

Guided By the Mission of Libraries Genther Celebrates Retirement



Ask Marilyn Genther to celebrate libraries, the staff of Mount Prospect Public Library (MPPL), and the Mount Prospect community, and she visibly lights up. There's a confident, knowing look and a warm smile that settles over her. It's clear she has honed in on the Mount Prospect community for years.

Ask Genther to talk about her upcoming retirement as the executive director of the Mount Prospect Public Library after more than a four-decade career — to shine back some of the spotlight on herself — and Genther is more abbreviated. She politely waves off compliments. Graciously acknowledging the many accomplishments during her tenure, she's definite in her position: the Library is about the staff, the Board, and the community.

If anything, she believes her contributions to the Library are about how she held the vision, guided the team, and actively participated within the community. And the accolades are considerable.

She led the Library through a successful referendum in 2002, resulting in funding that allowed for the expansion and renovation of the Main Library on Emerson Street.

"Perfect timing" allowed the Library to partner with the Village of Mount Prospect to open the Community Connections Center in 2009.

And the Library has grown exponentially in its service to the community.

"We want the Library to be a destination where everyone wants to be when not at home, school, or work," said Genther. "It's a place to learn, gather, explore, and be entertained. And we serve a vital role in helping reduce the digital and learning divides."

The Spark of the Mission

To know Genther's success story at the helm of MPPL, is also to understand her dynamic path.

She didn't set out to work in libraries. Genther first thought she might work in a museum or attend law school, but an academic scholarship toward a master's in library science set her off on another path.

Even then she wasn't certain that she would work at libraries long-term, but her first job working in Cincinnati as a homebound outreach librarian made an indelible impact. That's when the mission of public libraries struck her, "the service part," and she never looked back.

"We would bring books to people who couldn't go to the Library," said Genther. "We went all over the county and served 100 institutions and over 100 individuals. The library rarely closed, but there were times because of blizzards we couldn't go out in the [outreach] vans.

"I quickly learned that if we missed a trip, it would be another month for us to visit patrons, and they were heartbroken. It had a real impact on me. People really depended on the service."

Years later, Genther still remembers all of the details from her outreach patrons. The experience to focus on services became a foundation for her work.

Building Blocks

Later Genther worked in Indiana, including the Indianapolis-Marion County Public Library system, where she was a reference librarian. While there, she was encouraged to attend conferences and workshops as well as chair committees.

"It was important for me to understand the different challenges libraries face, not just from my own experience, but learning from workshops and reaching out to others at national conferences. I'm grateful that I learned across different settings, because it prevented me from having a parochial perspective."

She later applied at MPPL for the position of department head of adult services. The experience of working in large, urban libraries helped Genther balance the needs and challenges of a smaller, suburban library.

At the time of the Mount Prospect opening, she had three offers in front of her from different places, but Mount Prospect Public Library offered the most possibilities. Genther thought MPPL was very public-service oriented and responsive to its community, which she believes has turned out to be a true, sustained strength of the Library.

In short order, she added deputy director to her title. In 1992, she was named the executive director of the Library.

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SECTION**
Save for Future
Reference



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“I hadn’t thought about being a director of a Library,” said Genther, “I never planned to go into administration. But it turned out that I liked managing and leading individuals and groups to achieve a vision.

“I always enjoyed the coaching aspect of supervision. To support and help someone grow in their job is very satisfying.”

Decades of Leadership

In her first years as executive director, Genther spent time cultivating relationships in the community in addition to working with the Board and staff. She stressed that it’s important to have confidence in developing trust and synergy, and that it takes time in the community.

“Mount Prospect is a wonderful village with a hometown feel where you feel that you know everyone,” said Genther. “It’s a wonderful place to work, where you can make things happen and people pull together.”

A Dynamic Staff, Future Possibilities

Genther is particularly impressed by the enthusiasm and passion of everyone who works at the Library. It is part of what she will miss the most in retirement.

“Everyone loves their job and is excited and proud of the Library – what we stand for and its mission. We care and it shows,” she said. “I will really miss the people, the service, and seeing people grow in their careers.”

Genther sees an exciting and dynamic future ahead for libraries.

“There are multiple paths for libraries, which can customize to a community for what it wants and needs,” said Genther. “Individuals decide what works, what should change, and what can improve. We tend to be deliberate at this Library and we bring new ideas based on priorities that fit the community.”

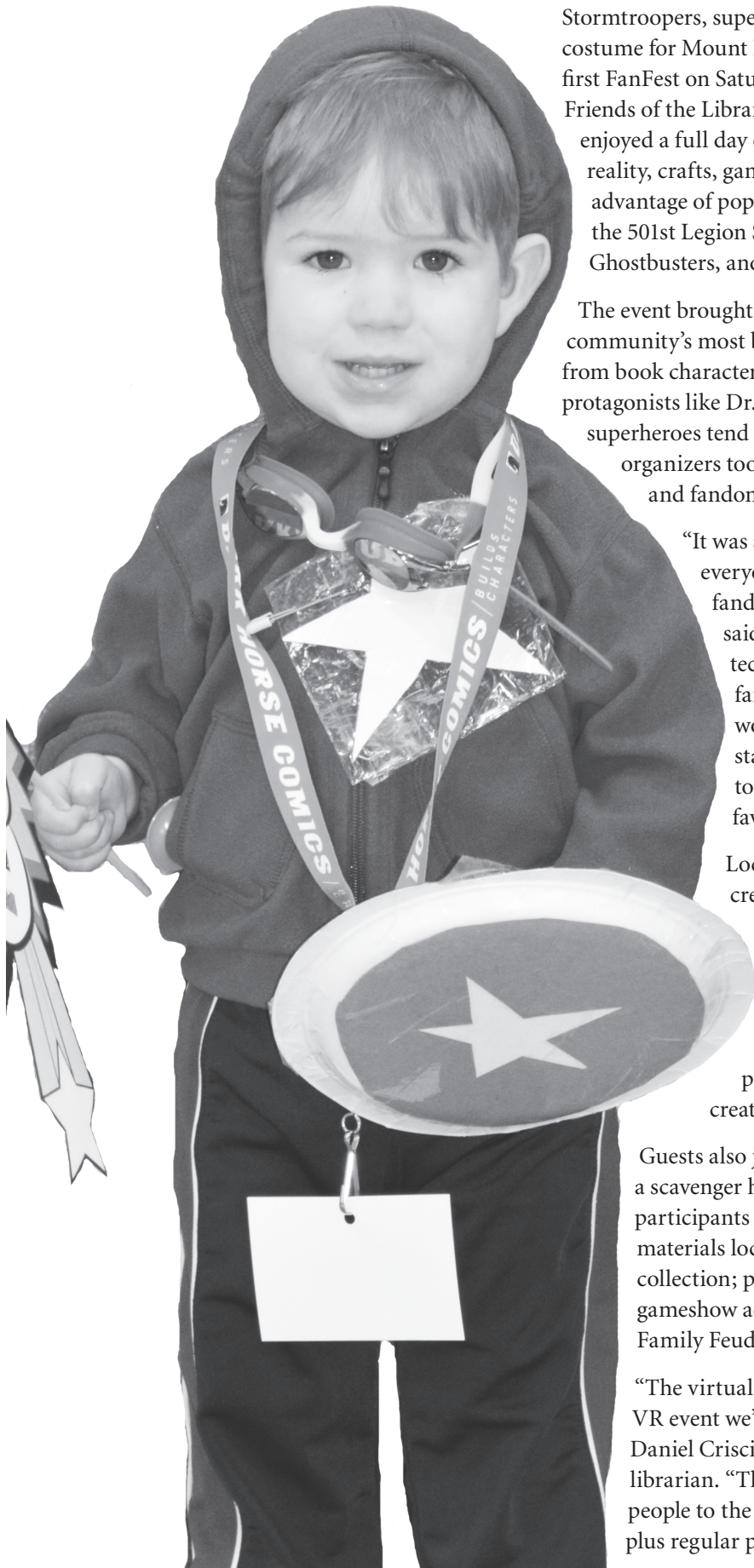
BORROWER’S CARD	
Author: Marilyn Genther	
Title: A Library Director’s Story	
Milestones:	Date:
Joins Mount Prospect Public Library, Head of Adult Services	1986
Hired Interim Deputy Director	1987
Hired Deputy Director	1988
Hired Executive Director	1992
Mount Prospect Business Leader of the Year	1993
Expanded and Renovated Main Library Opened	2004
Shining Star Recipient	2008
South Branch Library Launched	2009
Mount Prospect Chairman’s Award	2010

Organizations-Actively Involved and Held Leadership Roles

- American Library Association
- Library Leadership and Management Association
- Mount Prospect Chamber of Commerce
- Mount Prospect Historical Society
- Public Library Association
- Sunrise Rotary Club of Mount Prospect
- United Way of Mount Prospect-Prospect Heights



FanFest a Spectacular Success



Stormtroopers, superheroes, and wizards arrived in full costume for Mount Prospect Public Library's (MPPL) first FanFest on Saturday, Feb. 23. Sponsored by the Friends of the Library, more than 500 participants enjoyed a full day of festivities, including virtual reality, crafts, games, and cosplay. Many guests took advantage of popular photo opportunities with the 501st Legion Star Wars cosplayers, Windy City Ghostbusters, and Costumers with a Cause.

The event brought together a range of the community's most beloved popular culture passions, from book characters like Harry Potter to television protagonists like Dr. Who. While Star Wars and superheroes tend to be most visible characters, organizers took care to be inclusive of all ages and fandoms.

"It was a terrific community event where everyone could learn about different fandom cultures and feel comfortable," said Laura Bos, Youth Services technology librarian. "We had families tell us they thought they would stay for a little while and they stayed all afternoon. It was really fun to see kids taking pictures with their favorite characters."

Local graphic novelists and comic creators Katie Schenkel, Michael Morenci, and Ivan Brunetti participated in a panel discussion and book signing. Karen Herkes, MPPL registration assistant, moderated the forum, with patrons asking questions about their creative influences and processes.

Guests also joined in a range of craft activities; a scavenger hunt designed to introduce participants to the breadth of fan-favorite materials located throughout the Library's collection; plus Fandom Feud, a fan-themed gameshow activity with segments based on Family Feud and The \$100,000 Pyramid.

"The virtual reality event was the most attended VR event we've ever had at the Library," said Daniel Criscione, Research Services technology librarian. "The event brought a number of new people to the Library who never tried this before, plus regular patrons."

New Lobby Brings Welcome Changes

The Mount Prospect Public Library recently unveiled its redesigned lobby. Now divided into two zones — a staffed full-service desk on one side and a self-service area on the other — the refreshed lobby has increased efficiency, better traffic flow, and more self-service areas for patrons to use.

Visitors quickly remarked how the renovations make the area feel much more spacious.

"The entire lobby is now so much more bright and open," said Janine Slayton, head of Circulation Services. "All of the services are more convenient for patrons, such as open holds and having the copier and scanner so accessible."

Guests still receive one-on-one assistance from Registration and Circulation professionals to check out materials, answer questions about Library services and materials, register for programs, and obtain or renew a Library card.

In the self-service area, patrons can pick up items on hold and check out materials using self-service kiosks. Public computers, a scanner, and copier are also available. If patrons have a question about the self-service area, a staff member is available to assist. Open holds are popular and convenient, though titles are still shielded to protect patrons' privacy.

The lobby will also have new public art installations in May following approval from the Library Board of Trustees in April. Art installations at the Library are funded by donations from residents, community groups, the Library Foundation, and the Friends of the Library.



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Lighting Design for Video Production
WordPress
SMART Board essential training



5 Ways to beat *Summer Slide*

- 1 Keep children engaged and learning while they’re out of school. The Library subscribes to NovelList, which can help find books according to age, reading level, and interests.
- 2 Encourage kids to read at least 20 minutes per day. Librarians can help you find books on almost any subject kids want to read about!
- 3 Read to your kids! We can help you find quality read-alouds for any age group.
- 4 Transform car rides into reading time. The Library has audiobooks to interest every kid. Check out a Playaway or a book on CD. With an MPPL card, you can download stories from Hoopla, Libby, or RBDigital.
- 5 Visit your Library! Let your kids wander and pick what looks fun to them. All books are good books!

In Youth Services, we want to make sure kids leave with stacks of material that they find interesting. When kids are excited about what they’re reading, they end up reading more and more often. This is especially important in the summer. Studies have shown that kids can lose up to a month’s worth of learning over the summer if they don’t continue to read, play, and explore.

When it comes to reading options over the summer, graphic novels are great for kids who might find longer texts intimidating, because the words are broken up by lots of images. But those pictures are also an integral part of the story, and being able to “read” those pictures is also an important skill. Looking at a character’s facial expression helps children recognize emotions and builds empathy, and the images often add another layer to the story beyond the text.

Also, graphic novels tell a lot of different kinds of stories. There are funny stories, mysteries, realistic stories, epic fantasies, and even nonfiction graphic novels. There’s a graphic novel for every type of reader, so stop by and check one out today!

