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Eugene Library blends knowledge, literary adventures

Boasting some 300,000 volumes, the Public Library offers books, magazines, and access to the Internet

By Ayisha Yahya
News Editor

Tales of valor and tragedy, of discovery and innovation. Windows into distant lands and different lives. Channels of immense knowledge on millions of topics, squeezed into bound pages stacked neatly on rows and rows of shelves.

The Eugene Public Library allows residents to delve into the world of books, and since it reopened in its new building at 100 W. 10th Ave. in December 2002, the staff has seen an influx of patrons.

"Our business has gone up about 26 percent (for the downtown library)," Library Public Services Manager Rob Everett said. Overall, there has been a 23 percent increase in business at the main library and at the two branches in Sheldon and Bethel.

He said the library is handling about 150,000 items each month, and added that the library had issued almost 4,500 cards in the past three months, a 73 percent increase from the previous year.

With more than 350,000 volumes on hand, 400 magazine subscriptions, CDs and DVDs, and electronic research facilities, perhaps it is no surprise the library is pulling in people like a magnet.

But Everett said he believes the building's extraordinary architecture and decor are also key attractions.

Book lovers can sink into cozy chairs in airy rooms surrounded by large windows. Or they can surf the Internet at the workstations, which are equipped with the latest software. Everett said the new library offers three times the Internet access that the old library did, and that the electronic resource center has been improved considerably.

The ground-floor coffee shop and the entryway garden are good places for repose or relaxed reading, and children have their own special place in the children's center on the first floor.

The library also has a variety of programs for adults and youth. There is the Windfall Reading Series each month with local writers and poets.

"It's a fantastic free thing where you get to meet and talk to local published poets and writers," Reference Librarian Ilana Ferris said.

There are also book clubs, workshops, and programs like "Teen Read Week," which runs from Oct. 19 to Oct. 24. Every first Friday of the month, musicians play in the Lobby Central Stairwell; October will feature the Tomcats, a rock and pop trio, and the Rhythm and Swing Society.

Students may also benefit from the library's two study rooms, which can be reserved up to 24 hours in advance. Ferris said the library has implemented a career section with guidebooks to many careers, college guides and test preparation materials for vocational and professional exams like the GRE. There is also a foreign-language section with books in different languages and English-as-a-second-language study materials. In addition, students can access the EBSCOhost database, which is also available at the University's Knight Library, for research.

"For recreation and study purposes, there's a lot of resources here that would be really useful," Ferris said.

Patrons, like Eugenean Nancy Bauer, say they love the new library.

"I think it's more efficient," Bauer said. "I'm proud to have it as one of the buildings in Eugene."

She added that she often uses its services as part of her work.

"I really rely on the books for reference," she said.

Willie Poncy is also a regular patron to the library.

"I think the architecture is really nice," Poncy said. "There's a lot of extra space."

Poncy added that despite the architecture and space, the checkout system is sometimes slow and that the library could update some of its books.

Everett said the library is open to everyone regardless of their economic background and allows people to broaden their horizons.

"The role of the library in this community is to reflect back to the community all of its diverse interests, lifestyles and perspectives of the world," Everett said. "You can entertain, you can improve and enlighten yourself. It makes the world bigger, because you don't just see a reflection of yourself but of the world."

Contact the news editor at ayishayahya@dailyemerald.com.

VOLUNTEER

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social worker, law student or psychologist learn about crisis intervention and violence through volunteering. Volunteer Program Manager Nancy Hefner said.

"The main thread is watching a volunteer go from having a minimal amount of knowledge about (violence) to being able to work with a wide range of agencies, the district attorney's office, women in active crises and some in danger, while still keeping their composure and compassion," Hefner said.

For students wanting to explore other avenues, many options exist. Those interested in the medical field can apply to volunteer at Sacred Heart Medical Center in the hospital's Nursing Unit Volunteer program.

Environmentalists, on the other hand, can look into the BRING recycling program. Operations Manager Damien Czech said volunteers can work in general household recycling, in the resale yard or the deconstruc-

tion area, adding that he hopes students learn the virtues of reducing, reusing and recycling.

"Showing how much can be reused and kept out of landfills is our hope," he said.

Students interested in research or psychology can contact the Child and Family Center, which conducts intervention and developmental research with children and families.

"The CFC provides students with the opportunity to enhance their practical research tools and professional skills that can be applied to graduate school, and employment ventures post-graduation," Coordinator Jennifer Jabson said.

Students who want to reap these benefits have to plan carefully when applying, however. Organizations often require a background check and an interview or training session for potential volunteers in order to test their abilities and level of commitment.

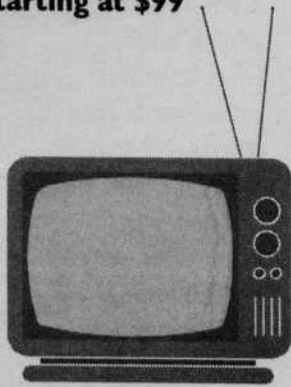
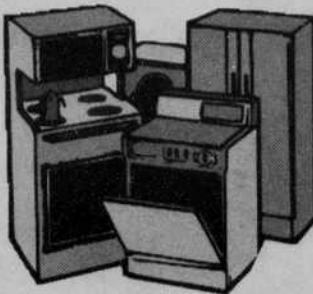
Ashley Griffin is a freelance reporter for the Emerald.

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