

Angela Zimmermann, Executive Director Report

April 2021

Pandemic Response

I sent an email updating the Board once I received the approval, so as you already know, the Racine Public Library will gradually reopen on April 19th for limited in-person services. The approval was received by the City of Racine Public Health Department and in accordance with the Policy & Procedures presented at the March Library Board meeting. Much of mine and the staffs' time has been spent preparing for the phased in-person reopening. We have a set of FAQs on the website for patrons (<https://www.racinelibrary.info/phased-reopening-faq/>) and the Pandemic Interim Service Policy & Procedures (<https://tinyurl.com/yptdkru3>)

We will be maintaining our current hours: Monday – Thursday 9:00 am – 6:00 pm and Fridays & Saturdays 10:00 am – 4:00 pm.

We will be holding one more staff meeting on Friday, April 16th, along with the security guards, to ensure everyone is ready for 'opening day'.

2nd Floor Renovation

The architects will be returning to RPL on April 13th to discuss the next steps with the 2nd floor. I hope to be able to bring back drawings, design concepts, and figures then to either the May or June Board meeting.

American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) – Federal Infrastructure Funds

As I reported at the March meeting, libraries throughout the nation are eligible for billions of dollars in recovery funding as part of the \$1.9 trillion American Rescue Plan Act. As part of ARPA, the library community in Wisconsin will be eligible for \$3.27 million, administered through the state's Department of Public Instruction. A DPI representative met with the System and Resource Library Administrators Association of Wisconsin (SRLAAW) on March 29th to discuss planning for ARPA. Although ARPA cannot be used for building construction projects, it can be used for technology, digital content (eBooks and e-audiobooks), network equipment, and other library services. The anticipated "Build America's Libraries Act," if passed, could be used for construction. DPI is still deciding how to best use the funding; both library system directors and resource library directors are involved in these discussions. It is not yet known how the funds will be distributed; either through LSTA grants libraries will have to apply for, through E-Rate programs, etc.

There have been many discussions and meetings I've been in around this topic already on the state, local, system, and director's level. I will update the Board as I know more.

Racine County Library Plan

In Racine County, the plan of library service is currently on a three-year cycle. Every three years, the idea is that an updated plan will be submitted to keep things current. The most recent full rewrite should have taken place during the summer of 2019, but the Library System Director, Steve Ohs, was on paternity leave, and the draft county plan was not taken back up until now.

Thus, the system and the Racine county libraries have essentially been working on "freshening-up" the existing plan so that dates reflect the current timeframe. The ultimate goal is to defer any large changes until the plan that will take effect in January of 2023. The current plan has been sent to the County, but not yet placed on an agenda for action.

Website Redevelopment and Branding

I signed all contracts after the approvals received from last month's Board meeting. We've had kickoff meetings with both vendors and work is underway. I may have been a little optimistic at targeting a May 1st launch date for the new website. It's a significant amount of work to rebuild a website as we're not simply handing over our current content to the vendor but rethinking even how our content is currently marketed and what's all included. We're also using the vendor to get some professional photos and videos of the library and we'd rather wait until it's a bit more summer-like for the exterior photos. I'm hopeful for beginning to mid-June for a launch date with everything concerning the website, branding, and new events calendar.

City Library Collective

RPL is part of the City Library Collective through WiLS (Wisconsin Library Services). This Wisconsin CLC will bring together representatives from 15 libraries across the state that serve communities of roughly the same size. Members will work together to address common issues and use collective knowledge and experience to improve their organization and services to their community. The overall goal will be to share what we learn through information exchange and various projects with the broader library community. To provide an idea of potential projects for the group: examination of responses to community and library racial inequities, information sharing and analysis of security protocols and practices, information sharing and analysis of response to needs of homeless patrons, and organizational structures and emerging job/skill needs at libraries. The kickoff meeting for this CLC will be Friday, April 9th.

Building

Quite a few aesthetic changes have been made to the building internally in preparation for 'reopening': repainting of the Youth Services area, more wayfinding in the new lobby area, relocating a few collections upstairs for optimal usage, and eliminating some of the older furniture (knowing new furniture will come with a 2nd floor renovation and we don't want people lingering in the building during this first reopening phase).

Pending building changes – I've given the ok to the City to remove the red brick wall along the outside of the building. It's an odd wall anyways and needs a significant amount of repair.

The City will also receive federal infrastructure funds which will go towards libraries. I've had a few talks already with the Mayor and sent ideas to the new City Admin. Again, at the moment, it's unsure how these funds are trickling down or what sort of grants will be available. One immediate idea mentioned was to conduct the much needed work on the plaza between the Library and Memorial Hall to make it more appealing and possibly have an outdoor programming space.

Personnel

As I reported at the March meeting, Anne Callaghan retired March 31st from the Youth Services Dept. We thank her immensely for her 26 years of service. A thank you letter and gifts were given on behalf of the staff and the Library Board.

Other personnel changes – we had one termination among our professional substitutes, and we promoted Armaan Haider to a Desk Clerk I within Circulation. We will also be hiring two new pages within the coming month.

Racine Public Library Foundation

After a couple of meetings with RPL Foundation President Sue Trottier, I will be working on, in the coming weeks, a new foundation appeal letter and video to get sent out, and centering around requesting funds for the 2nd floor renovation and a possible sensory room.

Darcy Mohr, Head of Adult and Youth Services Report
Programming

The Library presented 30 programs in March, which had a total participation of 1,417 people. This represents a 65% increase in participation over February. Additionally, the Library-sponsored BONK! Arts and Cultural Series had 1,300 views on Facebook in March.

March 2021 Programming			
Program	# of Programs	Participants	Format
1st Chapter Friday	4	34	YouTube
3D Prints	1	10	Take and Make
Planetarium Night	1	194	Facebook
Girls Who Code	1	2	Zoom
Teen Mock Battle of the Books	1	8	Zoom
Book Club	2	17	Zoom
Craft	1	22	Take and Make
Craft Instructions	1	30	YouTube
Simple Crafts	1	185	Facebook

Genealogy Club	1	14	Zoom
Phone a Story	1	5	Phone
Meditation	1	178	Facebook
Storytime	8	89	YouTube
Storytime	5	602	Facebook
Black Community Climate Change	1	27	Facebook
Totals	30	1,417	

Patron Services

Staff continued to help patrons register for VITA services, and were also available to assist patrons who were applying for housing vouchers during the three days that the Racine County Housing Authority accepted applications.

Rebecca Leannah and Sue McGrath compiled historic crime rate data for the Racine Police Department.

Staff answered 1,752 calls, 71 chats, and a total of 6,870 reference questions during the month. That is a 90% increase over the number of questions answered in February and is by far the busiest month for the Call Center since References Services went virtual in 2020.

Total # of phone calls	1752
Avg. # of calls per day	62.5
Avg. # of calls per hour	7.68
Total talk time	7,149 minutes
Avg. call length	4 min. 4 sec.
Total chats	71
Avg. # of chats per day	2.5
Total chat messages	581
Avg. # of messages per chat	8.18

Total # of reference questions answered	6,870
Computer users	224
Black and white prints	2,432
Color prints	66

Library Collections

Patrons are enjoying the new Book Bundles. 104 pre-selected Book Bundles were checked out in March, and 34 personalized Book Bundles were created for patrons who requested them.

Staff activities

13 Adult and Youth Services staff members participated in a combined total of 198 hours of continuing education in March. This includes webinars, online classes, workshops, and podcasts. That is an average of 15 hours of continuing education per staff member. The members of the Tech Team participated in the Computers in Libraries three-day virtual conference. All three indicated that this was a very worthwhile conference. Not only did they learn about many new advances in technology, they also felt the conference confirmed that RPL is on the right track with our plans for the future.

The Tech Team has been researching items to purchase for our Innovation Lab, including new 3D printers, a laser cutter, and a Microsoft HoloLens 2, which is a pair of mixed reality smart glasses. We will soon be receiving three RobotLab STEM Labs to use with students.

Keiko Skow, who is a member of the Racine Sister City Committee, translated a speech into Japanese for the Mayor.

Nick Demske is stepping down as Executive Director of the BONK! Arts and Culture Series after twelve years in that role. He is currently representing the Library on an advisory panel assembled by the Johnson Foundation which is tasked with guiding the creation of a “Regional Equity Dashboard.”

Staff members have been helping to get the Library ready for reopening on April 19.

Anne Callaghan, Youth Services Librarian and Battle of the Books Coordinator, retired after 25 dedicated years of service to RPL. Anne will be missed by staff and patrons.

Staying connected with the community

Melissa Olson has been calling our senior patrons to check in with them. She contacted 22 people in March.

Nick Demske, Community Resources Librarian Report

Restorative Justice

I have taken part three times now in a nation-wide “Community of Practice” meeting of Library practitioners who wish to weave Restorative Justice (RJ) practices into the fabric of their

institutions. In a somewhat unrelated meeting with Barb Brattin, Director of Kenosha PL, I mentioned these meetings and she asked if I could connect Alejandria Galarza, their Teen Services Librarian, to the community, because KPL has RJ written in to their strategic plan, specifically to work towards as a model to use in response to youth patron behavior issues.

After building relationship with this community and learning more from libraries that have been instituting these practices for years now, I believe that this not only would be a benefit for the RPL to have in a public-facing way (the way KPL is thinking of it), but RJ and particularly the practice of “circle keeping” strikes me as being a tool that, if used internally, could have potentially transformative effects on the interdepartmental divisions and dysfunctional workplace culture this library has struggled with. I am interested in having a dialogue with my management to see whether or not these are opportunities they’re also interested in exploring. If so, Alejandria and I are set to follow up with each other soon afterwards to discuss whether or not this would make sense to move forward on as a partnership between our two libraries (as we have in recent years on other types of professional development), or if we will support our efforts in more parallel but separate ways.

Moving on from BONK! Series

As many in the community know now, I am stepping away from Executive Director of the BONK! Arts and Culture Series after 12 and a half years in the role. Fortunately, the BONK! Team and I have been working for months now to develop and execute a succession plan and the transition of responsibilities has already begun. I am not officially withdrawing from my role until May 1st, and so far for 2021 my responsibilities in the role have been much more work than usual, even, because it’s not just doing the administrative and curatorial work of keeping the series going, but it is also the work of training several people to step up into different levels of leadership within the organization. Because the responsibilities I handled as one individual will be split to be handled by three individuals (one Administrative Director and two Creative Directors/Co-curators), it is my responsibility to make sure that, as much as possible, all three of the individuals moving up into those roles feel as competent as they can in carrying them out before I am gone. Obviously there are a lot of authority and documentation transfers that the transition requires as well (bank account access, etc), but we are on schedule to have everything in the new leadership’s hands before May 1st.

In the last few several years, BONK! has managed to bring out musicians and writers from all over the country, including some of the most accomplished American poets writing today. Among the hundreds of readers BONK! has featured, the list includes Pulitzer Prize winners (Tyehimba Jess, Jericho Brown), National Book Critics Circle Award winners (Ross Gay, Naomi Shihab Nye), NAACP Image Award winners (Phillip B Williams, Jamaal May), National Poetry Series winners (J Michael Martinez, Adrian Matejka), National Book Award Finalists and Winners (Carmen Giménez Smith, Daniel Borzutzky, Erika L. Sánchez) and countless others. This last Saturday of March, I myself was one of the readers, along with the poets Millissa Kingbird and Kazim Ali. The [Racine Journal Times](#) and [Racine County Eye](#) both highlighted the event before it happened.

I have received several messages of positive feedback from the event, both from people in this community and people beyond--including former Milwaukee poet Laureate, Roberto Harrison, and former Wisconsin Poet Laureate Kimberly Blaeser. In her message, Blaeser said "The whole event was a feast for the spirit." One member of our community, in a Facebook post afterwards, called the event "a moving, thoughtful, wrenching and sweet gift." The event video, as of this writing, has reached over 1,300 people, and received over 950 total views, over 190 comments and 576 "engagements." This is exponentially more impact than most of our virtual programs receive in their metrics.

Resilient Communities Update

On March 24th we held our second program in the 3-program series we are hosting as part of our responsibility to the "Resilient Communities; Libraries Respond to Climate Change" grant we received from ALA. The event was facilitated by the City's Sustainability Coordinator from the Mayor's office, Cara Pratt, and local racial justice and environmental justice activist, Carl Fields, and it was co-sponsored by the City of Racine and [Professional Women's Network for Service Inc.](#) As the grant is focused on creating more equity and inclusion in environmental education and activism, this event focused on those intersections.

The City is preparing to draft an "Equitable Climate Action Plan" (ECAP) to inform leadership policy and practice decisions going forward, and Cara Pratt is tasked with leading that effort. Part of the purpose of this plan will be to address the effects of environmental racism. First, the city is seeking community input on this plan through various means, and that was one of the main purposes of the event we co-hosted. It was an input session for Black community members on the ECAP, and what is to be prioritized on it.

Twenty-seven participants joined throughout the event. The dialogue was honest and impassioned. Of the many recommendations that were made for the plan, an emphasis on racially equitable economic inclusion in employment opportunities (for green jobs and infrastructure) was by far the most echoed sentiment. The conversation also served an important purpose in engaging community members on this issue that are often ignored or left out from the process. After the event, I and the two facilitators all agreed that not only had we never seen that many black community members at an environmentally-focused event before (in Racine), but we hadn't even ever seen that many people of color in general at an environmentally-focused event before. While programmatic impact needs to be measured in a variety of ways, we all agreed that was a significant metric to note.

The next event of this kind will be held on April 29th in Spanish and will be co-sponsored by Voces de la Frontera and Miss Latina Racine.

Regional Equity Dashboard

For the last few months I have been representing the library on an Advisory Panel assembled by the Johnson Foundation which is tasked with guiding the creation of a "Regional Equity Dashboard." The Advisory panel is made up of about 25 people and includes representatives from pillar community organizations including RUSD, United Way, Racine County, The City of

Racine, RAMAC, Racine Community Foundation, and others. The plan is that, as this Panel's work goes forward, eventually we will have collaboratively helped create a community resource unlike any that currently exists: a public-facing, publicly accessible, free dashboard that aggregates many different data sets related to equity issues in our community, which currently are only located in difficult to find, disparate locations (and often nowhere at all that is readily accessible to the public). Several communities across the country have already undertaken efforts like this. The goal is not to ultimately say "Well, there it is, now we know the data," but to have community leaders and policy makers especially to use the data to inform their systems-level decisions. These dashboards often create an "equity score" as well for the region they're evaluating, to give ourselves an idea of where we are versus where we may want to be, in terms of equity.

To see what this sort of initiative has ended up looking like in other communities, here are a few

Dashboard examples:

- Minneapolis-St. Paul Regional Indicators Dashboard - <https://www.greatermsp.org/regional-indicators-2019/>
- Dallas Equity Indicators Report - <https://dallascityhall.com/departments/office-of-equity/Pages/default.aspx>
- Tulsa Equality Indicators - <https://csctulsa.org/tulsaei/>
- St. Louis Equity Indicators - <https://www.stlouis-mo.gov/government/departments/mayor/initiatives/resilience/equity/>

Bob Margis, Head of Circulation Services

Bookmobile

The new summer Bookmobile schedule is almost all scheduled, with a new stop added: Ascension Little Saints Daycare. The Bookmobile had a total of 2,784 circs in March.

Circulation

Use of curbside pickup at Main continues to be steady with an average of 140 people visiting each day to pick up materials. We circulated 24,621 items from Main Library in March. Approximately 13,489 holds were placed and filled. 6,269 items loaned to other libraries. 369 new library cards issued. Total Circulation for March: 27,405 (16% increase from February 2021).

Technical Services

Ordering and processing:

In March TSD staff placed orders for 1254 items and received 961 previously ordered items. A total of 1383 items were added to the catalog.

Current Project Updates:

- Adult nonfiction call number updating is continuing. Sections completed or currently being worked on includes 900s, 800, 700, 000s, 100s, 200s and 600s. We are finding a large number of items that require mending.
- Juvenile spine labels are currently being updated in the Holiday and Wordless sections.
- In coordination with the selector for Juvenile nonfiction TSD is working on a weeding project.