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BUFFALO AND ERIE COUNTY PUBLIC LIBRARY SYSTEM CELEBRATES 175 YEARS AND SUMMER READING KICKS OFF *Fun, Fabulous and Free! Library Summer Reading Offers Educational Edge to All Ages*

This year marks the 175th Anniversary of public library services in Buffalo and Erie County and that, coupled with hundreds of Summer Reading activities being planned throughout the Library System, was the theme of today's media announcement held at the downtown Central Library, 1 Lafayette Square.

In 1836, the Young Men's Association was formed to create a publicly accessible library in the young but rapidly growing city of Buffalo. That first year, 5,500 books circulated. By the end of the 19th century, the Buffalo Public Library had grown so greatly in stature and usage, with 84,000 books circulating, that a grand new building was built on the same Lafayette Square site where the Central Library stands today. Fast forward 175 years: the Buffalo & Erie County Public Library System now has 37 libraries, located from one end of Erie County to the other, and 3.52 million items in circulation -- books, periodicals, reference materials, and e-content -- all of it free and for all ages.

After nearly two centuries, the mission of the Library has stayed the same: *Connecting our diverse community with library resources that enrich, enlighten and entertain.* However, what has changed is technology now playing a major role in how the library delivers information. The Library System's website, www.buffalolib.org, today offers a true portal to all the Library's resources, accessed via your free Library card: the complete catalog, multiple research databases, subject guides, homework help, and downloadable books and music. In 2010, the website enjoyed 5.4 million hits and 64,000 e-books were downloaded.

All 37 public libraries will in the next two weeks recognize the 175th Anniversary and kick off a series of Summer Reading programs with their own celebrations featuring cupcakes, prizes and more. (See the attached schedule for dates/times). In November, a 175th Fundraising Gala will be held. And now through August, fun activities designed to encourage reading including prizes for each book read, a *Read Down Your Fines* campaign for kids, and *Battle of the Books* trivia competition for students in grades 6 - 9 will take place. Crafts, concerts, games, movies, book clubs, storytelling and more will round out the season with an emphasis on discovering new and exciting worlds through reading. "*One World, Many Stories*" is the Summer Reading theme for youth ages up to 12. "*You Are Here*" is the theme for teens and "*Explore Novel Destinations*" the theme for adults. For more information on all of the 2011 Summer Reading programs, visit www.BuffaloLib.org.