

REPORT OF THE AVON FREE PUBLIC LIBRARY

GLENN GRUBE, *Library Director*

The Board of Directors of the Avon Free Public Library spent much of 2017-18 working on a new strategic plan for the library. Following a July 2017 planning meeting, the Board's strategic planning committee conducted public surveys, interviewed library staff and reviewed documents including the Library's previous strategic plan and *Best Practices in Connecticut Public Libraries*, a publication of the Connecticut State Library. Armed with the data from this research, the group updated the Library's mission, vision and values statements and began drafting broad strategic initiatives to guide the next five years of public library service in Avon. The full Library Board approved this plan in March of 2018 and the plan was formally presented to the Avon Town Council over the summer.

This process was aided greatly by the addition of two new members of the Board of Directors: Dave Howe and Margaret Tilney, who joined the Library Board this year. Both Dave and Margaret bring new perspectives and unique skills to the Board and quickly became active participants in its work.

One of the most exciting and noticeable changes in library service is the addition of Wednesday evening hours at Avon Library for the first time in more than a decade. Thanks to the continued financial support of the Town of Avon, the Library will now be open until 8:30 PM Monday through Thursday nights. It is expected that the additional hours will lead to increased library usage, as measured by door count and circulation of library materials.

A new library website was launched in September. Built on the free Wordpress platform, this new site was developed in-house, largely using the skills of librarian Jessica Palmer and Board member Eric Gauvin. The new site is easy to maintain, offers a seamless user experience, whether you are browsing on a widescreen monitor or on a smartphone, and integrates the Library's calendar of events with room reservation functionality for our bookable public spaces.

Other new technology programs and services introduced this year included a digitization station to edit and convert photos, audio and video; six new Nook HD tablets available for loan; a subscription to Gale Courses, an online learning platform offering six-week instructor-led courses in everything from test preparation to alternative medicine; the IGNITE technology club for teen girls; a community build of a 3D printed clock; and a major upgrade of the Library's wireless network.

Thanks to the support of the Friends of the Avon Library, the Carmon Funeral Home & Family Center, and the Town of Avon Public Works Department, Avon Library also had the distinction of being the first library on the East Coast to host The Amazing Castle™, a traveling exhibit created by the Minnesota Children's Museum. This 1,500 square foot replica of a medieval castle took over much of the children's department for almost four months in 2018. Imaginative, hands-on play in the castle's various interactive rooms, including a blacksmith shop, a garden, and a puppet theater, was a huge draw for children age 2 to 12. Library staff worked off the castle theme for months, dressing in medieval garb and creating programs, projects and storytimes related to dragons, fairy tales, and royalty. Visits from members of the Society for Creative Anachronism, where adults taught children and their parents about ancient crafts such as weaving, butter churning, and armor making were a huge hit with families and all were sad to see The Amazing Castle move on to its next stop at the end of May.

There were plenty of programs aimed at adults this year too, including a Four Freedoms lecture series on American democracy, sponsored by the Avon Taxpayers Association. Starting with Norman Rockwell's classic oil paintings interpreting FDR's "Four Freedoms" (Freedom of Speech, Freedom of Worship, Freedom from Want and Freedom from Fear) as inspiration, guest scholars examined these American ideals from a variety of perspectives, encouraging discussion and conversation on the topics. This series culminated with a bus trip, co-sponsored by the Avon Senior Center, to the Norman Rockwell Museum in Stockbridge, Massachusetts.

Other highlights included a month-long gallery exhibit of 19th century photographs taken by Avon resident Clinton Hadsell. Most of the prints for this exhibit were drawn from photos in the Library's Marian Hunter Local History Room, and were annotated by library staff. Work continued to digitize these, and other gems from the Library's local history collection, such as Avon's locally produced World War II newsletter and our back issues of the *The Lure of the Litchfield Hills*.

LIBRARY STATISTICS			
Library Use	FY 15/16	FY 16/17	FY 17/18
Resident Card Holders	8,323	8,144	7,948
% of Population	45%	44%	43%
Library Visits (door count)	165,223	164,249	156,275
Visits per capita	8.9	9.0	8.5
Circulation			
Adult Collection	149,128	136,692	108,425
Children's Collection	122,134	117,929	115,512
Young Adult Collection	17,642	18,831	16,453
Downloadable Collection*	10,839	12,144	18,334
Total	299,743	285,596	258,724
Circulation per capita	16.23	15.58	14.1
Library Programs	1,066	1,184	1,128
Attendance	33,438	33,147	39,044
Reference Questions	26,522	30,576	30,809
Internet Usage	30,924	29,564	27,260
Database Searches	83,856	77,253	83,340
Website Visits	150,022	141,261	197,769
Library Collection			
Print Collection	107,380	102,985	103,019
Non-print Collection**	17,392	50,977	91,708
Added to the Collection			
Print Collection	8,294	10,396	9,480
Non-print Collection**	1,687	6,067	78,625
Magazine Subscriptions (includes digital titles)	236	201	230

*Total includes downloads of e-books, e-audio, streaming video and digital magazines for all age levels.

**Now includes count of e-books and other digital content available for download.