THE FERGUSON LIBRARY
BUILDING TOGETHER

ANNUAL REPORT 2005—2006
Message from the Chair

In a dynamic, progressive, and professional community like Stamford, there is a great need for services that provide information, education and culture. The Ferguson Library, Stamford’s public library, has been serving the community and meeting its needs for almost 125 years with great success and distinction.

2005 – 2006 was no exception to this record of accomplishment. This year found the Library breaking new ground in its goal to excel. The completion of the new Weed Memorial & Hollander Branch in Stamford’s Springdale neighborhood was one of our major achievements. This magnificent structure represents a substantial renovation and expansion of the original 1820s house that has already enriched the experience of so many library users over the years.

Another notable achievement—for the first time in Ferguson’s history, the Main Library was able to open on Sundays during the summer of 2005. This was the result of a pilot program supported by a $25,000 grant from the Pitney Bowes Literacy and Education Fund. The grant provided an additional four hours of access to the Library on Sundays during the months of June, July, and August. Public response to this added service was overwhelming, with more than 800 patrons using our services and more than 900 items circulated every Sunday. With the city’s support, we anticipate that these new hours will continue in future years.

The Ferguson Library took important steps forward during the past year to accomplish its primary objective of providing the very best possible library service to the people who live and work in Stamford. The dedication and support of a vast array of community leaders, library volunteers and staff helped make this possible. The city, through its Mayor, Board of Representatives, Board of Finance, and Planning Board, continued to allocate sufficient funding to keep Ferguson strong. The Board of Trustees, Citizen Advisers, Friends of Ferguson Board of Directors and Ferguson Library Foundation Board all remained strongly committed to the Library’s mission of service to a vital and diverse community. At the core of the Ferguson’s success, as always, was the wonderful Library staff, who worked tirelessly throughout the year to assure our users that they would receive the professional service for which The Ferguson Library is known.

Kathryn Emmett, Esq.
Chair, Board of Trustees
Message from the President

Life is about building. We build on the past to reach the future. We build relationships to connect with one another. We build teams to accomplish important goals. This year, I am extremely proud of our achievement in building the beautiful new Weed Memorial & Hollander Branch of the Library. It was a tremendous undertaking that began with a vision to modernize the Branch while preserving Weed’s historic past and culminated in a stunning new library that will serve the Springdale and greater Stamford communities for years to come.

The project would not have been possible without the support of our partners in state and city government, our construction team and staff, and the Springdale Neighborhood Association, who worked with us to make this renovation a reality. Most importantly, we also had the support of some very special friends of the Library, including Dr. and Mrs. Milton Hollander for whom the Branch is now named, the Friends of Ferguson, the Freedman family, and the Ferguson Library Foundation. The generosity of these special friends is greatly appreciated. We truly built this branch together.

Elsewhere in the Ferguson Library system, we have continued to build on technological advances to offer the finest library service anywhere. More and more of our users are reaching us via computer from outside the Library, looking for information and resources. Wherever they are, our users can unlock the wealth of information the Library offers just by connecting to our website. With a Ferguson Library card, online visitors can access and use our many electronic databases, look up a book, find a computer training class, browse through our film collection, or find out what is happening at the Library.

But it is not all about remote library service. Close to a million people walked through our doors this year, looking for books, attending programs, using our computers and conducting research. Our librarians are always building relationships, whether they are leading a book discussion or answering a question. I cannot say enough about our caring, energetic staff. The Ferguson’s staff is highly professional and consistently produces unparalleled public library service. The Library is extremely fortunate to be able to draw on the talent and experience of so many dedicated individuals.

This coming year we will turn our attention to another ambitious building effort—the Main Library renovation. The project will modernize the Library and make better use of our space. It will also provide greater access to technology. Our children’s room will be expanded, with more room for programming, and we will create a new literacy/computer lab for computer training and English language instruction. While the Library is being upgraded throughout, it will remain fully open.

As we look forward to this project and other opportunities and challenges in the year ahead, I am confident the Ferguson Library will remain strong and vibrant, as we find new and better ways to serve the Stamford community.

Ernest A. DiMattia, Jr.
President, The Ferguson Library
Our Mission

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

Our Vision

The Ferguson Library will remain the community’s leading choice for information access, educational materials, and lifelong learning by continually and effectively adapting to technological and other changes in the environment.

Our Core Values

**Accelerate Promotion of Reading:** Beyond providing resources—support outreach, basic literacy and lifelong learning habits.

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

**Accountability:** Responsible to our community.

**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.
Like a butterfly working its way out of a cocoon, we have watched the former Weed Branch emerge this year as a stunning new library from the quaint, but cramped building it once was.

Ground was broken on the $2,075,000 project in May of 2005 and work proceeded right on schedule with very few delays. The graceful new Branch was designed by the architectural firm Perkins Eastman. Work was done by Encon Construction. The project was funded with a one million dollar grant from the Connecticut Department of Social Services and a $750,000 capital appropriation from the city of Stamford. In addition, Dr. and Mrs. Milton Hollander of Stamford generously donated $250,000. In recognition of their contribution, the Branch has been renamed the Weed Memorial & Hollander Branch. The new name was made official at a ribbon cutting and dedication ceremony June 21. The Friends of Ferguson contributed $50,000 to furnish the children's room, the Freedman family of Stamford donated $25,000, and the Ferguson Foundation gave $20,000.

The beautiful new building is now two and a half times the size of the previous branch, but every bit as welcoming. The renovation modernized and enlarged the Branch to bring it into the 21st century, while preserving its historic charm. The builders even managed to save some of the original beams. The new children's room is a spacious, light-infused area with a cathedral ceiling and French doors that open to a rear garden. Teens also have their own space now, and there is a new media section, as well as a comfortable reading room with a fireplace, where readers can cozy up with a book on wintry afternoons.

To accommodate increased demand, Weed is now open an additional six hours a week. This beautiful Branch—homey, yet modern—will serve the Springdale community for many years to come.
**Ferguson Online**

Our website, www.fergusonlibrary.org, continues to improve. This year we revamped our Teen Page, creating a more teen friendly site with easy to find information on schools, teen booklists and college & careers. Interlibrary loan is now available online too. If we don’t have a book or magazine someone wants, we can get it from another library via an online request. We keep our homepage fresh with a rotating menu of news and events at the Library—that way it’s always easy to find out what’s happening.

**ebooks and eAudio**

By some measures eBooks and eAudio books (digital books and digital audio books) are the fastest growing sector of the publishing industry. Demand for ebooks in libraries is growing too. Novels like the enormously popular *Da Vinci Code* by Dan Brown have helped boost the appeal of these electronic formats. People can read them on laptops or listen to the audio versions in the car or on the train. They are portable and the selection keeps improving.

**WiFi and Online Homework Help**

Wireless computer access has caught on in a big way. The Library’s WiFi network is available to anyone with a properly configured laptop, and more and more library users are taking advantage of it.

In June, the Library extended its WiFi coverage to Columbus Park in downtown Stamford in partnership with the city of Stamford, the Downtown Special Services District, The Stamford Partnership and The Business Council of Fairfield County. Plans call for extending the WiFi zone to Bedford and Atlantic Streets and the Stamford Transportation Center.

Our free online tutoring service also continues to grow in popularity. Homework Help offers students in grades 4 through 12 live online tutors seven days a week in English, math, science and social studies. Ninth graders looking for biology help seem to be the heaviest users, with most students logging on from inside the Library instead of at home.

**New Telephone System**

Phones aren’t as sexy as computers, but they sure are important. In January, the Library switched to the city’s new fiber-optic phone network. The new system is state-of-the-art, with direct dialing capability on Library extensions.
Special Events

The Ferguson Library Foundation honored syndicated columnist William F. Buckley Jr. with the first ever Ferguson Award for his professional achievements and longstanding support of the Library, at a special gala in December. The elegant evening was co-sponsored by The Advocate. The Friends of Ferguson hosted a silent auction of collectible books and generously presented the Foundation with a check for $5,000.

The year was full of other memorable happenings too. In April, we showcased the vibrant culture and heritage of Greece with our annual World of Words celebration. The Poet’s Voice, Jeanne Rinehart lecture and Book Buzz—our second annual book lovers’ conference, were among the steady stream of special programs and events that enlivened the rest of the year.

Summer Sundays

Thanks to a generous $25,000 donation from the Pitney Bowes Literacy & Education Fund, the Main Library was able to offer Sunday hours, 1 – 5 p.m., in 2005. Summer Sundays were a great success with 9,231 visitors to the Main Library.

The Library was able to stay open on Sundays again in 2006 with additional funding from the city.
Programs, Programs!

Summer Reading Clubs
It’s hard to believe it’s been a decade. Our very successful Adult Summer Reading Club celebrated its 10th anniversary this year with more than 350 participants who took advantage of films, book discussions and a toe tapping evening of jazz and swing at the Main Library.

Dragons, Dreams & Daring Reads was the theme for our 2005 Children’s Summer Reading Club. It was a roaring success, with 2,656 kids taking part—a 16% increase over the previous year. Films, workshops, book discussions, and a chess club kept the kids busy all summer.

Our teen club continues to thrive too. This year more teens registered than ever before. A total of 585 teens signed up—a 35% increase! Besides taking advantage of our many teen programs, these young adults are actually reading! More than a third of them read six books or more over the summer, entitling them to a free book.

Film Programs
From contemporary feature films to award-winning documentaries, the Ferguson is an exciting venue for film.

Our popular Second Saturday Cinema features recent movies like Firewall with Harrison Ford. Thursday Night at the Movies showcases independent film, sometimes with a lively discussion afterwards. And Ferguson Flicks draws a consistent crowd of 50 to 60 each Wednesday afternoon for travel, biography and documentary films.

Book Discussions & Author Programs
Bestselling author Philippa Gregory was a huge draw at the Harry Bennett Branch in September. Ms. Gregory, the author of The Other Boleyn Girl and The Virgin’s Lover, was a delightful, entertaining speaker. She graciously signed books after the program. In addition to author programs, the Library offers ongoing book discussions for children, teens, and adults. The adult discussions, especially, are often quite lively and have a regular following.

Poetry and Music
Our Poet’s Open Mic program is now in its fourth year at the Harry Bennett Branch. It continues to flourish there and at the Main Library, where it was introduced two years ago.

We observed Mozart’s 250th birthday with a wonderful concert/literary talk in January that celebrated this legendary composer’s life and work. And the always impressive Lumina String Quartet treated audiences to classical concerts at the Main Library in August and March.
Just for Kids

From lively storyhours, to Mad Science, to a real live wolf in the Library, children’s programming at the Ferguson is never dull! This year, our creative children’s librarians hosted 948 programs for children big and small.

CLOCKWISE: Children’s art workshop, Toddler Storytime, Halloween program, Afterschool Fun, Librarian Linda Kennedy celebrating Dr. Seuss.
Teens are an important constituency at The Ferguson Library. Not kids anymore, and not quite adults—they are a tough age group to interest. Our innovative, teen-friendly programs and knowledgeable librarians help these young adults feel welcome and at home here in the Library.

The manga party in August was one of our best teen programs in recent memory, and a duct tape program in April (yes, you can make things out of duct tape) was a big success too. We tried our first ever teen book discussion blog this May. Participants shared their thoughts online about the latest Harry Potter book, *Harry Potter and the Half Blood Prince*.

We had more teen volunteers this year than ever before, and T-MAD, the Library’s teen advisory group, continues to thrive, with an enthusiastic crop of new members.
The Ferguson offers first rate business resources that include an impressive offering of web-based business databases, including Business & Company Resource Center, Mergent Online and Standard & Poor’s Net Advantage, in addition to an outstanding collection of books and journals covering all aspects of business, management, economics, and finance. The Ferguson maintains special collections related to small business and nonprofit management.

The Library offers a wide variety of computer and Internet training classes, including Microsoft Word, PowerPoint and Basic Email. Many of these workshops are also offered in Spanish. We also offer a regular orientation to Ellis, our ESL program, which enables English language learners to work at their own speed in the Main Library computer lab.

Computers Made Easy and PC Basics, both taught at the Harry Bennett Branch, are extremely popular, especially with seniors looking to master introductory computer skills.
Reaching Out

Reaching out to the community is an important part of our mission. Whether it is sending books to the homebound or fostering literacy, we are constantly looking for ways to serve the community and promote learning.

**English Conversation Classes**
This new grant funded program to help newcomers learn to speak conversational English has been an overwhelming success. Volunteers at the Main Library and South End Branch work with groups of English language learners to help them talk about basics such as work, shopping and emergencies. We hope to keep this popular program going.

**Dial-a-Book and Visiting Books**
Our Dial-a-Book and Visiting Book services help seniors and the homebound stay connected. Dial-a-Book mails books to homebound patrons for an extended six week loan period. The Visiting Books service brings books and other materials to residents at twelve assisted living and low income senior housing complexes each month. A $3,000 grant from the First County Bank Foundation allowed us to purchase large print books for this collection.

**Special Needs Center**
The Library’s Special Needs Center serves parents of children with disabilities. It has a broad based collection of books, videos, Internet resources and other materials for families of children with special needs. While our LSTA grant concluded the previous year, we continue to promote and support this unique resource. We created a special needs version of the “Learning Kits to Go” brochure which was mailed to 224 special education teachers, therapists, and administrators in Stamford. We partnered with the Connecticut Board of Education, Services to the Blind to provide two storyhours directed at children with visual impairments in the Fairfield County area. Each family received a set of the materials used in the program, and we subsequently added these Braille and tactile materials to our special needs learning kits.

An active bulletin board near the collection has become a resource for parents, who find out about events, conferences, etc. that are of interest.

**Library Card Sign Up**
Several times a year we conduct a library card sign up for the William Pitt Child Development Center in Stamford. More than half of the children there are Spanish speaking, so one of our bilingual staffers helps out to communicate with the parents. At our April visit, we processed 77 applications!

**I Have a Dream Writing Contest**
In honor of Dr. Martin Luther King’s birthday, local students ages 7 to 13 were invited again this year to share their dreams for their community and the world. 350 students from Stamford and surrounding towns put pen to paper and submitted entries. Two Stamford elementary school students and one middle school student from Greenwich won top honors.
On the Road
The Bookmobile & The Purple Bus

In addition to traveling all over Stamford, the Bookmobile became the temporary Weed Branch this year during construction. During the early phases of the project, the Bookmobile was able to park in front of the Branch during regular Weed hours. When that became too difficult, the Bookmobile moved off site. It was on and off during the next several months. On Saturdays, the Bookmobile used the Springdale School parking lot, which was convenient for regular customers. Through it all, loyal patrons kept coming.

The Purple Bus ferries school children from all over Stamford to the Library. This year, for the first time we had 100% participation from every Stamford public elementary school. 3,571 children in Pre K to Grade 5 visited the Library on the Purple Bus.

Friends of Ferguson

The Friends of Ferguson is the Library’s energetic, volunteer support group. This year, the Friends generously funded all of the Library’s programming—everything from summer reading clubs to author events to film series.

The Friends’ incredibly successful used bookshops generate most of their revenue. And what the shops can’t sell is re-donated through the Friend to Friend program, which supplies teachers and Stamford nonprofits with free books. This past fiscal year, Friend to Friend gave away a record 30,000 books and other items to local agencies. Of those, nearly 2,000 books, tapes and magazines went to Stamford public schools.

The Friends also reached out to help Hurricane Katrina victims, donating ten boxes of books to an elementary school in Mississippi which was leveled in the disaster.

One of the Friends’ signature events is the annual Literary Competition, which recognizes excellence in writing. The 21st annual competition drew more than 250 entries from Stamford students in grades 3 to 12. Fifty-five winners were honored for their work.
Partnerships

The Ferguson has nurtured many successful partnerships with community groups. One of our most productive collaborations is with the Stamford public schools. Our youth services librarians visit the elementary and middle schools to booktalk and promote our summer reading clubs and Teen Read Week programs. And our Purple Bus, customized teacher units and Learning Kits to Go are just some of the many services we offer to teachers and students. The Library also participates in the School Readiness Council, a group that brings together the major early childhood providers in Stamford.

The South End Branch co-sponsors parent-child workshops in collaboration with CTE and ARC, where special needs youngsters interact with other babies for socialization and fun. South End also hosts a successful child/adult book discussion series called Enlightening the Mind, co-sponsored by Connecticut Light & Power and CTE.

What’s Next?

Main Library Renovation

We are about to begin a top to bottom renovation of the Main Library. The project will reallocate space in the building, modernizing the Library on all fronts. Our children’s room will be significantly enlarged, with the addition of a dedicated teen area, and more room for children’s programming. We will create a new literacy lab, thanks to generous funding from the Stamford Rotary Club. Plans also call for a special area for new books, with comfortable seating that invites people to feel at home. There will be new furniture, shelving, carpets and lighting throughout the building.

The Library will remain open during construction, which will probably be phased in over several years. It will be a challenging, but exciting time.

Ferguson by the Numbers

Operating support from the city of Stamford $7,188,617
Revenue from Library activities $760,240
Salaries & staffing-related costs $5,860,082
Purchases of books, electronic resources & other materials $915,031

Items circulated 917,620
Visitors to the Library 916,112
Offsite Internet users 169,717
Reference questions answered systemwide 157,461
Total programs systemwide 1,651
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