



Coldwater *Daily Reporter*, Wednesday, February 19, 2014, page A1:

BRANCH DISTRICT LIBRARY Library seeks millage

By Christy Hart-Harris
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COLDWATER

— Approximately 40 Community members gathered at the Coldwater branch of the Branch District Library on Feb. 6 for an informational meeting. The topic was an upcoming millage for the Branch District Library, which would be placed on the Aug. 2014 primary election ballot.

Due to a drastic reduction of the Branch District Library's revenue,

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a second millage of .5 or roughly \$18.80 per year was proposed. The millage would last for eight years, with money being directed towards operating expenses at all six branches.

The current millage, passed in 1991, is .6 or \$22.74 per year.

"All branches will benefit from this," said Evette Akin, director of the Branch District Library. "We are not trying to be frivolous or greedy, we just want to restore our services to the community—put us back where

we were in 2008."

Although the Library's funding has decreased significantly since 2008, operating costs continue to rise. In an effort to stay above water, the library has been forced to rely heavily on its reserves.

"We only have about six months of operating expenses, fewer than \$10,000," said Akin.

The Library has had a 15.3 percent decrease in revenue from 2009, not including the rising costs of materials. The average costs for an adult hardback book is \$28, paperback is \$16, children's hardback book is \$18 and a DVD is \$15. With an increase in costs

comes a decrease in expenditures. From 2008 to 2014, the Library has had a 48.4 percent decrease in material expenditures.

"We spend the most money on people and books and those are the things you have to cut; somethings you can't cut like the cost of insurance, for example," said Akin.

This can be seen in the fact that budgeted salaries from 2008 to 2014 has decreased 19.9 percent and hours of operation have decreased 23.5 percent per week.

"We are only asking for the bare bones of what we need," said Akin.

The BDL serves a vast majority of the county.

With all six locations included, in 2013 they offered 378 children's programs which saw 9,012 attendees and 47 adult programs with 455 in attendance. There are 21,771 active users. There has been 53,725 computer uses and the wireless usage has reached 217,215. It also had 147,977 checkouts in 2013 and 4,647 MelCat checkouts.

If the millage were to fail, Akin said, "we would have to undergo drastic cuts; closing down for full days."

This and more information can be found by visiting www.branchdistrictlibrary.org.

Coldwater *Daily Reporter*, Thursday, February 20, 2014, page A8:

COLDWATER



Library showcases collection

Private collector Nancee Brewster of Coldwater loaned some of her snowman salt and pepper shakers to be displayed at the Coldwater branch of the Branch District Library. They are displayed on the first floor until Feb. 28. Each month a different display will be showcased. CHRISTY HART-HARRIS PHOTO

Coldwater *Daily Reporter*, Saturday, February 22, 2014, page C2:



Branch District Library branches offer free wi-fi and resources for online reading. COURTESY PHOTO

What we offer

Residents looking for places to plug in

By Christy Hart-Harris
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COLDWATER — Whether moving to a new location for work or pleasure, how important is it to have Internet access and cell phone signals?

For some people, the lack thereof may be a deal-breaker. Smaller communities may have to compete with larger cities that offer several different Internet providers and cell phone carriers.

Several local shops in Branch County offer free wi-fi service as a way to draw customers to their establishments.

The Branch District Libraries offer free wi-fi and in-house computers are also



Customers use the free wi-fi service at Bigby Coffee in Coldwater. COURTESY PHOTO

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available for usage. John Rucker, assistant director and systems administrator, said, "The first several years I was here — I've been here 10-and-a-half years — the usage of our computers steadily increased.

"Now the usage has gone down, and I contribute that to people getting mobile devices," he continued. "Notably, the wi-fi usage has gone up because of the usage of personal devices."

The libraries keep track of the usage at each branch, which is defined as one device accessing the wi-fi for an hour or less.

In 2011 the aggregate numbers for all six branches of the Branch District Library showed a total wireless access usage of 113,690, whereas in 2013 the total was 217,215.

The busiest time of day at all branches is between 4 and 6 p.m.

Wi-fi is offered 24-7 at all branches. The maximum number of wi-fi users at the Coldwater branch from midnight to 1 a.m. is 22 and three at the remote Algansee branch.

"We figured out that we could serve an important group of people who couldn't come into our building during business hours," Rucker said. "We see it as a way to serve people."

The Coldwater Board of Public Utilities offers a variety of Internet packages from dial-up to a quick modem with 6 Mbps download power.

Brad Love moved to Branch County almost three years ago from Shiawassee County for work. He said Internet and cell phone signals were not considerations in moving here, but that "When I finally found a place to live — I live in the country — I did ask about Internet access."

"I have DMCI broadband," he said. "The bane of my existence is cell phone signals. Before I switched providers, I had five to 10 dropped calls a day at home. It's gotten better, but the lack of signal is still aggravating."

Marcus Reynolds moved to Hillsdale County seven months ago, also for work. He too said it was not a con-

sideration or factor in choosing where to live, but thought the signals would be better than they are.

"I think in some areas it's worse; it varies," he said. "I bought a signal booster and it helps, but you have to be right next to it — you can't walk around the house with the phone and still get Internet access."

Both newcomers agreed that Internet and technology have a stronghold on society as whole.

"It's sad that technology has a grip on life's decisions," said Love. "It's defi-

nately a selling point when you have access to good cell phone and Internet, especially in cases of emergency."

Although Internet access and cell phone service may be lacking in smaller areas, especially rural ones, the community has stepped up to supplement with services for the residents.

Not only do the libraries offer free wi-fi, but other locations such as Northwoods Coffee Co., McDonald's, Ponderosa Steak House and Biggby Coffee offer access as well.

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- To bring you the best of modern medicine and the most personal care
- To keep you informed, and make you as comfortable as possible
- To ease your pain and your fears
- To treat your family like my family
- To listen and respond to your concerns - quickly
- To make your hospital experience truly exceptional

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Coldwater *Daily Reporter*, Saturday, February 22, 2014, page C3:

Where we find our roots

Technology makes discovering family history easier than ever

By Chris Worst

Twitter: ChrisWorst_TDR

BRANCH COUNTY — Don Miller, a longtime Coldwater resident who now resides in Vermontville, may have never started researching his family history without the Internet.

“I can’t even fathom the efforts that would be involved with doing the research without the Internet

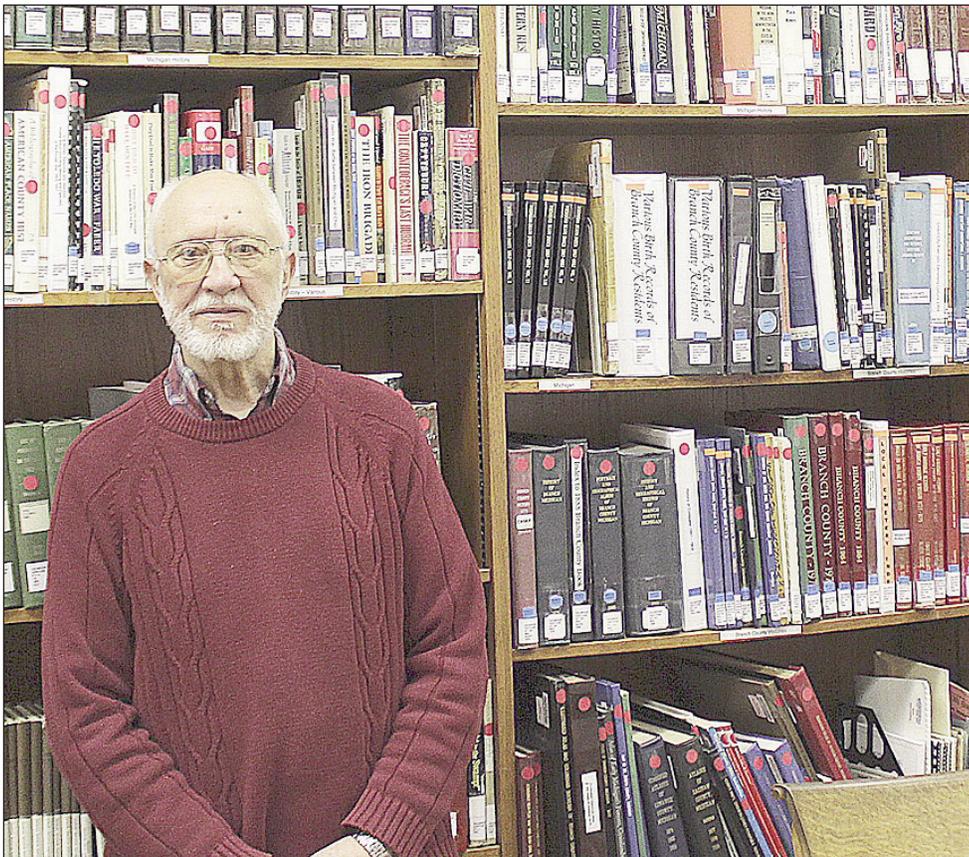
and computers,” said Miller. “I can go to the Internet, research a historical book on Hillsdale County and everything about a single name in seconds. Without the Internet I would likely have to read nearly every word of the book to learn about a single paragraph concerning a family member.”

Miller, who has a long history of family in Branch and Hillsdale counties, is

one of a growing number of people using the Internet for genealogical purposes. Websites and online databases abound, offering interested people the opportunity to search documents and records very quickly and from nearly anywhere.

Ancestry.com, one of the most prolific online resources for genealogical material, boasts approximately 2.7 million members

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Walt Lane works at the Coldwater Public Library and helps people learn about their family history.

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The Bronson Branch of the Branch District Library is one place where Branch County residents go to find out about their ancestors.

CHRIS WORST PHOTO

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worldwide.

Lynnell Eash, manager of the Bronson branch of the Branch District Library, said she has had several people come to the library and use Ancestry.com; however, most come to research their family lineage the old-fashioned way — the Bronson library has many old editions of the Bronson Journal on microfiche and in paper form, along with census records and some marriage records.

“It kind of goes in spurts,” explained Eash.

She said it seems many people gain interest in family history depending on

the programs they see on television. Nevertheless, she has seen people from as far away as California come to use the library’s resources for genealogical purposes.

“I would love to help people here,” said Eash. “If you have any family histories, we ask you to bring in those.”

“Most people start out their search on the (online) ancestry programs,” said Walt Lane of the Coldwater Public Library.

Lane said he has helped numerous people discover more about their ancestors, many of whom start-

ed online and traced their lineage back to Branch County.

According to Lane, while ancestry programs are a great start in genealogical research local libraries and archives are still an integral part of the process.

The Coldwater Public Library, which has a “Heritage Room” annexed to the Coldwater Branch Public Library, is home to thousands of records including obituaries, archived newspapers, yearbooks and others.

“You are never going to get everything they’ve got

in here computerized,” said Lane.

To Lane, the Internet resources serve as a supplement and assist in research, but local libraries and archives will never lose their place.

“This is the best place for me” to learn about family, said Lane.

“The actual record provides not only proof but may also contain information about the individual and their family,” said Miller.

While online resources can be very helpful, Miller said having the actual physical record is still very important.

Coldwater *Daily Reporter*, Monday, March 3, 2014, page A1:

READING IS FUN

BDL celebrates Dr. Seuss' birthday



Julia Littlely helping KayLynn Sandberg, 4, decorate her cookie. CHRISTY HART-HARRIS PHOTO



Mikey Arias Valencia, 12, prepares to make a hand print.
CHRISTY HART-HARRIS PHOTO

On Saturday, the Coldwater branch of the Branch District Library invited children of all ages to celebrate the 110th birthday of the famous children's book author, Dr. Seuss.

The theme was a Hawaiian Luau and children were greeted with a Hawaiian Lei. In addition, they made fish using their hand prints, made Cat in the Hat decorations and much more.