

The Boston Public Library

Report to the Trustees of the Public Library of the City of Boston

BPL Neighborhood Services Initiative Update

The Trustees' Neighborhood Services Committee, Chaired by Trustee James Carroll, was established by the Board of Trustees in the Fall of 2006 in conjunction with an Internal Staff Neighborhood Services Committee that began its work in August 2007.

Both Committees worked independently and collaboratively with an outside facilitator reviewing Boston Public Library historic branch documents, Boston Redevelopment Authority demographic reports, professional library association reports on branch libraries, and strategic plans for other urban branch systems across the country.

The Trustees' Neighborhood Services Committee also completed Individual Branch Profiles on current branch facilities and services, Reports on the Day in the Life of a Branch Librarian and Branch Library Assistant, and Profiles of Community Resources identifying contact information for schools, service agencies, cultural and civic institutions located in each branch service area.

The Board of Trustees on May 15, 2008 voted "unanimously to approve and adopt the *Boston Public Library Neighborhood Services Initiative Report* submitted by Chairman James Carroll and Trustee A. Raymond Tye on behalf of the Trustees' Neighborhood Services Committee."

The *Boston Public Library Neighborhood Services Initiative* completed the first phase of a multi-faceted planning effort. Beginning in the fall of 2008, three Neighborhood Branch Initiatives deemed essential to the success of the *Neighborhood Services Initiative* were embarked upon to pave the way for the successful completion of the remaining *Neighborhood Branch Initiatives*.

Progress Report on Neighborhood Branch Initiatives

Comprehensive review, renovation or refurbishment of all Branches

- Completed and opened Mattapan Branch (January 09)
- Completed and opened Grove Hall Branch (April 09)
- Renovation continues on the Brighton Branch (opening Summer 10)
- Roof repair project completed: South End Branch (opening September 28, 2009)
Included interior painting, carpet cleaning, new furniture for Adult computers, installation of Trustee A. Raymond Tye gift of six computers
- Roof repair project underway at West Roxbury Branch (opening September 21, 2009)
- Roof and storefront repair planned for Fields Corner Branch (temporary closing October 10, 2009)
- Library Planning Study completed for East Boston (July 09)
- Work continues on "Status of Facilities" document which will be driven by the Strategic Framework and the priorities identified by the BPL

State of the Art Technology: December 2008 - present

- New computer registration and print software installation completed (Summer 09)
- New staff computers installed at Honan-Allston and Codman (August 09)
- New staff computers planned for Lower Mills and Parker Hill (Fall 09)
An additional 80 computers to be deployed throughout the branches in the coming months
- Once all computers are installed, a standardized platform of software will be installed on all – a major improvement for staff and public
- Implementation of City of Boston Calendar software for events posting
- Staff members created online and printable documentation related to frequently asked technology questions
- Gates computers installed at Roslindale, Honan-Allston and Hyde Park
- Work continues on Codman Square “Warm to Kids” computer lab
- Donor gifts installed at Hyde Park and South End
Self-Check out machines installed at Grove Hall and Mattapan (Fall 09) and Brighton (Spring 10)

Professional Development

- 126 staff members participated in trainings including supervisory training, dealing with difficult people, basic computer skills and customer service training
- Seven staff members completed the “Train the Trainer” course for supervisory skills
- Six staff members received Language Reimbursement for learning a new language (3 times the amount used last year)
- Cooperative Training for Youth program to be offered Fall 09 on three occasions
- Staff attended the following conferences: Massachusetts Library Association, Book Expo America, American Library Association, Romantic Times Convention, Computers in Libraries. Upcoming: Service Excellence Symposium (September 21 -22, 2009)

Programming & Partnerships

A new Division of Partnerships & Communications was established. Ms. Koren Stenbridge was appointed as Director for Partnerships & Communications in January 2008 and work continues on the implementation of the *Neighborhood Branch Initiative* toward developing a set of programming and partnership standards ensuring that all neighborhood branches provide a broad range of entertaining, educational programs and opportunities for the library users of all ages.

Collections for Communities

Work continues on collection development and maintenance at each neighborhood branch. Staff from the branches has joined collection teams to assist the Collection Development department in ensuring that the neighborhoods have current and relevant collections.

Focus on Target Populations

The BPL is progressing in improving services to the five underserved populations identified in the report:

- **Early Childhood**
We continue to offer a full compliment of children’s programming at all of our branches from birth to school age.
- **Teens and Young Adults**
Our two newest branches, Mattapan and Grove Hall, have designated Teen spaces and staff who are offering creative and popular programming for this age group including: “Guys Read”, gaming as information literacy, and teen councils.
- **Education, ESL and Life Skills Programs**
ESL and GED classes are offered at the Dudley Literacy Center and at a number of branches. The Kirstein Business Library will be offering job searching and resume classes at all the neighborhood locations starting this fall.
- **Differently-Abled Individuals**
Adaptive technology software for sight and hearing impaired is available on BPL computers.
- **Boomers and Beyond**
Volunteer opportunities are being explored for boomers who are interested in getting involved in their communities. The Dudley branch in particular, is exploring a partnership with the Urban League of Massachusetts’ Mature Workers Program.

Marketing and Branding

A system-wide marketing and branding plan is under consideration

Christine Schonhart
Neighborhood Services Manager
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