San Mateo County Libraries

Agenda Item V.

To:	JPA Governing Board
From:	Anne-Marie Despain, Director of Library Services
Date:	June 8, 2021
Meeting:	June 14, 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 understand community needs and promote meaningful library services as solutions.

Phased Reopening Updates

We have completed over a month of Phase 3, in-library Express Service and are seeing a steady increase in use each week. We have had over 28,500 customers come through our doors since reopening sharing comments like "*it is so good to be back*," "*we really appreciate you being here*," and the note inside this beautiful homemade card that read: *"Thank you for all you're doing! Your efforts during such a challenging time are seen and appreciated! All your help before and during the pandemic means a lot to me. I love reading and didn't have a library near me where I lived before moving here. So, thank you for creating a safe space for me to be at."*

On June 1, we took one more step along the path to our new normal, by eliminating capacity limits, the midday break (which adds an additional hour of service) and phasing out curbside appointments. We are looking forward to how these new changes will impact customers and continue to welcome our communities back into our libraries.

Phase 3 operations will continue through July which will allow us to offer a hybrid service model of 3 days of in-library service and 3 days of in-person summer learning camps. Staff are continuing to plan to move to Phase 4: New Normal as soon as possible and incorporating the State's new June 15 guidelines as well as Cal/OSHA's updated regulations on workplace safety into our plans. Given the large number of children we serve, who are not eligible to receive a COVID-19 vaccine, it is unlikely that we will remove our physical distancing and mask requirements.

Bike to Your Library Day

We know many of our patrons have enjoyed riding their bikes this past year, so to help promote zero carbon commuting and the Libraries' sustainability goals, we celebrated our 2nd Bike to Your Library Day on Saturday, May 22, 2021. With our partner commute.org, we gave away 679 cotton canvas messenger totes, encouraging alternative transportation and a commitment to sustainability. To further promote and support this healthy activity, we are excited to announce the rollout of our Book-A-Bike program at all libraries this summer!

Mindfulness and Poetry Program

Poetry and mindfulness go hand in hand. Poets practice mindfulness to look at the world with new eyes and express their vision through the power of language. We were pleased to be joined by our celebrated San Mateo County Poet Laureate Aileen Cassinetto, San Mateo County Poet Laureates Emeritae Caroline Goodwin and Lisa Rosenberg, and San Mateo County Supervisors Carole Groom and Warren Slocum for a special evening of mindfulness and poetry. The poets read poetry and discussed their methods in reading and writing as a mindfulness practice, followed by an introduction of the Calm app.

In these uncertain times, mental health challenges, such as anxiety, stress, and insomnia can arise. To help our community mitigate these issues, San Mateo County Libraries is proud to be the first public library to partner with Calm, a mindfulness app and service. Calm offers meditation and wellness content for children, teens, and adults, including guided meditations, fun stories, sleep music, and nature sounds to help ease stress or anxiety. Library cardholders can check out a Calm account for six months and receive full access to all of Calm's premium content.

Strategic Plan Subcommittee

The Strategic Plan Subcommittee Members Groom, Penrose, Brown, Derwin and O'Neill met with library staff and EMC Research consultants to discuss the board's desire to explore options to gather additional data regarding changes in usage patterns and needs that have occurred over the last 12 months and predict how patrons will be using libraries moving forward. EMC Research presented a review of the key findings from the resident and patron surveys that were conducted in 2014 and 2020 and presented to the Governing Board at the September 2020 meeting.

Subcommittee members commended the EMC Research team for the thoroughness of their previous report and expressed interest in seeing if statistics provided could be broken down by each individual community. EMC communicated the challenges around providing branch specific data due to population sample size limitations. There was also discussion around doing targeted surveying for the North Fair Oaks Library since it was not represented in the survey at the time it was conducted. Member Brown expressed interest in seeing an updated survey that identifies how patrons' desires and ability to use library services have changed since the pandemic and how we may need to pivot our services to reflect those needs. Subcommittee members agreed that they would also like to see data about

how needs have evolved around technology, virtual services, social and emotional supports, especially for the more vulnerable populations within the service area.

EMC shared some additional demographic information they are compiling and are working on finalizing a more robust demographic report that will be shared with the full board at an upcoming meeting. Library staff is continuing to work with EMC Research to gather additional data per the Subcommittee's guidance. The Subcommittee will reconvene after the fiscal year end to review annual year-end statistics and next steps.

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

Talk Read Sing

Our award-winning program and partnership with the LENA Research Foundation, uses LENA's Smarter Happier Baby Curriculum combined with "talk pedometer" technology to help families track their progress in ensuring a language rich environment for their young children. This spring we piloted a virtual Talk Read Sing program in place of our regular in-person program. Staff led English and Spanish language cohorts at the Belmont Housing Authority and Ravenswood Family Health Center. For the first time, we held a Mandarin language cohort at the Foster City Library.

An exciting 34 families graduated last week and celebrated with a special virtual celebration and story time. The feedback from participating families was overwhelmingly positive: One participant stated that LENA has taught her important life skills that she shares with family and friends, especially the conversation tips. Another participant said she received a recommendation for the Libraries' Talk Read Sing program because her child was struggling with language. Since she has taken and implemented the skills learned through the program, she has seen a remarkable improvement in her child's language, and her pediatrician has also remarked that there has been development in the child's language ability.

Summer Learning Challenge

Summer is here! We officially kicked off this year's Summer Learning Challenge, which runs from June 1 – August 31. The Summer Learning Challenge is a fun way to engage youth, families, and adults by challenging them to read, explore new activities, and learn new skills, all summer long. All participants are invited to pick up a free book of their choice and youth who complete the program will be entered into a drawing again this year, for a for a chance to win a $1,000 college scholarship. Many thanks to the San Mateo County Board of Supervisors, who recognize the importance of early learning, and provide Measure K funding for the Summer Learning Challenge that supports all public libraries in the County.

Equity Author Series

Our Equity Author Series and Community Conversations continued in May as we focused on equitable education. On May 18, we hosted Rucker C. Johnson, author of *Children of the Dream: Why School Integration Works*. His live discussion explored the themes he examines in the book including the lasting benefits of the three most significant equal-opportunity initiatives: court-mandated integration efforts, school finance reform, and expansions of public pre-K investments. On May 25, community members gathered for a facilitated discussion on education in San Mateo County. We look forward to celebrating Pride month and welcoming author George M. Johnson to speak about the experiences that informed their hugely successful memoir *All Boys Aren't Blue*, on Wednesday, June 9. On Thursday June 17, we'll be joined by the San Mateo County Pride Center for a Community Conversation about how race, gender, and sexuality intertwine and intersect and all the identities we hold.

Supporting Student Success

Our Student Card Project continued through 2021 as we added the Pacifica School Districts to our growing list of community partnerships. We have previously mailed out library cards to students at the Pescadero, La Honda, and San Carlos School Districts. We have mailed out approximately 1,600 library cards to students in these communities and expect the project to expand as we continue to add new school districts. The Student Card Project allows students full access to our educational and online resources to support distance learning. The remote learning environment and this initiative has helped San Mateo County Libraries meet the online educational resource needs of the communities we serve. Overall, our Brainfuse HelpNow online tutoring, test preparation, and database usage increased by 75% when comparing this fiscal year to date (July 2020-April 2021) to last fiscal year to date (July 2019-April 2020).

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

New Atherton Library

This new space will see an enlarged makerspace and children's area, more meeting rooms and event space, and a dedicated quiet reading area. Besides a physical space increase, the new library will extend hours, add more staff, and increase programming for Atherton and local community members of all ages. We hope it becomes not only a knowledge resource, but also a center for community activity and engagement. Construction on the new library is making excellent progress and a new library community meeting space is shaping up beautifully with the adjoining historic town hall renovation. Library staff are planning to close the temporary library and begin move in activities late this summer or early fall. The most recent progress can be viewed at: Project Live Web Cam: https://www.ci.atherton.ca.us/519/Project-Webcams

State News

Governor Newsom released his May Revision of the 2021-22 State Library on May 14. In the May Revision document, the Governor released it states, "The May Revision stands in stark contrast to the budget of one year ago. Compared to a projected budget deficit of $54 billion a year ago, the state now has a projected $75.7 billion surplus. The Governor called his May Revision, "historical" and "transformative," and added, "This is a plan to get California roaring back."

Included in the proposals for public libraries under the State Library Budget are the following items:

- Library infrastructure – An increase of $50 million in one-time General Fund for an equity focused matching grant program to support local library infrastructure.
- Broadband Access – An increase of $35 million one-time General Fund available through 2024-25, to expand broadband access to isolated and under-served communities through a collaborative partnership of local education agencies, regional libraries, and telehealth providers and leverage available federal funds through the E-Rate Program.
- Broadband Capacity and Equipment Grants – An increase of $6 million one-time General Fund to support the Broadband Connectivity Initiative.
- English as a Second Language – An increase of $15 million one-time General Fund to support English as a Second Language programs offered through local libraries.
- Online Tutoring – An increase of $6.4 million one-time General Fund to support a two-year pilot to support online tutoring services statewide to any student who needs them in English, Spanish, and Mandarin.
- Assistive technology – An Increase of $1.6 million one-time General Fund and $220,000 ongoing General Fund to modernize the technologies offered to visually impaired Californians using Braille and talking book library services offered by the Braille Institute and the State Library.
- $3 million partnership with State Parks to make Park Passes available through more libraries.

Library staff is continuing to follow developments around proposals and grants for American Rescue Plan Act and potential federal and state funding opportunities for San Mateo County Libraries and the communities we serve.

Employee Service Awards

Three employees are being honored for their long careers working for San Mateo County Libraries: Andrea Marie Lumanlan, Millbrae Library Circulation Supervisor, Erin McGee, Brisbane Library Assistant and Kathryn Wiszowaty, Portola Valley Community Program Specialist, each reached an incredible 20 years of service.

Congratulations to Andrea, Erin and Kat 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:

Cherry Cruzat has accepted a promotion to the position of Librarian at our Belmont Library. Cherry has worked for San Mateo County Libraries since 2018, most recently as a Library Assistant for the Atherton Library. Her previous experience includes work for the system as an Extra-Help Library Assistant and Library Aide. Cherry has a Bachelor of Arts in Psychology from UC Merced and a Master's in Information and Library Science from San Jose State University.

Cristina Macz has accepted the position of Limited-Term Communications Associate. Cristina has held the position of Extra-Help Library Assistant since 2017 and has assisted with The Big Lift Inspiring Summers program and volunteer coordination. Cristina has a Bachelor of Arts in Media Studies from the University of San Francisco and an Associate Degree in Journalism from Skyline College.

Heriberto Madrigal has accepted the position of Youth and Family Services Librarian. Prior to joining San Mateo County Libraries, he worked for the Redwood City Public Library as a Youth Services and Programming Librarian and has experience working as a Library Assistant at the Menlo Park Public Library. Heriberto earned his Master's in Information and Library Science from San Jose State University and a bachelor's degree in Wellness Coaching from Arizona State University.

Welcome and congratulations to Cherry, Cristina, and Heriberto!

Media Coverage

San Mateo County Libraries continues to make headlines by offering exceptional services. Check out these great news stories:

- San Mateo County Libraries invest in summer programming, San Mateo Daily Journal, May 18, 2021
- San Mateo County Libraries Reopened for In-Person Services, Bay City News, April 23, 2021
- County Libraries to reopen doors for limited in-library services next week, Climate Online, April 15, 2021
- Libraries Reopening in San Mateo County, Good2Know Network, April 15, 2021
- San Mateo County libraries reopening, San Mateo Daily Journal, April 8, 2021
- County's public libraries to reopen in April, Half Moon Bay Review, March 24, 2021