

Report to the Board of Trustees

May 4, 2022

From the Director

Our 2023 budget request is on the agenda for the May 2 RTM Education Committee, and will be on the agenda for final approval by the RTM on May 10.

Our team continues to work with Trustee Michelle Blank on our strategic framework and we are on target for the draft writeup by June.

I submitted the paperwork for the State Historical Preservation Office grant, and attended my last meeting of the Advisory Council for Library Planning and Development with the State Library.

Programs on the 125th anniversary have begun and have been well attended. The program presented by Joel Dryer of Chicago, who is Oliver Dennett Grover's official biographer, provided interesting facts about the artist, including that he was a cyclorama painter at one time.

The tree identification tags have arrived and will be installed in the next few weeks. Sarah Mallory also created a google map showing the trees that will be added to our website.

Carly and I met with our new Afghan refugee family to provide a tour and register them for library cards. We wish



*Local artist Patty Meglio was the first to exhibit in the newly re-opened upper rotunda gallery in April. Patty also gave a talk on *Painting en Plein Air* at the beginning of the month.*

them all the best and hope this is the beginning of a better life for them after all they have been through.

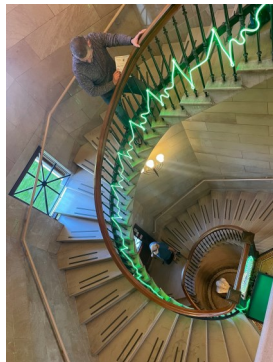
The Friends of the Library have moved into their new location at the River Run facility. They have spent time sprucing it up with paint and even flowers at the door. It is spacious and organized and the operation has grown to the point where they no longer need to share the space with a co-tenant. They are planning a spring book sale at the library for the weekend of May 14—15.

Staff submitted their annual self-evaluations and reviews will be complete before the end of June. As always, I am

reminded of how multi-talented our staff is.

In other staff news, our custodian, Frank Zdunek was featured in *The Sound* and recognized for his years of service to the library. Patricia Bussman, our technical services assistant, retired at the end of the month and we will be searching for a replacement. Allison Horton, circulation assistant, will be leaving us in May.

Our after-hours mini-golf event exceeded all expectations for ticket sales. We actually stopped sales on the Thursday before the event, and did not sell tickets at the door. This was a first for us!



Minigolf in the Library was a hit! The total raised was over \$13,000.

Karen Jensen

Highlights from the Youth Services Department—March

Toys and activities are back on the kids floor along with in-person classes for all ages! Families are overjoyed and things are really starting to feel “normal”. A hefty toy donation from a local family which included additional tracks and trains allowed us to update our train table with extra bridges, ramps and trees.

On that same note of new and improved, we have just purchased a new 3D printer and have been working with the Reference Department to get it up and running. The printer has come with rave reviews and will make it possible for us to complete double the prints. Since the pandemic has tapered we have been getting a lot of requests to print certain items. We had a gentleman create missing parts for a few of his model cars as well as a woman who made a prototype for an invention she is working on! Working with these patrons has been a blast and it is fun to see new ways the printer can be incorporated into their lives. I am sure that we will be hosting a series of “How to 3D print” classes this summer, especially since the new printer will be up and running.

This month Miss Sarah and I connected with the current 5th graders at Walsh Intermediate School and Media Specialist Nicole Hergret to introduce them to the library. Running our talks through Google Meet made it possible

to reach multiple classrooms at the same time. Right now we are in the process of completing a large number of library card registrations so that students can have access to our library. Our hope is that they will stop in and say hello.

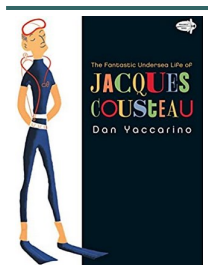
Two new programs started this month, one for elementary aged students and the other for our middle grade learners. Both have gotten a positive response and we hope that will only continue. The first is a picture book art program that takes place once a month on Saturday afternoons. The idea is to read a high level text, have a lively discussion and then make a piece of art that either mimics the book's illustrations or is pulled from the story itself. For our first session we read a picture book biography about Jacques Cousteau. The text talked about his life and all the amazing inventions he created so that people could see what is swimming under the surface. We talked a lot about the ocean, how certain animals survive and what they have personally been able to see at the beach or the aquarium. Then we took some time to create a seascape that included Jacques Cousteau scuba diving below! The participants had a lot of fun and checked out sealife books before heading home.

We also hosted our first virtual gaming meeting for middle schoolers and they did not

want to stop playing. The idea sprang from our Junior Teen Advisory Board since they look forward to the game or activity we provide after volunteering. During this first session we met online and played a couple of multiplayer games that had them working together to solve puzzles and decode drawings. The discussion was upbeat and they said they would invite friends in the future. My hope is to create a community of gamers that can use their critical thinking skills to play and meet others that have the same interests they do. We had an online gaming club that met in-person pre-pandemic that was pretty successful but that also came with some restrictions since they were using our computers to play together. Spots were limited due to the number of computers we could provide. Tablet games create a little more freedom since 1 game can include 6 to 8 players.

Miss Sarah hosted another successful Make & Take for middle school students and up. During this session families made soft pretzels and learned about the importance of yeast and how it is a living organism! Families continuously email her about how much they enjoy the program because they can do it on their own time. It also gives friends and family an excuse to come together and try something new.

Carly Lemire



With his iconic red beanie and famed ship Calypso, the French marine explorer, inventor, filmmaker, and conservationist sailed the world for much of the late 20th century, educating millions about the Earth's oceans and its inhabitants—and inspiring their protection.
www.nationalgeographic.com

Highlights from the Reference Department-March

March was another busy month for Reference, with lots of tech appointments and some well-attended programs, both in-person and via Zoom. Christina and Brendan went to the Senior Center where they had nine appointments and they hosted a drop-in at the library, on topics that included Hoopla & Libby, Gmail, Firefox, Zoom, help with an online application, sending pictures via text and email, and iPad/Android questions.

We recognize how important technology assistance is to

our patrons and we will continue with monthly drop-in sessions. Christina has begun planning classes again as well. She will hold small group classes in the Computer Lab and hopes to offer Microsoft Word, Google Docs & Gmail and other popular subjects.

25 people attended our Friday Game Night and we had our first programs celebrating Blackstone's 125th, with an in-person Victorian Lady program and a Mark Twain Zoom program. In addition, we hosted a very popular Zoom program on Kurt Ramshaw's

garden, in conjunction with the Stony Creek Museum. This month's topic for Branford Forum was Addressing Climate Change through Local Initiatives and we had a well-attended in-person Celtic Songs concert. We have resumed our Saturday Cinema program and it is clear to us that our patrons are very happy to be attending programs in the library again.

Deborah Trofatter

Oliver Dennett Grover's Murals

In April, we were honored to host Joel Dryer, Grover's official biographer, for a discussion of the art featured on the dome, as well as his life, art, and legacy.

The murals are described in Exercises at the Opening, the program published on June 18, 1896.

A description of one of the panels reads:

The scene of the seventh picture is laid in America and supposes a printing room in which two men dressed in the costume of Colonial times are operating what is known as the "Franklin Press," an improvement on the old-time machines of Gutenberg and

his contemporaries.

In front of the low broad window at the back of the room is seated a man at a table correcting proof and in the foreground lies a pile of books. The strong daylight from the partially draped window touching only the outlines of the figures, throws them in strong relief against the warm grey of the background, and a glimpse of sunny sky and trees seen through the small panes, gives a strong note of light and color to the scene.

The eighth and last picture deals entirely with that part of book-making which may be and often does amount to a

fine art in itself. But the dress of most modern books is put on amid the buzzing of wheels and the clicking of machinery. Such a bindery is here represented as far as the artistic necessities would permit realistic representation.

Shafts, pulleys and belts, steam and electricity would hardly seem hopeful materials from which to build a decorative composition, but a careful adjustment of tones and arrangement of lines, together with its pictorial illustration of the subject, "A Book Bindery - 1895," brings it into harmony with its neighbors and makes it a fitting ending to the series.



**Spring Book Sale
in the Library!**

**May 14 @ 10am - 4pm
May 15 @ 1pm - 3:30pm**

Hardcover and paperback fiction, including Large Print and Children's books.



James Blackstone Memorial Library
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 Branford, CT 06405
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May 2022 Program Highlights

Secret Connecticut

May 4 @ 6:30 - 8:00 pm
 As a travel writer during a pandemic, Greenwich resident Stasha Healy turned her attention to her home state and found 84 surprising stories that she compiled in *Secret Connecticut: A Guide to the Weird, Wonderful, and Obscure*. Healy will share little-known tales that will make even the most well-informed lifelong resident say, "I didn't know that!"
Sponsored by the Branford Historical Society.

Awakening to Change: Social Justice Discussion
May 5 & May 19 @ 7-8:30 pm
 Awakening to Change is designed to help unify our community by developing a shared understanding of the history, policy, and experiences shaping contemporary discussions of race. We tackle a new topic each month, sometimes reading books,

discussing films, or learning from articles. All are welcome! This month's topics are *How to Talk About Race?* and *Allies & Antiracism*.

Drop-in Tech Session

May 12 @ 2 - 4:00 pm
 Confused about your new iPhone or iPad? Need help formatting a Word document? Drop in to the library between 2 & 4 PM to get a tech question answered. First come, first served. Sessions will be limited to 15 minutes per person. Registration is not required.

A Visit from Harriet Beecher Stowe

May 21 @ 2 - 3:00 pm
 Harriett Beecher Stowe steps out of her portrait in the rotunda and into the library to help celebrate our 125th Anniversary! Learn about the life and times of one of Connecticut's most famous authors and how her work

changed the world. Presented by Kim Hanley of the American Historical Theatre.
Sponsored by the Friends of the Library.

Exploration of Image Making

May 22 @ 1:30 - 2:30 pm
 Local photographer Bill Keane will discuss the art of photography and what goes into capturing the perfect photo. Bill's work will be on display for the month of May.

Best Seller Book Club

May 28 @ 3:30 - 4:30 pm
 Have you ever thought about joining a book club? It's a fun way to get connected, make new friends, and read more books! This month we're reading *A Flicker in the Dark* by Stacy Willingham.

A limited number of copies are available for book club participants.

Programs require registration—see our website at blackstonelibrary.org

March 2022 Statistics—Deirdre Santora

Total Circulation: 7,611
March 2021: 5,455

borrowIT: 1,672
March 2021: 1,354

Renewals: 4,664

Computer Sessions: 652
WIFI Logins: 3112

Facebook: 2100 Likes
Instagram: 1090 Followers
MailChimp: 7565

Downloadable Circulation:

Overdrive ebooks: 1,388
 Overdrive audiobooks: 773
 Overdrive Magazines: 176
 HOOPLA: 1169
 Kanopy: 261
 Pronunciator: 591
 Ancestry Library: 303
 New Haven Register: 159
 Creative Bug: 154

Total Downloadable: 4,974

Children's Programs

38 programs/433 attendance

Teen Programs (12+)

9 programs/151 attendance

Adult programs

39 programs/520 attendance

Lucy Hammer Room & Conference Room

301 meetings/903 attendees

Average Daily Visitors: 283
Days Open: 31