



San Mateo
County
Libraries

Open for Exploration

Annual Report 2020-2021





Our Mission

San Mateo County Libraries strengthen our community by creating an inclusive sense of place and environment for learning.

Our Vision

San Mateo County Libraries ignite growth through transformative experiences.

Director’s Message

I am so proud of our libraries and the people who staff and support them. They are truly champions of learning, growth, and exploration even in the toughest of times. In fiscal year 2020-2021, we marked a year since our libraries closed due to the pandemic and what a year it was. Our communities endured more than we could have ever imagined. Despite our enormous challenges, San Mateo County Libraries proved to be a nimble organization with a flexible mission that allowed us to pivot, innovate and quickly respond with much needed services to the public.

This year we focused on deep meaningful work including equity and social justice, youth learning, workforce development, mindfulness, and the power of human experiences and the written word. In addition to providing new and unique services during the past year, we also spent many months preparing plans to safely reopen. Staff ingenuity and thoughtful mobilization resulted in many new and reimagined services to be proud of.

In this annual report, you will find an abundance of compelling stories that showcase our creative spirit, resilience and unwavering commitment to strengthen and uplift our community.

ANNE-MARIE DESPAIN
DIRECTOR OF LIBRARY SERVICES

Library Joint Powers Authority Governing Board

- Atherton**
Rick DeGolia
- Belmont**
Charles Stone
- Brisbane**
Karen Cunningham
- East Palo Alto**
Regina Wallace-Jones
- Foster City**
Sam Hindi
- Half Moon Bay**
Deborah Penrose
- Millbrae**
Reuben Holober
- Pacifica**
Mike O’Neill
- Portola Valley**
Maryann Derwin
- San Carlos**
Sara McDowell
- Woodside**
Dick Brown
- San Mateo County**
Carole Groom





283,997

SERVICE
POPULATION

37%

OF TOTAL COUNTY
POPULATION

351

SQUARE
MILES

86%

OF RESIDENTS BELIEVE THE
LIBRARY IS TRUSTWORTHY

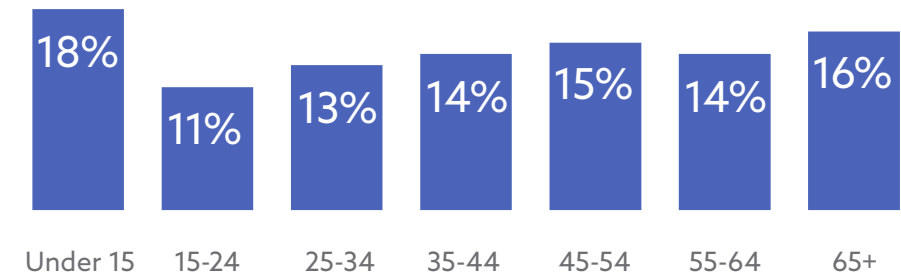
88%

OF RESIDENTS SAY THE
LIBRARY IS INCLUSIVE

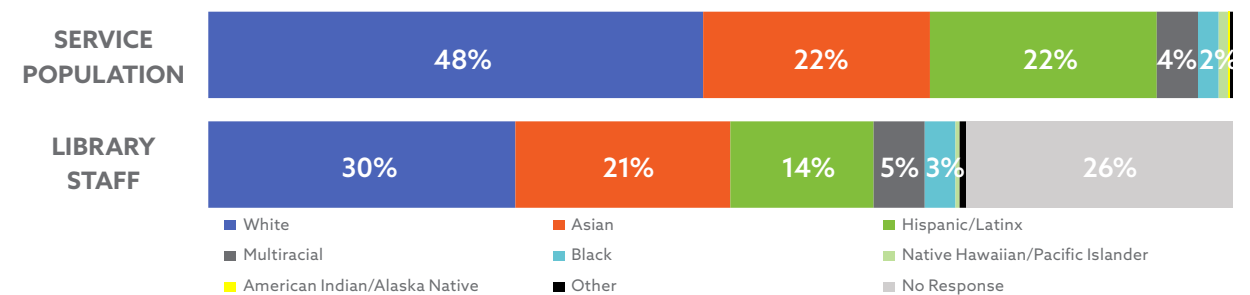
93%

OF RESIDENTS RATE THE
LIBRARY FAVORABLY

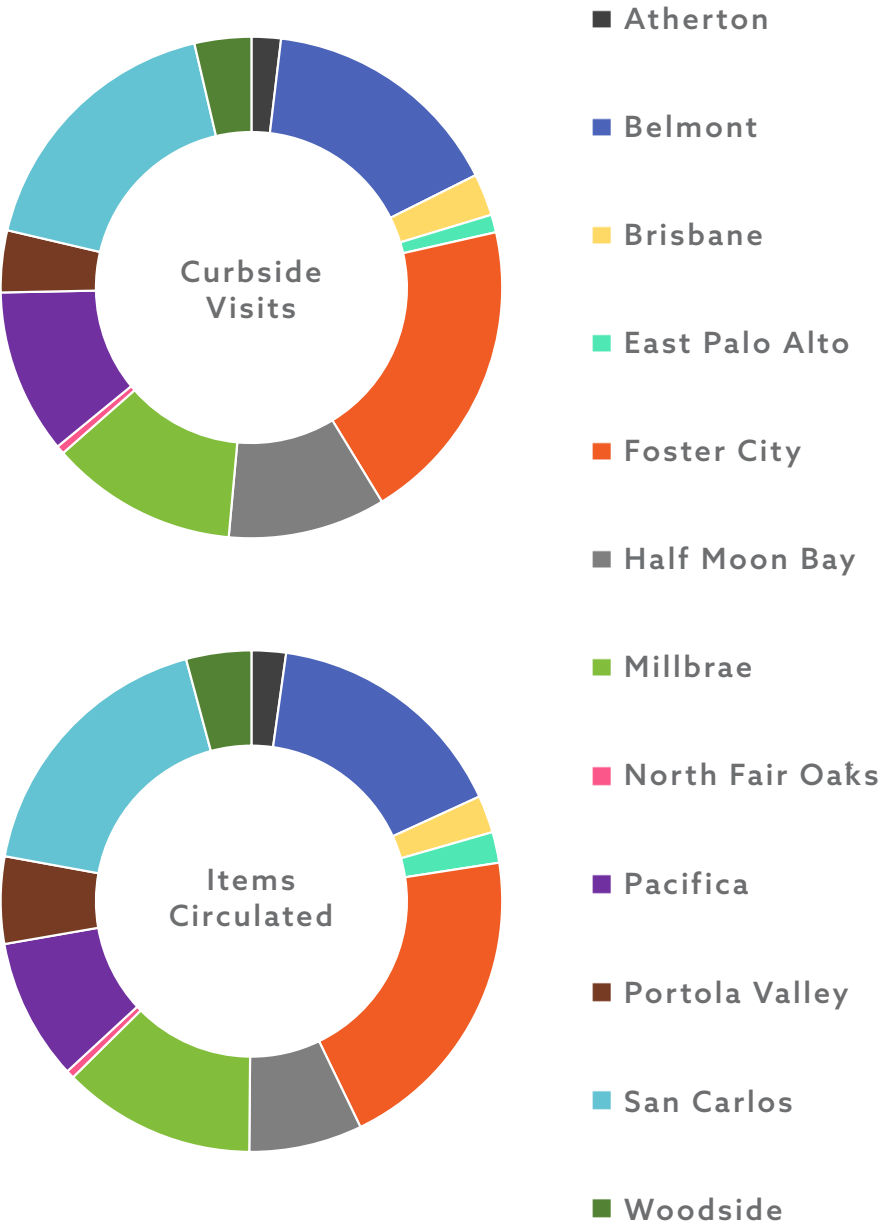
AGE DISTRIBUTION



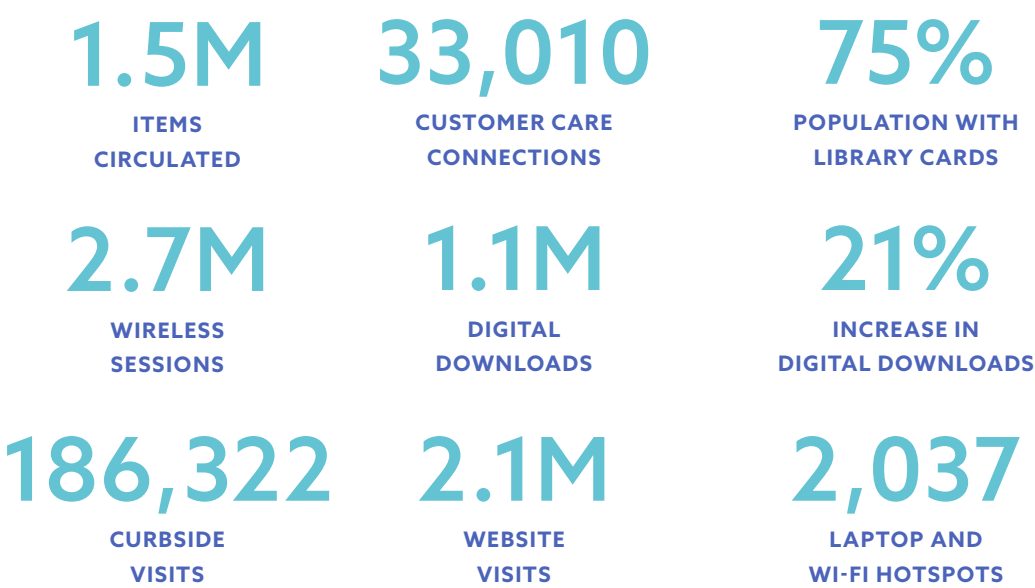
DIVERSITY



Year in Numbers



*North Fair Oaks Library joined the system in mid-March.



Dedicated Service

Our commitment to enriching the lives of our community members remains strong. Throughout the quickly evolving landscape of the past year, we adapted our innovative services to connect you to valuable resources and to each other.



We inspire young minds through engaging services like our free Library Explorers camps.

Welcome Back!

In April, we proudly opened our doors to lines of library enthusiasts who were eager to be back inside their beloved libraries.

On the first day of in-person service, hundreds of patrons came into our libraries to browse collections, use computers, pick up holds, and bask in the glory of being in their library again. Since then, we've had over 52,000 visitors come through our doors.

Curbside Service

Our staff and communities were filled with the excitement of being back in our libraries but for those that wanted contactless interactions, we continued to offer curbside services. Curbside services allowed members of the public to pick up materials by appointment. We later expanded this service to allow for a convenient walk-up option where no appointment was required.

One of the most popular curbside offerings was our Grab and Go Bundles. A staff curated stack of books were bundled together by age or topic and available for pickup by our patrons. Over 28,226 bundles were checked out, circulating close to 200,000 books in our community.

We also offered free printing, 3D printing projects, and Grab and Sew projects that were a big hit with the public. Free printing across all 13 of our locations resulted in 126,070 printed pages for 30,298 patrons. We also had a total of 388 3D print jobs, with projects ranging from bicycle parts to succulent planters and five of our locations offered sewing machines for check out during our curbside services.



"The ability to request library materials and pick them up at my local library during the pandemic has been a lifesaver for me and I expect other patrons. I truly appreciate it."

LIBRARY PATRON

Virtual Events

We are a catalyst for community connections, energizing the virtual environment with responsive programming and learning opportunities for all ages. Online book clubs regularly sparked dialogue and maintained connections across a variety of age groups, interests and languages. Staff hosted numerous Tech Café sessions, introducing various technology platforms and user tips in a friendly, equitable environment. Storytimes evolved from recorded videos to interactive experiences, allowing children and caregivers to sing and socialize with one another safely. Acclaimed authors disrupted the loneliness some were feeling in our communities with the power and inspiration of the written word. Creativity sparked during our springtime Make It March programs. We invited everyone to become a maker, and many did! People participated in podcasting workshops, took home 14,654 art and STEM kits for youth, and LEGO grab-bags inspired young engineers.



Our virtual experiences kept library staff and communities connected through innovative program ideas.



Multi-language Programs

We included more of our community members by offering 133 programs in multiple languages or in a language other than English, ranging from bilingual story-times to English development opportunities.



Online Services

Virtual Meeting Spaces

The holidays are a time for togetherness and community, which is why we launched virtual meeting spaces during the winter season. We made private virtual meeting rooms available for three hours at a time to accommodate up to 300 attendees. Supporting safe, family gatherings and bringing together friends is just one more way we connect and strengthen our community.

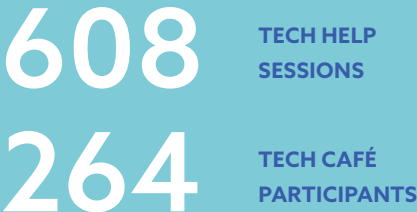
Practicing Mindfulness

To ensure greater access to self-care and healing, we're proud to be the first public library to partner with Calm, a mindfulness app, which offers guided meditations, relaxing soundscapes, and sleep stories for all ages. Since launching this service, 620 people have accessed this resource to enrich their lives.

In celebration of Mental Health Month, we built awareness and connected people to a wide range of mental health and wellness programs. The highlight was the inaugural Poetry and Mindfulness event, a series offered in partnership with County Supervisors Carole Groom and Warren Slocum and featuring San Mateo County Poet Laureates past and present. Heartfelt poems lovingly curated by the poets were read, engaging patrons in a shared, powerful experience.



We host a variety of tech help workshops to promote lifelong learning.



“You folks shone during the pandemic. I for one, learned a lot more about library services. Attended webinars and so on as well.”
LIBRARY PATRON

Uplifting Communities

Our communities are at the heart of our libraries, and we’re committed to addressing their most pressing needs through lifelong learning opportunities.



Our welcoming spaces provide opportunities for endless exploration for eager readers of all ages.

Equity Author Series

To continue to propel us toward becoming a more equitable county, we hosted various authors focusing on equity as it pertains to housing, immigration, education and LGBTQIA+ rights. Each author was introduced by a Library Governing Board member or community partner, and free books by each featured author were given away to patrons to make the conversation accessible for all.

After each event, the community engaged in conversations moderated by the Peninsula Conflict Resolution Center. Speakers shared information and connected with other community members to discuss how we can make a difference moving forward.

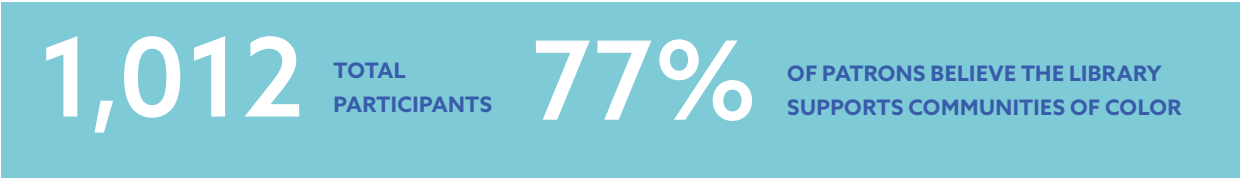
Featured topics included:

- ▶ Implicit bias, how it shapes our views on the world, and ways to move forward
- ▶ Our county’s history of inequitable access to housing, and how that history is still impacting communities of color today
- ▶ The experience an undocumented person faces immigrating to the United States, and the challenges they face around family deportations and xenophobia after 9/11
- ▶ Equity in education and how quality education is key for all children to succeed
- ▶ LGBTQIA+ issues including, structural marginalization, toxic masculinity, and gender identity



“Thank you so much! I only wish it could have been longer. I *love* that the library has been hosting more and more events around DEI [Diversity, Equity, Inclusion] and other important topics and will continue to keep my eyes peeled for similar events!”

LIBRARY PATRON



Digital Divide

This year highlighted the overwhelming need for our communities to have access to reliable technology. Between distance learning and working from home, to relying on virtual gatherings to connect safely with loved ones, having stable technology with support has never been more important.

To promote both digital literacy and access, our personalized tech help gave patrons an easy way to book an appointment with staff that were ready to assist in both English and Spanish. We also not only expanded our high-speed Wi-Fi in each of our libraries' parking lots, but we made sure that our broadband service was active 24 hours a day. We invested in Wi-Fi hotspots—distributing them throughout our most vulnerable communities and partnering with local schools to provide hotspots to keep students connected and learning.



eBook Stop

During the first half of 2021 we launched free eBook Stops in locations around the county, making 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. Community partner eBook Stop locations include Woodland Park Apartments (East Palo Alto), Sequoia Adult School (North Fair Oaks), San Pedro Valley Park (Pacifica), and Coastside Senior Center (Half Moon Bay).

1,526

AVAILABLE
HOTSPOTS
FOR CHECKOUT

“They’ve helped more than 60 of our students get hotspots to be able to access their classes. We have a lot of students that have lack of access to technology and in particular, high-speed internet. This has really enabled our students to be able to access our classes and be able to be connected to their teachers. ”

SEQUOIA ADULT SCHOOL DIRECTOR JONATHAN FU

Job Resources

During a year when so many people experienced job insecurity, San Mateo County Libraries met the needs of our communities with real-world workforce assistance. In collaboration with various community partners, we hosted online career development programs every week to help boost job searches and improve skills. From resume review to practice interviews, we empowered individuals with the tools they need to succeed.

Meal Program

Our libraries nourish more than minds. Our work around ensuring that families have what they need to thrive continues to be a priority. We are proud to support our communities with our ongoing meal programs at the East Palo Alto Library and Half Moon Bay Library. Offered as a to-go service, we provided 35,347 meals to our community members.

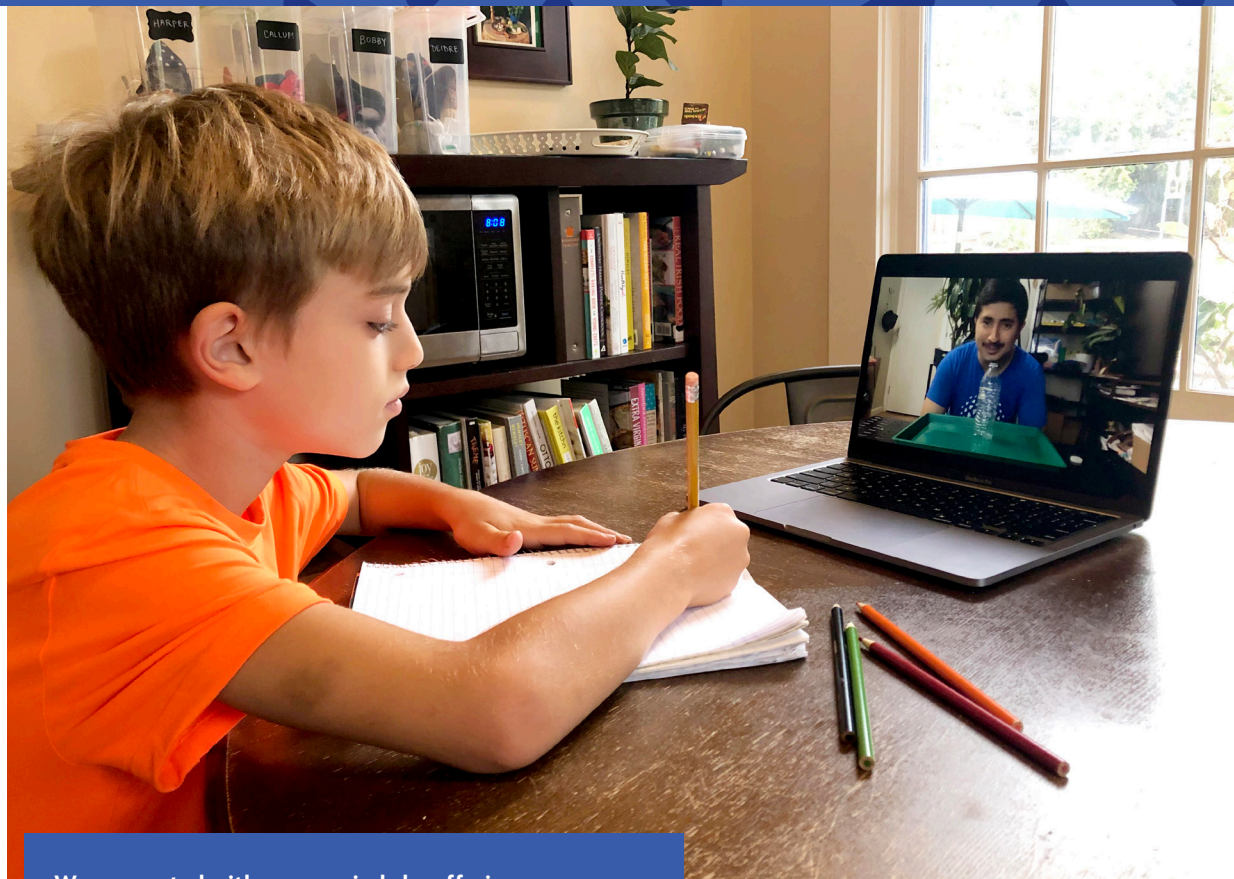


35,347

MEALS
PROVIDED

Bright Futures

Supporting youth is at the core of our mission. We expanded programs to enrich virtual school experiences, combat learning loss, and help children stay connected with their friends and communities.



We connected with young minds by offering transformative virtual experiences for all ages.

School Outreach

While education evolved rapidly over the past year, our commitment to support youth and educators remains unchanged. Virtual school outreach events were offered in three languages and reached 11,962 students. They included connecting youth with 22 accomplished authors of popular books.

With youth at home and struggling with distance learning, access to our wealth of library resources became imperative. Our new student card project opened up a world of knowledge to all youth enrolled in schools. We partnered with school districts to seamlessly give library cards to every student; adding approximately 1,600 card holders. We will continue to expand this program until all school districts have been included and no child lacks access to San Mateo County Libraries' support.



Partner Highlight

Partnerships make us stronger, and we are grateful to be able to provide opportunities for youth through our collaboration with Genentech. This spring, we kicked off Make-It March by providing sew-able robot circuit kits to children at our libraries, and launching a new virtual version of Genentech's afterschool engineering program, GeneAcademy. We recruited 100 3rd-5th grade students throughout the county, with targeted recruitment to engage youth from the highest need schools. From January-May, students participated in biweekly letter-writing to build literacy skills, and learned about various STEAM topics through live, hands-on activities.

"Before the academy I did not get columns, or turbines. I'll miss this. That was pretty fun."

GENEACADEMY PARTICIPANT



11,962

STUDENTS
REACHED

Summer Initiatives

Covid-19 has exacerbated inequities in youth learning achievement and social emotional development, disproportionately affecting youth of color. With our history as leaders in the summer learning space and the encouragement of our

Governing Board to think big, we developed a robust set of interventions that focused on positive whole-child outcomes to provide unprecedented support for a historic summer.



“Thank you so much for taking care of my 4-year-old daughter! She left me for the first time yesterday and apparently had a blast. She told me that she wants to see everyone again soon. And what she said melts my heart!” LIBRARY PATRON

Library Explorers

We launched a new camp called Library Explorers to address educational equity. Strong school partnerships successfully connected under-resourced rising K-3rd graders with this free summer enrichment program hosted at eleven of our libraries. Designed to help youth overcome pandemic losses and prepare for a new school year, five exciting weeks of the program helped 334 participants develop their social emotional skills and explore STEAM topics ranging from the human brain to engineering.



Inspiring Summers

To ensure student success, we expanded our award-winning Big Lift Inspiring Summers camps, working closely with seven school districts to provide the highest-need youth with enriching, evidence-based experiences. Thanks to the additional resources, we were able to extend the length of the program and offer additional slots for students, serving 976 youth.

Families CREATE

To make Summer Learning accessible to more children, we introduced Families CREATE, a virtual program funded by a grant from the Institute of Museum and Library Services. The goal of this program is to provide engaging STEAM and literacy activities to youth and to build family engagement through both self-paced and guided live, interactive virtual experiences with free, take-home kits provided by the library.

Summer Learning

As part of our commitment to equity, this year we enrolled every youth cardholder in the Summer Learning Challenge with the hopes of engaging more youth in creativity and exploration. Once enrolled, youth were automatically entered into a drawing to win one of 13 \$1,000 scholarships. Library staff worked tirelessly to provide stimulating reading lists and inventive programming that would inspire youth to read and try new things. Free books were also provided to youth throughout the summer so they could start or add to their home libraries.



Expanding Horizons

Our welcoming spaces, passionate staff and volunteers are what make our libraries special. We connect our boundless energy and transformative experiences to our communities.



Our spaces support lifelong learning by creating an inclusive sense of place for all to enjoy.

Library Champions

We're proud of our staff and their dedication to the wellbeing of our communities. When the county called on us for help during the pandemic our staff responded by volunteering to serve in various roles as emergency workers. In addition to providing technology and information support, staff have served as contact tracers, meal providers, and vaccine distribution workers.



"The library team is the most amazing staff . . . I've just never seen a more creative or productive group of people that never say no and are always looking to do bigger and better in how they serve the community."

COUNTY SUPERVISOR CAROLE GROOM



82% OF RESIDENTS SAY
STAFF IS FRIENDLY

Community Support

Our volunteers quickly mobilized to help transition our crucial ESL programs from in-person to online environments without missing a beat. They have utilized technology to reach even more community members in new and creative ways.

Our Friends of the Library groups and the Foundation for San Mateo County Libraries continued to be champions of our library services, and showed immense support to library staff in a time when it was needed the most.



Transformative Spaces



Brisbane

The beautiful new Brisbane Library was completed and opened to the public for the first time on April 22nd. The 7,670 square foot library provides three times the square footage, the city’s first-ever art display, an increase in collection size, new dedicated areas, such as a History Room, Quiet Room, children’s and teen spaces, collaborative makerspace, Community Room, and beautiful outdoor patios and gardens. The new building meets LEED Silver standards and the environmentally-progressive design features an abundance of natural light, sustainable interior choices, and a 5,000 gallon rainwater cistern which will result in a 77% reduction of indoor water use. The new library has been enthusiastically embraced by the community.

“This library is the place to read, to meet, to gather, to collaborate, to build, and to dream.”

COUNTY SUPERVISOR DAVID CANEPA



“Thank you for making this change possible for the North Fair Oaks community. We’re excited to see all the services the county will provide to residents of this part of San Mateo County.”

LIBRARY PATRON

Atherton

We’re in the final construction stages of the new Atherton Library thanks to crews who have been hard at work throughout the year. The beautiful 11,000 square-foot library will reflect the history and civic pride of the Town—standout features include a quiet reading room, a maker space and digital tech lab, numerous small meeting rooms, a café, larger front porch, and a restored history room that will truly make this library one of a kind. We anticipate that the new library will be completed soon, and are planning for a grand opening celebration to take place later this year.



North Fair Oaks

In March, our family of libraries grew as we welcomed the North Fair Oaks Library into San Mateo County Libraries. Community residents now benefit from increased hours and programs along with comprehensive and innovated services. Getting to know the North Fair Oaks community has been a joy, and we look forward to working together with them to continue to expand our presence and services.



We strengthen our communities by igniting growth through boundless opportunities like offering free reading books.



San Mateo
County
Libraries

Always open for exploration at **smcl.org**

