

RIVER BLUFFS REGIONAL LIBRARY



EIGHTH ANNUAL REPORT

1996 - 1997

RIVER BLUFFS REGIONAL LIBRARY

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RIVER BLUFFS REGIONAL LIBRARY

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Reference 816-232-8151
Reference Fax 816-232-7516
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INTRODUCTION

The River Bluffs Regional Library, the cooperative service of the St. Joseph Public Library and of the Rolling Hills Consolidated Library, provides materials and services to meet the informational and recreational needs of the citizens of Andrew and Buchanan Counties in Missouri.

Since the beginning of this contractual agreement, work has been ongoing on a long-range planning process.

Planning involves defining and redefining an institution's mission, roles, and goals. Once these have been determined for a public library system, a plan for facilities can be developed.

The 1995-1996 year ended as work was continuing on a draft of a master facilities plan, prepared by Professional Library Consultants. In late July of 1996 Robert H. Rohlf of PLC returned to St. Joseph for his fifth visit to discuss his work, which had included intensive public input, accompanying surveys, and interviews with over 160 citizens. In a meeting of library Board members, library staff, and community activists, Mr. Rohlf pointed out that the River Bluffs Regional Library has limited financial resources, and, unless increased support becomes available, a choice will have to be made between a reduction of services or an election to seek increased operating and capital improvement monies. This will be necessary not only to maintain the present level of service but to refurbish library facilities and bring them into compliance with laws and codes. Seeking a uniform tax rate throughout the district also is imperative, Mr. Rohlf said.

Mr. Rohlf's report included a review of the community, an assessment of present facilities, an overview of the organization of services and staffing, a tally of how people get to the library, a chart on how they use branches, a section on the library and technology, a comparison of the River Bluffs Regional Library with its peers, and an evaluation of library finances. Various alternatives for a strategy were proposed, including a "most desirable facility plan" to renovate the Central Library, refocusing the service program to one floor and moving major collections elsewhere; at the very least to renovate and make handicapped accessible the Carnegie and Washington Park Branches; to expand the Savannah Branch; and to relocate and expand the Belt Branch to a general east area to hold the major collection resources.

A major theme of the 1996-1997 year was the response by the library Board and staff and the community to this proposal, with some positive steps being taken as a preface to its implementation.

While the long-range planning process continued, staff maintained their commitment to developing collections of materials in a variety of formats for persons of all ages and backgrounds; encouraging children and young adults to develop an interest in

reading and learning through materials and services directed both to them and to their caregivers and educators; and providing timely, accurate, and useful information for users. What follows are highlights of progress made in meeting the library's goals in the context of these ongoing endeavors.

PUBLIC SERVICES

The goal for public services is to develop and implement a program of services to meet informational and recreational needs.

With all the talk about improving facilities, people still need to remember that many library users cannot easily come to any of the library's five buildings. These include residents of Andrew and Buchanan Counties who live in rural areas; homebound senior citizens; children in daycare centers; and the otherwise institutionalized. Service by mail is also enjoyed by increasing numbers of library users, although the future of this program may be in question with increasing postal rates, since the library has been picking up mailing costs. During the year improvements and additions to service by mail were made.

In the summer of 1996 deposit collections were also taken to the St. Joseph Public School District's elementary summer school sites at the Hosea, Gene Field, Parkway, and Webster Schools. These collections were for service to several hundred students. Teachers have reported that these books have provided incentives to encourage reluctant readers to learn.

Service within the library's five buildings continues to change in ways that would be wondrous to people who used the St. Joseph Public Library in the early 1900s. For example, the new multi-media computer workstation in children's services at the Downtown Library has proven to be quite popular. Parents have been pleased to have it available for their children, and families who even have computers at home have been impressed with the quality of the CD-ROM products, which include Encarta, a dictionary for preschoolers, and herstory, women's history. The computer has rarely been idle, and often several children can be seen clustered around it, searching for information that interests them, or working through one of the educational games available. Administrative staff working down the hall, especially soon after this service was introduced, were delighted to hear everything from music to the sounds of wild buffalo coming out of the children's service area.

Displays of library materials and other items stimulate the use of the library and give us all new ways of perceiving our world. At the Downtown Library in the summer of 1996, a "mountainous" book display with the attention-grabbing title "99 Good Reads for Summer" proved very popular, as did an attractive display on weddings. Purchased by the Friends of the River Bluffs Regional Library, a tabletop unit with a lighted sign with the library's name and logo was utilized, in among other ways, to acquaint library users with

information available to them through the Federal Depository Program. The main lobby display case featured a variety of toys from the 1940s, the 1950s, and the 1960s. Like programs and collections, displays are often rotated amongst one or more of the library's five facilities, and this was the case with a collection of toys and historical scenes both made of wood and provided by State Representative Maurice Lawson. Other displays throughout the year focused on government information on education, jobs, Scouting, Star Trek, Maine and Maine memorabilia, items made in Missouri, the environment, farming, homeschooling, agriculture, and Harry Truman. Also during the summer of 1996, a display at the Savannah Branch on storms and weather (especially tornadoes) proved informative with patrons of all ages. There was also a new display on the Olympics and past Olympic winners.

Once again the Summer Reading Program, whose theme in 1996 was READiscover Missouri, was one of the library's premiere efforts to promote the value of reading to young people and develop lifelong learners. And once again programming was greatly assisted by cooperation from other governmental agencies. For example, the Summer Reading Program kick-off party at the Downtown Library featured in the morning a Missouri Conservationist, accompanied by a native Missouri prairie king snake, giving a program attended by 200 children and adults. Later, throughout the day almost 100 children and adults came to the library for trolley rides on the First Street Trolley, provided by the St. Joseph Convention and Visitors Bureau. The director of the National Military Heritage Museum volunteered as a tour guide, giving his hour-long tour of St. Joseph to four groups of children and their parents. Many children made trolley hats and whistles for the ride and later returned to the library for storytime and refreshments. Throughout the day, several of the St. Joseph Museums also waived their fees and offered tours to summer readers and their parents.

Also during the Summer Reading Program, promoting reading in the downtown St. Joseph area was enhanced when managers and team members from the St. Joseph Saints Baseball team visited the library to sign autographs while young diehard ball collectors traded baseball cards. The team members did a great job of answering the children's questions about Saints team members, the MINK League of which the team is a member, and baseball in general.

The "Library Explorers Group," which met on Thursday afternoons during the summer at the Downtown Library, made origami frogs, paper patchwork quilts, and boats. In addition, they heard Missouri folktales and stories about Missouri waterways, farms, and pioneer quilts. They participated in jumping contests with their frogs and raced their boats.

Systemwide programs during the Summer Reading Program included those by Sarah Elder of the St. Joseph Museum, who showed items from a pioneer's traveling trunk; Jeff Anslinger, who demonstrated cowboy wear and read cowboy poetry; Clement McCrae Puppet Company, who put on a show and demonstrated the difference between puppets and how puppets from different countries are handled differently; and Jim "Two Crows" Wallen.

Final statistics for the 1996 Summer Reading Program showed 2,505 youngsters having registered for the program and 1,756 completing it.

After a short lull following the Summer Reading Program, the fall of 1996 brought new demands for services, especially among young people. Staff continued to work hard to provide service in both new and traditional ways.

Belt Branch staff helped to aid the learning process by providing "homework boxes" for use by afterschool children, which contained paper and other supplies, augmented by many donations.

For the somewhat younger set, preschoolers had the opportunity to vote on their favorite book from a list of ten nominees for the Missouri Building Block Award. All five library facilities participated in this program, designed to encourage adults to read aloud to pre-readers, using an annual list of ten recent, high-quality picture books as a resource. Parents and other caregivers could pick up the list of books at the library. Children who had not yet entered first grade could vote for their favorite book from the list if they had had five or more of the books read aloud to them. The children's votes were counted, along with others throughout Missouri. A special recognition was presented to the author and illustrator of the winning book by a committee of the Children's Services Roundtable of the Missouri Library Association.

Despite the library's traditional emphasis on programming for youth, there were, however, events for adults. A talk and book signing of her latest book Twilight in early November featured mystery writer Nancy Pickard at the Albrecht-Kemper Museum of Art, which attracted over 70 people. At the event and in a note sent later to the library's assistant director, Ms. Pickard was very complimentary of the City of St. Joseph, the River Bluffs Regional Library, the Albrecht-Kemper Museum of Art, and the people she met.

Children's Book Week provided another opportunity to promote books and reading. At the Belt Branch, "Booktivities" were held everyday. Children made bookmarks and helped staff create several long murals with the theme "Oh, the Places You'll Go!" by drawing and coloring their favorite places or story on paper. These murals were hung in the children's area. A book jacket workshop was also held, when children had their choice of unjacketed library books, for which they designed covers. Children participating were extremely proud of their colorful illustrations.

Throughout the year staff continued to work on programs for Head Start groups, daycare centers, library visitors, preschoolers, lapsitters, and regularly scheduled and special school visitors.

Reference and information service continued to keep staff busy, especially at the Downtown Library. Over half of reference questions now submitted are telephoned in. Other requests come by mail, especially those pertaining to genealogy and local history, and

oftentimes those writing will end up visiting St. Joseph, which helps to promote tourism and economic development. Increasingly, staff are using the Internet to supplement library resources.

COLLECTION DEVELOPMENT

The library goal for collection development is to acquire and organize a wide variety of information and materials to meet informational and recreational needs.

Recently, a trend has been to streamline selection practices and procedures. Although all staff may have input, fewer individuals now have final authority for purchasing decisions. Those same individuals are now making decisions about several formats, both traditional print ones and non-print, including audiovisual materials and electronic resources.

Another consideration is that even though the cost for a particular item may be charged to the budget of one particular facility, and, in the beginning, that item may be housed there, because of intralibrary loan, it may be accessed by a library user from any one of the library's five locations.

Developing collections involves the removal of items when they no longer meet the library's selection criteria. "Weeding" continued throughout the system in 1996-1997, strongly influenced by a lack of space to house materials. Details of the staffs' progress in the weeding of collections at individual branches may be found in monthly reports prepared by the staff Administrative Council for the Board of Trustees.

State statutes, standards for public libraries, and bylaws for the Board of Trustees call for policies to be developed to govern all operations of the River Bluffs Regional Library. In the first half of the 1996-1997 year, administrative staff spent considerable time on developing revised guidelines for collection development. A particular challenge in revising such guidelines is how to integrate the growing importance of electronic resources. Another question which stimulates considerable debate is how much money to spend on traditional materials, such as books, versus new ones.

PERSONNEL, TRUSTEES, VOLUNTEERS, AND STAFF DEVELOPMENT

The library goal for personnel and staff development is to recruit, develop, train, and retain the most competent and appropriate personnel available to perform and support the services of the River Bluffs Regional Library.

Volunteers continued to play a major role in the provision of service. At the Belt and Washington Park Branches, they are particularly visible, especially during the Summer Reading Program.

The Friends of the River Bluffs Regional Library, especially its Board of Directors, along with the Board of Trustees of the River Bluffs Regional Library, composed of the Boards of Trustees of the St. Joseph Public Library and of the Rolling Hills Consolidated Library, play an immensely important part in the life of the River Bluffs Regional Library. They represent the citizens of Andrew and Buchanan Counties and provide direction for the library's future.

Recognizing volunteers is a crucial element of a successful volunteer program. Current library volunteers were given small tokens of appreciation during National Volunteer Week, which coincided with National Library Week and Literacy Action Week, in the spring of 1997.

An important event in the area of volunteer recognition in 1996-1997 was when Marjorie P. Miner was awarded a lifetime membership in the Friends of the River Bluffs Regional Library for her many years of outstanding service as a member and officer of library and Friends Boards and her general commitment to library service in the community for approximately 40 years.

Progress in improving public library services cannot occur without an ongoing commitment to continuing education for trustees and staff.

In early June of 1997 the Missouri State Library and the Trustees Council of the Missouri Library Association sponsored a conference for trustees at the Missouri State Information Center in Jefferson City, which local trustees attended. The library director also led a breakout session on selecting, hiring, and evaluating a library director.

Staff took advantage of many conferences of professional associations as well as workshops to further their professional development. Among them, the 1996 annual conference of the American Library Association provided an opportunity to meet with staff and trustees from public libraries throughout the United States as well as to attend programs and view exhibits. Programs covered such topics as the future of the Federal Depository program, outreach services, planning for service in the 21st century, building programs, and library security.

The 1996 annual conference of the Missouri Library Association included sessions on Internet training, marketing, electronic access to Federal documents, the evaluation of electronic resources, and issues surrounding networked services.

A joint meeting of the Library and Information Technology Association (LITA) and the Library Administration and Management Association (LAMA), divisions of the American Library Association, had workshops on library buildings and technological change; continuing education for library support staff; social equity and empowerment in the age of technology; information needs of professionals; serving remote patrons; children's services and the Internet; and adult lifelong learning performance measures.

Other subjects studied by staff during the year included what's new in children's literature; networking and the Internet; computer network setup, management, and troubleshooting; the role of an administrative assistant; authors and publishing; personnel management; dealing with difficult people; dealing with change, particularly that influenced by rapidly changing technology; and preserving local and regional history. In the area of customer service, staff again were benefited by ongoing workshops offered by the St. Joseph Convention and Visitors Bureau entitled "You Are the Difference."

The most important need for continuing education for all staff pertains to customer service. In late January of 1997, a handful of top administrative staff presented a full-day program on customer service to 43 other staff members. The program, CLASS, an acronym for "Customers Leaving Appreciated, Satisfied, and Sold," was developed by the Columbus Metropolitan Library in Columbus, Ohio. A trustee of the River Bluffs Regional Library, Leechia Jones, gave the opening remarks and warmed up the group with her humor. It was felt that the program was successful in reinforcing the idea that library staff need to offer the best customer service possible.

In other areas, giving staff short-term assignments in other branches continued both to further their development and give staff fresh ideas on library operations.

Staff training on the Internet was a top priority. The LSCA (Library Services and Construction Act)-funded training session for all staff was held at the new Leah H. Spratt Multi-Conference Building at Missouri Western State College in late March of 1997. Led by an instructor from Pennsylvania State University, the event included participants from other college, high school, and special libraries in the area.

The Missouri Public Library Directors Group continues to provide the director a source of continuing education opportunities and news, as well as a forum for discussion of important issues. The MPLDG meets twice yearly. At the meeting in June of 1997, the director attended sessions on telecommunications issues, particularly discounts for universal service, activities of the State Library, and human resources.

Rewriting job descriptions and updating the library's organization chart continued in an effort to improve services. As an important example, the job of the Washington Park Branch manager was expanded to include the oversight of the development of outreach collections and services. The outreach services manager reports to the head of public services and works closely with other members of the staff administrative council and the administrative assistants who report to the director. The outreach services manager also supervises and schedules the activities of the outreach assistant and of the deliveries assistant. Other functions include oversight of the maintenance and scheduling of the library's two vans and continued coordination of the Friends book sale.

The Employee Advisory Committee (EAC) continued to meet in an ongoing effort to improve staff communication and public service. The EAC's official charge is to improve employee morale by improving communications between staff and the Administrative Council; to ensure that employee problems are recognized and appropriately reviewed; to provide a mechanism for presenting staff opinion on issues affecting a group of employees; and to assist in the presentation of a written grievance by an individual staff member or group of staff members.

In the budgeting process for FY 1998, as part of an ongoing effort to address inequities in present salaries as well as the market, a salary scale was reintroduced which is expected to be revised on an annual basis.

ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICES

The library goal for administrative services is to attain and maintain the most efficient and effective utilization of human, financial, and physical resources of the River Bluffs Regional Library to carry out its mission, roles, and goals.

Again, the most important focus during the 1996-1997 year was follow-up on the latest draft of a master facilities plan. At a work session on September 19, 1996, the Board expressed its intent to adopt the "most desirable facility plan" at a later meeting.

At a special meeting of the Board on November 7, 1996, representatives of the St. Joseph Downtown Association expressed their concerns that suggested plans for the Downtown Library might hurt efforts to revitalize downtown St. Joseph. During this meeting, the library Board asked the St. Joseph Downtown Association to help in interpreting its plans to the community.

Moving forward, at its meeting on November 21, 1996, the library Board authorized the director, working with the Board Executive Committee and Professional Library Consultants, to begin taking steps to have one or more engineering firms conduct building analyses of the Downtown, Carnegie, and Washington Park Libraries, which would include further information about costs pertaining to the recommendations contained in the "most desirable facility plan." At this same meeting, authorization was given to take steps to have analyses conducted of potential sites for the relocation and expansion of the Belt Branch.

At the December, 1996 library Board business meeting, it was announced that sub-committees of the Executive Committee of the Board of Trustees related to long-range planning were being set up: a Sub-Committee on the Future of the Central Library/School District Building; a Sub-Committee on Structural Integrity, Environmental Concerns, ADA Compliance, and Future Expansions; and a Sub-Committee on Finance (Tax Levies, Grants, Trusts, Legislative Options, City and County Financing).

The first sub-committee to meet, which included citizen representation outside the library Board, was the one on the Future of the Central Library/School District Building. In early January of 1997 library Board members, sub-committee members, library staff, School Board members and School District staff met to discuss issues relating to the School District's plans for this facility. It was determined that the School District is not planning any major changes to this building. Another matter discussed was that of an updated formalized agreement between the School District and the library. The almost 100- year-old relationship between the School District and the library in joint occupancy of the building was also reviewed. In this meeting and later, School District representatives assured library representatives that it has no plans at this time to ask the library to vacate the building.

At this stage of the long-range planning process, public input continued to be an integral part. At a meeting of the Citizens' Advisory Committee to the Board of Trustees in late January, discussion centered around issues relating to the development of a master facilities plan. Topics included the progress of conducting building analyses for the Downtown, Carnegie, and Washington Park Libraries; site selection for the replacement of the eastside branch; the nature of collections to be housed in a renovated Downtown Library as opposed to a replacement of the current Belt Branch on the east side; the accessibility of all materials owned by the River Bluffs Regional Library; the intent of the "most desirable facility plan" regarding the smallest branches; the relative cost to maintain facilities under a new master facilities plan; what it means to be the "heart of the city;" the technological capabilities of the Downtown Library/School District building; circulation statistics and other output measures; whether or not the library Board had made any final decisions at that point; difficulties in presenting any kind of a proposal for an increase in taxes; and public involvement in the long-range planning process.

Library Board members present at this particular meeting were encouraged by the demonstration of interest in their long-range planning. However, they were also concerned about the circulation of misinformation about options currently being considered. Board members present assured attendees that no final decisions had been made, and the Board is simply trying to make the best decisions possible, using expertise and considerable input.

Key steps were made in the first few months of the 1997 calendar year toward having the building analyses conducted of three facilities. At the April, 1997 monthly business meeting, the library Board finalized a Procedure for the Selection of Professional Consulting Services. Also approved in March had been documents entitled Request for Statements of Qualifications for Architectural and Engineering Services and Request for Statements for Qualifications for Structural and Engineering Services, pertaining to developing a roster of qualified firms interested in performing any such professional services for the library and determining which firms would be interested in the building analyses project, respectively.

In another area important to library development, staff continued to participate in the drafting of the Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA) legislation, which was to succeed the Library Services and Construction Act (LSCA), which had greatly benefited libraries of all sizes in Missouri. New legislation was considered essential to dealing with technological advances in library services which would help to educate and promote economic development into the next century. As it turned out, the LSTA was added to a conference report on an omnibus appropriations bill funding several government agencies and containing many reauthorizations and other provisions, and the President signed it into law prior to the beginning of the federal FY 1997. During the last intense negotiations on LSTA, Congresswoman Pat Danner lobbied members of the House Economic and Educational Opportunities Committee and the Conference Committee on H.R.1617, who are credited with placing LSTA on the omnibus bill. During the annual conference of the Missouri Library Association in the fall of 1996, members of the MLA Legislative Committee considered Congresswoman Danner to have been a key player in the final push for this major piece of federal legislation.

Staff spent considerable time and energy in 1996-1997 in applying for LSCA grants. In the early spring of 1997, word was received that an LSCA Title I grant for automation equipment in the amount of \$100,000 had been awarded by the Missouri State Library to purchase the basic hardware needed to construct a network which would eventually provide direct public access to the Internet, CD-ROM databases, and access to the library's automated integrated system, Inlex. (For the previous two years the library had had limited Internet connections and 15 e-mail accounts for administrative staff provided by MOREnet [Missouri Research and Education Network] and the REAL [Remote Electronic Access for Libraries] project. This grant will allow the library to distribute more accounts to staff and provide direct public access to the Internet.)

A second grant from Title I, LSCA, for basic equipment was awarded in the amount of \$17,700. This would allow the purchase of two additional CD-ROM towers and a PC to run them. This was planned to be connected to the network, so that CD-ROM products could be accessed by patrons at all branches.

A third LSCA grant, for \$3,100 in Title III funds, was given for intensive staff training in the use of the Internet for improving public service. In the series of focus group discussions hosted by the library in the spring of 1996, it had become clear that members of the public in Andrew and Buchanan Counties were clamoring for a better understanding of the Internet and for more complete access to the information it can provide. Front-line library staff members were also reporting a continuous rise in public requests for information from the Internet.

In other activity related to administrative services in 1996-1997, the library Board authorized the electronic transfer of state aid into the library fund of the City of St.

Joseph and into the Rolling Hills checking account, adopted a new personnel manual, and set about getting a T-1 connection to satisfy projected requirements for the REAL project.

FACILITIES AND EQUIPMENT

Prior to the beginning of FY 1996-1997, the Public Library Standards Committee of the Public Library Council of the Missouri Library Association had asked the River Bluffs Regional Library to serve as a test site for the then current draft of Missouri Standards for Public Library Service. According to a letter from one of the members of the committee, this pilot project was designed to yield feedback on the "potential benefits of the standards to directors, staff, and trustees; the effectiveness of the document as a working tool; and an evaluation of the peer review process." The peer review process was to include a self-study using a questionnaire based on the standards and guidelines; the provision of copies of all policies and documents pertaining to the library; and a review of responses from a discussion of standards met, those not met and why, and plans for changes needed. The commitment was also to involve a site visit by members of the Standards Committee.

Parts of the written report prepared by members of the Standards Committee after a visit on August 26, 1996 dealt with physical facilities. The following are sections of the report dealing with this subject.

"Most of the River Bluffs Regional Library's problems are directly related to the extremely inadequate physical plant, and this was very evident from the tour of the library.

"The review team cannot emphasize enough that the problems with the River Bluffs Regional Library are almost completely tied to the woefully inadequate physical plant. The Library has been taking a proactive role in attempting to address this problem and has recently been working with Robert Rohlfs and Associates of Minneapolis to come up with a strategic plan to address building needs. Mr. Rohlfs is perhaps America's best-known library building consultant.

"Like many older cities, St. Joseph follows a pattern of having a downtown which greatly deteriorated as development moved to the city's suburban ring. Recently, however, there is evidence of a turn-around including antiques and other niche retailers as well as riverboat gaming. Because of this, any attempt of the library to abandon downtown would be seen as a bailout.

"Mr. Rohlfs's recommendations are that the Library balance this by redeveloping the downtown facility as a one-story facility for walk-in services as well as specialization in local history. A new facility of approximately 40,000 square feet would serve as the primary resource center. This would be located in the eastern part of the city, perhaps in the area of the Belt, or at the intersection of Mitchell and Woodbine.

"The improvement of the existing downtown library will comport nicely with St. Joseph's reputation for historic preservation.

"The board and administration's role will be to explain and promote this or a complementary vision to the entire community. They have made a good start. Last year an advisory committee to the Board of Trustees was formed. The official charge to the group, which is open to anybody, is to 'receive and discuss information regarding library Board activities and long-range planning; to offer opinion on issues with which the library Board is dealing; to help focus public attention on library services, facilities and needs; and to act as an advocate for the River Bluffs Regional Library.

"Rohlf's study of the physical plant needs of the Library were not made in a vacuum. He conducted numerous focus groups which received positive feedback from the community. This has allowed the Library to position itself for needed improvement. Some community players may not realize, however, the full breadth of modern library services available because the physical plant is so limiting."

In a different area entirely, the library's use of a pre-sort mail service was discontinued, and staff assumed all duties for preparing outgoing mail, using Pitney Bowes postage meters placed in the Belt and Central Libraries and taking mail to the Post Office.

A new van was acquired for outreach services (deposit sites and interbranch deliveries), freeing up another van to replace an old station wagon owned by the Rolling Hills Consolidated Library, which was sold for parts.

Much-needed electrical work in the reference services area of the Downtown Library was completed. New lighting was installed in the reference "closet," and additional outlets were installed to improve the handling of the electrical requirements of the computers and microform readers/printers.

In the fall of 1996 safety audits of library facilities were conducted by the St. Joseph Police Department. During the 1996-1997 year, the two largest branches were covered.

Immediately prior to the 1996 annual conference of the Missouri Library Association, the director toured five facilities of the St. Charles City-County Library district and four of the St. Louis Public Library, meeting with top administrators of both systems. Photographs taken of these buildings, along with some useful promotional materials and documents related to building projects, will help library Board and staff members in future planning.

Problems continued with the Downtown Library. A heavy snowfall in late October of 1996 resulted in part of what is called the Eugene Field Room sustaining

damage from water which apparently seeped through the roof, through the School District offices, and through the ceiling. Water ran down over two microfilm cabinets containing close to 1,000 rolls of microfilm. Approximately 50 boxes were damp afterwards, and water was found standing days later at the bottom of the lower cabinet, resulting in further rust damage. This worsened the problem with the wall in the northwest corner of the room, which is covered with a stucco-like compound, which is slowly peeling away from the plaster beneath. It also produced some new cracks high on the wall, along with stained paint and plaster damage to the corners and column in the corner. A large area of carpet was also stained by water and rust. This situation consumed a considerable amount of staff time in covering the microfilm cabinets with plastic and then removing every roll of film from cabinets. The room was rearranged to allow the relocation of the damaged cabinets, and the microfilm was replaced.

Following a coordinated effort to improve the look of the library's facilities, ashtrays, trash cans, and bike racks were installed at the Belt and Central Libraries, and a bike rack was installed at the Washington Park Branch.

SUPPORT SERVICES

Early in the 1996-1997 year, the support services staff's biggest project was completed, with the records of virtually all periodicals throughout the system being included in the database.

Authority control (the process involving a decision about the naming of a person, body, or topic and establishing access points and cross-references) cleanup continued throughout the year.

COMMUNITY RELATIONS

The Friends of the River Bluffs Regional Library, according to their bylaws, focus attention on library services, facilities, and needs; stimulate use of the library's resources and services; encourage gifts, bequests, and memorials; raise funds; act as an advocate for the library; and receive and administer funds donated for these purposes.

African-American storyteller Gladys Cogswell gave several performances at Trails West! 1996 in a program co-sponsored by the Friends of the River Bluffs Regional Library.

The Friends Free-for-All 1996 for the Friends Board of Directors, library staff, the library Board of Trustees, and other volunteers was held in early September at Ol'

MacDonald's Farm. The event provided another enjoyable time for socializing and recognizing the accomplishments of all who work to improve the library.

During the FY 1997 year, the Friends of the River Bluffs Regional Library sponsored two book sales at the East Hills Shopping Center. Donations to the sales are accepted year round, and the proceeds of the sales constitute the largest source of revenue to support the Friends' activities.

In the spring of 1997, the Friends Board of Directors approved start-up funds for a project involving working with the Welcome Wagon to provide toddler board books for the children of families who are new to the area.

In another effort to promote the library, September as National Library Card Sign-Up Month has resulted in many activities throughout the system. In the last two weeks in September of 1996, all branches gave away a River Bluffs Regional Library pencil and a bookmark to anyone obtaining a new library card.

Throughout the year the director continued to talk about the library's long-range planning process in programs given to community groups and in other organizational activities. Some of these included receptions for the Governor, a reception for the Lieutenant Governor, and meetings of the Buchanan County Democrats, the St. Joseph Women's Press Club, and the Downtown Rotary Club.

It is important for official representatives of the library, both Trustees and staff, to keep in touch with neighborhood organizations concerning the library Board's potential plans for service in particular areas of the library district. One opportunity to do so was in the late fall of 1996, when the director and the Carnegie Branch manager met with the Southside Progressive Association, whose audience included Board members representing St. Joseph's Southside.

Similarly, in an effort to promote Downtown St. Joseph in general and the Downtown Library in particular, staff from the Downtown Library hosted an open house on a Friday evening in early December of 1996 as part of the City Lights Festival sponsored by the St. Joseph Downtown Association. Children visiting that night could make a holiday craft, and they and other visitors could enjoy refreshments, ask questions about library materials and services, and check out materials. A special effort was made in the preparation of the holiday decorations of the public service areas.

At its quarterly meeting in mid-February of 1997, the director spoke to the St. Joseph Downtown Association on long-range planning for the library, particularly the Downtown Library.

Throughout the 1996-1997 fiscal year, staff continued to work on promotional materials, particularly the brochure about the use of a library card.

In the Northside of St. Joseph, at least part of the area's interest in a community center overlaps with the library's long-range planning for its own service in that neighborhood, particularly where it comes to meeting room space. In early May of 1997 the outreach services manager, who also serves as the manager of the Washington Park Branch, and the director attended a meeting called by the Northside Action Group to learn more about the concerns of community activists in that part of the city.

The personal interest of a staff member dovetailed with St. Joseph's commitment to historic preservation when in a photography contest sponsored by the Landmark Commission of the City of St. Joseph in the spring of 1997, the assistant director was presented with a George Heckel Award for a photograph which she took of the Downtown Library.

INTERAGENCY COOPERATION

The library goal for interagency cooperation is to cooperate with other libraries, political subdivisions, organizations, and programs to carry out the mission, roles, and goals of the River Bluffs Regional Library both within the library's service area and beyond. This goal was carried out in various ways during the FY 1997 year.

A major component of the library's services is cooperation with school districts and the various organizations which support them. This is done to encourage the process of learning: in particular, the development of a love of reading for its own sake, and the use of the public library, be it in connection with curricular goals or other interests or purposes.

The library has also been placing an increasing emphasis on creating new readers of all ages and encouraging new library users to sign up for cards. In a parallel effort, library staff worked with representatives of the St. Joseph School District in implementing its new curriculum. In another endeavor, Downtown Library staff worked with a class of fourth graders and their parents from the Neely School. This involved staff visits to the Neely School and visits to the Downtown Library by Neely students and their parents, to learn how to avail themselves of library services and resources, including electronic ones.

Youth services and other staff continued participation in the Wynken, Blynken, and Nod Committee, which is comprised of appointed public school teachers in grades one to three, school librarians, school administrators, and public librarians. The committee's purpose is to read, review, and select the twenty best titles from books published in the last two years. Elementary school children then read these in classrooms and vote on their favorites. The goal of the project is to foster an interest in reading some of the best current books for children.

At a meeting of the St. Joseph School District's Early Childhood Board, the youth services specialist discussed library materials, programs, and services for children at birth through grade three. She also outlined how the Summer Reading Program is organized and what its goals are for all children.

Some opportunities present themselves in the form of one-time events.

A public forum in late June of 1996 sponsored by Catholic Charities, which featured a representative from the U.S. Catholic Conference speaking about public policy issues, many of which affect the work of the institution of the public library, was attended by the director.

Staff continued to work with other "literacy providers."

The head of public services played a major role in planning a series of literacy workshops to be provided by the Missouri State Library in St. Joseph. The first one of four, on learning disabilities, attracted members of the community working in this area. Other topics covered volunteer management and the relationship of literacy to job development.

In an effort spearheaded by Missouri Western State College to fight illiteracy, the director chaired a committee which worked on the reactivation of the St. Joseph Area Literacy Coalition and the hosting of a Literacy Action Week in April of 1997. During Literacy Action Week, celebrated at the same time as National Volunteer Week and National Library Week, three members of the staff executive team represented the River Bluffs Regional Library in the first annual St. Joseph Spelling Bee for Literacy. From a field of 15 teams, they made it to the final rounds, graciously allowing the office of the President of Missouri Western State College to win in an unparalleled gesture of inter-institutional diplomacy.

Contributing to the "health" of the River Bluffs Regional Library district, however that is defined, remained important in 1996-1997. A bibliography on the subject of nutrition was compiled for the Northwest Missouri Dietetic Association, which was distributed to clients of this group as well as customers at all library locations.

Library staff manned a booth at the Third Annual Healthy Communities Regional Summit held at the St. Joseph Civic Arena in October of 1996. Prior to that time, the library had demonstrated its commitment to building healthier communities by purchasing consumer health materials with an LSCA grant. In connection with this, much time was spent in discussion with the patient education coordinator of the Heartland Health System to help library staff determine topics and formats needed by the public. Interest from the Toothaker bequest, given in the 1950s, continues to be used for the purchase of materials on health as well.

The Runcie Club is a local society whose purpose is to educate its members on the arts, literature, and world affairs. It has been a longtime supporter of the library, and in late January of 1997, the director, along with representatives of other recipients of Runcie funds, gave an overview of how the library has spent Runcie donations.

Changes in and demands on contemporary families influence how the River Bluffs Regional Library provides service. The youth services specialist attended a meeting of the Dads & Kids group of the St. Joseph Head Start at the EOC (Economic Opportunity Cooperation) office, telling the "dads" about library materials and services and the importance of reading to children.

Staff continued to work with programs of the St. Joseph Youth Alliance. FACES is a program sponsored by the Cultural Diversity Committee of the St. Joseph Youth Alliance. Its purpose is to expose children in the community to the cultures of many different countries through hands-on activities. The River Bluffs Regional Library contributed the "passport stamps" which were used at a FACES Fair at the East Hills Shopping Center.

Since the development and continuing education of staff is so important, and the University of Missouri-Columbia has been a major grantor of the graduate degrees in library science of staff, the administration continued to be involved in meetings and discussions about the future of the library school.

The staff of local political subdivisions often provide the most helpful guidance and advice about challenges the River Bluffs Regional Library faces. From the staff of the City of St. Joseph, the new City Manager, the Director of Public Works, and the Transportation Planner assisted the library director in making arrangements for the building analyses to be conducted of the Downtown, Washington Park, and Carnegie Libraries.

SOME NUMBERS

<u>INCOME</u>	<u>FY 1996-1997</u>
Local tax income	\$ 1,947,972
State aid	41,076
Federal grant	49,560
Other	<u>172,980</u>
TOTAL	\$ 2,211,588*
 <u>EXPENDITURES</u>	
Personnel	\$ 1,282,399
Collection	318,671
Operations	<u>463,725</u>
TOTAL	\$ 2,064,795*

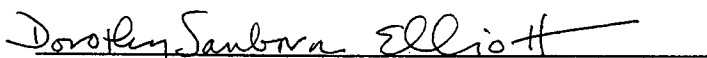
*Pre-audited figures submitted to the Missouri State Library at the end of the fiscal year. For audits of the River Bluffs Regional Library, the St. Joseph Public Library, and the Rolling Hills Consolidated Library, please contact the office of the director.

Population served:	97,715
Registered borrowers:	45,652
Total library holdings:	444,866
Output measures: (annualized)	
Annual number of library visits	342,732
Annual number of reference transactions	30,992
Annual children's program attendance	14,785

THE FUTURE

The key elements of continued success in the library's long-range planning process were recognized by the Public Library Standards Committee of the Public Library Council of the Missouri Library Association: an interested and involved Board of Trustees, other active volunteers, a great staff, and a community willing to articulate its needs for modern public library service.

With the continued commitment of all these parties, a bright future is attainable by the River Bluffs Regional Library.


Dorothy Sanborn Elliott
Director
St. Joseph, Missouri

Staff Administrative Council
Board of Trustees