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Utica Public Library

Annual Report

2015-2016



303 Genesee Street · Utica, NY · 315-735-2279 · www.uticapubliclibrary.org

Investing in libraries is investing in the future

A year in review of Youth Services at Utica Public Library

2015 was a big year for Youth Services. New, big programs, and more community involvement. Can 2016 top all of that? You bet it can. Stay up-to-date with the latest Youth Services programs and services at www.uticapubliclibrary.org/calendar and on Facebook at www.facebook.com/uticapubliclibrary and www.facebook.com/uticapubliclibrary.youthservices.

Big Changes: Super Summer Reading at the Utica Public Library

2015 saw a big change to the way we handle the summer reading program. Traditionally, the summer reading program has a theme, and is a collection of programs, along with record keeping of the number of books participants read. Josh Carlson, Director of Youth Services, wanted to shake things up a bit, create a brand for the library's annual program and also make the program more about experiences, and less about busy work and record keeping. As a result, *Super Summer Reading at the Utica Public Library* was created.

"This is great. Thank you so much for providing so many opportunities and ideas for us and our children to do over the summer and get them active in the community." --parent



Kathleen from Utica Zoo visited with animal friends.



Utica police officers conducted storytimes throughout the year.

Super Summer Reading is a way to create a consistent brand identity from year to year for the library's massive summer reading program. In addition, it is now broken into three component parts. First, there is the *Superbabies!* program, which is a way for our youngest patrons ages 0-3 and their caregivers to interact with each other and with reading. Second, is the option for ages 4-18 to join a more traditional summer reading program, where they will read and record books.

Finally, the third component is the option for ages 10-18 to join the *Summer Super Challenge*. The Super Challenge is an experiential program offering a wide variety of activities to be completed in four categories: CARE, EXPLORE, CREATE and PLAY. Participants receive a game board and a journal and proceed to complete activities designed to keep them active and engaged all summer long, with reading and other means of learning. The Super Challenge was a great success and most notably increased participation by teenagers in the library's summer reading program.

"Your Super Challenge was amazing! It was an entire curriculum for our summer." --Thea Bowman House teacher

"I really enjoyed this. It was new and very fun to do... it also helped us kind of keep in touch with books and school. I would like to do it again." -Super Challenge participant, age 12

The second year of Super Summer Reading kicks off July 5, 2016 and promises to be even bigger than 2015. Get involved in the conversation about Super Summer Reading on Facebook at www.facebook.com/uticapubliclibrary.supersummerreading.

Super Summer Reading at the Utica Public Library is sponsored by the M&T Bank / Partners Trust Bank Charitable Fund, a donor advised fund of The Community Foundation of Herkimer & Oneida Counties, Inc.

New! Early Literacy Backpacks with iPads!

The best way to raise a lifelong reader is to start reading at an early age. Utica Public Library staff are helping parents and caregivers in achieving this goal with new tools. This September, a new collection of early literacy backpacks, some including an iPad, will be added to the existing early literacy collection. There will be over thirty early literacy backpacks designed for kids ranging in ages from newborn to 5 years old that include different themes, such as space and superheroes. These bags have six age-appropriate books and activities that relate to each backpack theme. Each bag also contains a blank book that children can write and draw in with their parents. There will also be seven new iLearn bags that each have a different theme. These bags include an **iPad**, activities for the iPad, books, and games. We will be introducing a new line of bags with our first ever American Girl Doll bag featuring Addy. The bag will include Addy, a few changes of clothes, American Girl Doll books featuring Addy, books about the time period Addy lived in, and a journal for children to write about their adventures with Addy. The journal stays with the doll so everyone can read about Addy's new adventures.



Utica Public Library was given a check for \$1,026.50 by HAVOC, a Hamilton College volunteer organization, for use with early literacy backpacks.

Big Events in 2015: Fandemicon & Trunk or Treat

Trunk or Treat

Trunk or Treat was an idea brought to us by concerned community members. A local father noted that there is a tendency for families to leave the neighborhood for trick or treating at Halloween. He saw a "trunk or treat" event where youth can trick or treat from one decorated car trunk to another in a safe, central location, as a means to reverse the trend, and that the library's parking lot would be a fantastic location. The library's Youth Services Director loved the idea and moved forward with plans. On the evening of the event, we were blown away. We expected it to be a success, but we were vastly unprepared for the **over 600 people** that came. We needed more candy, more volunteers, more trunks and more things to do! We plan on having more of everything when our second Trunk or Treat takes place in October before Halloween. The Library would like to thank Twin Orchards Farm and Hemstrought's Bakeries for donating goodies for the children.



Marjie Cobane shared her pirate loot during Trunk or Treat.



Library staff really got into the spirit of Fandemicon.

FANDEMICON, Utica's Pop Culture Convention

FANDEMICON was an idea kicked around for a while: a comic-con style event at the library. 2015 was a perfect year to try it out, with Super Summer Reading needing some sort of spectacular capstone event. FANDEMICON is an all-ages, family-friendly event with programming and sessions for everyone on any fandom-related topic, from comics and superheroes to games and video games to anime and manga and more. Utica seemed to embrace the idea. We received a great deal of fantastic press leading up to the event, along with opportunities for radio interviews, mentions and shares on social media and local community websites, and discussion on the Uticast podcast. From what we understand, there was even a sign at the Thruway exit around the day of the event.

"It was a really nice con, great location and access. My kids had a fun time and the staff and vendors were friendly. It's a great starter con for families just wanting a first time experience. Can't wait to see how this one grows!"

--Comment on Facebook

FANDEMICON 2015 featured speakers on a variety of topics including cosplay and Japanese culture, toys, and comic book art. Attendees could make a variety of craft projects, kids could take part in a superheroic tea party, or play video games. A show from 90.7FM at Utica College interviewed presenters and attendees and later broadcast those interviews on the air. Attendees had the opportunity to join together as the crew of a starship and pilot it safely through the galaxy. Exhibitors from the local area and beyond sold geeky pop-culture merchandise. Many attendees came in full costumes and took part in the Cosplay Contest. It was a blast and a huge success. Nearly 700 people attended throughout the day. FANDEMICON alone accounted for nearly half of the increase in traffic into the library for the month of August compared to the previous year.



Many Fandemicon attendees participated in the Cosplay Contest.

"Thank you, the library, you other attendees, all of you, for being so inclusive."

--winner of the FANDEMICON Cosplay Contest

"This was so much fun. Very, very impressive. A real step forward for Utica and the library. I think you should do it every year." -Comment on Facebook

FANDEMICON 2016 will take place on Saturday, August 20.

Full details about guests and events can be found at www.FANDEMICON.com and also at www.facebook.com/FANDEMICON.

FANDEMICON, Utica's Pop Culture Convention is sponsored by the M&T Bank / Partners Trust Bank Charitable Fund, a donor-advised fund of The Community Foundation of Herkimer & Oneida Counties, Inc.



R2D2 was a big hit at Fandemicon.



Winner of the Mario Kart Tournament savoring victory.

Forging Ahead with Learning Themed Programs

2015 marked both a great community response and a change in adult programming. The library implemented a shift to increased learning themed programming which resulted in full attendance to classes in Butter Lambs, Yoga, Poetry Writing, Zumba, and Memoir Writing. Informative workshops by *The Alzheimer's Association* also drew many participants. Author Michael Keene spoke to a full house during his riveting lectures on Female Serial Killers and New York State Insane Asylums. *To Kill a Mockingbird* and *The Chalk Garden* garnered our largest attendances for the 2015 Classic Film Series. *Bella Regina* proved to be a wonderful community asset as they provided the delicious menu for our Spotlight on Italian Culture. The year ended with two fantastic musical performances by *Don Cantwell's Mardi Gras Five* and the *New Horizons Barbershop Chorus*!



Don Cantwell's Mardi Gras Five filled the library with lively Jazz music.



Carl Antonucci,
Adult Program
Coordinator



The Polish butter lamb tradition is alive and well in the library every Easter.



Melissa Lopez led a group in creating origami flowers.

Bridging the Digital Divide

It is a digitally-reliant world out there, and not everyone has the skills or resources necessary to be an active, engaged participant. Most employers require job applicants to solely apply online. Tax forms are increasingly difficult to get offline. More and more entry-level jobs require technology skills. Access to the Internet and technology training is more important than ever. Many people are marginalized from access to information because they lack the skills or they don't have access to computer equipment or Internet connection. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, over a quarter of households nationwide do not have Internet connection, and in areas with high rates of poverty, the number of households without Internet connection is closer to 50%. The staff of the Utica Public Library is committed to bridging the digital divide in our community.

The library offers access to the Web and digital literacy training. There is free Wi-Fi and 40 computers with Internet connection for public use. Users can get help with applying for jobs online, writing resumes, setting up email accounts, connecting to loved ones through social networks, and more. Computer classes at the library teach job readiness skills like word processing, spreadsheets with Excel, and Cloud Computing. There are also many people that come for help with the very basics like using a mouse and browsing the Internet. Private tutoring is available free of charge. Smartphone and tablet instruction has also gained in popularity. Instructors stay up-to-date on the latest gadgets to help visitors with their new devices.



Instructor Sarah Schultz taught a session on Cloud Computing, one of many computer classes the Library offers.

"It thrills me to learn but even more so to share a class with young working Uticans who are more likely to really use on a practical basis what we have been taught."

- Kathy Sinnott, computer class attendee

Thank you Volunteers!

Volunteers contribute their time and help to extend services for patrons. The library's Chapter One Café and Genealogy Room are staffed solely with volunteers. Other volunteers also assist in the Circulation and Youth Services Departments. Over 4,000 volunteer hours were donated last year.

Library administration would like to especially thank the following individuals for their dedication and time:

Charles Rogers, Nancy Langenegger, and Keith Gerlach staff the Genealogy Room helping local history enthusiasts and genealogy researchers with locating information and navigating online and print resources. Joe Mazzatti donates his time to help the Adult Reference Department with indexing Utica Observer Dispatch obituaries. Deborah Zamudio, Hal Pattee, Christine Reister and Adele Langdon Becraft are a great help greeting visitors, serving beverages and snacks in the Chapter One Café.

In addition to the fabulous individuals mentioned above, several area organizations send helpers to the library to gain work experience and get a chance to see what library employees do. Participating organizations include Upstate Cerebral Palsy (Chadwicks site), RCIL, and a multi-occupations class from BOCES.

I enjoy volunteering in the café because it allows me to stay active. I enjoy meeting people and talking with visitors, and I like my co-workers.



Deborah Zamudio,
Chapter One Café
volunteer for 3½ years

Outreach Programs: Spreading literacy throughout the community

Library staff members are committed to offering enrichment opportunities that are relevant and add value to the community. Their service and dedication do not stop at the doors of the library.

Promoting early literacy across the community continues to be a primary focus of the Utica Public Library. In addition to the 77 early literacy programs that took place inside the library in the past year, Youth Services staff visited at least a dozen Head Start programs, preschools, and daycares in the area. Each month the staff is able to reach over 400 children and help introduce them to the joys of literacy as well as spread awareness of their local library. During outreach, the children are treated to storytimes that include books, songs, and games. Teachers are also provided with library information for their students' families, such as the programs offered at the library and how to get a library card. Amanda Stewart, Early Literacy Coordinator, works with local agencies, including the Cornell Cooperative Extension Childcare Council, to offer programs for parents and caregivers that provide ideas on incorporating literacy at home. Staff also promote literacy and library services at community events year-round like the Mohawk Valley Mini Maker Faire, American Heart Association Run and Walk, school fairs, and One World Flower Fest.

Another strong focus of the Library is improving digital literacy among seniors. Jocelyn Ireland, Digital Literacy Librarian, taught computer classes and held tutoring sessions across the region at places like Mohawk Valley Institute for Learning in Retirement, New Hartford Senior Center, The Community at Sunset Wood, Human Technologies, Utica's Rescue Mission, Acacia Village, and more. Jocelyn works with people with a variety of technology-related needs. Some need help setting up a social networking account to connect to family and friends. Others need assistance getting comfortable with their smartphone or tablet. Digital literacy is just another form of literacy Utica Public Library is dedicated to promoting in the community.



Library staff helped local kids create paper flowers from upcycled book pages at the Mohawk Valley Mini Maker Faire.



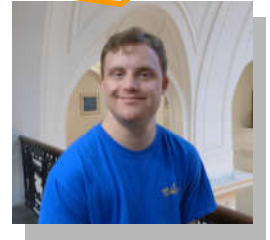
Library Instructors teach digital literacy skills at locations across the region. Pictured above is the Online Genealogy Exploration class taught by librarian Jocelyn Ireland at Mohawk Valley Institute for Learning in Retirement at SUNY Poly.

Share the love of reading with UPL Book Clubs

Next Chapter Book Club

The Next Chapter Book Club meets one hour each Wednesday in the library. NCBC is a national program developed by the Nisonger Center at Ohio State University, and provides individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities an opportunity to read together, learn together and have a lot of fun! Our Next Chapter affiliate has been running for 4½ years, and includes several clubs at Upstate Cerebral Palsy sites in our area. The Next Chapter Book Club is open to adolescents and adults 13-years-old and older, regardless of reading ability.

I really like to read. I enjoy the books we read and the people in the group. The teachers are great. Reading is fun.



Jamie Denyes,
Next Chapter Book
Club member

Utica Public Library Book Group

The UPL Book Group has been in existence for nineteen years, started by the library in October, 1998. Members choose in April the ten books to be discussed the following year, September through June, and the new list is distributed at the May meeting. The group reads mainly fiction, though occasionally a non-fiction book is chosen. The group also likes to include at least one classic each year. The group meets in the library on the first Tuesday of each month at 11:00 for one hour and then adjourns for lunch in a local restaurant, which satisfies the needs to continue the discussion on a more informal level and to socialize. Both aspects have fostered the development of strong bonds within the group. Membership in the group is a good way to meet new people. Some have said that the Book Club meeting is the highlight of that week's activities.

Each month, one of the members leads the discussion. The month's leader usually researches the author and the book in depth. The leader encourages the discussion with questions or other prompts to bring out the book's plot, themes and characters. The group has been large enough that each member is responsible for presenting only one book a year. This method has worked out well and is beneficial to both the leader and the group.

Members have enjoyed that we are a very diverse group that shares insights and opinions, while discussing each book. The group's own life experiences influence what is shared, enriching the experience of reading the books. Everyone receives new perspectives that a solitary reading would not accomplish and there is agreement that reading books that others suggested opens up otherwise unexplored personal spaces. All the members love reading and say that they learn from each book read.

Members have commented on how much they enjoy meeting in a building with such history and architectural beauty. This venue is a very wonderful space for group discussion.



Utica Public Library Book Group
Front row, L to R: Janet Tinelli, Lois Portman, Betty Pearle, Sheila Bamberger.

Back row, L to R: Joanne DeStefano, Frances Giruzzi, Cathie Welsh, Mary Chapin. Absent: Sandra DeVisser, Cynthia Donachie, Janet George, Gloria Schaeffer, Polly Angerosa

Community Garden

The New York State Department of Health, Oneida County, and the Mohawk Valley Resource Center for Refugees have joined together to create a community garden on Utica Public Library property. The community garden project takes vacant lots and transforms them into usable, green space to improve access to fresh produce, promote exercise, and foster neighborhood beautification. Approximately 40 boxes are being used by neighborhood members to grow fruits, vegetables, and flowers. The Unity Gardens offer a welcome urban retreat.

Utica Public Library has partnered with the Mohawk Valley Youth Build program to provide work site training in garden construction and landscaping to youth completing their high school equivalency requirements while gaining job skills. Youth Build students helped construct new raised garden beds behind the library, and installed hoops on garden beds for a micro-greens project.

In addition, the library partnered with Thea Bowman to create a garden that serves as an outdoor classroom for its children as well as providing fresh food for lunches.



Children from the Thea Bowman House used the gardens behind the library as an outdoor classroom.

Libraries transform their community

Testimonials from Utica Library users

"I recently moved back to the area and found myself jobless. After having been out of my chosen career field for a few years and not owning a computer at the time, I was a bit lost. That is when the resources of the library became valuable assets to me. I took several of your computer class offerings; some were refreshers for me while others gave me new skills. The instruction was both knowledgeable and personable, and was appropriate for people of multiple levels of computer proficiency. All of the instructors also assisted everyone in any way possible in class, after class, and by special appointment if need be. I know I am not the only one to have gained from these educational offerings. (Happy ending to my story--I found a job that I wanted!)" -M.D., computer class attendee

"After an unexpected change in careers, I became concerned about keeping my technology skills up to date. I read an article in the *Observer Dispatch* promoting 'Free Computer Courses' at the Utica Public Library. So far I've taken three courses led by instructor Jocelyn Ireland, and plan to take more.

It's clear she is an educator who loves to teach with lots of patience. The format was great, and classes were well organized. Perhaps the best part is it's for anyone who wants to learn. No pressure of tests, or being graded, and no fear of having to ask questions, its open game. I enjoyed the variety of content covered in these courses, and left each one more knowledgeable than when I had entered." —Carm Speciale, computer class attendee

"I have been a library patron for 60 years. I enjoy the cultural events and taking out movies, but what I have loved the most is reading the mystery fiction. Some of the literary characters like Nancy Drew, Bilbo Baggins, and Miss Marple have been like my best friends all my life."

—Lorraine Dehler, library patron

BECAUSE
TXT R FINE,
BUT SRSLY, PPL
ALSO NEED
2 C REAL
SENTENCES.

BECAUSE
PUNCTUATION
WITHOUT
IMAGINATION
MAKES A
SENTENCE,
NOT A STORY.

BECAUSE
LEARNING TO
READ
COMES BEFORE
READING TO
LEARN.

"Thanks so much for all of the time and effort you put forth to help us. You are very friendly, courteous and knowledgeable. I appreciate all of the research you did and e-mails you forwarded to help me put together the Family Tree project I am working on."

-V.S., Genealogy Room visitor

BECAUSE THERE
ARE MORE
THAN
14,400,000
SEARCH RESULTS
FOR THE 2016
PRESIDENTIAL
ELECTION

BECAUSE
5 OUT OF 5
DOCTORS
AGREE READING
ALoud
TO CHILDREN
SUPPORTS
BRAIN
DEVELOPMENT.

BECAUSE THE
WORLD IS AT
THEIR FINGERTIPS
AND THE WORLD
CAN BE A
SCARY PLACE.

BECAUSE
STUDENTS CAN'T
AFFORD
SCHOLARLY
JOURNALS ON
A RAMEN
NOODLE BUDGET.

BECAUSE
EMPLOYERS
WANT
CANDIDATES
WHO KNOW
THE DIFFERENCE
BETWEEN A WEB
SEARCH AND
RESEARCH.

BECAUSE MORE
THAN A
QUARTER OF U.S.
HOUSEHOLDS
DON'T HAVE A
COMPUTER WITH
AN INTERNET
CONNECTION.

BECAUSE ADDING
MINECRAFT TO
CURRICULUM
MAY INSPIRE
MORE FUTURE
ENGINEERS THAN
MATHEMATICS
ALONE.

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*Deceased

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New and coming soon!

Share your **KNOWLEDGE.**
CommuniTeach
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Do you have a hobby, skill, or are you an expert on a certain topic? Do you want the opportunity to share your love for your interests and give back to the community? Become a CommuniTeacher at the Utica Public Library. CommuniTeach is an opportunity open to teens and adults. For more information about becoming a CommuniTeacher, visit <http://www.uticapubliclibrary.org/adults/communitetach>.



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Starting September 2016, new early literacy backpacks will be available to borrow. Seven backpacks will include an iPad loaded with learning activities. One backpack includes an American Girl doll with fun learning activities and books centered on her story. Read more about this new offering on page 2.



New early literacy backpacks
coming September 2016.

Board of Trustees

The Board of Trustees is responsible for the governance and the fiscal stability of the Utica Public Library. We are grateful for the support that the Library received from the Utica City School District tax payers who voted for consistent funding for the Library in 2010. We are also grateful to Oneida County, the City of Utica and our elected officials for the support we received to ensure that the Library remains a valuable asset in our community.

During this fiscal year we raised over \$145,000 for operations and two important projects. We seek additional funds from other sources in order to provide and expand services and collections for the public as well as to preserve and enhance this historic building. The grant from the M&T Bank/Partners Trust Bank Charitable Fund of The Community Foundation of Herkimer and Oneida Counties, Inc. supported our Super Summer Reading program and Fandemicon; and the New York State Public Library Construction program and National Grid supported the replacement of the HVAC control system that resulted in the reduction of energy use and cost.

With generous donations from local organizations such as the Bank of Utica Foundation and the Indium Corporation and Macartney Family Foundation the Library is able to enhance its services and collections for technology access and instruction, universal literacy and life-long learning.

One project that we are still developing plans for is the renovation and relocation of our Children's Room to the first floor. This is an exciting project and will ensure that the children in our community will have a new space to enjoy the services that the Library is offering them.

We invite you to explore the Utica Public Library. Experience our unique activities for people of all ages. Use our wonderful resources in this gorgeous historical building. This is your Utica Public Library.

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A Letter from the Director

I have been Director of the Utica Public Library for over 25 years. Each year I am amazed by the dedication and innovation of the library employees. You will read about many of their accomplishments in this report. Some firsts during the 2015-16 year include Fandemicon, a popular culture festival that drew over 700 people and our Trunk or Treat, an alternative to the traditional door-to-door Halloween mainstay.

I am also amazed and grateful for our many volunteers. These volunteers staff our Genealogy Room for researchers who visit Utica as well as answer inquiries received from throughout the world. Volunteers run our Chapter One Café and serve on our Board of Trustees. These individuals help us to expand our offerings for everyone. I am also grateful for the patrons and organizations that use the library. It is because of them that we exist and continue to evolve services and collections that meet their needs.



Darby O'Brien

Library Director



Utica Public Library
303 Genesee Street
Utica, NY 13501
(315) 735-2279
www.uticapubliclibrary.org

The Library by the Numbers (2015-16 Fiscal Year)

Visitors

214,601 patrons came to the library. Another 143,426 visited via the website, <www.uticapubliclibrary.org>. Website visits were up over 200%!

Collection and Card Holders

135,597 items were borrowed. There were 50,368 active cardholders. 1,768 new library cards were issued.

Shared Resources

14,323 books, DVDs, CDs, and audiobooks were shared with other libraries—both within the Mid York Library System and abroad. 18,109 items were sent to us from other libraries. Resource sharing results in savings to the taxpayer.

Programs

From early literacy programs to digital literacy classes, musical performances and cultural events, the library offered over 1,400 programs and over 18,000 people attended. Program attendance was up 17.7%!

Public Computers

The library has 40 computers for public use. Patrons used the computers 76,250 times.

Community Services

The library's two notaries completed over 800 notarizations for community members. Staff participated in over 300 events bringing library information, services, and classes into the community.

Reference

Over 36,000 reference questions were answered over the phone, in-person, and online. Reference Librarians help patrons in using public computers for online education, job searching and connecting with web resources. People from across the globe email and call to get information on Utica history, newspaper microfilm, and genealogy research.