



# Report to the Board of Trustees

September 7, 2022

## From the Director

This has been a very busy summer. Library usage (borrowing, meeting rooms, program attendance, etc) is steadily growing. I've continued to meet with staff, board members, Friends members, and others to learn more about the Blackstone from a Director's point of view.

I attended Town Merchant meetings, representing the library, sharing what we're up to and learning about various events happening in Branford. I also attended a LION Board meeting, held at the Otis Library in Norwich.

The Strategic Plan team created a draft of the Strategic Framework, the culmination of 18+ months of hard work, which was circulated to the Board of Trustees for review and comment prior to the September board meeting.

We ordered and received new powered side tables for the new chairs in the main floor rotunda. These tables were funded by a special gift from the Friends of the Blackstone Library. Each table has 2 electric outlets and 1 USB port, allowing users to plug in and recharge their devices.

Thanks to another gift from the Friends, we were able to begin loaning a collection of lawn games! They debuted at



We don't have a library cat anymore, which is probably a relief to our new library fish! Thanks to a gift from the Friends, the Youth Services department now has a freshwater fish tank filled with some very adorable little fish! Everyone is invited to come in and read to our new fish friends!

the 125th Birthday Bash. Since then, the lawn games, including cornhole, croquet, horseshoes, Spikeball, and more, have been in near constant circulation. To make sure even more people have a chance to borrow a game, we've changed the lending period for lawn games (and the rest of our Library of Things) from 3 to 2 weeks.

On July 22, Jenna Anthony gave a tour of the library to a group of part-time staff from the Guilford Free Library, as part of their professional development day. They were excited to see the changes since the renovation.

On August 5, staff, joined by trustee Adam Spilka, participated in an in-service training session to learn about the basics of intellectual freedom.

Beginning August 15 and running through November 1, the library is participating in an art installation/geocache project with local artist Jen Payne. This is a statewide artist treasure hunt, and people must solve clues to find the treasure. Learn more at [somethingprojects.net](https://somethingprojects.net). Clicking on an artist's photo on the site will take you to each project page. We're so pleased to be part of the treasure hunt.

— Katy McNicol

## STAFF RECOGNITION

Over the summer, we received a phone call from a patron who had been helped by Jenna Anthony at the Reference desk.

The patron came in with her Kindle looking for some help, and Jenna was 'so magnificent, so sweet and so patient'.

The patron was grateful for the time Jenna spent to help her, and said: 'Three cheers for the library, three cheers for Jenna'.

Thank you to Jenna for providing a great experience to this person – and thanks to everyone on staff for taking your time with patrons and giving them the help they need!

## Highlights from the Youth Services Department—June & July

### BIRTHDAY BASH

In June, we celebrated 125 years of serving our community. Thanks to the a sponsorship from the Friends of the Library, the Youth Services Department was able to book master storyteller Bill Harley, who uses a combination of storytelling and singing to entertain the entire family. It was fun to see our library lawn filled with so many smiling faces.



*Ocean-themed photo booth opportunity at the Youth Services entrance.*



*Our Take-and-Make kits are hugely popular, allowing families to participate at their convenience. This summer featured a cookie decorating challenge!*

After that, Miss Sarah took over, manning our brand-new lawn game collection, also provided by the Friends of the Library. Sarah pooled together a group of volunteers, teens and adults, to man the games and show families how to play them. The volunteers spent most of the day chatting with families and showcasing this collection.

During the Bash, Miss Mary was busy inside the building, talking to families about summer reading, checking out books, and making brand new cards. People also got to participate in an ocean-themed scavenger hunt that Miss Carol had completed the day before.

### MIDDLE SCHOOL OUTREACH

Mid-month Miss Sarah and I were able to ZOOM in with a couple of middle school groups before the school year ended. During these sessions we were able to highlight our resources and the programs we have to offer. It was nice engaging with the students and shar-



*Teens and children participated in a summer paint night event with Pam's Picassos.*



ing how they can get involved with the library.

### NEW FISH TANK

Our fish tank made possible by the Friends of the Library also debuted this summer. Miss Sarah did an amazing job curating the overall look of the tank as well as researching which fish to get. Children of all ages have enjoyed watching them swim and many have pulled up a book to read aloud to them.

### SUMMER READING PROGRAMS & FUN

Teen volunteers helped decorate the department for summer reading with ocean-themed photobooth opportunities and light-up paper jellyfish to get ready for summer reading.

In July, our drop-in touch tank provided by the Mystic Aquarium was a huge success, with well over 70 people stopping by the tables set up in the lobby. The touch tank provided hands-on crustacean experiences as well as two specialists to answer questions.

We also hosted back-to-back paint nights for kids and teens with Pam's Picassos that were well-attended. Being able to provide this program after hours meant that working parents could attend, which brought in some new faces and supports our goal that library programming should be accessible to all.

We offered our first creative writing sessions with Amy Bowers for children. Amy mixes writing, movement activities, and discussion to draw in all types of learners. Each participant left with the beginnings of a short story that they will hopefully submit to our end of summer creative writing contest!

We also partnered with Branford Parks & Recreation, inviting their youngest campers to take part in a library field trip. The small group of preschoolers enjoyed a storytime, with songs and a craft. Every camper that attended left with our summer programming catalog so hopefully we will see them throughout the rest of the summer.

## Highlights from the Reference Department-June/July

### NEW APP FOR eBOOKS & AUDIOBOOKS



The library launched the Palace Project app this month. The Palace Project is a new, non-profit platform for public library users to access e-book and e-audiobook collections in one place. Included in the Palace app are the LION consortium OverDrive collection, the State of Connecticut's collection and the Digital Public Library of America collection of over 10,000 titles. Available on the App Store or Google Play, library patrons simply choose their library, add their library barcode and they are ready to borrow. Titles placed on hold or downloaded from the OverDrive collection can still be accessed in the Libby app if patrons prefer to continue using Libby.

### ADULT SUMMER READING

Adult Summer Reading launched on June 25<sup>th</sup>. No registration is necessary. Patrons can pick up a game sheet at the library and participate as much or as little as they like. There are nine challenges to complete – one for each week. They can be

completed all at once or spaced out. The more challenges completed, the more tickets collected, the more chances there are to win.

Once a challenge is completed, name and contact info should be filled out and the ticket placed in the box that corresponds to the prize of choice. Each challenge is good for one prize entry, and the prize entry boxes are located in the ground floor lobby of the library. Gift certificates from local businesses include: **R.J. Julia's, Common Grounds, Ashley's Ice Cream, Lenny's, and Thimble Island Brewery.**

### REFERENCE STAFFING

The Reference Department has been undergoing some changes in personnel and responsibilities. Christina has taken over most of the cataloging duties for the entire library, in addition to continuing with tech appointments, tech classes, Community Webs, Strategic Planning, and shifts at the Reference desk. She had twenty individual tech appointments in July, taught a Google Docs class and had tech drop-in days at the library and at the Senior

Center. Other reference librarians pitch in to help with some of the tech appointments, but Christina handles the vast majority and she has been a favorite for some time for our patrons seeking tech help!

We also prepared to say goodbye to Brendan Galvin who has accepted a full-time position at the Yale Music Library. We are delighted for him and very sad to see him go. Debby is accepting resumes to fill one full-time and two part-time positions in the Reference Department.

### PROGRAMS

Jenna is finalizing the Fall programs and we are all excited to see more and more patrons attend in-person programs at the library. In July, in addition to Latin classes, poetry, book groups, Saturday cinema, coloring and knitting groups, we had a lecture by Jane Bouley on the Architecture of the Blackstone Library, an art opening by Yvonne Gordon-Moser, a very well-received jazz concert, and a program on scrapbooking with plants in the 18<sup>th</sup> century.

— Deborah Trofatter



### New Digital Access to CT Newspapers

Blackstone Library cardholders now have access to the **New Haven Register** from home. It's updated daily and includes a new image edition that allows you to flip through the paper page by page (**click the link with the format "image"**). We also offer access to dozens of CT newspapers including the Shoreline Times! Visit [blackstonelibrary.org](http://blackstonelibrary.org) to learn more.

## SAVE THE DATE—FRIENDS BOOK SALE ON THE BRANFORD GREEN

Mark your calendars for the Friends of the Blackstone Library **Annual Book Sale** on the Branford Green!

**Thursday, September 22  
– Sunday, September 25**

- **Sale Preview for Friends Members**  
Thu, Sept. 22, 5 – 7 PM
- **General Sale**  
Thu, Sept. 22 7 – 9 PM  
Fri, Sept. 23 9 AM – 7 PM  
Sat, Sept. 24 9 AM – 7 PM  
Sun, Sept. 25 NOON – 3 PM (\$10 BAG)



FRIENDS  
OF  
BLACKSTONE LIBRARY



Questions? Email: [friends@blackstonelibrary.org](mailto:friends@blackstonelibrary.org)

**FALL 2022 Book Sale**





James Blackstone Memorial Library  
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Branford, CT 06405  
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...more than books

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"Although I very much enjoyed learning about the special architectural features of the library, I was particularly wowed by the presentation on 18th century herbaria. The presenter artfully and passionately shared her unique experience recreating the preservation techniques of the period, while grounding the attendees with the foundational history of plant movement, documentation, and preservation. She also provided helpful resources for learning more.

I left having learned a lot, but also with lots of wonderful questions and creative ideas to explore. What a pleasure! I would love to see the library partner more with knowledgeable researchers and scholars and their current work.

Thanks for all you do! I love the library! "

— Comment from Summer  
Programs Survey

## September 2022 Program Highlights

### How to Eat a Poem

**Saturdays @ 11 am–12 pm**

**In-person/online.** Learn to better understand and appreciate the wide world of poetry! This group will be your guide to discovering how and what a poem means, hopefully gaining a new appreciation for the art form. **To register:** Call 203-488-1441 x318 or email programs@blackstonelibrary.org.

### Free COVID-19 Vaccine Clinics

**In-person.** Vaccination Clinics offered by Griffin Health. No appointment needed. Please bring a health insurance card and photo ID if you have them, but it is **not necessary** to have health insurance or ID to receive the vaccine. No one will be turned away for lack of insurance or ID.

### Adult Vaccine Clinic

**Friday September 9 @ 12–4 pm**

Ages 12+ only. Pfizer, Moderna, and J&J Vaccines Available. A follow up clinic for the second vaccine

dose will be held on **Friday, September 30th from 12–4 pm.**

### Wild Edible Plants and Fungi of Autumn

**Tuesday, September 13**

**6:30–7:30 pm**

**In-person.** Join The 3 Foragers as they teach the edible plants and fungi of autumn. Learn how to identify, sustainably harvest, and prepare wild foods. **Sponsored by the Friends of the Blackstone Library.**

### Finding Mary: A Fireside Author Event

**Saturday, September 17**

**@ 2–3 pm**

**In-person.** We're pleased to welcome Connecticut author Julie Rummell for a talk about her memoir *Finding Mary: a Journey of Reclamation*, the story of her journey through unresolved grief toward forgiveness, understanding, and justice in the face of murder.

### Homeschool Social Hour

**Monday, September 26 @ 2–3 pm**

**Drop-in event.** Join other homeschooling families with students of all ages for a meet-and-greet hour of facilitated social fun. We'll meet on the library lawn to learn about some of the traditional & nontraditional services the library provides, including our brand new lawn games! Get to know Miss Sarah & Miss Carly and help us learn how we can better serve you in the future! **Sponsored by the Friends of the Blackstone Library.** Grades K-4.

### Fall Take-N-Makes

**4th Wednesday of the month**

**@ 9–8 pm**

**Drop-in event.** If you've enjoyed our TeensCraft Events in the past, this program is for you! Each month, we're putting together a different craft kit. No sign up is required but kits are limited. Drop by to pick one up while supplies last! **Sponsored by the Allan Louis Loeb Foundation.**

*Check our website for more programs and registration details!*

## June/July 2022 Statistics—Deirdre Santora

### Total Circulation

**June: 7,581 July: 8,434**

June 2021: 7,631

July 2021: 8,425

### borrowIT

**June: 1,410 July: 1,607**

June 2021: 1,426

July 2021: 1,431

### Renewals:

June: 4,297 July: 4,617

### Computer Sessions

June: 623 / July: 624

### WIFI Logins:

June: 3,284 / July: 3,290

**Facebook: 2,159 Likes**

**Instagram: 1,108 Followers**

**MailChimp: 7,624 Subscribers**

### Downloadable Circulation

June/July:

**Overdrive ebooks:** 1,666/1,775

**Overdrive audiobooks:**  
825/779

**Overdrive magazines:** 155/196

**HOOPLA:** 1,205/1,204

**Kanopy:** 249/292

**Pronunciator:** 613/640

**Ancestry Library:** 99/134

**New Haven Register:** 162/166

**Creative Bug:** 2/11

**Average Daily Visitors (July): 367**

**Days open (July): 24**

**Lucy Hammer & Conference**

**Room Usage:** June: 86 / July: 109

### Children's Programs

June:

21 programs/280 attendance

July:

25 programs/440 attendance

### Teen Programs (12+)

June:

8 programs/154 attendance

July:

8 programs/36 attendance

### Adult programs

June:

36 programs/364 attendance

July:

33 programs/322 attendance