



## Palmer Public Library

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# Annual Report for Fiscal Year 2020

### **Summer Reading**

Once again, our Summer Reading and Summer Lunch programs took place in July and August. We saw hundreds of people come through our doors for programming, books, food, and fun! The theme was “A Universe of Stories,” and a combination of music, art, and science workshops filled the programming schedule. Teen programs included a cupcake-decorating contest, an Escape Room event in our Community Room, and a metalworking tutorial where participants got to go home with a metal bookmark. Teen Book Club, and a Teen Writer’s Circle rounded out the programming.

Youth Services Librarian Angela Sanches and Assistant Youth Services Librarian Dan Meadow kicked off their programming with a family-friendly Mobile Mini Golf event, which was generously sponsored by local businesses. Participants of all ages wound their way through the Youth Services area and Community Room trying their best to get a hole in one. Angela and Dan also hosted six weeks of storytimes, games, contests, performers, and workshops. Performances included Dinoman who came four giant inflatable dinosaurs, Sparky Davis and her puppets, Magician Scott Jameson, musician Mr. Liam, and storytellers Motoko and Eshu. The Springfield Science Museum’s traveling Star Lab came and created a planetarium in our Community Room. The Summer Reading Program was closed out by the Toe Jam Puppet Band, who got a big crowd of kids up singing and dancing.

Adult Services Librarian Amy Golenski provided some excellent programming this summer including,

With the help of local businesses, we were able to provide over 700 free t-shirts to our Read-at-Home participants. Every child, teen, and adult who completed 47 days of reading also got to take home a book prize.

We continued our collaboration with the Monson Schools Food Services Department and the USDA to provide free lunch for any child aged 18 or younger four days a week for six weeks. We averaged about 30 meals a day, with about 720 meals total for the summer. This was made possible thanks to the help of a group of volunteers from the Second Congregationalist Church in Palmer, who assisted library staff with serving food and monitoring the dining area.

## **Outreach**

The library teamed up with many community organizations this year, including hosting Red Cross blood drives in the fall and spring. We were a drop-off location for toiletries, clothing, and other personal care items for a “Good to Go” Drive to benefit the Mental Health Association, a nonprofit provider of residential and support services for people impacted by mental illness, developmental disabilities, substance abuse, and homelessness in Western Massachusetts. We also continued to be a drop-off location for the Palmer Food Pantry and the Lions Club’s Recycle for Sight year-round.

Youth Services Librarian Angela Sanches continued the tradition of teaming up with the Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners and the Boston Bruins on a Pajama Drive for homeless youth in our state.

Angela Sanches and Assistant Youth Services Librarian Daniel Meadow and Young Adult Librarian Bridget Kennedy met with the Palmer Schools Superintendent Patricia Gardner, and the administrations of both Old Mill Pond and Palmer High School to discuss ways in which we can collaborate more.

Daniel Meadow also partnered with Margaret White and the Palmer Monson Family Network to drop by on Fridays throughout the winter and spring to introduce himself to families in our area and provide storytimes and library outreach.

We maintained our strong connections with Top Floor Learning, River East School-to-Career, the Palmer Historical Commission, Elbow Plantation, the Amherst Rail Society, and the Palmer Senior Center.

Adult Services Librarian Amy Golenski continued her partnership with the United Way to provide financial planning counseling to families, teens, and individuals in our area. “Thrive On The Go” is an extension of an in-house United Way program that helps people get back on their feet financially, save money for big purchases like cars and houses, and provides guidance and advice on how to start your financial life on the right track for teens and young adults. This multi-year program will allow participants to meet with the United Way financial counselor until they have achieved their goals.

At least once a month, Outreach Librarian Sandra Burke travels around Palmer in our outreach van, delivering books, movies, books on CD, and more to area patrons who find it difficult to leave their homes. We are always striving to provide as much access to our collection as we can. We hope to expand our outreach services to meet the needs of as many people in our community as possible.

## **Meeting Spaces**

In FY20, our meeting rooms were booked 972 times by a variety of local civic groups like the Boy Scouts, the Homeschool Collective, and Palmer Cowboys, as well as private companies and non-profit organizations. Cataloger Ashley Ngan continued to do an excellent job managing our meeting spaces.

Local artist and poet Denise Fontaine-Pincince volunteered her time booking monthly art displays in our Community Room. With Denise's help, we have a vibrant and ever-changing art gallery at no cost to the public, and we get the chance to highlight some of the most talented members of our community.

### **Programming**

In addition to the Summer Reading Program, the library hosted presentations by many talented artists, musicians, and authors, as well as programming run by skilled library staff.

Adult Services Librarian Amy Golenski organized and facilitated many excellent programs for adults throughout the fall, winter, and spring. Among the highlights were talks by local authors. J.R. Greene gave a presentation about the Quabbin Reservoir Amy also hosted weekly "Coffee and Coloring" programs, monthly "Crafternoons" and Wicked Wednesday Book Club meetings a tax information workshop, and an electronic device how-to. A few of her most popular programs were a visit from former "Ghost Hunters" star Dustin Pari to talk about his adventures searching for ghosts across the globe with T.A.P.S. and an evening of Robert Frost's Poetry presented by local actor Stephen Collins.

Angela and Assistant Youth Services Librarian Dan Meadow provided weekly storytimes and music programs for toddlers and preschoolers from September through March, four days a week. Friday mornings were especially fun when Angela held her Music for Munchkins class for little ones. The Youth Room filled with laughter, music, singing. Roughly fifty children and their families participated in early education programming at the library each week.

Dan converted half of our playroom into a Makerspace for kids. Each week there is new experiment or a new art project to try, tapping into our young patrons' creativity and ingenuity. Every day kids are building, creating, reading, and talking in our Imagination Station with their friends and family.

Young Adult Librarian Bridget Kennedy provided excellent programming for teens and early adults. The longstanding Role-Playing Game and Anime Clubs continued to go steady, meeting every other week. She threw a hopping Halloween party for teens that included candy, games, and a costume contest. Bridget ran a weekly teen book club and a weekly writing club after school, and provided lots of opportunity for art and creativity. Bridget and the Teen Advisory Board ran our annual Gingerbread House Workshop, where over 100 parents and kids stopped by to build candy-filled houses for the holiday season.

Assistant Director Matthew DeCara continued his tradition of organizing the Blind Date with a Book program in February, where patrons take a leap and pick out a covered book solely by the brief (often-funny) synopsis attached to the front.

Due to the closing of the library on March 16, 2020 to prevent the spread of COVID-19 many of the programming plans we had for the spring had to be altered and adjusted. But our staff did a great job of adapting. Story times and early childhood education programs moved to our Youtube channel where young audiences were treated to an interactive puppet show with local

artist/illustrator David Hyde Costello, Dan Meadow hosted a weekly video series called “Mr. Meadow’s Garden” and Young Adult Librarian Bridget Kennedy hosted online book club sessions and craft tutorials. Adult Services Librarian Amy Golenski coordinated with United Way to create opportunities for patrons to meet with financial counselors via Zoom, and continued her Crafternoon series online. Staff made video tutorials on how to request items through curbside pick-up, and met with patrons remotely to help them use their devices and access our e-books and e-audio materials through our online catalog. It took some adjusting, and it still feels strange to not be meeting and interacting face-to-face, the staff have risen to the occasion and made the best of it. They continued to provide quality informational program and entertainment despite the restraints of moving everything online.

Our closure in March has impacted our programming and attendance numbers, but I am happy to report that we had increased our program attendance for most of FY20 and we were on track to have higher numbers than the year before.

Number of children’s programs	119
Attendance at children’s programs	2,654
Number of young adult programs	131
Attendance at young adult programs	823
Number of adult programs	67
Attendance at adult programs	778

**Personnel and Volunteers**

We were fortunate to have a team of teen volunteers during our Summer Reading program to help us serve lunches and help with programming. Bonny Rathbone, Sonja Diamanti, and a dedicated group from the Second Congregationalist Church in Palmer led by Beth Zelazo helped keep the summer lunch program running.

Eleanor Szlachetka, Nancy Bauer, and the rest of the Friends of the Palmer Public Library team kept our Library Loft bookstore running on Park Street. The proceeds from book sales at the Loft enable us to provide quality youth programming, and we could not do it without their help. There is quite a team of volunteers who manage and take care of the Loft with Eleanor and Nancy including, Christine Reim, Steve Bobowicz, Micheal Moran, Lorrie Adamz, Maxine Amos, Barbara Benedetti, Brenda Benoit, Mary Bernat, Sue Bussel, Shirley Christensen, Anne Marie Proulx, Phil Sullivan, Diane Warnock-Draper, Barbara Marriott, Carole Mimeault, Paul Mombourquette, Sandy Noonan, Marilyn Cole, Lorraine DiNuovo, Jackie Graveline, and Barbara Hansen.

We are very grateful to Pathfinder, which always provides us with excellent student help during our summer programming and to all of the adults and students who participated in our volunteer program providing over 1,000 hours of their time to help the library. We are very fortunate to have such incredible support from our community.

During our busiest summer months we were helped along the way by a group of outstanding temporary staff, including Janet Dawson, Tracy Mastorakis, and Cindy Kowalczyk.

### **Library Association and Board of Directors**

The Annual Meeting took place in October, bringing together the staff, the Board of Directors and the Library Association to celebrate the achievements of the library and honor the recipients of the Mary McManus Award and the Robert M. Sullivan Award.

The Mary McManus award recognizes individuals who have given their time and talent to make a difference to the youth of our community. The 20th Annual McManus Award was presented to William Knolte. Mr. Knolte was a teacher for many years in the Palmer School system. In addition to teaching in a classroom Mr. Knolte also ran chess clubs and taught chess in our community for over 50 years. We have been lucky to have Mr. Knolte run a chess club in the library every Tuesday afternoon for over 5 years. Many of his students over the years have gone on to win major chess tournaments and championships. He was recognized for his excellence in teaching, and his dedication to instilling a love of chess to the youth of Palmer.

The Robert M. Sullivan Award is given annually to honor individuals who have demonstrated a commitment to supporting the mission of the Palmer Public Library and its Association. The 14th Annual Sullivan award was given Steve Bobowicz for his dedicated work as Library Board of Directors member for many years, and Library Board Emeritus. Steve has held many positions on the board over the years, and has spent many hours lending his support, help, and expertise to the board and library staff. As a recently retired librarian himself, Steve has been an invaluable member of the library community and we cannot thank him enough for all that he has done to ensure the library's continued success.

The Association voted to approve the Director's report and the financial report. The Association also voted to approve the appointment of Kelley Sasur as President of the Board of Directors, Jessie Alt as Vice President of the Board of Directors, Jan Marciniak, as Secretary of the Board of Directors, and Mary Rogers as Treasurer of the Board of Directors. The Library Association also welcomed new Association members.

### **Patron Use of the Library**

We continued the fine-free program for youth, teens, and seniors this year. The program has generated positive feedback and has resulted in better customer service interactions and a sense of relief for many teens, kids, and families while having little impact on return times. We stand by the sentiment that the library's mission is to provide as much access to information as possible. Financial boundaries should not exist for our youngest patrons. This combined with our longstanding policy to not charge senior citizens for overdue books ensures that the library continues to be a welcoming, inclusive institution that protects the ability of patrons of all ages, ethnicities, genders, and socioeconomic backgrounds to access our

materials and facility. Much like our programming numbers, our circulation numbers were affected by the closing of the building in March. But I am happy to report that our circulation stats were on the rise in FY20 and despite the building closure in March, our circulation numbers in FY20 were on track to exceed those in FY19.

Number of registered borrowers	11,756
Total attendance at library	67,898
Items received from other libraries for our patrons	11,924
Items provided to other libraries for their patrons	21,619
<i>Library materials borrowed by our patrons:</i>	
Books	46,288
Print magazines & newspapers	1,416
Audio (CDs, Playaways, etc.)	5,592
Video (DVDs, VHS)	27,662
Ebooks	4,817
Downloadable audio (books, music, etc.)	2,620
Materials in electronic format (CD-ROMs)	1,506
Miscellaneous (kits, museum passes, etc.)	387
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>90,288</b>
Number of reference transactions	8,201
Number of users of public wireless access	8,469

### **Collections**

The staff continued to use the Evergreen Acquisitions program this year. Helene O'Connor, Angela Sanches, Dan Meadow, Bridget Kennedy, Amy Golenski, Victoria Knolton, and Ashley Ngan all played a part in the Acquisitions process. The Evergreen Acquisitions Program allows patrons to see items that are on order in our catalog, which gives them a glimpse of the newest materials being added to our collections. Sandy Burke, our Technical Services/Outreach Librarian, makes sure that all materials are processed, covered, and labeled correctly before they make it to the shelves. The hard work of all these librarians means we can provide our community with the books, DVDs, video games, and music they want most!

We added some exciting additions to our collections, including Nintendo Switch games and the digitization of the Palmer Journal Register archives. Cataloger Ashley Ngan worked through the spring to get the scans of the Journal up on Internet Archive. Every two months a new batch will be uploaded and each scan is text searchable.

In April, due to the closure of libraries across the state, the members of the CWMARS network voted to increase funding to purchase e-books and e-audio materials to meet the overwhelming demand. E-book checkouts and e-audio checkouts and holds dramatically increased in the spring

of 2020. This resulted in our e-book collection increasing by close to 40,000 holdings and our e-audio collection increasing by about 7,000 titles.

<i>Library holdings by type of material:</i>	
Books	59,403
Volumes of print magazines & newspapers	1,640
Audio (CDs, Playaways, etc.)	9,269
Video (DVDs, VHS)	7,140
Ebooks	106,015
Downloadable audio (books, music, etc.)	27,199
Downloadable video	128
Materials in electronic format (CD-ROMs)	779
Microfilm	99
Miscellaneous (kits, museum passes, etc.)	222
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>211,894</b>

### **Fundraising and Donations**

Each year, local businesses show their support for the library by donating funds to our Mobile Mini Golf Summer Reading kick-off and our Summer Reading t-shirts. Patrons love getting a free t-shirt, designed by a local student artist as a prize for participating in our read-at-home program. We are grateful for the support from our community that helps us provide programming and rewards for our patrons!

As in years past, we were fortunate to have a supportive and generous group of donors and patrons. We are very grateful to be surrounded by enthusiastic advocates for our library who value what we do.

### **Tenants and Collaborators**

The library continues to rent space to River East School-to-Career, an education nonprofit that focuses on connecting students with local businesses to help prepare them for the workforce after graduation. In addition, our longstanding partnership with Top Floor Learning, a nonprofit adult literacy organization that offers tutoring, test prep, ESL classes, citizenship preparation, and basic computer literacy, is still going strong. All three organizations support each other and benefit from sharing a space. A member of the library staff continues to serve on the board of River East School-to-Career each year.

The library strives to be an integral part of the Palmer Community and is always searching for new ways to provide services and collaborate with local businesses, civic organizations, and nonprofits to fit the needs of our patrons.

Respectfully Submitted,

Stephanie Maher  
Interim Director