From the Director

In mid-July, the Library was awarded a low interest Paycheck Protection Program loan through Guilford Savings Bank made possible by the CARES act. The loan is payable over a period of 5 years, at a rate of 1% per annum. If the loan is spent on payroll costs, it may be 100% forgiven. The process to apply for loan forgiveness begins this month and the library may be eligible to apply before the end of the year.

Security cameras were installed in six locations around the building. One at each entrance, one at the terrace, two at the rear parking lot, and one at the front parking lot. Having these cameras will make a significant difference in the safety of patrons and staff for the future. Thank you to the Town of Branford for funding this capital expense.

We continued curbside service and opened the computer lab for appointments. It has been great seeing our regular patrons and they appreciate critical access to the internet and help with applications, research, and email.

Summer reading was supported through a variety of interactive programs on Zoom. Over 200 children participated in the summer challenges posted throughout the summer. You can follow our social media at Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter to see how we are communicating with our patrons.

The roof repair project began on August 3. By the end of the month, the terracotta had been removed and all of the steel was exposed. The new steel frame will be installed mid-September.

The community is discovering our programs on Zoom, and we find they are also being viewed afterwards by those who could not attend the live programs. The program hosted on July 29 with BCTV was viewed over 850 times on Facebook Live after it was broadcast.

Our flip/nest tables arrived for the auditorium. We are so excited to have tables that don’t require lifting! Thank you to the Town of Branford for funding this purchase.

As the summer comes to a close and school begins again, we are excited to make plans to open the building for browsing and studying. We have posted a list of FAQs and are ready to welcome our patrons in mid-September.

Karen Jensen
Highlights from the Youth Services Department—June & July

June marked the official start of our online Summer Reading Quest, featuring 10 weeks of virtual challenges for readers of all ages. We used social media, email, and Google forms to communicate with our participants, who read outside of their comfort zone, designed new book covers, re-read something they loved in their youth, and more! There were over 200 people signed up for the program including individuals and families. We loved seeing submissions and posting highlights throughout the summer. Each story reminds us how reading can transform us deeply.

For the summer months, we increased our virtual story times to three each week. In June, we brought two LIVE programs for families through Zoom, with the ScienceTellers and Denison Pequotsepos Nature Center.

The ScienceTellers use stories to explain scientific topics. Kids learned about the properties of solids, liquids, and gasses through a dragon-themed quest, ending with a LIVE experiment that the kids could replicate with supplies easily found at home.

Denison’s program focused on animals and the many senses they use in order to survive. Kids were able to see owls, turtles, and snakes up close and they enjoyed being able to ask questions and share facts they had learned along the way.

My favorite program this month was my book club for 4th & 5th grade. We discussed Storm Runner, a Maya mythology book from Rick Riordan’s new series that is committed to giving a voice to underrepresented cultures. Most of the kids signed up for the book club because they have read Rick Riordan’s mythological adventures in the past, so if he endorses it - it has to be good! Looking back, this platform is genius, allowing Riordan to open the door for under represented voices and share fully-rounded multicultural characters that we so desperately need! Not only to ensure that every reader can see themselves as the hero of the story, but also so that we will continue to look beyond our personal culture and history.

Miss Sarah reached out to her Teen Advisory Board to plan for the fall. One of the members hosted a “how to” makeup class where teens could learn how to obtain different looks. The teen said that putting a “how to” class together was something she wanted to do for awhile and the opportunity to use Zoom eased her fears and gave her the push she needed to share her love of makeup with others.

At the end of June, we mounted our annual Story-Walk on Main in the windows of Branford downtown stores. This year we chose My Two Blankets by Irena Kobald and Freya Blackwood. The story is based on true events of a friendship formed between the author’s daughter and a Sudanese child. The experience of reading a book while going on a walk was a safe way to get outside and the story was a reminder that our similarities surpass our differences.

Miss Sarah’s bi-weekly Creative Writing Class for teens has grown with each coming week and proves she is a marketing genius because teens from different countries have been participating in order to connect with kids from the U.S. and practice English in a natural setting. Creating this cross cultural connection has been beneficial and a way for teens to see life through the eyes of someone that does not live in Branford, CT; something that was not initially on our radar but a cool benefit of moving programming to an all online platform.

Speaking of connecting outside the U.S., I was able to book an early childhood musical performer from Canada that has a huge following on Instagram. Mr. Drew uses a combination of Music Together songs, puppets, and instruments to create a music and movement experience that extends outside screens. His personality is infectious and he calls as many viewers as he can by name so that they are seen and heard.

This summer we also hosted our first LIVE streamed movie, a sing-along of Frozen™. Miss Sarah’s Cosplay Club attended, and some brought LIVE action puppets to add to the experience. Many of the kids came to the show in full costume and we were able to connect, compliment, and talk about their favorite characters and songs.
The Reference staff continues to be busy with reference inquiries, archives indexing, collection development, and lots of programs. Our Zoom programs continue to be very popular and we are expanding our offerings since we recognize that in-house programming will not be possible for some time to come.

We have weekly yoga, Latin, and poetry classes, our knitting group now meets on the library lawn at safe social distancing, we host several book clubs, and Christina held a class on accessing eBooks from OverDrive, Libby, RBDigital, and SimplyE. Jenna has been working on summer reading and on additional programs for the summer. Christina and Sarah are taking their popular game night online in a Zoom session.

The department continues to support the circulation staff as they manage the contactless pickup service. Our patrons have been really pleased that we can offer hold and pickup service.

One question that the Reference department often receives involves requests for obituaries. Many of these inquiries are from out-of-town patrons looking for an obituary for a person who died in Branford. However, because many deaths occur at Hospice for non-Branford residents, these obituaries very often cannot be found in a local newspaper. Recently, we received one such request and were able to determine on AncestryLibrary that the woman was a resident of Fairfield at the time of her death, so we contacted the History Center at the Bridgeport Public Library and asked them to search for an obituary in the Connecticut Post. They did so and were able to locate the obituary which we forwarded to our patron, who was very pleased. Sometimes it takes a little extra effort, but going the extra mile is a characteristic of our department in which we take particular pride.

We opened the Computer Lab in July for socially distanced one-hour appointments and our regulars in particular were very happy to be back. We have had cooperation with mask wearing and social distancing and overall the process has been positive and well received.

The Reference librarians are very grateful to the staff in the circulation department as they are the ones checking patrons in as they enter the building and adding same day reservations to the schedule. Once again, interdepartmental cooperation shows what a great place the Blackstone Library is to work in!

Our Print from Home service has been used more often during the pandemic. Patrons are able to send a print job and arrange a contactless pickup from our atrium. This process is initiated in the Computer Lab, but once again the staff at the main desk makes sure the print jobs are available for pickup by our patrons.

We had a number of successful Zoom programs in July, including a class on Hoopla and Kanopy, one with the Canoe Brook Senior Center on accessing and playing online games, an online adult game night, an author book talk, a Drum Away the Blues program, our usual Knitting group, book discussions, yoga and poetry classes, a program on eating disorders, and a very successful program titled Black in Branford which we co-hosted with BCTV and ran on both Zoom and Facebook Live.

Our online programming is reaching patrons around the world; we have had people sign up for our Zoom programs from England, the Philippines, and Australia.

Highlights from the Reference Department—continued

Thank you for your help, expertise and kindness that you provide to everybody. We’re very grateful to have such great service and librarians. Stay well!!

Maria & Rocco Ciravolo
September 2020 Program Highlights

The Lafayette Trail
September 9 @ 7-9 pm
Julien P. Ichter will speak about Lafayette's Farewell Tour to the US and the stops he made in Connecticut. Sponsored by the Branford Historical Society.

Chasing Labyrinths: A Love Story
September 12 @ 2:30-4 pm
Bill Ludwig, a longtime Branford resident and creator of the Branford Labyrinth, will speak about how discovering labyrinths changed the course of his life.

Getting the Most from Social Security
September 17 @ 6-7 pm
Join us for this Zoom workshop sponsored by AAA Retire.

The Severed Finger: Author Talk with Arno Zimmer
September 19 @ 2-3:30 pm
Join us for a virtual presentation by local author Arno B. Zimmer. He'll discuss his book, The Severed Finger, a mystery novel set right off the coast of the Thimble Islands!

Virtual Game Nights
September 25 @ 6-9 pm
Join us for a night of online games with some fun, laid-back people, without having to leave the house! Find the Everyday Adventurers group at Meetup.com.

Best Seller Book Club
September 26 @ 3:30-4:30 pm
Read and discuss newly released, highly-rated books from a wide variety of genres.

Spirits of New England
October 1 @ 6-7:30 pm
This lecture by professional ghost hunter Dustin Pari chronicles some of his favorite New England paranormal investigations. Sponsored by the Friends of the Blackstone Library.

New members are welcome! Sponsored by the Friends of the Blackstone Library.

June/July 2020 Statistics—Deirdre Santora

**Total Circulation**
June: 3,123 July: 3,756
June 2019: 10,532
July 2019: 12,552

**borrowIT**
June: 740 July: 668
June 2019: 2,071
July 2019: 2,622

**Renewals:**
June: 1,149 July: 1,374

**Computer Sessions**
June: N/A July: 118

**Facebook:** 1,868 Likes
**Instagram:** 923 Followers
**MailChimp:** 7,776

**Downloadable Circulation:**
Overdrive ebooks
June: 1,405 July: 1,662
Overdrive audiobooks
June: 560 July: 589
RB Digital June: 302 July: 343
HOOPLA
June: 904 July: 865
Canopy
June: 176 July: 152
Pronunciator
June: 542 July: 547

**Lucy Hammer Room N/A**

**Conference Room N/A**

**Average Daily Visitors N/A**

**Children’s Programs**
June: 17 programs/158 attendance
July: 20 programs/170 attendance

**Teen Programs (12+)**
June: 4 programs/18 attendance
July: 4 programs/22 attendance

**Adult programs**
June: 15 programs/264 attendance
July: 17 programs/431 attendance

Check our website for more programs! All programs are virtual and require registration.