

# New Regional Resource Center serves local libraries

BY ANGELA ALLEN-WEHARY

The Southern Maryland Regional Resource Center, at the intersection of Routes 5 and 6 in Charlotte Hall, houses a public meeting room, the Charlotte Hall branch library and the Southern Maryland Regional Library Association.

The center is a shiny, new and roomy improvement over previous locations for these facilities. The original location for the Charlotte Hall branch library was a bookmobile on cinderblocks, says Eleanor Ritchie, branch head of the Charlotte Hall library.

During that time, from May 1982 until July 1984, the branch had no air conditioning and no toilet facilities.

The library's next "temporary" location was in a storefront on Route 5 from August 1984 until the opening of the SMRRC in January this year. The branch library's section of the new center is three times the size of the storefront location and offers study carrels, subscriptions to a large number of local and national newspapers and the public meeting room.

Although no fee is charged for the use of the meeting room, reservations must be made in advance by

calling the library. The regional library or resource center was previously located in a section of the Charles County Library.

Funding for the new building was approved in 1980, when plans to purchase the Charlotte Hall Military School were abandoned.

Through a series of trades between the parcel purchased for the center, the state and the proposed site for the veterans' home, the current location was established.

## About the regional library

Although the county libraries are locally funded, the regional library—which serves local libraries—is primarily a product of state funding.

The regional facility serves as provider of support in the form of "expensive equipment and books" for use by the local libraries whereas "the local libraries have only the basics" and have small annual budgets, according to Nadia Taran, associate director of the SMRRC. In December 1986, a task force was appointed by the governor to examine the needs of the regional library.

Katharine Hurrey, director of the SMRRC, explained that the recommendations of that task force have resulted in funding for the regional library both this and last year. Since the system was determined to be grossly underfunded, the library's

annual budget growth has been increased from about \$13,000 a few years ago to \$88,000 this year.

Now, the periodicals budget alone is near \$13,000 and the library subscribes to 435 different magazines and journals, dating from 1980 to the present. Although there are plans for a tri-county automated system, it has not yet been implemented.

Once an automated system is installed, all local county libraries will be linked to the regional library.

Pat Ward, in technical processing, uses the only state data base system in the area to catalog books and the extensive collection of government documents.

The data base also contains the Maryland register and the state contract register and is linked to libraries ranging from Johns Hopkins University to the Patuxent River Naval Base Library.

## Services for local libraries

The regional library holds seminars and training programs for the local librarians.

Amy Haden, employed by the regional library, does all requested clerical work for the tri-county libraries.

Kathy Rineaman is in charge of preparing all new books for shelving and distribution. The regional library has its own audiovisual technician, Barbara Wallace, who processes, catalogs and maintains the 1,047 video tapes and more than 900 films.

The SMRRC also sports its own graphics department run by Jo Rivore, who produces the hundreds of requests for original artwork which pour in from the local libraries.

The regional library supplies the artwork, posters, flyers and other works to the local libraries, charging only for the paper involved in producing the flyers. Ann Matthews writes a quarterly newsletter which keeps the libraries in touch with one another and updates each library on the projects and accomplishments of their neighboring branches. Due to a special automation grant, all main libraries will be connected to the regional library via FAX machines.

This new system will provide "better turnaround time, especially on state documents," according to Taran.

It should be in operation by the end of the month. Due to the pre-

vious lack of space, the regional library had been giving their purchases to local libraries who requested use of the material.

However, with the new facilities, the regional library is now beginning to build its own collection of books.

## Services for the public

Use of the regional library by individuals should be coordinated through a local branch, due to limited hours.

The regional library helps people to find information which is not available at the local branches when those individuals are referred by a member of the local library staff. The state documents located in the regional library are reference material and as a rule do not leave the SMRRC, but are occasionally loaned to the local libraries.

Upon request, however, the regional library will photocopy a specific page or two for an individual. The most common use of the regional library by the public is through the request of interlibrary loan materials.

Nadia Taran says the center is "like a post office" for the interlibrary loan system.

The regional library processes all ILL forms for the tri-county area and is the local hub for the state.

A courier serves St. Mary's County, Charles County and Calvert County public libraries, traveling over 200 miles daily on behalf of library patrons requesting ILL materials. Last year alone there were 1,500 requests for books and many more for periodicals and audiovisual equipment, all of which were pro-

cessed through the regional library.

Any requested book which cannot be obtained through interlibrary loan is purchased by the regional library for loan to the requesting patron if the request form indicates that enough time is available. The Southern Literacy Network is located within the walls of the regional library and is coordinated by Ellen Polhemus. One of the current projects of the regional library is the collection and compilation of the best information and activities from local children's librarians.

The best of their collections, ornamented with original artwork, will be published in a book which will be available to the public around June of this year. For further information

about the SMRRC or the services that it offers, contact your local library.

The Charlotte Hall branch library is open Mondays and Wednesdays, noon to 8 p.m., Tuesdays and Thursdays, 10 a.m. to 6 p.m., Saturday, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., and closed Fridays and Sundays.

In the summer months, the library is open 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. on Saturdays only. If you have any questions, the branch's telephone number is 884-2211.

"Maryland's library system is a model for other states...we have a leadership status."

Nadia Taran,  
Associate Director  
Regional Library



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