

**Director of County Library Services Report
For
September, 2010**

BRANCHES

BOOKMOBILE:

September was an exciting month for the Bookmobile. All the schools are back in session and several Summer Reading kids wore their t-shirts on the first day of school. Even better was the news that our summer reading participants saw their reading levels go up from last June, a fact that they attribute to our ranch visits. This point is well made by Karl Alexander in the book Outliers by Malcolm Gladwell: Over the summers from 1st to 5th grade, "the reading scores of the poor kids go up by 0.26 points....the reading scores of the rich kids, by contrast go up by a whopping 52.49 points. Virtually all of the advantage that wealthy students have over poor students is the result of differences in the way privileged kids learn while they are *not* in school." How exciting for the kids, schools and library to see how successful the summer reading program can be!

The clear favorite story time book for our little schools was Pierre the Penguin, A True Story. Pierre, an African penguin who lives at the SF California Academy of Sciences starts to lose his feathers which made him cold and miserable. His look frightens the other penguins who start to stay away from him and make noises at him. Along comes Pam, an Academy biologist, who gets the bright idea to fashion Pierre a wetsuit which saves the day. When his feathers grew back, Pierre's tiny wetsuit was put on display near the penguin exhibit.

Unfortunately there was some not so happy news too. The front axle of the BKM has broken, the replacement part is only available from Italy, and the vehicle will be out of service for some unknown period of time. The County garage has provided a standard government issue Ford Van for bookmobile staff to use and they will be contacting patrons with holds and will determine how to handle stops. Since purchasing the current vehicle 10 years ago, we have been putting aside money to replace it when necessary and that time has come.

We have been researching various possibilities, including hybrid vehicles, and hope to be ready to order a new Bookmobile sometime early in the new year. Terry Jones (C.L.S., Bookmobile) will be making a presentation in October at the Association of Bookmobiles and Outreach Services in Colorado. The organizers asked for hands on, practical topics, so hers is called "Taking Your Show on the Road: Portable Story Times for just about every setting imaginable!" The conference will give her a chance to talk directly to bookmobile manufacturer representatives and also share info and resources with her colleagues.

WEST MARIN:

Stinson Beach Library is currently featuring a very popular art show entitled "Dogs of West Marin." The show is dedicated to Misty, 6-19-1997-12-17-2009. According to Kerry Livingston (C.L.S., Stinson Beach,) Misty had figured out how to snag bread rolls from a local restaurant and a picture of her, trotting down the street with 3 of her prizes, is featured in the exhibit. The show is so popular that it merited a two-page spread in the September 9th issue of the West Marin Citizen. In addition to the canine-themed artwork, the Charlotte Jones Room (where the exhibit is displayed) is strewn about with great dog books such as *Encyclopedia of the Dog*, Bruce Fogle, *Mostly Bob*, Tom Corwin, *A Dog Year*, Jon Katz, and for the children, *Only One Woof*, James Herriot.

CI VIC CENTER: Our outreach efforts have included developing community partnerships and then leveraging those partners to help us publicize our events and resources. Elmer Jan (LII, Civic Center) has worked hard to establish some excellent relationships and the results are evident. This month the Tamalpa Runners, (<http://tamalparunners.org/>), posted a link to our calendar announcing Barry Spitz's CRM program, Dipsea: The Greatest Race, on Oct 7, increasing the number of folks who learn about the program. A win/win for both organizations.

In a heartwarming moment, Kathleen Fitzhugh-Remitz (LII, Civic Center, Children's) was returning from lunch and saw one of her regular library kids, 5-year old Susie (not her real name) and her aunt, returning books in the first floor book drop. As they dropped each book in the book drop, the aunt said, "Say goodbye Very Hungry Caterpillar" and Susie said "goodbye" and so on with each title. As they worked their way through the stack the aunt made various remarks like "Thank you library book for letting us read you!" and "We love our library books!" Susie would reply, "I love you Frog and Toad!," and "Thank you Pinkalicious!" After they returned their books they got frozen yogurt and then came to story time. How very clever of the aunt to use returning books as an opportunity to acknowledge what the library provides. Kathleen thanked the aunt and told her how lucky Susie was to have her in her life as such a positive role model for libraries and literacy.

In a thoughtful moment, a patron wrote on a Customer Comment card "The Frank Lloyd Wright library is ... a tranquil and magnificent library space that wonderfully absorbs the human sounds, has such perfectly engineered light, and that unique ceiling that suggests the cosmos and to which I often look in musing moments."

A Civic Center volunteer is working on a project that involves the relabeling of biographies with a MCFL sticker. He noticed that one of the biographies had a due date stamped in the book from 1944. The book was in good condition and he was delighted to see this one, and many others, still circulating after so many years.

Civic Center has a defibrillator by the elevator in the library. The height of the latch which opens the unit is perfect for young, curious children in strollers or those just standing about waiting for the elevator to arrive. Too often, the latch is opened, resulting in a loud siren sound and then a continual tweet until it is turned off by the maintenance staff. That occurred one night at 9 p.m. as staff was in the process of closing. In the morning, the defibrillator was still tweeting and maintenance was called. When the maintenance person arrived, there was some conversation about how annoying this is and a waste of time for all involved. Ralph Asay, (Library Branch Aide) commented that he's seen covers over hospital defibrillators and maybe we could do something like that here. The maintenance staffer didn't think that was possible. He replaced the batteries, stopped the tweeting and he went on his way. About half an hour later he returned with a solution: labels, about 3 inches long, saying in red, Emergency Use Only. The label covers the latch, making it a real challenge for small fingers to engage, but simple for an adult to tear off in a real emergency. Of course time will tell if it really works, but after all these years of putting up with the unwanted noises, we are hopeful.

FAIRFAX: The long planned ADA upgrade to the parking lot and the bike path was completed. Unexpected benefits are that the Library is now more visible from Sir Francis Drake Blvd. and the bike path area looks more attractive now.

Change, change, and then more change has become our library mantra and several recent events at Fairfax illustrate how our branches are moving to stay current with the needs and wants of our communities. First, the Team of the Quarter folks from Tech Support upgraded the wifi so that the signal is stronger and coverage is better throughout the building. More and more of our patrons are coming in with laptops and other mobile devices and our infrastructure needs to grow to meet the increased demand. Along with the other branches, Fairfax is retiring their books on tape, making room for our growing and popular collection of materials in Spanish. (see more on this subject below.) And finally, to meet the need of our teen patrons for a space of their own, they've taken the first step to creating a more inviting Teen area –a purple wall! Using funds from the Fairfax Friends of the Library, new shelving and furniture is on its way also.

MARIN CITY: From a very promising pool of applicants, Marin City has hired four new Webstars. The Webstar program was begun years ago with the move to the new library facility. It is designed to help local teens learn new technology skills and for them to use those skills helping patrons on the library computer work stations. These young people are an asset to the community and to the staff.

The annual Sausalito Floating Homes Tour was Saturday 9/25. The MCI Friends work as volunteers and in return the library is the recipient of a generous donation each year from the Floating Homes Association. I had the good fortune to be able to attend this year and what a fascinating experience. The open homes I got to visit varied from a restored tug boat to a large and lavish Japanese-inspired house to the art-filled home of Suki Sennett, long-time County employee and dedicated library supporter.

CORTE MADERA:

As September was National Library Card Month, children who got a new card, or just showed us their existing card, got raffle tickets for packets of 4 tickets to Giants game on October 2. Having the Giants in a close pennant race made the raffle all the more exciting! Serving Teens is part of MCFL's increased emphasis on Youth Services and on Wednesday, September

22 Corte Madera had a program for older teens, "Financial Planning for Teens." Fifteen teens of high school age and parents participated in this event.

BOOKS IN DIFFERENT FORMATS: Books have historically changed their form according to the available technologies of the times and libraries have traditionally had to make decisions on what to include in their collections. For most of history there was no choice. Books were on stone tablets, then on scrolls, then on printed pages. The difference we face today is the pace of the change. Stone books lasted millennia, scrolls for hundreds of years. Printed type was the sole format available for a couple of centuries. Starting a generation ago, the change accelerated bewilderingly quickly. Not only could we read books in regular or large type, but we could listen to books on 8 track tapes, then on cassette, then on DVD, then in electronic form. Now we can read books on paper, on a specialized e-reader, on our computer or on our phone. As librarians we want to respond to our patrons but their needs are becoming more and more diverse while our budgets stay limited. Choices need to be made.

Recently, several realities converged which lead the Collection Development Team to the decision to retire Books on Tape in September. (We will be keeping the Language Learning kits.) Because most titles are no longer released on cassette, MCFL has not been purchasing audio books on cassette since FY 08/09. Replacements for lost or damaged tapes are no longer free from the publishers and many are unavailable even for a price. Our long time volunteer tape mender is retiring, repair materials are no longer available from our suppliers, and our collection is extremely worn with more than 70-80 circulations per items. Usage has declined dramatically – in June of 2010, 914 books on tape circulated while 7,256 books on CD were checked out. At a recent library conference, the presenter pointed out that an item on a library shelf takes up \$35 worth of space in the building. If we own approximately 1000 books on tape, they're taking up more than \$35,000 worth of space in our buildings and that space could be more profitably used for more popular and heavily used collections. Many of the retired sets went to The Book Place for sale by the County Friends; many were sold from carts in the branches; some were donated to local schools and senior centers. Where possible, the completely unplayable ones were recycled. And the change continues. The Collection Development Team is now planning a pilot program of books on MP3 disks – an entire novel on only one disk.

DONATIONS: We acknowledged the following donations in September:

- 1) \$3,550 from various donors to Marin County Free Library's Anne T. Kent California Room. These are used to contract an oral historian to conduct 10 new oral histories and restore 12 fragile Marin Co phonebooks. (approved @ the 9/14 BOS Meeting)

PERSONNEL: Most of our vacant positions remain filled in a temporary way until Human Resources works on updating and streamlining the descriptions and classifications. This month we did hire two part time Library Branch Aides (these are our shelvers) at the entry level, one in Corte Madera and one in Fairfax. We also have an active recruitment for a part time Library Assistant I in Corte Madera that will close on October 15th.

MEDIA MENTIONS will return next month.