

Boxes, books all over? FSU staff to the rescue

McKay Arts Academy library gets a whole new look

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FITCHBURG -- In 2013, McKay Arts Academy seventh-grader Greta Jarvi wrote a letter to the Sentinel & Enterprise in which she described disarray at the school's library.

She described a space full of boxes of books and a lack of student access to the library.

At the time, school officials said the boxes contained new and used books that had been donated, and they hadn't yet been categorized for use in the library or given to students. They also noted that classrooms each had their own library.

Today the McKay school library is organized, filled with books and colorful paintings carpeted with areas for kids to lie back on and read, meet in small groups or sit quietly in big easy chairs.

On Tuesday, students, teachers, staff, and dignitaries celebrated the renovation and restructuring of the library, which underwent a comprehensive renewal over the past year thanks to months of effort from the staff of Fitchburg State University's Amelia V. Gallucci-Cirio Library.

The McKay Arts Academy is a prekindergarten-through-eighth grade school on the Fitchburg State campus that serves about 700 students.

Staff members from the Amelia V. Gallucci-Cirio Library spent the summer cataloging McKay's holdings and organizing the renovated space into a workable lending library. The library space was also redesigned with new carpeting and replacement furniture.

Sean C. Goodlett, interim dean of FSU's library and academic support centers, said the project involved moving more than 5,000 books from McKay to the main campus for review. Outdated or damaged materials were replaced, and thousands of newly cataloged books were brought back to the school and properly categorized and then shelved.

All of the items were also folded into a new online public access catalog that is linked to the university's computer system, Goodlett added.

He credited the work of library staff members Patricia Langevin and Nancy Turnbull, among many others, as well as Doug Thomas and Heide Messing from the university's Office of Capital Planning and Maintenance, for the hundreds of hours of effort involved in rebuilding the McKay library.

Fitchburg State University President Richard Lapidus praised the effort to renovate the library and the university's ongoing partnership with the city school district, in which it runs the school while provides its education students practical experience.

"McKay is an important component of Fitchburg State University, a unique resource for our teacher candidates and a source of great pride for the school," said Lapidus. "This collaboration builds on a strong foundation connecting the university with the wider community."

Fitchburg Schools Superintendent André Ravenelle echoed Lapidus' comments.

"Fitchburg State is a tremendous partner, and this project is emblematic of the collaborative spirit between the campus and the Fitchburg Public Schools," Ravenelle said. "On behalf of all our students, I'm grateful for the university's ongoing assistance and resourcefulness."

Students were impressed with the library's new look.

"Last year it wasn't as welcoming. It's definitely better," said Jakob Smith, a seventh-grader and student council member. "There's a better assortment of books and the junior librarians help their class find them on the shelves and in the caddies."

Seventh-grader Victoria Axelson, a junior librarian, is delighted with the new library.

"I'm an avid reader and love to check out books, and now we can right here," she said. "They've done an amazing job."

Fitchburg Mayor Stephen DiNatale and McKay Arts Academy Principal and FSU Associate Dean Lourdes Ramirez also spoke at the event.

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