

Bogue Banks Public Library: A Brief History

By Susan W. Simpson, Librarian and CPC Regional Director

A presentation on the library's history from 1981-2005

The original Bogue Banks Public Library opened on September 28, 1981, in a small room in the NC Aquarium (then called the NC Marine Resource Center) in Pine Knoll Shores. With the cooperation of Dr. Ned Smith, aquarium director, and Elinor Hawkins, director of the Craven-Pamlico-Carteret Regional Library, the facility was established as a cooperative library under the Department of Administration and Department of Cultural Resources. Its central location was selected to serve residents and visitors on Bogue Banks.

When the library was set up, the aquarium had a collection of marine-related materials available for public and staff use on the premises. It did not, however, have enough staff to circulate and process the materials. Through a cooperative venture, the Craven-Pamlico-Carteret Regional Library provided the staff and additional reading materials to expand the collection to serve a general reading audience and meet the needs of the communities on Bogue Banks. The library opened with about 2,000 volumes, and soon over 200 patrons were registered.

A federal grant provided funds to cover three fiscal years, 1981-1984. Books and supplies were purchased, and a staff of two was hired. Valerie Jones served as the first full-time librarian, and Olga Hedrick was her part-time assistant. Along with lending books, the library developed story hours and other activities for library patrons and aquarium visitors. Volunteers assisted with decorating the library and planning weekly and monthly programs especially for children. For many years the CPC Regional Library held an annual Storytelling Festival at the Bogue Banks Library at this location.

After the grant expired in 1984, the Carteret County Board of Commissioners was approached for funding to cover the library's operational costs. Island communities were also asked to assist with funding.

As the aquarium's popularity grew, so did its need for more space to conduct programs and display exhibits. In 1988, Dr. Smith requested that the Carteret County Public Library Board of Trustees begin the search for another location for the library.

In 1989 the Carteret County commissioners agreed to purchase space in a proposed building in Pine Knoll Village. The library would occupy half of the first floor of the two-story professional development at the corner of Pine Knoll Boulevard and Highway 58 in Pine Knoll Shores. The official ceremony marking the beginning of construction was held August 18, 1989.

During this same year a Friends of the Library group was organized specifically to raise \$40,000 for the furnishings for the new library. Benefactors, patrons, 75 contributors, and more than 170 donors contributed a total of over \$37,000 for this goal.

The ribbon-cutting for the new library, held on May 20, 1990, drew many interested local and state officials, as well as local citizens and library supporters and volunteers. Joyce Knight, librarian since 1985, and assistants Ernestine Conway and Helen Clugston immediately opened the library for business.

From the library's beginning in 1981 until June 1991, the Bogue Banks Public Library was governed by the Carteret County Public Library of Trustees, and operated as a branch library of the Carteret County Public Library.

When Carteret County agreed to provide a new facility for the Bogue Banks Public Library, it asked the towns on the island to bear the expense of operating the library until the purchase was completed. Inasmuch as the towns were paying the operating costs of the library during this interim period, the Carteret County Public Library Board asked the county to create an interim library board for Bogue Banks Public Library composed of representatives from each town which contributed to the operation of that library. This was done in June 1991.

When the purchase of the Bogue Banks Library facility was completed in 1994, the governance of the branch library returned to the Carteret County Public



Interested parties view the plans during construction of the library. From left: County Commissioner David Yoemans; Paxon Holz, Friends of Bogue Banks Library; Elinor Hawkins, director of the Craven-Pamlico-Carteret Regional Library; Kathy Baker, co-chairman of the Carteret County Board of Trustees; Diane Donovan, chairman of the Friends of Bogue Banks Library; Ken Hanan, mayor of Pine Knoll Shores; and Ken Windley, county manager.—Photo courtesy of Bogue Banks Public Library

Library Board of Trustees. Soon after, library operations were fully automated, for the first time, giving the staff and library patrons access to a catalog of the library's collection.

Living on an island has its hazards. During Hurricane Bonnie in August 1998, the wind shift peeled off the roof of the professional building, allowing rain to pour into the second story and then into the library on the first floor. Saturated ceiling tiles fell onto the wet carpet, computers sat in pools of water, and book edges caught raindrops. At the time, the Bogue Banks Library had about 10,500 titles; it was necessary that all be quickly moved into freezing storage to retard any mold development. The entire library was emptied, dried out, repainted, recarpeted, and new furnishings were provided through insurance. Then the collection, after being dried out, was returned to the library; only 599 titles were lost in the disaster. Complete recovery took almost nine months—and was a Herculean effort on the part of library staff members, county officials, dedicated individuals and, of course, the Friends of Bogue Banks Library.

A grant from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation in March 2001 added four new computers for public internet access and word processing. The library then had eight public access computers.

The Friends of Bogue Banks Public Library organization continued its support of the library. Through regular newsletters, the Friends encouraged use of the library, advertised their frequent book sales and motivated membership. The organization provided funding for books on cassette and compact discs, Masterpiece Theatre videos and special children's programs like the summer reading program.

The Friends also created the separate art gallery in the library's auditorium where local artists displayed their talents, and a monthly reception was held so patrons had a chance to meet the artists.

In 2005 the library collection contained about 12,600 titles in various formats, including books, audiocassettes, compact discs, DVDs and videos. There were 4,500 registered borrowers; in 2004 the library circulated 30,000 items. In the same year over 39,000 people visited the Bogue Banks Library to use the computers, enjoy programs, check out materials, or just sit and read in the attractive setting.

Year-round residents and seasonal visitors continue to make the Bogue Banks Public Library an important part of the community.

A special thank you is extended to Donna Freeman, Adult Services Librarian at Bogue Banks Public Library, for her help in finding the picture that accompanies this article and her efforts to get the best quality possible.