

Cranbrook Public Library Book Bench

By Ursula Brigl.

On Thursday, 13 November 2008, the landscape of the Cranbrook Public Library "literally" changed when three book benches were unveiled. Their arrival culminated months of work to revitalize the grounds around the west and south sides of the library.

"In spring 2008, when we began work on the landscape plan, the day to celebrate the completion of the first phase seemed a long way off," noted Keith Powell, Chair of the Library Board, at the ceremony. "But through incredible community support and the hard work of many individuals that day has arrived."



The first part of the plan was to remove the 30-year old neglected shrubs and replant the beds with plants and shrubs appropriate to local conditions. Gloria Margison, the acquisitions clerk at the library, worked with Communities in

Gloria Margison, bringing her landscape design to life.

Bloom representative Pat Adams (former Chief Librarian) to design the beds. "To be able to assist in the planning of the library's landscaping has been a wonderful experience," Gloria said once the last bed was mulched. "As a long-time employee of the library I felt very honoured to be able to contribute my time and knowledge towards this beneficial community project."



Paul Reimer (Bench designer); Jennifer Krotz (Columbia Basin Trust Rep.); Angus Davis (City Council Rep. on Library Board); Mayor Scott Manjak; Keith Powell (Chair, Library Board).



Pat Adams and Ursula Brigl pose in front of one of the library's new book benches.

But landscaping the library was going to be about more than just plants. "From the beginning, our vision was to create a place to anchor the north-end of downtown and give people a chance to sit, relax and meet with friends," states Keith Powell.

Powell continued, "Then Paul Reimer, a local artistic blacksmith, visited Ursula Brigl, the chief librarian, and said he wanted to create something for the new facility. The idea for the book benches, that would serve both a functional and artistic purpose, grew from that meeting."

Each bench is made from galvanized steel, making them virtually indestructible, and measure 1.2 metres wide by 1.5 metres long by 0.5 metres high. Once galvanized, they were painted to resemble leather-bound tomes. The result is something of which the entire community is proud. City Council and staff, having given the library free rein on the project, remarked how impressed they were with the project and expressed the hope that it would mark the beginning of more public art in Cranbrook.

Ursula Brigl is the Chief Librarian at Cranbrook Public Library.