

ROBBINS AND FOX LIBRARIES

Mission

The Robbins and Fox libraries, known collectively as the Library, are vital community centers for all. Library staff, trustees, and volunteers create opportunities for lifelong learning, personal fulfillment, and enjoyment that make Arlington a great place to live, work, study, and visit. The Library is committed to services that anticipate and respond to the needs and interests of all users.

It was another busy year at the Library. Although the Robbins Library continued to be closed on Thursday mornings, the public enjoyed Sunday afternoon hours, one of the busiest times at the Robbins Library. The Library circulated 668,087 items in FY2014, and processed 142,543 interlibrary loans. A total of 20,419 items were ordered and processed, 313,203 visitors came through the doors, and 1,022 card-holders took advantage of our meeting rooms. A marked departure from these steady numbers as compared with FY13 was the circulation of electronic content. E-book and downloadable audiobook circulation almost doubled in FY14, in keeping with nationwide trends among library users. Library visits dropped slightly, due in part to weather-related closures.

Accomplishments

- Administration and staff, in consultation with community members, Friends groups, the Foundation, and Trustees, formulated a new Strategic Plan, a five-year plan for Library development.
- Robbinslibrary.org was optimized for mobile devices, a major upgrade that resulted in ease of use for those visiting the Library's website on their smartphones and tablets.
- The laptop lending machine capacity was expanded to hold a total of twenty-four laptops, which are heavily used.
- The first-ever Arlington Book Festival was held on November 1, a day-long event which featured over thirty-five Arlington authors and attracted over 300 attendees. The Festival was organized by the Assistant Director and Adult Services staff, and funded by the Friends of the Robbins Library.
- Preparations were completed at the Fox Library for the future implementation of RFID circulation technology in the Robbins Library and Fox Library.
- The Library's wireless network was upgraded, providing patrons with significantly faster browsing and downloading speeds.
- The ladies' and men's restrooms on the first floor of the Robbins Library were converted

to gender neutral restrooms; signage was updated, accordingly. A baby changing table was installed in the public restrooms adjacent to the Community Room.

- Two articles by Robbins Library staff were published in *Library Journal* magazine: the first featured the public relations campaign surrounding the transition from "tethered" PCs to laptops for the public, and the second article featured Doctor Who Day in the "Programs that Pop" section of the magazine.
- A Local Author Shelf and submission policy were established to highlight books by Arlington authors. The shelves that hold this collection, located in the Reading Room, were custom-made by Andrew Fischer of the Friends of the Robbins Library Board.
- With funding from the Friends of the Robbins Library, the Robbins Library Community Room audio-visual system was completely upgraded with state-of-the-art equipment for use by staff for Library programs.
- Library users found information about programs, hours, and services through regular Constant Contact email announcements, Facebook, blogs, Tumblr, and Twitter.

Services for Adults

In 2014 sixty online databases were made available to the community through municipal funding, the Friends of the Robbins Library, the Minuteman Library Network, the Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners, and the Massachusetts Library System. The databases reflect a wide variety of subject areas. The Library added two subscriptions in 2014: Safari Books Online for technology-related guides, and Hoopla for downloadable and streaming music, television, and movies.

The Head of Adult Services collaborated with reference librarians to streamline the print Reference collection. As a result the collection is more relevant and is easier for patrons and staff to navigate, and more space was created for teen fiction and adult audiobooks. A "Test Prep" section was also created between the English Language Learning and Teen Fiction collections, making those materials more accessible to all.

Part of the Local History collection is in the process of being digitized for the Digital Commonwealth initiative. This effort is being coordinated by the Local History Librarian in conjunction with Boston Public Library staff.

Programming for adults was strong in 2014. Adult Services staff planned a Science Fiction themed summer reading program with a raffle funded by the Friends of the Robbins Library. A "Doctor Who Day Extravaganza" event, organized by Library staff, attracted over 200

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fans of the cultural phenomenon that is Doctor Who. A popular monthly film series spanned June to December, made possible by the Library's partnership with the Arlington International Film Festival. The eleventh annual Arlington Reads Together program, co-sponsored by the Diversity Task Group of Vision 2020, took place in March with events and discussions inspired by Markus Zusak's *The Book Thief*. The Arlington Reads Together selection is chosen by a committee consisting of Library staff, representatives from the Friends groups and the Trustees, and various community leaders. The first Arlington Book Festival was held in November, organized by the Assistant Director and staff and funded by the Friends of the Robbins Library and trust funds. The Library also supported local writers by hosting "Write-ins" during National Novel Writing Month.



New teen space furniture, funded by the Friends of the Robbins

The Teen Librarian offered orientations to various school groups, and teens continued to make use of the teen space, the teen blog, and the entire YA collection of circulating material. Young adults participated in the programs planned by the Teen librarian in consultation with the Russell Fund Coordinator and the Teen Advisory Group (TAG), including the Teens Only Book Group, writing workshops, movies, and LGBTQ drop-ins. Teenagers participated in the teen summer reading program, themed "Warping Across Time and Space (W.A.T.S.)," and had the opportunity to win raffle prizes funded by trust funds and Friends of the Robbins Library. The Library collaborated with the Gay Straight Alliance to host a GSA Halloween Party open to all teens. Multiple copies of titles on the middle and high school summer reading lists were available for students all summer long.



A scene from the Arlington Book Festival on November 1

The Library offered several book clubs, including the Guys Book Group, Not-So-Young Adult Book Group, Queer Book Group (QBG), Robbins Library Book Discussion Group, and Staff Picks Book Group.

The Robbins Library Community Room, the Fox Branch Library Community Room, and the Robbins Library Conference Room were used by over 100 local organizations for 1,022 meetings. In addition, the two study rooms were in constant demand by students and tutors, and the Local History Room received heavy usage by researchers with Independent Research Cards. The Reading Room continued to be a popular space for rental by citizens for private functions when the library was closed. Many local organizations also took advantage of the Library's exhibit space in the lobby to publicize their organizations and present informational displays.

Services for Young Adults

Young adults in grades six through twelve continued to make use of the facility and services, especially delighting in the new teen furniture that was made possible with funding from the Friends of the Robbins Library.

Services for Children

Children's Department staff launched several new collections in 2014, including the Discover It Yourself (D.I.Y.) collection of microscopes, orienteering kits, and other learning tools that children and their families can enjoy. A collection of American Girl dolls was also added (an instant success). A new art gallery was created in the lobby outside the Children's Room, featuring artwork by local children.

Children from infancy to fifth grade enjoyed Library materials and programs. Materials included books, magazines, music and books on CD, Playaways, DVDs, Wii games, and educational toys. Children and parents participated in many activities at the Library, including story times in English and Spanish, sing-a-longs for infants and toddlers, craft times, toddler programs, workshops, and various performances. The children's librarians offered assistance to children, parents, and teachers in researching homework assignments and for general use of the book collection and the Internet. Staff started new book groups for middle-grade readers.

Library staff maintained a connection with the schools through letters to teachers, attendance at elementary school faculty meetings, assignment support for teachers and students, extended loan periods

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for teachers, Library tours, and the preparation of curriculum kits. The children's librarians presented book talks in the schools and instruction for classes and prepared the summer reading list titles for the elementary schools. Staff worked with school library aides, sharing a new method for cataloging and shelving Folk Tales and Fairy Tales.

Russell Fund

The Library is very fortunate to have the Anne A. Russell Children's Educational and Cultural Enrichment Fund, which sponsors many special programs and services for children that could not be afforded otherwise. The Russell Fund sponsored approximately 325 programs for infants, children and teens which were attended by approximately 13,280 patrons. Over half of these participants attended the sing-alongs or summer concerts (12,525) confirming that music programs remain extremely popular.

Edith Fox Library and Community Center

Children and adults in East Arlington continued to enjoy branch library services on Tuesdays, Wednesdays, Thursdays, Fridays, and select Saturdays. The Fox continues to be open every Friday thanks to funding from the Friends of Fox. Circulation at the Fox Branch Library was up 6% as of December of FY2015 from FY2014, the third year in a row the branch has experienced an increase in circulation. Children and parents enjoyed a variety of programs including storytimes, sing-a-longs, craft programs, drop-in play, workshops on how to read to infants, and the summer reading program. Elementary and nursery schools brought classes to the Fox Branch Library for stories and instruction. All ages enjoyed the monthly book displays that highlighted the collection and exhibits from community groups and the schools. The Fox Library Community Room received a face-lift: a new coat of paint and murals created by Arlington High School art students under the guidance of Nancy Muise.

Circulation and Technical Services

The Circulation Department checked out and returned hundreds of thousands of items, coordinated the volunteer program, maintained the books in good order on the shelves, shifted collections, updated the periodical list, and checked shelves for missing items. Regular activities also included issuing new cards, reserving museum passes, and processing hold requests, which are largely submitted through the Minuteman Library Network's online catalog. The Library collected over \$54,000 in overdue fines and lost book money in FY2014 that was returned to the general Town fund.

A new Integrated Library System called Sierra was implemented in Minuteman Library Network libraries in 2014. This change affected all departments, and staff

worked hard to learn the system and create a seamless experience for Library users during the transition.

The Technical Services Department processed all new materials, updated the records in the automated catalog, coded vendor bills, and maintained selector accounts. Tech Services staff determined how best to process, catalog, and package new collections such as Local Author Shelf materials, the D.I.Y. collection, and the American Girl dolls. The Tech Services team tagged and encoded all new book materials for the Fox Library in preparation for RFID circulation technology. A new machine for cleaning and repairing DVDs was also purchased for the Department with funds donated by the Friends of the Robbins Library.

Board of Trustees

The seven-member Board of Trustees continue their commitment to administer the trust funds for the optimum benefit of the community and advocate for adequate staffing and delivery of essential Library services. The Board approved funding in FY2014 for materials for the adult, children's, young adult, and Fox Branch collections. These included reference and circulating books, books on CD, Playaways, music CDs, non-fiction DVDs, foreign language literature, language learning materials, local history books, and art prints. Other services funded include the summer reading programs, activities for children, the Community Read, the Arlington Book Festival, volunteer and staff appreciation, and staff development.

Barry Memorial Fund

Thanks to the tremendous generosity of the late Evelyn C. Barry and Mary P. Barry, the John F. Barry and Margaret O'C. Barry Memorial Fund, in honor of the donors' parents, was established in late 2011. The terms of the John F. Barry and Margaret O'C. Barry Memorial Fund dictate that the Library Board of Trustees will hold the principal of the fund in perpetuity, only net income shall be used, and no part of said income shall be used to defray, offset, or pay such items as have heretofore been customarily provided for by appropriation of tax revenues. While the Library Board of Trustees did not allocate any net income from the Barry Memorial Fund in 2014, they plan on using these funds in the future to reach Strategic Plan objectives.

Arlington Libraries Foundation

Private donors have funded many of the materials and services enjoyed by library visitors in Arlington since 1807. In 1835, the first continuously operating children's library in the United States was established in Arlington by a bequest of \$100 from Dr. Ebenezer Learned. The Arlington Libraries Foundation was established in 2013 to continue the long tradition of supporting the libraries of our community by raising funds. The Foundation

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seeks to create ways to build a legacy for the Library and create ongoing sources of support. These include an annual campaign to support purchases of materials for the Robbins and the Fox libraries, an annual campaign to offer additional hours, creating endowed funds and named funds at the request of donors, and providing a structure for bequests.

Friends of the Library

The Friends of the Robbins Library, with a membership of over 350, continues to assist the Robbins and Fox Branch libraries with programming, fundraising, and advocacy efforts. This vital support group raises supplemental funds for materials and equipment including books, rental DVDs, audiobooks, music CDs, language learning audiobooks, Playaways, children's materials, online databases, furniture, website maintenance, and the self-service laptop vending machine. They sponsor the museum pass program and provide books and prizes for the adult, teen, and children's summer reading programs. In 2014 the Friends launched a new website, friendsofrobbinslibrary.org, funded the new furniture in the Teen space, and hosted a wide variety of programs including lectures co-sponsored with Science for the Public, silent film nights, and a winter concert series. The Friends' Annual Book Sale took place at Town Day, once again drawing hundreds of book-lovers and raising needed funds. The Friends maintained their ongoing book sale on the fourth floor of the Library, and began curating a themed book sale shelf in the Lobby to promote sales. The Library is very appreciative of the efforts of the Friends of the Robbins Library Board of Directors and part-time coordinator.

The Friends of Fox continue to support the Fox Branch Library with programming, fundraising, and advocacy efforts. They supported the Library by funding Friday hours and select Saturdays at the Fox, and sing-a-longs. The Friends of Fox run the incredibly popular Little Fox Shop, collecting and reselling children's clothing and toys. The annual "Fashion at the Fox" adult clothing sale also raises funds for the Fox Library. The Library is very appreciative of the efforts of the Friends of Fox Board who do so much to support the Fox Branch Library.

Acknowledgments

In November 2014, Library Director Ryan Livergood left the Town for a position as Executive Director of the Warren-Newport Public Library District in Gurnee, Illinois. During his two year tenure as Library Director, Ryan did much to further the mission and goals of the Library. He also served as Treasurer for the Massachusetts Library Association, and on the Minuteman Library Network Board of Directors. Ryan's many Library accomplishments include initiating a regional "Library Card Sign-up Challenge," restoring the position of

dedicated Assistant Director, overseeing major capital improvements such as a new roof in 2012, supporting expanded programs for all age groups, creating a new Strategic Plan for the Library, and raising the Library's profile in the community through multiple new partnerships. Ryan will be missed by staff and by the countless people he served as Library Director.

Donations

In FY2014 citizens, businesses, and organizations gave generously for Library materials and general purposes. The Library acknowledges these gifts that allow for materials and services, which would be unaffordable through the municipal budget alone. The Library is also grateful to Arlington resident Richard Duffy who donates the profits from the sale of his book, *Arlington Then and Now*, to the Library.

The Friends of Robbins donated over \$85,000 to the Robbins and Fox libraries, and the Library is also grateful to the Friends of Fox Library and the volunteers at the Little Fox Shop and Fashion at the Fox for their fund-raising efforts.

Volunteers

Library staff is grateful for the contributions made by volunteers who donate over 3,400 hours assisting with Library operations. Beverley Brinkerhoff, Lanie Cantor, and Ron Sender gave significant hours to operate the important homebound delivery program. Also deserving of special note is Ann Honeycutt, who facilitated the Robbins Library Book Discussion Group for over twenty years. Dinesh Gupta, James Milan, Andrew Fischer, and Richard McElroy maintain the ongoing Friends of the Library book sale on the fourth floor.

Volunteers assisting at the Robbins Library in a variety of capacities were: Kecia Ali, James Battel, Rick Beeny, Priscilla Boisvert, Janet Casey, Monique Chaplin, Graciela Correia, Jennifer Davis Kay, Catherine Farrell, Heidi Gilliam, Aileen Grunder, Kim Haase, Mary Kokaras, Suzanne Monette, Donald Mugnai, Chris Pulari, Matt Olsen, and Max Litvinof. The Library also acknowledges the efforts of the following students, many of whom volunteered at the Robbins Library to fulfill their community service requirements for high school: Grace and Sara Gutierrez, George Chiang, Susanna Faas-Bush, Olivia Ferreira, Michelle He, Max Hardcastle, Risa Komatsu, Augustin Lee, Kenny Liang, Wendy Lin, Owen Niles, Elaine Song, Tomomi Yoshida, and Ziwei Wang.

The Fox Branch Library is grateful to volunteers Debbie Hayes, Katarina Seipel, and teen volunteer Grace Hogle for their efforts. Special recognition is given to Little Fox Shop Founder Susan Dorson and her crew of 20 volunteers who staff the Little Fox Shop at the Fox Library.

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Library administration and Trustees acknowledge the Friends of the Robbins Library Board members for their support: Sally Naish (chair), Amy McElroy (coordinator), Andrew Fischer, Betsy Singer, James Milan, Judi Paradis, Nancy Knoff, Skye Stewart, Stephanie Miserlis, Susi Barbarossa, Timothy Wilson, and Richard McElroy. Special thanks to volunteer Paul Bay, who assisted in reconfiguring the Friends of the Robbins Library membership database.

Library administration and Trustees acknowledge the Friends of Fox Library Board members for their support: Paul Benoit, Pam DiBona, Susan Dorson, Amy Elentuck, Jim Foster, Elizabeth Halley, Jack Hurd, Hilary Rappaport, Scott Weaver, and Shunsuke Yamaguchi.

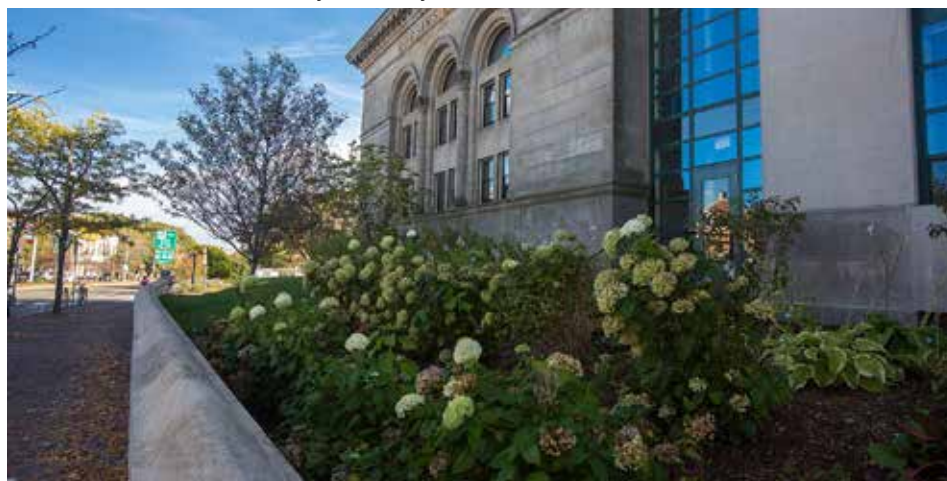
Library administration and Trustees are grateful to the Arlington Libraries Foundation Board members for all of their support: Ethel Doyle (chair), Mary Ellen Bilafer Bache (treasurer), Maryellen Loud (recording secretary), Susan Murie (corresponding secretary), Richard A. Duffy, Leah Eggers, Kathryn Gandek-Tighe, Allen Reedy, Laura Wiener, and Lori Uhland. Martha Parravano resigned in September.

The Library is also appreciative to the many volunteers assisting with the Town Day and Children's book sales. Town Day book sale volunteers include Susan Gilbert, Betsy Singelais, Sue Wood, Ajay Rao, Mary Parlee, Brian Rose, Lorraine G., Tali Gorokhovsky, Mila Stanojevic, Esme Emma Hodgdon, Rachel Diamond, Victoria Tse, Wendy Watson, Susi Barbarossa, Carole Burns, Sally Naish, Tim Wilson, Nancy Knoff, Bonnie Echmalian, Sheila O'Donnell, Katharine Jones, Bonnie Echmalian, Therese Henderson, Judi Paradis, Skye Stewart, Annmarie Ostrowski, Janice St. Clair, Susanne Blair, Colin Blair, Betsy Singer, James Milan, Jean Rosenberg, Steph Miserlis, Amy McElroy, Andrew Fischer, and Harmony Browning. Children's book sale volunteers include Hanna Ali, James Milan, Tali Gorokhovsky, Mila Stanojevic, Emma Hodgdon, Victoria Tse, Anne Higgins, Harmony Browning, Melanie Davis-Kay, Judi Paradis, Susi Barbarossa, and Amy McElroy.

Future Goals

The Library uses the Strategic Plan formulated in FY2014 as a guide for various initiatives that support the Library's mission:

- Continue efforts to ensure that the library provides a clean, welcoming, useful, and aesthetically pleasing environment.
- Conduct a study of library configuration to improve the layout of collections and services.
- Form partnerships with community organizations, strengthening town-wide efforts to make Arlington a cultural destination for residents and visitors.
- Focus on programs, spaces and resources that nurture children and teens, inspire a lifelong love of reading, and spark the imagination.
- Create opportunities for lifelong learning: expand horizons, expose residents and visitors to new knowledge, and nurture personal empowerment.
- Expand the Library's reach through content, programs and services that connect to residents and visitors where they are in Arlington. The Library will work to reach new communities within Arlington and increase the visibility and participation of the Library throughout Arlington.
- Complete the project to digitize a portion of our local history collection through the support of the Digital Commonwealth.
- Move forward with innovative, high value computer/electronic services to improve staff productivity and customer service, including the implementation of RFID at the Robbins Library and Fox Branch Library.



Historic wall in front of Robbins Library reconstructed and garden planted in 2014.