



Report to the Board of Trustees

March 3, 2021

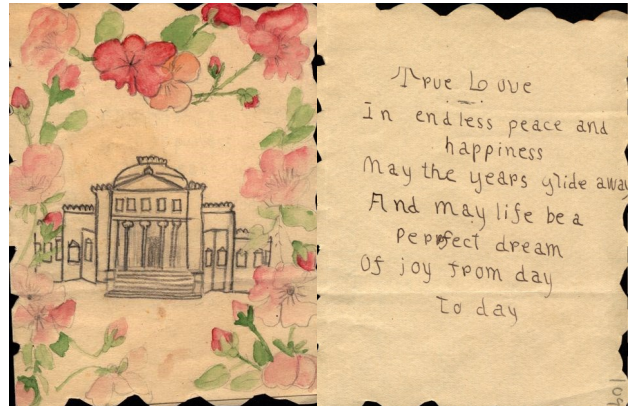
From the Director

The strategic planning project led by trustee Dr. Michelle Blank is underway. So far Michelle has completed sessions with all of our staff, and most trustees. The overall response has been extremely positive. The questions and sessions have been designed to make the participants feel comfortable, and Michelle has incredible listening skills and really makes everyone feel heard.

Next month we are interviewing a section of community stakeholders. We will also begin the staff training module with Jeanine Esposito of Innovation Builders. The staff who will be participating are Katy McNicol, Jenna Anthony, Sarah Mallory, Christina Kondziela and Angela Meikle. This team includes members who represent all departments, and they will learn the skills needed to conduct the interview sessions, design questions and interpret the data.

Thank you to all trustees who participated and shared your thoughtful insights and suggestions to help inform this effort.

The Finance Committee met several times this month to revise the budget request for



Drawing by Martina Meline, 1906

125th Anniversary

Everyone in Branford knows the Blackstone

Library is an impressive piece of architecture. One of our favorite things to see are artistic

renderings of the building from both professionals and amateurs alike! This

card from our archives features a beautifully detailed drawing of the library. The card is from 1906

and was created by Martina Meline, who was 14 at that time. Her family had come

to Branford from Sweden just before the library was built.

Town support. This year's request reflects the move to a sustainable withdrawal rate from investments which ensures a stable source of funding for future generations — offsetting the Town's necessary contribution year after year. It also reflects an increase necessary to re-set the base measurement due to flat funding in FY 2021 and reflects the use of some freed-up funds from FY 2021 to establish a sinking fund.

Other activities this month included filing the annual e-rate form in order to receive our 60% discount on monthly internet services and fiber internet maintenance through the CT Education Network. The Blackstone Library received a grant from the State of CT for 100% of the cost to install fiber internet in 2016. Participation in the federal e-rate program

saves \$4000 each year.

Interestingly, the discount percentage is based on the percent of students participating in the National School Lunch program, which provides free and reduced-price lunches. Branford's rate has reached 38%, increasing the eligible discount rate from 50% in 2016, to its current 60%.

It seems too soon, however our Yale SOM Fellow, Eloise Owens, will be graduating from the program in May! Beth Law, Pat Sanders, and I met our incoming Fellow, Nikki Whang, who will work with Eloise to transition into the role this spring. Nikki plans to carry on with Eloise's excellent work in supporting our strategic planning project.

-Karen Jensen

Highlights from the Youth Services Department—January

This month we spent a good portion of our planning time revamping our technology. Miss Mary and I have been trying to improve our storytimes with each class and thought providing two cameras - one that shows us and another that zooms in on the book we are reading would be excellent. We enlisted Sarah and set up a “set” in the youth services department, which includes our laptop, an iPad as a second camera focused on the book we are presenting. With this new set up Miss Mary and I can highlight the book and just read from the sidelines! We are also able to “brand” our programs by including the Blackstone kid’s logo in the right hand corner. Now when we meet in our zoom “space” families know they are in the right place since our logo is featured.

One of our most popular programs this month was run by Miss Sarah and had tweens and teens making cocoa bombs. Miss Sarah was surprised when the class filled within a few days! She did her best to order

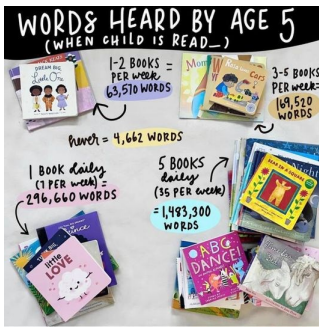
extra supplies and a few participants had no problem purchasing their own chocolate and molds so that they could take part in the class.

The Youth Services Department also met with the School Readiness Council a few times this month to help plan their annual preschool fair. This year things are going to look different since we are going virtual so we have offered our zoom platform to host the two-hour event. We will manage the waiting room, give a little background on all the preschools that are featured and then create breakout rooms where participants can meet preschool teachers and administrators to discuss their options, COVID protocols and price. Schools will be able to share their screens so that they can feature their website or short video tours of their facilities. Q & A time will also be provided. Depending on the number of preschools participating we may be able to create a community services room where we could highlight different social services that Bran-

ford provides - making it a one stop shop for families. We are still in the planning stages but are hoping to host the event at the beginning of March.

Miss Mary attended an online program on anxiety and how libraries can help families navigate this “new normal.” A lot of the information she garnered had to do with being honest with children and allowing them to talk about their fears. For the past year families have been trying to navigate school/work from home while seeing less of family and friends. This disruption can look like withdrawal from everyday activities or even outbursts of emotion. Either way, getting children to talk about and validate their feelings is key. During the talk Miss Mary was given a long list of books to review and is currently compiling a list of resources that we currently own and/or need to update so that we can serve Branford to the best of our ability.

Carly Lemire



@thekidlitmama made this awesome graphic displaying the power of reading aloud to littles. Making a commitment to read to your children daily will expose them to 1,000s of words, especially “big ticket words” that don’t come up in normal day to day conversations.

125th Anniversary—William Blackstone

The Blackstone family had a long association with the love of books. We know that Timothy Blackstone, who grew up in Branford, and made his fortune as president of the Chicago & Alton Railroad, donated the library building and an endowment for its operation in honor of his father, James Blackstone.

What is not as well known is that Timothy and James are descendants of William Blackstone (sometimes spelled Blaxton), credited with being the first European settler in the land now known as Boston. He was living there when John Winthrop came in 1630 with colonists from Eng-

land. By 1635, William had moved to Rhode Island, on the banks of the Blackstone River, becoming the first European settler of that region also. He frequently visited Boston, and also married a Bostonian. He named his Rhode Island Home "Study Hill" where he planted a garden and the first apple orchard in New England. When he died at age 80 in 1675, he left a library of nearly two hundred volumes, noteworthy for that time and place.

Unfortunately, his house and library were destroyed in a fire just at the outbreak of King Philip's war in the same year.

William Blackstone's only child, a son named John, moved to Branford in 1713. Timothy B. Blackstone was "the seventh generation from this old lover of books" honoring "his father's memory and all his ancestors by his munificent gift to the town. "

From: *The Blackstone Memorial Library* by Mrs. Edward M. Gallaudet, published in the *New England Magazine*, November 1896.

Also: <http://www.reportertoday.com/stories/william-blackstone-new-england-pioneer,22606>

Highlights from the Reference Department-January

January was an especially busy month for Christina, who taught a class on Navigating the Library Catalog and taught three classes for the Senior Center on OverDrive and Libby; Hoopla and Kanopy; and Pronunciator, SCOLA, Gale Legal Forms, Newspapers and Consumer Reports. She also had 6 virtual tech appointments with patrons, helping them with downloading e-books, using their iPhones and iPads, Facebook and other tech topics.

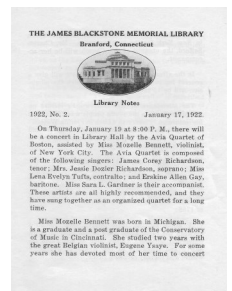
Christina also delivers all of our homebound patrons' items, creates weekly emails on upcoming events, hosts

Game Night with Sarah, enters catalog records for new nonfiction orders, catalogs local history books and manages several of our book clubs, all in addition to her regular Reference duties on the desk. I am truly blessed to have such an extraordinary staff working in the Reference department and I look forward to highlighting each of them in my monthly reports during the course of the year.

This month, as we look forward to celebrating our 125th anniversary, we launched our weekly library fun facts which appear on our website, in

social media and on our anniversary web page, which you can find at <https://www.blackstonelibrary.org/jbml-1896-2021/>. We are working on a number of archives projects, including library history, and we will be sharing more details on these and our new online Archives website in the next few months.

-Debby Trofatter



Over the years, the library published a number of different brochures and notes for patrons. These brochures contained lecture and program notes, lists of books added to the library's collection, history of the library, and quotes. Two examples are posted on the library website—there is a "Hamilton" connection in bulletin #2 from 1922!.



James Blackstone Memorial Library
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Branford, CT 06405
203.488.1441
reference@blackstonelibrary.org
facebook.com/blackstone_library
twitter.com/blackstonelib
www.blackstonelibrary.org

...more than books

Join our email list for more
information about programs
www.blackstonelibrary.org

March 2021 Virtual Program Highlights

Virtual Game Night

March 5 @ 6 - 9pm

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 on our Meetup page. Adults of all experience levels are welcome.

Introduction to Genetic Genealogy

March 13 @ 1 – 2pm

The availability of DNA testing for use in genealogy has opened up a whole new frontier of family history research. But where should you begin? Professional genealogist Eric Migal will discuss DNA testing with AncestryDNA, 23 and me, Y-DNA testing and Mitochondrial DNA testing. He'll go over the differences, pros and cons of each type of testing, analysis of data, pricing and subscription costs. *Sponsored by the Friends of the Blackstone Library*

Virtual Branford Forum: The Promise of COVID-19 Vaccines

March 14 @ 2 – 3:30pm

Having an effective vaccine is only half the battle. The other half is to distribute the vaccine effectively and equitably, and for the population to be willing to be vaccinated. In this talk we will explore the vaccines, allocation strategies, and strategies to improve vaccine uptake.

Women on Opposite Sides of the Law

March 20 @ 2 – 3pm

Three smart, independent women: two who were criminal attorneys and one who was a career criminal. They stood on opposite sides of the law, yet they confronted many of the same challenges and discrimination, persevering in a world where men made up the rules. Presented by authors Shayne Davidson and D.M. Testa

Best Seller Book Club

March 27 @ 3:30 - 4:30 pm

This month we're reading *The Invisible Life of Addie LaRue* by V.E. Schwab. We have a limited number of copies available for book club participants.

All programs are virtual—please visit our website at www.blackstonelibrary.org for registration information.

January 2021 Statistics

Total Circulation: 5,205
January 2020: 10,039

borrowIT: 925
January 2020: 2,539

Renewals: 3,550

Computer Sessions: 56
WIFI Logins: 817

Facebook: 1918 Likes
Instagram: 1106 Followers
MailChimp: 7,593

Downloadable Circulation:

Overdrive ebooks: 1615

Overdrive audiobooks: 657

RB Digital: 334

HOOPLA: 1013

Kanopy: 306

Pronunciator: 559

Ancestry Library: 2460
searches

Total Downloadable: 7,044

Children's Programs

13 programs/103 attendance

Teen Programs (12+)

3 programs/38 attendance

Adult programs

17 programs/714 attendance

Lucy Hammer Room N/A

Conference Room N/A

Days Open: N/A

Average Daily Visitors: N/A