

Angela Zimmermann, Executive Director Report

June 2021

Reopening RPL

RPL's physical building has been open now for nearly two months for browsing, in-person services, computer usage, etc. Based always on what's learned in the City Senior Leadership meetings and the City Health Dept. and where we stand with numbers (as reported on the 9th: We are at a 5% positivity rate. The City has not seen this rate since July of 2020. There are 55 positive cases per 100,000. All around positive news.), as well as discussing with the Leadership Team and staff, I've made changes in several areas; increased time allowance for study rooms, a bit more furniture has been added in both Youth Services and Adult Services, we're not necessarily monitoring the capacity as we've never come close to exceeding it, etc. It's been all around a positive experience for both patrons and staff with a semblance of normalcy returning. We're hosting MANY outdoor programs, offsite programs, as well as some smaller, adult programs inside. All programs are with limitations in numbers, pre-registration and masks required. Library staff, as usual, are doing and continue to do a remarkable job with flexibility and adjustment to the changes. I've also allowed browsing to resume on the bookmobile, one party at a time and with masks required.

We will also resume charging for faxing, copying, and printing at the beginning of July.

2nd Floor Renovation

Several meetings have taken place again since the last Board meeting with the architects. The Leadership Team and I have also discussed the plans and costs further which resulted in many emails back and forth with Product Design & Architects. Their presentation and Building and Grounds recommendation is on the agenda for this meeting.

American Rescue Act Plans – ARPA Federal Infrastructure Funding

As mentioned in most of the previous Board meetings, in regards to the ARPA funding and how it works, at this point, the Department of Public Instruction has received the \$3.27 million allocated to Wisconsin. Allocation from DPI to public libraries for these funds will take place through rolling grants with DPI looking at statewide projects that will impact most libraries. Racine Public Library is a part of the City Library Collective and this group of 11 libraries is looking to apply collectively for a grant and focused around libraries serving as community recovery centers. DPI is meeting with the CLC group at the beginning of July to supply us with further information about the next steps.

Website Redevelopment / Community Engagement Platform

This is a slow and tedious process but one we want to get right. The past few weeks we've been going back and forth with our website vendor (DesignsTouch) and we're near completion/decision-making on the homepage wireframe. Next steps involve building the individual landing pages, getting the fonts and branding to SirsiDynix to build the community

engagement platform side of thing (so we can, in turn, get that code back to the website vendor for our events), and final steps will involve feedback from endusers before going live.

2nd Bookmobile/Techmobile

All final approvals and designs have been signed-off on. LDV is waiting to give me the update they receive from Ford as to the expected delivery of the chassis to the body company. Once we hear news on that progress, we'll get started on designing the graphic wrap. LDV will need that information by end of October/beginning of November from us.

Interns

As reported last month about the partnership with RAMAC and The Academies, we have officially set-up the program at RPL for the Innovators in Residence to begin. So exciting! The Innovators in Residence will work under the Tech Team and help in all areas related to digital literacy, tech classes, coding, STEAM initiatives, design of the new Innovation Lab, etc.

Personnel

Quite a few personnel changes. Bob Margis is retiring after 39 years of service to Racine Public Library and I will have Christopher Tobias (Technical Services Lead) acting as interim and overseeing Circulation/Technical Services/Bookmobile until the changes with the organizational chart come into play.

Other personnel changes include:

Promotion/Job Transfer PT:

Matt Klug - From Page to Desk Clerk I

Debbie Clemons - From BKM Driver to Shelving Clerk I

Sean O'Toole - From Shelving Clerk I to Professional Substitute

Termination:

Alyssa Doran - PT Desk Clerk I (due to securing a fulltime position working from home)

Meetings/Presentations

I, of course, continue to make connections with various organizations, and over the past month just a few to mention were: Public Allies, the Johnson Foundation, Ascension All Saints Hospital Foundation, Gateway Technical College, e-Vergent, Racine Zoo, St. Monica's Senior Living, various folks from RUSD, NAACP and more.

I presented at the Business Matters Chat (hosted through RAMAC) on Wednesday, May 19th to talk about the future and the vision of the library and current projects underway at RPL. I also presented at the Churchmen's Club on June 4th. I'll also be conducting an interview through WGTD radio through Carthage College to talk about all of the happenings at RPL. RPL will also be going live on TV for Racine & Me on Wednesday, June 16th to talk about the food trucks and the Summer Reading Program.

Mentioned at the last meeting: I'm also a member of the Opening our Hearts and Minds to End Racism through the Dominican Center for Justice Resources and the library will be spearheading

the Racine Reads project which was started with the previous RPL Director. The book is Just Mercy by Bryan Stevenson. This project is going to turn out to be a bit larger than originally planned and will very much turn into a Community Reads initiative with a hybrid of in-person and virtual programs, book discussions, and potentially an author (virtual) visit. I've pulled into this project the Community Resources Librarian at RPL, Nick Demske to help spearhead this on the library's behalf as this falls in-line perfectly with his position's role as well as plays to Nick's enormous reach into the community.

Friends of the Library met this past week. They gave \$150 towards teen prizes for the Summer Reading Program and \$750 towards new canvas bags for the Home Delivery Services Program. The Friends' group does not meet during the months of July and August.

Lakeshores Library System / SHARE Consortium Updates

Probably the most forthcoming potential project from the system side of things, is that talks are beginning to happen about a potential merger with Arrowhead Library System (so Lakeshores and Arrowhead). As the resource library, I have been asked to serve on the Joint Task Force Committee to carve out a roadmap as to how this will look.

Some news from the WPLC (WI Public Library Consortium – OverDrive) - Audiobooks are now available for 21-day loan and the WPLC Board met on June 10th to approve a budget. Current recommendation from the collection development committee is to renew the magazines portion of the collection. This will increase the LLS (Lakeshores Library System) content share by about \$3,900. LLS is planning to cover this amount for 2022 for members' libraries.

The last SHARE meeting was very short and involved libraries sharing how they were approaching the recent mask mandate changes and discussions about the SHARE 2022 budget.

Various

With Tracy Austin's term appointment coming to completion in May, we'll still have three vacancies on the Board needing to be appointed from the City. I have a couple who are potentially interested in applying and would bring great value to the Board. Common Council doesn't meet again until July 20th, so we have a bit of time before further appointments would be made.

Pastor Melvin Hargrove will be appointed by the County to fill the remaining County position at their next County Supervisors' meeting. Pastor Hargrove and I already have his new trustee orientation scheduled and will be connecting for that towards the end of this month.

After a couple of months of seeing the building open and as discussed during the April meeting, I've chosen to not bring the Dress Code Policy back to the Board and as it's written in the current RPL Employee handbook is suitable. We've adopted more the mentality and approach a 'dress for your day' outlook.

Darcy Mohr, Head of Adult and Youth Services Report

Programming

The Library presented 24 programs in May, which had a total participation of 665 people. May is traditionally a slower programming month as staff focus much of their attention on planning the Summer Reading Program. The theme for this year's Summer Reading Program, which runs from June 1 - August 31, is "Bee Kind."

In addition to these programs, 7 patrons called into our "Phone-a-Story" line.

May Programming Statistics

Program	# of Programs	Participants	Format
1st Chapter Friday	3	15	YouTube
Craft for Children (Instructions)	1	15	YouTube
Craft for Children	1	20	Take and Make
Craft for Children	1	6	Facebook
Craft for Teens	1	45	YouTube
Craft for Teens	1	12	Facebook
Adult Informational	2	25	Zoom
Book Club	1	9	Zoom
Dungeons and Dragons	1	1	Zoom
Storytime	3	49	YouTube
Storytime	8	449	Facebook
Outdoor Movie	1	19	In Person
Totals	24	665	

Patron Services

During the month of May staff answered 1112 calls and 46 chats. A total of 4055 questions were answered across all methods of communication. 49% of the reference questions were asked in person, while 51% were received over the phone or via chat.

May Reference and Computer Use Statistics

Total # of phone calls	1112
Avg. # of calls per day	42.7
Avg. # of calls per hour	5.6
Total talk time	65 hours
Avg. call length	3.5 minutes
Total chats	46
Total chat messages	347
Avg. # of messages per chat	7.5
Total phone and chat questions	2060
In-person reference questions	1995
Total # of reference questions answered	4055
Computer usage - patrons	448
Computer usage - time	276.5 hours
Printouts from computer	93
Black and white prints	3485
Color prints	271
Scans	787

Library Collections

For the past three months Library staff have been offering “Book Bundles” to patrons. Book Bundles include 4-5 books from pre-selected genres. Patrons can ask for a Book Bundle at Curbside Pickup, or come into the building and select their own bundle. 82 Book Bundles were checked out in May.

Staff activities

Seven Adult and Youth Services staff members participated in a combined total of 59 hours of continuing education in May. All Adult and Youth Services staff were trained in using the Racine County Family Resources website and mobile app.

On May 24, Andrew Potter began a summer internship at the Library. Andrew is a Library Science student at UW-Milwaukee.

Staying connected with the community

Staff have been working on several upcoming collaborative projects including: Early Literacy in Laundromats with the Laundry Literacy Coalition; “Who Gets to Vote” community read with the Kenosha Public Library; Diaper Pantry with Keeping Families Covered; and Tech-Prize with the City of Racine. We are continuing our partnerships with the Financial Empowerment Center and LIFT Wisconsin (Legal Interventions for Transforming Wisconsin).

RPL librarian and archivist, Rebecca Leannah, has been working with local historians to increase her knowledge of Racine’s history, and to expand the Racine History Room collection

Nick Demske, Community Resources Librarian Report

‘Great RPL Behind the Circ Stations’ Mural update (Angie came up with this title and I quite love it)

We have set a timeline and begun work with community partners on the Great RPL behind the Circulation Station Mural project. Ultimately, the tentative hope is to have a mural on the wall by October 1st, with a number of mile markers between now and then. Our main community partner for this effort is ArtRoot--an arts advocacy group I co-founded through my library in 2014 and stepped away from in 2018. This group is responsible for the mural near the intersection near 16th and Ann St. and we plan to have two other poetry murals up in the community before fall also--one in Uptown and one Downtown.

Wisconsin Poet Laureate Commission update

I have represented the RPL on the Wisconsin Poet Laureate Commission since 2015, and currently serve as the Commission Chair. Because I am reaching the end of my second 3-year term, I will be leaving the Commission in July. Of the accomplishments I’ve had over the past 6 years on the Commission, I am proudest of taking the leadership, which had been overwhelmingly racially homogenous (white) since its inception over two decades ago, and diversifying it through intentional recruitment and retention efforts. I also founded an Equity and Inclusion committee for the Commission, which helped operationalize this work. When I joined the Board, 11 of its 12 members were white and one was East Indian. As I leave, the majority of members on the Commission are BIPOC, including Commissioners who are African American, Latinx, Anishinaabe, Oneida, and Nigerian American. As of January, we have also selected the first black Poet Laureate the state has ever had, Dasha Kelly Hamilton.

On Thursday May 26th we are having a “Passing of the Torch event” where our most recent laureate will be metaphorically passing the torch on to Dasha. Another unprecedented addition that we are thrilled to include in that event is, through a partnership with Woodland Pattern Book Center in Milwaukee, we also will be featuring former US Poet Laureate, Juan Filipe Herrera. Woodland Pattern has upgraded their zoom account because we expect so many virtual attendees for this event.

Case High School Creative Writing Class Visit

I received an in-reach email from two Case high teachers 2 months ago requesting I visit their creative writing class during their poetry unit and talk about what it is like to be a living, writing and actively publishing poet in 2021. There were 26 high school seniors (plus the two teachers) at the virtual talk earlier this month. They asked me to share a couple poems I’d written with them, asked me questions about them, about inspiration, my writing discipline, and how the library can act as a resource for aspiring writers in the community, among other things.

Recent ALA Involvement

I acted as a peer reviewer for the ALA 2021 Diversity Fair Poster Session, for the upcoming ALA conference in April and I was also solicited to act as interim Chair for the New Members Round Table “Membership, Promotion, Diversity and Recruitment Committee.” The current Chair had to step down due to some unexpected life events and, because I have experience in leading boards and commissions, they asked me to fill the role until July, when the annual election process happens.

Also, a woman named Sallyann Price, who is an Associate Editor of American Libraries Magazine (the magazine ALA produces) reached out to me to ask if they could publish something I had written. In the ALA membership online discussion forum, about a month ago I wrote a lengthy response to a post someone else made, asking the question of why our Association was not standing up against Amazon for “censoring” (deciding not to sell) a book that had strong anti-trans sentiment. The magazine edited my post for length and Sallyann asked if they could publish it as a letter to the editor. I have included the version of my post below, which I believe they will be publishing in the June issue.

Bob Margis, Head of Circulation Services

Bookmobile

As reported last month, the bookmobile is running off its new summer schedule. Bookmobile is now open for browsing, one party at a time with masks required.

Circulation

RPL circulated 27,633 items from Main Library in May. Total for the month, inclusive of the Bookmobile, was 30,511. April 2021 circulation was 25,867. Approximately 9,222 holds were

placed and filled. 4,724 items loaned to other libraries. 616 new library cards issued. Overall, we're seeing a steady increase of people coming to the Main library to browse.

Technical Services

Ordering and processing:

In May TSD staff placed orders for 1451 items and received 914 previously ordered items. A total of 1271 items were added to the catalog.

Current Project Updates:

- Adult nonfiction call number updating is continuing. Sections remaining include 300s, 400, 600s, oversized and WI history. We continue to find a large number of items that require mending.
- Juvenile spine labels are currently being updated in the Holiday and Wordless sections.
- Dawn and Amber are making good progress with the Juvenile nonfiction weeding project.

Additionally:

TSD will take over some previous Circulation department tasks:

- TSD will begin to handle the transferring of new material from their New Books home location to their standard home locations.
- Several materials maintenance reports will now be handled by TSD.

Dawn Seeger has created a new donation protocol document that will be posted on our website and printed as handouts (as approved by Angela and echoes the Board approved Gifts and Donor recognition policy). This document will outline the types and conditions of materials that we can accept.