

HOW FAR WE'VE COME by Marian R. Bauman, Director

Biggest change since we opened in 1971 is that Neptune Public Library withdrew from the Monmouth County Library in July 1972 after a special municipal election. Up until that election, we were an Association library and also part of the county system, paying twice to support both our own library and the MCL.

Everything had to be done by hand in 1971 to process books, check them out, and look them up one of three separate wooden card catalogs. It took the full-time typing of the cataloging clerk to keep up with the author, subject and title cards that went into the card catalog. Each book had a card that was stamped with a borrower's number on a metal plate when checking out. Those cards had to be sorted alphabetically each night, quite a job, especially during the Summer Reading Club when children were reading hundreds of books each week.

There were no computers in libraries in 1971. We did have electric typewriters available for people to use for a while, and over the years we checked out engravers to etch personal information on belongings, Polaroid cameras, although the borrower had to supply the expensive film, and we even let people check out artwork and bring it home to enjoy for a couple of weeks at a time.

Movies were shown at the library on a 16 mm projector that had to be threaded by hand. Now we have twice-monthly family movies that play on a DVD player.

In planning our current library, past board members realized how important it would be to the children of Neptune. They planned an entire floor for children, with rooms for storytimes, crafts, book clubs, and sturdy, colorful furniture and carpeting. We have been fortunate to have a full time Children's librarian since we opened these doors in 1971 to visit schools, do programs, plan Summer Reading Clubs, help with homework and foster a love of reading. Three of the children's librarians are here tonight: Me, Donna Donelon and her husband Richard who played Santa for us for several years, and Current Youth Services librarian Cheryl Otten.

Since many more mothers were home back in 1971, and there was no free preschool, storytimes always had the maximum 25 children enrolled. There were 4 or five sessions every week. Craft programs and Book Bingo were also always well-attended. Storytimes in the 1970s and 1980s were for children ages 3-5, but in 1989 the library began holding Toddler Storytime for 2-yr olds and a parent. Mother Goose Time Lap-Sit Storytime began in 2009 and has been very heavily attended, especially in the summer when mothers who are teachers are home.

To continue this nurturing of our smallest residents, we have partnered with the department of Vital Statistics and send invitations for a tour of the Children's department out to the parents of newborn babies, along with a coupon for a free copy of a "Goodnight Moon" board book.

In 2009 Mayor Dr Brantley started The Mayor's Book Club to encourage Early Literacy efforts by parents who read to their children. Children can earn free books to keep at home in a family library. Mary Beth Jahn and current Mayor Kevin McMillan have continued supporting the Mayor's Book Club, which now has 323 children, ages 7 mos. – 15 years, enrolled.

One of our most popular programs has to be our monthly "Read to a Dog" session with the Bright and Beautiful Therapy Dogs. Young beginner readers sign up to read and then want practice their reading at home, becoming better readers, painlessly.

Another literacy initiative is our Tween and Teen books clubs. Early graduates of the Tween club demanded and got their own book club. Members get to keep the books that they read and discuss, as well as hang out with other kids with like interests.

When we started our "Book Club in a Bag" program in 2008, modeled after one I saw in Duluth, MN visiting my sister, we initially had only 3 clubs. We are now providing books, reviews, and author information to 13 book clubs each month.

Our webpage went up back in 1996, and since then we have put up a blog with all of our programs, accessible through our website, and we also have a presence on Facebook. Through the township, we have Email blasts of events sent out to anyone who signs up to get municipal Emails.

Through a grant in 2005, we got funding to become a wireless Hot Spot, with routers both up and down stairs. Every day residents use this free internet access for their notebooks, Ipads and smart phones.

We also started a small video game collection that circulates games for a week at a time. This allows parents to try a game before they make the investment and buy it.

Future projects include finishing the display cases in the rotunda with ones that honor our fire fighters and first-aiders, putting up An Early History of the Township by John B Stout, an updated history of the Neptune Library, cemetery listings compiled by the Monmouth County Historical Association, and other interesting historical and genealogical documents.

Over the summer we will be joining ListenNJ and all card-holders will be able to download audiobooks to their Ipods, MP3 players or other devices. Free Ebooks will also be available for download to Nooks, Sony Readers or Ipads. The company that negotiates licenses for libraries is in talks with Amazon so that Kindles will be able to download free books, but they currently don't.

We will continue changing to meet the needs of our community, and as always, provide that service with a smile!