

New Eugene public library celebrates its first birthday

Nearly 3,000 community members gathered to help commemorate the library's first anniversary on Saturday

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The new Eugene Public Library, touted as a major achievement in Eugene's effort to develop downtown, celebrated its first birthday Saturday.

About 3,000 community members participated in the celebration activities, which included Argentine tango, marimba music, storytelling, a juggling show and a jazz dance performance by the University's dance team.

Tango dancer Marisela Rizik, who emigrated from the Dominican Republic 20 years ago and now resides in Eugene, said it is a rewarding experience to perform her ethnic dance at the aesthetic new facility, located at West 10th Avenue and Olive Street.

"It's a wonderful library," she said. "We are happy that we could do something for the community. I'm having a great time."

Community member Tony Myers came to the event to show support for the library. Myers said he enjoys the library's excellent offerings.

"I am a wheelchair user, but the accessibility of the library is absolutely wonderful," he said. "I like this ample space, much better than the old one."

The four-story library is approximately three times bigger than the old library, an increase from 38,000 square feet to 130,000 square feet.

"It's been a great success," said Tylar Merrill, marketing coordinator at the Eugene Public Library. "We're keeping track of how many people are going through at each of the performances, and every one is packed."

With increased capacity and services offered at the new facility, the library also attracts more people now.

"We have been in this building for about a year, but we're still getting close to 1,000 new cardholders each month," Merrill said. "That's been pretty consistent."

University librarian Tom Stave attended the event with his 12-year-old daughter and said he comes to the Downtown library to feel a sense of the Eugene community.

"I do most of my reading at the U of O library, but I just enjoy being here," he said. "I like to mingle with the public and the community."

Stave said his favorite time at the library begins as the lights turn on.

"At night, this library has the lights on, and it's like a glittering jewel," he said.

Noriko Miyazaki is a freelance reporter for the Emerald.