

Angela Zimmermann, Executive Director Report

September 2021

Pandemic Update

As I updated the Board via email and as everyone knows, the City of Racine has reinstated the citywide mask ordinance indoors, legally effective as of Saturday, September 4th. For the most part, patrons have been compliant. About 85% of patrons, even without the mask ordinance in effect, were entering the building masked. Security has obviously been kept abreast with all of the requirements and enforcement thereof.

I have opened the library back to its pre-COVID hours, so remaining open Monday – Thursday 9:00 am – 8:00 pm.

There have been no capacity limitations put back in place. We still have not reached pre-COVID numbers indoors, so this is not a concern at all.

I am allowing limited in-person programs with mask requirements and social distancing in place.

I'll continue to take advice from the City of Racine's Health Department for any further precautions or changes necessary.

Website Redevelopment / Community Engagement Platform

We can finally see the light at the end of the tunnel! All of the content has been entered into the new website, and we are now in the fine-tuning stages. Our website vendor (DesignsTouch) continues to be in contact with SirsiDynix (our ILS provider and CEP vendor) as the events calendar is still not populating, so they are working together to figure out the RSS feed and code. Once the content has been fine-tuned and everything looks set, the next step will be usability studies. I'll be asking specific staff, Board trustees, and community members to test the new site and provide feedback.

Personnel/Operations

We said goodbye to Alex Parizek and Armaan Haider, who were both part-time pages and did exceptionally well with customer service and working at the service stations. Both went off to college.

And joining us for the meeting as a welcome and introduction is Shay King, Head of Business Development and Ashley Cedeño, Social Worker. We're glad that they have joined the RPL Team.

Deputy Director interviews begin the week of September 13th and first rounds interviews will last about two weeks. On the interview panel along with myself, are Rashanda Cainon, City of Racine HR Assistant Director and Steve Ohs, Lakeshores Library System Director.

Significant cross-training takes place with several employees from Circulation being trained on the Call Center. Reference staff continue to be trained on various Circulation duties. Training for

a good portion of the staff (all those involved with programs and marketing) will take place soon with the new Community Engagement platform.

There will be an all-staff meeting on Friday, August 17th where we will be covering a variety of topics right now: cross-training, security, auditing in libraries, and various department happenings.

American Rescue Act Plans – ARPA Federal Infrastructure Funding

Again, as mentioned in 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 is focused around libraries serving as community recovery centers. The guidelines from DPI on the grants are expected to come out the week of September 20th. Grant categories will include:

- Library as center for community resilience (competitive)
- Hybrid service model (competitive)
- Library Service Improvement (competitive)
- IT Hardware Improvements and Upgrades (formula)

Category funding will range from \$50,000 - \$200,000 with funds needing to be spent by June 30th, 2022. The competitive grants may have a minimum award of \$50,000 to encourage system-level applications or library partnerships. In most cases, library systems will serve as fiscal agents on these grants, however, individual libraries may apply in some cases.

I had a meeting with the other directors within the City Library Collective on Friday, September 10th and we are working on refining our umbrella categories and teaming up in similar cohorts to apply.

Building

Construction/ Renovation of the sensory space is coming along nicely. The walls are up and have been painted. We are waiting for the interior painting to be completed and for the door to go up.

We had two incidents where the fire alarm has gone off in the past month. Staff have responded correctly and everyone was outside within minutes. DPW and Johnson Controls were onsite almost immediately (no one from the Fire Department though.... we've taken care of why that happened). They found out that the issue was with a sensor in the mechanical room. All of that has been rectified and the fire alarm system has been tested since.

I may potentially be bringing the Building & Grounds committee together to discuss the possibility of a new phone system. Meaning we'd go away from the City's phone system. We're fairly limited with our current phone system (well, they simply have no further extensions to

give out to Library employees), and for our needs at RPL, it may make sense for us to go down our own path. We have pulled quotes from multiple vendors and it would only be a slight cost increase for us to take a different route to better align with our needs at RPL. More information to come on this.

Innovation Lab- The Tech Team needed an interim solution before we receive our 2nd new floor and dedication Innovation Lab space, because of the many new technology equipment we have and for current digital and tech literacy classes. Due to the current weeding on the 2nd floor, the Tech Team was able to rework the west end of the 2nd floor for their needs, an extension from the once Computer Lab. It works out well for now, and actually, looks quite great.

I have asked the Friends of the Library that by December 1st, their collection is out of the outreach/extension area. Currently all of the Friends items are located in four different areas of the building and I'm attempting to get them and all of their books/items into one location. I also plan to use the back extension area for further, very much needed office space.

2nd Floor Renovation – I have this actually as a point of discussion on the Board packet for this month.

125th Anniversary

2022 is the 125th Anniversary of Racine Public Library. I've pulled together a planning committee from the Foundation, Friends, Board, staff, and community members to discuss how RPL can celebrate next year in tandem with all of the exciting initiatives going on at RPL. This will most likely incorporate a separate logo and marketing campaign, fundraising initiatives, events and displays, etc. The kick-off for this planning committee is September 23rd and I will be looking for someone else to chair the committee.

Darcy Mohr, Head of Adult and Youth Services Report

Programming

The Library presented 30 programs in August, which had a total participation of 557 people. We typically do fewer programs in August in order to catch our breaths after the Summer Reading Program and give us a chance to prepare for a busy fall programming schedule.

540 people participated in the 2021 Summer Reading Program. Broken down by age group there were 308 children, 80 teens, and 152 adults who participated.

August Programming Statistics

Program	# of Programs	Participants	Format
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1st Chapter Friday	4	27	YouTube
Adult Informational	3	46	YouTube
Adult Informational	3	221	Facebook
Adult Informational	2	15	Zoom
Adult Storytime	2	17	In-person, outreach
Book Club	1	11	In-person
Craft for Children (Instructions)	4	22	YouTube
Craft for Teens	2	21	Take and Make
Crafts for Teens	2	112	facebook
Japanese Calligraphy	1	5	YouTube
Random Acts of Science	2	16	YouTube
Random Acts of Science	2	37	Facebook
Sip and Swipe	1	3	In-person, outreach
Summer Scares	1	4	Zoom
Totals	30	557	

Patron Services

Staff answered 1,022 calls and 43 chats during the month. A total of 4,641 questions were answered across all methods of communication. 57% of the reference questions were asked in person, while 43% were received over the phone or via chat.

August Reference and Computer Use Statistics

Total # of phone calls	1,022
Total # of questions via call center	1,968
Avg. # of calls per day	39.3

Avg. # of calls per hour	4.86
Total talk time	60.4 hours
Avg. call length	3.5 minutes
Total chats	43
Total chat messages	303
Avg. # of messages per chat	7
Total phone and chat questions	2,011
In-person reference questions	2,630
Total # of reference questions answered	4,641
Computer usage - total logins	614
Computer usage - total time	473 hours, 46 minutes
Computer usage - avg. time per login	46.3 minutes
Faxes	260
Scans	649

Library Facilities

Construction began in the Youth Services Department on a multi-sensory room. The construction of the room is expected to be completed by mid-September, with hopes that it is furnished and ready to use by early next year.

Staff activities

Adult and Youth Services staff members participated in a combined total of 51 hours of continuing education in August.

Interviews were completed for the Library Social Worker position. The position was offered to Ashley Cedeño. Ashley begins her duties on September 7.

Staying connected with the community

Library staff participated in several outreach events including the Starving Artist Fair, Rotary in the Park, Stuff the Bus Tour at Mitchell School, Business Expo at the John Bryant Community Center, Health Fair at Dr. John Bryant Community Center, and the Zoo Car Show.

Christopher Tobias, Lead of Circulation and Technical Services

Circulation

RPL circulated a total of 37,651 in August of 2021, 33,819 items from Main and 3,832 items from Bookmobile. July circulation was 39,212. Approximately 9,010 holds were placed and filled. 5,396 items loaned to other libraries and 4,521 items received for RPL patrons. 369 new library cards issued.

Position description of part time Circulation Clerk has been created to better reflect job duties that have changed with the increase in cross training. This position combines both the Desk Clerk and Shelving Clerk positions. Angie to bring this position description before Finance & Personnel at the next meeting for approval.

Glynis Kimbrough, Brianna Fuentes, Matt Klug, Jack Peyton, Shannon Matuch and Debbie Clemons have volunteered to take training to work shifts on the Call Center. Training will take place in early September.

In August Circulation staff sorted **83,404 items** through the automated material handler (AMH).

Technical Services

Ordering and processing

In August TSD staff placed orders for 1,426 items and received 1,108 previously ordered items. A total of 1,595 items were added to the catalog.

Current Project Updates

- Adult nonfiction call number updating is continuing. Sections remaining to complete include 400s, 600s, oversized and WI history.
- Stephanie has completed spine label updates to juvenile DVD and audiobook collections and has begun adult audiobooks.
- TSD staff is continuing to assist librarians with the current large scale weeding project in the Adult Department.
- Dawn and Amber are continuing with the juvenile nonfiction weeding project.

Nick Demske, Community Resources Librarian

(Beginning in October, the Community Resources Librarian's report will become a part of the Head of Business Development's full report.)

Interview Published on Community Engagement at RPL

Some editors at a publication of ALA called “The Programming Librarian” learned of the work we did through the ALA Resilient Communities; Libraries Respond to Climate Change grant and solicited me for an interview for the platform. This was a grant we successfully wrote and received about a year ago now, which has already gotten national attention in the library landscape and elsewhere, including when we were included in the very popular Yale Climate Connections series.

The Programming Librarian interview, however, focused on a different angle than any of the other publicity pieces have focused on, which was that we used some of the grant money to provide direct stipends to community members for contributing to community input sessions on a “Equitable Climate Action Plan.” This plan is being designed by the city’s Sustainability Coordinator, Cara Pratt, and is intended to be a guiding document for city policy decisions in the future. You can find the interview [here](#).

Presentation Proposal accepted for WLA Conference in November

The Wisconsin Library Association has an annual conference which is currently scheduled to take place in person this year in November at a convention center in Green Bay. I proposed a presentation with Adrianna McCleer, the Community Partnerships Supervisor of Appleton Public Library, which was accepted. The presentation is titled “Barriers to Equitable Hiring Practices in Libraries and How to Unmake Them.” In it, we will discuss the various strategies and policy changes our two institutions have implemented to make our recruitment, hiring and retention practices more equitable. This will be an excellent opportunity to highlight some of the ways the RPL is leading on some regional and national issues in the library field. Aside from highlighting the work of the management and staff in the library, this presentation will also inevitably highlight some of the great leadership of our Board of Trustees, even, since some of the changes we’ve made towards more equitable hiring practices were policy level changes that wouldn’t have been possible without Board approval.

Hispanic Heritage Month (HHM) at the RPL is Community-Driven

We have several projects planned at the RPL for how to celebrate Hispanic Heritage Month, but one of the most exciting pieces of our work this year is that, for the first time ever, we’ve solicited and assembled a group of Latinx community members to design and help lead this effort. We have several RPL employees from different departments collaborating with each other to help this project succeed, including Maria, Brianna (Fuentes), Adelyn, Keiko, Jessie and myself. And we have several community members affiliated with several community organizations helping lead the effort, including Ilse Merlin and Yazmin Romero-Haluska (Miss Latina Racine/RUSD), Lizeth Brito (Voces de la Frontera/Carthage), Fabiola Diaz (UW Extension), Rep. Dulce Cervantes Contreras (first latina ever to serve on the RUSD School Board) and others.

Again, there are several ways this committee has determined we will celebrate HHM. We are planning to hold two in-person events outside of the library in September. The first event will

feature a traditional Mexican folk dancing group and the second will feature Chinelo dancers--a kind of traditional costumed dance which has origins in the blending of Catholic and Indigenous traditions--as well as a Latinx Hula and Belly-dancing troupe. We hope to have a taco truck at each event, and UW Extension will have a booth and do some food and nutritional education on some traditional Latinx cuisine items.

Aside from the in-person events, we plan to offer other ways to celebrate also. Miss Keiko is providing some take and make craft bags that will be HHM themed. Rep Cervantes is organizing some (or potentially all 6) of the Latinx people who hold public office in Racine County to give a bilingual story book reading on video, which we will post on our social media platforms. Lizeth is organizing some students to create a short educational video on Latinx leader Dolores Huerta. Jessie is working with the Racine Literacy Council to try to get audio readings of some of their participants who are developing their English language skills to read stories they've written about their life experiences, which we would then also share publicly. Adelyn has shown great leadership in that she has acted as Chair of the committee and it has been a really positive experience to have staff do this in conjunction with community members, which we hope to only build on in future years.

Seed Library Update

The Seed Library Project continues to make progress, in part thanks to the fact that it--like our Hispanic Heritage Month efforts this year--is being led in partnership with other community groups and community members. Board member Angelina Cruz helped us connect with Shannon Gordon at RUSD who was able to find a very tall, old card catalog that we hope to have restored to use as perhaps the largest "shelving" unit for the seeds. RUSD kindly donated it--and even delivered it to us. We also have attained 3 other units of varying sizes and conditions so that we have as options to use for how we will eventually house seeds for the public to access.

We are currently working on creating RPL branded marketing and informational material to clarify to the public what this resource is exactly and how they can use it (and contribute to it). We are also in the beginning stages of designing labeling and packaging for the seeds to be portioned into. Once we have some of the logistical pieces resolved, the team is really looking forward to moving on to the creative parts of it--making it look as exciting and fun to the public as possible and getting it out on the library floor for them to benefit from it!

Public Allies Update

I have kept in touch with Auntavia Jackson at Public Allies regularly because we would really like to host one of the "Allies" for this, their first year with a cohort in Racine. They happen to have a young man in this cohort whose dream it is to be a career librarian. But the cost to host an Ally is \$16K and, because this was not anticipated when we budgeted for the year, we are having to work extra hard to make it possible. Thanks to our diligence in showing sincere interest and proactively keeping communications current with them, Public Allies just this month agreed to subsidize \$5K of that cost for us, which is a great addition to the amount of

funding we can offer towards it. We--in collaboration with Auntavia and PA--are continuing to pursue other funders to support this partnership, but the direct financial support from Public Allies will certainly help us close that gap faster.