

# Fox Point



by Douglas H. Frazer



# The North Shore Library

## Do you love libraries? I do.

Our local library, the North Shore Library (6800 North Port Washington Road), is a member of the Milwaukee County Federated Library System. 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 to its larger, present location in 1986. At the same time, Glendale and River Hills joined the consortium.

The library's 2014 budget is just under one million dollars. It has seven full-time and 26 part-time employees. It hosts an average of 400 patrons per day, who check out about 25,000 items per month.

Data shows that Wisconsin residents value and use public libraries. More than six in ten residents are registered library users. An entire chapter of the Wisconsin Statutes, Chapter 43, is devoted to the subject of public libraries.

Most of Wisconsin's 384 public libraries are municipal libraries that are administered by local library boards.

Municipal library boards are appointed by the mayor or village president, with the approval of the governing body. In addition, the board must include a school district administrator or the administrator's representative. The North Shore Library Board consists of 10 members – four from Glendale, two each from Fox Point and Bayside, one from River Hills, and a school administrator. Mardee Gruen (a former Fox Point Village Board member) and Beverly Bell (an incumbent Fox Point Village Board member) are the current Fox Point representatives on the Board. Gruen has served on the Board for many years and is currently Board President. Library Board members serve three year terms and are not compensated for their services.

Fox Point serves as the fiscal agent for the library. The Library Board forwards spending vouchers, including payroll information, to the Fox Point municipal clerk who processes the disbursements and writes the checks. Library employees are considered "municipal personnel" for purposes of the municipal civil service system.

All of Wisconsin's public libraries have voluntarily chosen to participate in one of the State's seventeen regional public library systems. These systems maintain certain standards and provide efficiencies -- supervised by the Division for Libraries and Technology within the Department of Public Instruction -- through sharing and consolidation of services. Each public library system receives state aid for the operation and maintenance of the system pursuant to a formula. This aid generally is provided in terms of shared goods and services rather than as direct pass-through grants. Withdrawal from a regional public library system would jeopardize eligibility for this state aid and the shared resources, technological support, inter-library loan delivery coordination and other system services provided to local member libraries.

In addition to state aid, the library is funded through the constituent municipalities' respective tax levies according to a formula. In 2014, Fox Point's contribution to the North Shore Library budget is about \$225,000.

Space-wise, the North Shore Library is bursting at the seams and its long-time director, Dick Nelson, just retired. The Library Board is actively looking for a larger space, possibly in a new building, and is searching for a new director.

The digital age has required libraries to expand their services to electronic media of all kinds, and the North Shore library has dedicated resources toward this end. Kindles, Nooks, and laptops, for instance, are now available for check-out. The library is also conscious of keeping materials in its collection that are of particular interest to the patrons of its constituent municipalities.

A library is an important component to any community. The North Shore Library Board continues to recognize our library's role as a critical epicenter of North Shore life, and carries forth its belief that our communities want and should have a first-rate library.

*Douglas H. Frazer is a trustee on the Fox Point Village Board. The views expressed are his own and not necessarily those of the Village, the Village Board, other Village Board members, or Best Version Media, LLC.*



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