

# Report to the Board of Trustees

July 7, 2021


## From the Director

Our strategic planning team has begun conducting our community conversations, and are collecting the data. Once the data is collected, we will work with Innovation Builders to analyze and interpret the data. Some initial indicators of the conversations are that people really love the library and the building and they are looking for ways to be involved. We have also had some comments indicating a desire for more expert-led programs. We have also heard that people still appreciate being able to attend programs via zoom, when they are unable to come to the library. While we hoped to have the conversations completed by the end of June, recruitment has been a challenge, and we are working hard to schedule more groups for July.

Trustee Michelle Blank contributed to a press release about the library's 125th anniversary, which ran in The Sound and the Shoreline Times on June 17. The press release included the 125th logo. We also used the logo in a presentation to the Friends at their annual meeting, and we will incorporate it into our marketing materials.

The Friends' annual meeting

**I'M STILL [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED] HERE [REDACTED]  
BLACK [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED] DIGNITY IN [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED] A WORLD  
MADE FOR [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED] WHITENESS  
AUSTIN CHANNING  
[REDACTED] BROWN [REDACTED]**

  
**AWAKENING TO CHANGE:  
A SOCIAL JUSTICE  
BOOK CLUB**

Thursdays July 1, 8, & 15 at 7:00pm

Join us for a discussion of *I'm Still Here* Thursday evenings in July. Each session will focus on a different part of the book. Come to one, or all three sessions. Copies of the book are available at the library.

was held in person on June 15th. There was a reception afterwards that made use of the new Cosgrove Terrace. The chairs for the terrace have been delivered, and the tables are expected by June 29.

The new social justice book discussion group was a success, with 20 members in attendance at each of 3 weekly sessions in June. Volunteer Linda Packard did an exceptional job of facilitating the conversation. July's book is *I'm Still Here* by Austin Channing Brown.

The Community Foundation for Greater New Haven held an online training session presented by the Racial Equity Institute, called the Groundwater Approach, which outlined the systems that support racism. The program presented stunning

statistics that showed how Black people in our country are at a consistent disadvantage. It was helpful to gain a better understanding of the challenges that many of our patrons are still facing. As an institution that serves the entire community, I feel it is important to continue educating ourselves about racial inequity.

The new AC chiller has arrived and work is tentatively scheduled for early July. The self-checkout machine is up and running to the delight and convenience of our patrons.

Finally, we used surveys from Project Outcome to evaluate selected programs in May and have more surveys scheduled to go out after June programs.

Karen Jensen

## project **OUTCOME** MEASURING THE TRUE IMPACT OF LIBRARIES

This month we sent Project Outcome surveys to participants in two programs.

We received 12 responses out of 33 people who attended the "Birder on Berry Lane" on May 12. 100% indicated that they learned something that was helpful, 92% intended to apply what they had learned. 92% were more aware of resources available at the library and 83% felt confident about what they had learned.

45 people out of 101 attendees responded to our survey after attending "Birdscaping" and indicated similar results.

## Highlights from the Youth Services Department—May

May was a busy month in Youth Services! As you know, Miss Carly left at the end of April to begin her family leave, and we were very excited to welcome a healthy baby boy named Wesley as the youngest honorary member of Blackstone's staff. During Miss Carly's absence, Miss Mary is continuing to run story time with Miss Sarah's help, and they have both taken over running some special children's programs to ensure the calendar continues as planned. Miss Carol has added extra hours in the department to cover staffing shortages at the desk, which would have usually been covered by Carly. Miss Sarah is continuing to order teen materials. Children's materials that would have been ordered by Carly are currently being selected by Miss Mary and orders are being organized and submitted by Miss Sarah so Patricia can process them. Special programs this month in Children's Services included a Mother's Day story time and a water conservation program. Special programs in Teen Services included a Teen Game Night and a *Nailed It!* cooking event. The cooking program was run by Miss Sarah with the help of Terri Torres and her two daughters, who volunteered to share a family recipe. Teens who signed up received a shopping list in advance, and everyone cooked together at the same time in a live version of a Food Network program, making their own vanilla milkshakes and cheesy chicken enchiladas. Not only

was the program well received, but some of the ingredients for the event—fresh scallions and garlic—were on the list of plants we grew last month in our teen gardening program. It was so rewarding to see three of the teens in attendance were able to harvest their own scallions and green garlic from our April event and use that in their recipe!

Both of our special teen programs this month took place in the library's Virtual Teen Space, which is one of the positives that has come out of the pandemic, as it has provided local teens with an online forum in which to share poetry, art, and book recommendations, as well as a place to receive updates from the library and to participate in programs. It has become, overwhelmingly, the main way our teens reach out for information from the library, as many of them already have the app installed on their phones. We updated the online behavior policy agreement this month for this Teen Space, asking teens to provide contact information for their parents and to promise to follow library rules even in virtual spaces. Finally, our spring Take & Make series concluded this month with a Pipe Cleaner Dragons craft for children and a Wildflower Suncatchers craft for teens. In total, we made 40 craft kits but, thanks to repeat watchers and social media shares, the videos we created for this month's crafts were viewed a total of

77 times (and counting!). The Take & Make program has been so popular that we will be expanding it for the summer to include craft kits for adults, as well as for children and teens. Miss Sarah will be organizing the craft kits with the help of Miss Mary, Jenna Anthony in Reference, and Katy McNicol.

Live program attendance for the month of May was 108 with additional views of recorded programs of 77, for total attendance in Youth Services of 185.

-Sarah Mallory



*Thanks to students from Lyman Hall for presenting a series of programs on animal care this summer!*

## 125th Anniversary—The Bird Collection

We get lots of questions about the bird collection and it's no wonder! The collection was extremely impressive and represented many different types of local species. According to our archives, the core of the collection was provided by Valdimar Hammer and the taxidermist was

Mr. Armstrong of Pawson Park here in Branford. We were certainly sad to see them go, but we know they found a great home at Earthplace Nature Discovery Center in Westport CT, a non-profit organization committed to building passion and respect for the natural

world and a more sustainable future. There, the collection continues to educate and inspire a new generation of animal enthusiasts!

## Highlights from the Reference Department-May

We continue to have good attendance and a positive response to our programs, with patrons attending from all over the country. In May, we had Latin classes, Poetry discussions, book groups, our knitting group is meeting on the library grounds now that the weather is warmer, we had another well attended game night, a program on Birdscaping - creating garden habitats to attract birds, Branford Forum and a Cutting the Cord program.

Anne has been busy scanning some of our assorted collections of newspaper clippings. Included in these scans are newspaper clippings on Senator Lucy T. Hammer's career, on the 350th celebration of the town of Branford (1994) and on the trolley in Branford from its beginnings. These are presently stored locally, but they are included in our list of possible uploads to the Digital Archives or regular library website.

Jenna completed organizing the library manuscript and article collection; she orga-

nized them into six archival storage boxes with a finding aid for each box. She has been working on and assisting with new book groups, hosting two of them and creating new book club sets. Jenna is planning new programs for the Fall and makes sure that our current ones are ready to go on Zoom, with publicity in place and someone to host the Zoom sessions. She continues to add new photographs, descriptions and metadata to the Digital Archive.

Christina has been very busy with the Community Webs project, an IMLS funded effort to preserve local websites. She attends a number of sessions each month to learn all of the technical aspects of the project, of which there are many, and she has begun running test crawls on our initial group of websites, to analyze them, ensure that they are being captured correctly and prepare them for public access. She had six tech help appointments this month - how to use Zoom, Windows 10 & browser navi-

gation, Gmail and Yahoo accounts, Apple ID/iCloud, Gmail troubleshooting and JobNow/resume assistance.

Debby is working with both Christina and Jenna on the archival projects. She also attended the virtual New England Regional Genealogical Conference and viewed programs on New England probate research, DNA (understanding the science, testing, and how to implement in genealogy), New England Maps, Irish Ancestors, Connecticut Vital Records, New England land records, and more. Debby purchased new bookshelves from IKEA for our board games collection, now stored in the side room of the auditorium; we are all looking forward to the day we can have our Game Night in person again. (Jenna put all three bookshelves together for us!)

Everyone attended CLA sessions - many thanks to the Friends who covered the cost of our attendance.

-Deborah Trofatter



A variety of local bird specimens were displayed in cases on the 2nd floor of the library until 1996, when the area was renovated to provide expanded space for children.



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## July 2021 Virtual Program Highlights

### Virtual Game Night

*July 2 @ 6 - 9:00 pm*  
Join us for a night of silly online games with some fun, laid-back people, without having to leave the house! Get all the info you need and RSVP Meetup page. For adults of all experience levels.

### Ovenbirds and Wood Thrush, Research, and the CT Bird Atlas: Presented by DEEP

*July 8 @ 6 - 7:00 pm*  
Connecticut is completing a three-year project for The Connecticut Bird Atlas. This undertaking combined efforts of the public with DEEP and University researchers to tabulate the populations of all birds found here in Connecticut. Two species, the Ovenbird and Wood Thrush, will be highlighted by Min Huang, Wildlife Biologist and one of the Coordinators of the atlas project.

### Education in the Grotesque: Gargoyles of Yale University

*July 14 @ 7 - 8:30 pm*  
The Branford Historical Society presents a lecture by Mathew Duman highlighting a selection of gargoyles and grotesques found throughout the buildings of Yale University's campus in New Haven, CT. Using original photographs from his book, *An Education in the Grotesque*, he explores the artistic, historic, architectural, and even humorous significance of these decorative sculptures, as well as their role in communicating the identity of Yale University as a place of learning and enlightenment.

### Start, Manage, & Grow Your Business with Reference Solutions

*July 29 @ 6 - 7:00 pm*  
Are you interested in learning about new technologies to

help you start or grow your own business? Guest speaker TJ Pridell with Reference Solutions will hosts an interactive, lead-generation marketing seminar catering to the Branford business community. Reference Solutions, an online provider of business and consumer research is offered free to the public through the Blackstone Library—it's an invaluable resource for business owners, sales & marketing representatives and job seekers!

### Best Seller Book Club

*July 31 @ 3:30 - 4:30 pm*  
This month we're reading *Klara and the Sun* by Kazuo Ishiguro. A limited number of copies are available for book club participants. *Sponsored by the Friends of the Blackstone Library.*

*All programs are virtual—please visit our website to learn about more programs and registration information: [www.blackstonelibrary.org](http://www.blackstonelibrary.org)*

## May 2021 Statistics

**Total Circulation:** 4,850  
*May 2020: 1,338*

**borrowIT:** 1,080  
*April 2020: 246*  
**Renewals:** 3,900

**Computer Sessions:** 219  
**WIFI Logins:** 1,317

**Facebook:** 1980 Likes  
**Instagram:** 1031 Followers  
**MailChimp:** 7,618

### Downloadable Circulation:

Overdrive ebooks: 1558  
Overdrive audiobooks: 694  
Overdrive magazines: 206  
HOOPLA: 1014  
Kanopy: 337  
Pronunciator: 567  
Ancestry Library: 2301 searches

**Total Downloadable:** 6,677

### Children's Programs

*14 programs/70 attendance*

### Teen Programs (12+)

*4 programs/ 38 attendance*

### Adult programs

*27 programs/324 attendance*

**Lucy Hammer Room** N/A  
**Conference Room** N/A

**Days Open:** 25

**Average Daily Visitors:** N/A