

ALBERT LEA PUBLIC LIBRARY

Lori Barkema, Library Director

The year 2003 marks the 35 year anniversary of providing library services at our City Center location. Much has changed during those 35 years. Library services were extended to all Freeborn County residents in 1969, just a year after moving into this site. The Library entered the computer age in 1986 with the automation of the card catalog. The information explosion required expanded collections of books, magazines and newspapers to meet an expanding desire for more information by the public. Internet workstations were added in 1995, providing undreamed of access to information. New formats and materials including music CD's, movie DVD's and Books on Tape/CD further expanded the library's collections. In response to all these changes, library use doubled by 1995 and then doubled yet again by 2002.

All of these changes over the past 35 years required more space for people, computers and materials. In 1987, Library Planning Associates consultant Anders Dahlgren noted that the "library building was showing signs of overcrowding". In 2003, a space needs assessment noted that "the Albert Lea Public Library is thriving and its circulation statistics are impressive - even when housed in much too small quarters."

This year the public was surveyed at the Freeborn County Fair and asked to provide suggestions for where to locate a new library building. Their suggestions included renovating the vacant Walmart or the vacant high school, expanding further into the city center or building a new library on the North Broadway site by the Civic Theater. A study of these sites is to be reported to the City Council and Library Advisory Board in 2004.

Library Milestones

- 1968 The new Library opened in the City Center location
FRIENDS of the Library organization founded
- 1969** Library services are extended to all Freeborn County residents
Annual circulation tops **100,000 items** for the first time
- 1973 Freeborn County agrees to a library tax assessment for library services to rural residents
- 1986 Library's card catalog moves to the computer age
- 1987 Library Planning Associates study indicates the library is showing signs of overcrowding
- 1994 Lori Barkema appointed new Library Director and implements new policies, services and collections
- 1995** Internet access made available to the public
Annual circulation tops **200,000 items**
- 1996 Library service hours are expanded to seven days per week with the addition of Sunday afternoon hours
Library is open 69 hours per week year round, the most hours of any public library in Minnesota
- 1998** Library survives damaging winds that removed portions of the roof and is closed three weeks for repairs
Library still manages to hit another circulation milestone as circulation tops **300,000**
- 1999 Library celebrates 100 year Anniversary
- 2002** Circulation tops **400,000**
Library Internet workstations are used 27,289 times
- 2003 Library Advisory Board and City Council pursue a study of various sites to expand the Library

Library Advisory Board Members

Ken Bertelson
Harlan Bang
Grace Haukoos
Kristen McGivern
Jane Saunders
Roger Lonning, SELCO Board Representative
Gail Batt, Freeborn County Representative

FRIENDS Board President

Elaine Baer

Library Staff

Lori Barkema, MLS, Director
Theresa Schmidt, MLS
Sarah Clendineng, MLS
Staci Waltman
Denise Sande
Jan Rogness
Teresa Kauffmann
Gail Rasmussen
Sandy Soli
Patty Greibrok
Terri Tinman

Library Comparison

	Annual Circulation	Hours open per week	Staffing (FTE)	Collection (Items)	Building Size (sq. ft.)
Red Wing	182,792	50	10.6	62,894	27,196
Northfield	357,191	68/64*	13	83,553	12,320
Faribault	262,847	62/56*	11.8	81,890	19,950
Albert Lea	417,035	69	11	85,903	11,000
Austin	304,004	68/64*	12.95	102,923	26,500
Owatonna	368,749	64	16.2	145,260	25,500
Winona	354,804	51/47*	15.75	121,466	12,165

* Denotes winter and summer hours

Library Hours

The Albert Lea Public Library is open more hours than any other public library in Minnesota. These service hours are available all year including during the summer months. Our Sunday hours are particularly appreciated by the public. These hours are a key factor in the high circulation of items to the public. At any given time, over 34,000 items are in use by the public.

Monday – Thursday	9 AM - 9 PM
Friday	9 AM - 6 PM
Saturday	9 AM - 5 PM
Sunday	1 PM - 5 PM

The Library's catalog is accessible 24/7 via the web at www.city.albertlea.org.

Library Staffing

The Albert Lea Public Library is very efficiently staffed in comparison with other public libraries of similar size in this region. While the Albert Lea Public Library is open the most hours and our circulation is also the highest, our staffing level remains the lowest.

Library staff is also responsible for producing and maintaining the city website. This year the city website was "hit" 29,385 times, up from 15,804 "hits" last year, proof that people are using this website for locating information on city services. This year the library staff took on an additional responsibility and began producing a quarterly city newsletter that is circulated to over 6,600 households in Albert Lea via their utility billing. Teresa Kauffmann is both the city webmaster and the library staff member responsible for the city newsletter.

Library Collection

Due to the space constraints at this location, the library collection is very small in comparison to other library collections, most noticeably Austin and Owatonna which have libraries sized at over 25,000 square feet compared to the 11,000 square feet available here at Albert Lea.

Over the last ten years over 67,235 items have been withdrawn to keep the collection within the space provided. Even after withdrawing so many items, there is little space for the public to comfortably enjoy using the library. Many items are in storage and retrieved on demand only since there is not space for them in the main floor collections.

FRIENDS of the Library and Volunteers

Many of our expanded library services depend on volunteers. Library staff hosted a coffee to show our appreciation to our many volunteers including our Library Advisory Board, FRIENDS of the Albert Lea Public Library, Senior Outreach Volunteers, and Daycare Delivery Volunteers. The Library is also fortunate to have

many young volunteers after school and during the children's summer reading program. Our services would not reach as many people without the contributions of these volunteers.

Special thanks must be extended to retiring library advisory board members Richard VanderWaerdt, Del Stein and Veda Harris. Their many years of service and continued support of the library are invaluable.

Adult Library Services

Fountain Lake Readers continues to be a popular program for our adult library users. Three sessions are held each month with Librarian Sarah Clendineng organizing these events.

The Library partnered with The Constant Reader, Community Education, and David Larson to produce a community reading program called **Albert Lea Reads**. Community members all read the "Joy Diet" by Martha Beck and attended reading discussion groups and presentations.

Community members interested in the library issue participated in an **Albert Lea Listens** session to promote their vision for our community. This process is initiated by the Albert Lea Freeborn County Chamber of Commerce.

The Library continues to promote its **Senior Outreach Services** to Albert Lea residents and also rural Freeborn County residents and recently added the **Emmons Community Library** to our sites served. Librarian Theresa Schmidt and staff member Gail Rasmussen coordinate these outreach efforts.

Children's Library Services

The Children's Library held several special events for kids during fall break and again during winter break since when school is out of session there are so many children looking for something to do. And of course, the **Summer Reading Program** continues to draw many children to the Library over the long summer school break. The Children's Library again had an entry in the **July 3rd parade**. Our summer volunteers entertained parade goers with a special book cart square dance routine choreographed by library staff member Jan Rogness. The Children's Library hosted a **Freeborn County Fair Booth** which was very popular with the children.

The Library's **Daycare Delivery** program serves over 40 sites and reaches almost 600 children each month in Albert Lea and Freeborn County with rotating collections of library materials and on-site programming. Librarians Staci Waltman, Patty Greibrok and Terri Tinman present these story times, manage the rotating collections and recruit delivery volunteers.

The Children's Library again this year served as the school library for classes from St. Theodore's. School classes come every week and the Library provides materials, story hours, and library use skills training to children from kindergarten to sixth grade. The Library also presents a weekly after school program of games and crafts each Tuesday during **LAF (Library After School Fun)**.