



FOX POINT *files*

by Douglas H. Frazer

What's Up at the North Shore Library



On Saturday May 21, 2016, the North Shore Library is celebrating its 30th birthday with a gala, on-site event between 10am and 3pm. This milestone is a good opportunity to recognize the library—an epicenter of North Shore life. It is also an occasion for historical reflection and a look to the future.

The North Shore Library (6800 North Port Washington Road) is a member of the Milwaukee County Federated Library System (MCFLS). It is what is known as a joint library since it serves Fox Point, Bayside, Glendale, and River Hills.

The library's mission is to provide access to materials and services, which can improve minds, broaden lives, and fulfill cultural, civic, intellectual, educational, professional, and recreational needs. The library boasts two active support groups: a Friends of the Library organization and the North Shore Library Foundation.

For many years residents relied on other Milwaukee County municipal libraries or on a Milwaukee Public Library bookmobile on a borrow-for-a-fee-charged-back-to-the-Village arrangement until 1979 when the Villages of Fox Point and Bayside jointly established the Fox Point-Bayside Library in Stormonth School. By 1982 it had outgrown its space, prompting a move in 1986 to its larger, present location. At the same time Glendale and River Hills joined the consortium.

The constituent communities share library expense on a population-weighted formula. The Village of Fox Point has long served as the library's fiscal agent—processing payroll and administering accounts payable and receivable.

On July 13, 2015, the North Shore Library welcomed new Director Susan Draeger-Anderson. She accepted the position with challenges aplenty. The facility functions just fine on a day-to-day basis, but space-wise the library is bursting at the seams and in dire need of updating and redesign.



The library board, which oversees the library's direction, had long considered relocating the library to address these concerns. However it recently decided that the library should remain in its present location. This determination came, in part, after the board was able to purchase about 1,000 square feet of space it had long leased from the property owner.

The next issue is how to repurpose and improve the space. A library refurbishment will require a substantial capital contribution from the constituent communities.

Draeger-Anderson is on top of this issue and more. She comes to the job after serving as a field service representative for a large library vendor and in various brick and mortar library capacities in Wisconsin and in Dayton, Ohio. She has undergraduate degrees in political science and theatre from the University of Wisconsin-Oshkosh and a master of library

and information science from the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee.

For Draeger-Anderson the job presents a great challenge and an equally great opportunity. When it opened, the North Shore Library was one of the nicest facilities in the area. "It should, and will be that, again," she says.

The Fox Point members on the library board, Village Trustee Christine Symchych and citizen member Beverly Bell, echo this belief. "Our community," say Symchych, "deserves a library second-to-none. We should have that again and we will."

In the meantime, the library hums along. It is busy. Each day it hosts about 400 visitors who check out roughly 700 items. Digital services continue to grow—including e-books, e-audio, and e-video materials—but interestingly, e-circulation is still just seven percent of the materials borrowed.

The library has great offerings for children and students, including Spring Break and Tween Scene programming. The library's membership in the MCFLS means that it has a readily available catalog of materials

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Head of Youth Services Alyssa Pisarski (l), Library Director Susan Draeger-Anderson (r)

and media. One exciting new item the MCFLS is offering: free online access to Gale Courses—hundreds of courses for professional and career development, computer skills, and personal enrichment.

Of course, what goes out must come in. After a three-day grace period the library assesses a \$.20/day fine for overdue books and \$1/day for DVDs and electronic devices like Nooks and Kindles. The library currently has \$117,500 outstanding in overdue fines and charges for non-returned items.

On February 29, 2016, the governor signed a bill to assist the return of library material. The bipartisan legislation clarifies that libraries may contract with collection agencies and seek law enforcement assistance in collecting overdue accounts. However, the legislation clarifies that libraries may only share with collection agencies or local law enforcement the patron name, amount owed, and number and type of materials, but not the titles or subject matter.



It remains to be seen how the library board will elect to implement this authority.

In the life of a community library, the 30-year mark is special. It is a good time to consider from where we have come to where we want to go. The question going forward is whether the North Shore Library will lead or lag. If we choose the former, the issue then is one of resolve: whether we can find the money—from sources public and private—to make the North Shore Library, once again, a facility among the best.

Douglas H. Frazer is a Fox Point resident and neighborhood contributor. The views expressed are his own and not necessarily those of Best Version Media, LLC.

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