



A World of Knowledge

**MAIN LIBRARY
CATAWBA COUNTY LIBRARY SYSTEM
115 West C Street
Newton, NC 28658**

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County libraries continue busy streak

NEWTON—Year-end library statistics have confirmed what librarians already know: lean times mean brisk business.

Local residents checked out more library materials, visited the library more often and attended more programs than they have in years. Library Director Karen Foss said that overall circulation of library materials was up 5 percent systemwide for the fiscal year which ended June 30.

Meanwhile, door counts at each of the seven locations showed a 10 percent increase over the past 12 months. There were 458,019 visits made to the county's seven library facilities. The library is headquartered at Newton and has branches in Conover, Claremont, Maiden, St. Stephens, Sherrills Ford and Southwest (Mountain View).

"Families short on money appreciate the free services we offer," Foss said. Besides loaning audio books, DVDs and print materials, the county system offers free internet access, homework help, research assistance, computer classes and programs for all ages.

Print circulation was way up. Young adult and children's fiction was up 17 percent across the system. Overall print circulation among children and teens was up 11 percent in the county, including both fiction and non-fiction titles.

A downturn in the economy meant greater response to Summer Reading. More families stayed home and relied on the library to keep their children busy. The accompanying programs held at the library were attended by 2,136 children through June 30, up nearly 15 percent from that point a year ago.

"We were pleased to see the overall figures," said Richard Griffin, Youth Services librarian. Griffin, who coordinated this year's Summer Reading program for the county, said that more programs were offered, "and the public has supported it."

Youngsters weren't the only ones cracking the books. Adult library patrons read 6 percent more than before the economic downturn. Readers at Main preferred memoirs and other non-fiction books while those at the branches preferred novels and short stories.

But the uptick in checkouts didn't mean more video time. DVD circulation was down three percent. A change in loan periods from three to seven days may have contributed.

Audio book usage, meanwhile, was up about 5 percent, a change due in part to technology allowing books to be downloaded from the library website.

Patrons who cannot afford a home computer and/or internet service have turned to the library for internet access. Computer use increased by an amazing 28 percent. The library staff upped its offerings of classes covering such relevant topics as how to write a resume and how to search for a job.

Foss said, "We're here to serve the public and our customers appreciate it. There are few times when computer labs aren't busy."

Catawba County Library System has 65 public service computers. Free wireless internet service is also available at each location.

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