Birmingham Public Library Annual Report 2007
Since the beginning of civilization, human beings have been collecting information in one way or another. From the carvings on early clay tablets to the wireless transmission of today’s electronic bytes, people have needed ways to record, store and retrieve information. This human need for managed information is fundamental to the existence of libraries.

When I entered librarianship in 1972, I considered it to be a profession of tradition with very little change. Little did I know that information and the processes used to store, organize and disseminate it were about to explode. On reflection, I now see that librarians have been living in a state of transition for decades. Everything about our profession has changed, is still changing and will continue to change. As the nature of our work has evolved and as the demand for the immediacy of information has increased, we have developed new techniques of learning and new ways of delivering information. The knowledge that we gained yesterday is not sufficient to satisfy the needs of today’s customers. Tomorrow’s customers will expect even more from us. As the library is a portal to a world of expanding knowledge, we librarians must understand our community so that we are ready to respond to their needs and requests in minutes. To succeed we must have at hand the tools and skills best suited for the job.

As our cities struggle to contend with the ever-changing demands of society and the associated costs, libraries must be right there at the table. The library is a part of everything that affects our communities – education, government, economic development, and health and human services. With this in mind, I have attempted to lead the Birmingham Public Library and its staff toward fulfilling our mission:

...to provide the highest quality library service to our citizens for lifelong learning and cultural enrichment and enjoyment

During my tenure as director, I have helped the Birmingham Public Library face challenges and changes. Maintaining the library’s rich tradition of excellence these past six years has been difficult as we have dealt with declining budgets and staff shortages. If the library is to continue to be the place where the public is expected to interact with others and to gain knowledge, we must have the necessary resources. Our public is not demanding less of us. They are demanding more and expect to receive more.
The Birmingham Public Library is considered by many as the “crown jewel” of the City of Birmingham. Twice in the past five years, we have been designated as the top tourist attraction in our city. Our doors are open to everyone regardless of age, race, gender or ethnicity, and the staff stands ready to assist them all. The Birmingham Public Library is an anchor for this city. We take our responsibility seriously.

With City funds continuing to decrease, we have recognized the need to reevaluate the library’s expenditures and to seek out additional revenue streams. We have leveraged an existing staff position so that the job responsibilities include writing grants. Additional funds from other organizations and foundations insure that we can meet the challenging technological demands placed on us and continue to provide high-quality programs and exhibits for our customers. This external financial support has allowed the Birmingham Public Library to remain a formidable competitor in the “information marketplace.”

The library patrons of today demand immediate attention and want their library needs fulfilled in their preferred formats. The Birmingham Public Library has met this challenge and continues to meet it by providing new products, new services and new opportunities for learning.

In the past year, the library has introduced new initiatives to support the services and opportunities that the library provides. From the collection and conservation to training and technology, the library is working on all fronts to insure that current and future users will find what they need when they need it at the Birmingham Public Library.

While today’s customers often consult Internet websites as sources rather than books, the Birmingham Public Library can still report an increase in the circulation of books and other media during the past year. In addition to an increase in Circulation, the library also experienced increases in Membership, Library Visits and In-Library Use. This documented growth in the use of the library supports my opening statement that people will always need “managed information,” but the formats will change and the speed of change will continue to accelerate.

Public libraries are positioned to manage the flow of the knowledge, the change in formats, and the public’s requests for information, but we must be ready and equipped to meet the needs of every generation that enters either in person or via the web. This means maintaining traditional methods of service and also reaching out with new service techniques. To meet this challenge, I shifted staff positions to create a new "mini" library department that is called the L2Crew. The name is a nod to the term “Library 2.0” that is used to describe the transition in the way library services are delivered to users with blogs, wikis and other Web 2.0 and social networking concepts. In the following list of new initiatives, you will see the many approaches to hosting and sharing of information that this group has developed. Unlike traditional committees with planned face-to-face
meetings, these young librarians and library assistants transact much of their business via blogs and wikis. I am excited about their future and consequently the future of BPL as they steer us in this direction.

The possibilities afforded us by technology are unlimited. Purchases of new video equipment allowed us to increase our audiences through programs that are simulcast between Central and the Five Points West and Springville Road branches. With this equipment one speaker or trainer can reach three audiences at the same time. To make immediate practical use of this technology, this past year we introduced Tech Tuesdays @ Your Library, a series of programs on using popular Internet tools such as blogs, photo sharing and instant messaging.

Each year we increase our outreach. We believe that we cannot just build buildings and wait for the public to come to us. We know we have to reach out and publicize what we do, so we continue to find ways to market our services. For example, we have purchased promotional items specifically designed to represent BPL in our community at events and fairs as well as in our own backyard. We also build relationships and will continue to collaborate with old acquaintances and to forge new partnerships to help us deliver our message.

We will always need and want to tell the library's story. Although most people do not visit other public libraries when they travel, we librarians do. We know that Birmingham Public Library is among the very best in the nation. We want our citizens to know this too.

The review that follows highlights some of the programs, special events, exhibits and other initiatives the library featured in the past fiscal year.

Barbara Sirmans,
Director

I have been blessed to have two wonderful and very capable Associate Directors - Renee Blalock and Pamela Lyons. Together, our individual personalities and strengths have been responsible for the continuous push of the wheel that keeps Birmingham Public Library in a forward motion. The three of us have been blessed with ten excellent Coordinators whose individual charges have combined to form the wheel that is necessary for this movement. And for the individual staff members, I can never say enough about them. I am where I am because of the staff, and BPL is what it is because of the staff.

Finally, I am grateful to the members of the Library Board for your support in helping BPL to remain the "crown jewel" of the City of Birmingham. It is my desire that our citizens will always be able to count on us to provide "the highest quality library service for their lifelong learning and cultural enrichment."
2006 / 2007 New Initiatives

Collections

In addition to the acquisition of new materials and maintenance of the largest public library collection in the state, the library acquired access to two important electronic databases from the family of scholarly resources of the Oxford University Press. The library’s own staff developed and launched three new databases of unique material from the library’s collection. And the popular DVD collection was expanded and reorganized.

New Databases

Purchased
- Oxford Dictionary of Music
- Oxford African American Studies Center

Developed in-house by staff
- WPA Index to Alabama Biographies (28,359 entries – 1840-1951)
- Public Relations Picture File (3,261 records)

New Floating Collection of DVDs
- A traveling collection of DVDs to eliminate multiple purchases

Conservation and Preservation

With recent focus placed on the reorganization and protection of the collection in the Southern History Department, more emphasis was directed to preserving the library’s unique and scarce materials. The library acquired a new air-conditioning system for the rare materials and fire-proof cabinets for the pamphlet collection. A campaign to expand the high school yearbook collection resulted in adding records for these popular items to the catalog and reorganizing the books for ease of retrieval. Staff training in disaster response and consultations with experts in preservation kept the spotlight on the importance of preservation and conservation and offered plans for moving forward to preserve our past.

Rare Book Room
- New air conditioning and climate control

Indus Planetary Scanner
- To digitize oversized items

Pamphlet Files
- 8 new fire-proof filing cabinets
- Reorganization and cataloging

Yearbooks

Training
- SOLINET Disaster Preparedness Workshop
Consultations
Tom Wilsted, Archival Consultant

Review and Report on Linn-Henley Building Options

Kara M. McClurken, Preservation Services Librarian, SOLINET Preservation Services
Preservation Needs Assessment

Construction
Every year brings the need to renovate and improve the physical facilities throughout the library system. In addition to these important cyclical improvements, this year the library opened the new West End branch.

West End Branch Library
Wylam Renovation
IT Workroom Reorganization
Computer Room Reorganization

Literacy
The Literacy division continues to advocate the importance of literacy and libraries. By going into the schools and the community, the staff promotes library card sign-ups, forms partnerships with service groups, applies for grants, and encourages adults and children to value the ability to read.

Born to Read @ Your Library
Joint effort of JCLC member libraries for parents of infants born at area birthing hospitals

Family Place Libraries
Avondale and Springville Road branches are the first libraries in Alabama designated as Family Place Libraries

Ready to Read
Literacy Council partnership for adult nonreaders

Storytime
Weekly storytimes for patients at Children’s Hospital

Programming
Every year programming becomes more important as a means of drawing people to the libraries. Many events including Summer Reading, Alabama Bound, and Brown-Bag-Lunch programs have become standard entries on the annual calendar. New programs are inspired by new interests and needs. The Local Authors Expo added last year was so successful, it will return this fall. BPL@Night was expanded to the branches, and additional outreach programming is underway for all teens and seniors.

Between the Lions
Hosted the cast of Between the Lions at branches

BPL@Night
Expanded from Central to the branches
Local Authors Expo 2006
    Space and opportunity for 70 authors to promote their books

New Outreach to Adults and Seniors
    Development of adult programming systemwide

New Teen Initiative
    Organization of BPL teens for activities and as helpers

Public Relations
    Telling the library’s story can be as obvious as presenting a program on the Bright House television channel, as subtle as hanging a banner on a lamp post or as accessible as putting bookmarks and printed brochures on a rack. All are important ways to place the library in the public arena. New public relations efforts this year included training the staff to add events to the new online calendar and to use digital cameras, easing up the restrictions on the public having food and drink, putting the logo on library fixtures and furnishings, and stationing people to welcome library visitors.

Christmas with Santa
EventKeeper
    Online calendar of events for all Birmingham Public Library locations

Food in Libraries
    Central has soft drinks, coffee and pastries in the Atrium; Avondale provides snack space

Library Greeters
    Staff and volunteer greeters at Central

Purchases
    BPL exhibit tents
    Tablecloths with the logo
    Signs with the logo and a picture
    Digital cameras for every location

Staff Training
    Ongoing training is required for keeping up in today’s library world and factors in all of the library’s initiatives. One notable new training program this year is the University of North Texas Le@d program that brought online instruction for practical matters to BPL.

Le@d Program of Online Training
    Online paraprofessional staff training funded by an LSTA grant

Technology
    Technology spread in many directions for the library this year. For the infrastructure and security of the network, the library’s aging hardware and products received upgrades or were replaced with new technology and system management tools. An LSTA grant provided funding for equipment for simulcasts, and now on Tuesdays the library offers simulcast training in the use of Internet tools.
Installation of CybraryNet
   PC management and statistics

Installation of New PCs
   288 new PCs

Network Security
   Installation of new firewall and new virus protection product

New Purchases
   Replaced Web Server
   Replaced MAS90 Server

Tech Tuesdays @ Your Library
   Live technology programs at Central simulcast to Five Points West and Springville Road

Video Conferences
   LSTA grant for equipment to simulcast programs among Central, Springville Road and Five Points West

Web 2.0 Technology
With the Internet having developed into a powerful interactive resource, the library has expanded its technology to include blogs, wikis and other ways of sharing content on the web. A team of staff from around the system is working to manage the library’s content on the web, to train staff how to use the web for projects for their work, and to incorporate the web into the library’s operations.

The L2Crew
   Staff using Web 2.0 tools to develop Library 2.0 concepts and make the library’s space interactive

Blogs
   News, Reviews and Information
   Digital Collections
   Staff blog has been developed for use by all staff
   Departmental blogs

Wikis
   Departmental and committee wikis

flickr
   Photos online

YouTube
   Videos promoting products and services

Instant Messaging (IM)
   IM reference services

Facebook and Bebo Profiles
2006 / 2007 Exhibits

Academy of Fine Arts – Southern Roots

Alabama Watercolor Society Juried Show

Charles Brooks Cartoons

Druscilla Defalque Gallery

Funky Art High School Exhibit

John DeMotte

Olmstead Maps and Drawings

Sea To Shining Sea (Smithsonian)

Southwestern Quilters

2006 / 2007 Awards

BPL was one of 80 libraries featured in the book *Heart of the Community: Libraries We Love*

Deborah Dahlin was awarded the first *Le@der of the Month* award (for the number of hours of training done by the BPL staff)

East Ensley (Mrs. Wilma Cottrell posthumously) - Girl Scouts Friendship Service Pin

Melinda Shelton – BPL’s MySpace page won the *Be Innovative* award from Innovative Interfaces

North Birmingham – CHARPS Great Service Award

North Birmingham – Jefferson County Health Department Public Health Award

Pratt City – Alabama Governor’s Commission on the Employment of People with Disabilities Mentoring Day Award

BPL received the 1st place award from the Department of Youth Services for the Feed the Need and Toys for Tots Program
2006 / 2007 Special Events and Programs

2007 Career Development for Unemployed Women
3rd Annual Great Garage Sale (fundraiser for Staff Day)
3rd Annual Read It Forward
African American Genealogy Workshop
Alabama Bound: A Book Fair Celebrating Alabama Authors and Publishers (19 authors)
Between the Lions (608 library cards to students in Head Start)
Bill Cosby's Call Out
Boo at the Zoo
BPL Presents - 12 Bright House productions
BPL@ Night
  2nd Chance at Love
  Andy Offutt Irwin
  Cahaba Saxophone Quartet
  Chicago
  Eric Essex
  MadSkillz Dance Company
  Muse of Fire (Shakespearean Group)
  Ron Anglin (Juggler) and Larry Moore (Magician)
  Umdabu Dance Company
Chinese New Year Festival
City of Birmingham Chess Championship
Collectors and Collecting Conference - Alton, England
Councilor Royal's School Supply Distribution
Explore Your Family Tree
Family Night (Avondale and North Birmingham)
Family Read
Fishing Rodeo
Function at the Junction
Ikebana Workshop (Japanese Flower Arrangement)
Jones Valley Urban Garden (fundraiser for Staff Day)
Kids 'n Kin
Kitchen Shower (staff shower for items needed in the kitchen)
Kwanza Year Round
Langum Prize Award
Library Day on the Hill - Washington, DC
Licensed to Read (941 library cards to students in elementary school)
Local Authors Expo (70 authors)
Mayor's Safe Summer Streets
National Deaf History Month
Neighborhood Fun Days
Neighborhood Health Fairs
Pepper Place Market
Reading Rally
Small Business Seminars
Staff Bake Sale (fundraiser for Staff Day)
UAB Early Head Start Health Fair
Ujima Math and Science Program
WILD Card Program (518 library cards to students in high school)
Young Mothers Program
Children's Author/Storyteller Events
  Andy Offutt Irwin
  Diane Ferlatte
2006 / 2007 Support

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<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Amount</th>
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<tr>
<td>City of Birmingham</td>
<td>$15,737,354.55</td>
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<td>State of Alabama (State Aid)</td>
<td>214,925.16</td>
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<td>Misc. Grants and Gifts</td>
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<td>Neighborhood Associations</td>
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<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>$16,125,669.71</strong></td>
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2006 / 2007 Statistics

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<th>Category</th>
<th>Count</th>
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<td>Circulation</td>
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<td>In-Library Use</td>
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<td>Library Cardholders</td>
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<td>Library Programs</td>
<td>1,905</td>
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<td>Library Visits</td>
<td>2,259,374</td>
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<td>Central</td>
<td>438,516</td>
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<td>Branches</td>
<td>1,820,858</td>
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<td>Meeting Room Bookings</td>
<td>4,836</td>
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<td>New Bibliographic Records Created</td>
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<td>New Library Material Processed</td>
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<td>Program Attendance</td>
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<td>Public Computer Use</td>
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<td>Reference Transactions</td>
<td>789,516</td>
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<td>Staff Hours in Continuing Education</td>
<td>5,680</td>
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<td>Summer Reading Club</td>
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<td>Certificates</td>
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<td>Participants</td>
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<td>Program Attendance</td>
<td>18,498</td>
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<td>Programs</td>
<td>381</td>
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## 2006 / 2007 Collaborative Partnerships

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<th>American Cast Iron Pipe</th>
<th>Jefferson County Health Department</th>
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<tr>
<td>Barnes &amp; Noble Booksellers</td>
<td>Junior League of Birmingham</td>
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<tr>
<td>Birmingham Chamber of Commerce</td>
<td>Literacy Council of Central Alabama</td>
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<td>Birmingham Children’s Theatre</td>
<td>McWane Center</td>
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<td>Birmingham City Schools</td>
<td>Rally’s</td>
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<td>Birmingham Civil Rights Institute</td>
<td>Rotary Club of Shades Mountain</td>
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<tr>
<td>Birmingham Museum of Art</td>
<td>UAB’s Community Health Assisted Research Partners (CHARPS)</td>
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<td>Birmingham Zoo</td>
<td>UAB’s Deep South Network</td>
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<td>Bright House Networks</td>
<td>United Way</td>
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<td>Camp Birmingham</td>
<td>University of Alabama - Birmingham</td>
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<tr>
<td>Chick-fil-A</td>
<td>University of Alabama - Tuscaloosa</td>
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<td>Children’s Hospital</td>
<td>Women’s HealthLink - Cooper Green Mercy Hospital</td>
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<td>City of Birmingham Neighborhood Associations</td>
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<tr>
<td>Division of Youth Services</td>
<td>YMCA of Birmingham</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jefferson County Child Development Center</td>
<td>YWCA of Birmingham</td>
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Birmingham Public Library Board

Mrs. Lillie M. H. Fincher, President

Mrs. Gwendolyn B. Welch, Vice President

Mrs. E. Bryding Adams

Mr. Thomas J. Adams, Jr.

Mrs. Nell Allen

Mrs. Gwendolyn R. Amamoo

Mrs. Shanta' Craig-Owens

Ms. Emily Norton

Mr. Samuel A. Rumore, Jr., Parliamentarian

Mrs. Dora Sims

Mr. Jimmie S. Williams

Representative from the Mayor's Office

Ms. Vickie Reynolds
Birmingham Public Library Administration

Barbara Sirmans, Director
Renee Blalock, Associate Director for Branch Libraries
Pamela O. Lyons, Associate Director for the Central Library

Administrative Council

Hope Cooper, Facilities
Sandra Crawley, Southern Region
Deborah Dahlin, Collections
Virginia Guthrie, Western Region
Janine Langston, Literacy and Outreach
Sandra Lee, Public Services
Marguerite Scott, Northern Region
Rochelle Sides-Renda, Eastern Region
Phil Teague, Information Technology
Linda Wilson, Staff Development
Locations

Avondale
509 South 40th St., 35222
(205) 226-4000

Central
2100 Park Place, 35203
(205) 226-3600

East Ensley
900 14th St., Ensley, 35218
(205) 787-1928

East Lake
#5 Oporto-Madrid Blvd., 35206
(205) 836-3341

Eastwood
4500 Montevallo Road, 35210
(205) 591-4944

Ensley
1201 25th St., Ensley, 35218
(205) 785-2625

Five Points West
4812 Avenue W, 35208
(205) 226-4013

Inglenook
4100 North 40th Terrace, 35217
(205) 849-8739

North Avondale
501 43rd St. North, 35222
(205) 592-2082

North Birmingham
2501 31st Ave. North, 35207
(205) 226-4025

Powderly
3301 Jefferson Ave. SW, 35221
(205) 925-6178

Pratt City
1100 Hibernian St., 35214
(205) 798-5071

Slossfield
1916 25th Ct. North, 35234
(205) 322-1222

Smithfield
#1 8th Ave. West, 35204
(205) 324-8428

Southside
1814 11th Ave. South, 35205
(205) 933-7776

Springville Road
1224 Old Springville Road, 35215
(205) 226-4081

Titusville
#2 6th Ave. SW, 35211
(205) 322-1140

West End
1348 Tuscaloosa Ave. SW, 35211
(205) 226-4089

Woodlawn
5709 1st Ave. North, 35212
(205) 595-2001

Wylam
4300 7th Ave., Wylam, 35224
(205) 785-0349

24/7 Virtual Library
www.bplonline.org

Birmingham Public Library
2100 Park Place
Birmingham, Alabama
35203