



APPLETON PUBLIC LIBRARY
225 North Oneida Street
Appleton, WI 54911-4780
(920) 832-6170 | FAX: (920) 832-6182

TO: Members of the Appleton Public Library Board of Trustees
FROM: Colleen Rortvedt, Library Director
DATE: December 9, 2020
RE: 2020 Summary of Library Services

The Appleton Public Library has been a part of our community since 1897. As we approach the end of a year unlike any we have seen in a century, it is important that the astounding efforts of our library staff are recognized. Their creativity, dedication and resilience has resulted in the creation of many new services while pivoting others to ensure that we were in alignment with our community's public health priorities.

Here is a look back on this year's accomplishments.

ENSURED SAFE ACCESS TO COLLECTIONS AND RESOURCES

- **Electronic Library Cards:** This service didn't exist prior to the pandemic due to system restrictions and staff worked with the Outagamie Waupaca Library System to develop procedures that would make this feasible both for checking out electronic resources and physical resources.
- **New and Updated Library Cards:** We have created over 600 new cards since mid-March and we have updated over 5,000 cards since August (data for card updates prior to that is not available due to the migration).
- **Curbside:** By the time of the Library Board meeting we will have reached 18,000 curbside pick up orders resulting in many times that in materials. This entirely new service is the result of an extensive effort led by our Public Services section. We have 806 curbside pick-up slots per week (Mon-Sat) and have nearly 100% utilization of those spots. This does not include spots for book packs and take and create packs.
- **Book Packs:** Book Packs began on July 15. Since then we have had 659 Book Pack requests with a total of 14,407 items checked out.
- **Suspended the collection of fines:** Returns and delivery were disrupted throughout most of the year with our regional and state-wide delivery systems shut down for periods of time and fluctuating quarantine periods based on the evolving understanding of the life of the virus on library materials. As we are focused on ensuring patrons have access to resources, we have suspended the collection of fines for the time being.
- **Public access computers, copiers, faxing, notary services:** While these services are currently not available, they will be reinstated when feasible in consultation with the health department.
- **Extended Wi-Fi Access to the parking lot:** Providing access to individuals to safely use personal devices for internet access on chairs placed outside or from inside their vehicles.

- **Telephone and electronic reference services:** We have kept phones open all our pre-pandemic hours and continued to respond to e-mail and social media inquiries without disruption. Phone service has been an integral part of helping patrons navigate digital services, new procedures and services. Community members relied on library staff for information about evolving government information and provided access to information on the elections, pandemic, etc.
- **Access to electronic resources:** Provided enhanced access to new services and collections including many that were provided by publishers for free during the pandemic. Circulation of electronic resources is up 20% over the previous year.
- **Quarantine periods for library materials:** APL followed state-recommended guidelines that changed throughout the year as research was conducted regarding the life of the virus on library materials. This was very staff intensive as over the years we reduced staff and increased automation and the automated systems were not designed to accommodate this and our meeting room has transformed into a quarantine area for materials. We have been able to reduce quarantine periods from four days to one alleviating confusing disconnects between patron records, restoring the delivery system and ensuring patrons and staff feel comfortable with the protocols.
- **New Infosoup Online Catalog:** OWLSnet had a once-in-a-generation system migration scheduled this summer. This was a significant effort requiring many APL Materials Management and Public Services Staff to ensure the public had minimal disruptions to their catalog access and took the majority of the year to prepare for, execute and work through inevitable issues.
- **Created new ways to connect patrons with great reads:** [Book Matchmaker](#) and a [Virtual Shelf Browse](#) online tool.

PROVIDED HIGH-QUALITY PROGRAMS, CLASSES AND SERVICES FOR ALL AGES

Programming has pivoted to virtual offerings and the pandemic has allowed us to have access to presenters across the country in ways we would not have been able to if we needed the presenter to appear in person. We have been offering programs on a variety of platforms including Facebook Live & Zoom. Live programs have included opportunities for interaction in new ways and now that they are recorded has expanded access to those who are not able to make the original time. We needed to upgrade our zoom account to accommodate the size of attendance we were receiving at some programs.

- Summer Library Program was offered fully virtually with 1,099 Children, 10 Childcares and 305 adults participating. Children received books as incentives that were distributed via curbside.
- We have offered 667 programs throughout 2020 for children, teens and adults with 14,340 participants and growing.
- Since March, at least 527 Take & Create kits have been bagged and dropped off at various community locations for distribution including: Braids Salon, Appleton Downtown Incorporated, Harbor House, Long Cheng Market, FVLC & more.
- Provided virtual field trips and story times for schools and daycares
- Developed Story Walks: In Partnership with Parks and Recreation and Appleton Downtown Incorporated our Children's section created multiple story walks that provide families with a literacy-rich experience outdoors.
- Offered teens kits via curbside with all the materials to make a project.
- Offer limited contact-free walking books delivery to homebound patrons.

CONTINUED TO ADDRESS SHORT-TERM AND LONG-TERM FACILITY NEEDS

- Furniture has been rearranged to accommodate physical distancing and touch points have been minimized to the extent possible.
- Barriers have been added to service desks.
- Carpet replacement was scheduled to coincide with pandemic-related closure to not additionally disrupt library access.
- An ionization system was installed in November.
- Long-term building planning has resumed with a request for proposals for architectural and engineering services being released this month.

SUPPORTED CITY-WIDE PRIORITIES

- Supported the city's spring and fall election efforts by providing staff to help process absentee ballot requests and work at polling locations.
- Participated in the City's emergency operations command center and supported city-wide communications
- Library meeting rooms are the source for a centralized inventory of PPE ensuring that all our departments have access to masks, sanitizing materials and other resources to ensure a healthy environment.

During the pandemic APL has been committed to leveraging resources to support those suffering from job loss, families struggling with educational needs, marginalized communities, individuals and families suffering from social isolation and those who rely on the library to mitigate the impact of the digital divide.

If you have a conversation with anyone who works at the library, you will learn that this is a team of helpers who are committed to serving the community they call home. As in past times of economic distress, we know that APL is going to be relied on by our community as part of their physical, economic and emotional recovery from the pandemic. As COVID rates improve and vaccinations are distributed, this team of helpers is looking forward with great optimism for restoring the services and access that have been missing while maintaining the innovations that have resulted from the pandemic and helping our community thrive.

Please note: There are far too many individual programs, services and collaborations to mention here.

*Most of the programs are provided in our quarterly **Friends Grant Summary Reports** as many of them are made possible thanks to Friends of Appleton Public Library grant funding which has been essential in our ability to adapt this year. Other programs are listed in this month's report on outside grants that the library has obtained this year. Of course, we continue to support our medical clinics offering Reach Out and Read in well child visits thanks to funding from The United Way Fox Cities. Finally, the library could not do all of this alone and we work with many community partners. The organizations that we work with in our collaborations are compiled multiple times a year in our **Collaborative Cooperative Agreements List**, which is attached to the December Library Board agenda.*