

November - December 2020 Report from the Executive Director

ADMINISTRATION

By David Slivken

November

On November 18th, members of the library leadership team attended the 2020 Virtual LJ Design Institute. Leadership Team members had an opportunity to debrief several days later. While the “bones” of our 2019 Master Plan is still solid, the following features, garnered during this COVID-19 pandemic, will be especially important in the design of new facilities as well as potential upgrades to our several of our current facilities.

Poudre River Public Library District and the 2020 Election Colorado adopted voting by mail in 2013. Many states have increased the opportunities for voters to cast their ballots by mail this year as an alternative to gathering at a polling place during a pandemic. But in an environment where some politicians are trying to raise doubts about the security of voting by mail and the ability of the United States Postal Service to deliver mail-in ballots, many libraries in Colorado and nationwide are using their unimpeachable reputations to offer stability as ballot drop-off sites.

Drop boxes can offer a safe and secure way to vote as the nation continues to face COVID-19, wildfires, and policy changes affecting the stability of the postal system. The Harmony Library has had a ballot box in front of the library for several years. It’s been well received by the community and especially Front Range students, since it is so convenient for those both working and attending school. In general, most of the work related to collecting ballots is done by election staff, but libraries that wish to offer the service need to prepare. Library District staff needed to know how to respond if a voter attempts to hand a ballot to them or drops the ballot in a book return, rather than the ballot box. If the Library finds ballots in our book returns or our remote book drops, we place them in an envelope, and send them to the Harmony Library with instructions to be deposited in the ballot box. On election day, ballots can also be sent to the Council Tree Library as Council Tree will be a voting center on November 3rd. That said, the library district is not liable or responsible for these ballots. We advise voters to check the website on the Larimer County Clerk’s office to track their ballot. If they cannot track their ballot, voters can request a replacement ballot or show on election day at a polling location.

The Council Tree Library will serve as a polling location on Election Day. The library worked closely with Larimer County elections staff, inviting them to tour the library to ascertain best options for safe and secure voting. After some deliberation, we decided to close Council Tree as a library on election day to ensure the safety of all concerned.

Voter Education

The Library partnered with the League of Women Voters Larimer County for two virtual voter information sessions in October: a presentation of the ballot initiatives during the 2020 General Election and a meet and greet with local candidates. For the candidate meet and greet, participants were added into Zoom rooms in small groups led by a LWV facilitator. The groups then had 15 minutes with each candidate to ask questions and get to know them.

December

Incorporating the Outdoors for Library Service

Libraries serve as critical community partners by evaluating current and future needs and proactively filling gaps in the community fabric. Often libraries forget to use a key asset in their toolkit: the outdoors. Library buildings have historically included outdoor spaces, often to underscore the building's significance and to contribute to the beauty of place. Libraries of all scales and in all climates can use their outdoor spaces to fulfill their missions and effectively serve their communities. By turning the library inside-out, libraries can increase their available real estate for providing services and add a host of benefits for patrons.

Flexible Spaces

Library needs and services are ever-changing as a response to our community, thus designing flexibility into layouts and furnishings has been increasing over the years. In 2019, small study rooms, collaborative spaces, and open flexible layouts were popular design trends. Less than a year later, a pandemic hit our communities and the need for social distancing, more private and physically divided areas became immediate necessities. The flexibility to alter spaces as trends change or crisis arise allows libraries to best serve the communities. Although it is hard to foresee the exact needs a community will have after a disaster, libraries can prepare themselves by maintaining a combination of open spaces and small and large gathering spaces that can easily be adapted for crisis-related functions. Creating a plan of how the spaces can be rearranged, designating relief areas such as a multipurpose room, can only help staff to react quickly to the unexpected.

Current Curbside Service/Future Drive-up Window

Users have become to appreciate curbside service when the pandemic forced us to close our buildings. In Fort Collins, parking always seems to be at a premium, regardless of what library location is being visited. In the future, users may be able to use the drive-up window to check out and return books, magazines, and audio/video recordings — even to sign up for a library card. While we are not a fast-food restaurant, we can be a quick service Library for those users who necessitate this assistance!

Enhanced Virtual Programming

The virtual delivery of library programs has been very successful, and these virtual programs will be permanent where possible. Virtual programs allow for a greater diversity of attendees than is generally possible at in-person events. Adults with 9–5 jobs are now better able to attend programs, for example, some may never have been able to go to a story time with their child, but now they can (provided they have the right tech, of course). Library users who are disabled are more easily able to attend virtual programs, too. Even after libraries resume in-person programming, there will still be value in creating filmed programming, whether it is to preserve the program for future use or to allow those who are not comfortable or able to come to the library to participate. Librarians have always strived to deliver the highest quality in-person programming, so why should our video programs be any different? The district should invest in enhanced production equipment to ensure the technical quality remains high.

Public Computer Banks

Public computer labs may become a thing of the past in a post-COVID-19 world. Libraries will encourage users to bring their own devices or will loan devices and hot spots. The library district may offer devices (tablets, laptops) in a self-service lending system. The district will be able to make more space flexible by not having cables, network points, PCs and fixed furniture typically associated with a computer lab.

COMMUNICATIONS

By Katie Auman

November

In November, the Communications Team helped launch the first ever Winter Reading Challenge in partnership with our Children and Teen Services Librarians. The team also supported the launch of the Bundle o' Books service.

November Highlights:

- Supported libraries in the return to curbside pickup service.
- Created promotional pieces for the new Bundle o' Books service including a dedicated webpage, graphics package, social media, blog, etc.
- Extended public education/outreach on the Library's "fine free" policy on social media.
- Launched the "Winter Reading Challenge: A Winter Tale" which will run from November 16, 2020 through February 7, 2021. Adapted the program to fit the Library's return to curbside pickup service and limits to accessing buildings.

Ongoing Activities:

- Keeping customers updated about library news via email, website, and social media
- Working with staff to expand the Library's selection of video tutorials, Tech Tips, "how-to guides" and other video resources
- Working with local media to share news about the Library District
- Managing new staff-only SharePoint site to support staff at-home access to library news, key health and safety documents and videos
- Continuing with social media promotions and platforms including "The River's Mouth" blog.

December



Libraries Are Essential Partners for Inclusive Economic Recovery

As trusted and deeply connected community anchors, public libraries are uniquely equipped to support the business owners and entrepreneurs hit hardest by COVID-19, especially people of color, women, veterans, immigrants and justice-involved residents.

Read below to learn how city/county governments and public libraries are partnering to drive inclusive economic recovery by supporting vulnerable business communities.



Libraries Are Essential Partners for:



HELPING UNCONNECTED BUSINESSES GET ONLINE

In the wake of COVID-19, businesses must pivot online to stay afloat. Libraries are helping to bring unconnected businesses online by providing internet, training, devices and tech support to those in need.

Look to » Saint Paul Public Library (Minn.) partnered with its county government to provide 1,000 "TechPaks" — including Wi-Fi hotspots and laptops — to business owners and other residents experiencing economic hardship due to COVID-19.



LEVELING THE PLAYING FIELD FOR RELIEF FUNDS

City, county and state governments are leveraging the reference skills and community connections of libraries to help at-risk business owners navigate options for COVID-19 relief funding.

Look to » Poudre River Public Library District (Colo.) librarians stepped up at the start of COVID-19 to help staff the state's financial hotline. Assisting callers in English and Spanish, librarians provided relief funding guidance to over 300 entrepreneurs and business owners.



FOSTERING INCLUSIVE ENTREPRENEURSHIP

Entrepreneurs are critical drivers of job creation and innovation. By offering equitable pathways to entrepreneurship, libraries play an essential role in advancing inclusive economic recovery and growth.

Look to » Richland Library (S.C.) has helped fill equity gaps during the pandemic by convening local government and business leaders for over 20 virtual meetings to discuss how the community can address immediate needs for underrepresented entrepreneurs.

The Urban Libraries Council is an outcomes-driven research and innovations network of leading North American public libraries. Learn more at urbanlibraries.org.



- Appeared in an Urban Libraries Council advertisement in ICMA's Public Management magazine which showcased how "Libraries Are Essential Partners for Inclusive Economic Recovery" and the District's small business outreach efforts during the pandemic
- Featured in *Biz West* article, "Poudre business library sees spike in activity," which was also picked up by Loveland Reporter-Herald
- Supported the month-long 2020 Staff Celebration activities to thank and celebrate library staff and the amazing work they did this year
- Supported the Jacob Center's annual holiday gift drive with staff helping to fulfill holiday wish lists of local children and teens
- Continued ongoing efforts related to social media, email communications, newsletters, video development and other key activities to keep the community updated on Library services and news

COMMUNITY SERVICES

By Johanna Giron Ulloa

November

Collaborative-Innovate and Inclusive

Community Services team participated in the training "Providing Library Senior Services in a COVID-19 World" by the Public Library Association. During this training, libraries shared different programs and services that have pivoted during Covid-19 to continue providing older adults' services. Our District is already providing some of those programs and services; however, we will continue finding new ways to connect with older adults throughout the library district.

To continue providing storytimes in different languages, Ludy Rueda coordinated another series of World Language Storytimes in French. In partnership with the CSU Department of Languages, Literatures & Cultures, students and CSU staff record weekly stories that the public can access through the Phone A Story service.

Africa Garcia, in coordination with Children's librarians, is creating a schedule for Takes and Makes, a practice we began using early during the COVID-19 quarantine, and that has been widely popular among families. At different branches, kits with materials and instructions for families are available to pick up. The takeaway kits for Dia de Muertos, sugar skulls, ran out the same day as they were available at the branches.

Our partnership with Poudre School District, and other partners, continues to help the collective task of supporting many families with different needs related to literacy and digital literacy availability in the District during Covid-19. Johanna Ulloa Giron participates in ongoing weekly conversations with the District and many other community partners to provide services and programs to many families. Ludy Rueda and Africa Garcia provided library cards, the book from On Book from Colorado, books for lending libraries, and digital literacy services to schools like Harris Elementary, Stove Prairie Elementary, Axis International School, and Livermore Elementary Schools. These services are crucial as many schools can't allow access to their library materials during hybrid or remote learning; adding to this issue, purchasing reading materials is prohibited for many families under the current financial circumstances.

Dia de Muertos celebration 2020 wrapped up after so many fantastic programs, services, and passive offerings were made available in the community. This program would not have been possible without the coordination of Ludy Rueda and the support of Africa Garcia. Equally important the fantastic participation of community partners made the event memorable, especially under the current circumstances. Special thanks to funders like the Friends of the Library and United Way of Larimer County; partners like Downtown Fort Collins Creative District, Fuerza Latina, The Family Center La Familia, Fort Collins Museum of Discovery, Global village Museum, Alianza Norco, Aztlan Center- the City of Fort Collins, Larimer County Health Department Office on Again, the Bohemian Foundation, and many more.

Ludy Rueda and Africa Garcia attended the webinar "Testimonios: A Critical Component of Decolonizing the U.S. Classroom with Dr. José Medina". Johanna Ulloa Giron participates in a series of training on "Embodied Leadership, Universal Partnerships" after receiving a scholarship from the Colorado Trust.



December



Café de Olla Spanish Book Club read “El murmullo de las abejas” by Mexican author Sofía Segovia. We had the pleasure to count with author’s presence. Sofía gracefully attended the meeting and had a heart-warming discussion of her book and her writing process. The members of the club were extremely excited about her visit.

Africa Garcia delivered a new set of citizenship classes. On this occasion, the classes were 100% in

English to meet the needs of the non-Spanish speaking members of our community. She also reached out to our local immigration lawyer, Kim Medina, who attended the last session to answer questions. On December 3rd, Ludy Rueda and Africa Garcia hosted a workshop per PSD’s request. The focus of this workshop was to promote library resources on literacy. In order to engage children as well, Ludy and Africa turn it into a clay workshop and they invited Mexican artist Memo Plastilina to guide children while they created their pieces of art with clay. During this time, Ludy and Africa presented and promoted several resources and programs such as Winter Reading Program, how to get a library card, Odilo, Hoopla, VST and PAS, and others.

Africa and Ludy also put together a list of resources on PDF format with links to share with all participants after the workshop, so families would have access to all the resources we talked about and more.

The program was a success as Clare Barquero from PSD communicated with us:

“Thank you both so much! I am already getting messages about how much they liked it 😊”

“We had a great Clay Workshop on Thursday evening. We had more than 35 kids sign on and parents are asking for more! They loved that their children were doing something fun online.”

The Community Services department partnered with Poudre School District (PSD) to provide a “Mental Health Matters” with PSD session. Over 270 guests participated in a session, in English and Spanish, with Licensed Social Worker Nicholas Thompson. We hope to continue this partnership with PSD.

Ludy Rueda did a presentation of the book “You Matter” by Christian Robinson. Children from our community participated in the program and afterward expressed their excitement and pride of being included in our digital experiences.

We wish to highlight throughout our programs, services and collections Native American, Black, Latinx, Asian Pacific, and Middle Eastern cultures. A selection of materials with this intention was purchased to support this endeavor.



COUNCIL TREE LIBRARY

November

By Currie Meyer

Professional Development Currie and Teen Services Librarian Jenny Thurman attended the Library Journal Design Institute online all-day conference on November 18. Particularly useful programs included Architect Panel: Moving from Crisis to Innovation and the Library Design Challenge Charrettes. Jenny also attended the Young Adult Library Services Association (YALSA) Symposium November 6-8. Children’s Services Librarian Amy Holzworth attended a Youth Services fall workshop presented by the Colorado State Library. *Reimagine the Future #3, Invest in staff development and build opportunities for meaningful engagement.*



Take and Make activity kits are a hit with kids and teens! Jenny and Amy planned and implemented two fun kits during the month: Weave a Basket for children and Make a Friendship Bracelet for tweens and teens. Each kit contained basic materials and instructions. Intended to provide a break from screen-learning and to support mental / emotional health, these kits also encourage creativity and social connection. Staff distributed over 60 Friendship Bracelet kits and many Basket weaving kits via curbside request. *Learn and Discover #1, Connect individuals with opportunities to explore (and) create.*



Staff services “pivot” again to curbside-only operations, November 9. Circulation Supervisor Angela and I realigned staff schedules, duties and procedures to prepare staff for curbside-only service. With demand high – over 1,100 curbside deliveries made the week of November 9 – our staff welcomed the addition of two phone lines (to total 4) and stepped up to new tasks with admirable flexibility and teamwork. *Reimagine the Future #5, Maximize efficient, flexible, and sustainable library operations.*

Bundle o Books launched November 16: Based on the successful Bag o’ Books pilot project this summer at Council Tree Library, Bundle O Books (BoB) is a service where library card holders may request bundles of staff-selected children's books via an online form, and pick them up curbside or from the hold shelf at any Library. BoB options include 10 picture books, 10 beginning reader books, or 5 board books. Spanish-language BoBs are also available. Staff select books for Bundles directly from regular shelves (not from any special collection), with attention diversity of style, presentation, voice and culture. <https://read.poudrelibraries.org/readers/bookbundles.cfm> *Reimagine the Future #4, Develop more agile, responsive, and effective services.*

Council Tree serves as a voter service polling center on November 3. After months of planning with Larimer County Elections staff, CTL provided the community a place to vote in the general election on Election Day. Over 360 votes were cast at the Library, and many more ballots were dropped in the ballot boxes provided. CTL closed public library services for the day, but select staff provided onsite support, or processed returned materials. Although we were prepared for the unexpected, the day (6am – 9pm) was calm and uneventful. *Meet and Collaborate #6, Serve as a center for civic information...and engagement.*



December

Outdoor storytimes: CTL Children’s Services Librarian Amy Holzworth organized and presented two outside storytimes at the CSU Environmental Learning Center on December 12 and 16. With sunshine and temperatures were above 40 degrees, 13 people attended. Outdoor storytimes require registration as per Larimer County Health and Environment variance agreement. *Meet and Collaborate*



#1, Provide user-centered spaces that are flexible; #3, Create and maintain strategic partnerships that enable us to connect with customers. Re-imagined 2020 strategy, support K-12 learning.

December Take-and-Make activity kits for kids and teens: Amy partnered with



Fort Collins Museum of Art Education Coordinator Elizabeth Morissette for two Take-and-Make activities for children in December: “Portraits” and “Art and Books”. The Eye Center of Northern Colorado and Fort Collins Youth Clinic collaborated on “Portraits” to coincide with FCMOA’s exhibit “About Face”. Amy and CTL LA staff processed just under 600 Take and Make kits in November and December; 358 have been delivered to customers



curbside. Teen Services Librarian Jenny Thurman coordinated “Create a Comic” Take and Make kits, offered at all three Libraries this month. More



than 50 customers have picked up a kit curbside at CTL. *Learn and Discover #1, Connect individuals with opportunities to explore and create; Meet and Collaborate #3, Create and maintain strategic partnerships that enable us to connect with customers. Re-imagined 2020 strategy, support K-12 learning.*

Teen Cooking program: “Better Than Takeout” via Zoom, December 16: Jenny and Harmony Library Teen Services Librarian Miranda West hosted local cook Sapna VonReich’s demonstration on how to make four easy, affordable vegetarian recipes. Q&A followed. Due to demand, the program was expanded to include all ages. 25 people attended. *Learn and Discover #1, Connect individuals with opportunities to explore and create; Re-imagined 2020 strategy, support K-12 learning.*

Circulation Services busy in December:

- As check-outs have dramatically decreased, our shelves are beyond full. Circulation Services Supervisor Angela James managed CTL’s over-full shelves through collaborative problem solving with Collections Services and CTL staff. CTL has borrowed 15 extra book carts to manage capacity while keeping collections organized and navigable (if not pretty!).
- Angela helped to mitigate customer holds notifications when the District’s automatic email ready notices were accidentally disabled on December 22.
- Angela collaborated with Answer Center Supervisor Chris Cortez to re-word customer notices in order to align with the District’s new Fines Free policies.
- Angela conducted annual performance reviews for her 20 hourly staff and hired one new CER. *Reimagine the Future #4. Develop more agile, responsive, and effective services. 5. Maximize efficient, flexible, and sustainable library operations*



OLD TOWN LIBRARY

By Eileen McCluskey

November & December

Chromebook circulation: OTL and IT partnered with the City to circulate Chromebooks as a part of the Gadget collection. The first Chromebook was checked out as part of a soft opening in late December in order to facilitate civic engagement and provide access to virtual City government meetings. We will expand the program with additional devices and marketing in January.

Story Stroll collaboration: Karla, Meg, Laura and Katie are collaborating with DDA on a window "Story Stroll". The idea is based on the StoryWalk® concept created by Anne Ferguson of Montpelier, VT and was developed with the help of Rachel Senechal, Kellogg-Hubbard Library. The goal is to provide a safe, fun and enriching outdoor, literacy-based activity for families. Pages from a Bilingual children's book will be installed in the windows of the downtown businesses. As participants stroll down the street, they will be directed to the next page in the story. Project is on track to begin February 2021. A Story Stroll is also in the planning stages for Library Park.

Children's Virtual programming: Continues with virtual storytimes and phone a stories. January additions include a virtual makerspace STREAM program for kids on January 13 hosted by Erin Lucero. Deidre

will present a Yoga Storytime, Live! program on Jan. 20. Both programs have a "Take and Make" activity component.

Take and Make kits: OTL classified staff are working collaboratively to create and assemble snow-themed kits. We continue to receive grateful feedback from parents, who are happy to have "anything" to keep their kits engaged and busy. Nicole shared some Take and Make kits with the Murphy Center, along with discarded magazines for the isolation facility.

Spanish Instruction for Staff: Karla and Ian coordinated Spanish Instruction for classified staff, which is the result of a 2019 Innovation Initiative. Spanish lessons will be offered weekly to classified staff via ZOOM. One of the initiative's objectives is to increase staff ability and confidence when assisting Spanish-speaking customers.

The ESL Mentoring service started mentor recruitment, with seven applications received so far. Anne, with Xochil's help, is busy with learner assessments, developing mentor training and building out program infrastructure.

Nicole hosted a virtual Dungeons and Dragons game for Teens and will continue it again in January.

Eileen planned and facilitated an OTL staff retreat, using tools learned at the Futures School and an updated DiSC team profile. OTL classified employees met and brainstormed 2021 services based on three worlds: abundant, market and fortress. The team learned how to use a probability-impact matrix and developed a foresight mindset focused on Youth Services, Civic Engagement and Lifelong Learning.

Old Town Circ has been busy, averaging 196 phone calls a day for curbside service. Our busiest day was 12/22 when after an email glitch was resolved we answered and processed 405 calls. In addition to providing curbside service, processing returns and pulling over 11,500 holds circ has been working with the Collection Development Team on collection maintenance.