

Fletcher Free Library Commission Annual Report
Burlington City Council
May 2015

During FY15, the Library Commission engaged with the Library Director and Staff to move forward various initiatives important to the future management and governance of Burlington's public library.

- **Commission development:** The Library Commission developed a critical skills / competency matrix to assess capacity needs on the Commission. In FY15, this assessment has been crucial in Commission development, guiding recruitment efforts for vacant trustee and commissioner positions. The Commission is also currently evaluating and assessing the structure of the Commission in relation to governance practices in the City.
- **Strategic Plan development:** A new Strategic Plan and associated Community Engagement Report are under development. The Strategic Planning Committee of the Library Commission, chaired by Commissioner McRae, spearheaded the development a RFQ and a RFP seeking a consultant to lead the development of the new strategic plan for the Library. The Library Commission contracted Maureen Sullivan, a national library consultant. Commissioners McRae and Nordhaus are members of the Strategic Plan Steering Committee. The Library is currently engaging with the Burlington community to elicit feedback that guides the future of Library services and programming. A series of open and targeted community forums are being held to maximize community input to the strategic plan around three main goals: enhancing literacy skills, facilitating access to and exchange of knowledge and building community connections. The Strategic Plan and associated Community Engagement report will be finalized by the end of the first quarter of FY16.
- **Development & public awareness efforts:** The Development Committee of the Library Commission, chaired by Commissioner Krowinski, worked with the Library Director and Development Coordinator to develop the Library's FY15 annual appeal. The FY15 appeal was expanded from 400 donors who have regularly supported the Library over the years to 5000 residences in Burlington (using the March 2014 voter's list). While expanding the recipients of annual appeal has raised the community's awareness of Library services and programming, we are however still working toward raising our unrestricted donation revenue goal for FY15.

After a full year of having a part-time Development Coordinator on staff, it is evident that the traditional non-profit development paradigm is not sufficient for long term Library sustainability. As a municipal organization providing core services free of charge to the Burlington community, Library sustainability is neither the work of charity nor is it achievable through raising purely unrestricted funds. The Library Commission is working

with Library staff to develop a strengthened data-driven sustainability strategy for implemented in FY16. Key elements of this revised strategy include: diversifying revenue sources, strengthening Friends of Fletcher Free Library as Library's 501c3 foundation, and growing the Library's endowment fund.

In addition to the daily provision of services and programming to the community, the Library Commission is proud of Fletcher Free achievements in FY15. Some highlights to date from FY15 are presented below.

- ❖ New Integrated Library System (ILS) implemented. A new ILS system is being implemented to provide patrons with a more efficient and effective library experience. During FY15, an RFP for a new integrated library system (ILS) was issued, proposals were evaluated, meetings with potential vendors were held, and a new vendor was selected. The Library is currently working with the new vendor on data migration from the old system. Staff training for the new system has begun. The new ILS goes live at the beginning of FY16. In addition to a range of upgrades for staff use, the new system will provide patrons the following benefits:
 - Library events and programming can be easily incorporated into the online card catalog;
 - E-book integration – patrons will not have to leave our catalog and go to another site to download most FFL e-books;
 - Using responsive design our catalog will display correctly on mobile devices;
 - Patrons can receive notifications from the library via email or text;
 - Patrons can pre-register for a library card before they come into the library.

- ❖ Exploring Human Origins Smithsonian travelling exhibition awarded. The Fletcher Free has been selected through a nationwide competitive process as one of 19 U.S. public libraries to host “Exploring Human Origins: What Does It Mean to Be Human?,” a traveling exhibition developed by the Smithsonian’s National Museum of Natural History (NMNH) and the American Library Association (ALA). The exhibition will be hosted at FFL from February 18, 2017 – March 17, 2017. Through panels, interactive kiosks, hands-on displays and videos, the exhibition invites audiences to explore milestones in the evolutionary journey of becoming human — from walking upright, creating technology and eating new foods, to brain enlargement and the development of symbolic language and complex societies — advancements that define the unique position of humans in the history of life.

While understanding evolution is a controversial topic, the Library is excited to host respectful community conversations about it here at our library. Programming is a key library service and an essential component of how libraries connect people with ideas in a changing world. Being selected to host the Smithsonian exhibition at Fletcher Free reinforces our strategic emphasis on providing programming and reinforcing partnerships for the Burlington community. The Library has proposed a six-month programming and community engagement period prior to exhibition display – starting in the fall of 2016, building context and a shared understanding of different sides of the evolutionary debate.

The Fletcher Free Library will promote the exhibition in school districts around Vermont; the Library plans to maximize the number of K-12 students statewide who visit the four week exhibition in Burlington.

FFL staff joined forces with over 30 local organizations and individuals representing diverse perspectives – education, research, religious, cultural, the humanities, and community engagement – to develop Burlington’s application. Partners to date include the University of Vermont (UVM) and the University of Vermont Medical Center, Champlain College, St. Michael’s College, the Burlington and Winooksi School Districts, the Partnership for Change, the Episcopal Cathedral Church of St. Paul’s, the First Unitarian Universalist Society of Burlington, RETN, VPR, Rice Memorial High School, Vermont Commons School, Rock Point School, the State Department of Libraries, the State Division of Historic Preservation, and Burlington’s Community and Economic Development Office (CEDO). Library staff will work closely with community partners to develop robust programming that will enrich the exhibition’s presence in Burlington.

- ❖ Data Management revamped. During FY15, Library staff redesigned the data management system moving toward assessing community impact of Library services and programming. In April 2015, the Library’s Development Coordinator was trained as a trainer in Results-based Accountability (RBA) framework. RBA is a methodology that can be used by communities can use to improve the lives or well-being of the community as a whole. RBA is also used by organizations to continually improve the performance of their programs or services. RBA was signed into legislation in Vermont’s 2014 legislative session, and is currently being adopted and implemented by governmental and social service organizations statewide. RBA will be foundational to the implementation of the Library’s new strategic plan – measuring performance and providing accountability to the community. RBA will be implemented across Library programs by the end of FY16.
- ❖ Friends of Fletcher Free Library management and governance streamlined, with the aim of developing the capacity of the Friends to support the Library’s fundraising efforts as a 501c3. In FY15, the FFL worked with the Friends to develop governance and management structures for increased functionality. Board composition and function has been strengthened in accordance with by-laws and a 3-committee management structure was adopted. The Friends have streamlined their financial management systems. Accounting services have been contracted. The first 990 form is currently being prepared for 2014. An annual resource allocation process to Library was developed, the first round of which is being implemented for the period 03/15 – 06/16. In FY16 and beyond, FFL will increasingly using the Friends 501c3 status to seek increased funding for programming, technology resources and other innovative literacy projects.