

**Grace A. Dow Memorial Library Board
Annual Report 2007- 2008
Submitted August 20, 2008**

It was another rewarding and educational year for the Library Board and we are pleased to report the following progress on our 2007-2008 goals:

1. Collaborate with staff to address revisions in the fines and fees ordinance.

Library staff presented revisions to the current fines and fees ordinance at the September 2007 Board meeting. The fines and fees had not been changed since 1996. The Board reviewed, discussed, and debated the changes during the October Board meeting.

After this first Board review, the proposed changes were posted on the library bulletin board and web page. Staff also informed regular renters of the library's facilities that changes in rental fees were being proposed. Articles appeared in the Midland Daily News, Midland Issues and the Public Meeting Notice highlighted the public hearing.

During the public hearing on October 17, 2007, the Board did not receive any direct comments from library patrons, however, the Board did review all input received through other avenues. The revised fines and fees ordinance that was supported by the Board was then forwarded to the City Council for their approval and went into effect February 4, 2008. (Since the implementation of the ordinance, negative comments about the revised ordinance have been small in number.)

2. Monitor the library's performance through library statistics, the Director's Report to the Board and patron feedback to provide recommendations on the future direction of the Grace A. Dow Memorial Library.

The Board received library statistics as a regular part of the agenda packet. The 2007-2008 report indicated a growth in circulation from 810,098 in 2006-2007 to 833,798. The Board was happy to see this increase in circulation of 23,700 in a year's time. During that same time period the number of patrons entering the library did decrease from 470,411 to 466,134. The Board also received statistics dealing with adult and youth programming participation, as well as database usage throughout the year. This kind of information helped the Board to better track the usage in the library.

Melissa Barnard also provided a Director's Report to the Board at each Board meeting. This report included highlights of the month, relevant newspaper clippings from the month, and patron compliments and concerns. Barnard addressed each patron concern, and the Board had an opportunity to ask questions and comment. It was an important part of each Board meeting.

Through the excellent communication between the Library Director and the Library Board, we were able to monitor performance, make recommendations, and be better informed Board members.

3. Suggest innovative marketing strategies to communicate library services and programs to the community.

The Board discussed three approaches to achieve this goal: brainstorming with members of the Board, staff and public; exploring marketing strategies from other businesses, including retaining professional marketing input; and the use of focus groups.

Based on a suggestion from a community member, the Board requested that the Library Director contact a professor in the Marketing Program at Central Michigan University who had a business class of students who were willing to work with the library as a "client" to make recommendations to better market the library's electronic resources. Unfortunately, the students did not complete the assignment and did not provide recommendations. The Board will evaluate whether and how to pursue this goal for the coming year.

Library staff continues to demonstrate excellent communication regarding the library services and programs to the public. The Board will continue to identify opportunities for improvement regarding marketing strategies, as needed.

4. Suggest new opportunities for library collaborations with community organizations.

A Board subcommittee met with Library Director, Melissa Barnard, and Assistant Director, Virginia McKane, to better understand the community partnerships already in place. Barnard and McKane compiled a list of 36 partnerships with diverse organizations. It is an impressive list of partnerships that benefit library patrons of all ages.

Barnard and McKane put together a presentation for the Board highlighting some of the partnerships. They mentioned that some of these organizations approach the library, while the library initiates other contacts. When approached by an organization, the staff needs to decide if the partnership is a good match, meeting the library's goals. Then they need to look at staff resources to make sure that a particular partnership is a good use of those resources. Finally, they must consider the audience that a particular event will attract. After consideration of these criteria, the library decides whether a particular partnership is in the best interest of both groups.

Although Grace A. Dow Library participates in many community activities with many organizations, staff, unfortunately, cannot say "yes" to every request, secondary to aforementioned criteria. After hearing this presentation and seeing the long list of partnerships already in place the Board decided that this goal had already been met and that our library does an excellent job in this area.

5. Seek dialog/feedback from the community to determine needs through solicited comments.

The Board continually seeks dialog/feedback from the community through a variety of ways. The Board has invited the public to attend and comment at every Grace A. Dow Memorial Library Board meeting. Patrons are encouraged to complete compliments and concerns forms at the library and also to access on the library's website the "Contact Us" link.

Compliments and concerns are addressed at each Board meeting by the Library Director. Previously, from July 2006 through June 2007, the library staff received 125 written comments/concerns. In the past year, from July 2007 through June 2008, staff received only 105 written comments/concerns. It is difficult to interpret whether this is a positive or a negative, since comments are both compliments and suggestions for change. The library staff proactively interacts with patrons at the library to improve communication.

Board members continue to write a column in the Library Connection Newsletter, to not only provide information about the Library's services, but also to spark dialog regarding patron's needs and ways to improve library services.

In January 2008, the Board subcommittee suggested ideas for soliciting further input from the Library's patrons. These were discussed during the Board meeting held in March 2008 and are summarized:

- Board members and Library staff commented that much input from the community was provided regarding the drive-up return with the proposed changes in the St. Andrews roundabout.
- The Board agreed that providing Board members with name tags, to be worn when they attend library functions, could promote opportunities for open dialog with patrons.
- After much discussion, a letter to schools introducing the Board and opening dialog was not acted upon, secondary to the excellent existing relationship between Library and local schools.
- A question insert at the check out stations was also proposed, but was not supported at this time.

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The Board will continue supporting the Grace A. Dow Memorial Library staff, providing community input and encouraging patron participation in improving library's services. The Board is impressed with the staff's accomplishments, continued service excellence and look forward to acting upon the following goals in 2008/2009:

1. Increase the availability of computers and computer instruction in the library.
2. Seek community partnerships in order to share costs and to better meet the needs of the community.
3. Fund new opportunities for youth programs.
4. Fully utilize the resources of the Mideastern Michigan Library Cooperative and the Library of Michigan.
5. Continue to participate in the Public Spaces initiative.

2007-2008 Grace A. Dow Memorial Library Board

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