
REPORT FROM THE DIRECTOR

2020 has been a year that has tested our resiliency, flexibility, and creativity like no other, and *“we are living in unprecedented times”* has become the phrase of the year. At the end of 2019, we were looking forward to 2020 being the year to officially launch our Library’s expansion and renovation plans with a fundraising feasibility study.

Unfortunately, a global pandemic and unquestionable racial inequity caused the Library to pivot from our well-laid plans. Over the spring and summer, the Strategic Planning Committee prioritized the library’s projects to focus on:

- 1) Safely reopening the library
- 2) Providing services to those most impacted by COVID-19
- 3) Implementing the Racial Literacy Plan

Each department of the library is working on all three areas: Safely providing continuity of services including contactless & express services:

- Curbside pick-up with software for scheduling
- More return bins to quarantine materials
- Protective equipment supplies for staff and patrons
- Increased cleaning and sanitization procedures
- Technology and platforms to effectively work & offer programs remotely
- Enhanced digital collections
- Virtual Summer Library Program for all ages with Beanstack software
- Walk-up window for Summer Library Program prize redemption
- Express Technology Service for computers, printing, faxing, photocopying
- Enhanced wireless access into the parking lot
- Outdoor tables and chairs in front of library
- Remote reference services by phone and email
- Reader’s advisory services with “Librarian’s Choice” form
- “Programs to Go”

Implementing the Racial Literacy Plan will lead to a deep understanding and knowledge of systemic and individual racism. This year we dove in with:

- A six-week anti-bias training workshop for the Library Board (beginning in October)
- Urban SUN: Black Voices Book Club – a monthly book club
- Library Journal Virtual Summit and Library Journal Antiracism Workshops
- Participation in City of Sun Prairie’s Equity Academy
- Dane County Library’s Ripple Project

SPPL staff began implementing the items above in March. Below is a brief timeline:

Friday, March 13

- The Library and Library Foundation quickly and swiftly canceled the Gatsby Gala.

March 13-16

- Library staff worked around the clock all weekend and into the first half of the week to alert staff, patrons, officials and stakeholders about the emergency closure.
- Staff worked on site for two days to take equipment and items home to work remotely.

We thought it might be two weeks!

Tuesday, March 17

- Youth Services offered a virtual Facebook Live Storytime with over 500 attendees!
- We increased our Hoopla and Overdrive/Libby digital collections to increase digital access.

Hoopla usage and Overdrive/Libby usage has doubled!

Early-mid April

We realized this would be more than two weeks!

- Staff began coming in to work on site to help with all the materials coming in through delivery, while maintaining physical distance with each other and safely handling materials.

May 4

- Opened for curbside pick-up with limited returns. Patrons were very excited to get physical materials again!

June 15

- Offered a virtual Summer Library Program through Beanstack for children and adults.
- Opened up the library for patrons to access technology and pick up their holds.
- The Friends Board generously offered RBBS as “Curbside Central”. Staff use this space to monitor and manage curbside pick-up.

July and August

- Added a walk-up window to the Youth Services porch for young patrons to pick up their summer reading prizes, providing a nice feeling of normalcy!
- Introduced “Librarian’s Choice” – staff browse and make selections for patrons.
- New return bins to help accept more returns and assist with quarantining materials.
- “Programs to Go” for youth and families.
- Library Board endorsed Racial Literacy Plan.

September

- COVID-19 cases in Dane County are on the rise and the Library returns to Curbside only for holds pick up with the assistance of new curbside scheduling software.
- Express Technology Service for patrons needing to access technology.
- Urban SUN: Black Voices Book Club with Donna Mackey and Marilyn Ruffin launches!
- First Book Club Kits are added to the collection, thanks in part to generous funding from the Friends.

Looking ahead, the Library has a few more exciting projects to round out this very unusual year including:

- 1) Additional book club kits.
- 2) Youth Services Story Walk project. This is a grant funded project that will allow children and families in our community to enjoy literature and walks in their neighborhood – no technology or screens needed! The first Story Walk will be installed around the perimeter of CH Bird Elementary School later this fall.
- 3) Option for drive-up window service.
- 4) Further enhance digital collection with workforce development resources.

Even though 2020 was full of unexpected challenges, the projects put into place by my talented staff continue to align with the Sun Prairie Public Library's overall vision of serving as a dynamic, positive force in the community by connecting residents with the world of ideas, literacy, literature, and information. The SPPL Staff should all wear capes along with their masks! They truly are superheroes!

The SPPL staff and Library Board hopes in the next 6-8 months we will have more information as to how we may be able to move forward with the Library's expansion and renovation. The crisis this year has proven how vital public library services are to a community, and when the library is ready to reopen, enhanced services requiring 21st century library spaces will be even more necessary.

The Friends have been extremely generous during a year of great uncertainty. On behalf of the entire SPPL staff and board, we are deeply grateful for your continuous support. I am confident that Sun Prairie and the Sun Prairie Public Library will be stronger due to our collective effort towards a healthier and wiser community.

Thank you!
Svetha Hetzler
Sun Prairie Public Library Director

