Ferguson @ Home

The Ferguson Library Annual Report 2004
Message from the Chair

With the publication of this 2003–2004 Annual Report, Ferguson is celebrating its 123rd year of public library service to the Stamford community. It has been an illustrious period in the history of our world, our nation, our state, and our city. The Ferguson Library has been there every step of the way, providing access to the wealth of information which fully documents our past, helps us comprehend our present, and sets the stage for our future. The role of Ferguson to acquire, organize and disseminate information has developed and matured to the point where library service now is available in homes, offices and schools throughout Stamford, 24 hours everyday, through www.fergusonlibrary.org.

It is difficult to recall our lives before the Internet: before .com or .gov or .edu or .org; before music downloads and ebooks; before online reservations and stock trading; before virtual travel and merchandise auctions. We remember being asked then if people would still need libraries and librarians with information so readily accessible. Ferguson has proven that libraries are needed now more than ever, to help all of us benefit from the information explosion and online access we have experienced over the past decade.

You will see in the pages of this report that technology has both transformed The Ferguson Library — e-mail messages to users, an online monthly newsletter, an award-winning web page — as well as transformed the way people obtain information. Access to technology is a fundamental need in order for people to exist and succeed in today’s society. For many of the 135,000 people who used the Library’s computers in the past 12 months, our workstations may have been their only means to access the Internet and to learn basic computer literacy skills. Our computers and software also have been used as tools to learn English, apply for a job, and prepare a term paper, as well as accomplish hundreds of other technologically based tasks. Certainly our 92,000 visitors last year to www.fergusonlibrary.org, did so with access to information as their goal.

Thankfully, our users still need books as well. Nearly 965,000 visitors came to The Ferguson Library in 2003/2004 and checked out books, audio books, magazines, music CDs, videos/DVDs, “learning kits” and works of art. The total items circulated this year reached nearly one million items.

All of this is the result of the dedication and commitment of many elected officials, enthusiastic volunteers, and forward thinking employees in their quest to bring the very best in library service to a community that deserves nothing less. I congratulate and complement everyone directly and indirectly involved in this effort, on a job well done.

With the end of each year, a new one begins. For Ferguson, it will be one of the most exciting ever. New construction projects, new technology enhancements, major collection expansions, and increased program events, will all further add to the scope, strength, and vitality of our services. One hundred and twenty-three years strong and still going and growing. That is today’s Ferguson Library.

Patricia L. Broom
Chair, Board of Trustees

Our Mission

The Ferguson Library, Stamford’s public library, provides free and equal access to print, audiovisual and evolving electronic resources. It supports lifelong learning through reading and other forms of communication by addressing the informational, educational, cultural and literacy needs of the Stamford community.
Message from the President

For well over a century, The Ferguson Library has played a pivotal role in the educational development of the Stamford community. It has fostered a love of books and reading, made accessible a diverse world of information, and brought knowledge to generations of Stamford residents. As technology changes our lives at breathtaking speed, Ferguson has been keeping pace. Wherever they are around the globe, our users can unlock the wealth of information the Library offers just by connecting to our website. With a Ferguson Library card, users can delve into our many databases, in a way we could never have dreamed of before. That kind of access, and the way it is making library services more widely available and convenient, is perhaps the most exciting development of this past year, and even the past decade.

Providing access to, and meeting the needs of the diverse community we serve is a challenge we embrace with enthusiasm. As an example, this year our Special Needs Center, serving families of disabled children, became fully operational. We are proud that the Center has become a model for public libraries statewide, and will continue to thrive in the future with new grant funding for programming and training.

Our many creative programs and special events throughout the year offer a rich variety of educational and cultural opportunities for children and adults. From our highly successful summer reading programs, to book discussions and special author events, The Ferguson Library is more than ever the cornerstone of the community — a place to gather, to learn, and to grow.

The city of Stamford, through its mayor, board of representatives, board of finance, and planning board, has been extremely supportive of our efforts and accomplishments. This, coupled with the strong volunteerism of community leaders through The Ferguson Library Board of Trustees, Citizen Advisers, Foundation Trustees and Friends of Ferguson, has guaranteed the success of The Ferguson Library. Special recognition should be accorded the trustees for their unwavering commitment to providing outstanding and progressive public library services.

None of this would be possible without the tireless and dedicated efforts of our staff. The Ferguson’s energetic, highly professional team consistently produces the finest public library service anywhere. The Library is extremely fortunate to be able to draw on the collective talent and experience of so many individuals who daily devote themselves to the highest standard and caliber of service.

This coming year, the renovation and expansion of our Weed Branch will undoubtedly be our most significant challenge. After 50 years of service to the Springdale community, the Branch will be totally updated, almost tripling in size. Major renovations to the interior of the Main Library will take several years to complete, and will result in a state-of-the-art facility, more responsive to the needs of our users. With rapid advances in technology, there will assuredly be other changes to absorb and opportunities to embrace. I am extremely confident that whatever the new year brings, we will maintain and enhance our tradition of excellence in serving the Stamford community.

Ernest A. DiMattia, Jr.
President

Ferguson Values

Accelerate Promotion of Reading: Beyond providing resources, support outreach, basic literacy and life-long learning habits.

Access: Provide convenient hours for the Stamford community: provide 24/7 access via the “virtual branch.”

Accountability: Responsibility for our actions.

Creativity/Innovation: Introduce and/or adopt new technology, services and work styles.

Diversity: Embrace the numerous cultures, races and ideas in the community.

Equity: Freedom from bias or favoritism.

Intellectual Freedom: Encourage the free exchange of information and ideas in a democratic society.

Safety/Security: Create a safe and comfortable haven that is conducive to reading, studying and browsing. Provide quality customer-driven services.

Technology Leadership: Use the latest technological advances to help provide better services.
Ferguson Firsts

The Ferguson Library continued a tradition of creating innovative new programs and services to serve the community.

SPECIAL NEEDS CENTER
A broad based collection of books, videos, Internet resources and other materials designed to serve parents of children with disabilities. It is the most comprehensive and extensive public library collection of its kind in Connecticut, and has become a one-stop resource for special needs families in the Stamford community and beyond.

“NO CHILD LEFT OUT” GRANT
The Library received a $17,000 federal grant to create inclusive programming for children with special needs. The LSTA “No Child Left Out” grant will also fund important training for children’s librarians from The Ferguson Library and other Connecticut libraries to learn how to better serve these children.

FOCUS ONLINE
The Library’s newsletter, Focus on Ferguson, is now available online as well as in print. Our website has links to current and back issues of Focus, and the newsletter is e-mailed each month to subscribers who signed up to receive Library information electronically. That list also receives weekly e-mail updates about Library events.

MONTHLY FOCUS
Focus on Ferguson is now a glossy, monthly newsletter. Instead of bi-monthly distribution we now print Focus each month, bringing the latest Library news and happenings to the community.
Technology—Embracing the Future

The Ferguson Library embraces technology as a means to an end. Our website and online catalog provide information and resources, enhancing the people-friendly service we are so proud of here at The Ferguson.

Library users can log onto our website from anywhere at anytime, making The Ferguson a true 24/7 source of information. And our dozens of top-flight research databases are available remotely to anyone with a Ferguson Library card.

COMMUNICATING ONLINE
One of the most exciting new uses of technology is the way we are now able to communicate with Library visitors electronically. We send weekly e-mail updates about Library events to our e-mail registrants — a list that continues to grow. Our monthly *Focus on Ferguson* is also e-mailed to this list.

Library users can access our website, www.fergusonlibrary.org, from home anywhere else to review their library account, renew books, place a reserve online, or do research. Whenever possible, reserve and overdue notices are now sent via e-mail. It’s clear that the trend towards remote library usage is growing. Our data show that off-site access increased 13% this year.

NEW ONLINE CATALOG
In July we switched our Library computer system from DRA to SIRSI. The change involved many hours of training for the entire staff and there were the expected bumps in the road as problems were ironed out. Overall, the public was enthusiastic about the new online catalog. Its user-friendly format has links to reviews, and users can see at a glance whether a book is available, and whether it is at the Main Library or one of the Branches.

FERGUSONONLINE
We have to brag a little. Our website, www.fergusonlibrary.org, was recognized in 2004 as the best library website in the state, winning first place in the Connecticut Library Association’s annual public relations contest.

The website continued to grow and change during the past year. We added many new features, including a re-designed homepage with links in several different languages, and new drop-down menus throughout for easier navigation.
Our Collection

In 2003-2004, close to 965,000 people visited The Ferguson Library—either the Main Library or one of our Branches. That’s close to a million visitors a year! They chose from our rich collection of books — hardback, paperback and large print, children’s books, videos, CDs, DVDs, audiobooks and much more.

Special funding enabled us to add to several collections. Audio books, world languages and book/cassette combinations tripled in size last year. The teen collection has seen the most dramatic changes over the last few years, with the establishment of a teen browse collection and several brand new collections just for teens: audio books, music CDs, CD ROMs, and videos/DVDs.

“We love the library. Besides the baby I have a four-year-old son and we are at the library at least once a week. My son has developed a love of books and going to the library is a big thrill for him. We have a million books at home, but every time he goes to the library he finds something new.”

Cindy Nacson-Schechter
Parent and Ferguson Library user
Outstanding Services and Programs

SUMMER READING CLUBS
Our Children’s Summer Reading Club, Book Banquet, had young readers devouring books all summer! It is hard to believe that our summer reading registration could increase after the previous year’s 13% increase, but 3,448 kids and teens registered for a system wide increase of 4%.

We are especially proud of our teens, an age group notoriously hard to coax into the library. Teen Summer Reading Club finishers at the Main Library showed a dramatic increase of 18% from 2002. We think reorganizing the teen club’s incentives, and throwing an after hours party made it more attractive for participants.

THE ADULT SUMMER READING CLUB, Take a Bite out of Reading, was a huge hit. The new tote bag incentive proved to be a big draw!
Children’s Programming

The numbers from the Connecticut State Library confirm what we’ve always guessed — our Children’s Department is the busiest in the state! From storytimes to book discussions to our wildly popular chess club, the Children’s Department produced a year of imaginative programming. In addition to regularly scheduled programs, we produced 50 special programs for 4,297 children and their families. We took advantage of several sources of outside funding such as Connecticut Family Day funds, and the General Electric Summer Science grant to supplement the programming budget. Here are some of the highlights:

WEINERVILLE — This puppet/variety show featuring comedian and children’s TV personality Marc Weiner, packed the house with a crowd of 375 people. A big success!

HARRY POTTER PARTY — Harry’s popularity is still magical. The kids love dressing up like witches and wizards. The librarians get into the spirit too!

ANIMAL EMBASSY— Animal Embassy’s Chris Evers fascinated his young audience with real live animals he has rescued, including a red legged tortoise, an African hedge hog, and a 50 pound boa constrictor!

Teens

We drew more teens than ever into the Library with exciting and innovative programs, like special teen movies and a Yu-Gi-Oh! tournament that brought 40 pre-teen and teenage boys into the Library!

T-MAD, the Library’s teen advisory group, continues to grow, with new members at every meeting. And what would we do during the summer without our teen volunteers to help out with the Children’s Summer Reading Club?!
Book Discussions and Author Programs

Children, teens and adults took advantage of our regular book discussions throughout the year. They were usually well attended and often quite lively!

It’s a real treat when we are able to bring authors into the Library to talk about their work. One of the year’s highlights was award-winning poet and novelist Julia Alvarez, who drew an enthusiastic audience from all over Connecticut. Ms. Alvarez graciously spent time chatting and signing books after the program.

We were also lucky to host author Malachi McCourt at the Harry Bennett Branch. Mr. McCourt charmed a full house with his self-deprecating humor, irreverent wit and unabashedly liberal opinions, all in a lilting brogue.

Business Resources—Helping You Succeed

Whether you use one of our many business databases or attend a workshop at the Library, The Ferguson offers business services that are second to none.

Our business resources include:

THE SMALL BUSINESS RESOURCE CENTER — a collaboration between the Library and the Women’s Business Development Center.

THE NONPROFIT RESOURCE CENTER — a partnership between the Library and the Volunteer Center of Southwestern Fairfield County.

WORKSHOPS — the Library paired with the local chapter of SCORE (retired business professionals) to offer small business workshops.
Film Programs

Film has become an exciting part of our programming here at the Library. Our regular film programs, Second Saturday Cinema and Ferguson Flicks, consistently draw healthy audiences. We have also begun offering independent or documentary films on Thursday nights, which run the gamut from a two part series on the slave ship Amistad to an interview with Hitler’s former secretary. Sometimes provocative — always interesting.

Computer Training

Internet use at the Library increased dramatically over the last year for both children and adults. Adult Internet usage was up 17%, children’s Internet usage increased by 27%.

Our many computer training classes provide access to new skills and information. Each month, we conduct a variety of computer workshops, including Internet training in English, Spanish and Russian, e-mail, and Word and PowerPoint classes. Our heavily used language lab offers an interactive self-instruction program to help non-English speakers learn the language — a key part of our commitment to literacy at The Ferguson.
Special Programs

What a year! We were wowed by Japanese-style drummers at the Weed Branch, and inspired by award-winning poet Marjorie Agosin during Poet’s Voice. In between, there was an opera class at the Harry Bennett Branch, and a new series of writing workshops featuring published romance authors. And of course, our popular open mic poetry nights . . . where anyone can and does get up and read their work!

Special Events

WEED BRANCH 50TH ANNIVERSARY
It’s not every year that a golden anniversary comes along. This year we were thrilled to celebrate the 50th anniversary of The Ferguson’s Weed Branch. It was a spectacular party! Close to 100 friends and patrons came to help us celebrate, including Connecticut House Speaker Moira Lyons, (pictured at right) who has been a tireless supporter of Weed.

Maybe it’s the cozy size . . . maybe it’s the way the staff at Weed know so many users by name. Whatever it is, the Weed Branch is truly a special place. Just ask the people who use it.

MEG CABOT VISITS THE LIBRARY
Princess Diaries author Meg Cabot delighted 200 young people at the Library’s annual Jeanne Rinehart lecture. Meg answered questions and signed books, visiting with each and every one of her admiring fans. She even donned a crown to get into the princess spirit!
Partnerships

South End’s “Powering Literacy” partnership with Pitney Bowes brought volunteers into the Branch and other neighborhood community centers during the summer to read and interact with children. The program continued into the fall with an expanded emphasis on literacy for families. The program is generously funded by Pitney Bowes.

The South End Branch also sponsors ongoing parent/child workshops called Padres Abriendos Puertas, with local social service agencies CTE and ARC. The program targets children ages one to three and their parents or caregivers, especially those for whom English is a second language.

World Languages

Our staff reflects Stamford’s multilingual diversity—a real plus in helping visitors who do not speak English. Thirty-three Ferguson employees speak another language: Arabic, Chinese/Cantonese, French/Creole, Greek, Hindi, Italian, Polish, Russian and Spanish. Our World Languages collection contains materials in 14 languages, and includes both contemporary and classic titles. Visitors to our website are able to find information in eight languages, including Chinese, Polish, Russian and Spanish. We also offer many bilingual programs at the Main Library and South End Branch.

Reaching Out

One of the greatest challenges we face is meeting the needs of Stamford’s diverse community. Recent figures show that three out of ten Stamford residents were foreign born, and one out of three speaks a language other than English at home. We are constantly striving to make the Library a welcoming place . . . whether visitors have been here a week, a month or a lifetime.
On the Road — The Bookmobile and Purple Bus

Our Bookmobile and Purple Bus make The Ferguson visible all over town. Even with a reduced schedule, the Bookmobile manages to make 25 stops every two weeks. Seven of those stops are at childcare centers; our energetic librarians read stories to an average of 200 children every two weeks!

The popular Purple Bus continued to ferry children to the Library. Children’s librarians conducted 121 Purple Bus visits for 2,566 school age children. For younger children there were 38 preschool visits for 744 children including all the Head Start sites, the William Pitt Development Center and a number of private nursery schools. Purple Bus visits are so popular that by the end of January the bus was booked through May!

Dial-A-Book and Visiting Books

The Library’s outreach services for older or homebound adults are a lifeline for many in our community. Our Dial-A-Book service mails books to the elderly or disabled, who return them in a postage-paid envelope when they are finished. The Visiting Books service brings books and videos to residents at eleven assisted living and low-income senior housing complexes each month. This year, we were able to add new materials to this collection thanks to a federal LSTA grant.
What would we do without the Friends? This dedicated support group makes many of our programs and events possible. The Friends help fund key Library programs such as our summer reading clubs, film programs and art exhibits. Their annual Book and Author Luncheon, co-sponsored by The Advocate, is one of the Library’s most important events. This year, Pulitzer Prize-winning author Frank McCourt delighted the audience with tales of his childhood in Ireland. Best-selling author Gail Sheehy and award-winning children’s writer Jean Fritz were also captivating speakers.

The Friends of Ferguson also sponsors the annual Stamford Literary Competition, which recognizes excellence in writing. This year, 61 young writers were honored at the 19th annual awards ceremony.

The Friends’ two very successful bookshops at the Main Library and Harry Bennett Branch offer eclectic collections of current and classic fiction, non-fiction, art and much more. There are also monthly collectible sales.

The Main Library bookshop is an especially inviting place. The door to Starbucks is always open and visitors can browse for books with their coffee, or enjoy a book and coffee at one of the café tables in the bookshop. We’ve made it so friendly, you’ll never want to leave!
Bricks and Mortar

WEED RENOVATION PROJECT
At year’s end, we looked forward to the start of the Weed renovation and expansion project, expected to begin in the fall of 2004. The work is slated to cost about $1.75 million, with $750,000 coming from the city, and $1 million allocated by the state.

The expansion will add 2,300 square feet to the tiny 1,650 square foot Branch, as well as renovate the existing 150-year-old building. The Branch will be reconfigured to include a spacious new children’s and teen area, a new audio/video section, as well as flexible usage space and a comfortable “living room” reading area.

Construction should take between nine and twelve months. The Branch will be closed during that time. Bookmobile service during the hours the Branch would have been open will be provided to Springdale residents during this period.

CHILDREN’S ROOM REPAIRS
The Main Library Children’s Room is much fresher and airier now with new plaster and paint in the first floor fiction and picture book rooms. The six-week project created a bit of dust, but it was well worth it. The work was finished right on schedule the week before Christmas.

“Dear Springdale [Weed] Library,
I cannot begin to thank you for all your many kindnesses over the years . . . what a special place your branch is! You always seem to go one step further than necessary to help your patrons. The size of the Springdale branch must be measured in the size of your hearts and the work of your hands. Surely you have the largest library I have ever known.

Most gratefully,
Mary Slater”
Weed Branch user
Ferguson Library

Board of Trustees
Patricia L. Broom
Chair
Harry Romanowitz, M.D.
Vice Chair
William W. Warrick
Treasurer
Kathryn Emmett, Esq.
Secretary
Ernest N. Abate, Esq.
Greg Caggainello
Thomas M. Cassone, Esq.
Robert E. King
Durham J. Monsma
Dudley N. Williams, Jr.
Ernest A. DiMattia, Jr.
President, The Ferguson Library

Citizen Advisers
Cleveland Christophe
George B. Harvey
Juanita T. James
Dr. Jacqueline Joseph-Silverstein
Theodore E. Payne

STAMFORD SCHOOLS LIAISON
Dr. Anthony Mazzullo

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEES
Gladys Cohen
Adopt-a-Book
Arlene Quigley
Art Exhibits
Nancy Kucera and Ruth Marcus
Book & Author Luncheon
Robbie Monsma
Book Shops
Ann Weiss
Books for Babies, Reach Out and Read
Kitty Sample and
June Langenhan
Membership Committee
Lorrell Guydon
Chair, Newsletter

Friends of Ferguson Library

EXECUTIVE BOARD
Mary Deery Uva
President
Julie Malloy
Executive Vice-President
Joan Rinaldi
Secretary
Jamie Santer
Treasurer
Robbie Monsma
Chair, Book Shops
Gladys Cohen
Chair, Adopt-a-Book
Ann Weiss
Chair, Books for Babies/Reach Out and Read
Kitty Sample and
June Langenhan
Chairs, Membership
Lorrell Guydon
Chair, Newsletter

Ferguson Library Foundation

Board of Trustees
Dr. Gino P. Giusti
Chair
Harvey L. Ganis
Vice-Chair
Frank J. Kugler
Treasurer
J. Ralph Murray
Secretary
Ernest N. Abate, Esq.
Charles A. Guinta
Frank D. Rich, Jr.

EX-OFFICIO
Patricia L. Broom
Chair, Board of Trustees
Ernest A. DiMattia, Jr.
President, The Ferguson Library

Debbie Neiman
Historian/Archivist
Lorrell Guydon
Newsletter

The Ferguson Library
One Public Library Plaza
Stamford, Connecticut 06902
203.964.1000
www.fergusonlibrary.org