

DEBENHAM RESOURCE CENTRE

End of year report 2010-11

Debenham Resource Centre is one of 44 Suffolk Libraries. It has been in operation since 2003. The library serves the village of Debenham together with several outlying villages in mid-Suffolk.

Since it opened, the library has become a popular and valued service in the village. This statement is supported by the statistics and qualitative judgements which have been recorded, as follows:

1. PLUS SURVEY

A recent government survey of national libraries, called the PLUS survey 2010, shows the following about Debenham Resource Centre:

- 99% of customers think that the standard of customer care in this library is either good or very good.
- 68% of customers come to borrow books, and 38% come for other reasons, including using the computer and information requests.
- Taking everything into account (opening hours, quality and scope of provision, customer care etc) 87% consider that our library is either very good or good, 12% consider it adequate. Nobody thinks it is poor or very poor.

The full report is 46 pages long, please ask if you would like a full copy.

2. VISITOR STATISTICS

Number of visitors to Debenham Resource Centre

2002-2003 – 9,412

2007-2008 – 14,455

2008-2009 – 15,138 (magic eye count: 25,000)

2009-2010 – 20, 418

Visitor numbers have increased dramatically in the last four years.

3. ISSUES STATISTICS

Items (books, CDs, DVDs, spoken word etc) issued at Debenham Resource Centre

More and more people borrow from Debenham. This increase bucks the national trend for libraries. In particular, in the last three years, we have been most successful.

2008-9 36% increase in the number of items borrowed

2009-10 8% increase in the number of items borrowed

2009-10 4% increase in number of items borrowed

4. Income generated

2009-10 £5, 027.99

2010-11 £4, 134

5. INFORMATION PROVISION

Part of a library's core work is the provision of accurate, clear information to customers. Therefore, we monitor the amount and quality of information provision at this library and others.

- in 2008-9 we had 329 enquiries
- in 2009-10 we had 366 enquiries

Our score for unobtrusive testing of the quality of our information provision is 100%.

6. STAFFING

Staffing at the library is one of the big pluses for the village. Since 2006, we have had three staff positions, two weekend staff and a manager. We've been able to employ 18 year-olds, offer them training, experience in a people-focussed environment, and real responsibility as the library is single staffed. Of these young staff, one is just completing her Cambridge degree, another has completed a degree at Anglia Ruskin, and is still working for us one Saturday in four, another has gone on to work for the Princes Trust, and another went on to manage a bigger library. At the same time, we are privileged to have people with deep seated community links, and tremendous experience working in rural communities as committed relief staff, as well as the invaluable support of volunteers.

We are particularly grateful to our wonderful volunteers who work hard to help us extend our services, and who never fail to offer to help when they can with what they can.

7. INVOLVEMENT WITH THE COMMUNITY

- **Arts and Literature Festival**

We are very active working with the committee, and ran several events in 2009 and 2010 to support the festival. We also help with promotion, printing and photocopying, we advertise the festival to all the library users, and order in books by authors who come along to the festival.

We're involved in 2011, working with the volunteers on the arts festival committee. We've organised a children's author to visit the primary school, and we'll be having local performance artists Shirley Bignall and Penny Parkes at the library on the Saturday morning to entertain us with their own 'take' on Dr Seuss. We'll be selling books by all the visiting authors in the run up to the festival, and we're open to requests for support by the committee: we'll help whatever way we can, although funding has been withdrawn for this area of work for the time being.

Events we organised this year:

For teenagers: An 'urban day' featuring free running, a graffiti workshop, and a DJ (over 60 teenagers attended, as well as parents and other, generally interested villagers).

For toddlers: A storytime session with local performance artist Shirley Bignell (a group of 15 parents and toddlers took part).

For everyone: A community read on the subject of knife crime, featuring an author visit from Bernadine Evaristo. We handed out 500 books to people of every age, shape and size, and over 60 people attended her talk, and asked lively questions, in the Parish Church on an England World Cup football match night!

- **Christmas Fair**

Each year, we open specially on a Friday evening for the event and work with the local traders in the run up to the event. We always run a special event for our customers. Last year, we ran a secondhand book sale as well as an extremely well received Santa's Grotto. Over 50 children visited Santa and we had over 350 visitors on the

night. We're doing the same this year (December 3). We invited Suffolk Wildlife Trust to join in last year, and they ran a children's craft activity outside, under the tree in the car park.

- **Debenham Project**

We've been working with the Debenham Project from its inception. We help carers with information and books, and we make suggestions about how people can better access the library service to suit their needs. We attend the carers' club, and we are developing a collection of books especially for carers and for people with dementia.

Museum visit: working with the Suffolk Museums service, we organised a trip for carers and people with dementia to the Mid Suffolk Railway museum in Wetheringsett. Transport was laid on, so that people could easily get to the museum, and we had a memorable afternoon of train reminiscences, singing, dancing puppets, cups of tea, sandwiches and cakes.

East Anglian Film Archive DVDs: we supplied DVDs, in co-operation with the Suffolk Record Office, for an afternoon of reminiscence, using film.

Exhibition plans: our next joint project will involve helping to put together an exhibition of the work of one of the project's carers.

- **Youth Club**

We involved the youth club with the community read this year, gave them free books, and held a discussion about the topic of knife crime.

- **Children's Centre**

We run a weekly Bookstart nursery rhyme session at the Children's Centre which is attended by over 20 families.

- **Leap centre**

We work with the Leap centre, referring people to the courses they run.

- **Primary School**

We're offering an after school library club, working with the school's literature co-ordinator who brings the children to the library to choose their books.

- **High School**

We provided the SEN department with books for the community read.

Work experience placements are organised for high school pupils every year.

- **Leisure Centre**

We're working together on publicising both services.

LIBRARY-BASED ACTIVITIES FOR THE COMMUNITY

- **Reading Groups**

We support and help six reading groups in the village. We help them to set up, find members, organise their books and co-ordinate the pick-ups for the members.

- **For Children**

Reading Challenge

Each summer, we run the National Reading Challenge for children. We challenge them to read six books, and they come along in the school holidays to choose their books with their parents. We provide encouragement, stickers, posters, prizes etc. At the end of the challenge we organise a presentation of medals and certificates. Councillor Alcock presents the medals. We visit local primary schools in Debenham, Stonham Aspall, Wetheringsett and Framsdon to promote the challenge.

In 2009, 100 children took part, and 61 finished the challenge.

In 2010, 80 children took part and 58 finished the challenge.
The theme is Circus in 2011, and we'll be needing volunteers to help us run the game.

Sunday Activities

Every Sunday we offer craft and other activities for children

Storytime

Every Sunday, at 2pm, volunteers read stories for children. This is a regular fixture which emerged from the recent read-in – everyone enjoyed it so much, they wanted to carry on. We're thinking that we should do a storytime for adults, too.

Writing Workshops

Leila Anani, a local young poet, works with us as a volunteer to offer writing workshops for children. In September, the theme was *Dr Who*...

Bookstart

Saturday morning nursery rhyme sessions for the under 5s and their carers.

- **For Adults**

Get online Sessions

Until August 2010 we were funded to provide free, basic IT sessions for adults. These were, and still are, sought-after, and we hope to continue, if the funding returns. We have a waiting list, and we can refer people to other providers if they wish. We will always help when you get stuck if you are using a computer in our library!

Quantitative information - anecdotes

It is difficult to measure the far reaching impact a library has on its community.

One thing we do in Debenham is to try to record what we do by keeping a diary of events and anecdotes in the library which you are welcome to come and read. I am putting a selection of comments from customers and staff below, in the hope of painting you a picture of how your villagers use and value it:

April 20, 2010

A customer came to use our service on his return from Switzerland - he has moved there, but finds our service useful when he comes home.

Ordered books on football for a person with dementia.

Took memory boxes to the Debenham Project.

April 25, 2010

Showed a borrower details of the music and drama library, described score sets and availability.

Showed an older customer how to reserve books online and showed him the 'reading corner' - he was very impressed with what a small library could offer and said we do much better than lots of other libraries in counties where he has lived.

May 2, 2010

Showed three young readers how to research their project on wind and coal power.

May 9, 2010

Found books on speed boats for adult with learning disabilities, plus a CD.

May 26, 2010

Customer delighted to offer help to another - both are studying psychology and organised to borrow each other's books.

"Helped two women, both over 60, to exchange emails for the first time. One of them proceeded to email her granddaughter."

June 13, 2010

Introduced borrowers to Roma Tearne's books - Roma is coming to Literature festival.

July 31 2010

"Debenham library is one of the smallest and one of the best!" A reading game participant.

August 24, 2010

"I am so glad I asked about reading groups, you introduced me to a really nice one, thank you."

September 14, 2010

Helped borrower search for a job and gave the numbers of two tourist information centres as requested.

October 27, 2010

Gave an elderly customer a new library card, and found the book about the Jordanian royal family which she wanted to read. Got stock team to order it in, specially.

Introduced a young reader who said she didn't like poetry to Michael Rosen's poetry. She likes it now.

January 1 2011

Spent much of the session taking down the decorations with the help of a borrower with depression, and who did not want to be alone during the holiday period.

January 2011

Tuesday morning fit bike session for Olympic week in libraries. Several customers went home specially to get their trainers so that they could have a go.

March 2011

Over 1000 people through the door for the read-in. BBC, Diss express, East Anglian and web coverage – not bad for the smallest library in Suffolk. Marvellous cake supplied all the time by volunteers.

May 2011

And here's an extract from a letter I received this week from one of our borrowers, who came into the library one day, distraught. I suggested a few avenues of help, which is my job, and one area of our work which is confidential and yet happens on an almost daily basis:

"Dear Mel...the organisation you put me in touch with were extremely kind and helpful, and the volunteer who came in to see me a number of times was lovely, and very supportive...I will never be able to thank you enough for helping me to pick up the pieces of my life!"

What's happening now?

As I do every year, I have summarised the activities we have undertaken at Debenham Resource Centre for you. However, this year has been different. There have been many proposed changes to the service, and I should give you a brief update on the current position of Suffolk libraries.

The Suffolk County Council Process

We had a county-wide consultation on the proposed divestment of libraries which ended on April 30th. In total, over 4,000 online responses were counted, and there are many more paper responses, letters and emails which will all be taken into consideration. There is a specific team in place to analyse the responses.

Meantime, campaigners organised a county-wide petition to 'save' libraries, and this was signed by over 20,000 people. The petition was presented to Judy Terry, portfolio holder for libraries, and because of the size of the petition, campaigners will be given 5 minutes to address the council on July 14th.

On June 14th there is a scrutiny meeting that will consider libraries, and this may give some indication about the result of the consultation.

The result of the consultation will be presented to Cabinet on July 14.

This is the process as defined officially within Suffolk County Council. Staff members have been given no indication that libraries have had any kind of 'reprieve' as reported in the papers.

Events in Debenham

As you are aware, in response to divestment proposals, the Parish Council have set up a working group to look at all the options for the future of the library. I am a member of that group, as are parish councillors, campaigners, staff members and volunteers. The group have looked at the cost of running a library, the potential for generating an income, viable locations for the library, and the level of support for the library in the village.

The Library working group have put in an expression of interest to Suffolk County Council, outlining their desire to keep a library in Debenham, and to discuss and progress the matter through negotiation and co-operation with Suffolk County Council.

We're waiting for the results of the consultation, and at the same time, talking to officers at the council. However, the library is not yet secure and despite village rumours to the contrary, no decisions have been taken.

In terms of support for the library – campaigners held a 28-hour read-in back in March, and it was supported by over 1000 people. They are now taking names for 'Friends of Debenham Library' group, which is envisaged as a fundraising and social group who will organise events, donations, help out and generally get involved in their own way to support the library in the future.

Melanie Wood, Manager, May 22, 2011