

*PRESERVING THE
PAST,
EXPLORING THE
FUTURE*

November 2007



Birmingham Public Library Annual Report 2007

Looking Back and Reaching Forward *as we* Preserve the Past and Explore the Future

Since the beginning of civilization, human beings have been collecting information in one way or another. From the carvings on early clay tablets to the wireless transmission of today's electronic bytes, people have needed ways to record, store and retrieve information. This human need for managed information is fundamental to the existence of libraries.

When I entered librarianship in 1972, I considered it to be a profession of tradition with very little change. Little did I know that information and the processes used to store, organize and disseminate it were about to explode. On reflection, I now see that librarians have been living in a state of transition for decades. Everything about our profession has changed, is still changing and will continue to change. As the nature of our work has evolved and as the demand for the immediacy of information has increased, we have developed new techniques of learning and new ways of delivering information. The knowledge that we gained yesterday is not sufficient to satisfy the needs of today's customers. Tomorrow's customers will expect even more from us. As the library is a portal to a world of expanding knowledge, we librarians must understand our community so that we are ready to respond to their needs and requests in minutes. To succeed we must have at hand the tools and skills best suited for the job.

As our cities struggle to contend with the ever-changing demands of society and the associated costs, libraries must be right there at the table. The library is a part of everything that affects our communities – education, government, economic development, and health and human services. With this in mind, I have attempted to lead the Birmingham Public Library and its staff toward fulfilling our mission:

...to provide the highest quality library service to our citizens for lifelong learning and cultural enrichment and enjoyment

During my tenure as director, I have helped the Birmingham Public Library face challenges and changes. Maintaining the library's rich tradition of excellence these past six years has been difficult as we have dealt with declining budgets and staff shortages. If the library is to continue to be the place where the public is expected to interact with others and to gain knowledge, we must have the necessary resources. Our public is not demanding less of us. They are demanding more and expect to receive more.

The Birmingham Public Library is considered by many as the “crown jewel” of the City of Birmingham. Twice in the past five years, we have been designated as the top tourist attraction in our city. Our doors are open to everyone regardless of age, race, gender or ethnicity, and the staff stands ready to assist them all. The Birmingham Public Library is an anchor for this city. We take our responsibility seriously.

With City funds continuing to decrease, we have recognized the need to reevaluate the library’s expenditures and to seek out additional revenue streams. We have leveraged an existing staff position so that the job responsibilities include writing grants. Additional funds from other organizations and foundations insure that we can meet the challenging technological demands placed on us and continue to provide high-quality programs and exhibits for our customers. This external financial support has allowed the Birmingham Public Library to remain a formidable competitor in the “information marketplace.”

The library patrons of today demand immediate attention and want their library needs fulfilled in their preferred formats. The Birmingham Public Library has met this challenge and continues to meet it by providing new products, new services and new opportunities for learning.

In the past year, the library has introduced new initiatives to support the services and opportunities that the library provides. From the collection and conservation to training and technology, the library is working on all fronts to insure that current and future users will find **what** they need **when** they need it at the Birmingham Public Library.

While today’s customers often consult Internet websites as sources rather than books, the Birmingham Public Library can still report an increase in the circulation of books and other media during the past year. In addition to an increase in Circulation, the library also experienced increases in Membership, Library Visits and In-Library Use. This documented growth in the use of the library supports my opening statement that people will always need "managed information," but the formats will change and the speed of change will continue to accelerate.

Public libraries are positioned to manage the flow of the knowledge, the change in formats, and the public’s requests for information, but we must be ready and equipped to meet the needs of every generation that enters either in person or via the web. This means maintaining traditional methods of service and also reaching out with new service techniques. To meet this challenge, I shifted staff positions to create a new "mini" library department that is called the L2Crew. The name is a nod to the term “Library 2.0” that is used to describe the transition in the way library services are delivered to users with blogs, wikis and other Web 2.0 and social networking concepts. In the following list of new initiatives, you will see the many approaches to hosting and sharing of information that this group has developed. Unlike traditional committees with planned face-to-face

meetings, these young librarians and library assistants transact much of their business via blogs and wikis. I am excited about their future and consequently the future of BPL as they steer us in this direction.

The possibilities afforded us by technology are unlimited. Purchases of new video equipment allowed us to increase our audiences through programs that are simulcast between Central and the Five Points West and Springville Road branches. With this equipment one speaker or trainer can reach three audiences at the same time. To make immediate practical use of this technology, this past year we introduced *Tech Tuesdays @ Your Library*, a series of programs on using popular Internet tools such as blogs, photo sharing and instant messaging.

Each year we increase our outreach. We believe that we cannot just build buildings and wait for the public to come to us. We know we have to reach out and publicize what we do, so we continue to find ways to market our services. For example, we have purchased promotional items specifically designed to represent BPL in our community at events and fairs as well as in our own backyard. We also build relationships and will continue to collaborate with old acquaintances and to forge new partnerships to help us deliver our message.

We will always need and want to tell the library's story. Although most people do not visit other public libraries when they travel, we librarians do. We know that Birmingham Public Library is among the very best in the nation. We want our citizens to know this too.

The review that follows highlights some of the programs, special events, exhibits and other initiatives the library featured in the past fiscal year.

Barbara Sirmans,
Director



I have been blessed to have two wonderful and very capable Associate Directors - Renee Blalock and Pamela Lyons. Together, our individual personalities and strengths have been responsible for the continuous push of the wheel that keeps Birmingham Public Library in a forward motion. The three of us have been blessed with ten excellent Coordinators whose individual charges have combined to form the wheel that is necessary for this movement. And for the individual staff members, I can never say enough about them. I am where I am because of the staff, and BPL is what it is because of the staff.

Finally, I am grateful to the members of the Library Board for your support in helping BPL to remain the "crown jewel" of the City of Birmingham. It is my desire that our citizens will always be able to count on us to provide "the highest quality library service for their lifelong learning and cultural enrichment."

2006 / 2007 New Initiatives

Collections

In addition to the acquisition of new materials and maintenance of the largest public library collection in the state, the library acquired access to two important electronic databases from the family of scholarly resources of the Oxford University Press. The library's own staff developed and launched three new databases of unique material from the library's collection. And the popular DVD collection was expanded and reorganized.

New Databases

Purchased

Oxford Dictionary of Music
Oxford African American Studies Center

Developed in-house by staff

WPA Index to Alabama Biographies (28,359 entries – 1840-1951)
Obituary Index (137,868 entries – Nov. 1951 – Dec. 1976)
Public Relations Picture File (3,261 records)

New Floating Collection of DVDs

A traveling collection of DVDs to eliminate multiple purchases

Conservation and Preservation

With recent focus placed on the reorganization and protection of the collection in the Southern History Department, more emphasis was directed to preserving the library's unique and scarce materials. The library acquired a new air-conditioning system for the rare materials and fire-proof cabinets for the pamphlet collection. A campaign to expand the high school yearbook collection resulted in adding records for these popular items to the catalog and reorganizing the books for ease of retrieval. Staff training in disaster response and consultations with experts in preservation kept the spotlight on the importance of preservation and conservation and offered plans for moving forward to preserve our past.

Rare Book Room

New air conditioning and climate control

Indus Planetary Scanner

To digitize oversized items

Pamphlet Files

8 new fire-proof filing cabinets
Reorganization and cataloging

Yearbooks

Training

SOLINET Disaster Preparedness Workshop

Consultations

Tom Wilsted, Archival Consultant

Review and Report on Linn-Henley Building Options

Kara M. McClurken, Preservation Services Librarian, SOLINET Preservation Services

Preservation Needs Assessment

Construction

Every year brings the need to renovate and improve the physical facilities throughout the library system. In addition to these important cyclical improvements, this year the library opened the new West End branch.

West End Branch Library

Wylam Renovation

IT Workroom Reorganization

Computer Room Reorganization

Literacy

The Literacy division continues to advocate the importance of literacy and libraries. By going into the schools and the community, the staff promotes library card sign-ups, forms partnerships with service groups, applies for grants, and encourages adults and children to value the ability to read.

Born to Read @ Your Library

Joint effort of JCLC member libraries for parents of infants born at area birthing hospitals

Family Place Libraries

Avondale and Springville Road branches are the first libraries in Alabama designated as Family Place Libraries

Ready to Read

Literacy Council partnership for adult nonreaders

Storytime

Weekly storytimes for patients at Children's Hospital

Programming

Every year programming becomes more important as a means of drawing people to the libraries. Many events including Summer Reading, Alabama Bound, and Brown-Bag-Lunch programs have become standard entries on the annual calendar. New programs are inspired by new interests and needs. The Local Authors Expo added last year was so successful, it will return this fall. BPL@Night was expanded to the branches, and additional outreach programming is under way for all teens and seniors.

Between the Lions

Hosted the cast of Between the Lions at branches

BPL@Night

Expanded from Central to the branches

Local Authors Expo 2006

Space and opportunity for 70 authors to promote their books

New Outreach to Adults and Seniors

Development of adult programming systemwide

New Teen Initiative

Organization of BPL teens for activities and as helpers

Public Relations

Telling the library's story can be as obvious as presenting a program on the Bright House television channel, as subtle as hanging a banner on a lamp post or as accessible as putting bookmarks and printed brochures on a rack. All are important ways to place the library in the public arena. New public relations efforts this year included training the staff to add events to the new online calendar and to use digital cameras, easing up the restrictions on the public having food and drink, putting the logo on library fixtures and furnishings, and stationing people to welcome library visitors.

Christmas with Santa

EventKeeper

Online calendar of events for all Birmingham Public Library locations

Food in Libraries

Central has soft drinks, coffee and pastries in the Atrium; Avondale provides snack space

Library Greeters

Staff and volunteer greeters at Central

Purchases

BPL exhibit tents

Tablecloths with the logo

Signs with the logo and a picture

Digital cameras for every location

Staff Training

Ongoing training is required for keeping up in today's library world and factors in all of the library's initiatives. One notable new training program this year is the University of North Texas Le@d program that brought online instruction for practical matters to BPL.

Le@d Program of Online Training

Online paraprofessional staff training funded by an LSTA grant

Technology

Technology spread in many directions for the library this year. For the infrastructure and security of the network, the library's aging hardware and products received upgrades or were replaced with new technology and system management tools. An LSTA grant provided funding for equipment for simulcasts, and now on Tuesdays the library offers simulcast training in the use of Internet tools.

Installation of CybraryNet

PC management and statistics

Installation of New PCs

288 new PCs

Network Security

Installation of new firewall and new virus protection product

New Purchases

Replaced Web Server

Replaced MAS90 Server

Tech Tuesdays @ Your Library

Live technology programs at Central simulcast to Five Points West and Springville Road

Video Conferences

LSTA grant for equipment to simulcast programs among Central, Springville Road and Five Points West

Web 2.0 Technology

With the Internet having developed into a powerful interactive resource, the library has expanded its technology to include blogs, wikis and other ways of sharing content on the web. A team of staff from around the system is working to manage the library's content on the web, to train staff how to use the web for projects for their work, and to incorporate the web into the library's operations.

The L2Crew

Staff using Web 2.0 tools to develop Library 2.0 concepts and make the library's space interactive

Blogs

News, Reviews and Information

Digital Collections

Staff blog has been developed for use by all staff

Departmental blogs

Wikis

Departmental and committee wikis

flickr

Photos online

YouTube

Videos promoting products and services

Instant Messaging (IM)

IM reference services

Facebook and Bebo Profiles

2006 / 2007 Exhibits

Academy of Fine Arts – Southern Roots
Alabama Watercolor Society Juried Show
Charles Brooks Cartoons
Druscilla Defalque Gallery
Funky Art High School Exhibit
John DeMotte
Olmstead Maps and Drawings
Sea To Shining Sea (Smithsonian)
Southwestern Quilters



2006 / 2007 Awards

BPL was one of 80 libraries featured in the book *Heart of the Community: Libraries We Love*

Deborah Dahlin was awarded the first *Le@der of the Month* award (for the number of hours of training done by the BPL staff)

East Ensley (Mrs. Wilma Cottrell posthumously) - Girl Scouts Friendship Service Pin

Melinda Shelton – BPL's MySpace page won the *Be Innovative* award from Innovative Interfaces

North Birmingham – CHARPS Great Service Award

North Birmingham – Jefferson County Health Department Public Health Award

Pratt City – Alabama Governor's Commission on the Employment of People with Disabilities Mentoring Day Award

BPL received the 1st place award from the Department of Youth Services for the Feed the Need and Toys for Tots Program

2006 / 2007 Special Events and Programs

2007 Career Development for Unemployed Women	Fishing Rodeo
3rd Annual Great Garage Sale (fundraiser for Staff Day)	Function at the Junction
3rd Annual Read It Forward	Ikebana Workshop (Japanese Flower Arrangement)
African American Genealogy Workshop	Jones Valley Urban Garden (fundraiser for Staff Day)
Alabama Bound: A Book Fair Celebrating Alabama Authors and Publishers (19 authors)	Kids 'n Kin
Between the Lions (608 library cards to students in Head Start)	Kitchen Shower (staff shower for items needed in the kitchen)
Bill Cosby's Call Out	Kwanza Year Round
Boo at the Zoo	Langum Prize Award
BPL Presents - 12 Bright House productions	Library Day on the Hill - Washington, DC
BPL@ Night	Licensed to Read (941 library cards to students in elementary school)
2nd Chance at Love	Local Authors Expo (70 authors)
Andy Offutt Irwin	Mayor's Safe Summer Streets
Cahaba Saxophone Quartet	National Deaf History Month
Chicago	Neighborhood Fun Days
Eric Essex	Neighborhood Health Fairs
MadSkillz Dance Company	Pepper Place Market
Muse of Fire (Shakespearean Group)	Reading Rally
Ron Anglin (Juggler) and Larry Moore (Magician)	Small Business Seminars
Umdabu Dance Company	Staff Bake Sale (fundraiser for Staff Day)
Chinese New Year Festival	UAB Early Head Start Health Fair
City of Birmingham Chess Championship	Ujima Math and Science Program
Collectors and Collecting Conference - Alton, England	WILD Card Program (518 library cards to students in high school)
Councilor Royal's School Supply Distribution	Young Mothers Program
Explore Your Family Tree	Children's Author/Storyteller Events
Family Night (Avondale and North Birmingham)	Andy Offutt Irwin
Family Read	Diane Ferlatte

2006 / 2007 Support

City of Birmingham	\$15,737,354.55
State of Alabama (State Aid)	214,925.16
Misc. Grants and Gifts	153,022.00
Neighborhood Associations	20,368.00
Total	\$16,125,669.71

2006 / 2007 Statistics

Circulation	1,519,261
In-Library Use	1,844,239
Library Cardholders	159,968
Library Programs	1,905
Library Visits	2,259,374
Central	438,516
Branches	1,820,858
Meeting Room Bookings	4,836
New Bibliographic Records Created	50,473
New Library Material Processed	74,228
Program Attendance	55,145
Public Computer Use	883,104
Reference Transactions	789,516
Staff Hours in Continuing Education	5,680
Summer Reading Club	
Certificates	3,893
Participants	5,447
Program Attendance	18,498
Programs	381

2006 / 2007 Collaborative Partnerships

American Cast Iron Pipe	Jefferson County Health Department
Barnes & Noble Booksellers	Junior League of Birmingham
Birmingham Chamber of Commerce	Literacy Council of Central Alabama
Birmingham Children's Theatre	McWane Center
Birmingham City Schools	Rally's
Birmingham Civil Rights Institute	Rotary Club of Shades Mountain
Birmingham Museum of Art	UAB's Community Health Assisted Research Partners (CHARPS)
Birmingham Zoo	UAB's Deep South Network
Bright House Networks	United Way
Camp Birmingham	University of Alabama - Birmingham
Chick-fil-A	University of Alabama - Tuscaloosa
Children's Hospital	Women's HealthLink - Cooper Green Mercy Hospital
City of Birmingham Neighborhood Associations	
Division of Youth Services	YMCA of Birmingham
Jefferson County Child Development Center	YWCA of Birmingham

Birmingham Public Library Board

Mrs. Lillie M. H. Fincher, President

Mrs. Gwendolyn B. Welch, Vice President

Mrs. E. Bryding Adams

Mr. Thomas J. Adams, Jr.

Mrs. Nell Allen

Mrs. Gwendolyn R. Amamoo

Mrs. Shanta' Craig-Owens

Ms. Emily Norton

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Mrs. Dora Sims

Mr. Jimmie S. Williams

Representative from the Mayor's Office

Ms. Vickie Reynolds

Birmingham Public Library Administration

Barbara Sirmans, Director

Renee Blalock, Associate Director for Branch Libraries

Pamela O. Lyons, Associate Director for the Central Library



Administrative Council

Hope Cooper, Facilities

Sandra Crawley, Southern Region

Deborah Dahlin, Collections

Virginia Guthrie, Western Region

Janine Langston, Literacy and Outreach

Sandra Lee, Public Services

Marguerite Scott, Northern Region

Rochelle Sides-Renda, Eastern Region

Phil Teague, Information Technology

Linda Wilson, Staff Development

Locations

Avondale

509 South 40th St., 35222
(205) 226-4000

Central

2100 Park Place, 35203
(205) 226-3600

East Ensley

900 14th St., Ensley, 35218
(205) 787-1928

East Lake

#5 Oporto-Madrid Blvd., 35206
(205) 836-3341

Eastwood

4500 Montevallo Road, 35210
(205) 591-4944

Ensley

1201 25th St., Ensley, 35218
(205) 785-2625

Five Points West

4812 Avenue W, 35208
(205) 226-4013

Inglenook

4100 North 40th Terrace, 35217
(205) 849-8739

North Avondale

501 43rd St. North, 35222
(205) 592-2082

North Birmingham

2501 31st Ave. North, 35207
(205) 226-4025

Powderly

3301 Jefferson Ave. SW, 35221
(205) 925-6178

Pratt City

1100 Hibernian St., 35214
(205) 798-5071

Slossfield

1916 25th Ct. North, 35234
(205) 322-1222

Smithfield

#1 8th Ave. West, 35204
(205) 324-8428

Southside

1814 11th Ave. South, 35205
(205) 933-7776

Springville Road

1224 Old Springville Road, 35215
(205) 226-4081

Titusville

#2 6th Ave. SW, 35211
(205) 322-1140

West End

1348 Tuscaloosa Ave. SW, 35211
(205) 226-4089

Woodlawn

5709 1st Ave. North, 35212
(205) 595-2001

Wylam

4300 7th Ave., Wylam, 35224
(205) 785-0349

24/7 Virtual Library

www.bplonline.org

Birmingham Public Library
2100 Park Place
Birmingham, Alabama
35203

