

Turning a New Page

Grandview Heights Public Library starts its next chapter with a change in leadership

THE GRANDVIEW HEIGHTS Public Library has seen nearly 90 years of history, and Mary Ludlum was there to witness more than three decades of it.

Ludlum served as the library's director for the past five of those years, recently turning her duties over to fellow librarian Ryan McDonnell.

But Ludlum didn't always know she wanted to lead a library. Growing up in rural Indiana, she had little interaction with public libraries. She didn't become acquainted with them until college, when she took on a work-study job in a library while at Capital University. Upon finishing her undergraduate degree in sociology, Ludlum went to work for the Otterbein College library, where she remained for five years.

"I worked there long enough to know, 'This is really what I want to do with the rest of my life,'" Ludlum says. After receiving a master's degree in library science from the University of Michigan – an institution, she admits, she doesn't like to mention much around Columbus – Ludlum found a job at the Grandview library. She started in the role of young adult librarian and served a total of 32 years at the Grandview location before retiring in August.

What really held her interest, Ludlum says, was the dichotomous nature of the career.

"I like the combination of detail and people," she says. "You're organizing things, but you're also serving and helping people."

In her time at the Grandview library, Ludlum says, she came to cherish many accomplishments. Among her most valued achievements were collaborating with the Grandview Parks and Recre-



Retired Grandview Heights Public Library Director Mary Ludlum and current director Ryan McDonnell

ation Department to create the Music on the Lawn concert series – a tradition now in its 28th year – and assisting in establishing computers in the library and remodeling the building. She also fondly remembers working to pass all seven of the library levies that landed on voting ballots throughout her tenure.

"That has been a joy; the campaign process is certainly hard work, and you hope you're getting the message out, but the reward with the passage of the levies has been incredibly heartwarming," she says.

The library received a five-star rating from the Library Journal Index of Public Library Service each year of Ludlum's leadership as director. For the past two years, it was also ranked as the best public library in its expenditure range in

America, based on factors such as circulation, visits, program attendance and Internet use.

Ludlum looks forward to spending more time with her husband, Dan, who retired in 2010 after teaching social studies at Upper Arlington High School for 35 years. Aside from wanting to do more traveling and become more involved with her church community at Atonement Lutheran Church, Ludlum is hoping her schedule will now afford more time for volunteering.

"I'm just a firm believer that opportunities arise that will help you serve," she says. "I'm very much about serving and responding to where God leads me."

Now McDonnell has stepped into Ludlum's shoes. He's held positions in both academic and corporate libraries

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and, most recently, served an eight-year stint as director of the Marysville Public Library. Prior to taking on Ludlum's position Sept. 1, McDonnell had worked with her through the Central Library Consortium – an organization of 11 central Ohio libraries that share resources – and, during that time together, the two came to be friendly colleagues.

"I have total confidence and trust that he will help this library to continue to be the good place that it is," Ludlum says.

McDonnell's first task at his new post was to learn everything he could about the Grandview library and how it can best serve the community. McDonnell believes libraries can positively impact the quality of life of the community members they serve. By listening to library-goers, he hopes to find out just how he can make a difference in their community.

"It's very important to engage the community and understand what their needs are," he says.

Ludlum says understanding those needs may also involve making some changes within the library.



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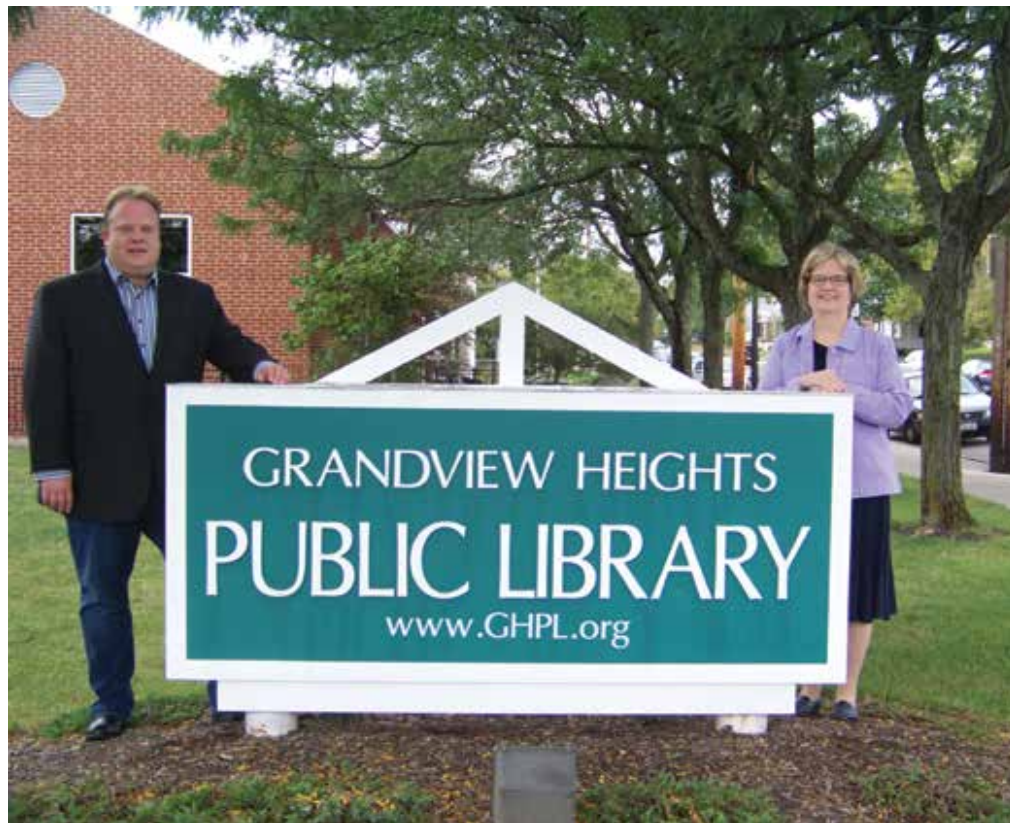
"(The library) will continue responding to the needs and the wants of our community and, as (it is) doing that, responding to the changes that are necessary," she says. Responding to those changes will likely involve addressing the increasing prevalence of eBooks, as well as other digital media forms – such as magazines, movies and music – and how they impact the kinds of resources the library provides.

"I think some of the challenges will be to keep up with the demands for materials that patrons have, to keep up with the changing formats of materials," he says.

However, McDonnell is not only prepared for the job – he welcomes its more difficult tasks.

"I think it's a wonderful opportunity and it's a fantastic community," he says. "I'm really looking forward to the challenges that it brings."

Rose Davidson is a contributing editor. Feedback welcome at laurand@cityscenemediagroup.com



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