Annual Report 2010

Services & Programs

Record numbers of adults and teens came out for established favorites and many new classes, activities, guest speakers, and program series in 2010. Programs like inter-generational Nature Walks in the town forest, band concerts and picnics on the library lawn, book-clubs, and Sit 'n Knit series continued to attract participants of all ages and interests. A new monthly Drop-In Chess program, using teen volunteers to provide guidance and help, enhanced weekends for many Reading families. We launched a new REWIND Film Discussion series of screenings and monthly film discussions led by an expert facilitator. Cool Cats Craft Night attracted many to the library on a hot summer night, and the staff-led Summer Sizzlers - Speed Book Reviews was a smash hit as we made it easy for everyone to reserve books reviewed that night on the spot. Forty-five people enjoyed a new Holiday Arts & Crafts night featuring staff and volunteers sharing their special talents and interests.

Several new marketing efforts resulted in boosts to circulation of selected collections as displays featured new media and a new emphasis on different formats.

"This is just awesome"

The library took to the streets to serve everyone: from summer into early fall, librarians once again provided books, recipes, and more to shoppers and busy commuters at the Farmers' Market/Train Depot. Some comments:

"Glad I ran into you"….

"You guys are offering a great service"

Several librarians made the most of the successful Fall Faire to spread the word about library services and partnered with Reading Public Library Foundation and Friends to

promote library resources and services. The Library hosted an informational table at Friends and Family Day and signed up participants for summer programs. Librarians took a new Library Myths presentation to PTO meetings and reached out to parents and faculty at several schools.

There's also a colorful new library services brochure entitled "Did You Know?" and Information Emergency business cards available at the Information Desk as a fun and easy way to keep library contact information.

Grab 'n Go Bags

Club Kits

New in 2010 are eight **Grab and Go** kits - book bags that have five books in them on a similar topic. The highest circulating kit is the cozy mysteries followed by historical fiction. The other bag titles are: Baseball, Beach Reads, Local Color, Laugh Out Loud, Non-Fiction Page Turners and Thrillers.

We've also added a new quick pick up for Book Clubs! So far we offer six **Club Kits** and a few more on the way. These are the book club kits in a bag with a variety of formats of the same title for book club members to enjoy. If you've thought about starting a book club in your neighborhood or workplace, grab a "Club Kit" next time you're in the library and find out how simple it is!

The Library subscribes to a new online service called "Bookletters" which provides reading lists directly to patrons and allows librarians to create a variety of custom lists of new materials to which patrons can subscribe.

We now offer Ebooks, connecting to a whole new group of users. Ebooks are downloadable titles users can read on devices such as Sony Readers and the Nook.

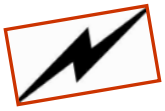
We created a new Too Hot to Trot collection of bestselling paperbacks to ensure a greater selection for walk-in users.

The library looked for new ways to connect people to enriching activities for all ages and engage families in learning and worthwhile experiences at home and on vacation. Every week from spring through summer, a different Museum Pass was featured on a "Monopoly" board display. We used bookmarks, displays, and weblogs to enrich and extend community interest in Afghanistan and global issues, reminding us all that all kinds of learning activities are available and no matter what age we are, we are still learning!

Adult Services

The Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners approved an environmental literacy grant entitled "Change makes a Difference" to offer programs and resources to engage the public to make informed decisions on environmental issues. In 2010 we created a new grant website and revitalized our green collection. Attendance was solid and interest was high in the first of several planned classes, local information on home energy.

As soon as we learned about a new digitization project through Internet Archive at Boston Public Library, we hastened to add some of our local history books to it. We hand-carried eleven volumes of rare and out of print books of local historical significance to Boston to have them digitized. You can now find them online for the very first time! Also newly available online are several podcasts developed in partnership with local historians and Walkable Reading that provide a walking/bicycling tour of some historic houses in Reading. Plans are afoot ☺ to do more podcasts of Bare Meadow and other local places to explore while listening to experts describe some special features.



One of the most successful program series the library has ever offered is the twice-monthly LiveWires program, lifelong-learning programs that attract people who bring their curiosity and interest in everything from Pleasure Island to charitable giving to Cape Ann artists and more. This program series was originally established through a special grant and has been continued through generous private donations.

A Job Search Skill Series provided resources for people looking to change careers, find employment, or learn how to update their job seeking skills. Attendees from previous years who succeeded in their job search returned to tell their stories and share their successes and special tips to the newest group.

Librarians shared their enthusiasm for lots of new books at the annual Reading Women's Club booktalks program. 60 people attended their very entertaining presentation.

For the first time, the Reading Public Library is offering a Foreign Affairs discussion series. This monthly group is led by by a former state department employee who provides readings and insights for the participants during their in-depth discussions of hot topics and controversial issues. The program is held in the conference room and is currently running at maximum capacity.

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A spring Book Group Night featured author Randy Susan Meyers and attracted sixty-five participants from local and area bookgroups.

Reading Public Library Foundation/Helen Nigro Speaker Series supported a third season of The American Voices book discussions led by Ann Murphy. New in 2010 were two evenings of dinner and discussions which attracted enthusiastic crowds for Indian and Chinese foods and books.

Website

Web highlights include the launch of our Twitter presence and Facebook page, and development of an “Adult Service” page, a need-to-know-now “In the News” page and completion of the RPL Foundation page.

Many new additions & enhancements were made to the Kids section of the library website, notably the highly-visited For Babies & Toddlers page and bi-weekly lists of new children’s books & media. Customers can subscribe to these lists. A parents’ page which highlights our new Autism/Spectrum-related materials was also a useful new addition.

We introduced our new reader’s advisory page Books, Movies and Music, offering users: easy access to booklists from award winners to hot new titles; the ability to check our catalog and reserve titles; links to great reader resources; and multiple options to receive automated updates.

Young Adults

Teen Summer Program: Teen librarians visited twelve sixth-grade classrooms to promote summer reading activities at Reading Public Library. 199 teens joined the program and read a total of 755 books. Teens also enjoyed a Pizza Taste Off and a Summer Survivor event that had them competing in special events throughout the library!

Volunteens: 27 teen completed 355 volunteer hours. Volunteen work included: Scanning, indexing, updating statistical databases, compiling evaluations, collating handouts, inputting summer reading forms, and assisting at all teen programming.

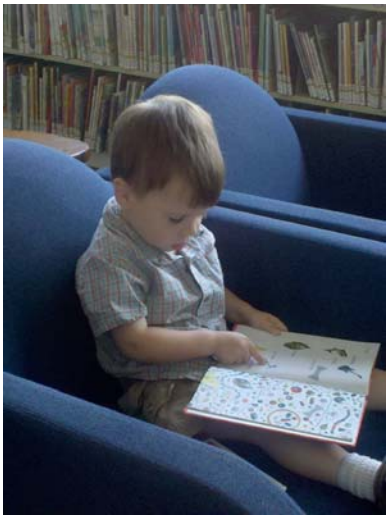
Teen Librarians facilitated a successful two-day middle school visit with author Kathleen Benner Duble, including an evening visit to Reading Public Library.

Children

New services were added in 2010 in addition to the established round of story times, school visits, vacation programs, films, and book discussion groups. Babytime playgroups meet twice monthly and offer opportunities for learning, resource sharing and socialization. Something on Sundays targets families on a day when there can be more time spent together. Family Storytimes and the LEGO Creation Club have been drawing enthusiastic crowds.

French for Kids was a new series run as a Girl Scout Gold Award Project.
As part of the huge Summer Reading Program, “It’s Reading Cats and Dogs”, we added two new programs which were a howling success!

100 children signed up for Paws to Read, to read to therapy dogs; increasing their enjoyment with books and skill in reading. The Art Contest encouraged young artists to create their perfect pet. In all, over 1000 children participated in the Summer Reading Program, reading for a record 16,252 hours, with 5277 children attending 91 programs during the 10 week period.



Reading Library is a partner in a federal grant to enhance resources and services to Families with Autism. The grant provided funding for staff training that we offered to other Town departments who serve the public. The library also added Autism/Spectrum-related resources to our Parents Collection that have been well-received by special education professionals and parents.

We expanded the Graphic Novel collection and created a cozy seating area where children could enjoy those materials. The new Playaway format finally released children's book titles and we purchased a nice collection which flew off the shelves! With a nice donation from the Reading Co-operative Bank, we expanded our extremely popular collection of Picture Book Backpacks. These convenient collections are almost always checked out!

Building Study

The Library commenced a comprehensive building analysis and feasibility study in 2010. The study was the result of a long-range planning process that identified several pressing needs associated with the current condition of the Library. The Library Trustees were unanimous in their commitment to improving conditions while preserving the landmark building for future generations. At the same time as the Trustees were concluding their planning, in January 2010, the State announced a new and enhanced round of grant funding for library construction projects, including funding for renovations and additions.

History

The Highland School Building was built by Reading architect Horace Wadlin in 1894 and served as an elementary school until the 1960's. In 1984, after a major redesign by Mark Mitchell Architects, the building was converted for use as a library. The building is on the National Historic Register.

Photo courtesy of Everett Blodgett

STUDY

Several steps were undertaken to identify present and future needs and provide sufficient information for developing a plan for the building. A Programmer was hired and produced a preliminary report. An architectural team was selected to analyze existing conditions and develop ideas and schematic drawings based on the information gathered from expert analysis, engineers, geotechnical study, and the Programmer's report.

TRUSTEES & BUILDING COMMITTEE

While the architects and their consultants were working, the Trustees met regularly with representatives of the community to review plans and set priorities. The members of the Library Building Committee are:

Sharlene Reynolds-Santo (Historical Commission)
Joseph Huggins (Facilities Director)
Vicki Yablonsky (Trustee)
Karyn Storti (Trustee)
Nancy Aberman (Reading Public Library Staff)
David Hutchinson (Trustee)
Richard Curtis (Trustee)
Cherrie Dubois (Trustee)
Jeffrey Doucette (Trustee)
Bill Hecht (Reading Public Library Foundation President)
Ruth Urell (Library Director)
John Brzezenski (Past President, Reading Public Library Foundation)

Advisory:
Dennis Smith (Reading Memorial High School)
Kaitlin Menzie (Reading Memorial High School)

GOALS OF LIBRARY BUILDING PROGRAM

CREATE SPACE FOR:

1. Children's programs and learning areas
2. Children's general &special collections
3. Teens for studying, reading, gathering, computers, and books
4. Increase in resource sharing / delivery / outreach / homebound /
5. Volunteers work spaces
6. Space for Friends & Foundation official activities and archives
7. Meeting room is too small and not equipped for multi-purpose functions

8. Conference room is too small and not equipped for multi-purpose functions
9. Need silent study, small group spaces, and tutoring areas
10. Need more places for people to sit, work on laptops, sit at desks/study carrels

FIX

1. Building envelope repairs :masonry, chimneys, downspouts and gutters, windows, roof
2. Lighting (interior and exterior)
3. HVAC – poor distribution, hot and cold areas, inefficient & ineffective
4. Safety and accessibility issues
5. Technology infrastructure and power distribution
6. Solve adjacency problems – e.g. – teens next to elders currently
7. No staff presence in some large areas of current building
8. Address security/growth issues – improve sight lines and make more browsing and seating space
9. Parking/pedestrian and car traffic issues
10. Make library accessible from front (Middlesex Avenue)
11. Out of date and inadequate staff work spaces

VALUES

1. Sustainability and Low Environmental Impact
2. Preservation
3. Community: – The library is a destination - people visit with one another, they meet, they discuss, parents bring toddlers, tutoring for adults, children, and after-school and summers
4. Marketing collections and services: display spaces, make it easier to browse and to see; more books need to be displayed cover-out
5. Flexibility: collections change, need more flexibility in design and furnishings
6. Welcoming & comfortable "Shabby chic" not stuffy and polished – Just like home atmosphere
7. Neighborhood feeling, bright, daylight, open views
8. Efficient and practical, smart use of space, not elaborate, not fussy, and easily maintained
9. Build for growth and increasing usage

PROPOSAL

At the conclusion of the Building Study, the Library filed a grant proposal to seek state funding for a 7,596 SF addition and an extensive renovation to the existing building to provide full access, updated lighting, traffic flow, security, HVAC, and wiring and to build in more flexible spaces for future growth, changes in services, and increasing usage. The Library Trustees will make a proposal to Town Meeting in April, 2011, to support the plans for the design and, if successful, will ask for a full vote from the community in the Fall, 2011.

2010 Highlights

- Job Search Skills Series draws record participation
- First-ever Podcasts recorded and mounted in partnership with Walkable Reading for self-guided walking tours of several historical homes in the area
- Environmental Literacy "Change Makes a Difference" federal grant awarded
- Corinne Fisher inducted into the Massachusetts Library Association Hall of fame for her outstanding leadership in Children's Services
- Allison Sloan named Paralibrarian of the Year by Library Journal for her work on advocating for recognition of the contributions of Paralibrarians throughout the profession
- Two beautiful old trees on the library lawn were destroyed by disease and removed
- Staff Day tour of the new Cambridge Public Library and the Print-on-Demand service at the Harvard Book Store
- Ashley Waring had an article published in the well-respected children's reviewing journal, The Horn Book.
- Mary McIntire celebrated her 25th anniversary with the Reading Library!
- We said sad goodbyes to : Mary DeSisto in Technical Services, Jackie Storti, longtime Friend and loyal Book Store manager, and Nancy Smethurst, who retired as Administrative Secretary

THE NUMBER STORY

Volunteer Service Hours (In-house, i.e., excluding Friends, Foundation, etc.)	2,020
Magazine subscriptions	305
Collection: Books	107,992
Video, DVDs, CDs	19,200
Meeting Room Bookings	1,324
Reference Consultations	62,904
Program Attendance Adults & Young Adults	4,541
Children's	13,704
Circulation	506,594
Registered borrowers (90% of Town population)	21,672

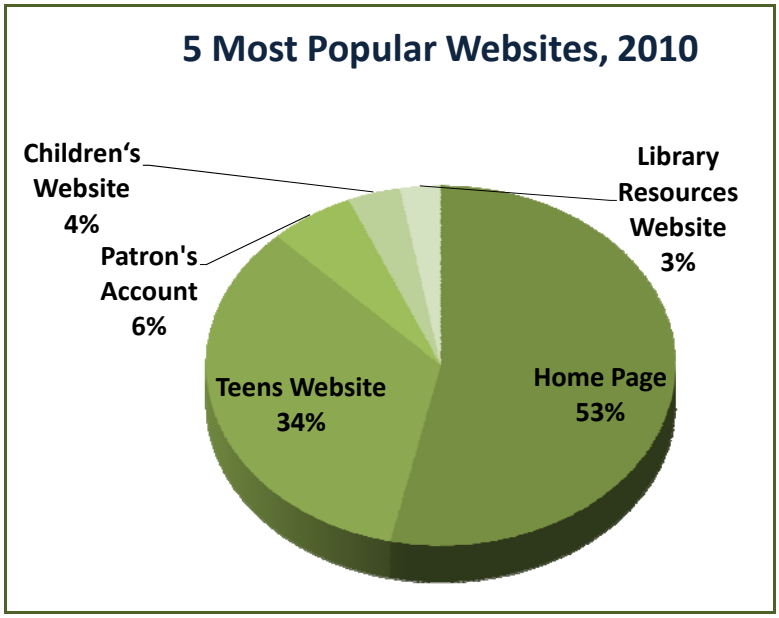
E-STATISTICS

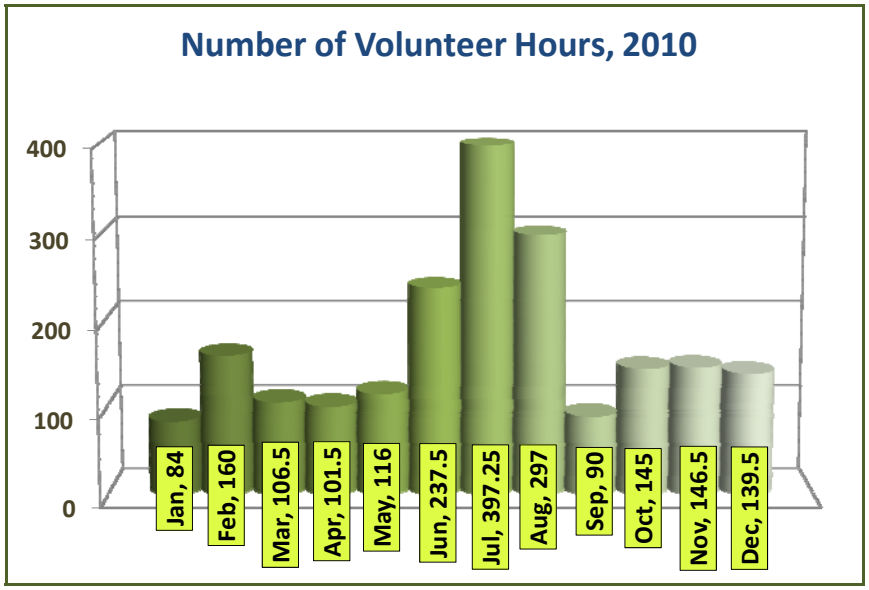
RPL website

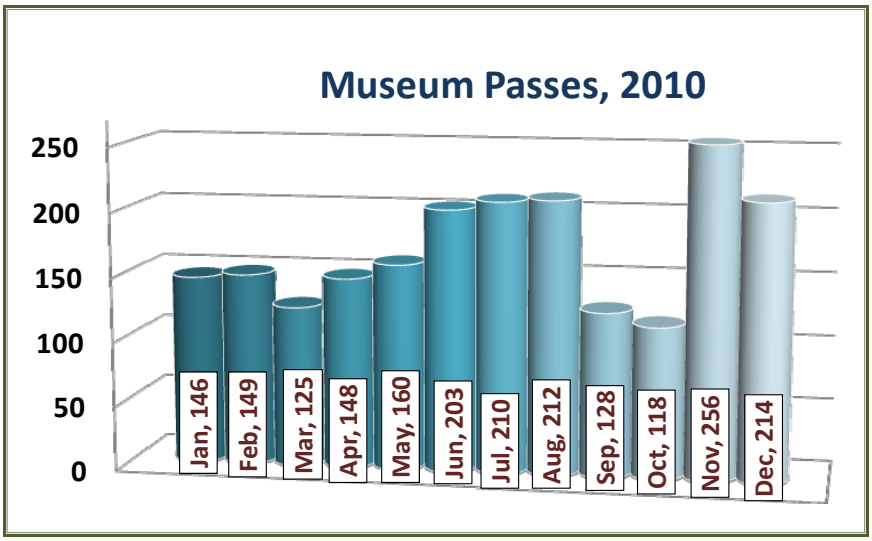
91,861	Visitors
187,360	Visits (sessions) to our websites
336,253	Pageviews (viewed pages)

5 most popular websites:

189,763	Home page (www.readingpl.org)
20,830	Patron's account (www.readingpl.org/myaccount)
12,835	Children's website (www.readingpl.org/kids)
12,167	Teens website (www.readingpl.org/teens)
9,935	Library resources website (www.readingpl.org/research-learning)*




Number of Volunteer Hours, 2010
400
300
200
100
0
Jan, 84
Feb, 160
Mar, 106.5
Apr, 101.5
May, 116
Jun, 237.5
Jul, 397.25
Aug, 297
Sep, 90
Oct, 145
Nov, 146.5
Dec, 139.5


Museum Passes, 2010
250
200
150
100
50
0
Jan, 146
Feb, 149
Mar, 125
Apr, 148
May, 160
Jun, 203
Jul, 210
Aug, 212
Sep, 128
Oct, 118
Nov, 256
Dec, 214

Financials

State, trust income, grants, and other sources of outside support for the library comprise 6% of the library budget. Municipal funding accounts for 94%. The library is part of a consortium that is supported by state aid for technological infrastructure, licensing, and continuous upgrades. The library relies on the state for many electronic resources, professional development and essential staff continuing education in all facets of technology and evolving services. The library relies on other libraries for a substantial portion of its lending (interlibrary loan).

The library relies on private donors and its Friends and Foundation for 100% of its programming budget and many major improvements (computer lab, meeting room a-v system, additional computers, etc.) As income from the state, trust interest, gifts, and grants become less reliable, we turn increasingly for support from the Reading Public Library Friends and Reading Public Library Foundation to support all the important programs and classes and special initiatives that make the Reading Public Library a valuable and relevant community resource.

We trust that our support groups and town funding will see us through this lean time so that we can remain a strong and solid source for adult enrichment, family literacy, and children's education and entertainment.

Library revenue FY10

Municipal Appropriation	**$1,225,328**
State Aid	**$23,472**
Friends & Foundation	**$14,500**
Trust & Endowment Income	**$1,972**
Gifts	**$11,552**
Grants	**$21,199**
Revolving Fund	**$8,760**
Capital (Building Study)	**$85,000**
TOTAL	**$1,391,783**

Library expenditures fy10

Salaries	$963,683
Grants Projects	$12,021
Books & Materials	$195,024
Continuing Education	$8,863
Tech Upgrades	$8,731
Building Study (Capital)	$85,000
Programs	$21,445
Software & Network	$47,278
Supplies & Equipment	$26,046
State Aid & Donations Revolving	$23,692
TOTAL	$1,391,783

Reading Public Library
Board of Trustees

Richard H. Curtis, Vice-Chairman
Jeffrey J. Doucette
Cherrie Dubois
David P. Hutchinson, Chairman
Karyn A. Storti, secretary
Victoria Yablonsky

Friends of the Reading Public Library

Johanna Anderson, House Tour
Suzy Axelson, President
Jean Clark, Recording Secretary
Eleanor Delaney, At Large
Jenny DiMuzio, Music Series
Cherrie Dubois, House Tour
Lynne Freeman, Music Series
Terry Hale, Photo Contest
Cathy Hoodlet, At Large
Beth Klepeis, Treasurer
Karen O'Connell, Book Sale Room
Anne Schofield, Membership
Carol Silva, , Ass't Treasurer
Dorota Socha, Staff Liaison
,Joanne Swanson, At Large
Shari Therrien, Newsletter

Reading Public Library Foundation Inc.

William Hecht, Sr. President
Robert Nordstrand, Vice President
Amy Coumounduros, Treasurer
Bruce Austin, Secretary
John Brzezenski
Lynne Cameron
Neil Cohen
RIchard Curtis
Gerald Fiore
Russell Graham
Eugene Nigro
Maria Silvaggi

Reading Public Library Staff

Director – Ruth S. Urell
Assistant Director – Dorota Socha
Administrative Assistant – Kathryn Melesciuc

Reference Division:
- Division Head – Lorraine Barry
- Adult & Elder Services Librarian – Nancy Aberman
- Local History Librarian – Rachel Baumgartner
- Young Adult Librarians – Susan Beauregard, Amy Lannon
- Promotional Services Librarian – Kathleen Miksis
- Reference Librarians – Eileen Barrett, Danielle Kimerer

Technical Services:
- Division Head – Jamie Penney
- Senior Library Associate – Allison DaSilva
- Senior Technician – Dawn Colford
- Page – Judy Newton

Circulation Division:
- Division Head – Michelle A. Filleul
- Senior Library Associate - Patrice A. O'Donnell
- Technicians – Donna Beaulieu, Dawn Didham Colford, Maureen Conwell, Mary Ellen Downey, Susan R. Haggerty, Louise Hetherington, Carol Macomber, Joanne H. Penta, Christine Rutigliano, Danielle Kimerer
- Pages – Neftali Gonzalez, Nancy Hunt, Rebecca Maitland, Patrick Holland, Lisa Li

Children's Room:
- Division Head – Corinne Fisher
- Children's Librarians – Brenda Wettergreen, Rachel Baumgartner, Ashley Waring, Carol Bender, Kathryn Geoffrion Scannell
- Library Associate – Mary McIntire
- Pages – Kathleen Bowe, Judy A. Newton, Meredith Lawrence, Meaghan F. Kinton, Ellen Garrison, Teresa Teixeira

Custodian – John Davis