San Mateo County Libraries

Agenda Item VII.

To: JPA Governing Board

From: Anne-Marie Despain, Director of Library Services

Date: February 1, 2022

Meeting: February 7, 2022

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.

2021 was another year of profound change for our communities. From the moment we were able to reopen our libraries, we focused our efforts on deepening community connections and providing boundless opportunities for exploration. It was a proud moment for us to end the year being named a 5-Star Library. Library Journal announced the list of Star Libraries in December and out of 5,608 qualifying public library systems, 85 were awarded 5 stars, the highest honor on the list. San Mateo County Libraries received the top score of the three libraries from California. Ratings are based on how the public uses their library and is a testament to our community's steadfast support. 2022 will bring new opportunities for growth, and we can't wait to continue our transformative work and expand our services.

Top Circulating Titles

Our 2021 top circulating titles show the diversity of collections currently trending in our communities. The top circulating titles for adult collections show that 63% are fiction and 37% are non-fiction. The highest circulating titles include Taylor Jenkins Reid's *Malibu Rising*, Kate Quinn's *The Rose Code*, Stephen King's *Later*, Sam Sifton's *No-recipe Recipes*, Robert Kolker's *Hidden Valley Road*, and Isabel Wilkerson's *The Warmth of Other Suns*.

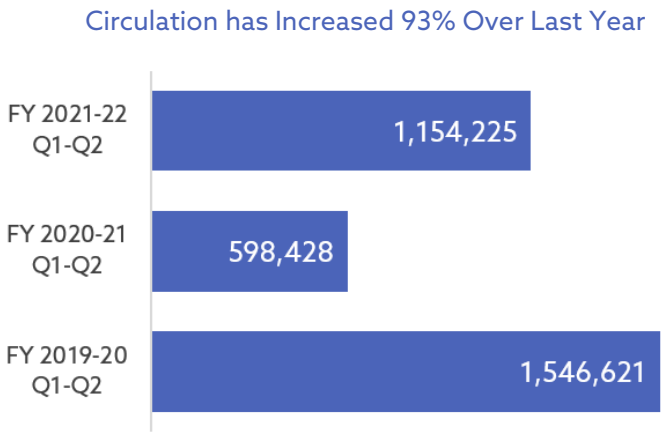
Phonic books topped the charts for the most circulated children's titles. The popularity of *Peppa Pig*, *Transformers Rescue Bots*, and *Pete the Cat* remained consistent for the latter half of 2021. Additional popular titles for youth include Raina Telgemeier's *Guts*, Victoria Jamieson's *When Stars Are Scattered*, and James Dean's *Pete the Cat and the Cool Caterpillar*.

Operations Update and New Service Hours

The winter COVID-19 surge is affecting all of our communities as we've seen the highest number of positive cases being reported in the County. In response to evolving conditions, the rapid spread of the omicron variant, and input and guidance from stakeholders, we have delayed our timeline for expanding library hours and indoor programming.

To provide a safe library environment we will continue to follow safety protocols including requiring proof of vaccines or testing for all employees, maintaining strict adherence to the mask mandate, observing social distancing in all indoor and outdoor spaces, and avoiding indoor group gatherings. So far, the impact on our libraries has been low due to the current precautions we have in place.

Circulation has increased 93% when comparing FYTD 2021-22 to FYTD 2020-21. As hours increase and COVID case decline, we project continued growth in library material circulation. We anticipate offering our new operating hours and resuming indoor programming as soon as we see a trend of decreased COVID-19 activity reestablished. We are disappointed to delay our plans but looking forward to being able to serve the public with additional services and hours very soon.



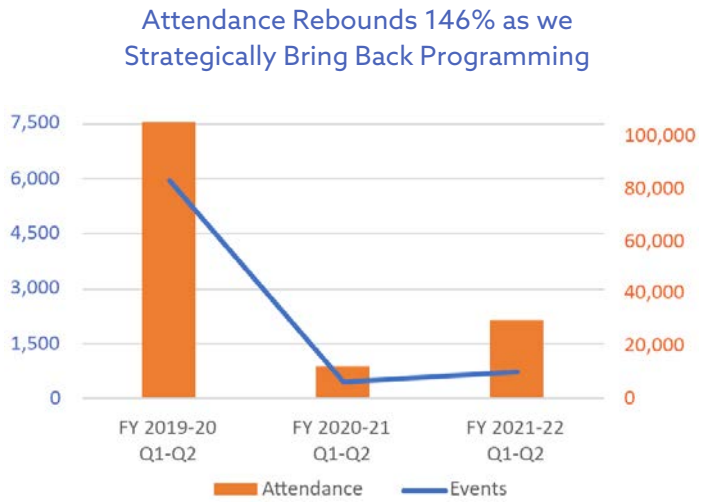
A recent patron comment included these kind words, "The pandemic has been so stifling on our household and the library has been such a beacon of support. Such a great inventory of books, friendly/helpful librarians, easy/efficient check-in/out and everything is so easy to find and manage on the library website too! It also feels safe in terms of COVID-prevention at the library when we do come in. We honestly don't know how we'd be coping without you all. My son says that checking out books from the library has been his favorite part of the pandemic."

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

Together Outdoors

In September we relaunched in-person programs outdoors to increase options for our community members and bring back highly anticipated offerings. Outdoor storytimes in English, Spanish, and Mandarin are offered weekly at libraries and community parks and are an exciting mix of toddler, preschool, family, and musical experiences. More than 6,800 children and families have attended our storytimes throughout the county.

Virtual programming continues with choices that include our monthly Live Virtual Family and Baby Storytimes. Families can access our pre-recorded storytime content at any time through our YouTube channel while we all eagerly look forward to resuming indoor storytimes as soon as local conditions allow.



In October, our libraries debuted a new monthly series designed around the principles of STEAM. Participants created bath fizzers, made basic light-up circuits, and designed their own unique door latches. These exciting in-person experience engaged over 600 local 2nd-5th graders in exploring science, technology, engineering, art, and mathematics.

Sustainability Field Trips

This fall, our work with nonprofit Sustainable Future Outdoor Academy allowed us to offer a series of enriching field trips for middle school students from East Palo Alto, Millbrae, North Fair Oaks, and San Carlos.

Over the course of 9 weeks, 75 youth from over twelve middle schools engaged in meaningful outdoor experiences in beautiful San Mateo County locations and away from screens to get hands-on with sustainability. 39% of the participants were from Millbrae, 39% were from San Carlos, 10% were from East Palo Alto and 12% were from North Fair Oaks.

One student's mother was very appreciative and grateful for the opportunity – she shared a lot of positive feedback and expressed her desire for the library to offer more programs like this. Students left the field trips 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. This important work develops a new generation to lead us into a greener future.

The Big Lift Inspiring Summers Outcomes

Two recent reports highlight the success of Inspiring Summers and the meaningful outcomes we have been able to support in partnership with the County of San Mateo, San Mateo County Office of Education, and our local school districts.

The Big Lift Evaluation: Research Findings Five Years In: this study was undertaken by RAND Education and Labor, and is the fifth in its multiphase, independent evaluation of The Big Lift. The study revealed – for the first time – a statistically significant gain for children who attended both The Big Lift preschool and summer learning programs, demonstrating the positive effects of combining multiple approaches.

The Big Lift: 5 Years of Learning Gains report: this Sperling Center Research Institute report incorporates key program evaluation findings and outcomes from 2016 to the present and focuses on 2021 outcomes. In 2021, Inspiring Summers demonstrated strong positive academic gains in literacy and math assessments across the overall initiative, as well as at the district and school site level. Youth, on average, gained between 1.5 months in literacy and half a month in math. The literacy gain is equal to our highest gains in the history of the program, remarkably achieved in a pandemic context.

Library Outreach Highlights

We are an active presence in our communities, working with local partners to support and promote library resources. Highlights of recent outreach activities include:

- Hosting virtual, schoolwide author visits including Victoria Jamieson and Omar Mohamed, the authors of *When Stars are Scattered.* More than 7,000 students all over San Mateo County were able to attend these visits and engage in conversation with acclaimed and accomplished authors.

- Participating in San Carlos Parks & Recreation's Goblin Walk, where we distributed books, maker and craft kits, and shared information about library hours and services with 500 people. We also attended San Carlos' Night of Holiday lights, where we met 900 more people to share library resources with.

- Providing book giveaways in partnership with Second Harvest Food Bank in North Fair Oaks. 250 books were given to attendees picking up free meals.

- Hosting a Makers Marketplace with book distribution, a 3D Printer Lab, and a Fix-It Clinic as part of Half Moon Bay's Make It Main Street where 65 visitors had the opportunity to learn something new about their library and its services.

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

Atherton Library Project

After three years of service in the modular unit space, the doors finally closed at the Temporary Atherton Library on Saturday, December 4. The modular unit will be removed from the site to allow construction crews to continue landscaping the campus – paving the way to our new library. The library collection is circulating through mail outs until the new building is ready for us to move in sometime in February.

Construction on new Atherton Library is progressing beautifully, the flooring is complete, and shelving will be installed over the next few weeks. Work will soon begin planning an Atherton grand-opening celebration in Spring 2022.

East Palo Alto Library Project

At the December 7 East Palo Alto City Council meeting, Council approved moving forward with a purchase and sales agreement of the land adjacent to the EPACenter Arts building for a new library. The proposed location of the new library at this site gets us one step closer to seeing the conceptual plans become a reality! The two facilities were designed in a way to provide the community with an educational hub where residents would access services and complementary common areas offered by both EPACenter Arts and a library. There will be a 90-day process for this sale to go through with the anticipated acquisition to be completed in Summer 2022.

New Face of Library Makerspaces Charter

We are proud to announce that we have been selected to be a Charter Member of the New Face of Library Makerspaces Collective. 31 libraries from around the country applied for this opportunity presented by Makers in the Library, and after an application and interview process, San Mateo County Libraries and six other libraries were selected to lead as the Collective's Charter Members.

Charter Members are distinguished by having adapted maker activities during the pandemic and by their ability to serve as leaders to other libraries pursuing makerspaces.

By joining the Collective, San Mateo County Libraries will explore, share, and grow together with Collective members and other libraries across the nation in the area of making. Supported through funding from the Institute of Museum and Library Services, the duration of the Collective will last for approximately two years. We truly believe that *Everyone is a Maker* and San Mateo County Libraries is a leader in the field of making.

Makermobile Update

After some delays due to the supply chain and the pandemic, the building and fabrication of our Makermobile is once again on the move! After a long wait, we were recently informed that our Makermobile chassis has been delivered and is ready to be converted into a zero-emission, all electric Makermobile. Before electrification of the chassis, the body of the vehicle will undergo a custom build and fabrication process to turn it into our first mobile makerspace.

The Makermobile will bring a diverse array of maker activities to libraries and community destinations in order to encourage making, ignite a growth mindset through trial and error process, create transformative experiences, and teach timeless skills like problem solving, critical thinking, design thinking, creativity, and curiosity.

Equity Initiatives Updates

Our Equity through Art Series, in partnership with the County's Equity Office, has looked at various communities of color facing inequities in San Mateo County through the lens of art. The most recent event focused on the LatinX experience on the coast side.

San Mateo County Libraries was chosen to participate as part of a select cohort among leading libraries throughout the US and Canada, to pilot and test new library benchmarks for anti-racism and digital equity and inclusion. The Urban Library Council's Edge 360 Pilot will help us assess our work and establish benchmarks to underscore the urgency of paying attention to and aligning priorities to build a stronger, more equitable library system. We are thrilled to be working closely with strong visionaries in the field to learn and collaborate in service of a more equitable and inclusive future.

Grants and Fundraising

We recently received several grants to support our ongoing work. To support a Resource Access Program at North Fair Oaks Library to connect local community resources through local programs and dedicated services at the library, we received $60,000 through the California State Library Services and Technology Act and Institute of Museum and Library Services. To create and support outdoor spaces at East Palo Alto Library and North Fair Oaks Library the Foundation received $75,000 from Sunlight Giving and finally, the County extended our COVID-19 Outreach grant by $20,000, for a total of $70,000 to continue our work to reach out and keep community members informed about COVID resources and public health updates.

The Foundation for San Mateo County Libraries is also hosting Home is Where the Heart is for their annual winter fundraiser on February 5. Guests are invited to virtually join a one-hour program where you can create a charcuterie board, set intentions for your home, and learn about the impact of the libraries.

Small Business First Policy

The JPA Governing Board approved the Library's Small Business (SB) First Policy in November 2021. Since approval, a new procurement webpage has been launched. This page provides information about general procurement and our SB policy, posts the certifications accepted under the SB policy, links to an outreach survey vendors can submit that are interested in providing goods or services to the Library, and links to any available formal RFP and RFQ opportunities.

In the coming months, we will be sending out a survey to vendors we have awarded procurements to in recent years to better understand who our vendors are and to help us identify California-based small businesses and disabled veteran business enterprises that we have used in the past. This information will also help us as we work to build an internal database of SB vendors with active certifications accepted under the new policy.

Library Personnel News

We are excited to share the following personnel announcements:

Alex Chen has accepted the limited- term position of Data and Performance Management Analyst. Alex joins us from Change Research in Palo Alto. Alex has worked with public, private, and non-profit sectors in data analysis and data engineering. Alex holds a B.A. from Harvard College in Computer Science, with secondary in Ethnicity, Migration, and Rights.

Gina Feil has accepted the position as Senior Librarian at the Half Moon Bay Library. Gina joins us from the Menlo Park Library where she was a supervisor at the Belle Haven Branch Library and prior, a Teen Librarian at the Mitchell Park Library. Gina holds an MLIS from San Jose State University, and a bachelor's degree in Molecular, Cell, and Developmental Biology from UC Santa Cruz.

Michele Foley has accepted the limited-term position of Projects Management Analyst. Michele joins us from the City of Santa Cruz as the IT Projects Manager. Michele has worked in communications and project management since 2001 and has experience working in public and government sectors. Michelle holds a B.A. in English from Old Dominion University and holds certificates in Leadership Training, Project Management, and Business Process Analysis and Design.

Caila Parodi has accepted the limited- term position of The Big Lift Inspiring Summers Management Analyst. Caila joins us from the Boys & Girls Clubs of the Peninsula where she served as the Programs Operations Manager and Associate Director. She has experience providing oversight, guidance, and leadership to summer and out of school time programs. Caila holds a B.A. in Social Science from Westmont College in Santa Barbara.

Shawnte Santos has accepted the position of Senior Librarian in Youth and Family Services. Shawnte joins us from the South San Francisco Library where she served as the Youth Services Manager. Shawnte was responsible for the development and delivery of both educational and recreational classes, workshops, and programming for all ages. Shawnte holds an MLIS from San Jose State University, and a bachelor's degree in Art History and Visual Culture.

Julie Smith has been promoted to Senior Librarian at the Belmont Library. Most recently Julie served as the Youth Services Librarian at the Half Moon Bay Library where she gained experience with youth services programming, collection development, and customer service. Julie holds an MLIS from San Jose State University, a Ph.D. in Pharmacy from UC San Francisco, and a bachelor's degree in Biochemistry from the University of Oregon.

Rex Viernes has accepted the position of Information Technology Technician. Rex joins us from Genentech where he worked as an Information Technology Services Coordinator supporting both clients and employees. Rex's excellent customer service focus was developed during his tenure with Trader Joe's. Rex holds an Associate in Arts Degree in General Studies and Social Science from Foothill College.

Welcome and congratulations to all of our Library Champions!