Annual Report to the Town of Cortland 2016

Cortland Library spent the fiscal year between May 1, 2015 and April 30, 2016 providing many services to the Cortland community.

Our library becomes more of a community center each year. People rely on our Public Internet computers to check their email, Facebook page, fill out job applications, file taxes, check bank accounts and print out airline boarding passes, to name of few.

Monday Crochet class is popular with both adults and some children. We counted 265 adults and 89 children attending the 40 weekly sessions. Our certified crochet instructor is paid only $25 per week; a significant bargain!

Neighborhood House, from Sycamore, began sending volunteers to tutor students this past winter. Although off to a slow start, they will return in the fall and we hope to encourage more families to take advantage of this free service. Library staff and Neighborhood House volunteers agree this type of program has to be offered for years before it is well utilized. We are all happy to give it time to "catch on".

Poke'Club is now being run with cooperation from "The Gaming Goat" shop in DeKalb. The owner is paying his staff member to conduct our program, and the kids are having a great time! Two hundred seventy six kids attended our 48 sessions.

May Day baskets distributed to senior citizens is now a "tradition" at the library. Various age groups make the baskets during their weekly craft session, and the older kids help deliver this old fashioned custom.

December 2015 brought a caroling evening! The families who participated, agreed over hot chocolate, that caroling with the library needs to be an annual event. Neighbors and seniors serenaded thanked us for this old fashioned musical treat.

Every spring someone comes into the library and asks if we have a Summer Reading program! We do! We have planned and presented Summer Reading every year since 1984.

Summer Reading programs nationwide are proven to help school aged children NOT fall prey to "Summer Slide" (the loss of over 3-6 months of reading ability discovered in children who do not read over long summer vacations).

During Summer 2015 we also began "1,000 Books before Kindergarten"; a program to encourage parents to read to infants and toddlers in order to prepare them for future schooling. Reading to little ones furthers their language development and it the BEST thing parent can do to ensure school success. We provide library books, encouragement and small incentives.

Literacy is library business. We have always provided early childhood and elementary literacy assistance. Our summer program, "Lunch & Listen" is a thinly disguised reading fluency lesson.

Now, we provide computer literacy "lessons" as we help patrons using our computers. Adults and children both ask for help on a daily basis. We try to show patrons how to achieve their computing goals, at the teachable moment. This absorbs an increasing amount of staff time.

Technology assistance is also given by library staff to allow patrons to use their own devices to download library purchased e-books and e-audiobooks. Heather is expert at teaching how to use various devices, like IPADs, Kindles, Nooks, etc. After Christmas, she is busy showing people how to use their new "presents" from their tech savvy families. Libraries nationwide admit to this phenomenon.

As the role of public library changes, Cortland Library staff keep up with trends by attending training sessions, reading journals and informal staff discussion at our circulation desk. The expansion and remodeling at DeKalb Public Library has brought many a policy and philosophical discussion to the forefront; often initiated by our patrons.

During the 2 months DeKalb Library was closed for their remodeling, we experienced a doubling of their patrons using our facility. Reciprocal borrowing checkouts ran over 1,500 each month. Most months, visits from out of town patrons account for 10% of our checkouts. Families comment that they prefer our child friendly atmosphere. We benefit from instances of rude treatment dished out to people by staff at larger libraries. Our talkative friendly staff is a huge asset. Our noisy friendly library is both our best feature, and for some people, our worst. Cortland cardholders (our taxpayers) who need or prefer larger libraries are free to use neighboring public libraries.

Since we are all on the Prairie-Cat checkout system, taking your card to neighboring libraries is easy! Returns can always be brought to Cortland Library for immediate check-in. The Prairie-Cat system allows cardholders to place their own requests (holds) and pay their library fines on-line. Cortland Library is blessed with 5 day delivery of inter-library loan items. Most small town libraries receive delivery only twice a week.

We all know only our own library. Because of that, I have included some private Prairie-Cat statistics about neighboring libraries. Town and Library Board trustees are discreet. However, looking at these statistics helps understand how frugal and efficient Cortland staff really are! Although it is an oversimplification to calculate cost per checkout by dividing tax income by number of checkouts, the figure is valid. Modern libraries do so much more than checkout books, but circulation figures have long been the standard of comparison.
No matter how you look at these figures, Cortland Library staff are doing a fantastic job!

Next fiscal year the library will levy for $230,780. This number represents the maximum levy without incurring a “black box” penalty under the “tax cap”. It is expensive to be available for the public for 3, 200 hours per year.