10-1-2016

Georgia Library Spotlight - Augusta-Richmond County Public Library System

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GLA SPOTLIGHT

Augusta-Richmond County Public Library System

The Augusta-Richmond County Public Library System (ARCPLS) is comprised of the Headquarters Library and five branches scattered throughout the greater Augusta, Georgia, area. The Headquarters Library was opened in 2010 across the street from the previous main location, transporting services and collections from a 3,500 square foot building to a 95,000 square foot, three floor facility equipped with computers on each level, dedicated children's and YA areas, study rooms, and an auditorium with a collapsible wall, affording versatile uses of the building's largest meeting space.

Aerial view of ARCPLS old and new headquarters (old library is top left)

The remaining five locations include the Diamond Lakes Branch, which shares building space with a recreation/community center known as the hub of a very active sports program serving athletes of all ages. The Freidman and Maxwell Branch libraries are each slated for extensive renovations within the next few years due to a community-backed SPLOST initiative. Upon completion, these branches, having been in existence over a combined seventy years, will be able to continue to serve their communities within familiar walls using state-of-the-art library fixtures and resources.

Undoubtedly, the hidden jewels of the system are housed in its oldest buildings. The Wallace Branch is one of the most popular meeting room destinations of all of the facilities. Its location, less than five blocks away from the Augusta University Medical Campus (formerly the Medical College of Georgia), next door and across the street from two high schools, and across the street from a respected preschool, makes it a convenient destination for students of all ages. Its historic significance to the city is invaluable as it was originally built in the 1950s as the first public library location to specifically serve African-American patrons. Finally, the beautiful Appleby Library occupies a stately, antebellum home that was willed to the system many years ago and is located in one of the oldest neighborhoods in Georgia. Parents regularly remark that their children are the third generation in their family to attend the branch's very popular story times.

A strengthened emphasis on programming is the latest effort by ARCPLS to transform the system into one that leans out into the community to bring patrons into the fold, while not necessarily into the doors. Annual signature programs such as the Augusta Literary Festival,

Star Wars Reads Day, and the Evenings in Appleby Gardens Concert Series regularly draw thousands of attendees. However, lessons on how to become a "virtual patron" teach those unable or unwilling to travel to a branch how to best maximize online resources, such as Georgia Download Destination for book downloads, Zinio for periodical downloads, and Pronunciator and Tumblebooks for distance literacy learning in over eighty languages. GLASS Augusta rounds out the system's offerings, providing Talking Books outreach to twenty-one surrounding counties.

Under the leadership of Library Director Mashell Fashion, who has spent the bulk of her thirty-year career with the system, ARCPLS looks forward to honoring its past while simultaneously exceeding goals and is poised to become a model public library system of the future.