

Birmingham Public Library
2010 Annual Report

Submitted by
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Birmingham Public Library

The mission of the Birmingham Public Library is to provide the highest quality library service to our citizens for life long learning, cultural enrichment and enjoyment

State of the Library Report, January 2011

To paraphrase Charles Dickens these are the best of times and the worst of times for the Birmingham Public Library. It is the worst of times because the library's budget has been slashed for Fiscal Year 2011 and there is no relief in sight. The library's acquisitions budget was cut 48 per cent. The City of Birmingham's Volunteer Retirement Incentive Plan (VRIP) netted a loss to the library of 25 positions (from a total of 170 full time positions) held by long time experienced library staff. The Mayor's Office has at this time given us permission to fill only twelve of these positions.

The loss of these 25 employees is greatest in the area of leadership. For many years the BPL has depended on a leadership team made up of ten coordinators who oversee a function of the library or a geographical area of branches and public service. Six of the retirees were coordinators and the City will allow us to fill only one, the Information Technology Coordinator. In addition we will not be allowed to fill the second Associate Director position. The loss to our leadership team is almost fifty per cent. From a team of thirteen we will be a team of seven.

Cuts to the budget of the Jefferson County Library Cooperative threaten BPL because the Cooperative provides the backbone of our day to day operations---our online library catalog, Internet access, and much more.

These are the best of times for the Birmingham Public Library because we have the finest staff and board remaining who have the intelligence, creativity, and determination to rise to the many challenges of this crisis and continue the excellent service that is BPL's tradition. We have almost completed work on a strategic plan that will allow us to focus our energies on what the public wants and needs in the next five years while we reorganize to deliver old and new services to our public with our usual skill and competence. We will soon receive a report from Robert A. M. Stern Architects that will enable us to begin planning and building support for a renovation of the Central Library complex that will transform the Central Library into the attraction and asset Birmingham deserves. It will be a center of our region's history as well as a striking contemporary public library.

In November of 2010 BPL was named a STAR Library by *Library Journal*. This award places us in a very select group nationally. Of the 7,407 rated public libraries across the US, only 258 were named STARS. This puts BPL in a very elite group. Our best qualities will be required to maintain this designation.

We launched and very successfully completed a grassroots fundraising campaign for the first time last Fall. BPL Campaign 2010, which ran from mid September to November 1, netted donations totaling more than \$26,000 and the follow-up Give the Gift of Reading Campaign has continued to bring in donations.

We have a talented full time grant writer and have had more and more success writing grant proposals to local foundations and corporations. We are building a reputation for presenting excellent educational and fun programs for all ages. Our successful FamilyPlace programs including 1, 2, 3 Play With Me presented in partnership with the Junior League of Greater Birmingham are unique in the state.

Not long ago I went back through my monthly reports to the board and other records of BPL activities over the past year and noted all the details of what we provide to our community. This document is attached and will demonstrate the incredible value we return on the City's investment in the Birmingham Public Library.

The challenge of the next few years is to build relationships with government, the business community, and our users to ensure that each understands the value of public libraries in general and the Birmingham Public Library in particular in the areas of education, community development, workforce development, and in economic development. We need to convince community leaders at all levels that supporting and promoting the library is a way of demonstrating government success on a very local level. Our service to individuals is a very real way that their tax dollars are returned to them and our services contribute to the success of our city and our region in many, many ways. Our job is to educate our leaders on the value of these services and facilities and to assist them in communicating their support of their constituents through excellent library services and materials they help to provide.

The City of Nashville has as one of its slogans "A great city has a great library." Recently at the kickoff of the Next Big Thing our mayor stated that he intended to make Birmingham "the greatest city." My hope is that Mayor Bell knows that to be the greatest city Birmingham must have the greatest library. And on the grand scale of things the cost of a great library is not much. The city of Birmingham has a great start in the Birmingham Public Library, its staff, its facilities, and its collections both historic and contemporary.

BPL By the numbers

Birmingham Public Library (BPL), the oldest cultural institution in our community, is celebrating 125 years of library service in 2011. For all of these years this library has been a great investment for the City of Birmingham for the people of Birmingham. The library has returned a profit on every dollar received in the form of excellent services, valuable programs, extensive library materials, and has contributed consistent excellence in education, culture, preservation, and a vital place for generations of citizens of the City of Birmingham to learn.

The following are examples of the high use and excellent return on the tax investment by the library. All figures are for 2010:

- **19 libraries** open to the public seven days a week, **50,256 hours per year**. That is a cost of \$330 per hour for the whole library system. Based on FY2010 budget of \$16,575,620.
 - Per hour cost for FY2011 projected to be \$328 based on FY2011 budget of \$15,841,902 (48,176 hours open due to reduced hours at two branches.)

- **161,913** people have an active library card including more than half the citizens living in Birmingham (24,249 of these are children)
- BPL is the **most visited tourist attraction** in the area with **1.9 million visitors** in 2010. (Birmingham Business Journal *Book of Lists 2011*, page 113)
- **2,220 programs** and events in **BPL libraries** with 62,825 attending for an average of 2.23 programs per week at every location with 28 people in attendance
- **284 programs** presented by library staff **outside the library** at schools, nursing homes, camps, etc. serving 25,510 attendees
- **713,180 uses of library public computers** for a total of 20,981,124 minutes
- **1,571,953 books, DVDs, audio books and music, downloadable audio books and ebooks, etc. loaned** in FY2010
- Library meeting rooms were used **4,243** times by community groups
- Began new service—downloadable **ebooks** which are growing in popularity every day
- Named to the **Top Ten Public Libraries for Genealogy** by *Family Times Magazine*
- Hosted *Black Caucus of the American Library Association Conference*, August, 2010
- BPL named **STAR Library 2010** in Fall of 2010 by *Library Journal*