

Fletcher Free Library



Rubi O. Simon, *Director*
Ed Adrian, *Chair, Library Board of Commissioners*

THE FLETCHER FREE LIBRARY is the largest, busiest, and most “urban” public library in Vermont. We serve the educational and cultural needs of the greater Burlington community. Fletcher Free offers a welcoming space for people to gather and learn.

FY15 was a busy and productive year for Fletcher Free. While continuing to provide library services and programming to the community, Fletcher Free staff also set about developing a new Strategic Plan for 2016-2019.

2016-2019 Strategic Plan

Jim Collins, author of *From Good to Great*, wrote, “Any great and enduring human institution must have...a sense of timeless purpose that should never change.” Libraries have been helping people learn for centuries. Fletcher Free’s timeless purpose is to enable lifelong learning in our community. Over the next four years, we will create a hub for lifelong learning that reflects community needs. To catalyze personal growth as part of daily life in our community, Fletcher Free aims to deliver year-round enrichment and literacy programming, and build robust partnerships for successful learning.



Underpinning our strategic plan is a broad engagement process eliciting input and feedback from community members and other stakeholders to guide the development of the plan. During FY15, the Fletcher Free – under the guidance of a national library consultant - convened nine community forums, held focus groups and workshops, and administered a survey. Results of this community engagement process were foundational to the development of our strategic plan. Integral to the implementation of our strategic plan is a commitment to continued public engagement, adaptive management, and accountability. Our 2016-2019 Strategic Plan will be distributed and posted in early 2016.

FY15 in numbers

Library Services:

- 354,025 total circulation of library materials, over 45% of these were youth materials
- 251,935 library visits, averaging over 700 visits a day
- Library is open 58 hours a week, for a total of 3,016 hours a year
- Over 13,000 active library users, and more than 2,500 new patrons in FY15
- 9,414 reference questions made to librarians
- 1,141 resources loaned to other Vermont public libraries and 732 resources borrowed from Vermont public libraries
- Over 6,500 volunteers hours logged, equivalent to 3.5 full time employees
- Over 650 new materials added to collection monthly

Youth Services and Programming:

- 325 programs benefiting 8,826 youth, teens, and their family members
- 154,882 youth materials borrowed by patrons
- 1,483 Summer Reading Program participants read for 18,112 hours this summer

Programming and Partnerships:

- 448 adult literacy and enrichment programs held, benefiting 5,600 patrons
- Over 300 free language and digital literacy classes to English language learners
- 36 programs co-sponsored with community partners were organized, benefiting over 1,800 people
- Community organizations held 733 events and meetings at the library, benefiting 8,532 people

Community Outreach:

- 179 book deliveries to 15 senior residences, benefiting approximately 430 seniors monthly
- 32 music programs at senior residences, entertaining and delighting more than 1,000 seniors during the year
- 25 individual book deliveries throughout the year to homebound Burlington residents
- Outreach activities carried out by FFL’s Outreach Librarian with the support of 114 volunteer hours

Information Technology and Computer Center:

- 43,735 login sessions in the computer center
- Over 200 people benefited from fall and spring digital literacy classes
- 100,188 website visits
- 12,981 wi-fi visits

Highlights from FY15

New Integrated Library System (ILS)

Fletcher Free went live with a new ILS in May 2015, culminating a year-long process. The new system provides patrons with a more efficient and effective online library experience, and staff with more robust tools that improve our capacity to provide services. During FY15, an RFP for a new ILS was issued, proposals were evaluated, meetings with potential vendors were held, a new vendor was selected, data was migrated from the old system, and staff was trained in the use of the new system.

Capital Improvements

Patrons are enjoying significant capital improvements made to the library in FY15. These improvements were HVAC and lighting upgrades, urgent repairs to skylights and the glass wall in the Main Reading Room, historically appropriate brick re-pointing to the Carnegie building, and repairs to the roof. Library staff worked closely with Capital Improvement Project staff to ensure these repairs were successfully completed. Further capital improvements are underway in FY16. If you have not visited the library lately, we hope you'll stop by soon and enjoy the ongoing improvements to our space!

Burlington's Summer Reading Program (SRP)

Keeping children reading during the summer takes a community. The success of our 2015 SRP is grounded in community partnerships. We thank all of our SRP partners: the families of this year's 1,483 participants; Burlington's elementary and middle school staff; the staff at our 15 summer outreach sites around the City; our 25 dedicated sponsors and donors; the presenters of over 100 literacy and recreational programs engaging over 3,800 children and family members throughout the summer; and our 60 volunteers donating 950 hours of their time.

Annually, the Fletcher Free Library coordinates a free eight-week Summer Reading Program designed to motivate children to read, maintaining and boosting reading achievement during the summer. Research shows that children who do not read over the summer can lose more than two months of reading achievement a year – a phenomenon called the “summer slide.” Children living in low-income families are at greater risk of the “summer slide.” The cumulative effect of learning loss over the summer is the main cause of widening achievement gaps between students of lower and higher socioeconomic levels. Approximately 40% of the children who participate in Burlington's Summer Reading Program live in low-income families.

Burlington's SRP 2015 in numbers

- 18,112 hours read by 1,483 participants!
- Edmunds Elementary logged the most reading hours with 2,213 hours read. Champlain Elementary came in a close second with 2,085 hours read.

- 54% of all Burlington School District elementary and middle school students participated.
- Integrated Arts Academy and Sustainability Academy had the highest participation rates, with 63% and 59% respectively.
- Of special note, some grades had over 70% participation – this year's 1st graders at Sustainability Academy and JJ Flynn, 3rd graders at Champlain and JJ Flynn, and 4th graders at IAA.
- Congratulations to all schools and all participants!

New in the SRP in 2015

- Healthy competition to engage children in reading and programming.
- Online registration and reading log to increase the convenience of recording hours read for families, as well as increase the responsiveness of our program management.
- This year 125 early learners (ages 0-5) participated for the first time. Welcome to Burlington's SRP, early learners!



Programs and Partnerships

Some highlights from adult literary enrichment programming during FY15 were:

- Fletcher Free Library (FFL) has been selected through a nationwide competitive process as one of 19 U.S. public libraries to host “Exploring Human Origins: What Does It Mean to Be Human?” a traveling exhibition developed by the Smithsonian's National Museum of Natural History (NMNH) and the American Library Association (ALA). The exhibition will be hosted at FFL from February 18, 2017 – March 17, 2017. The exhibition seeks to shed light on what we know about human origins and how we know it. The exhibition welcomes different cultural perspectives on evolution and seeks to foster positive dialogue and a respectful exploration of the science.
- The FFL is working with over 30 local organizations and individuals—representing diverse per-

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spectives – to develop programming and community engagement starting in the fall of 2016. Partners to date include the University of Vermont (UVM) and the UVM Medical Center, Champlain College, St. Michael's College, the



Burlington and Winooksi School Districts, the Partnership for Change, the Episcopal Cathedral Church of St. Paul's, the First Unitarian Universalist Society of Burlington, RETN, VPR, Rice Memorial High School, Vermont Commons School, Rock Point School, the State Department of Libraries, the State Division of Historic Preservation, and Burlington's Community & Economic Development Office (CEDO).

- In July, 600 people participated in the Wake Up To Dying Project – an exhibit on the library's front lawn paired with workshops, author talks, and community discussions in our meeting rooms. The four-day long event was presented by the Vermont-based organization Wake Up To Dying. The traveling exhibit provided information for making end-of-life decisions and encouraged storytelling and conversation as a way to explore with loved ones death, dying, and life. UVM Medical Center, Blue Cross Blue Shield VT, and Alzheimer's Association Vermont Chapter were some of the many organizations involved with the project.
- In cooperation with poet and UVM Professor of English, Major Jackson, and poet Florence McCloud, the Fletcher Free Library celebrated Burlington's vibrant poetry community with a poetry reading marathon, an extravaganza of 27 Burlington poets. The event kicked-off a month-long celebration of the beauty and power of language, including the first-ever Intercollegiate Poetry Reading with students from Champlain College, Johnson State College, Middlebury College, Norwich University, St. Michael's College, and the University of Vermont reading their own work.
- Jennifer Pharr Davis – hiker, writer, adventure speaker, and the 2012 National Geographic Ad-

venturer of the Year – spoke to a crowd of nearly 100 people in September. Pharr Davis recounted how and why she has been able to hike over 12,000 miles of long distance trails on six different continents. Included among her feats, holding the record for covering the 2,181-mile Appalachian Trail in 46 days, 11 hours, and 20 minutes, maintaining a remarkable average of 47 miles per day. She was the fastest person (male or female) to accomplish this feat until this July when Scott Jurek bested her time by three hours and 13 minutes. A week after the event, her article about women in hiking made the cover of the *New York Times*. Co-sponsors for this event were Burlington Parks, Recreation & Waterfront, the Green Mountain-Burlington Chapter, Vermont Outdoors Woman, and the UVM Outing Club.

Friends of Fletcher Free

The Friends of the Fletcher Free Library had another very busy and productive year supporting Burlington's public library. Through book sales and other revenue generating activities, the Friends in conjunction with library staff and tireless volunteers raised over \$33,000 to support library services and programming. Throughout the year, the Friends invested in professional development opportunities for library staff, as well as activities that enhance youth and adult services and programming – such as the Summer Reading Program and musical Spanish lessons for preschoolers, book discussions for adults, and poetry slams for teens.

During FY15, the Friends welcomed a new President – Joan Conroy. In addition to focusing on raising funds for the library, Joan and other members of the Friends are establishing partnerships in the community that strengthen the library's mission. One such partnership involves providing gently used books to the Chittenden Emergency Food Shelf. Weekly donations to the Food Shelf include books and DVDs for all ages and interests, often with a strong focus on youth resources.

Fletcher Free Library Commission FY15

Ed Adrian, Chair

Kate Bouton, Commissioner – Staff Representative
Peter Ireland, Trustee

Jill Krowinski, Commissioner

Mary Ellen Manock, Trustee

Glenn McRae, Commissioner

Jessica Nordhaus, Commissioner–

Mayoral Designee

Peg Boyle Single, Commissioner

Cate MacLachlan, Trustee

1 Trustee Vacancy in FY15