

MOSES GREELEY PARKER MEMORIAL LIBRARY

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DRACUT, MASSACHUSETTS 01826

LIBRARIAN'S ANNUAL REPORT TO THE BOARD OF LIBRARY TRUSTEES--1983

Although this library's desire and ability to serve the Dracut community has been frustrated by historic minimal funding, 1983 was a year in which the Moses Greeley Parker Memorial Library faced the reality of a potentially desperate financial crisis. As a result of financial constraints imposed directly or indirectly by Proposition 2 $\frac{1}{2}$, the library was level funded from FY 1983, a situation which translated into an actual budget reduction. All areas of library service were affected; the number of personnel was reduced; and the library cut its number of open hours. The library's ability to serve Dracut was compromised. However, of even greater importance is a concern for the future; for despite minimal funding, the library, library services, and most importantly library use have grown. Within the past four years and with a total investment of over \$1,000,000, the library has quadrupled in size, has expanded the level and number of its services and is computerizing many of its operations. However, 1983 was a year in which the library struggled to maintain past services, programs, and operations. If the library's financial situation is not significantly improved, the existence of the Parker Library as the Dracut community has come to know and use will be jeopardized. Maintaining the current levels of service and of operation will become impossible. Will the library revert to its status and use some ten years ago? Will an investment of over \$1,000,000 be wasted? 1983 was a year in which these questions became extremely real concerns.

Although the library defined a staffing pattern in 1981, staffing that pattern has remained in constant change. Whereas salary levels have traditionally led to staff turnover, level funding for FY 1984 also dictated the library reduce its number of personnel. Beginning in July, the library terminated all part time personnel in order to create one full-time Library Aide position. The net effect was the loss of two full time personnel, approximately 23% of the library's work force. Consequently, the library's schedule of open hours was reduced, and the work load of remaining employees was increased. Given the growth in library use and the expansion of library services and operations, the effect of the reduction in staff was, and continues to be, a serious problem affecting the entire range of library services, programs, and operations. Even with the reduction in open hours to maintain the level of library operations, the library needs more personnel.

The reduction in staff began in July, the beginning of Dracut's fiscal year. The two Library Pages were terminated immediately, and Library Aide Margaret O'Malley resigned to accept the Librarian's position at Notre Dame Academy. Library Aide Marion Thissell was terminated in October, and Library Aide Julia West was appointed as a full-time Library Aide. Thus 104 personnel hours were consolidated into 35. After a maternity leave, Assistant Librarian Claire Withee resigned. Subsequently, Library Assistant Jeanne Roy was appointed as Assistant Librarian/Adult-Young Adult Services leaving a Library Assistant position to be filled in early 1984. Thus the history of constant staff turnover continued at a repeated cost to the Dracut community as well as to the library. The library continued its participation in youth employment programs by serving as a work site for the Center for Occupational Awareness and Placement (COAP) as well as serving as a work site for six participants in CETA's summer youth employment program.

Community use of the Parker Library, as reflected in circulation statistics, decreased in 1983. Beginning in September, the library reduced its weekly schedule of open hours from sixty to fifty-three; consequently by the end of the year, the library was closed over two additional weeks as compared to 1982. Thus, level funding effectively compromised last year's growth in library use as measured by circulation statistics. The following table illustrated the areas of public use of the library's collection of circulating materials.

<u>ADULT</u>		<u>JUVENILE</u>	
		Picture books	11,338 (13% increase)
Fiction	13,240 (3.7% decrease)		4,156 (3.4% decrease)
Non-Fiction	11,178 (7.1% decrease)		5,967 (12.2% decrease)
Paperbacks	12,355 (nochange)		1,538 (45% decrease)
Magazines	3,470 (13.6% decrease)		294 (14.4% decrease)
Records	1,174 (7.4% increase)		618 (46.4% increase)

Although the table indicates an overall decrease in circulation of approximately 3.8% from 1982, that decrease is minimal in view of the reduction in hours. Library circulation services also include deposits to the Dracut Housing Authority and the St. Louis School totaling 461; circulation of talking books made available through a deposit from the Perkins School totaled 133; and through its interlibrary loan services, the Parker Library was able to supply 476 items not in its collection while helping patrons of other libraries by supplying fifteen titles. New circulation services in 1983 included framed art prints, made available through a grant from the Dracut Arts Council, and poloroid cameras, made available through a grant by the Poloroid Corporation secured by Assistant Librarian Kathleen Hudzik. Use of these services was reflected in the circulation of fifteen art prints and 28 loans of cameras.

As mentioned last year, one of the problems the library faces is the non-return of circulated items. In 1982 the library instituted a policy that curtailed borrowing privileges for severely delinquent patrons; and in 1983, the number of items overdue six weeks or longer was reduced by over 30%. This policy resulted in more books available to the public thus contributing to the minimal drop in circulation. The library continued its policy of renting most fiction thus making available a greater number of currently popular titles.

Circulation statistics are not the sole measure of library use, and in 1983 more people attended library programs than ever before. Despite the reductions in staff, services and open hours total program attendance was approximately 5,140, a 28% increase from 1982. Also, in 1984 the library initiated public access to a coin operated microcomputer. Sponsored by the Friends of the Library and supported by the Lions Club, McDonald's, Alexander's Markets, the Demoulas Foundation, and private donations, this microcomputer will be available to all library patrons aged ten and up who have completed a one hour orientation. Initially the library will seek to establish a large group of users who in turn will establish direction for subsequent computer use. Thus 1983 continued a familiar pattern of frustration: library use grew while the library's resources were reduced.

Children's programs included preschool story hour (attendance 895), class visits to the library (attendance 79), a weekly film series during the first part of the

year (attendance 213), and visits from local day care centers (attendance 115). Children attended other library activities including special holiday programs, computer orientations, a continuing cable television program, and various performances (total attendance 345). The library's summer reading program centered around "New technologies in fact and fiction" (attendance 304), and the library's National Library Week series of programs featured a balloon launch, storytelling, and a mother-child crafts program (attendance 61). Thus, over 2,000 children participated in library activities in 1983.

Library activities for adults included a wide range of programs and services ranging from the practical to the cultural. Programs and services ranged from aerobic dancing and crafts programs to speed reading, a theater series, and circulating art prints. Approximately 3,127 of Dracut's adult population utilized these services. Of special interest this past summer were the theater and computer literacy series. Funded primarily by the Dracut Arts Council, over 300 people attended productions and performances at the North Shore Music Theatre. Also, in cooperation with the Dracut School Department, the library presented two computer literacy series. Over 30 people participated in the two fifteen hour hands-on programs. Special events at the library also included a full week's activities during National Library Week and the Friends of the Library's Winter Wonderland, the highlight of which was a raffle for a getaway weekend donated by Dunfey Hotels. This past year the library extended its facilities to various civic groups, community agencies, and public service groups including the Postcard Club, Dracut Finance Committee, Town Republican Club, Dracut Arts Council, Campfire Girls, Dracut Rotary Club, Dracut Lions Club, Dracut Cable Commission, and the Dracut Historical Society. This year the Dracut Historical Society presented the community with The Photographic History of Dracut Massachusetts as well as a new town seal.

The library's collection continued to grow with the addition of 2,400 items, including 355 paperback books, 80 records, and 1,965 hard bound volumes. Approximately 800 volumes of popular fiction and non-fiction are made available to patrons through the library's participation in the McNaughton Book Rental Program. Thus acquisitions increased in 1983 even though the library's budget was level funded. Registrations continued to increase with 1,248 new patrons registered in 1983, bringing the registration file to 16,527.

Special recognition and thanks must go to the individuals and groups that have been especially supportive of the library and its activities throughout the year. The Dracut Friends of the Library sponsored, (with the support of the Dracut Lions Club, the DeMoulas Foundation, Mrs. Ann Conrod, Alexanders Markets and McDonalds) a coin operated public access microcomputer. Also the Dracut Arts Council provided funding for the library's summer theater series as well as continued support for the circulating art print collection. A special thank you is extended to those individuals who donated materials for inclusion in the library's collection. Finally I would like to extend special recognition to and applaud the dedication, commitment, and accomplishments of a library staff reduced in number who sought to provide and maintain the highest quality of library service. The work to implement the changes in library technology coupled with the pressure of maintaining this library's expanded services, made 1983 a year in which the ability to serve an increased demand for its services an impossible paradox.

Thus 1983 marked a year of waiting for both the library and the Dracut Community.

With a level funded budget approved at Annual Town Meeting, the library's history of minimal funding grew to a desperate reality. Hours and staff were reduced to accommodate financial constrictions, yet there was no reduction in the demands for service. A sense of past progress, highlighted by an expanded library building and the commitment to computerization has been compromised. If this situation continues, this library cannot continue to serve Dracut as this community has come to expect. Thus 1984 will become a year of decision: will the library and its services continue a process of erosion, or will needs of the library and the needs for library services be recognized and supported?

Respectfully submitted:
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M. G. Parker Memorial Library

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