



Report to the Board of Trustees

May 6, 2020

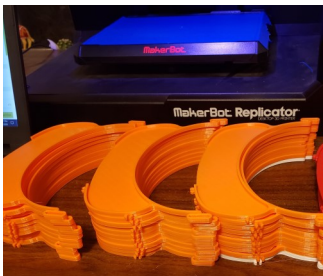
From the Director

The month of April has been an entirely new experience for the library and staff. The building remains closed and staff have been reporting on staggered shifts to keep up with returns processing, issuing library cards, ordering and processing new books, maintaining the building, and administration.

Frank has been working on a project to change out light-bulbs, polish the 125 year-old brass light fixtures and other maintenance work that doesn't get done within normal time constraints.

Youth services staff have been working hard to keep our kids and teens engaged, and are planning for a summer reading program that may be entirely virtual.

Response to virtual programming is growing. As more people become familiar with teleconferencing apps like zoom, audiences are growing. We have held two sessions of Branford Forum and the Tilde Café is returning remotely. Our Books & Brews continues and we started a new virtual book club that will meet on Fridays at noon, using HOOP-
LA titles, which are available to all at once. We actually had someone attend from her living room in London at the first meeting!



Many thanks to Jim Davis, volunteer 3-D printing instructor, for making holders for face shields to be donated to area medical professionals.



Our April 1 zoom meeting was a first for JBML Trustees. Thanks to Trustee Adam Spilka for the screenshot.

Staff are learning new productivity tools like Slack, which helps with remote work. We have a weekly staff meeting as we keep in touch and plan for new programs.

The LION consortium has been meeting weekly to discuss the process of re-opening and we hope to do this as a unified group. We hope to start with some form of curbside service where patrons can place an order and reserve a time to pick it up. We have ordered PPE for staff and portable acrylic barriers for public desks. We are looking at ways to rearrange computers and furniture throughout the building to comply with social distancing.

The RTM education committee met on April 20 to review the library's budget. They had some concerns and will be meeting again on May 4 at 7 pm to vote on the request.

The RTM also met on April 22 with a long agenda. One item was to approve an amendment of the Town's appropriation for the renovation project by adding an additional \$500,000 to cover the expenses of the roof repair, ceiling painting and the balcony enclosure. We were fortunate to have members of our team from SPA and Downes on the call. The discussion was lengthy, and in the end, the motion passed with the majority voting yes.

I have been working on a grant application through the State Historical Society to support the auditorium roof repairs. We are eligible to receive up to \$100,000 which would offset the Town's contribution.

-Karen Jensen

Highlights from the Youth Services Department—March

The month of March had us in a tailspin. Living through a pandemic and trying to serve our patrons the best way we know how; all while staying up to date with federal, state and town wide recommendations was challenging to say the least. The entire staff took everything in stride, adapting to program cancellations, working in a building without patrons and then finally finding a comfortable work from home balance.

I would like to commend everyone for coming together and researching new and exciting ways to stay connected with our community. In a time where we have never been more spread apart, it's funny to think that I have never felt so close to my co-workers as we navigate through the "new normal." Thank you for your support.

Our department has taken the COVID-19 virus very seriously. We started a rigorous daily cleaning routine which included high traffic surfaces like: keyboards, door handles and countertops. We also took all of our toys and early literacy backpacks off the playroom floor. These items were then fully sterilized and packed away for our return. We personally contacted all of our volunteers and program attendees to cancel events in anticipation of slowing the spread.

Anticipating that we would be working from home, we began tapping into new technologies and creating content.

One of our biggest questions was how to stay in contact with our families. Using ZOOM conferencing software, Miss Mary, Sarah and I produced a virtual story hour for families on Saturday mornings. We held our first program the last Saturday of March and had 12 families attend. Miss Mary and I were able to successfully make it through and loved singing and dancing with so many familiar faces. Attendees thanked us for our time and we are hoping to spread the word and reach more families throughout April.

Miss Sarah has kept in touch with our tweens and teens with her Remind App, which is used by most schools for widespread communication. When we first closed to the public she was sending everyone riddles, trivia questions and encouraging messages but really wanted to reach people on a larger scale. After thoughtful consideration she decided to make our first ever Social Distance Challenge! The idea is to connect people completing various tasks and documenting them on our social media platforms. One week people may be posting photos or sharing dance moves. Another they may be swapping recipes or sharing good news. Last I checked Miss Sarah had 55 people signed up and we hope that number will only continue to grow.

Time at home has also made it possible for the Youth Services staff to experiment with

different technologies like ZOOM and Slack. After watching a variety of YouTube tutorials and testing out different apps I have been able to curate content for our website and social media platforms. When thinking about "staying home" and creating access for all I thought a lot about people who have never used our digital resources before and how they were going to navigate the world of eBooks, eAudiobooks, streaming movies and more. What could I do to encourage them to take advantage of what we have to offer all while making them feel safe and secure? These thoughts led me to the creation of Tech Tuesdays, a weekly video on social media that showcases a different database, app or website so that viewers can see that these resources exist and that they are simple to use. My first video showcased HOOP-^{LA}, since we have increased to 10 downloads a month. The video took a total of 3 apps to create and a lot of growing pains but the results have given us 250+ views. I already have next week's video ready and waiting to upload. Creating content is something I have never contemplated before but the more I experiment with it the more confident I become and realize that this just another tool I can throw in my librarian toolbox and share with others - especially since Summer Reading will center around "Everyone has a Story." So, I see movie making in our near future!

-Carly Lemire

**Saturday
Stories
LIVE**

Desperate times call
for ZOOM storytimes!



The number of virtual programs continues to grow—Jenna and Christina have switched most programs to virtual within the past month.

Highlights from the Reference Department-March

This month's report reflects our month of change. During the first half of the month, the library was open; for a week after we closed to the public, staff was still working in the library. At the end of the month, we had transitioned to a remote, work from home situation.

At the beginning of the month, we were working on our usual in-house projects; reference, weeding, collection development, ordering new items, local archives projects, etc. During the week that staff was working in the library but closed to the public, we focused on working intensively with the physical collection and also preparing for the expected time when we would need to be working from home.

Debby worked on preparing laptops and tablets for the staff to take home for remote work. She created a web page for staff to find a wide range of webinars and training opportunities. The rest of the Reference staff prepared themselves to work at home,

organizing documents and files. LION was able to give us access to our files from home as well as access to the circulation system.

The last two weeks have been very busy. We have been focusing on setting up a variety of ways the staff can connect (Zoom meetings and Slack), working on rapid and extensive updates to the website and social media, finding ways for patrons to connect with us and ask for help – at least hourly checks of both the library's voicemail and email, a Google voice number and staff email for patrons to call or email with tech questions and to request a tech appointment by phone or Zoom meeting. We are also sending out weekly newsletters.

We have created a COVID-19 website with links to vetted government and scientific websites to ensure our patrons can access quality information. We created a website dedicated to helping our patrons find ways to stay busy while at home; included are

websites on music and the arts, virtual tours and museums, eBook and audiobook websites, movies and other entertainment, classes and online learning, and more. We were able to set up a way for our patrons to access AncestryLibrary from home, a resource that had previously been available only when in the library.

This new reality of being required to stay at home has led to a large but not unexpected change in the use of our digital resources. Here is a snapshot of what we are seeing:

- An increase of more than 3,000 new users to the website.
- OverDrive eBook checkouts are up over 30%.
- A 55% increase in Hoopla checkouts.
- AncestryLibrary is up almost 300%.

-Debby Trofatter



The CT State Library offers a new app that allows access to the State's ebooks, NYPL classics, and Blackstone Library's Overdrive books, all in one place.



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...more than books

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

May 2020 Virtual Program Highlights

Knitting Group

Wednesdays, 6:00 pm

Join us for conversation and show off your projects.

How to Eat a Poem:

Weekly Poetry Discussion

Saturdays, 1:00 pm - 2:00 pm

Learn to better understand and appreciate the wide world of poetry! Each week we'll discuss a new chapter from the 8th edition of the book *Sound and Sense: an Introduction to Poetry* by Laurence Perrine. With an emphasis on teaching students to read, understand, and evaluate poetry, this group will be your guide to discovering how and what a poem means, and hopefully gain a new appreciation for the art form. Digital copies are available through Open Library.

Branford Forum: Modern Environmental Politics

May 3 @ 2:00 pm - 3:00 pm

With fresh data from recent elections and mobilization experiments, voter turnout expert Nathaniel Stinnett will discuss how modern political campaigns identify and mobilize voters, and how that impacts environmental policy at all government levels.

Virtual Book Discussion

May 8 @ 12:00 pm - 1:00 pm

Don't let social distancing prevent you from discussing a great book with your neighbors! Read *The Bookwoman of Troublesome Creek* by Kim Michele Richardson on Hoopla (free with your Blackstone Library card), then meet up with us via zoom for a live book discussion.

No-Till Gardening

May 9 @ 10 am - 12:00 pm

Learn about ways you can create an amazing garden that's easier on the body and a fun family activity that makes gardening nearly weed free and a joy.

Cutting the Cord

May 21 @ 2:00-3:15 pm

Dealing with cable can be a pain, but finding an alternative can be equally frustrating. Need some guidance? This class is for you! We'll discuss all the most popular streaming services and devices so you can decide which is right for you!

Books & (BYOB) Brews

May 27 @ 6:00 — 8:00 pm

This month, we're revisiting books we read in the past that affected us in some way to see how we feel about them now.

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

March 2020 Statistics

Total Circulation: 4,568

March 2019: 10,469

borrowIT: 1,616

March 2019: 2,335

Renewals: 3,320

Downloadable Circulation:

Overdrive eBooks: 1406

Overdrive audiobooks: 580

RB Digital: 352

Hoopla: 851 plays

Kanopy: 170 plays

Pronunciator: 492 users

Ancestry Library: 1187

searches

Website: 6670 sessions

Children's Programs:

Babies (0-2)

5 programs/72 attendance

Preschool (3-5)

7 programs/90 attendance

School-age (6-11)

2 programs/10 attendance

All Ages

0 programs/0 attendance

Total Children's Programs: 14

Total Attendance: 172

Teen Programs (12+)

10 programs/97 attendance

Adult programs

6 programs/54 attendance

Hammer & Conference Room

63 meetings/172 attendance

Computer Sessions: 753

Facebook: 1,820 Likes

Instagram: 791 followers

Twitter: 803 followers

MailChimp: 7,847 subscribers

Days Open: 13

Daily Attendance: 414