



While surrounded by local children, Mayor Thomas Menino cut the birthday cake for Roslindale Library last Friday.

PHOTO BY ZACK HUFFMAN

Rozzie Library celebrates 50 years

Zack Huffman
Senior Reporter

The Roslindale Branch Library was perhaps one of the most happening spots in Roslindale Village Friday afternoon, as community members, politicians and library officials, packed the stacks for a birthday bash.

It was fifty long years ago when the Roslindale library first opened its doors.

Former Roslindale resident Leo Entwistle can remember when the library first opened. At the time, he was

living in Roslindale and had begun taking courses at Suffolk University.

One of those courses, a humanities class, required that he use a textbook that carried a \$7 price tag - a pricey amount in 1961 dollars.

"I came here to do some studying after I bought the book and there it was, right on the shelf," he said.

Much like the book he could have gotten away with not buying, the library has long served as a gem in the community.

According to Entwistle, the \$350,000 library looked very

similar when it opened to how it appears today.

"It was very modern for those days, almost futuristic," said Laura Gang, president the Friends of the Roslindale Library.

Fast-forward 50 years, and the building's exterior may have a retro feel, but last Friday the atmosphere inside was entirely festive.

Parents and kids alike crowded inside 4238 Washington St. to enjoy music,

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games, free food and a general appreciation for literacy.

Mayor Thomas Menino was on hand to cut the cake for the library's 50th birthday. Menino, originally a City Councilor for Roslindale, praised the community for getting behind the library and keeping it a vibrant part of the neighborhood.

"It's all about you folks getting involved," he said.

At the risk of having to spend the night on the couch, Menino said that his wife was there for the library's opening in 1961.

"I won't tell you how old she was," he quipped.

City Councilors Rob Consalvo, Stephen Murphy and John Connolly were all in attendance.

"This library is an oasis for families to bring their kids," said Consalvo. "It's the heart that beats in this community."

"This is a very active local

branch," added Murphy. "I spent a lot of time at this library when I was younger."

When the Boston Public Library announced early last year that as many as 10 libraries may have to be shuttered in order to make up budget shortfalls, the Roslindale community feared that their library might face the chopping block, given its close proximity to the larger West Roxbury and Hyde Park libraries.

"The city's commitment to the library is strong," said Murphy. "When it became clear that there was a problem in funding, you saw a resurgence from the community."

That concern helped facilitate a surge of growth among the Friends of the Roslindale Branch Library, which continues to this day.

"I think that mobilized a lot of interest," said Gang. "I took over in January and I feel like I

came in and was able to just ride a wave of support."

As the library moves forward, Gang said that she hopes the Friends group can help grow the library's programs, especially the conversational English program that allows non-native speakers to help develop their grasp of English through informal conversation.

Gang would like to recruit a volunteer to allow them to hold a second weekly session.

"This is a time to let the community come in and rededicate ourselves to the community," said Gang.

The Friends Group also plans to take an inventory of the interior of building to get a better sense of what could use work, such as the building's heating or cooling system.

"The Friends Group speaks to the strength of this library," Consalvo said.