San Mateo County Libraries

Agenda Item VI.

To: JPA Governing Board
From: Anne-Marie Despain, Director of Library Services
Date: November 3, 2020
Meeting: November 9, 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 understand community needs and promote meaningful library services as solutions.

Expansion of Curbside Services

San Mateo County Libraries has launched new services in order to lessen the digital divide and to foster exploration and discovery. In October, we launched walk-up services, check-out of sewing machines, and Grab-and-Go book bundles at all 12 of our locations.

Patrons are now invited to come to our libraries without an appointment to pick up their holds. This new service makes the library even more accessible and allows staff to – from a safe distance – share our many services. In the first three days of walk-up service, we assisted 480 patrons.

Sewing machines are a tactile, multi-generational tool that provide an outlet for creativity, functional use, and learning a new skill. Patrons can now take a sewing machine home for a week in order to make pillows, pajamas, or a spooky costume just in time for Halloween! One patron wrote: "I was beyond thrilled to see that the library was lending out sewing machines! When the pandemic hit it was impossible to find a machine to purchase. I've grown a ton of herbs over the summer and am planning to try making simple dream pillows for people I know as we could all use a little self-care these days."

Grab-and-Go book bundles allow families to pick up curated groups of picture and board books. This introduces the youth in our communities to new books, authors, and new vocabulary to feed their growing minds. In just a short amount of time, we have checked-out 4,084 books and received great responses: "Thank you for the grab and go book bundles. My grandsons love them."

Preparing for Future Services

We have spent the last seven months heavily investing our time and resources into pandemic operational design and delivery. This work has been important and worthwhile. Circulation of materials is one of many critical functions of San Mateo County Libraries and we have received great feedback from our communities about the importance of virtual and curbside services. Now that this work is stable, we are able to pivot and invest resources in other priority areas.

Knowing that we will extend our Phase 2 operations into January affords us the opportunity to bring management strengths to different areas of our organization. In November, most library managers will begin short-term assignments to support new areas of focus including, re-opening plans and facility preparations, outreach, communications, data/performance analysis, equity and training. Our Senior Librarians and Supervisors will continue to provide local branch support to staff.

We are looking forward to some exciting discoveries and enlightening experiences over the next couple of months. One of the silver-linings of the pandemic has been the opportunity to look at our services in different ways, to prototype quickly, and learn from our communities. We are excited to take advantage of this period of creativity, resilience and adaptability and see where it takes the organization.

Bike to Your Library Day

On September 19, our communities enjoyed the outdoors by participating in our Bike to Your Library Day, a family-friendly celebration of bicycling and community. Participants got to choose a bike-themed giveaway book and take a cool cotton canvas messenger bag from our community partner Commute.org. In total, we distributed 334 books and 567 bags and brought positive awareness to alternative transportation and sustainable practices. To mark this special day, we also brought back our Book-A-Bike program at the Belmont Library!

Elections and Voter Education

We hosted four election related events this election season: three Pro/Con Ballot Measure Forums with the League of Women Voters, one in Spanish and two in English, as well as an election and Census issues panel with partner Thrive Alliance. In addition, our curbside locations distributed bookmarks provided by the Elections Division in each curbside pickup, and posters displayed curbside directed patrons to their nearest ballot drop box location. A staff-created voter resources and education webpage can be found at smcl.org/vote.

Bookfest

Our final installment of Bookfest was held on Monday, October 26. Bookfest is a project of San Mateo County Poet Laureate Aileen Cassinetto, who convened authors to read their works, both poetry and fiction, countywide. Reading streamed live on the Poet Laureate Facebook page. Recording of the readings can be found on the Bookfest playlist on our YouTube page. Over 750 participants tuned in for seven reading featuring 33 authors.

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

Outreach to Schools

As the new distance-learning academic year progresses, we are prioritizing efforts to support public schools through virtual class visits. Teachers and educators can request virtual read-alouds, library tours, book talks, resource instruction, author visits, book clubs, teacher and/or student library cards, and even workshops for families. We launched outreach efforts in at the beginning of September and have so far received 82 requests from teachers asking for support in multiple classes. We completed 24 visits serving 787 students, and 58 visits are scheduled for this fall.

To meet the needs of educator requests during this time, we have revamped a new Teacher and Student Resources webpage with accessible information on requesting class visits, library cards and how-to library tutorials.

Get Live Homework HelpNow!

Connect live w/ expert tutors for homework help in English & Spanish, 7-days a week, 12–10 PM. Includes SkillSurfer learning library.

Get a Library Card!

Sign up to get a library card and unlock a world of adventure!

Language Classes

We expanded our online English as a Second Language (ESL) services to meet demand and are now offering an ESL Class for Beginners as well as two English Conversation Clubs per week. Our ESL programs continue to fill up quickly and are highly valued by our English language learner community. Says one participant: "You always give me interesting topics that I can learn not only English but also what is happening in the world. They are so exciting to me. Thank you again!"

New Language eResource

We are pleased to offer a new Chinese language eResource with the addition of the HyRead eBook and eAudiobook platform. This new resource will join an already robust lineup of world language materials. The HyRead platform allows us to curate a wide range of Chinese materials covering everything from fiction and cooking to politics and self-help. Parents will be pleased to see an increase in the quality and quantity of the children's collection.

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

Equity Work

On September 29, we hosted one of the world's leading experts on unconscious bias, Dr. Jennifer Eberhardt. Her live lecture explored how bias affects all our lives and answered many questions from the audience. There were over 1,000 registered and 350 attendees. We are committed to education and dialogue and look forward to hosting additional author talks around Racial and Social Equity through 2021.

New Brisbane Library Dedication

San Mateo County Libraries and our partners, the City of Brisbane and the County, are pleased to share that the new Brisbane Library is making great strides in its progress toward completion. On Saturday, October 24, community members were able to join Brisbane City Council members for a live virtual dedication event to celebrate the new Library. Virtual attendees were also invited to view a video featuring Karen Richards, from Siegel and Strain Architects, that walks viewers through the spectacular design elements of this new children's courtyard. Current operations will remain at the old library until the contractor finalizes the incredible features inside this new state-of-the-art building.

PSPS Resource Center

The Half Moon Bay Library continues to be an important community resource during challenging times. Most recently, the library's community room served as the location for PG&E's Community Resource Center during our latest Public Safety Power Shutoffs. This was made possible through a PG&E partnership with the City of Half Moon Bay. The Resource Center provides information, device charging, WiFi connectivity, snacks and water for residents effected by the PSPS. A generator was connected to the building in early October.

Grants Received

Over the last few months, we have received several grants to enhance the activities of our library system. The California State Library awarded us with $86,515 to continue our family and adult literacy programming and $99,687 for the Big Lift Inspiring Summers program. We received a small monetary and equipment grant, $2,000 plus 10 monitors, keyboards and mice, from the Office of Sustainability to support telework, and our Friends and Foundation have provided over $200,000 to support programs, additional WiFi hotspots, meals, and the Makermobile.

Employee Service Awards

Seven employees are being honored for their long careers working for San Mateo County Libraries: Minna Albagli, Millbrae Library Assistant, Gabriela Barraza, Millbrae Library Assistant, and Ana Marcelo Huerta, Access Services Library Assistant reached 10 years of service; Kathleen Beasley, Belmont Library Manager celebrated 20 years; and Eileen Browning, Belmont Library Circulation Manager, Martina Torres, East Palo Alto Library Circulation Manager, and Martina Tello, Half Moon Bay Library Community Program Specialist have each completed an amazing 30 years of service. Congratulations to Minna, Gabriela, Ana, Kathleen, Eileen, Martina, and Martina for their many years of service and numerous contributions to San Mateo County Libraries!

Library Personnel News

We are excited to share the following personnel announcements:

Cloud Bell has been promoted to the position of Brisbane Library Assistant. She has worked as a Library Aide since May 2019. Cloud has an Associate's Degree in Tourism and Travel Services from Vaal Triangle Technikon (Vaal University of Technology).

Xiuwen Chen has been promoted to the position of Brisbane Library Assistant. Xiuwen has worked for San Mateo County Libraries as an Extra Help Library Assistant since October 2015. She has a Bachelor's in Urban Studies and Planning, and a Master's in English with an emphasis in Teaching English to Speakers of other languages from San Francisco State University.

Maureen Garcia has been promoted to the position of Atherton Library Assistant. Maureen has a Bachelor's in Political Science from UC Berkeley and a Master's in Entrepreneurship from San Francisco State University. She joined the system as a Library Aide in August 2018.

Shilpi Khanna has been promoted to the position of Foster City Library Assistant. Shilpi has been working in a number of capacities for the last four years. She has a Master's Degree in Business Administration from the Institute of Management and Information Sciences in Bhubaneswar, IT India.

Jasmine Mithani has been promoted to the position Belmont Library Assistant. She started working for the library as a Library Aide for just over a year. Jasmine is a graduate of UCLA and is excited to learn and continue to grow her skills as a library employee.

Valery Marin-Revolorio has been promoted to the position of Woodside Library Assistant. Valery has worked for San Mateo County Libraries as a Library Aide since 2017. She is currently working toward a double major in Public Health and French and Francophone Studies at Santa Clara University.

Finally, Danae Ramirez has accepted the position of Deputy Director of Library Services. Danae earned a Bachelor's in Communications from UC San Diego and a Master's in Public Administration 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. Danae began her career at San Mateo County Libraries in 2016 as Financial Services Manager overseeing Human Resources and Budget and Finance which includes oversight of the Library's $63 million budget and over 300 employees. For the past seven months she has served as Interim Deputy Director and provided strong leadership to our pandemic response as well as taking on new responsibilities including IT oversight and the County's Food Availability Response Team.

Please join us in congratulating Cloud, Xiuwen, Maureen, Shilpi, Jasmine, Valery, and Danae!

Library Holidays and Closures

Since 2003, the Library has incorporated several additional days into the regular holiday closure schedule based on the calendar year and usage patterns. All library closures are posted for public notice well in advance of a scheduled closure. In 2005, the Governing Board determined a permanent continuation of this practice was prudent and should be communicated through the Director's Report. Based on current operational hours, updated 2020 and 2021 holiday and closure dates include:

Thursday, November 26	Thanksgiving Day Holiday
Friday, November 27	Day after Thanksgiving Holiday
Saturday, November 28	Library Closure
Thursday, December 24	Library Closure
Friday, December 25	Christmas Day Holiday
Saturday, December 26	Library Closure
Thursday, December 31	Library Closure
Friday, January 1	New Year's Day Holiday
Saturday, January 2	Library Closure
Monday, January 18	Martin Luther King, Jr., Holiday
Monday, February 15	Presidents' Day Holiday
Monday, May 31	Memorial Day Holiday
Monday, July 5	Independence Day Holiday Observed
Monday, September 6	Labor Day Holiday
Monday, October 11	Indigenous Peoples' Day Holiday
Thursday, November 11	Veterans Day Holiday
Thursday, November 25	Thanksgiving Day Holiday
Friday, November 26	Day after Thanksgiving Holiday
Friday, December 24	Library Closure
Saturday, December 25	Christmas Day Holiday
Friday, December 31	Library Closure