San Mateo County Libraries

Agenda Item VI.

To: JPA Governing Board
From: Anne-Marie Despain, Director of Library Services
Date: September 14, 2021
Meeting: September 20, 2021
Re: Director's Report

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

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

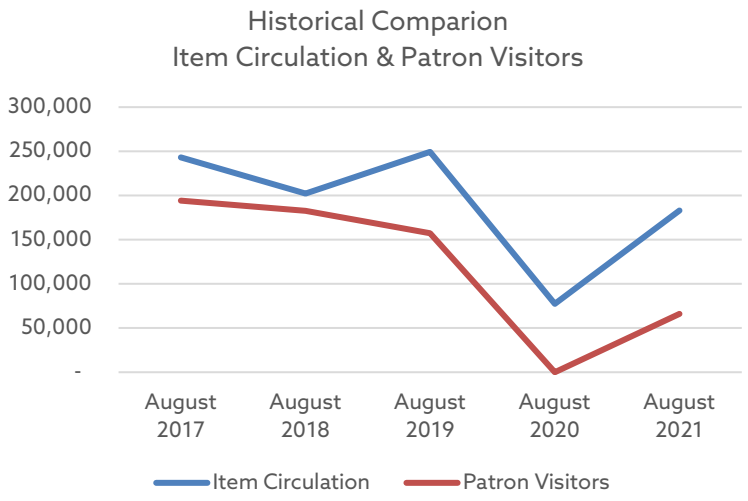
Phased Reopening Updates

We have reached the final phase of our Phase Reopening Plan, Phase 4: New Normal. San Mateo County Libraries is committed to protecting the health of our community while continuing to meet their needs. This summer, as Library Explorer and Inspiring Summer camps ended, the percentage of individuals vaccinated steadily rose, the number of COVID-19 transmissions slowed, and the risks from COVID-19 were reduced, we were poised to be able to expand services.

As of August 2, 2021, all libraries (with the exception of Pacifica—both libraries have a slightly different operating schedule) expanded to six days a week and added evenings. Library hours moved to a consistent schedule of Mondays and Tuesdays 10am-8pm and Wednesdays through Saturdays 10am-5pm. Pacifica's two libraries have adjusted hours that include: Sharp Park Library: Mondays 10-8pm, Tuesdays 12-8pm, Thursdays and Fridays 10-5pm, and Saturdays 1-5pm; and Sanchez Library: Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Saturdays 1-5pm.

In addition to new operating hours, libraries have returned to offering pre-pandemic room capacity and opened reservations to study and community rooms once again. Most furniture and technology and equipment were returned to public spaces, and we began welcoming back some of our Extra-Help staffing and opening recruitments to fill vacancies. As a youth setting our libraries never discontinued mask requirements and recommended social distancing, but all library spaces are open and available for use.

Libraries have been bustling, but we have not reached pre-covid visitor counts or circulation numbers at any location, nor encountered any significant challenges. Over the last month, staff have become comfortable and confident returning to their roles in the library while also continuing to support curbside services for the public that prefer a contact-free experience.



Now that we have expanded operations and the community is enjoying our spaces again, we are steadily working to relaunch in person programs in September. Plans being developed include beginning with focused, outdoor offerings that are most critical to resume, while also continuing a complement of virtual experiences as well. Minimal indoor programming may be approved on a case-by-case basis. All current services and future programming and events will be carefully monitored, and we will continue to revisit and iterate as appropriate.

The high vaccination rate in San Mateo County has provided us with an optimistic outlook and we look forward to further expanding hours and services in the future; however, the recent uptick in corona virus cases and the prevalence of the variants in our communities has resulted in uncertainty. We plan to continue with our current hours through the fall and then re-evaluate the expansion of hours based on public health conditions and staffing. Provided that local conditions and guidelines permit, we will continue to restore programming, services and hours of operation as staffing levels allow. It is anticipated that service hours at the majority of our libraries will be fully restored in the beginning of the new year.

<u>Customer Care</u>

The pandemic provided us with an opportunity to streamline and consolidate our customer care phone and text services. To support this patron enhancement, staff are currently piloting a full VOIP solution, where Zoom will replace our traditional phone systems. Part of our next level of customer focused service, Zoom phones allow staff to pick up customer calls from any location. The service also allows us to offer language lines that can be picked up immediately by our multilingual staff. This new service covers 213 digital phone licenses, our branded 1-833-YES-SMCL phone number, 150 Zoom meeting licenses, and other add-on services. The cost of the service will not exceed $200,000 for two years. While we just implemented the service and are still evaluating it, early data shows that customers calls are being picked up within seconds and few calls are being routed to voicemail. We will continue to assess the service over the next several months and make necessary adjustments to provide the best customer care possible for our patrons.

Equity Initiatives

In FY 2020-21, we increased our commitment to equity and spent the year working to support staff, host an equity author series and contract with The Justice Collective to conduct an internal survey and provide recommendations for how our divisions can take steps to increase equity in their policies and practices. Building on what was learned in the last year, we have begun to focus on key priorities and initiatives to support both the public and the overall organization.

- Public Programs—In partnership with County and its new office of Equity and Social Justice, we are creating a six-part virtual event series called Equity through Art. This series will look at various communities of color facing inequities in San Mateo County through the lens of art. The series kicks off with Seeing Silicon Valley: Life Inside a Fraying America by Mary Beth Meehan and Fred Turner on September 22, at 6 pm and hosted by the Chief Equity Officer, Shireen Malekafzali.

- Equity Action Plans—This fall, each division and community library will focus on creating and implementing Equity Action Plans. These plans allow staff teams to select a priority for the coming year to move their equity work forward. The Library Equity Workgroup will support these goals and share updates on the progress.

- Trainings and Partnerships—Over this next year, staff will have the opportunity to participate in trainings including Cultural Competency, Implicit Bias, Microaggression and more. We hope to provide training that will help staff build a deeper understanding of equity to support our diverse communities. Staff are also engaged working with the County as part of their Core Equity Team and part of the Urban Library Council Equity Officers group. These will provide us with opportunities to learn, collaborate and increase equity resources for our communities.

Ballot Boxes

Four of our community libraries (North Fair Oaks, Brisbane, Woodside, and Half Moon Bay) are hosting indoor ballot collection boxes through the August 16-September 14 voting period. Voters can locate our library Ballot Drop Box Locations using our voter resources page: https://smcl.org/vote/

Local Newspapers Digitized

We're excited to announce that our microfilm collection is now completely digital. Instead of going into the library to use a microfilm machine, patrons can peruse these archives from newspapers such as the *Brisbane Bee* (1979-1980), *Brisbane Bee-Democrat* (1961-1979), *Coast Side Comet* (1910-1923), *Half Moon Bay Review,* and *Pescadero Pebble* (1916-2015).

State Funded Workforce Resources

The State Library announced that it will be utilizing America Recovery Plan funds to provide free library access to six digital platforms designed to help Californians and their communities recover from the pandemic. State Librarian Greg Lucas stated, "We know these unemployed or underemployed Californians are disproportionately women,

people of color, young people (under age 25), and people with less than a bachelor's degree. The choice of platforms took this and other workforce development needs into account. Making online tools like Coursera, GetSetUp, Learning Express, LinkedIn Learning, Northstar, and Skillshare universally available to Californians now will speed recovery from the pandemic by offering quick help and return those unemployed or underemployed hit hardest by the pandemic to the workforce."

Among other things, the platforms offer resources for workforce development and recovery, career change, small business startup, digital skill building, soft skills, test prep and certifications. San Mateo County Libraries currently only subscribes to LinkedIn Learning.

Strategic Plan Subcommittee

On September 7, Strategic Plan Subcommittee Members Groom, Penrose, Brown, Derwin and O'Neill met with library staff and EMC Research consultants to follow up on the Board's request to gather additional data regarding changes in library usage patterns and patron needs that have occurred over the last 12 months and predict how patrons will be using libraries moving forward. EMC Research presented an updated patron survey draft that will help track how usage patterns have changed since the last patron survey conducted in 2020 and how patrons see themselves interacting with libraries in the months to come. Changes to the survey include adding specific questions to gauge patron comfort with in-person programming and services, the type of programming they're interested in the future, and the importance of having physical or digital services and materials.

Subcommittee Members were in favor of increasing the survey sample size from 1,000 to 2,000 to optimize the data collected and to increase sampling in the following communities: East Palo Alto, Half Moon Bay, North Fair Oaks and Pacifica as well as unincorporated service areas, particularly in north county Broadmoor/Colma areas. Library staff is continuing to work with EMC Research to finalize the additional survey with the goal of sending it out to patrons mid-September. The Subcommittee will reconvene once more in October to provide feedback and recommendations after reviewing survey results and a final report will be presented to the Operations Committee and Governing Board in November.

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

Meal Programs

Ensuring youth have the nourishment they need to be creative, learn and thrive has been a multi-year priority and one that becomes more profoundly needed in the summer. That's why we sponsor summer meals in four locations: Colma Community Center, East Palo Alto Library, Half Moon Bay Library, and Pescadero Elementary School. Half Moon Bay is a new summer meal location for us and we're now able to provide ongoing meals there during the summer and school year. Across the four sites, we were able to provide 11,825 meals and snacks to youth and their families.

To make nutrition services fun and to further augment the resources available to participating families, we had a lot of support. Half Moon Bay Friends of the Library provided $2,500 for the Half Moon Bay Library and the Foundation for San Mateo County Libraries provided $2,500 for the East Palo Alto Library thanks to the Palo Alto Weekly Holiday Fund. A $5,600 award from the State Library Lunch at the Library grant also allowed us to purchase items to enhance home resources for those participating in any of our summer meal service sites. We purchased magnetic tile building blocks, solar rover kits, modeling clay, coloring books & crayons, soccer balls, bubble wands, slime kits, yoyos, jump ropes, Rubik's cubes, and pouches with sharpeners, pencils, erasers, highlighters, rulers, colored pencils & glue sticks for youth to take home with their grab & go meals. We are excited to continue providing engaging meal services for youth in the fall and we are thrilled to expand this service to our North Fair Oaks Library.

Sustainability Field Trip for Youth

On July 30, our work with nonprofit Sustainable Future Outdoor Academy (SFOA) allowed us to provide an enriching field trip for rising 3rd – 5th grade Inspiring Summers, Gene Academy and Library Explorers camp students and their families at Pie Ranch in Pescadero. SFOA educates youth about sustainability. Their environmental modules are based on United Nations Sustainable Development Goals and apply to local experiences, activities and farms. This important work develops a new generation to lead us into a greener future. Youth had a busy day harvesting herbs, flowers, vegetables, learning about native plants and the importance of bees in the food chain. They also had a chance to milk a goat, bake a pie from scratch and—best of all—perform a taste test! Children left with a strong understanding of our food cycle, the hard work that goes into harvesting the food we eat and the importance of having a sustainable approach to our daily lives. We will continue to make learning and environmentalism fun in the fall with 3-day programs targeted for middle school students.

Raising a Reader

Throughout the last spring and summer, we began connecting with our 200 Raising a Reader (RAR) classrooms at 66 individual sites. These are preschool-aged children in the most under-resourced communities across the county and include targeted Big Lift preschools.

Staff began virtual visits to classes at IHSD Ravenswood from October 2020 through May 2021 and provided 19 visits reaching approximately 190 students. We delivered approximately 300 book bundles of children's books to students at Big Lift site Martin Elementary School in early June prior to summer dismissal. Additionally, 150 books were provided to students in Family Connections in Redwood City for their end-of-the-year celebrations.

In September, we'll continue to develop training for all our RAR site staff on best practices to support youth and families in this program. Our priority is to help preschools resume circulating book-filled bags again this fall, as most sites paused the service due to the pandemic. Monthly storytimes at the participating preschool classrooms, either virtually or in-person, are scheduled to launch by early October.

Educational Resources

Use of our Educational eResources continues to accelerate throughout the pandemic. Brainfuse HelpNow, which provides online tutoring services, increased by 68% from FY 2019-20 to FY 2020-21. TeachingBooks, which provides multimedia content to complement children's and young adult books, increased by 258% from FY 2019-20 to FY 2020-21.

Digital Collections Update

Circulation of our OverDrive eBook and eAudiobook platforms increased by almost 26% when comparing FY 2019-20 to FY 2020-21. Our Axis 360 eBook and eAudiobook platform increased by 14% in the same time frame. Our Kanopy streaming platform known for its indie films, documentaries, and Great Courses increased substantially in usage by 86% when comparing FY 2019-20 to FY 2020-21. Similarly, our Hoopla streaming platform increased by 18%. Simultaneous use eBooks and eAudiobooks are always available to checkout, without any holds. Our simultaneous use collection spans across OverDrive, Hoopla, and ODILO. In total, we have 489,156 simultaneous use eBook titles. We have a total of 141,517 simultaneous use eAudiobooks.

Author Talk Series

Our author series continues to delight, bringing national and local authors to inform and entertain. In June, George M. Johnson shared their memoir *All Boys Aren't Blue* for the final installment of our spring Equity Author Series. In July, bestselling author Taylor Jenkins Reid shared her latest book, *Malibu Rising*. August brought the Queen of Greens herself, Deborah Madison to reminisce in a discussion of yet another NYT bestselling book *An Onion in My Pocket*. A total of 247 patrons attended these author talks. September will bring more stellar author programming with K-Ming Chang's *Bestiary*, Mary Beth Meehan, and Fred Turner's *Seeing Silicon Valley*, and finally, Carolina de Robertis' *The President and the Frog*. To keep up with all our upcoming author events, visit our blog, Author Talks, All Year.

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

Atherton Library Project

In mid-July, Atherton Town staff hosted VIP hard hat tours of the new Atherton Town Center. Project stakeholders were able to see first-hand the exciting developments of the town campus and the new library. Construction crews continue work on the interior walls, circular skylights, and installation of the library deck.

It is anticipated that City Hall will be completed soon with Town staff moving in this fall. The library is approximately five to six weeks behind City Hall completion. Library staff anticipate coordinating the furniture and equipment installation and library collection move in October/November. A grand opening celebration is planned to take place sometime after both buildings are open. The most recent paving progress can be viewed at: https://www.ci.atherton.ca.us/519/Project-Webcams

Brisbane Library Project

Over the Labor Day weekend, internationally recognized artist, Michele Gutlove, installed Brisbane's first permanent public artwork of hanging glass butterflies in the library's entry hall. The textured swirls of fused glass create shadows, reflections, and refractions. The suspended sculpture will be highly visible from the exterior, celebrating the geography of place with the magical science of optics.

Save the date for Saturday, October 23 as the City and Library invite the community to celebrate this new library. City and Library staff are currently working together to coordinating this event which coincides with the City's 60th anniversary. Details and invitations will be sent out soon.

Annual Report

We are pleased to present the 2020-2021 Annual Report and would like to thank our champions who support our libraries and help us reach our goals, including the Library JPA Governing Board and Operations Committee, the many Friends of the Library groups, the Foundation for San Mateo County Libraries, our dedicated volunteers and generous donors, and special thanks to our wonderfully resilient library staff. This impactful report will be sent to all JPA members, stakeholders and library partners and is available at 2020-2021 Annual Report.

Library Personnel News

Finally, we are excited to share the following personnel announcements:

Rhea Bradley has retired after serving 20 years with San Mateo County Libraries as a Librarian at the East Palo Alto Library and most recently at the San Carlos Library. During her tenure, she led programs for children and adults. Rhea is an avid reader who is known for being able to recommend the perfect book. Rhea is looking forward to spending her retirement doing the things she loves like gardening and exploring the outdoors and she also plans to adopt a dog or two.

Silvia Escalante Corral has been promoted to the position of Community Program Specialist with our Youth and Family Services division. Silvia has worked for San Mateo County Libraries since 2016, most recently as a Library Assistant at our Pacifica Library. Silvia's experience includes leading bilingual storytime in Spanish and supporting adult literacy programming. She also assisted the Big Lift Inspiring Summers program, where she has worked as a facilitator, supplies coordinator, and a Community Program Specialist. Silvia has earned a bachelor's degree in Communicative Disorders from San Francisco State University, and she is starting her MLIS at San Jose State this fall.

Bosi Chew has accepted the Office Assistant position with our Library Administration division. Bosi has over seven years of experience working as a teacher and is passionate about supporting youth and their families. She was also responsible for managing complex calendars, facilitating meetings, developing lesson plans, and effectively maintaining classroom and outdoor spaces that are safe and conductive to learning. Bosi possesses a bachelor's degree in Social Science and Social Work from Beijing Agriculture University, and she is fluent in Cantonese and Mandarin.

Karla Barreiro has accepted a Library Assistant position at our North Fair Oaks Library. Karla has worked for San Mateo County Libraries since 2019, most recently as an aide in Foster City, a Library Greeter, and as an intern for BLIS. Karla is bilingual in Spanish and earned a bachelor's degree in Anthropology from UCLA.

Valerie Castillo has accepted a Library Assistant position at our Portola Valley Library. Valerie has worked for San Mateo County Libraries since 2018 as a Library Aide and most recently as an extra-help Library Assistant for the Library Explorer's program. Valerie earned an associate degree in Allied Health from Cañada College and is currently in the Public Health program at San Jose State.

Daniela Castrillo has accepted a Library Assistant position at the North Fair Oaks Library. Daniela has worked for San Mateo County Libraries since 2017 as a Library Aide and Office Assistant. Daniela earned a bachelor's degree in Foreign Languages from Lewis and Clark College and is currently pursuing her MLIS degree at San Jose State University. Daniela is bilingual in Spanish.

Jessica Ellwood has accepted the position of Library Assistant with our Finance division. Jessica's has worked for San Mateo County Libraries since 2016, first as an intern and most recently as an extra-help fiscal office assistant. Jessica earned a bachelor's degree in finance from Menlo College.

Marcia Lee has accepted a Library Assistant position at our Atherton Library. Marcia's previous experience includes working as a Senior Clerk and Library Assistant for the San Bruno Public Library. Marcia earned her MLIS from San Jose State University. Marcia earned a bachelor's degree in English & Fine Art, with concentrations in Creative Writing & Drawing from Bryn Mawr College.

Greta Marti has accepted a Library Assistant position at our Foster City Library. Greta has worked for San Mateo County Libraries since early 2021 as an aide for our San Carlos Library. Greta recently earned her MLIS from San Jose State University and holds a master's degree in Theatre Arts from San Francisco State University.

Steven Wong has accepted a Library Assistant position at our Atherton Library Branch. Steven's previous experience includes working as a Library Assistant at the South San Francisco Public Library. Steven earned a bachelor's degree in Communication Studies from San Francisco State University.

Alan Zamora Cuevas has accepted a Library Assistant position at our Brisbane Library. Alan started working with San Mateo County Libraries in 2019 as an Extra-Help Library Assistant and has also been a Facilitator for Big Lift Inspiring Summers. He is currently pursuing a graphic design degree and is in the process of transferring to a four-year college. Alan is bilingual in Spanish.

Leslie Herrera-Mejia has accepted a Library Assistant position at our North Fair Oaks Library. Leslie has worked for San Mateo County Libraries since 2018 as a literacy intern, as an aide for Bookmobile, and she helped with the Library Explorers program this summer. Leslie is currently pursuing a bachelor's degree in Psychology and is bilingual in Spanish.

Kailey Fisicaro has accepted the Communications Specialist position and will begin working with our Comms team later this month. Kailey has experience as a freelance communications consultant and writer and she comes to us from Bend, Oregon where she worked with clients including Oregon State University-Cascades. Prior to that, Kailey worked for the public affairs agency Hubbell Communications as an account coordinator and as a reporter for the newspaper The Bulletin. Kailey has a degree in Communication Studies from California State University, Stanislaus.

Welcome and congratulations to all of our Library Champions!