

Scotch Plains Library Joins Automation Age

By **KIMBERLY A. BROADWELL**
Specially Written for Our Town

With the addition of 17 computer terminals and a bar-coded system to track books, the Scotch Plains Public Library is gearing up for the 21st century with a comprehensive automation program designed to improve services to the community, as well as enhancing in-house library functions.

Automation of the library, located on Bartle Avenue, will allow staff members and patrons to peruse the library's current collection of 70,000 volumes via the Personal Automated Catalog (PAC) – the computerized successor to the traditional card catalog system.

It will also better enable library personnel to track books being checked in and out, and to research the availability of materials.

The library's conversion to automation also includes the incorporation of CD-ROM capabilities, allowing residents access to electronic encyclopedia information. Patrons will additionally be able to connect online from their homes with the library's PAC to search for books.

As the library fully enters the computer age, terminals in the Children's Department will feature Internet access with a filtering system restricting certain material. Youngsters age 12 and under will require written parental permission each time they wish to go online.

The library, which has been serving the township since 1968, is split into two major sections, one for adults and another for children. Under the direction of Adult Librarian Mary Czarnomski, the former section includes literature for young adults, reading and research materials.

For some time, this section of the library has had four computer stations in operation, providing patrons with Internet access along with a national telephone directory and state Department of Labor job listings.

The Children's section contains an enclosed, windowed "story pit" which, according to its small patrons, provides excellent surroundings for Storytime programs. Recently, Salvadorian artist Carlos Sanchez painted a mural of a Central American village on a glass window of the story area.

The work was commissioned by the library to encourage children to learn about art, while also broadening the library's cultural scope, according to Norbert Bernstein, Director of the library since 1972.

Storytimes, led by Children's Librarian Ann Luerssen, run in five-week sessions four times a year, and are geared toward two different age groups. A program for children age 3 through kindergarten is offered on Tuesdays from 10 to 10:30 a.m. and on Wednesdays from 1:30 to 2 p.m. For children in kindergarten and first grade, Storytimes are conducted on Wednesdays from 3:30 to 4 p.m.

Classes are limited to 18 children, and all Storytime program participants must

pre-register in the Children's Department. Youngsters must be Scotch Plains residents and be current library card holders.

Among the most popular activities for children is the library's annual Summer Reading Club, which is open to youngsters in pre-kindergarten through fifth grade from Scotch Plains and Fanwood, who can read or listen to stories. This year's program, entitled "Reading Round Up," offered children the opportunity to explore the "wild west" through books.

According to Mr. Bernstein, the Board of Trustees which oversees the library is appointed by the Mayor. Those currently serving on the board include Diane DiFrancesco, President; Thomas Barth, Vice-President; Ruth Sanford, Secretary; Paula Criscuolo, Treasurer; Judge James Walsh, Trustee; Carl Kumpf, Board of Education Liaison, and Councilman William F. McClintock, Jr., Scotch Plains Town Council Liaison.

Many Scotch Plains organizations utilize the library's meeting room, located in the lower level of the library. Some of these organizations include the African Violet Society, the Veterans of Foreign Wars, Literacy Volunteers of America and the Friends of the Scotch Plains Library, an organization formed to support the library.

Anyone interested in using the room for group meetings is asked to call Joan Iuliano, Secretary of the Library, at (908) 322-5007.

The library is open during the school year Monday through Thursday, 9 a.m. to 9 p.m., and on Fridays and Saturdays from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. The library is closed on Saturdays during the summer.



Scotch Plains Public Library • 1927 Bartle Avenue
Director: Norbert Bernstein • (908) 322-5007

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