

Pease Public Library
1 Russell Street
Plymouth, NH 03264-0414

Pease Public Library: Planning for the Future

A library opens the whole world and beyond to each and every one of us

Pease Public Library sits on the brow of a hill overlooking the Common in the center of the original village of Plymouth. It is a fitting location for an institution that serves as a town Commons, bringing together community members of all walks of life who take advantage of its many services.

Opening in January 1991, Pease Public Library was built with funds bequeathed to the Young Ladies Library Association (YLLA) from the estate of Charlotte Pease, a YLLA member of long standing. The land was donated by the Pemigewasset (now Northway) Bank.

In the intervening years the library has enjoyed steady growth in its use. Since 1995:

- Materials borrowed have more than doubled from 35,884 to 73,456
- Visits to the library have doubled from 22,578 to 44,980
- Public access computers have been added. In 2008 patrons used the 4 public computers for more than 4,000 hours; an additional 1,000 patrons used our wireless connection with their own laptops.
- Since 2003, when records were first kept, the Rachel Keniston Community Room has been used for more than 350 scheduled programs and meetings a year; many requests are unable to be met.
- The number of library-sponsored programs for adults and children has increased from 56 to 122, with over 2,600 attending programs in 2008.
- The collection has grown from 20,550 items to 33,128 items today.

Addressing the challenges and opportunities

With all this activity Pease Public Library is bursting at the seams and in great need of changes that will enlarge, renovate and update the building to accommodate both existing and new programs. The two primary challenges for the Library are:

- A lack of space to maintain quality in the management of the collection,

materials, and equipment, and to accommodate users

- A lack of consistent safety, accessibility, and environmental quality throughout the building.

In recognition of the library's growing challenges, the Trustees appointed a Long Range Planning committee in 2002. Following their recommendation, a library space needs specialist was hired. Her 2006 report identified areas of concern, and provided detailed facility needs including:

- A separate and enclosed children's room with its own bathroom and computers.
- An expanded adult browsing and collection area with additional seating space
- An enclosed, quiet reference area for adults
- A bathroom for adults on the main level
- A small meeting room to accommodate one-on-one tutoring or small group meetings, in addition to a large community room
- An elevator to replace the chair lift, providing easy physical access throughout the building
- While not in the space needs report, it is clear there is also need for expanded space for the local cable access channel, including an office and production studio to support community education and awareness.

In 2008 the Trustees appointed a Building Committee to guide and assist with a renovation/expansion project.

2009: Charting A Vision For the Future

Free public libraries are essential institutions. They guarantee equal access to information. They enrich our world, and they do this for everyone. Two of our First Ladies captured the essence of libraries best. In the words of Lady Bird Johnson, "Perhaps no place in any community is so totally democratic as the town library. The only entrance requirement is interest." First Lady Laura Bush said, "Libraries allow children to ask questions about the world and find the answers. And the wonderful thing is that once a child learns to use a library the doors to learning are always open."

Pease Public Library improves the quality of life for all of us in Plymouth and surrounding areas. A healthy future for this community requires a vibrant library – not just for next year but to serve the needs and challenges into the distant future. In 1873 the Young Ladies Library Association took matters into their own hands and acted on a vision that has endured for 136 years.

Now it's our turn to create a vision for the future of our community. It's in our power to leave a legacy for the next 100 years.

APPENDIX

The History: 136 years in the life of Pease Public Library

In 1873 a group of 14 young ladies recognized the need for a public library in Plymouth. With \$500 and donated space above the Express Office, they opened the Young Ladies Circulating Library in 1874. Both the collection and patronage grew quickly and soon the library outgrew its space. In 1878 they were given the historic Daniel Webster Courthouse, which served as home to the Library until its move to the current location. In the same year the young ladies formally incorporated as the Young Ladies Library Association.

The original library now serves as the Plymouth Historical Museum, and the YLLA continues its role of support for the Library.

The creation of today's Library evolved from a true sense of community and values that recognized the importance of a library as central to community life and well-being. Charlotte Pease, once a member of the Young Ladies Library Association, generously bequeathed from her estate the funds for construction of the present library. The Library sits on the site of the Pease family homestead, on land given to the Young Ladies Library Association by the Pemigewasset Bank (now Northway).

Thanks to Charlotte's vision and generosity, to the dedication and energy of those founding Young Ladies and those who have followed, to the resolve of the Pemigewasset Bank, and to the spirit of the town of Plymouth, Pease Public Library is an attractive and vital community asset, providing a service to the community while simultaneously serving as an attraction to those who are considering moving to the region.

