

*A Century and Counting***THE RIDGEFIELD LIBRARY CELEBRATES ITS CENTENNIAL**

A young boy stands in front of the library in 1903, the year the library first opened its doors.

Celebration begins as Library reaches 100

by JONATHAN SCHUMANN
Press Staff

Libraries promote the sharing of knowledge, connecting people of all ages with valuable information resources. These dynamic and modern institutions, and the librarians who staff them, add immeasurably to our quality of life.

— President George W. Bush

Oh, what a century it has been. Men have walked on the moon, women have sat on the Supreme Court, the nuclear family has come and gone, and the digital revolution has changed the way we communicate and access information. Through all of these milestones of social and historical significance, The Ridgefield Library has served our community. While it houses chronicles of local and world history, the library has become a piece of Ridgefield history itself. After opening its doors on June 22, 1903, it's time for the library to celebrate its first 100 years.

Over the years, as Ridgefield has grown as a community, the Library has undergone several significant changes. The Morris Memorial Building, which forms the historical wing of the library and faces Main Street, was the original structure for the library as we now know it. This comparatively small space housed the library's collection from its opening day in 1903 until an addition was

made in 1963. This addition, which doubled the library's size, reflected Ridgefield's swelling population, which had doubled between 1950 and 1960. Further expansion in 1984 brought the facility to 24,000 square feet. The library received additional space in 1990, when the Charles Dayton Program Room was constructed. With an extensive renovation in 1997 and the addition of the Storytime Sculpture Room in 2001, the library reached its current size.

From a technological perspective, the shift from the card catalog to an automated, computerized system forever altered the way books and information are accessed. With the digital revolution came public Internet access at the library, which brought to a wide audience a great breadth of information from a broad source base. The library has worked hard to stay current with these technological advancements, as well as to service the public demand for access to all the Internet has to offer. Currently, the library has 28 public computers all linked to the same network, and has subscriptions to several top-knotch online databases which make magazine, newspaper and academic journal articles easily accessible.

To stay current with these and other trends, the library has required the help of The Friends of the Ridgefield Library. Over the past 26 years, the members of the Friends have donated items, volunteered time and

raised money for the library. In addition to helping to keep technology current, the Friends sponsor special library events and have funded several permanent improvements. The Friends have been very influential with the organization of the Centennial Celebration, as they have sponsored several of the programs and events that are scheduled to occur.

Birthday bash

A Birthday Bash on Sunday, June 22, will kick off a year of special events and programs. The Friends sponsor this event with entertainment, refreshments, games and music. This party will also be the launching pad for Ridgefield Reads, a town-wide reading program. The entire town will be asked to read L. Frank Baum's classic tale, *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*.

Throughout the rest of the summer and the fall, discussion sessions will talk about the book's pertinent values and messages, culminating in a Costume Ball to be held on October 17. Free copies of the book will be available starting at the party. (See story on Ridgefield Reads elsewhere in this special section.)

In addition to the launching of Ridgefield Reads, the winners of the "My Dream Library of the Future" contest will be announced on June 22. Students were asked to submit their creative visions of what the Ridgefield Library might look like in the

future. Any type of creative endeavor was acceptable for admissions, from poems to paintings to essays and PowerPoint presentations. Winners in several age groups will be presented gift certificates to Books on the Common.

The library is also presenting the Hollister Film Series: *Movies Through the Century*, which highlights notable American films that debuted during the library's first 100 years. The series started in February with the 1900's and the special presentation, "The Movies Begin." The selections for the library's Critics' Circle and A.M. Book Groups also correspond with these decade distinctions; in May they read works by Fitzgerald and Faulkner. June will highlight selections from the 1940s, July from the 1950s, and so forth until the series culminates in November with selections from the 1990s. The library has selected seminal American films such as *Breakfast at Tiffany's*, *The Graduate* and *Annie Hall* and literary classics like Jack Kerouac's *On the Road*, John Updike's *Rabbit* novels and Anne Tyler's *Breathing Lessons*.

As the community reflect on the Library of the past 100 years, there is a committee of hardworking individuals who are looking forward. The library's Strategic Planning Committee is re-assessing the library's direction, image and potential and hopes to unveil its conclusions later this summer.



Busy building

The new front of the library is tucked behind the original building and is adjacent to a parking lot with access to Main Street and Prospect Street.

A Century and Counting: THE RIDGEFIELD LIBRARY CELEBRATES ITS CENTENNIAL

Knowledge is free at the library. Just bring your own container. — *Unknown*



The library circa 1903, from a postcard. View is looking northeast.

From card catalogs to Bibliomation, library grows

by ANITA DAUBENSPECK
Former Director

The June 1903 dedication of the Elizabeth W. Morris Memorial Library was not the first effort to provide public library service to the town of Ridgefield.

Samuel Goodrich's *Recollections of a Lifetime*, published in 1857, dates the first library in Ridgefield to 1795. One hundred and fifty items were available for circulation. Hiram K. Scott, one-time Town Clerk, began a subscription library in Ridgefield in 1852. His advertising for this venture stated that "novels, travels, etc. in pamphlet form [cost] 25 cents" to borrow for a week. 50-cent books (evidently the most expensive) were 9 cents a volume to borrow. It is not known how long this library existed.

The source of the present library organization is a meeting of 12 men, held in the office of physician William S. Todd on October 16, 1871 to consider ways of developing a library for Ridgefield. The men formed a "Library Club" and each pledged \$3 a year to purchase books for their own use. All books were sold at the end of the year, with the proceeds and dues used to purchase new books. In 1878 and 1879, the books were not sold but stored in the attic of the club treasurer, Dr. Daniel L. Adams and became the nucleus of the original library collection.

Mrs. Keeler's idea

Mrs. Ebenezer Keeler is credited with persuading the men of the library club to organize a Ridgefield Library Association in 1880. Mrs. Keeler, Mrs. Adams and Mrs. Larman W. Abbott were appointed to make arrangements to circulate the library materials, a duty later delegated to the Women's Committee until 1974. The 1880 seven-page printed catalog of the library association's 312 books is divided into juvenile, scientific and practical, travels and adventures, fiction, history and biography and miscellaneous sections. Each section lists the books alphabetically by title.

Ridgefield's population in 1880 was 2,028. The library was located in Town Hall and was open for two hours on Wednesday afternoons and two hours on Saturday evenings all year. Cost of a subscription membership was \$1 per year, books circulated for two weeks and fines were ten cents per week.

In 1882 the by-laws and constitution of the renamed Ridgefield Library, Inc., were sent to Hartford but the name change and incorporation were never recorded. In 1883, former Governor Phineas Lounsbury donated a two-room building that had been a telegraph office on Bailey Avenue for exclusive use by the library. The library and building were later moved to Governor Street where the present Ridgefield Bank drive-up branch is located. This building became the Town's first telephone office and later the office of the Ridgefield Water Company.

The library needed more space. It housed 2,956 volumes and had hired Jennie Smith as Head Librarian in 1899. Miss Smith and volunteer Miss Mary Olcott of Casagmo closed the library for three weeks to convert the library's collection to the new Dewey Decimal Classification system.

On July 9, 1900, an anonymous offer of \$15,000 was made to purchase the property at the northeast corner of Main and Prospect (then Depot Hill) Streets, the site of Smith

Tavern and now the location of the present library and Webster Bank buildings. Evelyn Smith deeded the land to James Morris, the donor, in September 1900. The property was given to the Ridgefield Library Association in June 1901, after Mr. Morris and E. P. Dutton had secured a charter for the Library through an act of the Connecticut Legislature in 1901.

At the Library annual meeting June 21, 1902, James Morris was reelected president. The treasurer reported expenditures of \$663.51 on an income of \$1,199.29. The endowment was \$9,356. Head Librarian Jennie Smith received a salary of \$250. 3,593 books were owned and annual circulation was 7,124.

Mr. Morris contracted with architect Raleigh Gildersleeve of Fifth Avenue, New York, to design a library building. The original interior contained features typical of public libraries at the time, including skylight, a translucent glass floor to let light into the lower level and a circular iron stairway. Mr. Gildersleeve also designed the Roma Pizza building on Main Street, Ridgefield and several eating clubs at Princeton University.

Members of the Library Board and Women's committee completed furnishings and landscaping. A. Newbold Morris furnished the interior. Misses Anne and Ellen Stone provided grading, landscaping and the stone wall. Mr. and Mrs. William Hawke contributed the sidewalk, and Mr. George M. Olcott donated the oak trees down Prospect Street.

The building dedication June 15, 1903 was a simple service. James Morris made a short speech to present the deed, and Mr. Olcott accepted for the board and gave Mr. Morris \$1. The day was stormy and, the Ridgefield Press noted, "The public generally did not come, there being no invitations to them...." The library opened to the public June 22, weekdays from 10 AM until noon.

James E. Morris died at his home in New York City October 17, 1903.

Businessman James Morris and his wife Elizabeth were among many from New York City who owned summer homes in Ridgefield. They purchased parcels of property at what is now 164 Main Street in 1890, 1891 and 1897. The Morrises' permanent home was Washington Square in Manhattan. Mr. Morris's brother, A. Newbold Morris, and family also owned a summer residence at 48 East Ridge. Both families were involved, together with many summer residents, in Ridgefield community life.

Elizabeth W. Morris died at her home in Ridgefield October 15, 1899. Her only child, a son, predeceased her. Little more is revealed in her obituary than that she had been an invalid for some time.

Early years

For many years, the Ridgefield Library Board met only in June for an annual meeting. Daily operations, staffing and book selection were managed by a volunteer Women's Committee. Reports to the Library Board on the endowment fund began in 1901. Board president George M. Olcott organized a drive to secure endowment subscriptions in 1907 to support library operations, but an economic panic the same year resulted in reduced or lapsed pledges.

At some point, before 1920, the corporate charter was amended to read the Ridgefield Library and Historical Assn., Inc.

For many years, the Ridgefield Library Board met only in June for an annual meeting. Daily operations, staffing and book selection were managed by a volunteer Women's Committee.

In 1919 cost of electricity was \$31.80 and fuel cost \$306.80 for the year.

A children's library in what is now the History Room opened in 1924. Miss Jennie Smith retired as Head Librarian to be replaced by Marion H. Nash. Miss Nash served as librarian until her death from being struck by an automobile on Main Street in 1930. Annual cost for salaries of the librarian and assistants was \$1,028.

In 1927, the Library contained 15,000 volumes. \$396 was spent on adult books and \$378 on children's books. Library salaries were \$1,485. Total expenditures were \$3,201.

Christie L. Nash replaced her sister-in-law as librarian in 1930. She served until 1953, except for a period from 1944 to 1949, when children's librarian Mrs. Sylvia Davis served as Head Librarian. Mrs. Nash reported in 1941 that average daily circulation was 96.

Sufficient operating funds were always a problem for the library. Library benefit drama performances and special events were organized to raise money. Ridgefield neighbors, opera star Geraldine Ferraro and NBC music director Sam Chotzinoff, persuaded Arturo Toscanini to return from retirement in Italy and conduct the NBC Symphony Orchestra in concerts to benefit the Library in 1946 and 1949 at the then high school auditorium on High Ridge (now the Ridgefield Playhouse).

Children's library services were moved to the lower level room with an outside entrance in the 1930s. Miss Phyllis Paccadolmi joined the library staff in 1946 and remained a continuous presence at the adult circulation desk and a rich source of information on local history and former residents until her retirement in 1999.

The Library Board sold about half its property in 1939, on Prospect Street, for \$7500 because the library needed cash. A movie theater, now a bank, was built on that half. The Library Board repurchased the property in 2001 for \$1.5 million following negotiations by Board President, Morton Bailey.

The library remained a subscription library through the years. A library card cost \$1 a year from 1890 to 1955, when the charge was raised to \$2. In the 1940s, the Ridgefield Board of Education paid, to the library, 40 or 50 cents per student in the public schools so that students could use the library free. The fees finally ended in 1968 when the Board of Selectmen named Ridgefield Library the principal public library for the Town of Ridgefield, qualifying it for State funds.

Growth years

Ridgefield doubled in population between 1950 and 1960 and doubled again between 1960 and 1968. It seemed that a new school was being built every year. The library space became very cramped, and in 1962 the Board launched a fund drive. Governor John Dempsey dedicated a new wing in 1963. This construction doubled library space to 8,000 sq. ft and provided for a new "student's library" and adult shelving space.

The Library Board contracted for a self-survey and analysis in 1973. The Library was deemed inadequate in resources and services for a community of Ridgefield's size. An immediate result was the hiring in September 1974 of a professionally degreed librarian (Master of Library Science: MLS) Louisa Campbell as Library Director. Mrs. Campbell resigned in May 1975, and was replaced as Library Director by then Children's Librarian Anita Daubenspeck MLS. Ms Catherine Burke MLS replaced Mrs. Daubenspeck as children's librarian and Joan Vaillancourt MLS joined the staff as reference librarian in 1976. Friends of the Ridgefield Library was organized in 1976. The annual budget was \$125,000.

The volunteer Women's Committee was able to disband in early 1977. A building program was commissioned by the Board and developed by the Library Director with assistance of a professional consultant also in 1977.

Expansion

A bequest received by the Library enabled the Board to purchase from Dr. James Sheehan the property adjacent to the Library in 1978. An architect was hired to design a library expansion that same year. For the first time, in 1979, the Library asked the Town for funds to expand the building. The proposal was narrowly defeated in referendum. The Sheehan house was demolished to provide a temporary parking area, as parking on the street had become hazardous.

The expansion plans were reduced from 18,000 square feet of new construction to 13,500. Discussion with Town funding authorities continued until March, 1983, when Board President Al Hall announced an anonymous donor had offered one million dollars to build the expansion provided the Library Board contribute \$500,000 and the Town assume responsibility for majority funding of the annual operations. The proposal was adopted unanimously at a Town meeting in August. A new Library Board, three-quarters of them named by the First Selectman, was seated in 1984.

The library closed for a month following construction to move the collection, and the 21,000 square foot library was opened December 1984.

Concurrent with the construction, the library joined Bibliomation, Inc., a consortium providing data processing services to 48 public and school libraries in Connecticut. An automated circulation system was introduced in the library in March 1985.

Ridgefield Library was the first library in Bibliomation to provide automation of its card catalog in 1987. For the first time the library's adult and children's collections were available in one source. Users could find books in New Haven, Bridgeport, Danbury, Atlanta, Los Angeles and Chicago libraries on these computers.

A much-needed library program facility, the Charles Dayton Program Room was added to the library in 1990. This 2500 sq. ft. facility, built with gifts from Mr. and Mrs.

Gordon McGovern and Mr. Eugene Katz and a grant from the State of Connecticut, has video and digital projection equipment, a small grand piano and a separate entrance and kitchen.

An unfinished area on the library's second floor was completed in 1992 to accommodate the adult fiction, audio and large-print collections. Janice Benedict MLS became the library's first adult services librarian.

Two projects in 1995 and 1997 reconfigured the library's second floor area relocating children's and adult services and staff areas, with 1200 square feet added for an enclosed children's program facility. A special computer-learning center for children was introduced at the same time. The "assembly room" in the 1903 building was restored to provide a gracious area for quiet study and reading. Public Internet access was provided on 2 computers in the adult information department and 2 in children's services. Ridgefield Library mounted its own web page and web address for public access to library resources from home and to some subscription information databases using a Ridgefield Library card.

The library implemented a \$300,000 technology upgrade in 1999. Network Administrator Anthony Cacciola was added to the staff and staff space on the second floor was converted for computer equipment and an office. More than 25 computers available for public use provide access to the catalog, word processing and learning games. A high speed T1 line gives access to Internet, email, genealogy and informational databases.

Anita Daubenspeck retired in late 2000, after 25 years. A 300 square foot addition to the library's main floor houses the sculpture "Storytime" by renowned sculptor Glenna Goodacre, was presented to the library by a devoted supporter in recognition of Ms. Daubenspeck's service.

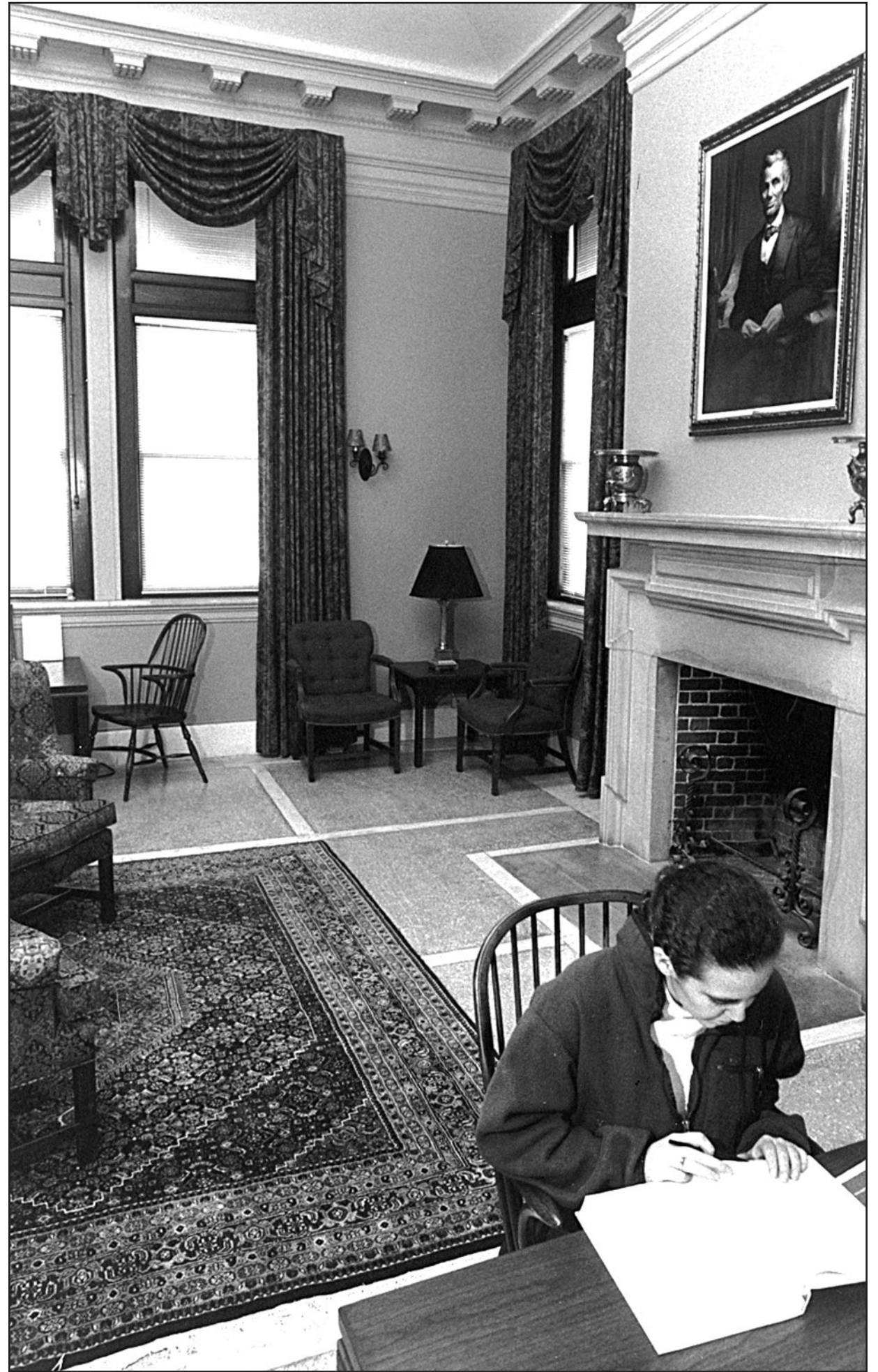
Christina Nolan MLS became the new library director in November 2000. Mary Rindfleisch MLS was named the library's first assistant director in 2001.

One thousand one hundred items were borrowed each day from the library last year. The budget for 2002 was \$1.6 million. The library's parking lot was enlarged in 2002 with Town funds and a new strategic plan is in development to plan for services to Ridgefield's citizens in the years to come.

- Ridgefield population went from 2,626 to 23,600 in the past century.
 - The library building grew from 4,000 to 27,000 square feet in its first hundred years.
 - Library opened 10 hours per week in 1903; 58 hours per week in 2002.
 - Library staff grew from 1 in 1900 to 22 full-time equivalent positions in 2002.
 - Collection size grew from 3,593 in 1902 to 116,203 in 2002.
 - Annual circulation in 1902 was 7,124; in 2002 it was 376,356.
 - Operating budget increased from \$663 in 1902 to \$1.6million in 2002.
 - Average daily visits in 2002: 1,081.
- This writer thanks The Ridgefield Press and its jubilee editions of 1950 and 1975, Samuel Goodrich, historians George Rockwell and Silvio Bedini, the micro-filmed collection of The Press, the library information services staff, the newspaper obituary index developed by Helen K. Lewis and a timeline history prepared by Hope H. Swenson for much of the above information.

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A library is the delivery room for the birth of ideas, a place where history comes to life. — *Norman Cousins*



Full circle

The photo above shows the library's interior from about 1926. The room in the distance was a reading room but was converted over the years to house bookshelves. At right, a photo from 1997 shows the "new" reading room, the room opposite the one pictured above. This constituted a return to the former function of the room from 1926.

— Photo at right by Scott Mullin

Library plans many events during its centennial year

The Ridgefield Library plans many events during the centennial year. Following is the Centennial Events Calendar.

June - December, 2003

For further information, please contact Lesley Lambton, Director, Adult Programs, The Ridgefield Library, 472 Main Street, Ridgefield, CT 06877, 203/438-2282 or e-mail rdgprograms@biblio.org or rdgprograms@biblio.org.

All events are free and open to the public.

June

Sunday, June 22, 1-4 p.m. — The Ridgefield Library's 100th Birthday Party — The library is 100 years old today! Come celebrate with cake and other refreshments, entertainment, games, music, and short ceremonies commemorating the 100th anniversary of the opening of the Library. Fun for the whole family on the library lawn.

Tuesday, June 24, 1:30 and 7 p.m. — Hollister Film Series: Movies Through the Century — The 1940's: Casablanca.

July

Monday, July 7, 2 p.m. — Celebrating Ridgefield's Creative Spirit; Children's Summer Reading Program with illustrator Michael Rothman.

Tuesday, July 8, 7 p.m. — Tuesday Evening Nonfictioneers; Marie Antoinette by Antonia Fraser. History Room.

Tuesday, July 8, 1:30 and 7 p.m. — Hollister Film Series: Movies Through the Century — The 1950's: A Streetcar Named Desire (1951)

Thursday, July 10, 11 a.m. — Celebrating Ridgefield's Creative Spirit; A Children's Program with children's author Laurie Krebs.

July 10, 7 p.m. — Celebrating Ridgefield's Creative Spirit; Award-winning songwriter and lyricist Stephen Schwartz will discuss writing for musical theater. Call 203/438-2282 to register.

Tuesday, July 15, 7 p.m. — Critics' Circle Book Group — A Century of Books and Reading — The 1950's: Breakfast at Tiffany's by Truman Capote.

Wednesday, July 16, 10 a.m. — A.M. Book Group — A Century of Books and Reading — The 1950's: On the Road by Jack Kerouac.

Tuesday, July 22, 1:30 and 7 p.m. — Hollister Film Series: Movies Through the Century — The 1950's: East of Eden (1955).

Thursday, July 31, 7 p.m. — Celebrating Ridgefield's Creative Spirit; Jack Sanders, the author of the new book "The Secrets of Wildflowers," presents a talk and slide show. Co-sponsored by the Ridgefield Discovery Center who will be leading a "Wildflower Walk" on Saturday, Aug. 2, at 10 a.m. at Lake Windwing.

August

Tuesday, Aug. 5, 7 p.m. — Tuesday Evening Nonfictioneers — Dragon Hunter: Roy Chapman Andrews and the Central Asiatic Expeditions by Charles Gallenkamp. History Room.

Thursday, Aug. 7, 7 p.m. — Celebrating Ridgefield's Creative Spirit — Poetry in Motion discussion with Ira Joe Fisher.

Tuesday, Aug. 12, 1:30 and 7 p.m. — Hollister Film Series: Movies Through the Century — The 1960's: Breakfast at Tiffany's (1961).

Tuesday, August 19, 7 p.m. — Critics' Circle Book Group — A Century of Books and Reading —

You're invited

The Ridgefield Library's 100th birthday party is on Sunday, June 22, from 1 to 4 p.m. at the library. Re-dedication ceremonies will start at 1:30 p.m. Birthday cake and cold drinks will be available for the first 1,000 visitors. The day will include:

- Children's crafts and games
- Musical entertainment by Ridgefield High School's A Cappella 8
- Sparkles the Clown
- Announcement of the "My Dream Library of the Future" contest winners
- Display featuring the past 100 years of the Ridgefield Library
- Commemorative T-shirts, chocolate bars and book bags for sale

Refreshments are sponsored by the Friends of the Ridgefield Library.

The 1960's: The Fixer by Bernard Malamud.

Wednesday, Aug. 20, 10 a.m. — A.M. Book Group — A Century of Books and Reading — The 1960's: Rabbit, Run by John Updike.

Thursday, Aug. 21, 7 p.m. — Ridgefield Reads: The Wonderful Wizard of Oz. Film Screening of The Wizard of Oz followed at 8:45 p.m., by a "Book to Movie" discussion led by Andrew Miller, Professor of Media Studies at

Sacred Heart University.

Tuesday, Aug. 26, 1:30 and 7 p.m. — Hollister Film Series: Movies Through the Century — The 1960's: The Graduate (1967)

September

Ridgefield Reads: The Wonderful Wizard of Oz — Book discussions about The Wonderful Wizard of Oz, by L. Frank Baum, will be held throughout the community during September and October. Dates and venues to be announced.

Tuesday, Sept. 2, 7 p.m. — Tuesday Evening Nonfictioneers — Seabiscuit: An American Legend by Laura Hillenbrand. History Room.

Tuesday, Sept. 9, 1:30 and 7 p.m. — Hollister Film Series: Movies Through the Century — The 1970's: Annie Hall (1977).

Tuesday, Sept. 16, 7 p.m. — Critics' Circle Book Group — A Century of Books and Reading — The 1970's: Humboldt's Gift by Saul Bellow.

Wednesday, Sept. 17, 10 a.m. A.M. Book Group — A Century of Books and Reading — The 1970's: A Fairly Honourable Defeat by Iris Murdoch.

Tuesday, Sept. 23, 1:30 and 7 p.m. — Hollister Film Series: Movies Through the Century — The 1970's: Apocalypse Now (1979).

October

Ridgefield Reads: The Wonderful Wizard of Oz — Book discussions about "The Wonderful Wizard of Oz," by L. Frank Baum, throughout the community in September and October. Dates and venues to be announced.

Tuesday, Oct. 7, 7 p.m. — Tuesday Evening Nonfictioneers — A discussion of the biography, L. Frank Baum: Creator of Oz, by Katharine M. Rogers. In the History Room.

Tuesday, Oct. 7, 1:30 and 7 p.m. — Hollister Film Series: Movies Through the Century — The 1980's: Dirty Dancing (1987).

Thursday, Oct. 9, 7 p.m. — Ridgefield Reads: The Wonderful Wizard of Oz — Lecture: "The Wonderful Wizard of Oz: The American Classic" with Oz expert and founder of Books of Wonder, Peter Glassman.

Wednesday, Oct. 15, 10 a.m. A.M.

Book Group — A Century of Books and Reading — The 1980's:

The Mosquito Coast by Paul Theroux.

Tuesday, Oct. 14, 1:30 and 7 p.m. — Hollister Film Series: Movies Through the Century — The 1980's: Dead Poets Society (1989).

Friday, Oct. 17, 7-10 p.m., Yanity Gym. Ridgefield Reads: The Wonderful Wizard of Oz — Costume Ball for all ages, featuring entertainment, refreshments, contests and more. A Great chance for participants in different discussion groups to get together for one last Oz Extravaganza.

Tuesday, Oct. 21, 7 p.m. — Critics' Circle Book Group — A Century of Books and Reading — The 1980's: Breathing Lessons by Anne Tyler.

November

Tuesday, Nov. 4 and Dec. 2, 7 p.m. — Tuesday Evening Nonfictioneers — Theodore Rex by Edmund Norris. History Room.

Tuesday, Nov. 11, 1:30 and 7 p.m. — Hollister Film Series: Movies Through the Century — The 1990's: Philadelphia (1993).

Tuesday, Nov. 18, 7 p.m. — Critics' Circle Book Group — A Century of Books and Reading — The 1990's: Rabbit at Rest by John Updike.

Wednesday, Nov. 19, 10 a.m. — A.M. Book Group — A Century of Books and Reading — The 1990's: A Thousand Acres by Jane Smiley.

Tuesday, Nov. 25, 1:30 and 7 p.m. — Hollister Film Series: Movies Through the Century — The 1990's: American Beauty (1999).

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Whatever the cost of our libraries, the price is cheap compared to that of an ignorant nation. — *Walter Cronkite*

Administration

Christina Nolan (left) was appointed Library Director in December 2000 — a job that involves personnel management, budget oversight, public relations, Board development, facilities management, strategic planning, and much more. She came to Ridgefield following 12 years as a library director and manager in Michigan and Wisconsin and has quickly become a fixture of the community, from the Newcomers Club to Rotary. Mary Rindfleisch (center) became the Library's first Assistant Director in 2001 and focuses on development and promotion efforts, as well as overseeing the Library's public service departments; she served as Adult Services Librarian from 1997-2001. Administrative Assistant Ginny Canfield (right) is invaluable in helping the library director and the Board stay on top of myriad details necessary for the smooth functioning of an organization with a \$1.6 million budget and more than 30 employees.



Staff

The talent behind the scenes that makes it all go



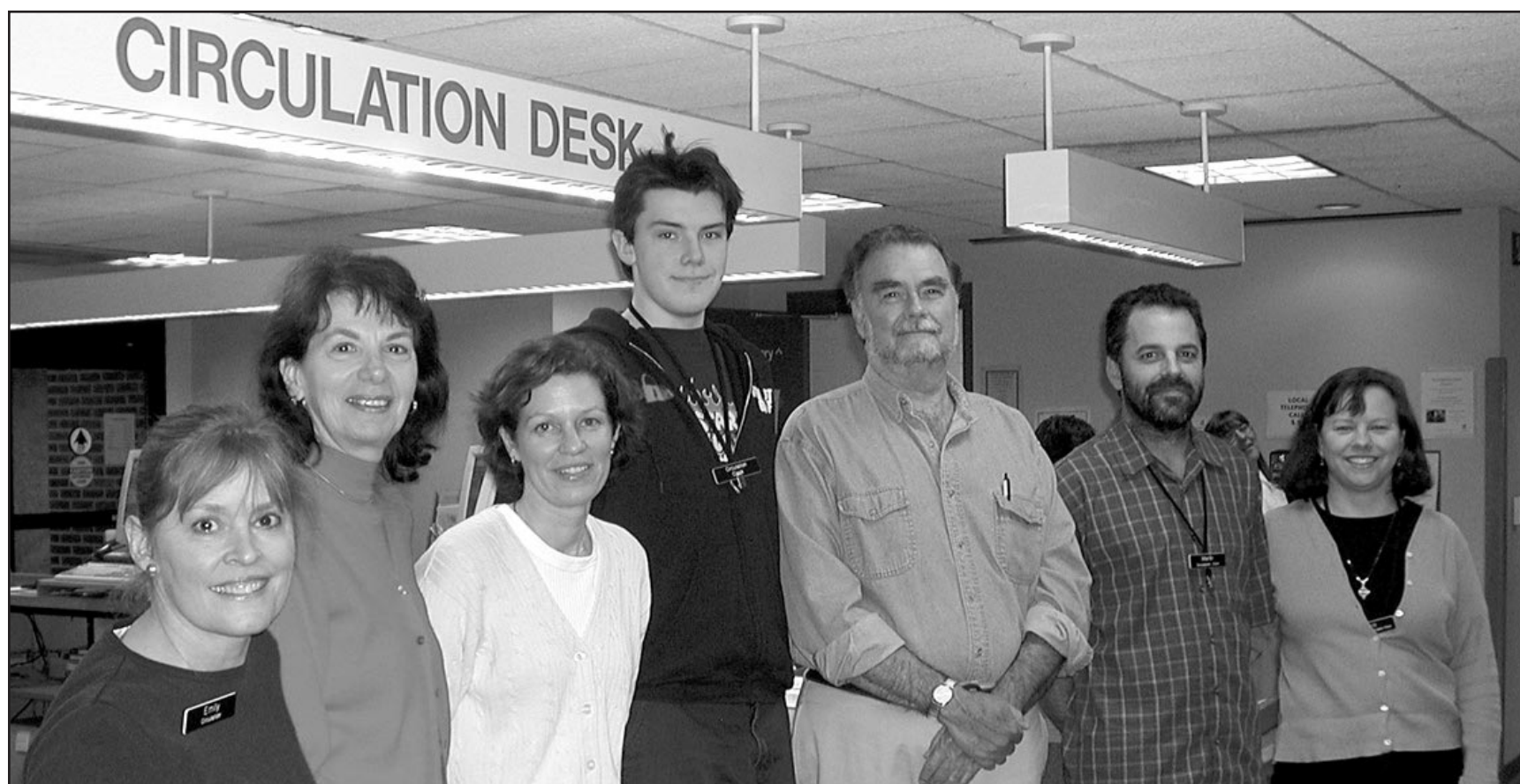
Information Services

Victoria Carlquist (second from right) has been with the Library since 1983, first as Administrative Assistant and, since the early 1990s, as head of Information Services. She is responsible for development of the adult non-fiction and reference collections and the burgeoning selection of films on videocassette and DVD; she also serves as the Library's webmaster. She and her staff provide reference assistance in person, by phone, and via e-mail, responding to nearly 18,000 queries last year. They also facilitate patron use of our computerized catalog, Internet functions, and a wide range of electronic information databases and software applications. Information Librarian Lesley-Anne Read (second from left) brings to her duties an extensive body of knowledge based on her frequent travels around the globe and her proficiency with quilting and other crafts, both extremely popular topics of inquiry by patrons. Part-timers Christie Mitchell (left) and Mary Lee (right) help keep up with the flow of questions that range from investment research to planning the perfect wedding. Lynda Hanley and Jennifer Mackenzie (not pictured) provide additional coverage on weekends so that all public service desks are staffed with capable librarians throughout our 58 open hours per week (55 in the summer).



Adult Services & Programs

As head of Adult Services since January 2002, Dorothy Pawlowski (far left) selects and promotes the extremely popular adult fiction, audiobook, recorded music, and large print book collections. She is perhaps best known as a provider of reader's advisory — personalized assistance in locating leisure reading selections to satisfy any mood and taste. Her staff in the Fiction Room includes Karen Kazzi (second from left), who also manages reserves and inter-library loan requests, and Teen Services Librarian Geri Diorio (see Children's Services photo), who is charged with helping teen readers make the transition from children's to adult books. Lesley Lambton (second from right) took over this winter as Adult Programming Director, after serving as programming assistant since Fall 2000. She produces a wide range of activities and events for adults and families, including the Ridgefield Folk concert series, the Hollister Film Series, book discussion groups, the Health & Wellness lectures, and this year's Centennial Celebration. Her assistant, Liz Marcus (far right), is a recent addition to the staff and helps Lesley with publicity, logistics, and rentals of the Dayton Program Room by community groups.



Circulation

This very busy area is headed by Kate Turner (far right), who took on the job of Circulation Supervisor in April, following several years as an Access Services Team Leader in the Carrollton, Texas public library. Her skills in library automation, training, and computer applications equip her nicely to manage this department, whose members interact in some way with virtually every visitor or caller to the Library. Her staff, the largest in the organization, includes (from left to right) Emily Whittemore, a cheerful and efficient fixture at the check-out desk since 2000; Florita Nickel, the newest addition to the staff; Lauren Spengler, who has many years experience as a school library volunteer; Will Shugg, who is back from college to assist as the Summer Reading Program quickens the pace at the Circulation Desk; veteran George Lohman, who has served as circulation clerk (and shared with patrons his encyclopedic knowledge of science fiction) since 1994; and Martin Blasco, who is working towards his Masters of Library Science at Queens College. Not pictured are high school pages David Duff, Rebecca Johnston and Caleb Wattlely, who keep things on track by shelving returned books, videos, and magazines — not an easy task with an average daily circulation of 1,188 items!

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He is wise who knows the source of knowledge – where it is written and where it is to be found. — A.A. Hodge



Technical Services

In the nearly 20 years she has headed this department (after 10 years as a part-time assistant), Mary Anello (right) has seen its work shift dramatically, from typing catalog cards and gluing in date due slips to sophisticated computer database maintenance and assigning bar-codes. Mary and her staff order, catalog, and process some 13,000 new books, audios, videos, and other materials each year, as well as attending to the condition of the existing collection. Mary is primarily responsible for adult non-fiction and reference books and for tracking invoices and payments, while Bobbie Hermann (center) focuses on adult fiction and media and Joan Gregory (left) specializes in children's materials of all kinds. Joan also has the distinction of being the longest serving current staff member, having started work in October 1974.



Network Administrator

Anyone who has ever become frustrated with the quirks of a personal computer can appreciate how fortunate the Ridgefield Library is to have Anthony Cacciola on board as Network Administrator. Anthony is responsible for the upkeep of 31 staff and 28 public access computers, as well as managing the web of outside suppliers that provide our library automation system, Internet access, e-mail, electronic databases, and more. He is constantly monitoring technology trends and working to keep our systems up to staff and public expectations and needs. From troubleshooting "Reader Rabbit" educational software for eager pre-schoolers to researching new productivity software for staff to clearing away the electronic debris that accumulates on computers that see hundreds of different users each day, Anthony is always on the go.

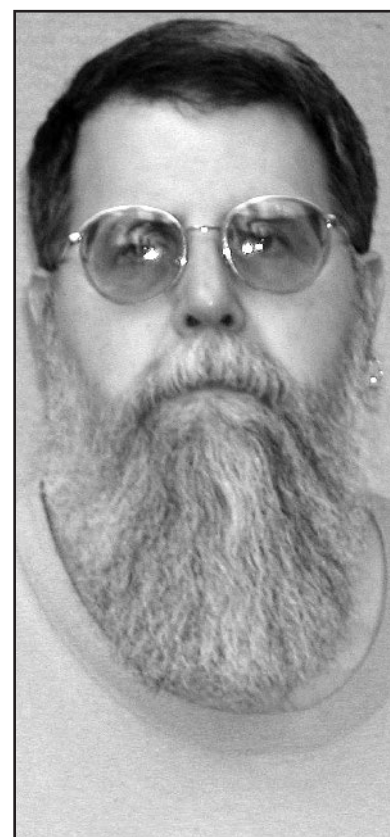


Children's Services

Marie Spratlin Hasskarl (second from left) has been the head of Children's Services since 1988 and has overseen growth in the quantity and quality of the library's collections and services for Ridgefield's young people, from birth through the teen years. As just one of many examples, the Summer Reading Program she instituted her first year has mushroomed from 180 participants reading 1,200 books to last summer's extraordinary 1,367 readers and 39,674 books read. Since 1997, Diane Tinacci (far right) as Children's Programmer has contributed mightily to these efforts, organizing and leading storytimes, from the extremely popular "Mother Goose" sessions for infants and their caregivers to programs based on favorite children's book series such as "Magic Treehouse" and "American Girl." Geri Diorio (center) is the newest addition to this team, filling since February the newly created position of Teen Services Librarian and busy brainstorming activities to appeal to middle and high schoolers. Helping young patrons with homework research, preparing for programs, and finding just the right book for a beginning reader interested in baby animals are library assistants John Casiello (far left); Leigh Ann Larkin (second from right), who has joined us for the past three summers; and Christine Miller (not pictured). High school pages (not pictured), currently including Caitlin Foley, Katie Ifert-Miller, Marlo Jones and Caitlin Quigley, work shelving books and keeping the heavily used Children's Room in order.

Staff

The talent behind the scenes



Maintenance

With a facility dating from several different epochs (including the original 1903 wing), maintenance chief Lem Woolf must contend with a hodgepodge of mechanical systems and interior decoration schemes, to say nothing of the often conflicting facilities needs of the staff and public. Since the Ridgefield Library & Historical Association owns its own building and grounds, Lem is also responsible for performing or supervising all repairs, upkeep, and minor renovation projects, from snowplowing to custom cabinetry. He is assisted by Russell LeClaire and Werner Kaylor (not pictured), who are rarely seen by the public but whose efforts are important to maintaining a safe, clean, and comfortable library environment.

photos by
Jonathan Schumann

A Century and Counting: THE RIDGEFIELD LIBRARY CELEBRATES ITS CENTENNIAL

You must live feverishly in a library. Colleges are not going to do any good unless you are raised and live in a library every day of your life.

— Ray Bradbury

Friends of the Ridgefield Library offer a helping hand

by JONATHAN SCHUMANN
Press Staff

If you've lived in Ridgefield long, chances are you've visited the library once or twice. If you can, imagine no chairs in the lobby, no DVDs to borrow, no microfilm to view and severely limited Internet access. Without the help of the Friends of the Ridgefield Library, this barren image could be a reality. For the past 26 years, this organization has acted as the library's helping hand, raising funds and donating items.

"What we are committed to doing is to support the library through whatever we can," said president of the Friends of the Ridgefield Library, Joan Laspia, adding that the organization's two chief contributions are raising money and volunteering time.

A significant portion of the Friends' support comes from their popular book sales, those frantic and exciting three-day events that normally occur twice a year, and draw an eclectic crowd of literature enthusiasts and families alike. Book donations from the public make these sales possible, and because of an unprecedented number of community donations this year, the recent May book sale was expanded to four days. With such a surplus of donations, there are new plans for next year, which include the normal November and May sales, in addition to a Christmas Boutique sale in December, to include books in pristine condition to be given as gifts, and two 50-cent sales for paperback and children's books.

"The town itself had been very generous and kind to us," Ms. Laspia said, "contributing enough books in order to get books out there for the public." Ms. Laspia also

said that donations are accepted all year long and may be turned into the library's circulation desk. Tax forms are also available so the donation may be cited.

The proceeds from these fund raisers go to anything that the library needs. This ranges from permanent improvements to special programs or events. The Friends' role provides the library with "a big brother or sister for the extras that they can't quite fund or pull off without help." Over the years, contributions from the Friends have included additions to the library's DVD collection, computer and Internet upgrades, laser printers, puppet shows and other special programs such as film and lecture series.

"To me, the library is a very vital part of a community and a child's upbringing," Ms. Laspia said, "When my kids were young we would most enjoy going to the library and picking up books. The stronger the library, the more of a hub it is for community activities both for kids and adults." Donating and volunteering through the Friends of the Ridgefield Library helps the library reach and impact people in the community. "What we are trying very hard to do is make our organization as available to the town as possible through volunteerism, membership and service," Ms. Laspia said.

"If anybody has any kind of ideas that they think we would benefit from, would like to see us do or initiate, we are as available as we can be," she said.

To join the Friends of the Ridgefield Library, there are membership forms available at the library. Membership fees start at \$10 for an individual or \$15 for a family.



Marge Dunnington, corresponding secretary; Peter Laqueur, treasurer; Jo Fainer, past president; Joan Laspia, president; Harold Spratt, treasurer, vice-president; Vicki Enge, recording secretary.

Technology at the library changes dramatically over time

by JONATHAN SCHUMANN
Press Staff

Imagine a world where book information was kept on little cards, and compiled in a system called the card catalog. When searching for information in this world, one would need to obtain a tangible copy of the desired journal articles and other resources. Seems hard to believe, right?

A trip to the Ridgefield Library of today would make this world even harder to visualize. For nearly the past 20 years, the library's technology has significantly shifted from archaic to cutting edge. While a computer-based system has replaced the card catalog, the Internet and online information databases have made research even easier to conduct.

Perhaps the biggest change the digital revolution brought was the movement from the card catalog to a computerized system. Andrew Cacciola, the library's network administrator, agreed that the change was significant. "With the card catalog, anything you came in for, your search options were limited," Mr. Cacciola said, and noted that it took time for some patrons to adjust to the change.

"They were used to the way the card catalog was," Mr. Cacciola said, "they could hold it and feel it," he said about the catalog's tangible quality that a computer system cannot match.

In addition to the eradication of the card catalog, the prevalence of Internet-driven research and the popularity of subscription-based online databases has greatly changed searching for information. Victoria Carlquist, head of Information Services,

said the shift into the future has changed her job and the nature of gathering information. "This centralizes source information," Ms. Carlquist said about public Internet access in the library and the availability of online databases to the public. "So much of it is right on line, right in front of you."

Online databases have particularly revolutionized research and information-seeking. These services will provide full-length articles on a multitude of topics, compiled from a broad range of sources, including respectable research journals, magazines and newspapers. "Subscription databases are updated so often, this broadens everyone's source base," Ms. Carlquist said, "More people have access to more full-text articles than we could possibly keep on our shelves. The sources that we subscribe to are very reliable and much more complete than they have been in the past." Ms. Carlquist also said that there is less maintenance involved with online resources as opposed to hard copies.

"It has changed our job in terms of the amount of time spent teaching and instructing people how to use things," Ms. Carlquist said about technological advancements and the Internet revolution, "I think it has made things easier in terms of the access of information, but learning how to get at it using the Internet is different."

While the computerization of library resources was certainly a large step, there have been important steps made with hardware upgrades as well. When Mr. Cacciola started work at the library, there were only 17 computers. Currently, the library has 60 computers, each linked on the same network. Most recently, the library upgraded

its Internet connection to a DSL line. "In comparison to at-home with a dial-up, it is amazingly fast."

"The DSL connection should be roughly three to four times faster for roughly a quarter of the price," Mr. Cacciola said. The new DSL line should be installed by the end of June.

As far as technological capability is concerned, the Ridgefield Library is "even with, if not ahead of, most libraries in Bibliomation, the consortium that supplies the library's automation system," Mr. Cacciola said. "Some libraries don't even have high speed Internet."

While the library is current with many technological standards, there are still more advancements to be made. One change Mr. Cacciola would like to see is wireless Internet and laptops. "People could take the machines and move where they want to, in the History Room, Dayton Program Room and study room," he said. Mr. Cacciola also said he would like to see the library house video conference capabilities as well.

Mr. Cacciola echoed the fact that sometimes people do not know how to use the equipment, and said that when the library offered computer access, "some people were not used to the mouse." For these patrons not fully versed in new technology, Mr. Cacciola offered encouraging advice. "I'm hoping that people who don't frequent the library come in and check things out because it's a lot different than a lot of people think it would be," he said; "I'm amazed at how many computers are running, how well the building runs. I hope people check out things they're not used to seeing."

A Technological Timeline

Since 1984, the library's technological advancements have been staggering. Here is an abbreviated list of the most significant steps forward.

1984
Automated Circulation — With its membership in the Bibliomation library consortium comes a new, modern approach to circulation.

1989
Children's Games — Reader Rabbit, played on an Apple II computer, becomes the first educational game to appear at Children's Services.

1990
Statewide Cooperation — ReQuest catalog, accessed by CD-ROM, lists the holdings of most Connecticut public libraries.

1991
Library Loans On-Line — Online Computer Library Center reduces the delivery time of inter-library loan items.

1993
Card Catalog Retires — Public Access Catalog, a computerized system, renders the card catalog obsolete.

1996
On-line Ordering — A new on-line ordering system, B&T Link, eliminates paperwork and speeds up the arrival of new materials.

1997
Public Internet — The first public Internet access becomes available, and is immediately popular. New workstations in Information and Children's services are added to meet the demand.

1998
Ridgefield Library On-line — The library's homepage, which provides twenty-four hour information about services and events, is introduced.

1999
On-line Info from Anywhere — Remote access book information and subscription-based databases become available to any library member from anywhere on the Internet.

1999-2003
Computers Everywhere — In this four year span, the library's number of computers has increased from seventeen to sixty, while the children's game computers have gone from one to four.

2002
Virtual Reference — AskYourLibrary.org uses the latest "chat" and "push" technology to provide 24/7 reference service.

2003
Full Steam Ahead — An upgrade from a T1 to DSL Internet connection allows faster Web access and surfing.

Yesterday and today: Facts at a glance show changes over the years

The library has changed a great deal over the last 100 years. It has grown physically more than six-fold and from its modest collection of just over 3,500 books in 1902 it now houses over one hundred thousand

books and other media, some of which were not even dreamt of 100 years ago. Below are some facts and comparisons that illustrate just how far the library has come over the last century.

	1903	2002
Ridgefield Population	2,626	23,600
Library building (sq. feet)	4,000	27,000
Opening hours (per week)	10	58
Library staff (full time positions)	1	22
Collection size	3,593	124,022
Annual circulation	7,124	376,356

	1903	2002
Operating budget	\$663	\$1.6 million
Average daily visits	50 (estimate)	1,081
Reference questions	25 (estimate)	17,868
Adult programs	None	170
Children's programs	None	449
Computer stations	None	23

A Century and Counting: THE RIDGEFIELD LIBRARY CELEBRATES ITS CENTENNIAL

Going to the library builds a kid's imagination. Books help them discover themselves and the world. — Mike Bordick



Board members, from left, sitting: Morton S. Bailey III, emeritus; Sue W. Manning, Sally A. Savoia, treasurer; Kathryn P. Berger, corresponding secretary; Judy Di Mattia. Standing, from left: Hope H. Swenson, emerita; Gloria Bucher, Barbara Dobbin, chairman; Albert M. Shagory, Frank A. Rowella, Jr., Lynn S. Holley, recording secretary; Thomas R. Mantz. Not pictured: Carroll W. Brewster, vice chairman, and William B. Dickinson.

Board of Directors: The library's governing body

by LIBRARY STAFF

The Board of Directors is the governing body of the Library. As such they are responsible for setting policies and direction for the Library, managing the financial soundness of the Library, providing oversight to the library administration and establishing the qualifications, duties, responsibilities and per-

formance expectations of the Board members.

Meeting monthly, the second Monday at 7:30 p.m. in the Dayton Program Room, this 12-member group operates in a committee structure that facilitates the business brought before the Board. Standing committees such as Finance, Development, Audit, Personnel and Nominating are augmented by ad hoc

needs such as the Planning Committee (currently engaged in the latest strategic planning process). The Board is an active working group that tackles topics such as pending library legislation (including state funding or lack thereof), financial management, privacy issues, and strategic planning.

The 12-member board is comprised of nine members appointed by the first

selectman. The other three members are appointed by the Library Board itself. The process of becoming a library board member has changed in the last two years to include a broadcast call placed in The Ridgefield Press to the community at large to self-nominate. With board terms being three years, the Nominating Committee is constantly attentive to balancing the skill sets needed on the

board. The Library Board is representative of the Ridgefield community and works best with broad-based support.

The Library Board provides us with fabulous, dedicated individuals who enrich the library enormously, by sharing their professional and community skills. In return, the board members get a chance to really see behind the scenes at our very active, growing library.

Strategic Planning: looking back, planning ahead

by JONATHAN SCHUMANN
Press Staff

Every library needs direction. After 100 years serving the town, the Ridgefield Library is re-assessing its mission, image and purpose, and looking ahead to the next century.

A strategic planning committee is taking on this library re-assessment. The makeup of the committee represents four groups essential to the library: its board of directors, library staff, the Friends of the Ridgefield Library and members of the Ridgefield community. This community group is important in particular said Tom Mantz, chairman of the committee.

"We wanted to have a group that really was going to provide us with input from the community," Mr. Mantz said.

"All of us are very close to the library. What we wanted was a group not close to the library that was going to be able to participate and provide us with an external point of view," he said.

While there are community representatives as part of the strategic planning committee, there is also a planning advi-

sory group comprised of eight community members of varying backgrounds, ages and professions who will view the committee's work at various stages along with the entire library staff, board and Friends of the Ridgefield Library.

The planning itself was initiated in the fall of 2001, and the committee was comprised in the winter and spring of 2002. Since then, members have "spent time becoming familiar with current library trends, have visited other libraries, have done a lot of reading and talked to other libraries in the area" in an effort to familiarize and reacquaint themselves with issues facing libraries today, Mr. Mantz said. "The goal was to build our understanding of what was happening in the library community."

Mr. Mantz said that it was important for the library to undergo the planning process for two reasons. The first was time.

"Every organization should look at direction at least every five years," Mr. Mantz said, and added that the last strategic plan was completed in 1997.

The second reason involves the library's acquisition of the adjacent

Webster Bank property two years ago.

"The important thing is we also have to consider the future of the library within the context of the current facility and the bank building," Mr. Mantz said regarding the acquisition's effect on the planning process. "As we think about where we're at and what we're doing, its time to revisit the direction (of the library). The Webster Bank building creates opportunity," he said.

"I have never seen a group of people work so hard to get a sense of what the town wants and what the town needs," Joan Laspia, a member of the committee representing the Friends of the Ridgefield Library, for which she is president, said.

"We have spent quite a long period of time trying to get this concept," Ms. Laspia said, and added that the committee still has a ways to go before reaching a final conclusion. While the planning committee has not agreed upon a final mission statement, Mr. Mantz believes they will reach a conclusion in the next 60 days.

"Library usage of all measures continues to grow significantly year over

year," said library director and planning committee member Christina Nolan.

"We feel space constraints in serving the public and having sufficient work areas for the staff," she said.

Of the strategic plan, Ms. Nolan said, "We know what issues we have, we don't know what paths we will go down ... this is crafting our options."

In addition to serving as chairman of the planning committee, Mr. Mantz is also a member of the library's board of directors. For his work with the board, Mr. Mantz received the award for Connecticut Trustee of the Year from the Associate of Connecticut Library Boards, a state-wide organization that advocates for libraries and addresses issues of library governance, in October 2002. Members of the Ridgefield Library board nominated Mr. Mantz for this honor because of his revolutionizing work with its annual fund raising appeal.

"Under Tom's leadership, we made the decision to acquire a professional non-profit software package, develop our own list of donors, and generate customized thank-you notes and also track donations over time," Mary

Rindfleisch, assistant director of the library, said. "He took us from ground zero to our most successful return ever in a matter of months," she said. Ms. Rindfleisch added that Mr. Mantz's amount of work and dedication to the project were commendable. "It was a huge amount of work to implement this significant improvement."

"It was most unexpected," Mr. Mantz said of his honor. "I was quite overwhelmed, and still am. I think anybody that receives an award like this doesn't seek it out, it is a byproduct of the other work they are doing."

"What I did could not have been accomplished without support of the board," Mr. Mantz said about Ridgefield's library board, which he called "extremely capable."

Members of the planning committee are: board members Carroll Brewster, Judy Di Mattia, Barbara Dobbin, Gloria Bucher and Lynn Holley, staff members Christina Nolan, Mary Rindfleisch and Dorothy Pawlowski, planning advisory group members Mark Meachem and Susan Cocco, and Friends of the Library president Joan Laspia.

Test your Library IQ

1. How many hours per week is the Library open during the school year?
a. 20
b. 40
c. 50
d. 58

2. How can you get professional assistance with a reference question?
a. In person
b. By phone
c. Via e-mail
d. Online
e. All of the above

3. How can you reserve a book?
a. In person
b. By phone
c. Online
d. All of the above

4. What services can you access remotely via the library's webpage?
a. The catalog
b. Patron information (items checked out, holds placed, fines due, etc.)
c. Electronic databases like Electric Library, Ebsco, and the Literature Resource Center
d. All of the above

5. How can I find out what is going on at the Library?

a. BiblioEvents and other flyers available at the Library
b. The Library Events section of our webpage
c. Articles and calendar listings in the Ridgefield Press
d. All of the above

6. Who was the original 1903 Library building named for?
a. Phyllis Paccadolmi
b. Elizabeth Morris
c. Geraldine Farrar
d. Abraham Lincoln

7. Who made the life-size bronze sculpture of a woman reading to a child in the first floor reading area?
a. Anita Daubenspeck
b. Mike Wise
c. Glenna Goodacre
d. Leonardo da Vinci

8. How many items did people check out from the Library last year?
a. 7,124
b. 110,583
c. 376,356
d. 403,454

9. What approximate percentage of the Library's budget is provided by the town of Ridgefield?

a. 0%
b. 33%
c. 75%
d. 100%

10. How old do you have to be to get a Library card?

a. No restriction
b. Old enough to sign your name
c. 17
d. 21

Answers

1. (d) 58 hours. During the school year the Library is open 7 days a week, including Tuesday and Thursday evenings until 9 PM, all day Saturday, and Sunday afternoon from 1-5 (Sunday hours are dropped from Memorial Day to Labor Day).

2. (e) All of the above. Professional reference librarians are available at the Information Services Desk whenever the Library is open; they are also happy to take your phone inquiries. After hours, you may send an e-mail question to rdginfo@biblio.org or rdgref@biblio.org. Or try AskYourLibrary.org, our 24 hour a day/7 day a week Virtual Reference Desk service accessible through our website at www.ridgefield-library.org.

3. (d) All of the above. If the book you

want is checked out, you may put your name on the waiting list by filling out a white reserve card, speaking with staff at Adult, Children's or Information Services desks, or online through the catalog, either at the Library or at home via our webpage.

4. (d) All of the above. These are just a few of the resources you will find at the Library's webpage. The selection is always growing, so check here often for the latest information and links.

5. (d) All of the above. And if you can't find the information you need in any of these places, just call!

6. (b) Elizabeth Morris. The land and the building which now forms our historic front wing facing Main Street were donated in the early 1900s by James Morris in memory of his late wife Elizabeth. Of course, many present-day Ridgefielders identify their earliest library experiences with Phyllis Paccadolmi. Although "Miss P" was a fixture for more than 50 years, she wasn't on the job (or even born!) in 1903.

7. (c) Glenna Goodacre. The renowned artist has crafted many works for libraries, museums, and other institutions. "Storytime" was presented to the Library by a private donor in 2000 in recognition of the retirement of Anita Daubenspeck after 25 years as Library

Director. Local contractor Mike Wise completed the renovation that created the light and airy alcove where the sculpture now resides.

8. (c) 376,356 is the number of books, videos, audios, magazines, CD-ROMs and other items borrowed in 2001-2002. Compare this with (a), 7124, which was the circulation in 1902 and (b) 110,583, the activity for 1985, to see just how far we have come. Answer (d), 403,454 is an estimate of what the current year's circulation will come to, if we keep up our current pace of a 7.2% increase over last year.

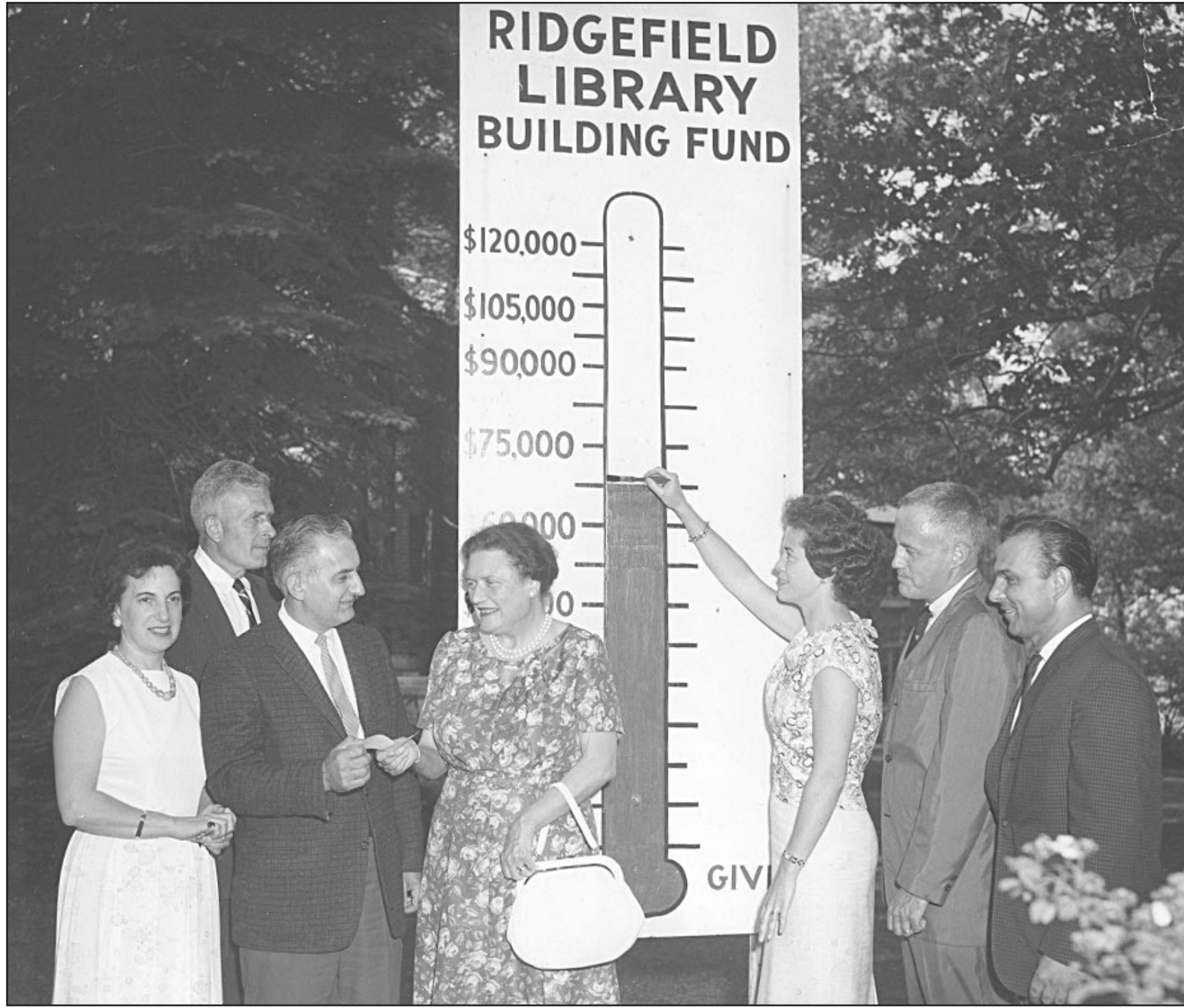
9. (c) In recent years, the town of Ridgefield has granted the Library approximately 75% of its operating budget. As a separately incorporated, 501(c) (3) non-profit organization, the Library raises the remainder of its funding through an annual appeal, activities of the Friends of the Library, foundation grants, and other sources.

10. (a) No restriction. There is no minimum age required to get a Ridgefield Library card - we have many proud parents who come in to get one for their newborns! We encourage every child in town to sign up for his or her own card before starting school. Registrants under 17 must have a parent's or guardian's signature to get a

A Century and Counting: THE RIDGEFIELD LIBRARY CELEBRATES ITS CENTENNIAL

As a child, my number one best friend was the librarian in my grade school. I actually thought all those books belonged to her.

— Erma Bombeck



Raising money

From left, Mrs. Mario Marcheggiani, Joseph Whittman, Gerald Pannozzo, Mrs. Theodore Jessup, Mrs. Joseph Whittman, Dr. Theodore Safford and Primo Zandri at the thermometer during a 1956 library fund raiser.

Ridgefield Reads to celebrate The Wonderful Wizard of Oz

by JONATHAN SCHUMANN
Press Staff

"Dorothy lived in the midst of the great Kansas prairies, with Uncle Henry, who was a farmer, and Aunt Em, who was the farmer's wife..." So begins L. Frank Baum's classic children's tale, *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*. Like many of my generation, and other generations past and present, I recall these opening words, and the rest of Dorothy's wild adventures across Oz with Toto in her arms and the Tin Man, Scarecrow and Cowardly Lion at her side. For years my mother and father read this engaging, magical novel to me. These memories of laying in bed at night, with a parent as my companion for these amazing journeys down the yellow brick road stand as some of my childhood's most distinctive and enjoyable. Now, with the Ridgefield Library's "Ridgefield Reads" program, part of their Centennial Celebration, the novel's joy will reach a new, wider audience.

"Ridgefield Reads" is a reading program for the town that will include multiple book discussion groups and other activities.

"It's an effort on the part of the library to be engaged in the community beyond their

The cyclone had set the house down, very gently — for a cyclone — in the midst of a country of marvelous beauty.

"The road to the City of Emeralds is paved with yellow brick," said the Witch, "so you cannot miss it."

own doors and draw their community into a thoughtful project based on reading," Assistant Director of the Ridgefield Library Mary Rindfleisch said.

The program focuses on one book, and encourages the entire community to read this book, and then come together for discussion. An early successful, highly publicized instance of this type of reading program occurred in Chicago. The city focused on Harper Lee's *To Kill a Mockingbird* and discussed the racial themes in conjunction with the city's own racial issues. More locally, New York City chose Chang Rae Lee's *Native Speaker* and Westport read Lois Lowry's *The Giver*. This is the first time Ridgefield has participated in such a program.

For this occasion, the library chose *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*. The novel, first published in 1900, follows the heroine Dorothy's search for home in the magical and mysterious land of Oz. Though popular years before the landmark 1939 film version, the movie elevated the story to its iconic status in popular culture.

While planning the Centennial Celebration, a group of library board and staff members began to decide what book to choose. After four to six weeks of reading

and brainstorming, they introduced "personal favorites and books that had been done by other libraries," Ms. Rindfleisch said. After considering such titles as Louis Sachar's *Holes* and Jean Craighead George's *My Side of the Mountain*, *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* "rose quickly to the top of the list," Ms. Rindfleisch said.

"It did have a recognition factor, it did have inter-generational appeal," Ms. Rindfleisch said of the library's choice. "It was the *Harry Potter* of its day."

The similarity to this modern-day classic was key in the selection process, as this project is geared toward families. "Given the composition of the town and the huge amount of emphasis on family, we thought that something that could appeal to the whole family was a good choice," Ms. Rindfleisch said. "We like this book because it wasn't just written at a kid's level, and it has enough complexity as a piece of literature that it could appeal to older readers."

In addition to its appeal to multiple age groups, the library also likes the book's message. "We thought it had some themes worth looking at in this new century," Ms. Rindfleisch said, noting that the values each

They now came upon more and more of the big scarlet poppies, and fewer and fewer of the other flowers; and soon they found themselves in the midst of a great meadow of poppies.

"...at the end of the road of yellow brick, was a big gate, all studded with emeralds that glittered so in the sun that even the painted eyes of the Scarecrow were dazzled by their brilliance."
"Dorothy now took Toto up solemnly in her arms, and having said one last good-bye she clapped the heels of her shoes together three times, saying, 'Take me home to Aunt Em!'"

character is searching for are especially relevant today. "There is nothing wrong nowadays with seeking courage, heart, brains and home," Ms. Rindfleisch said. "We thought these would lend themselves to discussion on many levels."

Ms. Rindfleisch also said that a comparison of Ridgefield and Oz draws some striking similarities, noting that both towns have a seemingly "Utopian" quality.

This type of discussion will take place after Labor Day, in carefully planned sessions. "We're hoping to get a range of people involved," Ms. Rindfleisch said, and noted that diverse groups would participate in discussion sessions. Already signed up is a mother and baby group, who will be "looking at the perspective of being a mother of an infant, and how to introduce children to this literature and these ideas," Ms. Rindfleisch said. Other groups categorized by age or affinity will meet and discuss the book's themes and meaning.

While Westport's reading program spawned 24 reading groups, "We think with this book we can do more than that," Ms. Rindfleisch said, "maybe 40."

"It is the one occasion at which anyone who has participated can come together."

In addition to this gathering, there are several other activities geared around *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* that will take place.

Perhaps the most exciting event for Ridgefielders will occur on July 10, when musical theater sensation Stephen Schwartz, who penned *Pippin* and *Godspell*, will come and speak about writing for musical theater. Mr. Schwartz's latest, *Wicked*, which will head to Broadway in the fall, is based on Gregory Maguire's re-telling of Baum's classic from the *Wicked Witch of the West*'s perspective.

Later in the fall, there will be a discussion of Katherine M. Rogers's biography of L. Frank Baum, *L. Frank Baum: Creator of Oz*. This will take place on Oct. 7 at 7 p.m. in the library's History Room. On Oct. 9, Oz expert Peter Glassman will give a lecture entitled, "The Wonderful Wizard of Oz: THE American Classic" at 7 p.m.

A grant from the Wadsworth Russell Lewis Fund has made possible much of this program, and the activities surrounding it.

