Special Report by Jennifer Winberry: South County Branch Library

After several construction delays and some telecommunication issues, the South County Branch Library opened in its new home on August 9. The first patron who walked in commented how much larger and more open the new library was, and where is the photocopier? At first, patrons were unsure where to find the library, but thanks to some shiny new library signs from the County Sign Shop and some strategically placed Open flags, patrons have found the library and are delighted to have library service once again.

Word quickly spread that the library was open and patrons wasted no time in returning to their library. During the first month (less the first seven days closed), the library circulated 5,301 items and over fifty patrons came in to renew their library cards and almost a dozen new cards were issued. Story times have quickly filled up and the nursery school in the building next door is eager to make use of the library and its resources. Art teachers at area schools are already planning their first exhibit for the bulletin boards in the Youth Services area.

The new library, though only a few hundred square feet larger than the previous location, has an area carved out for quiet study, several comfortable seating areas (which will soon have new chairs thanks to the generosity of the Friends of the Hunterdon County Library) and an expanded area for children with a special space dedicated to teen readers. The landlord and his general contractor were very sensitive to the library’s needs and graciously accommodated our requests: where there were no windows, there are two lovely banks of windows overlooking a meadow; a moderate size workroom/staff lounge was carved out and several interior windows were added to allow staff maximum visibility. The Friends of the Hunterdon County Library helped replace some of the older, worn furniture including new computer tables and chairs, a table and chair set for the staff room, a new display spinner for library and county information and display cubes to highlight sections of library materials.

The library staff from South County Branch and Extension Services worked very hard in keeping track of returns and holds for patrons during the closed time, emptying the book drop several times a day and contacting patrons when holds were ready, offering them alternative locations at which to pick up their materials. The staff at Headquarters and the North County Branch graciously welcomed the displaced staff into their daily routine and patiently answered patrons’ questions as to when the new library would be open. Even the staff at the Ringoes Post Office (in the same complex in which the library was formerly located) fielded many questions about the library’s new location and continues to direct patrons four miles south to its new home.
The opening of the library was a county-wide effort: county architect Frank Bell who assisted in every step from planning the space to making sure the certificate of occupancy was all in order when it was time to open; members of the Buildings and Grounds department moved the circulation desk, removed no longer usable items from the old location and assembled furniture, hung pictures and tightened screws in our new location, making sure the library was cleaned and vacuumed for opening day; the Road Department’s sign shop made new directional signs and placed them in a location that leads patrons right to the front door; the IT Department not only disassembled all the equipment at the old location, they assembled and configured, tested and retested all the systems at the new location and kept patrons up to date on the progress of the library through website and on-line catalog updates.

This new library is a tribute to the dedicated library employees, Library Commissioners, Friends of the Library and fellow county employees along with the support of a community that recognizes the value of library service. The South County Branch Library looks forward to serving the southern part of Hunterdon County and providing outstanding library service for many years to come.

Extension Services

This has been a busy summer for the Extension Services Department. In addition to the usual deliveries of books, the staff spent time assisting in the South County Branch Library move, emptying the book drop, making special deliveries of last minute things that needed attending to, assisting in the unpacking of the new library and helping keep returns and requests organized while the South County Branch Library was closed. Several staff members also manned the booth in the Community Services tent at the Hunterdon County 4-H and Agricultural Fair. The bookmobile was also very much in demand at community events such as Night Out sponsored by the sheriff’s department and a back to school event sponsored by the Salvation Army. The bookmobile also visited the nursery school at the Merck Corporation; a trip that is becoming an annual event looked forward to by both library staff and students at the school. The staff has begun receiving and processing requests made by schools for library materials, a service that many of the school librarians brag about to their out of county colleagues at professional conferences.
Technical Services

After twenty-five years, the Technical Services Department (and the library) bid farewell to Kristin Momberg. Kristin has spent her library career cataloging for the library, and as head of the department for more than fifteen years. While she will be sorely missed, the department runs very smoothly and has quickly picked up work when necessary, welcoming staff members from other departments who come to assist as schedules allow and helping to acclimate their new supervisor as she takes on a new role in the department. Members of the department are diligent about shelving library materials, many of them adopting a favorite section and taking much pride in certain sections, shelf reading and straightening them after the shelving is complete.

Teen Café

Teen Café at Headquarters presented six programs this summer. Students in grades 5 through 9 learned how to make their own bleached t-shirts, attempted to complete a challenging library-wide scavenger hunt, built their own pasta towers, and competed in our own version of the Summer Olympics, as well as a Battle of the Books.

North County Branch Teen Café had a very successful ninth summer of programming with 128 participants for six programs. This year’s theme for teens was Own the Night. The programs included an evening with YA author David Lubar, a bat program presented by the director of Bat World Sanctuary in NJ, an evening of Native American storytelling with local Indian scholar Kevin “Two Steps” O’Connell, a Vampire and Werewolves extravaganza, as well as the Fourth Annual Teen Idol Talent Show, which the Clinton business community graciously continues to support with prizes. Fifty-three young people registered for the Teen Summer Reading Club. Twenty-two young people turned in four or more book reviews and participated in the pizza party summer finale.

Teen Writers Group

The North County Branch Teen Writers Group flourished this summer with 22 young people on the roster. This group of advanced writers meets monthly with co-facilitators Bill Spear and Ann-Louise Taylor. The program is sponsored through the financial support of the Friends of the Hunterdon County Library.
Tweenz programs

The Headquarters "tweenz" (grades 1-4) learned how to make their own glow-in-the-dark paper beads, learned about and competed in a Summer Olympics event, and played a game of water balloon volleyball. The tweens also had fun playing indoor games with Yvonne Kusters of "Let's Play Today." All programs for teens and tweens were well-attended.

This summer, children and teens also had the opportunity to come watch several movies, including "Red Riding Hood," "Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows Pt. 2," "The Lorax," and "The Hunger Games." Screenings of "The Lorax" and "The Hunger Games" each drew over 90 patrons.

The North County Branch tweenz, (grades 1-6) enjoyed programs such as Dream Big with Yvonne from Let's Play Today, Dream Big Singing in Sign (American Sign Language) with Paula, Dream Big Learning with HCL's Therapy Dog Handlers and Dogs, and Dream Big Creating Hats. A total of 165 young people attended these programs.

Hunger Games lock-in

Twenty-four teens also attended a "Hunger Games" lock-in this August, where they watched the movie and participated in games, crafts, and discussions of the popular book series by Suzanne Collins. The lock-in was very successful, with most participants requesting another similar event in the future.

Summer Reading Club

Overall, it was another very successful Summer Reading Club. With the help of additional summer librarians, we offered storytimes and craft programs for all ages at all locations. At HQ and NCB, we also hosted special performers including a magician, singers, a theater group, a reptile show, and a petting farm held outside. All were very well attended and patrons expressed their gratitude that the library continues to offer such wonderful programs!

Discounts with Your Library Card

In honor of National Library Card Month, the Hunterdon County Library and the Flemington Free Public Library are once again teaming with local businesses to offer “Discounts with Your Library Card.” Patrons will receive a pre-determined discount when they present their library card at participating businesses. Brochures with a list of participating businesses can be found on our web page or at any Hunterdon County Library. The promotion runs until September 30.
HCL Amateur Photography Show

Entries are now being accepted for the Hunterdon County Library Annual Photography Show, which will be on display in the main gallery of HCL Headquarters during the month of October. New Jersey author and photographer Walter Choroszewski will judge the show and prizes will be awarded on Wednesday, October 10. Library patrons are also invited to vote for their favorite entry.

300th Bookmark Contest

HCL held a competition for library patrons to design the September 2012 monthly bookmark. The contest commemorates the 300th bookmark in the series designed by Jim Thatch since October 1987. The three winners were Leah Kenny (Grade K-5), Alex Cummins (Grade 6-12) and Cori Kosar (Adult). The winners received prizes and had their bookmarks printed and distributed to library patrons. All entries are on display in the Bookmark Café at HCL Headquarters until the end of September.

Web Page Redesign

Amy Jo Seeley, Tanvi Rastogi and Jim Thatch are currently working to redesign and update the Hunterdon County Library web page. The new site should be ready sometime in October.

Circulation Statistics for July 2012

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Circulation Statistics for August 2012

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Items Circulated through end of August
2012 YTD vs. 2011 YTD

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YTD 11

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