San Mateo County Libraries

Agenda Item III., E.

To: JPA Operations Committee
From: Anne-Marie Despain, Director of Library Services
Date: May 7, 2020
Meeting: May 12, 2020
Re: Director's Report

This report summarizes significant library operations and program activities that have occurred since the last meeting of the Operations Committee. Services and activities are aligned with our Strategic Plan Goals.

We are leaders in establishing a foundation for early literacy and supporting exploration and growth at every stage of life.

Even though our outreach efforts and in branch services are on hold, that hasn't stopped us from making headlines.

- Coronavirus Impact: SF Bay Area libraries expand online services after closing, ABC 7 News

Live Experiences

Our virtual programming continues to grow and ignite our communities! We've created fun, free library staff-led programs where patrons can continue to learn and explore. We've expanded to nearly 25 virtual events per week with favorites like music playtime, bilingual storytime, open lab, and drawing lessons. Several of our virtual programs have been viewed over 300 times. Our daily offerings continue to evolve, and we look forward to rolling out new programs every week. In addition, our staff have found creative ways to incorporate promotion of the Census into our programming.

Expanding Our eCollections

Although our doors are closed, our patrons still have access to boundless library materials. We have been adding more resources and titles to our digital collections including eBooks, eAudiobooks, streaming movies, and music — titles that are all online and free to access with a library card.

New Text Service

Getting help from our knowledgeable librarians has never been easier. Recently, we launched a new text messaging service, making real-time support available at the tip of your fingers. Here's how it works: simply save the number (650) 851-0147, and then text us your library-related questions. We'll send you a friendly, helpful reply as soon as possible. Our texting service is available seven days a week between 9 AM and 5 PM.

New Phone Pilot

An enthusiastic team of test pilots have been working hard to configure a dedicated central information phone line: 1-833-YES-SMCL. This new line will be monitored by Customer Care staff alongside the popular Texting and Get in Touch email services. This new service will launch in the coming weeks.

Digital Library Card

Access Services staff is issuing digital library cards on a daily basis. All patrons need to do is sign up online to receive their digital card number. From there, they can instantly access our extensive online materials. Once our libraries are open, a physical card will be mailed to the patron. Feedback on this service has been incredibly positive.

Reading for Hope

San Mateo County Libraries partnered with our County Poet Laureate to launch a new program — Reading for Hope. Poet Laureates will be recording frequent readings of their own poems as well as poem submissions from the community. These poems of hope aim to share joy during shelter in place.

Introducing One-on-One Tech Help

Our knowledgeable staff are providing virtual person-to-person help with technology-related issues, including but not limited to downloading eBooks, troubleshooting devices, or accessing our online resources. This program allows us to ensure that all patrons have the knowledge they need to use important resources. Patrons can book an appointment on smcl.org Monday through Friday, 9 to 5 PM.

Our New Homepage

To better serve our patrons during shelter in place, the libraries revamped our homepage. The new page is focused around relevant content, digital resources, online events and crafts to facilitate learning, exploring and connecting. All of it is accessible online and free to access with a library card. Some highlights of the new design include:

- Discover Exciting Events: Even though our traditional, in-person events have been postponed, we are excited to spotlight exciting new online events. In the top, right corner of the homepage, you'll notice an events column with both SMCL virtual experiences and other online author visits, digital storytimes, and celebrity read-alouds.
- Specialized Audience Selections: We have curated specialized online content for Adults and Seniors, as well as Kids, Teens, and Families. In this section, we will spotlight and link to relevant online content, resources, staff lists, and activities for both audiences.
- Explore from Home: Even when sheltering in place, there's a big world to explore and this section will help you find it! Through virtual tours, live streams, and online exhibits, this section will spotlight and link to the numerous ways you can see the world from the comfort of your home.
- Library Catalog Carousel: Here we're featuring all the library materials that are still accessible including e-Books, e-Audiobooks, streaming movies, and music—titles that are all online and free to access with your library card.

Summer Learning Challenge

Staff are hard at work envisioning an enriching summer learning experience that fits our current moment. They are designing an updated approach that makes summertime experiences with the library (at home) joyful and easy, while also preventing summer learning loss. This summer will be an adventure for all of us--and staff are excited to embark upon it with every family in San Mateo County.

Big Lift Inspiring Summer

The Libraries are currently working with partners to find a new innovative way forward for Big Lift Inspiring Summers. BLIS has two new additions that will be included in any program version provided. It will expand to the 3rd grade and provide STEM family engagement activities. Although the program will look different this summer, the partners are looking at a variety of options to still provide an enriching experience for the students that are enrolled.

Library Staff, 3D Printers Make Protective Gear

When our libraries were open, our 3D printers created toys, tools and other household items daily. Now, our 3D printers are busy churning out a vital community service — protective gear for healthcare workers. With a commitment to our communities and desire to help, library staff began using our 17 3D printers to create face shields and ear savers to protect front line medical staff. We've already printed more than 300 ear savers and hope to print and deliver over 600 face shields in the coming weeks.

- San Mateo County Libraries using 3D printers to create PPE for frontline medical staff, Climate Online
- San Mateo County librarians use 3-D printers to make equipment for health care workers, SF Chronicle
- Community briefs: Printing protective equipment, Almanac

Teacher and Student Resource Webpage

As we shelter in place, teachers, educators and students have sought creative solutions to distance learning. With a wealth of online resources, we have plenty of tools to help them succeed. Recently, we launched a teacher and student online resource webpage. The page includes a collection of online resources, like online tutoring or book discussion guides, and relevant blogs with helpful information about improving distance learning.

Wi-Fi Hotspots

Our commitment to closing the digital divide has led us to creating a Technology Taskforce dedicated to finding innovative ways we can keep our community connected during shelter in place. So far, we have loaned out over 500 hotspots to our community and we plan on connecting with other county and city partners to address additional needs for Wi-Fi connectivity. We have also increased the Wi-Fi range at our branches to cover our parking lots so patrons can still utilize our branch Wi-Fi despite our buildings being closed.

- KCBS Radio: Libraries Using WiFi To Connect Customers During Shelter-In-Place

We cultivate an active presence and create spaces that support discovery, enrich lives and uplift the community.

Library Building Projects

Due to shelter in place, many construction projects were put on hold. Fortunately, with the new County Health order, our library building projects should be back on track soon. Progress continues on the new Brisbane Library as anticipation grows for the grand opening scheduled for later this year. The beautiful new Atherton Library is still on track for completion in 2021. Work is also continuing on the conceptual designs for a new East Palo Alto Library and new Pacifica Library.

We understand community needs and promote meaningful library services as solutions.

Food Availability Taskforce

The Library system is teaming up with the County to coordinate a Food Availability Taskforce. This taskforce will be in charge of bringing together the wonderful resources and partnerships that already exist to help address and support those in need during difficult time. The County effort is currently focused on working quickly to access and understand current needs as well food resources available.

Supporting County's EOC

The libraries are continuing to support the County's Emergency Operations Center by sending library staff to help support County efforts during this health crisis. Our staff have been signing up for voluntary rotational assignments and have been utilizing their skills to assist in outreach and information gathering.

Library Personnel News

It is my pleasure to share the following personnel updates:

Will White retired at the end of February, he began his career with San Mateo County Libraries in July 1997. His library journey began at the East Palo Alto and Foster City Libraries, before proceeding to work exclusively at the Atherton Library. His contributions to the community are many, but some highlights include his newsletter contributions, his enthusiastic support of pub trivia nights, and his knowledgeable and passionate curation of classic film programs.

Karina Labrenz retired at the end of March after working 26 years for the County. She started her career with the County as an Administrative Secretary in the Probation. During her tenure, her responsibilities and duties changed along with the changing landscape of public libraries. Reflecting back on her past 26 years, Karina has worked with 9 directors and a whole host of library staff, and feels very lucky to have worked for and with some great people, some of whom became dear friends.

Congratulations and best wishes to Will and Karina!

Yan Chen accepted the IT Analyst position and joined the Information Technology Team. Yan has a Computer Science and Math degree from Chabot College. He previously worked as an Information Technology Consultant for 17 years at San Jose State University. When Yan is not at work, he enjoys playing with his 3 years old and doing home improvement projects.

Luz Galicia has accepted a Library Assistant position at the San Carlos Library. Luz first started as a Summer Intern before being hired as Library Aide. During her tenure she has supported storytimes and helped develop procedures to make circulation processes more efficient. When she is not at work, Luz is working to obtain her Bachelor's degree in Business Administration and loves to spend free time reading and learning new cooking skills.

Danae Ramirez has been appointed Interim Deputy Director. Danae received her BS in Communications from UC San Diego and her MPA from San Diego State University. Before working at the Library, she worked as a Management Analyst in the County's Office of Budget, Policy and Performance and as a Strategic Planning Analyst for the Rady Children's Hospital in San Diego. She also has over eleven years of experience working for the County of San Diego as a Legislative Policy Advisor, Policy Advisor, and Human Resources Analyst. As Financial Services Manager for the past four years, Danae has become a valued and well-respected member of our Leadership Team.

Ally Garcia has been appointed Interim Library Services Manager. Ally joined San Mateo County Libraries in 2016, as the Manager at San Carlos Library. In addition to that important work, she has served as Interim Manager of the Atherton Library and been instrumental in leading our Customer Care Initiative and co-leading our current TextRequest service. Ally received her Bachelor's in Liberal Studies at Cal Poly Pomona and her MLIS from UCLA. She started working in libraries as an Aide in 2005, moving into library management in 2012 when she worked for the Clearview Library District in Colorado.

Lindsey Freeland has been appointed as Interim Financial Services Manager. Lindsey has worked as an analyst in the County Manager's Budget Office for the past two years. Before coming to the County, Lindsey worked to combat educational disparities as a kindergarten and first grade teacher in San Jose. After her time in the classroom, she went back to school and earned a Master's in Public Policy from UC Berkeley. During and after graduate school, she worked with Santa Clara County's Office of Women's Policy on a variety of projects, including identifying advocacy priorities for women incarcerated in the county.

Congratulations to Yan, Luz, Danae, Ally and Lindsey!