Temporary Wheeling library checks out with staff, patrons

The Wheeling-based Indian Trails Public Library moved to a temporary location near the intersection of Dundee and Buffalo Grove roads in Buffalo Grove in April while the main building undergoes $14.4 million in renovations.

Erin Hegarty | Staff Photographer

The Indian Trails Public Library's temporary location may be in a strip mall, but officials at the Wheeling-based library district say the nontraditional site hasn't kept patrons from checking out books and participating in programs.

About 45 percent of the library's collection was moved in April from the Schoenbeck Road library in Wheeling to the temporary home near the intersection of Dundee and Buffalo Grove roads in Buffalo Grove.

The main library is undergoing $14.4 million in renovations that include the addition of study rooms, space for English as a second language classes, a computer lab and mechanical and
building upgrades.

Shelves of DVDs and the circulation counter greet patrons when they walk into the temporary library at 70 W. Dundee Road. Stacks of books, a wall of magazines, comfortable chairs and clusters of computers await patrons as they descend into the open and bright main section.

"People say they're surprised because it looks really small from the outside, but when you walk in, it really opens up," said Indian Trails Public Library District Communications Manager Susan Dennison.

The temporary library opened three days ahead of schedule on April 1, and in the first month patrons checked out 62,936 items. More than 175 new library cards have been issued since the move. The number of visitors in April -- 14,054 -- was down about 25 percent from the number who visited the permanent location in April 2015.

Library staff members were surprised, though, when 48 children and adults attended the site's first storytime program. Dennison said the library hadn't offered any programming for several weeks before that event, and expected a smaller crowd.

The temporary location also has helped the library attract new patrons who are shopping at the Dundee Point Shopping Center.

"They go by and sort of just discover the library," Dennison said.

Library officials chose the shopping center because it met their main criteria: a location in the district, with the necessary infrastructure for computers and Wi-Fi, and available on a one-year lease. Once they chose the location, architects were hired to create a layout.

"We wanted what we had in the main library but downscaled," Dennison said. "We wanted to make sure we had places people could sit down and read a book or newspaper."

The move also gave library staff an opportunity to weed through their collection and get rid of damaged items and books that haven't been check out in years, she added.

The $14.4 million in renovation of the main library is scheduled to be complete in spring 2017. For more information about the project, visit http://www.indiantrailslibrary.org/renovation/.