San Mateo County Libraries

Agenda Item III. C.

To: JPA Operations Committee
From: Anne-Marie Despain, Director of Library Services
Date: May 5, 2021
Meeting: May 11, 2021
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 cultivate an active presence and create spaces that support discovery, enrich lives, and uplift the community.

<u>New Brisbane Library Opens!</u>
The public was welcomed into the new Brisbane Library at a limited capacity with the opening of Express In-Library Service. For the first time members of the public were able to see the eagerly awaited, new 7,670 square feet library.

The community will soon enjoy new dedicated areas, such as a collaborative Makerspace and Community Room, Children's space, Quiet Room, and Historic Room. The new library is designed to be a Zero Net Energy building and meet LEED Silver standards.

A virtual Dedication Ceremony was held on October 24, 2020 by San Mateo County Libraries and our partners—City of Brisbane and the County of San Mateo.

A grand opening celebration will be planned for the fall when community members can safely gather and enjoy this wonderful new library together.

New Atherton Library

Construction crews are working hard and making wonderful progress on the new Atherton Library, which will be completed in August. Mailout Services were a popular option for library patrons at the Atherton Library and neighboring communities during the temporary branch closure from February to March 2021. During the nearly eight weeks of branch closure, we mailed out all available patron holds at the branch and all incoming holds. Approximately 950 items and 600 packages were mailed out to nearly 250 patrons. The mailout services provided a great opportunity to continue to provide access to resources despite the building's closure due to street construction.

North Fair Oaks Library Transition

We were thrilled and excited to include the North Fair Oaks Library into our family of libraries and began serving the residents of the community with curbside and walkup services on March 16, 2021. The transition was smooth, and customers have been able to enjoy expanded hours and increased services.

Staff have assisted over 500 customers through curbside and walkup and distributed over 130 Grab and Go bundles to the community with a total of about 930 items checked-out. Customers have been thrilled and appreciative of being able to check out Wi-Fi hotspots, Chromebooks, and laptop combos. Equally popular, has been families stopping by to pick up our giveaway items like the robot kits, and craft kits to take part in our virtual programming from their home. Carmen Letona, Emmanuel Landa, and Erica Palafox got services started at the North Fair Oaks Library in March, with Carmen and Emmanuel continuing to serve the community on a permanent basis. The North Fair Oaks community is in excellent hands!

Welcoming the community back into our doors on April 22nd was wonderful with one of the first customers coming through the doors and at once enjoying computer use for the first time at our library in over a year. We look forward to expanding our services and partnerships as we continue to reopen.

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

GeneAcademy

Through a partnership with Genentech, Inc., this Spring we increased our educational STEAM offerings with sewable robot circuit kits to kick off Make-It March, along with a new virtual version of Genentech's afterschool engineering program, GeneAcademy. We conducted a targeted recruitment to engage 100 third to fifth grade students of the highest need throughout the County and Big Lift partner schools. From January through May, students participate in biweekly letter-writing to mentors to build literacy skills, and learning about various STEAM topics through live, hands-on activities.

Families CREATE

We received a $12,000 grant to implement the Families Create virtual program series for Summer 2021. Families Create was supported in whole or in part by the U.S. Institute of Museum and Library Services under the provisions of the Library Services and Technology Act. The goal of this program is providing engaging STEAM and literacy activities to youth and building family engagement. Families will be able to participate in both self-paced and guided live, interactive experiences. Families of first to fifth graders will receive bi-weekly kits of activities beginning in June, engaging communities with the highest need youth in our service area. A total of 10 unique bilingual (Spanish/English) kits will be created-five for first to third graders and five for third to fifth graders. Families will gain knowledge of library programming and resources around the featured topics and can try activities on their own or with the community.

Youth Book Distribution and Read for the Record

To build home libraries and give youth a break from screens, staff distributed 18,833 quality book titles at partner sites and curbside in celebration of Día de los Muertos, Read for the Record, and as part of Winter Learning to encourage kids to read and learn during winter break. As a result of all our efforts in getting books out to youth for Read for the Record, we were awarded with the County of the Year Award, along with two libraries in the nation. We were recognized for our dedication to promoting early literacy and access to quality children's books via drop offs to schools and curbside pick-up – particularly during such a challenging year.

Make It March

In March, we celebrated hands on creativity by hosting Make It March. All ages participated in a month of creating, building, and more! Youth enjoyed a special series of Take & Make activities including music making, drawing, an Art Break Day, and LEGO building days, and 4,705 kits were distributed to support these activities.

Part of Make It March, we completed the Podcast for Beginners workshop series. It was a progressive series of classes that leveraged in-person learning, icebreakers, group discussions, and optional asynchronous homework assignments. All of which harnessed experiential learning in Podcasting! We noticed a sense of comradery and community that was built among staff and patrons that frequented the virtual workshop series. We were also fortunate to have professional podcasters, Jordan Blair and Krystal Proffitt, drop-in for fruitful discussion and Q&A for our attendees. We ended the Podcasting series with a "mic-drop" awarding one lucky Half Moon Bay attendee, Julianne, with her own Blue Yeti Microphone. She is eager to get to creating her own Podcast now. At San Mateo County Libraries we believe everyone is a maker!

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

Phase 3 Planning

Our Library staff spent March and April preparing for our Phase 3 Reopening: Library Express, while continuing to offer all curbside and walk-up services. In April, we developed and trained library staff at all 13 locations on our reopening plan, prioritizing safety for our customers and staff, while allowing our communities back into the buildings for browsing and computer access. On April 19th we welcomed our communities back with expanded hours, and in-person Library Express Thursday through Saturday. Our staff and communities were filled with excitement being back in our libraries together. At Foster City Library customers walked in clapping, and at Belmont Library you could see people dancing and cheering as they came in- this sentiment was shared systemwide.

Curbside Services

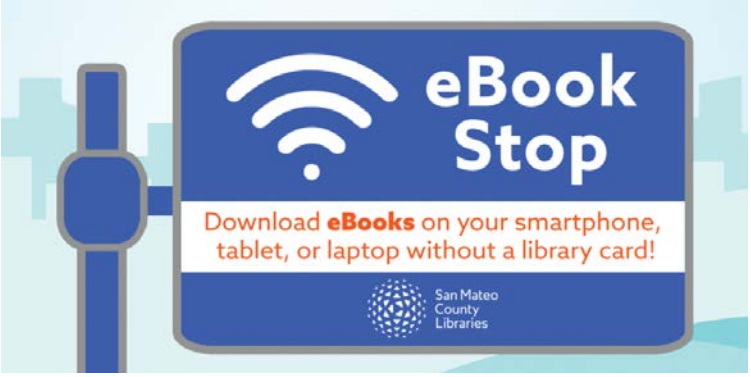
We recently surpassed 100,000 Curbside Services appointments! Patrons visiting on the day we celebrated were elated to receive swag bags and cheers from staff when they came to pick up their items. While making her pickup at Foster City Library, Gloria exclaimed, "I'm so glad! It is obvious I use this service a lot. I love it. I also do stream! Axis, Libby, all of it. If the County has it, I use it. I love it!" Another customer at Portola Valley Library was checking out a book for her book club and was excited to share the news with all of them.

Asian American and Pacific Islander Stories

Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders are important and valued members of our local communities. Their heritage and contributions have not only shaped the Bay Area's history, but also our nation's. San Mateo County Libraries reasserts its commitment to stand with communities of color. Our dedication to education, lifelong learning, and community dialogue are crafted by the amazing diversity of our staff and those we serve. Standing up for equity, inclusion, and social justice is part of our mission to ensure everyone is welcome to the library, in person or virtually.

For those who wish to express solidarity with Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders, reading stories about their experiences is one small but important step you can take. Staff created the following book lists of stories about Asian American and Pacific Islander authors or characters and some of the social justice issues they face: recommended books for adults, young adults, middle grade, and kids and families.

eBook Stops



Another way we are supporting new and existing partners is through free eBook Stops, which make thousands of eBooks available in just a few easy steps with a wireless device. Readers can simply visit an eBook Stop, connect to its free Wi-Fi and our webpage, and then begin browsing popular titles available in English and Spanish. You do not need a library card, mobile app, data plan or your own Wi-Fi connection to read these eBooks. We have already rolled out eBook Stops at East Palo Alto and Pacifica Sanchez Libraries. In late April/early May, we will have eBook Stops at:

- Woodland Park Apartments, East Palo Alto (two eBook Stops)
- Coastside Senior Center and Residential Lounge, Half Moon Bay (two eBook Stops)
- North Fair Oaks Library (and the Human Services Agency)
- Sequoia Adult School, North Fair Oaks

We are also in communication with other local organizations and schools for future eBook Stops and will announce new locations as they are confirmed.

Equity

We are proud to launch a new Equity Author Series highlighting authors who write about equity in housing, immigration, education, and LGBTQIA+ issues. On March 15, we launched our Equity Author Series with Richard Rothstein discussing Redlining and his book "The Color or Law" moderated by Governing Board member and East Palo Alto City Council member Regina Wallace-Jones. The recording is available here. A week later, a community conversation about housing followed and a presentation by Home for All inspired robust small group conversations to brainstorm and discuss solutions around local housing issues. Each month through June, we will cover a different topic and host an author talk and a corresponding community conversation to continue the dialogue.

Wireless Access Points

To further assist the students and public that lack Internet connectivity, we have installed exterior wireless access points at all our locations. In January we completed the installation extending the Wi-Fi range to parking lots, park areas, and any other outdoor space near the library making an internet connection available to anyone that needs one. From January to March 2021 the exterior wireless access points have had 3,054 unique users and 84,495 sessions. The wireless access point installation was a CARES supported project.

New Chromebooks

San Mateo County Libraries continues to look for ways to support families by bridging the digital divide. 250 Chromebooks have been distributed to all libraries for checkout to students in our communities.

Wi-Fi Hotspots and School Partnerships

A partnership with the Sequoia District Adult School allowed us to loan out 50 Wi-Fi-Hotspots to their students to use for the entire school term. The students are from the three major programs at Sequoia Adult Schools: high school diploma (HSD), high school equivalency (HSE), and ESL. In addition to providing Wi-Fi Hotspots, we have created and updated library cards for the students to access our education and online resources. We continue to provide several school and community partner presentations on all library resources, with a heavy focus on digital resources and support for technology with hotspots/laptop combos, and virtual tech help programming.

Library Personnel News

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 took advantage of this period of creativity to push the organization forward. In November, most library managers began temporary assignments to provide increased leadership in key areas including reopening plans and facility preparations, outreach, communications, data and performance analysis, equity, and training. Our Senior Librarians and Supervisors provided local branch support to staff. Now that our libraries have reopened to the public, managers have returned to in-branch work. We are very proud of our library champions. The assignments were temporary, but the impact of their work will last.

Promotions and New Employees

We are excited to share the following personnel announcements:

Lindsey Freeland has accepted the position of Financial Services Manager. Since May 2020, Lindsey has been working as the Interim Financial Services Manager and is excited to join San Mateo County Libraries permanently. Prior to working for Libraries, Lindsey worked as an analyst in the County Manager's Budget Office. Lindsey has a Master's in Public Policy from UC Berkeley.

Priscilla Bermudez has accepted the position of Administrative Assistant. She has over eight years of progressively responsible administrative support experience in San Mateo County, most recently in the Probation Department. Priscilla received her Bachelor's in Child and Adolescent Development from San Francisco State University.

Deidre Brill has accepted the position of Librarian at the San Carlos Library. Deidre has held the position of Library Assistant at the San Carlos Library since 2018 and has been working Out of Class as a Librarian for the last few months. She has a Bachelor's in English from UCLA and recently received her MLIS from San Jose State University.

Please join us in congratulating Lindsey, Priscilla and Deidre!

Retirement News

Belmont Library Manager Kathleen Beasley retired in February. Kathleen infused San Mateo County Libraries with her unique combination of passion and optimism for the last two decades. While she has held distinct roles and worked in several communities throughout the last twenty years, it was her leadership at Belmont that transformed the library from a well-regarded institution to the beating heart of the community.