

## **Fletcher Free Library November, 2013 Commissioners' and Trustees' Report**

### **Overview**

Under the leadership of Director Rubi Simon, the Fletcher Free Library<sup>1</sup> has undertaken an assessment and reallocation of its resources to offer expanded services and new programming. The increased services and programs have been widely popular, as assessed through patron comments and by the community “voting with its feet.” Her efforts start at the top, by leading the way to develop an up-to-date strategic plan, and go through all the operational aspects of the library by reviewing and revising policies and procedures.

In close collaboration with the Fletcher Free Library Board, Director Simon has put a new emphasis on development and expanding the available resources of the library through fundraising, grant writing, and community and national partnerships. She is also working to develop an up-to-date and effective strategic plan that will help to guide the library over the next three years. And, she is working to review and preserve the physical facility and collections of the library. In addition, the Fletcher Free Library Board is undergoing a reorganization that will allow us to be a potent resource for the Director and her staff.

Overall, it has been a very exciting time at the library. Director Simon has brought high-level expertise and unbounded energy to her position. The library staff combines a great professionalism with dedication to the library and is central to every accomplishment listed below. As Director Simon works closely with City Hall, community and national partners, we believe she will help to enhance the library resources and fulfill the Fletcher Free Library's potential as a valued and valuable resource for our community, an economic driver for our city, and a gem that serves to entice families and businesses to move into Burlington. Below we provide an overview of some of the highlights since January 2013.

**Expanded Evening Hours Have Been Very Popular:** After months of reviewing statistics on the number of patrons using the library, the library began a new schedule as of September 3<sup>rd</sup>. This is the first schedule review and update in years, going on decades. This change has been well received by the public, with patrons “voting with their feet” and using the library during the evening hours to a much greater extent than the prior morning hours. The staff has had great response to the extra evening.

**Enhanced IT Capabilities and Expanded Hours Results in Greater Use of Community Spaces:** The library offers its meeting rooms to community groups for gatherings. The extra evening has seen a marked increase in community use of the meeting spaces and most rooms are already scheduled through the winter. A Google Grant equipped the community rooms with video conferencing capabilities.

**Offering New Drop-In Tutoring Services for Burlington 1<sup>st</sup> through 8<sup>th</sup> Grade Students:** The library is offering after-school and weekend tutoring/homework assistance for students in first through eighth grades. Graduate students from the Albany College of Pharmacy and Health Services tutor individual students or small groups in reading, math and science. Tutoring has begun in early October.

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<sup>1</sup> Please excuse the anthropomorphizing of the library; we did so in the interest of brevity.

**The Summer Reading Program Enhances Its Outreach and Enjoys Another Successful Year:** The DIG INTO READING! Summer Reading program had an exceptionally successful year. This free seven-week program for elementary and middle school students offers fun activities, encouragement, and incentives to read during summer vacation. This program serves to lessen the summer learning loss that students experience. With the hiring of a temporary Youth Outreach Coordinator, this program targeted diverse communities to increase participation. Along with librarians meeting with six of Burlington's elementary schools, the coordinator reached out to thirteen sites, including King Street Youth Center, Sara Holbrook Community Center, and programs at parks and housing developments.

**Record-Breaking Attendance at Chris Bohjalian and Stephen Kiernan Author Event:** A partnership with Phoenix Books to bring authors Chris Bohjalian and Stephen Kiernan to the library drew over 300 attendees. The library is enhancing both its programming and its publicity efforts to meet the needs of the community and subsequently attract increased attendance at events.

**Emphasis on Programming Highlighting Multicultural and Race/Ethnic and Sexual Orientation Diversity and Timely Social Issues:** The Library Staff continues the good work developed by the late Dan Balon to meld the Library's Programming with its Diversity Statement. A Spanish sing-a-long group for pre-school children and families has been added as a regular programming event. Events such as one sponsored by Conversations on Race Now were held at the library and focused on the Trayvon Martin decision and President Obama's subsequent remarks. An art exhibit was sponsored by the RU12? Community Center in which it presented the Vermont Queer Archives, which focused on how community is developed, celebrated, and preserved. As part of the Let's Talk About It Series, the library is currently sponsoring a series of film and book discussions on Islam. Finally, Community Cinema, a partnership with the library and Vermont Public Television, is a civic engagement initiative featuring monthly screenings and community discussions of films that focus on timely social issues of the day.

**Expanded On-line and E-offerings:** With the increased usage of e-books and videos, the library has expanded its on-line and e-offerings. Recently, it added IndieFlix as a service; IndieFlix provides patrons with unlimited access to thousands of independent films from around the world. With this addition, the library continues its focus on providing access to non-mainstream media. This adds to its offerings of e-books and on-line audio books and language learning resources, in addition to Consumer Reports and Morningstar.

**Hack the Stacks: Civil Hacking at Fletcher Free Library Supports the Local NonProfit Community:** In partnership with Code for BTV (the Burlington-based Code for America Brigade of volunteer civic hackers), the library will sponsor a two-day hackathon on October 26 and 27. This event will bring together volunteer hackers to create Internet-based public resources that serve Burlington's (and Vermont's) nonprofit community.

**Fletcher Free Library Plays a Pivotal Role in the Launch of "BTV Ignite" :** On October 15th, Mayor Weinberger announced that the City of Burlington would be the 26th US city to join

US Ignite, a White House initiative run through the National Science Foundation that connects communities with exceptionally fast broadband capability in order to develop next-generation Internet applications. Our existing fiber network allows us a unique opportunity to enhance our educational systems, provide high-speed internet access to all our citizens, allow existing businesses the opportunity to grow, and support entrepreneurs as they start new businesses. As a critical partner in the launch of BTV Ignite, the library now has 1Gbps (Gigabit per second) connection speed, which is over 100 times as fast as both the average national broadband speed and Vermont's statewide average broadband speed. This capability will support our schools, institutes of higher learning, entrepreneurial communities and businesses with the goal of sustainable economic growth and workforce development. As BTV Ignite was taking shape, Director Simon was able to connect with library leadership in Kansas City, Kansas, another US Ignite city, and learn more about their plans for a software lending library. She is in conversation with the Kansas City Public Library about the formation of a Library Consortium that would allow FFL patrons access to this digital lending library. Director Simon also participated on the panel "Sparking Burlington's Future" at the official launch of BTV Ignite at Tech Jam on October 18th.

**Developing Relationship with Partnership for Change to Strengthen Educational Partnerships with Burlington and Winooski Schools:** Partnership for Change is an initiative that supports innovation in Winooski and Burlington schools as they remodel our public education system to focus on Student-Centered Learning and Family-School Partnerships and to meet the needs of a more diverse and changing local and global society. Through the leadership of Mayoral-Designee Commissioner Jessica Nordhaus, the library, the schools and the Partnership are working together to support multiple projects. Most currently, Fletcher Free Library is supporting the work of Burlington High School 9th graders in their Make a Change project and is hosting diversity and race training for the BHS.

**Re-energized Board Development Committee Due to New Leadership:** Director Simon is working closely with the Board Development committee to boost external funding opportunities for the library. State Representative and Library Commissioner Jill Krowinski brings extensive development and outreach experience and is the new Chair of the Development Committee. Library Trustee Selene Colburn, Librarian at the University of Vermont, brings extensive development, marketing, and planning expertise to the Board. The Development Committee is recruiting outside volunteer talent to assist in its efforts.

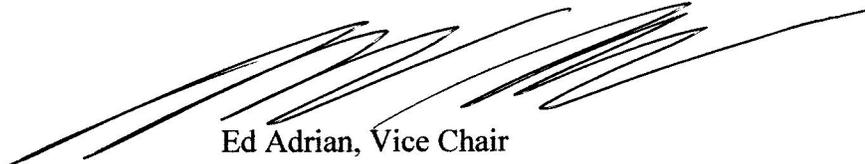
**Experienced Organizational Development Professional Leads Fletcher Free Library's Strategic Planning Process:** Library Commissioner Glenn McRae, Associate Director at the UVM Transportation Research Center and teaching in the Public Administration Graduate program, brings over three decades of experience in strategic planning and organizational development to his role as Chair of the Board Development and Strategic Planning committee. Mr. McRae and Director Simon are working closely with the Board, the Friends of the Library and the library staff to develop an up-to-date and effective strategic plan that will guide the library for the next three years and will translate into annual operational goals and objectives.

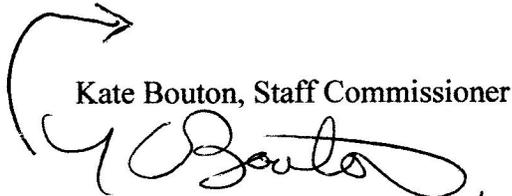
**Dedicated and Professional Staff Continue Commitment to Excellence:** Through this time of change, we must commend each and every library staff member on their unfaltering commitment

to the library and the community. These many accomplishments could not have been done without their enthusiastic participation.

We are very pleased to present this report to the Burlington City Council and Mayor Weinberger. If you have any questions or would like additional information, please feel free to contact the Board Chair at [pegboylesingle@gmail.com](mailto:pegboylesingle@gmail.com) or at 802/862-4699.

  
Peg Boyle Single, Chair

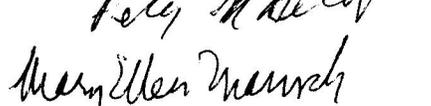
  
Ed Adrian, Vice Chair

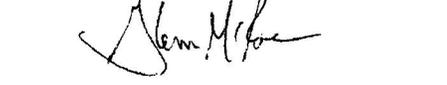
  
Kate Bouton, Staff Commissioner

  
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Jill Krowinski, Commissioner

  
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Jessica Nordhaus, Mayor-Designee  
Commissioner

  
Ellen MacLellan,  
Representative of the Friends of the Library