JAMES BLACKSTONE MEMORIAL LIBRARY

Annual Report

2019-2020
The James Blackstone Memorial Library provides essential access to information, resources, and unique shared experiences to help ensure Branford is an educated and enriched community.

MISSION STATEMENT
This has been a challenging year for all, though not without some silver linings. Though access to the building has been limited, virtual programs have allowed us to connect in new and different ways, providing a lifeline during the pandemic. Many of you discovered our electronic materials, whose use has grown to account for 15% of the Library’s total circulation. We are excited to have the renovation essentially complete, and we are grateful to the Town of Branford for supporting long needed auditorium roof repairs.

— Karen Jensen, Library Director
the following numbers reflect 3 months of closure due to COVID-19...
LIBRARY USAGE

208,195 digital & physical items borrowed

2019-2020
63,152 questions answered
LIBRARY USAGE

9,971 registered cardholders

2019-2020
4,224 children/caregivers & teens attended programs
1,935 adults attended programs
LIBRARY USAGE

2,604 meeting room bookings

2019-2020
NEW FICTION

500 MILES FROM YOU
JENNY COLGAN

BLACK SUN RISING
MATTHEW J. COOKE

THE SPLIT MOUTH
SHARON BROWN

THE THERAPY SHARON BROWN
93,626

Total items in the collection
62,278
books, DVDs, audiobooks, CDs
LIBRARY MATERIALS

31,037

electronic/digital collection

*(does not include access to over 500,00 HOOPOLA titles)*
311
Newspapers & periodicals
(includes 240 RBdigital magazine titles)
The new entry was open to the public in September 2019.

The project received a 2020 CT Preservation award which recognized the design of the new entry as “respecting and enhancing the historic architecture, creating a dignified entry while leaving the architect’s original design intact.”
By December, the project was essentially complete with the children’s department moving out of the auditorium and into their new space.

Unfortunately, extensive damage to the auditorium dome roof was discovered before the final phase could be completed.
The library was able to secure a Historic Restoration Fund grant for $100,000 from the State Historic Preservation Office toward the work and the Town of Branford contributed an additional $400,000 to ensure the repairs would be completed. That work is expected to be complete in FY 2021.
The library was pleased to participate in the celebration of Branford’s 375th birthday by providing material for Factual Fridays on Instagram.
During the early history of Blackstone's Cove the notorious pirate Robert Kidd, in his numerous raids would often times cruise among the Thimble Islands. He would move his schooner in a little dock called to this day Kidd's Harbor, a little natural dock where, when moored, it was almost impossible for even a searching party to have discovered the craft, because high rocks, from two adjoining islands, surmounted by trees, completely hid from view. Here we are told Captain Kidd the pirate chief many times anchored. He would then take a boat and some of his crew and row ashore to Blackstone's cove, in search of farm produce and other supplies. Captain Kidd was well known to Mr. Blackstone. About this time Mr. Blackstone had as his guest a brother from England who was an officer in the King's bodyguard, and a very expert swordsman. Captain Kidd had among his crew a young lieutenant who was a great favorite with the old pirate and also very skillful in his use of the sword. The old captain having

blackstone_library Yesterday's Factual Friday is certainly a dramatic one. Here it is, courtesy of our partnership with @branford375: A favored lieutenant of the famous pirate Captain Kidd was once in a duel with the brother of Captain Blackstone, an important figure in early Branford history. In an article in the New Haven Register, published in 1898, it was reported that the young pirate lieutenant and the brother of James Blackstone--an expert swordsman visiting from England--engaged in a fierce duel to test their skills. Blackstone was reportedly the better swordsman but he feared Kidd and his men would seek revenge if he defeated the pirate, so he allowed himself to be defeated. Sounds like a good call to us!

#branford375 #branfordct #captainkidd #localhistory #blackstonelibrary
The Board of Trustees’ Development Committee hosted its first *Snuggle In and Read* virtual fundraiser in October 2019, raising $4,800 toward the library’s operating budget.

By December, the annual appeal had exceeded its goal for the year.
the Snuggle In and Read Halloween Ball

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 26

"My choice for Snuggle In and Read?
The House of the Spirits, by Isabel Allende.
JEN PAYNE, AUTHOR OF WAITING OUT THE STORM"

"The library is one of our most important community resources..."
CHERYL DELLA PIETRA, AUTHOR OF GONZO GIRL
The minigolf fundraiser planned for Spring 2020 had to be cancelled due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

However, overall development efforts were successful enough that the Board of Trustees voted to cancel the spring appeal, encouraging donations to other Branford organizations instead.
The Friends of Blackstone Library held their annual book sale in September 2019 with gross receipts of almost $65,000.
These funds were crucial in supporting a variety of library programs — including access to electronic books, audio, music, and streaming video through HOOPLA and Kanopy — essential resources whose use increased threefold in April and May.
The Friends’ book sale planned for Fall 2020 was cancelled due to the COVID-19 pandemic.
FACE SHIELD SUPPLIES MADE WITH BLACKSTONE’S 3D PRINTER  Photo: James Davis
When the library closed its doors to the public on March 13 due to the COVID-19 pandemic, staff immediately rallied to reimagine library services.
By the end of the month, new virtual programs were launched, monthly limits on digital materials were increased, wifi was extended for access in the library plaza, and staff continued to help our patrons by phone, email and zoom.
No-contact pickup now available!

Visit blackstonelibrary.org for more info or call 203-488-1441 with any questions.

Blackstone Library Presents

Saturday Stories LIVE

Join us from the comfort of your couch at 10:30AM

All you need is your computer, tablet or phone and an internet connection. Follow the LINK provided to be prompted to ZOOM.

#BlackstoneAtHome

We're all in this together. Let's explore from home.
By May 20, we had launched a new contactless pickup service and by July the building was open again for computer access.
Looking ahead to 2021, the Blackstone Library will celebrate 125 years serving the Branford community in June.

From all of us at the Blackstone, we wish you and your families good health, happiness, and success.
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2019-2020
LIBRARY STAFF

Karen Jensen, Library Director
Carly Lemire, Associate Librarian for Youth Services
Katy McNicol, Associate Librarian for Development & Outreach
Kathy Oxsalida, Business Manager
Deirdre Santora, Associate Librarian for Access Services
Deborah Trofatter, Associate Librarian for Technology and Reference Services
Jenna Anthony, Reference Assistant
Barbara Barrett, Access Services
Patricia Bussman, Cataloging
Erin Byrne, Access Services
Carol Capezzone, Youth Services
Moira Healey, Access Services
Allison Horton, Access Services
Sandre Johnson, Access Services
Anne Killheffer, Reference Librarian
Christina Kondziela, Reference Librarian
Mary Lockery, Youth Services
Sarah Mallory, Teen Services
Angela Meikle, Access Services
Frank Zdunek, Maintenance

2019-2020
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Callista Stoddard, Treasurer
Jonathan Grande, Assistant Treasurer/Membership
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