CELEBRATION & CHALLENGE
THE FERGUSON LIBRARY AT 125 YEARS
ANNUAL REPORT 2006 ~ 2007
Message from the Chair

2006–2007 has been a year of celebration and challenge. As we celebrate the Ferguson’s 125th anniversary, we face financial challenges that have called for difficult choices. At the close of the fiscal year, the Library was facing a budget shortfall in municipal funding for 2007–2008. After much deliberation, we felt the only course was to keep the Main Library fully operating to benefit the entire community, and as a temporary solution, to reduce hours at the Branches. These reductions in hours will be made with due regard to existing patterns in public usage. Nevertheless, this was a painful decision, and one that was taken only after it became clear that there was no other way to make up the deficit that would not have a permanent adverse effect on our staff and our collections. While plans for service reductions are being formulated, the Board is working to achieve restoration of the cuts that were made and the hours of access that are being reduced.

The outpouring of community support for the Library at this difficult time has been unprecedented and extremely gratifying. Despite the uncertain times, we will endeavor to continue to provide the Stamford community with the outstanding library service it deserves and has come to expect.

On a more upbeat note, we are thrilled to be able to mark 125 years of service to the city of Stamford. During this period, The Ferguson has grown from a sleepy small town library to a hub of learning and information for the dynamic, diverse city Stamford has become. Our vision . . . to remain the community’s leading choice for information access, educational materials, and lifelong learning . . . is the goal we constantly strive to reach, and the benchmark by which we will measure our progress over the coming years.

Our success in serving the public would not be possible without the Library’s talented and dedicated staff. Our employees are Ferguson’s backbone, and the reason we are able to offer such a high level of service. The dedication and support of a vast array of community leaders and library volunteers has also helped make this possible. As always, the leadership of the city of Stamford plays an important role in the Library’s vitality, and I sincerely thank Mayor Malloy and the Boards of Finance and Representatives for their ongoing support of, and commitment to, The Ferguson Library.

As we look to the coming year, I am confident the Ferguson will emerge from its financial challenges healthier and stronger than ever. With the steadfast support of our community, volunteers and city leaders, The Ferguson Library will continue to serve Stamford with distinction.

—Greg Caggainello
Message from the President

With all that has happened in our society over the past 125 years, it is difficult to imagine living in a time without change. So too, during this period, information, education, culture and literacy have all undergone a radical transformation to become the vital elements of the life-long learning process we experience today. Those elements are what comprise the services, collections, and programs of Stamford’s public library, The Ferguson Library.

I look back on 2006–2007 with great delight. It was an outstanding year of accomplishment for the people of Ferguson: our volunteer leaders, our staff, and, especially, our users (over a million strong). Be it the growing popularity of the new Weed Memorial & Hollander Branch, the continuing expansion of our technology capability and usage, the Big Read and other book and film related programs, or our outreach to a host of diverse constituents and community organizations, Ferguson’s impact on Stamford was unmistakable and lasting.

This annual report provides a lengthy litany of some of the highlights of the year, but is only a sampling of the usage made of Ferguson by thousands of residents each day. People who are young and old and every age in-between, from all walks of life, find the public library a place of learning and knowledge, inspiration and enjoyment, and excitement and fulfillment. It is a service that is unparalleled and insures the continuing education and growth of an entire community.

As one of the leading public libraries in the Northeast, as well as the nation, Ferguson has been extremely fortunate to have attracted talented people at almost every level of its organization. Outstanding community leaders volunteer on the Board of Trustees and Citizen Advisers, Friends Board of Directors, and Foundation Board of Trustees. Their commitment to their work at Ferguson is deep and boundless. Our professional and support staffs continue to represent some of the best and brightest people available, committed to excellence in strong customer service and providing that extra measure of help. Add to this mix, a responsive and supportive municipal government led by Mayor Malloy and the city boards, and you create a very special synergism which results in The Ferguson Library.

The future, always difficult to see clearly, promises to provide new opportunities and new difficulties. Budget reductions will have to be overcome, the Main Library renovation program needs to be fully launched, new services responding to ongoing societal change will have to developed, and new users will be seeking our services. The Ferguson family has the strength of character to surmount obstacles and gain strength in the process. These continue to be our near-term and long-term goals as another new year, 2007–2008, brings us new challenges to meet, and new reasons to celebrate our success.

—Ernest DiMattia, Jr.
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.
Ferguson at 125

Since it first opened its doors at the end of the 19th century, The Ferguson Library has been a central part of the Stamford community, a haven of learning and education, a gathering place where people could meet and exchange ideas. Sometimes even a place to come in out of the cold for a while.

As Stamford grew and changed, The Ferguson Library grew along with it.

In 1911, the Ferguson became a free public library, embracing the concept that knowledge should be available to all, regardless of ability to pay.

The Ferguson now serves nearly a million visitors each year, and countless others access our online services. But our core values haven’t changed much in the last 125 years. The commitment to supporting lifelong learning, and providing free and equal access to information is still at the heart of our mission. We think it will serve us well for the next 125 years.
What’s New at the Ferguson

Weed Memorial & Hollander Branch Takes Off

The Weed Memorial & Hollander Branch re-opened after extensive renovations at the very end of fiscal 2005–2006. This year was the first full year of operation for the newly renovated Branch. It has been a resounding success. The community was delighted with the renovations, and usage immediately began to soar. The Branch is especially busy after school when children walk over from Springdale Elementary School next door. They do homework, use the computers and browse for books.

The cozy fireplace reading room is a favorite spot with young and old, whether it’s cold enough for a fire or not. And the toddler room is a delightful, sunny space for programs.

Main Library Opens at 9 a.m.

Thanks to a generous grant from the Pitney Bowes Literacy and Education Fund, we were able to open the Main Library at 9 a.m. Monday–Saturday beginning in July. The public response has been enthusiastic, and we hope to find the funding to maintain these hours next year.

Passport Services Expanded

In an effort to grow our passport business, we began offering passport services at the Harry Bennett Branch on Saturdays. This project began at the very end of June with a promotional blitz. We hope to add passport service on Sundays at the Main Library soon.

Diversity Task Force

Our new Diversity Task Force aims to make sure the Library is meeting the informational and cultural needs of our diverse community. To this end, we began producing foreign language versions of Focus on Ferguson, the Library’s newsletter. Our Spanish version of Focus came out in the spring, and a Creole Focus was published this summer. Our New Americans blog also grew out of this task force.
Our Collection

Books & More
Close to a million people visited the Library this year, and nearly 200,000 users logged onto our website remotely. We helped many of those people find what they needed, answering 168,450 reference questions over the course of the year.

Because of budget constraints, collection development was limited this year, but we were able to introduce Playaways, which immediately became a huge success. Playaways are a new type of audio book—individual MP3 players loaded with one audio title, so no downloading is necessary. They are small enough to slip into a pocket or bag, and the public seems to love them. The Library sells ear buds as a convenience.

We were also able to modestly grow our World Languages Collection, adding about 100 titles in both Arabic and Chinese, as well as books in Russian, Polish and Spanish.

On the Road

The Bookmobile & Purple Bus
The Bookmobile is the traveling face of the Library. In addition to visiting its regular stops on Wednesdays and Fridays, the Bookmobile participates in special events around town, including parades, Spring on the Farm at the Stamford Museum and Nature Center, and Touch a Truck at Westhill High School. The public loves seeing the Bookmobile out and about, and these community events do a lot to raise the Library’s profile.

The Purple Bus brings school children from all over Stamford to the Library, some for their very first visit. This year, once again, we had 100% participation from every Stamford public elementary school. 2,953 children in Pre K–Grade 5 visited the Library on the Purple Bus.
Technology—Embracing the Future

Ferguson Online
Our website, www.fergusonlibrary.org, is undergoing a makeover. With input from a staff website design committee, our talented in-house graphic designer created a new homepage prototype that updated the look of the site as well as addressed functionality issues. We are now working on the interior pages, which will mirror the look and feel of the homepage. It's an exciting project that will result in a more intuitive, elegant website.

Pay for Print
We rolled out a pay for print system in November, first at the Main Library, then the Branches. First, we spent months experimenting with and tweaking the software. But thanks to all our advance prep work, the introduction of pay-for-print was painless for the staff and public. This was an effort to cut costs, while giving the public the option of color printing. Each user is allowed ten black-and-white or two color prints per day. The public response was overwhelmingly positive. Paper usage has gone down dramatically.

WiFi
When the Ferguson first began offering wireless Internet access in 2004, we were among only 18% of public libraries to do so. By 2006, 37% of public libraries were providing WiFi, and another 23% said they had plans to add it within two years. Our usage figures reflect that trend.

This fiscal year we had about 8500 successful wireless log ins at the Main Library. WiFi usage has been climbing steadily each month—from 475 log ins in July, 2006 to 611 log ins in June, 2007. The Harry Bennett and Weed Memorial & Hollander Branches are both wireless now too.

Interlibrary Loan Online
Only a few other public libraries in the area allow customers to request materials from another library online. Ever since we began offering this service in 2005, its popularity has grown steadily. This year, we handled 158 online interlibrary loan requests.

New Blogs
The Ferguson now maintains a Spanish language blog as well as blogs on technology, film, and new Americans. Blogs are an informal way for the public to connect with library staff on a variety of subjects, and give us a presence in the red hot world of social networking.
Special Events

The Big Read
April was all about The Big Read. Stamford, led by The Ferguson Library, was one of 72 towns and communities around the country to join the Big Read, a nationwide initiative from the National Endowment of the Arts, designed to restore reading to the center of American culture.

Stamford, along with Shelton, Bridgeport and Norwalk, received an NEA grant for this project, which focused on Harper Lee’s classic novel, To Kill a Mockingbird. There were several venues for Big Read events throughout Stamford, but the Ferguson was at the center of it all—with book discussions, films and performances, and a visit by Charles Shields, author of a new biography of Harper Lee.

It was truly a cooperative project, and exciting to be part of a national effort to promote reading.

Cultural Festivals
The Library offers rich cultural events throughout the year. In December, drumming, dancing, crafts and candle lighting highlighted our 10th annual Kwanzaa celebration.

The South End Branch serves a vibrant Haitian community, and sponsors two big Haitian cultural programs each year. About two hundred people attended the 7th annual Haitian Book Fair and Festival in October, which featured titles in English, French and Creole as well as live music and poetry.

In May, Haitian singer Jocelyn Clermont performed for an appreciative crowd at South End’s annual Haiti Flag Day celebration.

Black History Month
Emeline Michel—the “Queen of Haitian Song”—treated an audience of over 200 to a fabulous performance at the South End Branch in February. And we received an Ezra Jack Keats mini-grant to bring African-American artist R. Gregory Christie to the Library to conduct two children’s art workshops.
Programs, Programs!

Summer Reading Clubs

Once again our summer reading clubs were a huge success. Our Adult Summer Reading Club, Read in Wild Places, featured book discussions, films, a lovely evening concert on the lawn at the Weed Memorial & Hollander Branch, and a special Wild Times newsletter that won rave reviews from the public.

Our teen club keeps growing, and interestingly, attracts older teens as well as middle school age. Close to 600 teens participated in our S.A.F.A.R.I. summer reading program this year.

Animal Antics, our lively 2006 Children’s Summer Reading Club, drew 2,763 children, a 4% increase over last year. Kids flocked to the Library for programs like African drumming, films, book discussions and our ever popular chess club.

Book Discussions and Author Programs

Our third annual Book Buzz drew 55 book lovers to the Library for a day of discussions with eight authors. They enjoyed lunch and great conversation about books. We also hosted an English tea when best selling British author Philippa Gregory returned to the Library to talk about her latest book, The Constant Princess.

In addition to author programs, the Library offers ongoing book discussions for children, teens and adults at the Main Library and Branches.

Film Programs

From Borat to An Inconvenient Truth, the Ferguson dishes up an eclectic menu of film. New this year—an International Film Shorts festival, which featured award-winning short films from around the world. Seventy-five people came out on a Sunday afternoon for what turned out to be a terrific program.

Poetry and Music

The Poet’s Voice in October featured Connecticut poet Ira Joe Fisher, who charmed the audience with his poetry and wit.

Our Poet’s Open Mic series continues to thrive at the Main Library and Harry Bennett Branch, with a featured local poet often highlighting the evening.

The talented Lumina String Quartet treated audiences to classical concerts at the Main Library in August and February.
Just for Kids

Our many children’s programs offer inspiring, educational and just plain fun activities that form an important bond between the Library and our youngest users. It was a year of exciting, innovative children’s programming.

Samantha, a licensed therapy dog, turned out to be the perfect listener for beginning readers. Samantha visited the Library as part of Therapy Dogs International’s Children Reading to Dogs program. The program proved so popular that Samantha has become a regular.

The animal parade continued with a visit by a screech owl, hawk and bald eagle in a fascinating program about these birds of prey and their environments. Our tireless children’s librarians also hosted author visits, storytimes, book discussions, films, chess club and a zany juggling program.

We also cooperated with the Connecticut Board of Education Services for the Blind by offering two special story-hours for children with visual impairments.

Teens

Our brand new teen tech program turned out to be a highly successful enterprise that brought tech savvy teens into the Library for paid work experience. The internship project was part of a city-wide program funded with a grant from the Mayor’s Youth Initiative, to give technology minded high school students some real world experience.

From a pool of 61 applicants, the Library hired 13 exceptional young people who worked as computer aids in the Main Library and Branches. They quickly became indispensable. We hope to find the funding to continue the program next year.

Another new initiative is our teen book critics program. It’s not a formal book discussion . . . instead teens get together and informally talk about books they like. It is a format that seems to appeal to this age group, and keeps them coming to the Library.

The Library’s teen volunteer program continues to thrive, with 140 volunteers this summer at the Main Library alone. T-MAD, the Library’s energetic teen advisory group, helps plan teen programming and advises librarians on teen materials.
Computer Training

We are offering more varied computer training than ever before. In addition to basic classes like Internet and Microsoft Word, our Information Services Department began offering workshops on digital photography and social networking sites. We conducted two MySpace for Parents classes, which helped parents understand this social networking phenomenon popular with many children and teens.

Computers Made Easy and PC Basics, both taught at the Harry Bennett Branch, are extremely popular with seniors looking to master introductory skills. The Weed Memorial & Hollander Branch has also begun offering computer workshops, which draw students of all abilities.

Also new this year—a class on Basic Word in Creole at the South End Branch.

Business Resources—Helping You Succeed

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.
Reaching Out

English Conversation Classes
Our Let’s Talk English conversation groups help New Americans or those with limited English skills practice conversational English in an informal setting. Volunteers at the Main Library and South End Branch work with groups of English language learners to talk about basics, such as work and shopping.

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.

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.

I Have a Dream Writing Contest
The Ferguson’s annual “I Have a Dream” writing contest drew a record 812 entries this year from students ages 7–14. In honor of Dr. Martin Luther King’s birthday, local students were invited to share their dreams for their community and the world.

Zhen Nalywayko (left) and Darnell Dorival, 7th graders at Cloonan Middle School, were among the winners.
Friends of Ferguson

The Friends of Ferguson is the Library’s dynamic volunteer support group. This year, for the second year in a row, the Friends generously funded 100% of the Library’s programming, including summer reading clubs, author events, children’s programs and much more. The Friends’ two used book shops make all this possible. This year, the stores had a record breaking year, earning more than $200,000. What the shops can’t sell is re-donated through the Friend-to-Friend program, which supplies nonprofit agencies, including Stamford schools and teachers, with free books. Friend-to-Friend re-donated an astonishing 120,000 books to local, state and international charities this year.

The Friends annual Literary Competition drew a record 450 applications for the 22nd annual competition. The contest recognizes Stamford students in grades 3–12 for excellence in writing.

The Books for Babies outreach program has also grown, providing every baby born at Stamford Hospital with a beautiful board book, courtesy of the Friends of Ferguson.

Community Partnerships

We launched an exciting new partnership with Stamford Hospital this year to bring health information to the public. The Healthy Choices project included a series of lectures at the library on topical subjects such as avian flu and heart disease, as well as a series of hands-on computer classes to help the public learn where to find high quality health information. Most of the venues were at the library, with experts from Stamford Hospital presenting. While attendance was modest, the venture was an effort to meet our customers’ demand for health and medical information.

The Ferguson continues to nurture other partnerships, including our longstanding collaboration with the Stamford public schools. Book talks, the Purple Bus, customized teacher units and Learning Kits to Go are just some of the many services we offer teachers and students.

At the South End Branch, the Enlightening the Mind child/adult book discussion series, co-sponsored by Connecticut Light & Power and CTE, continues to flourish.
What’s Next

Main Library Renovation

We hope to begin the top to bottom renovation of the Main Library this fall. The project was originally on track to get underway in the spring, but when cost estimates came in significantly above budget, we needed to re-examine every aspect of the plan. We are paring the project back, but feel confident that even with reductions, the end result will be a handsome, functional building that will serve the public for many years to come.

Ferguson by the Numbers

Financial Highlights

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Public Service Data

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<td>Total programs systemwide</td>
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