miss Marlena be wearing today, I wonder?" muses one parent. Like Whoopie Goldberg in the movie *Sister Act*, Marlena knows a little showbiz packs the house. Parents give her storytime performances two thumbs up: "We never miss it. We get wonderful ideas to use at home." "Storytime gives my children new subjects to talk about, exposure to reading, and interaction with other children."

Families can't say enough about YDL's youth librarians, all of whom have been singled out for praise: "Mr. Ernie [Pope] is the greatest." "The kids LOVE Ernie at Ypsilanti Head Start and so do the teachers." "I learn something new almost every visit." "Thank you for all you've done to make my children's first Library experiences so positive."

In all, the audience for YDL storytimes and 659 other youth events numbered an enthusiastic 18,002 last year. Entertainment and learning were combined in youth programs such as puppet shows, a mime performance, a day at the farm with national recording artist Jason Ringenberg,

and an up-close-and-personal experience with reptiles that some found positively "creepy."

"Go Figure!", a touring exhibit from the Minnesota Children's Museum, used life-sized storybook characters like Marc Brown's Arthur and Arnold Lobel's Frog and Toad to teach basic math concepts to nearly 1,191 students in school groups.

Programs like these set the stage for students to get excited about reading and learning. And, with more than 100,000 items in YDL's youth collection, there's a lot for kids to get excited about.



“My early memories of the Library are still very vivid. I remember the excitement I felt as I opened the door to a world full of adventure...the wonderful smell of the crisp pages that leapt into the air as I pulled different books from the shelves and eagerly looked through them to decide where my next journeys would take me.”

— CATHERINE PAPPAS



Catherine Pappas has her roots in Ypsilanti, and before she ventures elsewhere, her travels take her to YDL's multimedia resources. "In addition to the fabulous books to choose from, movies and music have become wonderful options to color my world," she says. "One of the joys of planning a road trip is heading to the Library to decide which books on tape and what music will be my companions."

Catherine isn't alone: our CDs, DVDs, audio and videotapes are so popular that we struggle to keep up with the demand. Our videos were checked out an average of 12.7 times, compared with an average circulation of 1.6 for books. We've read more than one comment card that told us, "Please get more books on CD...I don't have a tape player in my car!"

Last year, our 54,000 Library cardholders—fully 68 percent of the residents in our service area—checked out all sorts of resources in record numbers. The total, according to Circulation

Coordinator John Connaghan, was just three items shy of 600,000, an 11 percent increase over 2003.

Since 1995, YDL has nearly doubled the size of its collection, which stands at 250,605 books, 13,978 audio and 9,714 video resources. Guiding this growth is a collection development policy that was updated in 2004 as part of the strategic planning process.

Selecting the materials to add is a year-round effort that takes education and experience, which YDL librarians possess in great measure. Spending the funds allocated for new materials—\$375,000 in 2004—is a job shared among 14 adult and youth librarians. They read reviews and books constantly, study circulation statistics, evaluate suggested titles, monitor a daily log of reference requests, and add their knowledge of community needs into the mix.

The result is a gigantic "wish list" pared down, item by item, to the more than 24,000 items YDL purchased last year. Mimi Chapman, Manager of

Acquisitions, says YDL librarians take great care in selecting new materials. "We think of ourselves as education advocates," she notes. "Librarians love putting real, accurate and trustworthy information into people's hands. When patrons browse our stacks, we want them to feel confident that someone purposely selected these books."

Patron comments attest to their confidence in our staff's choices: "Great selection of alternative medicine books." "Such a variety of books on tape." "I travel to libraries in many states and this is one of the finest." "Your selection of Christian books is fantastic."

A similar selection process sets the Library's extensive program schedule each year. All librarians share in developing programs that include arts and crafts workshops, book discussion groups, and speakers ranging from an Ebay expert to an Elvis tribute artist.

Record attendance at YDL's adult programs underscores the staff's success in making the Library a hub of community activity. We doubled the number of adult events in 2004 and drew 1,331 people to presentations on historic homes, landscaping, sustainable architecture, and such diverse needs as staying healthy, doing their taxes, and producing their own music.

The popular "Take Note @ YDL" concert series attracted 290 people—among them Catherine Pappas—to concerts featuring an opera singer, an acoustic ensemble, and two Celtic fiddlers.

"My friends tease me about always being on the go," says Pappas, "but the Library has so many interesting events happening all the time, and I don't want to miss anything. For the past two years, in fact, several friends joined me for YDL's Annual Trivia Night, and we all had a great time."



"I have my own Library card," declared a grade-schooler, one of 7,182 new cardholders who signed up last year.



Love Letters

“Paula is my connection to the Library. I’ve e-mailed her so many times that I’m reminded of the novel 84, Charing Cross Road, where correspondence between two strangers led to a lasting friendship.”

— MARY LEHNIS



Even a seasoned Library user like Mary Lehnis would be the first to admit that it’s easy to get lost in information overload—or to search for hours and come up empty-handed. It didn’t take too many Library visits before Mary sought an experienced guide, and found one in Adult Services Librarian Paula Drummond.

In her 20-plus years at YDL, Paula has used her skills as a good listener and an expert information detective to answer questions on every conceivable topic, even settling a bet once on the particulars of Smokey the Bear. Last year, Paula and other YDL reference librarians answered nearly 100,000 questions, 15 percent more than in 2003.

During the months of her own questions and requests, Mary discovered something she might not have anticipated: an enduring friendship with Paula, who she calls “my own personal reference librarian.”

Mary, a voracious reader, says she and Paula are alike in one respect: “We’re both information

hounds. I’ll go online and find books—either by popular authors or on subjects that strike my fancy. I e-mail the titles to Paula and ask her to let me know when the Library buys them. Thanks to her diligence, I’m often the first one on the reserve list.”

The search for materials that aren’t in YDL’s collection takes us to libraries across the state and as far away as Alaska. In 2004, we borrowed 550 items through interlibrary loans and sent 824 items to other libraries. Through the Michigan Library Exchange, or MiLE, patrons can go online to request books from any of Michigan’s 160 academic, public, museum or hospital libraries—and pick them up at YDL for checkout.

Mary’s friendship continued after Paula transferred from the downtown Library to Whittaker Road. When Mary took a trip to the Pacific Coast to celebrate her 50th birthday, the YDL staff was among the friends to get an e-mail of her vacation pictures. “Paula knows me and what I like,” Mary says. “E-mail keeps us connected, and Paula goes to the ends of the earth to help me.”

Paula may not go quite that far, but she and our other reference librarians earn high praise for going the extra mile: *"Thank you, Christy [Havens] for your patience with my huge list of requests."* *"In the adult book area, I can always expect first-rate service."* *"Thanks, Eric [Stanton], for locating a book the Library didn't have."*

In response to the last letter writer, Eric Stanton says that each day at the Michigan Avenue reference desk, which fielded 42 percent more questions this year than last, is a learning process. Asked what makes a good reference librarian, Eric defers to his mentor: "Watch Paula. She's an expert at finding out what people are actually looking for, and she gives them many options. If I were ever on *Who Wants to be a Millionaire*, I would call Paula as my lifeline."

For their part, the Library's staff appreciates every compliment more than Mary and our other letter writers will ever know. Even three little words on a comment card, "Wonderful reference staff," are enough to make our day.



Love Letters



“The Bookmobile is the greatest. Who else delivers my favorite things right to my front door? Your big blue streak flashing by my front window sends me scurrying to find my Library card and books to return. Thank you for your faithful service.”

— PATTI McCARTY



Although Patti McCarty may not have been the Bookmobile’s first patron, we can’t recall anyone who’s used it longer or more often. Even Patti’s children, now grown, got into the Bookmobile habit.

These days, the Bookmobile brings YDL’s resources right to Patti’s front door, which opens up a world of possibilities. She and her husband Ron scouted their trip to Scotland last fall without leaving home. “The Bookmobile practically stops in my front yard, like clockwork, every Wednesday at 6 pm,” Patti says. “I have all of 50 steps to walk to get a selection of my favorite mysteries.”

The reason the latest works by Sue Grafton, Robert Parker and other novelists are waiting for Patti is simple: she orders them in advance. “Just give them the author or title, and they’ll bring whatever you ask for,” says Patti. She makes her requests on the Library’s web site and through Stacey Palazzolo, the Bookmobile’s lead driver.

Stacey fills requests at each of the 30 stops she makes each week, and stocks extra books on subjects her patrons have requested before. Her job, she says, is all about building relationships: “I try to cover the basics, but I’ve also gotten to know what people like. I try to anticipate people’s interests, and I call in advance to say I’ve got something just for them.”

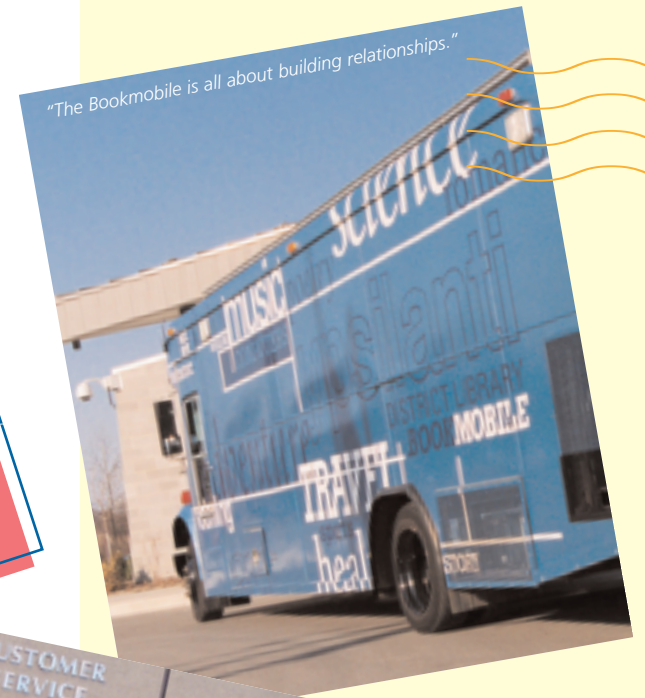
In addition to her regular route, Stacey visits homebound patrons and travels to nine senior citizen sites, dropping off a fresh collection of about 100 books every three months. She makes people feel as if they were her only stop—and along the way, has seen the Bookmobile’s circulation jump 29 percent in 2004, to a total of 14,000 items.

At YDL-Whittaker Road, Bill Sinkule looks at customer service from a different vantage point. From the entrance at YDL-Whittaker Road, it’s a straight shot to the Customer Service Desk, and many

patrons make Bill's desk their first stop. A master of wearing many hats, Bill signs up people for Library cards, gives directions, checks out Library materials when the line at the Circulation Desk gets long, and calls patrons to let them know the book they requested is ready for pickup.

On Bill's desk and others throughout the Library are stacks of customer comment cards, which, he's glad to report, need frequent refilling. "Patrons like to express their opinion and have it heard," he says. "It's an opportunity for them to help improve the Library and recognize the staff."

While he loves the compliments, Bill says his biggest motivator is helping newcomers appreciate all the Library has to offer. He invites anyone who's never been to YDL to stop by his desk, where, he promises, they're sure to leave with a Library card.



"Who doesn't like a compliment?" asks Customer Service Associate Bill Sinkule.



A record number of candidates for the Library Board of Trustees expressed their views and visions for the Library at a forum hosted by Friends' President Les Scherer and broadcast by Community Television Network.



This summer's youth reading program on the architecture of Frank Lloyd Wright inspired 1,528 students to create their own masterpieces.

After reading each of your comments and compliments, I have many letters of my own to write.

Thanks to donor support of our community tea, work on the rebirth of Fountain Park alongside YDL-Michigan Avenue is scheduled to begin in summer 2005. Funds raised from the event, inspired by the 25-year tradition of teas held by community activist Patsy Chandler, will be added to gifts from individual donors and grants from Pfizer, the Ypsilanti Downtown

Development Authority, the Library Board, and our Friends group. Support from the YDL Friends of the Library is felt in many ways—from sponsorship of the "Go Figure!" exhibit to funding of our summer reading and community reads programs.

We have scores of community leaders to thank: our Board of Trustees, Friends of the Library Board, members of our various committees, and the volunteers who tend gardens, sort donated books, work in the Friends Shop, and help patrons at our customer service desk. I also speak for our patrons

in thanking the many talented artists, musicians, and authors who make our Library more colorful, more entertaining, and a richer source of ideas and viewpoints.

And to our patrons, I could write volumes, but I'll keep it short with these words of encouragement: Keep those cards and letters coming! We love to hear from you!

Jill Morey
Library Director

Library Budget, fiscal Year 2004



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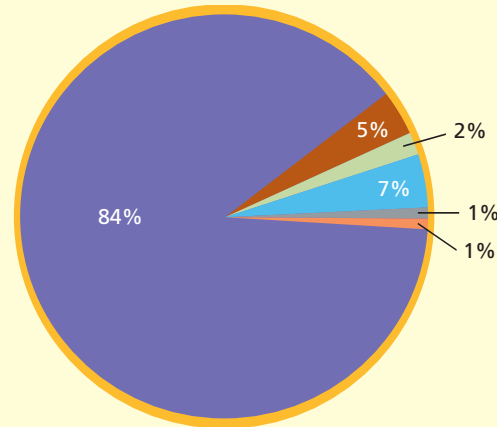
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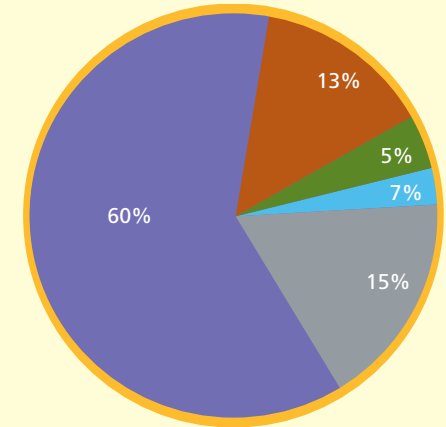
Janalyn Hale

Revenues



- Property Taxes/\$2,482,000
- Penal Fines/\$158,000
- State Aid/\$70,000
- Interest & Other/\$209,000
- Grants & Donations/\$29,000
(reflects Friends contributions)
- State Revenue Sharing/\$40,000

Expenditures



- Salaries/\$1,787,000
- Library Materials/\$402,000
- Contractual/\$210,000
- Automation & Capital Outlay/\$152,000
- Other/\$29,000

"Information, which is like air to me, is found in huge, endless quantities in this place. I am limited only by my imagination and the number of books I can carry - a lot!" - Mara Fienhold



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