

# At Your Service



A Newsletter for the Citizens of Midland, Michigan

June 2006

Dear Citizens,

It's hard to believe that it's time once again to issue the City of Midland annual report... time to look back at the many changes, innovations, and successes of another year in our community.

This edition of "At Your Service" focuses on the many high points and achievements that occurred during the City's 2004-05 fiscal year:

- Community Budget Roundtables gave Midlanders a chance to voice their views on important issues that affect the City budget and the City services they have come to enjoy;
- Tax incentives once again played a key role in attracting and retaining business and industry in Midland;
- Our community celebrated the much-anticipated opening of its new civic arena, plus the creation of a new dog park, new walking/biking paths, and other recreational opportunities;
- Criminal offenses were down, and the Grace A. Dow Memorial Library gate count was up; and
- As part of our continuing efforts to attract visitors to our community, Ashman Street leading to downtown Midland received a pleasing makeover.

We hope information about these and many other topics addressed in this newsletter shed light on what your local government is doing for our citizenry.

On behalf of the City Council and City staff, we'd like to thank you for getting involved in the issues that affect all of us. And we hope that you continue to voice your comments and lend your support to the City's efforts to make this a better community.

Sincerely,

Karl S. Tomion  
City Manager

## City's List of Recreational Facilities Grows

### Polar Shift Brings "Cool" New Arena to Midland

In just one short year, a patch of land on the southeast side of Midland went from being covered with dirt to being permanently covered in ice. Global warming had nothing to do with the polar shift that occurred at 405 Fast Ice Drive, but various elements did come together to form what is now known as the new Midland Civic Arena.

After years of planning and collaboration on the part of many people and organizations in Midland, the 107,000-square-foot, three-sheet-of-ice arena opened to the public in September 2005.

The new arena, with two NHL-sized rinks and an Olympic-sized rink, is a state-of-the-art facility that will accommodate more ice sport enthusiasts than the old arena on Collins Street. Expanded locker room space can support the many individuals and teams that utilize the arena. In addition, there is a concession area, and you can have your skates sharpened at a pro shop where skates, hockey sticks and other skating equipment are sold.

The arena also is home to the Midland County Sports Hall of Fame, which represents Midland County's rich heritage of sports.

The dream facility, designed by Siegel-Tuomaala Associates and built by Three Rivers Corporation on land just south of Bay City Road and west of Rockwell Drive, became a reality because of the

*(cont. on Page 6)*



# Economic Development...

## Making It the City's Business

**T**he City of Midland has been involved in several initiatives aimed at bringing more investments and business diversification to Midland. Each initiative has its own unique focus, but all are helping to set a course for Midland's future success.

### **Tax Incentives Key to Bringing Business to**

**Midland:** Here are some numbers worth talking about: \$123.3 million in investments, and a possible 152 new and retained jobs.

Those numbers represent new Midland projects that are currently in the works or planned for the future, thanks in part to tax incentives approved by City Council in 2004-05.

The City continues to partner with Midland Tomorrow, Midland County's economic development organization, and various state agencies to research and utilize tax incentive programs. The ability to offer state and local tax incentives makes it possible for Midland to compete for new investment on a global playing field.

"The City's partnerships with organizations such as Midland Tomorrow and the Michigan Economic Development Corporation have been invaluable," said Midland Mayor Bruce A. Johnson. "These alliances allow the City to work on incentives for companies that might not otherwise look at Midland as a place to establish or expand their business."

One such project that came to Midland is a two-phased automotive manufacturing expansion project at The Dow Chemical Company's Michigan Operations site called DAYTONA. The project could result in as many as 109 new and retained Dow jobs and a possible 310 spin-off jobs.

A Renaissance Zone designation within the Michigan Operations site is one reason DAYTONA is being constructed in Midland. Within a Renaissance Zone, new investment can be virtually tax free for a period of up to 12 years. After the twelfth year, property taxes are phased in at 25 percent annually until the full amount of property taxes is paid in the sixteenth year.

In 2002, City staff, Dow, Midland Tomorrow, and state officials worked to secure the last available Renaissance Zone in Michigan for a proposed pharmaceutical facility Dow had considered building at Michigan Operations. Although the pharmaceutical project was put on hold indefinitely, Dow will be able to utilize the zone designation for project DAYTONA.

Another incentive to locate DAYTONA in Midland was the approval of a Brownfield Redevelopment Plan. Through Brownfields, properties can qualify to receive Single Business Tax credits for reusing obsolete, contaminated or blighted sites. Dow could receive up to \$10 million in Michigan Single Business Tax credits through a plan that was approved by Council and the Michigan Economic Growth Authority in late 2004.

Council also approved standard tax abatements for another eight new investment projects in the city during 2004-05. The companies that will benefit from these tax incentives include Dow Chemical; the Dow Corning Corporation; Dow AgroSciences; Precision Torque Control, Inc.; McKay Press, Inc.; and Quadsil, Inc. These projects are expected to result in nearly \$53 million in investment and 73 new or retained jobs.

**Service Sector Development Program:** In May 2005, Midland City Council approved a partnership that dovetails a high budget priority mentioned during the Community Roundtables – to diversify Midland's economy. Through the Service Sector Development program, the City is partnering with the Midland Area Chamber of Commerce to encourage businesses to start up or relocate in Midland. The focus of the program is to stimulate the city's service economy and promote retail and restaurant development.

The Chamber has contacted about 70 qualified prospects, and a promotional video on Midland's many benefits is being shared with retail and restaurant prospects.

The program also focuses on the importance of buying local. Several radio and print advertising campaigns have already taken place that are geared towards the local market.

Efforts like the Service Sector Program have contributed to at least 15 new service sector businesses opening in Midland.



### **Michigan Main Street Program Designation:**

It might go without saying that Midland is a "cool" city, but it's nice to be officially acknowledged as one.

Midland received such a recognition in the summer of 2005, when it was announced that our community was one of only four in the state selected in 2005 for a Michigan Main Street (MMS) Program designation. Part of Governor Jennifer Granholm's Cool Cities initiative, the MMS designation means that the community will receive more than \$300,000 worth of technical expertise and services from the State of Michigan to develop the downtown area.

*(cont. on Page 7)*

## New Airport Terminal Takes Flight

A new, Alden B. Dow-inspired terminal building at Jack Barstow Municipal Airport received a proper send-off in August 2005 with a celebration attended by about 100 people.



Midland residents, Midland City Council and Aviation Advisory Commission members, local, state and federal representatives, many local foundations and pilots who donated toward the facility's construction, and some family members of Jack Barstow gathered on the tarmac to witness the take-off of the new \$500,000 building. The 2,100-square-foot terminal replaced a 54-year-old building.

Following a brief dedication ceremony, citizens had a chance to peruse some locally-owned planes displayed on the runway. Members of the U.S. Parachutist Association also dropped in – from the sky, that is! – to commemorate the event.

To find out more about Midland's only general aviation airport, contact the City's Engineering Department at 989-837-3348 or visit the City's website at [www.midland-mi.org](http://www.midland-mi.org).



*Top left: The new building, with one of many local planes displayed on the tarmac on the day of the celebration. Top right: Mayor Pro Tem Johnson welcomes guests, while Airport Advisory Commission Chairman James Pollack looks on. Bottom left: Bronze plaque commemorating the celebration now hangs in the terminal building.*

## Crime and Traffic Accident Numbers Continue Decline

Safety and security continue to be hallmarks of the Midland community, as reflected in numbers from the Midland Police Department's 2004-2005 annual report.

Criminal offenses last year were down a dramatic 10 percent compared to the 2003-2004 reporting year, and the number of traffic crashes was lower by a significant 11 percent.

**Criminal Offenses Down:** The lower crime statistics continue an eight-year trend of criminal offenses declining or remaining stagnant. While calls for service went up only slightly – by about 1 percent – compared to 2003-2004, complaints involving youth ages 16 and under decreased for the second straight year.

Additionally, the city's crime index – based on crimes like murder, burglary, arson, and felony sexual assault – remains low for a community of Midland's size. The crime index is used by the FBI and other law enforcement agencies to determine a community's overall level of personal safety and security.

**On the Road Again:** The total number of vehicle accidents last year was the second lowest number of accidents recorded annually in our community since 1975. This achievement is due at least in part to the police department's aggressive enforcement of traffic laws that pertain to red light running and speeding. The Police Department is able to keep accident numbers down with the aid of two full-time officers devoted to traffic enforcement in the city. The department's traffic safety team is also made up of other officers and department staff who devote extra attention to traffic-related issues.



*Officer Greg Tait works with Northwood University mascot Woody at an alcohol awareness event.*

Traffic patterns, congestion and driving practices in Midland continue to be a priority concern for the police department. Traffic safety awareness is emphasized through MGTV Cable Channel 5 programming, and the police department's community relations officer, Greg Tait, provides high schools with safe driving information for young drivers. Officer Tait also makes safe driving presentations – more than 40 last year alone – to interested community groups.

Midland Police Chief James St. Louis attributes the reduced crime and traffic incident numbers to the high visibility of patrol officers in the community, as well as effective departmental programs, community relations programming, and citizen involvement in groups like Neighborhood Watch and Business Watch.

“Midland is fortunate to have dedicated police officers who utilize effective programming to keep crime and traffic accident counts low, and the community's level of safety high,” said St. Louis. “We also are a community of safety-conscious citizens who are willing to participate in programs that help keep neighborhoods safe.”

For more information about Midland Police Department initiatives and ways in which you can get involved in programs promoting safe communities, call 989-631-5716.

# Let's Give Them Something to Talk About

## City Asks Midlanders for Input on Budget and Service Priorities

Like most municipalities across Michigan, the City of Midland in recent years has experienced decreased revenues and increasing costs in its annual budget.

That's the reason why, before starting to develop last year's City budget, Midland City Council invited citizens to attend Budget Priorities Community Roundtables held in January 2005. Through the Roundtables, Council gave Midlanders the opportunity to better define and give input on many of the top issues affecting the City budget and services.

The Roundtables provided a rare opportunity for the City to explain how various parts of the budget works. It also allowed the participants – 185 in all – to voice their views on how they would approach shortfalls in the budget.

What resulted was a comprehensive, 149-page document detailing what Roundtable attendees felt were some of the important priorities for the City. That report can be found on the City's website at [www.midland-mi.org](http://www.midland-mi.org). Hard copies of the report can also be found at the Government Information Center at the Grace A. Dow Memorial Library.



*Above: Midland citizens discuss budget priorities for our community.*

## After All Was Said, Much Has Been Done

Below are some of the main themes that came up during the Roundtables, and how the City has addressed citizens' ideas and concerns:

**Roundtable participants said they wanted to maintain the same services, and raise taxes only if necessary to keep the City's current quality and level of service.** Despite many budget challenges, the City Council preserved all current services and actually reduced taxes with its adoption of the 2005-06 budget. The tax reduction resulted from the Michigan Tax Tribunal's approval of a negotiated settlement between the City and Dow Corning Corporation. This settlement required the City to pay a refund to Dow Corning of \$1.9 million, leaving a \$5.33 million balance in the tax appeal reserve fund. City Council had historically promised to return any unused reserves. It confirmed this commitment by returning the \$5.33 million to Midland taxpayers in the form of a 2.63 mill reduction in the City's property tax.

Tax appeals with The Dow Chemical Company and Midland Cogeneration Venture are still being litigated. The remaining reserve funds are being maintained to pay any refunds that are ordered by the court for these two appeals.

**Roundtable participants stressed the importance of having a coordinated policy and plan for growth.** The City's Planning Department is in the process of updating Midland's Master Plan, a guide for managing growth and land use in Midland. Citizen input is a key element of the two-year update process, which began in late 2005.

To date, Midlanders have had an opportunity to fill out a survey asking where they envision Midland could be in 20 years in terms of character, growth and development. Similar questions were asked during unique "Meetings in a Box" held in area homes, businesses, or other locations throughout the city during March 2006. Community Workshops were also held in mid-May 2006 to discuss findings from "Meetings in a Box" and further develop ideas to reshape Midland's Master Plan.

The Master Plan update process will continue at Planning Commission and City Council meetings until late 2007; a new plan is expected to be approved then.

**Participants said they wanted to see traffic congestion issues addressed, especially in the Midland Mall area.** In March 2005, City Council approved a \$65,000 design development study that resulted in three proposed solutions to improving traffic flows along Eastman Avenue near the Midland Mall and near Joe Mann Boulevard and Jefferson Avenue. Council asked for citizens' feedback on the proposed options, and they gave an overwhelming number of comments – 3,500 in all!

Citizens also offered a variety of alternate solutions that the City and its consultants are in the process of analyzing. A report on this analysis will be presented at a future Council meeting.

Traffic flow in Midland will also be a component of the two-year Master Plan revision process that is currently taking place.

**Roundtable participants consider communication and involvement with their City government as high priorities.** The City continues to provide multiple ways to get information to citizens about City services, programs and events. Last year, the City stepped up efforts to get the word out with the following changes or additions to Midland's communications program:

*At left: City Manager Karl Tomion explains the City's budget and services*

*(Cont. on Page 5)*

## Changing of the Guard

A big change following the November 2005 City Council Election was the passing of the proverbial torch – or in this case, a gavel – to a new Midland City Council leader.

After serving 14 years total on the Council – seven of those as mayor – R. Drummond Black chose not to seek reelection. Bruce A. Johnson of Ward 4 succeeded Black as mayor, and Council newcomer Tom Adams replaced Black as councilman to the first ward.

Also elected to serve on Council until November 2007 are James Myers, Ward 2 councilman and Midland’s mayor pro tem; Hollis McKeag from Ward 3; and Joe Rokosz from Ward 5.



*Incoming Mayor Johnson presents Former Mayor R. Drummond Black with a proclamation for his many years of service (November 2005).*



The City Council meets at 7:00 p.m. on Mondays at least twice per month in City Council Chambers on the first floor of City Hall, 333 W. Ellsworth St. All City Council meetings are open to the public. Meetings can also be seen live and replayed on MGTV Cable Channel 5 in Midland, and via streaming video on the City’s website ([www.midland-mi.org](http://www.midland-mi.org)).

*The 2005-2007 Midland City Council from left: Mayor Pro Tem James Myers; Councilman Hollis McKeag; Mayor Bruce Johnson; Councilman Joe Rokosz; and Councilman Tom Adams.*

## Something to Talk About... Community Roundtables *(cont. from Page 4)*

- [www.midland-mi.org](http://www.midland-mi.org) City Council meeting agendas, summaries and approved minutes have appeared on the City’s website for many years, but, starting in 2005, the entire City Council agenda packet is now posted online. These are the same materials that Council members receive before a meeting, and are helpful for learning the intricacies of issues that Council faces. More user-friendly online forms, such as a Yard Waste Bin order form or building permit applications, are being added to the City’s website, and new information on City departments, services, fees and activities continues to be posted online almost daily. Some of the City’s web-based forms and surveys provide an easy way for Internet users to communicate with City Hall. For example, an online form was successfully used in early 2006 to solicit citizen feedback on proposed Eastman Avenue traffic improvement options.

- **At Your Service** The City continues to send “At Your Service...” newsletters to Midland households at least once each quarter. More and more, these newsletters are including forms that ask citizens for their input on key City issues that affect the community.
- **City Hall News** The City’s free weekly e-newsletter – City Hall News – was freshened with a new look and feel in 2005 (see screen capture at right). The same type of timely and informative City news and information is still provided, but a little extra “pizzaz” in the design adds to its appeal.

City Hall News includes press releases, City construction news, and reminders about services such as refuse and recycling pickup days and times throughout different sections of the city. To sign up for City Hall News, visit the City’s website ([www.midland-mi.org](http://www.midland-mi.org)).

**What Else Did Roundtable Participants Say?** Other priority issues discussed during Roundtables are addressed in earlier editions of the “At Your Service...” newsletter. Past issues can be found on the City’s website at [www.midland-mi.org](http://www.midland-mi.org).



## Recreation List Grows

(cont. from Page 1)

generosity and support of many:

- Nicolaos and Elaine Rapanos donated the 10-acre parcel of land on which the facility now stands.
- The Herbert H. and Grace A. Dow Foundation, the Rollin M. Gerstacker Foundation, and the Charles Strosacker Foundation donated a combined \$4 million to build the arena.
- A grassroots organization called Fast Ice, comprised of local ice users, worked diligently through the Midland Area Community Foundation to raise \$750,000 toward the \$10.3 million facility.
- The Dow Chemical Company, the Dow Corning Corporation and many other organizations donated products that went into the facility's making.
- The Midland Parks & Recreation Commission sought public input and pursued various options that allowed the Midland City Council to make informed decisions about the arena.
- Staff in the City's Parks and Recreation Department worked many long hours to see the facility built.
- \$6 million in municipal bonds were sold by the City to fund just over half of the facility's construction costs over 25 years.

The new arena offers local families and both amateur and competitive sports enthusiasts an ideal opportunity to touch their toes to the ice.

It's also a great attraction of visitors and business to our community - a top goal of City Council. Events like the 2006 U.S. Junior Short Track Championships / World Team Trials, held in November 2005, will enhance our community's economic well-being: visitors will shop in Midland, dine at some of our many fine restaurants, stay overnight at one of our many hotels, and maybe consider Midland as a place where they'd like to raise a family or open a business.

For more information about this new community asset, visit the City's website at [www.midland-mi.org](http://www.midland-mi.org), or call Midland's Parks and Recreation Department at 989-837-6930.



*Kids enjoy the many offerings at the arena, and hockey skates abound at the new Pro Shop.*

**What's Happening with the Old Arena?** As the community enjoys the new 107,000-square-foot ice arena at 405 Fast Ice Drive, the question of what to do with the old arena at 515 E. Collins has taken center stage.

The Parks and Recreation Commission conducted a thorough public process to solicit recreational uses for the 75,000-square-foot building. After evaluating several alternatives ranging from a velodrome to a dance facility and including many others, the Commission concluded that there were no financially viable recreation alternatives and that the building should be demolished and the land returned to green space.

Council accepted the Commission's report and agreed that the considered recreational uses of the facility could not sustain the cost of maintaining the structure. Council did, however, see value in seeking proposals for other uses of the facility. Council received two such proposals, one for an Expo Center and one for a senior living center, as well as significant input calling for the land to be returned to green space for use as a community park.

City Council then conducted its own public input process on April 10, 2006. After much discussion, Council decided to pursue negotiations with The Villas at Central Park LLC. Using the frame of the current arena structure, The Villas has plans to develop a senior living center which would offer independent living, assisted living and congregate care for seniors.

Although significant, the April 10 decision is simply another step in a long process. Before anything other than recreational use can take place on the property several things need to take place:

- In the coming months, the City and The Villas will work on a development agreement that takes into consideration the size of the area to be used, an appraisal of the land's value, inspections of the current structure, and general due diligence regarding the project.
- Two master plans for Central Park will need to be reviewed and approved by the Parks and Recreation Commission and City Council prior to the November 2006 general election: one showing how the land could be utilized with a new senior citizen facility in place, and another showing potential uses without the structure. Parks and Recreation Commission members reviewed concept plans at their June 6 meeting, and will consider two suggested master plans at their June 27 meeting at City Hall. To view the concept plans, check the City's website at [www.midland-mi.org](http://www.midland-mi.org).
- The land will have to be rezoned from Community to Residential B (multiple family).
- Ballot language will need to be developed for the November 2006 General Election to ask voters to:
  - discontinue the five-acre site's designation as park land, and
  - approve the sale of the property by a three-fifths favorable vote if the value of the property is more than approximately \$925,000.

## Other New Recreational Opportunities in Midland



### Best Doggone Park in Midland

Your pooch can now perch on land specially designated for him or her, thanks to the creation last year of Midland's first and only dog park.

The new park, at the westerly end of Chippewassee Park, was made possible by a generous gift of \$40,000 from an anonymous donor and plans designed by a group of interested citizens and Parks and Recreation Department staff.

The nine-acre area is fenced in, and has a combination of wooded and open areas where dogs can run free. A water source and various agility courses are provided to make Fido's romps more enjoyable. A separate area in the dog park is earmarked for smaller dogs, and a gravel parking area has been added near the park for dog owners' vehicles.

The park is one element of the city's Parks and Recreation Master Plan, which was adopted in 2004 and can be found online at [www.midland-mi.org](http://www.midland-mi.org).

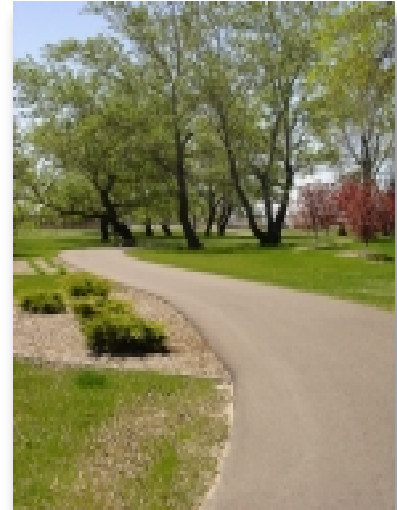


### Walking/Bicycling/Inline Skating Trail

Last year there was a new addition to the growing family of walking/bike paths in the city. The Chippewa Trail, completed in August 2005, is a four-mile pathway that links the Pere Marquette Rail Trail with Chippewa Nature Center. It also connects to other popular recreational areas, such as the Tridge, the new St. Charles softball complex, and the disc golf course.

The City assisted in the planning and design of the trail, which was built on property owned by the City and Chippewa Nature Center, plus property donated by The Dow Chemical Company.

Initiatives like the new Chippewa Trail are helping to pave the way for future projects that celebrate the natural beauty of Midland.



### Another Grand Idea Enhances Entrance into Midland

In 2005, City planners worked with the Midland Area Community Foundation's Entranceways Initiative Task Force to construct a 1.4-mile walkway between Patrick and Lyon streets (Business U.S. 10) from Washington to State Street. Trees, benches, and other landscaping were also installed along the City-owned land. The result is an attractive, winding bicycle and walking path that has informally been dubbed "the Grand Curve." The curve greets visitors traveling along Business U.S. 10, and serves as another green space that's ideal for bicycling, rollerblading, or walking. It will also provide pedestrian access to the new baseball stadium that will be in place by the spring of 2007.

## Economic Development *(cont. from Page 2)*

Already, there have been four visits by State-provided business development experts who are working with Midland residents and business leaders to develop a long-term, sustainable business district and enhance downtown Midland's economic position.

The downtown district continues to have extremely low vacancy rates, and, through the program, up to three downtown buildings per year will receive free architectural design assistance through Michigan's State Historic Preservation Office.

**Ashman Streetscape Improvements:** One of the main entryways into downtown Midland received a face lift and safety improvements in 2005. Ashman Street from Ann to Buttles streets was reconstructed and visual enhancements were made to the tune of nearly \$1 million. New street lights and crosswalks, a jumping water element, and planting beds with trees and plants now greet Midlanders and visitors who enjoy shopping and dining downtown.

To coincide with the beautification project, the City also replaced water main from Larkin to Buttles streets.

The effort was funded through the Downtown Development Authority and the City's Water and Major Street funds.



# Library Building Turns 50

What would Alden B. Dow say to the many changes that have occurred since he designed Midland's public library in 1955? He would likely comment that the Grace A. Dow Memorial Library continues to serve the community as he meant it to – as a social gathering place for those seeking information and education.

In January 2005, the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the library building was celebrated with an open house. The celebration focused on the many wonderful things that have occurred at the library since the first patron walked in the door on January 24, 1955.

**Techno-Services:** Of all of the changes made during the library's 50-year history, possibly the biggest has been how patrons get their information. The library is no longer a facility that contains primarily ink on paper materials; more and more, library patrons are enjoying technological advances that have made access to information as easy as the click of a computer mouse.

The library is responding to changing use patterns by changing its materials mix. In addition to providing printed materials, new services make it possible for patrons to gather information on computer and via the Internet. Also, more DVDs and books on CDs and MP3s are being added to library shelves.

A variety of new programs and services involving computers are now offered at the library.

- A web-based catalog introduced in September 2004 includes photos of book covers, summaries, reviews and other features to help patrons select materials.
- Computer classes offered last year ranged from teaching basic skills like how to use a mouse to more involved skills such as how to find out health information or your family's genealogy using the Internet. More classes centered around computers are planned for this year.
- An online book club makes it easy to read snippets of new books sent by e-mail, then place the books you like on hold from your computer.
- More databases are becoming available through the Internet. You can search for business and investment data, information on antiques, biographical data, encyclopedias, data on vehicle repairs... the list goes on.

Downloadable audio books have also become quite popular. After patrons secure a password, books can be downloaded from the library's catalog to your home computer. You can listen using your computer or download to a personal audio device.

E-mail is also playing a larger role in efforts to deliver services quickly and efficiently. "Ask the Librarian", activated in September 2004, is an e-mail reference service on the library's website ([www.midland-mi.org](http://www.midland-mi.org)). Using a handy online form, patrons can type in their reference question, hit the Submit button, and a Reference librarian will respond within 24 hours (except on holidays). Patrons can still call the Reference Desk for answers when the library is open, but "Ask the Librarian" is a great way to shoot off questions from the convenience of your home computer at any time of the day or night.

Patrons can now receive overdue book and hold notices via e-mail. This method of notification is faster and less costly than mailing a letter or making a phone call. Mailing a letter costs 39 cents and the average local phone call, 8 cents, but e-mail notification is a function of the library's automated system and is not an additional cost to the library.

While the library still purchases books and other printed materials and will continue to do so, services delivered via computers is quickly becoming commonplace. This hasn't hurt library "business" at all, according to Library Director Melissa Barnard.

"The public has embraced the changes that are making information more available," said Barnard. "Our patrons' use of these new services shows us that we're heading in the right direction."

Visitor counts could also be supporting that view. In 2004-2005, the library saw its highest gate count ever – 479,911 visits were tracked, an increase of nearly 13 percent from the previous year.

The wide variety of services offered at the library could be one reason why the gate count is up, said Barnard. Another could be the library's attractive spaces, such as the Teen Spot and the Cup and Chaucer Coffee Bar – both added in the 2004-2005 fiscal year.

"We have found that the meeting place aspect of the library is becoming a greater need in the community," said Barnard. "People want a setting where they can meet friends, study, work on a computer in a relaxing environment, or just hang out."

Although Alden B. Dow couldn't foresee the changes coming to the library, we think that an emphasis on meeting patrons' changing interests in a unique gathering place is just what he would have wanted.



*The library in its early days (above), and today (below).*



## At Your Service

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