

THE MELROSE BRANCH IS BACK

AUTHOR: JESS A. MUNOZ



Photo by Jess A. Munoz

Melrose Library had its grand re-opening celebration on June 21, 2010. Although we all agreed that 1:00pm on a Wednesday was a rather odd time to have a re-opening, we have more than 50 people come out in support of this wonderful neighborhood treasure. The attendees included local activists, press, city officials and families excited to see the doors to this library open once more.

The Melrose Library was closed for 3 months while it underwent some very much needed repairs to its windows. The sills and frames themselves had rotted away and no longer were properly functioning. In fact, according to Melrose Branch manager Sandra Toscana, some of the windows were not even securely sitting in their frames, and could have fallen out at any moment. Having these dangerous windows replaced and functioning once again has potentially saved the city significant money in damages, had the windows fallen on a library patron.

What's great about these windows functioning again, is the ability to have them open with air circulating throughout the library during the summer months. In the past when the Melrose branch got too hot inside, the city was forced to shut the library down for the day, which would mean one less day the local community would have access to the its library. The ability of this branch to stay open during the hot summer afternoons is a godsend to the local community which includes a sizable population of families due to the 3 public schools in the vicinity.

After admiring the restoration of the windows we headed downstairs to the large meeting room which adjoins the Melrose Garden and sat down to wait for the festivities to begin.

Vice Mayor Jean Quan was on site for the celebration, and provided a celebratory cake for all too share. Jean Quan, being a longtime advocate of Oakland's Public libraries, spoke about the spirit of hope and community that neighborhood treasures like the Melrose Library foster. She reminded all in attendance that even in tough economic times, we must stand steadfast in our support of these vital community services.



Photo by Jess A. Munoz

After Vice Mayor Quan spoke, Manager Sandra Toscana and Supervising Librarian, Jane Lopez happily introduced Melrose's new full-time children's librarian!!! The crowd erupted with applause, happy to hear that the long time vacant position of Children's librarian has finally been filled by Adina Leitner. As some of you may know, the Melrose library has been without a full time children's librarian for the past 3 years. As a community, we would all like to welcome Adina Leitner to her new position. She may be new, but in the eyes of the neighborhood she is already family.



Photo by Jess A. Munoz

This summer, make sure to include the Melrose library in your family plans. There will be fun events going on for the whole season. Also don't forget to check out a few books, magazines and DVD's. Remember the branches funding is directly connected to the number of people who use this branch, and the materials being checked in/out.

For more information about the branch, or its friends group, please checkout:

www.friendsofmelroslibrary.org

There you can find more information about what you can do to help this local community library grow, the wonderful programs put on by the branch, and what the library can do for you.

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

Melrose Grand Reopening	1
Tribute to the Asian Branch	2
Measure Q and You	3
Dimond: Picnic in the Park	
Montclair Friends	4
Dimond Contd.	
Giving	5
Library Internet Access	
Friends of the Tool Library	
FOPL on Facebook/Twitter	
Membership Form	6

A TRIBUTE TO THE ASIAN BRANCH STAFF

Author: Sophie Fynland Souroujon

Early last February, I went to 9th Street in Oakland to purchase some red envelopes (to celebrate the Chinese Year of the Tiger) and then walked to the Asian Branch Library to find a beehive of activity. Among the crowd were four or five women who were showing a group of children how to make Chinese lanterns using red envelopes. Some were octagonal lanterns while others were two-tiered and all had a red string to hang the lantern and a red and gold-colored tassel below.

I turned to one of the women and asked, "Would that be OK if I made one too?" She smiled and said, "Sure. Choose 12 envelopes and I'll show you how to staple them together." Lisa Fung was so amazingly patient and kind that I asked if I could interview her for FOPL's Off the Shelf newsletter. Lisa consented and then introduced me to Anita Yan, who had organized the workshop. Anita agreed to an interview as well.

Anita is a full-time Library Assistant at the Asian Library Branch. Anita's first contact with the Oakland Public Library was as a teenager, soon after her arrival with her family from Hong Kong, when Anita's mother, herself an avid reader, encouraged Anita to go. Anita became a patron of the "old" Asian Branch Library, located a few blocks away from the current location at 388 9th Street, and eventually was hired as a Library Aide at that same branch. She became a Library Assistant in 1997

Anita enjoys her job, especially knowing that she can help library patrons, the majority of whom do not speak English and are new immigrants and/or

seniors. Anita can empathize with those who are in a new country and have questions about public transportation, schools and the like.

A few years ago, before the Chinese New Year, Anita's three children, who attend Sunday Chinese School, brought home a creative project - the Lantern Making out of Red Envelopes. Anita was inspired by what she saw and created several lanterns for the Circulation and Information Desk at the entrance to the Asian Branch Library. Several library patrons asked Anita, who usually sits at the Information Desk, if she would teach them how to create the lanterns.

Vera Yip, Acting Manager of the Asian Library Branch, and Anita discussed the idea of a workshop, along with Vicky Chen, Teen Librarian. Vicky was instrumental in receiving a generous grant from the Wells Fargo Foundation to pay for 800 red envelopes and other lantern making supplies. And thus the Lantern Making Workshop was born, with volunteer help and much energy and enthusiasm. Most of the nearly 75 participants were 6-12 year old children, as well as some teenagers, parents, grandparents, and curious observers like me.

Anita has always had an interest in crafts including jewelry, knitting and crochet, which she shares with her young daughter. Working in a library gives Anita a chance to discover new books on crafts and get new ideas. She feels fortunate to be part of a strong working team at the Library and sees the Asian Branch Library as a community



Photo Courtesy of OPL

center that provides service beyond books - there is a sense of family and connection. All staff members at the Asian Branch Library are required to be fluent in English and at least one Asian language.

Anita calls this library "the heart of Asia town."

Lisa Fung is Library Assistant at Oakland Main Library's Children Room. She works at the Desk at the Children's Room and answers questions and supplies information. Some of her art work (a green large dragon, for example) is exhibited there. Lisa started working at this location right after the 1989 Loma Prieta earthquake. Before that, she had worked part-time at the "old" Asian Library, as well as every other branch except Montclair and the Bookmobile. Lisa knows many staff members at the Asian Branch because staff is shared as needed, between the Main Library and the Asian Branch.

Knowing that Lisa conducts the arts and crafts program at the Children's Room at Main, Anita had asked her if she would be willing to volunteer at the Lantern Making Workshop. Lisa agreed and took a vacation day to join Anita and other volunteers and fellow-staffers.

As the Volunteer Supervisor of the Children's Room, Lisa

speaks highly of the dedication of the teenagers who come to help with the Summer Reading Program. Quite a few of the many teenagers now volunteering were once young library patrons themselves. Lisa remembers them all, having been involved here since 1994. Some help as part of their school community service while others are thinking about their college applications.

At the end of each year, the Children's Room presents its volunteers a Thank You Certificate of Appreciation with their name on it, "In recognition of volunteer service," designed by Lisa's friend, comic book artist Chris Giaruso (Mini Marvels)

Lisa is "Oakland, through and through." She was born in Oakland, attended Lincoln Elementary School, Edna Brewer Middle School (formerly known as McChesney), and Oakland High School. Lisa's parents, grandparents, and one set of great grandparents are from the Bay Area, some moving to Oakland after the 1906 San Francisco earthquake.

She also makes jewelry and plans to have a workshop this summer for people of all ages. She also paints, makes costumes, designs dragons made of various materials.

To Anita Yan and Lisa Fung, my sincere appreciation.

MEASURE Q AND YOU

Author: Gene Tom, OPL CFO

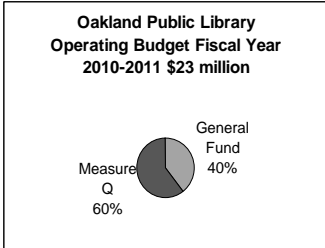
Due to the tireless efforts of a broad coalition of dedicated supporters from the Oakland community and library staff volunteering their own time after hours, the electorate of Oakland, by more than a two-thirds majority, approved a parcel tax in June of 1994 for the sole purpose of providing a dedicated funding source to retain and enhance library services in Oakland. The Library Services Retention and Enhancement Act of 1994 (Measure O) levied a parcel tax on both residential and non-residential parcels for 15 years beginning on December 1, 1994 with a sunset provision in 2009. However, as more and more burden for retaining library services were shifted to Measure O, by Fiscal Year 2001-02 the annual revenues from Measure O became insufficient to maintain the library services that were dependent upon it. With severe library cuts and closures on the horizon, the City Council voted to put before the electorate a proposal to extend and increase the parcel tax.

On March 2, 2004, for the second time in less than 10 years, and again, due to incredible hard work from the community, the electorate of Oakland overwhelmingly approved The Library Services Retention and Enhancement Act of 1994, as Amended in 2004 (Measure Q), to both extended and increase the tax. To ensure that Measure Q revenues did not become the Library's sole funding source in the future, a key provision was included in the measure:

"For any year during which this tax is in effect, the City Council may collect this tax only if the General Fund appropriation for Library services is maintained at a level that is no lower than the General Fund appropriation for fiscal year 2000-01. The General Fund appropriation for Library services for fiscal year 2000-01 was \$9,059,989."

This key provision of Measure Q has thus far limited the extent of cuts the library has had to bear. More importantly however, anticipating the continued weak economy, the Library implemented a strategic reduction in branch Library service by one day per week and a selective hiring freeze in order to develop a reserve that would help limit the continued General Fund cuts that the Library anticipated. Although offsetting the Library's General Fund reductions with Measure Q reserves has limited the effects of the cuts thus far, it is not sustainable should the economy not improve.

For Fiscal Year 2010-11, which began on July 1, 2010, cuts to Library programs was limited to the Literacy program, which City Council had reduced by one staff member in November 2009. Excluding grants and donations, the Library's Fiscal Year 2010-11 Total Operating budget is \$23,114,290, of which 40% (\$9,148,100) is from the City's General Fund, and 60% (\$13,966,190) from Measure Q tax revenue.



DIMOND FRIENDS CELEBRATE PICNIC IN THE PARK

Author: Friends of Dimond

A blanket on the grass under a shady tree with books and a few stuffed animals provides a great break for the kids' fun in Dimond Park. A bright blue Frisbee with Friends of Dimond Library logo on it is a special remembrance of playing in the park. A juggler walks by on stilts near the circus tent while crowds are feasting on BBQ chicken and ribs. Volunteers from Friends of Dimond Library host a table in Dimond Park and hand out lots of flyers about local library programs and activities. The Dimond Friends' group enjoys being part of the action and sharing ideas with the community at the yearly Picnic in the Park. Community outreach is one of the most important goals for the Dimond Friends' group. On Sunday, July 18th the group hosted a table at the annual Picnic in the Park in Dimond Park. We handed out some new bright blue Frisbees with our name and a library book

tree logo on it. Frisbees were seen flying through the air all over the park. They are a great outreach gift. Lots of people come by the Friend's table to thank us for having such a strong branch library and helping to be such an important part of the community. We encourage family participation in the wide variety of library programs. The Tuesday family nights at Dimond Library are especially popular along with the summer reading program, *Make a Splash*. Families have been attending these Family Night programs for 17 years. The Friends of the Dimond Library always sponsor a performer or two for these popular Tuesday night programs at 7:00 PM.

In October the Dimond District is again celebrating its third annual Oaktobfest on October 9th. Friends of Dimond

CONTD. ON P. 5



Photo Courtesy of Dimond Friends

THE MONTCLAIR FRIENDS

Author: Jeni Paltiel, Coordinator, FOML

In 2008, a Montclair resident and library patron, Lida Broadhursts, saw that the used books for sale at the Montclair branch library needed to be better managed. As word got out about her project, her simple goal of organizing and sorting donated books quickly grew into the Friends of Montclair Library (FOML).

Selling used books continues to be one of FOML's key activities. Since the branch is so small, volunteers curate a selection of books for sale in the library and periodically save up donations for popular one-day book sales. Money raised at these sales has enabled FOML to fund items that make the branch more useful to patrons, from unglamorous but much-needed things like a changing table and modern book shelves to colorful children's story time materials. The Friends are currently working with city council member Jean Quan to get funding for an additional book drop outside the library, as the current book drops often fill up to overflowing during long weekends.

In addition to fundraising, FOML sees library advocacy as another important task. The

group has been working to make and use community connections to benefit the library, from connecting with other Friends groups to partnering with local schools and organizations to using online resources like its blog, social media and email newsletters to interface with the community.

As FOML becomes more established, they hope to coordinate and fund more programming for the branch. The storybook-style Montclair branch celebrated its 80th anniversary this year, and the Friends organized a month-long celebration in May featuring events that highlighted the history of the library, the neighborhood and Oakland.

For the history events, FOML was able to utilize many resources from within the library system. Speakers included Oakland Public Library librarians and local historians Steve Lavoie and Kathleen DiGianni.

One of FOML's future goals is to provide more programming for children and teens at the branch. Working with the Hillside Gardeners of Montclair, who also help maintain



and beautify the library grounds, FOML offered a successful youth knitting workshop this spring and hopes to continue with more activities in the fall.

Montclair is an involved, vibrant community that has been very supportive of the Friends group and the branch. FOML is looking forward to continuing to help improve the library and what it offers to Montclair. The Friends welcome donations of trade paperbacks, new best sellers and regular paperbacks in good condition.

If you're interested in volunteering or learning more about the Friends of Montclair Library, please visit:

montclairlibrary.wordpress.com

DIMOND CONTD.

Library again plan to have a table with volunteers for community outreach at this popular celebration. We plan to underwrite a local musical group for the family entertainment stage and perhaps repeat our popular library scavenger hunt for kids. Dimond Library and its Friends' group takes community outreach seriously! Come and join us at one of these community events!



GIVING

FOPL is grateful for donations recognizing special people and events. Listed below are gifts for general support received from April to July 2010:

In memory of **Robert Potter** from Sally Pincus


In honor of

Taylor Dye from Susan Keefe Kabir and Anonymous


Evelyn Benas' birthday from Sophie and Ruthie Souroujon

And thank you to our members who designate the Friends for a matching gift from their employer:

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Visit us online @
www.FOPL.ORG



FRIENDS OF THE TOOL LENDING LIBRARY - Now Recruiting Members -

The Friends of the Tool Lending Library will be holding meetings at the Temescal Library to discuss building and strengthening our community.

The goals of the group are:

- Education:** holding classes to improve the ability of our patrons to use the tools they borrow
- Outreach:** understanding the needs of our patrons and increasing the membership of the Friends
- Advocacy:** explaining the purpose and function of the TLL
- Fund Raising:** raising money for projects as agreed with patrons and the TLL staff

To achieve these goals, we will coordinate public classes in basic electrical work, carpentry and other tool use as directed by the TLL staff. For example, the TLL has seismic retrofit kits that most of our patrons don't know how to use.

We want to develop checklists of tools needed for tasks typically undertaken by the patrons. We will encourage mutual support relationships with other community organizations like Greening Oakland Homes. We plan to develop a web presence.

Please join us, and help to build a strong community for tool users. For more information:

please call (510)238-5049 or email toollibrary@branchfriends.org

STUDY SHOWS: OAKLAND PUBLIC LIBRARY IS A COMMUNITY HUB FOR INTERNET ACCESS

Representatives of FOPL were among 88 Oakland library users, staff and community members interviewed by researchers from the University of Washington about computer use in libraries. The interviews were conducted as part of the first large-scale study to document the ways library patrons use computers and Internet access, why they use it, and how it affects their lives.

According to the study, nearly one third of Americans, age 14 or older—roughly 77 million people—used a public library computer or wireless network to access the internet in the last year. People of all ages and income levels use computers and Internet access at libraries. The study identifies four critical areas for the use of library technology: employment, education, health, and making community connections.

The Oakland Public Library began offering public access computers in 1995 and now has approximately 200 public internet access computers and a wireless network that patrons with their own laptops can use to access the Internet. The Oakland Public Library also provides computer basics classes at two branches. Last year patrons logged over 400,000 sessions at the library's computers.

The University of Washington report, *Opportunity for All: How the American Public Benefits from Internet Access at U.S. Libraries*, March 2010, funded by an Institute for Museum and Library Services grant and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, contains quotes from patrons, staff and others which illustrate the value the public places on the free technology services available at the OPL.

Education: A principal at an Oakland high school had this to say about the way the local library addressed his student's needs: "100 percent of our graduates are accepted to college... We work with largely disadvantaged and at-risk youth, and they don't have computers at home, so they come here to the library. They [the students] get support here. The librarians help them attain the online and print materials they need."

Employment: A computer user in the Oakland Public Library system summed it up this way: "You know how the economy is right now. But if you're just out there filling out applications and walking around, you get so tired and you give up... But in the library, you can do what would take you a week to do in one day."

An Executive Summary and the full report are available online at:

<http://cis.washington.edu/usimpact/projects/us-public-library-study/>

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If your membership has expired,
PLEASE RENEW NOW!

More ways to support the Friends...

- Share this newsletter. Ask a friend to join a growing organization - 800 strong - dedicated to supporting the Oakland Public Library.
- Donate your gently-used books and DVDs to the Bookmark Bookstore. Call (510)444-0473 for more information.
- Do you have a few hours per month? Visit www.fopl.org or call (510)444-0473 to learn more about volunteering.
- Donate your Vehicle. Charity Connection, a service of Volunteers of America, will sell your vehicle, and contribute a portion of the proceeds to FOPL. Call (800)559-5458 and be sure to mention that your tax-deductible gift is for the Friends.

Join Us

Yes, I want to show my support for the Friends of the Oakland Public Library!

Enclosed is my check payable to FOPL for \$ _____

____ New (1 year membership) ____ Renewal (1 year membership)

____ Donation (\$ _____ in addition to my membership dues)

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