



Local Libraries Blend Traditional

The libraries of both Scotch Plains and Fanwood have played significant roles in their respective communities since before the dawn of the 20th century.

Today, each of the libraries is also prepared to meet the challenges of a new millennium with state-of-the-art technology whereby patrons can tap into a world of knowledge with a simple keystroke.

Although now part of the automation age, both the Scotch Plains and Fanwood libraries have retained many of the traditional activities that residents of all ages have enjoyed for years, including programs designed to encourage a love of books and reading among youth.



Fanwood Memorial Library

Like its Scotch Plains counterpart, the Fanwood Memorial Library, located at North Avenue and Tillotson Road, has successfully blended traditional library resources and services with cutting-edge technology for the 21st century.

Originally housed in a small room at the rear of the post office, then on North Avenue, the library has been lending books to the public since 1902. Its initial collection consisted of 156 books, according to literature provided by the library.

The library's current building was dedicated on December 16, 1951, with an addition made in 1980. Its transition to full automation culminated on September 18 with a ribbon-cutting ceremony to unveil the library's latest technology.

On hand for the milestone occasion were Mayor Maryanne S. Connelly and the entire Borough Council, among other guests.

Since taking the helm as Library Director two years ago, Dan Weiss has guided the incorporation of modern technology at the facility, which has an adult section upstairs and a children's area on the lower level.

Last September, the library became part of the Libraries of Middlesex Automation Consortium, a regional organization comprised of 26 libraries in Union and Middlesex Counties, among them the libraries of Kenilworth and Plainfield. Mr. Weiss was recently named to a two-year term on the consortium's executive board.

It was through membership in the consortium that the library became fully automated. This evolution has not only streamlined administrative duties for the staff, but also given patrons computerized access to materials at all the consortium's libraries — approximately 500,000 items.

The Fanwood library alone boasts a collection of about 38,000 bar coded items, along with newspapers, audiovisual materials and subscriptions to more than 100 magazines.

Nine computers which are available to the public, including four in the Children's Department, now feature Internet access. There are also new computerized library cards for both adults and children, which they can use to scan their own records.

By being part of the consortium, the Fanwood Library can additionally utilize InfoLink, a North Jersey delivery link capable of bringing resources to the Fanwood facility from other member libraries. In addition, the library staff receives training through the consortium to better assist the public.

Additional services now offered by the Fanwood Library include *InfoTrac*, a periodical and newspaper index that features full text magazine articles, and *Electric Library*, a comprehensive on-line reference center with full text access to articles, television and radio transcripts and books.

There are also on-line versions of "The Encyclopedia Britannica" and "The WorldBook Encyclopedia" available for reference.

According to Mr. Weiss, the Fanwood library's "automation partners" also included the New Jersey State Library, which administered the Integrated On-Line Library Systems Grant for Public and Community College Libraries and the Technology Bond Fund, encompassing both state and federal moneys.

In the adult section, patrons can find materials on cooking and crafts, local history and the Civil War, art and biographies and the classics, among other offerings. There is also a Young Adult collection and selections which are included on the high school reading list.

The Children's Department, which is geared toward kindergarten through grade 8, features fiction, non-fiction and reference collections.

The library offers several "Storytime" programs for youngsters starting at age 2 during the fall, winter and spring, which typically last for six weeks each. In addition, the library presents special storytime fare during the holiday season.

Evening "Storytime" activities for families and an after-school program for children, are also offered by the library.

In addition, the library holds a summer reading program for children, including a "Read-to-Me-Club" for preschoolers; the Summer Reading Club for youngsters in first through fifth grade and the Teen Reading Club for middle school students.

This year's summer reading activities were capped by a "Medieval Market Fair" on September 18 at the library, during which youngsters bought books and other commemorative items with prize money they earned for their participation in the program. Mayor Connelly presented each youngster with a certificate of participation.

For the first time this summer, the library also hosted "Dragon Tales," a drama workshop for children entering fourth through ninth grades. Thirty-eight youngsters took part in the four-week program, directed by Mary Everson.

The library also hosts "KidsmArt," a fall program for kindergartners which is designed to build self-esteem and readiness for school. It is conducted by an art therapist and funded through a HEART (History Education and Arts Reaching Thousands) grant from Union County.

The library is offering computer and Internet training for families this fall, as well as an adult book discussion and the continuation of a film festival, which the facility kicked off last spring, according to Mr. Weiss.

The Fanwood Room at the library is available for meetings of local non-profit organizations, and is also used for library board meetings and other activities.

Governing the library is a six-member Board of Trustees, with Fanwood Councilman Stuart S. Kline serving as council Liaison to the board.

Full-time personnel at the library include Mr. Weiss and Children's Librarian Susan Staub, along with Gloria Rusnak in the Adult Section and Kerry Quigley in the Children's Department. There are also eight part-time staff members and six high school "pages."

During the school year, the library is open from 10 a.m. to 9 p.m. on Mondays, Tuesdays and Thursdays, and from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. on Wednesdays, Fridays and Saturdays.

The Children's Department is open until 9 p.m. on Mondays only, and the library is closed on Sundays. The building is closed on Saturdays during the summer.

For further information on programs and services available at the Fanwood Memorial Library, please call (908) 322-6400, or visit www.lmxac.org/fanwood on the Internet.

Both the Fanwood and Scotch Plains libraries are buoyed by the activities of Friends of the Library groups, which conduct fundraisers and coordinate other activities during the year in support of the library.

In addition, the two facilities are part of an inter-library loan system through which they can request materials from libraries throughout the country via the State Library's Access Center.

The libraries are also members of MURAL (Middlesex Union Reciprocal Associated Libraries), comprised of 40 libraries in Union and Middlesex Counties, which extend borrowing privileges to card holders in good standing from other member libraries.

