



Palmer Public Library
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Annual Report for Fiscal Year 2022

Summer Reading

The Summer Reading program took place in July and August and, due to COVID, looked a little different than it had in years past. The theme was “Tales and Tails,” and a combination of music, art, and science workshops filled the programming schedule.

Much of the special programming for the summer took place online and on our YouTube channel. Youth Services Librarian Angela Sanches and Assistant Youth Services Librarian Dan Meadow made sure that our youngest patrons had access to the same great programming despite the fact that we couldn’t all meet in our Community Room. Online performances included Jungle Jim, whose combination of magic, music, and comedy always makes him a hit, and Little Red Wagon Theatre, a traveling troupe of student actors from the University of New Hampshire who are a crowd favorite here in Palmer. Mother Goose & Honque the Goose stopped by on our YouTube channel to share some stories and laughs, and David Hyde Costello provided a video series centered on animal myths, tales, and legends. Zoo on the Go showed off some amazing animals, and we wrapped up our Summer Performance Series with a performance by the legendary Toe Jam Puppet Band. We are grateful to the Palmer Cultural Council for supporting this program.

Other online programming included the “Look a Book!” series with Mr. Dan and baby Walter. Throughout the summer, we had “Library on the Lawn,” where families could come and play games, make some chalk art, and have a snack in our side yard. We also offered many Drop-In and Take-and-Make Crafts for kids and families to enjoy!

Young Adult Librarian Bridget Kennedy planned and organized an amazing lineup of programming for our teens and young adults. Events included: Cupcake Wars, a virtual talk entitled “Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles: From the Underground to Superstardom,” virtual workshops on creative writing and navigating the college admissions process, and a virtual Marvel Trivia contest.

Adult Services Librarian Amy Golenski provided some excellent programming this summer, including a virtual Pet Meet & Greet and a six-week virtual dog training workshop. Author Terry Wolfish Cole led a virtual workshop on Personal Storytelling and appraiser Mike Ivan offered a virtual Antiques Roadshow program called “What’s It Worth?” And to round everything off, Amy also organized a virtual Q & A with cat behaviorist Rachel Geller, Ed.D

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.

Outreach

Angela Sanches and new Assistant Youth Services Librarian Olivia Chartrand collaborated with Margaret White and the Palmer Monson Family Network. They helped organize a story walk in downtown Three Rivers and participated in a special event at Pulaski Park.

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.

Library Director Stephanie Maher became a member of the “Age and Dementia Friendly Taskforce” and has been working with Marlene Johnson, Executive Director of the Palmer Council on Aging, and her staff, alongside Becky Bash of the Pioneer Valley Planning Commission, to obtain “Age and Dementia Friendly” status for the Town of Palmer.

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. In FY22, delivery service increased to once a week, and not only included library materials but also COVID tests, masks, gloves, and food deliveries. 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.

The Library also started a small food pantry that provides ready-to-eat food items and personal care products to any patron who needs them. The pantry is available anytime the library is open and located in our Town Square kitchen. With the help of monetary donations and donations from Palmer Food Share we have been able to provide easy-to-open, easy-to-eat food. This combined with the installation of a new water fountain that is designed to easily fill a water bottle means the library is better able to meet the needs of our community, especially during the hottest and coldest months of the year.

Meeting Spaces

In FY22, 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 nonprofit 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: J.R. Greene’s presentation about the Quabbin Reservoir, a Meet & Greet with artist Barbara Sullivan, a workshop on accessing our e-content using the Libby app, and a series of virtual food and

cooking programming with author and chef Collin McCollough including “Breakfast Smoothies that Taste Like Dessert,” “All About Beans & Legumes,” and “Fresh Whole Food Soups.” Tom Goldscheider did a virtual talk on Sojourner Truth, Author Charles Nothe stopped by to talk about his book “Five Names on a Granite Slab,” and Dennis Picard visited around Halloween to give a presentation on “Pox, Pus, and Creeping Miasma: Disease & Death in Colonial New England.” Also included in Amy’s offerings were workshops on Alzheimer’s disease with Dr. Andrew Budso and a “Planning for Final Arrangements” presentation by Sandy Ward.

Youth Services Librarian Angela Sanches and Assistant Youth Services Librarians Dan Meadow & Olivia Chartrand provided weekly virtual story times and music programs for toddlers and preschoolers from September through March.

In an effort to keep everyone safe and healthy the focus changed from in-person programming to virtual programming and take-and-make crafts. Some of the offerings included: a Take-Home Pumpkin Painting Craft, Roblox and Minecraft Clubs, a Spooky Library Scavenger Hunt, and a virtual trivia contest entitled “Are You Smarter than a Librarian?” The winter meant Snowman Take & Make Crafts flew off the shelves, and families signed up to bring home a “Make Your Own Gingerbread House” kit complete with icing and lots of candy. Mondays were renamed “Makerspace Mondays” and families were invited to explore new toys, technology, and art supplies in the Community Room on Monday mornings. There were also virtual escape rooms and a Leprechaun Slime workshop. As the weather turned warmer, kids and families could hang out outside on our side lawn for story times and play a little croquet. Family Board Game Night was a hit, and everyone was very excited for the Mario Kart Tournament in the spring.

Young Adult Librarian Bridget Kennedy provided excellent programming for teens. Bridget made sure that the weekly teen book club and a weekly writing club carried on whether they met in person or online. Bridget and the Teen Advisory Board ran an amazing outdoor Halloween bash complete with costume contest and lots of candy! For teens who love spooky crafts, Bridget made sure the fall was filled with lots of chances to get creative. There was a “Create Your Own Spell Book” craft class and a virtual talk all about “Mysterious Massachusetts.” The winter saw virtual cooking classes for teens, Take & Make No-Sew Heart Pillows, and 2022 Vision Board craft kits. As the weather got warmer, Bridget organized an Open Mic Night for teens and tweens, offered a career prep workshop with Edward Lawrence, and brought in Laura Campagna for a very popular Teen Tarot Card Reading program. There were DIY Sketchbook tutorials, DIY CD Sun Catchers, and a Take & Make Tie Dye T-shirt kit. To celebrate the start of summer, Bridget threw a “Mocktails & Coloring” party where teens and tweens could mix their own soft drinks, decorate them with candy and paper umbrellas, and chill out with some coloring while making plans for their summer vacations.

Number of children’s programs	291
Attendance at children’s programs	5,484
Number of young adult programs	122
Attendance at young adult programs	1021
Number of adult programs	54
Attendance at adult programs	801

Personnel and Volunteers

Eleanor Szlachetka, Nancy Bauer, Barbara Benedetti, 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.

In the late summer we said goodbye to our Assistant Youth Services Librarian Daniel Meadow and hired Olivia Chartrand in the fall. Mr. Dan had been an amazing member of our staff and provided not only in-person programming, but also made wonderful video content for our YouTube channel along with his newborn son Walter. While we were sad to see Dan move on, it was our great pleasure to hire Olivia. Olivia had worked at the Palmer Public Library as a temporary staff member before the pandemic. She brought a wealth of great programming ideas for youth patrons of all ages, and in a short period of time became an integral part of welcoming the public and our community back into the building when our doors open in the summer of 2021.

The Palmer Public Library Board of Directors voted to hire Interim Director Stephanie Maher as the permanent Library Director effective January 1, 2022.

During our busiest months, we were helped along the way by our outstanding temporary staff member, Tracy Mastorakis.

Bridget Kennedy, our Young Adult Librarian and Volunteer Coordinator, oversaw 26 volunteers and coordinated over 340 hours of volunteer work in FY22.

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 conduct our annual business meeting. The annual meeting was held over Zoom as the library was not open to the public at that time.

The Association voted to approve the Director's report and the financial report. The Association also voted to approve the appointment of Fay Halsall as President of the Board of Directors, Sara Menard as Vice President of the Board of Directors, Jan Marciniec 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

When the library reopened in June of 2021, we expanded our fine-free policy to include all of our patrons, which means that we no longer charge any late fees on items owned by our library. The program has generated positive feedback and has resulted in better customer service interactions and a sense of relief for our patrons, 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 patron access to materials and information. This 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.

After being closed for most of 2020, we were excited to open our doors in June of 2021. We were able to return to our open hours pre-pandemic. We are happy to report that our circulation numbers rebounded to pre-pandemic levels, but more importantly, we were excited to welcome the community back into the building.

Number of registered borrowers	16,269
Total attendance at library	49,992
Items received from other libraries for our patrons	9,846
Items provided to other libraries for their patrons	16,379
<i>Library materials borrowed by our patrons:</i>	
Books	50,415
Print magazines & newspapers	844
Audio (CDs, Playaways, etc.)	3,881
Video (DVDs, VHS)	18,139
Ebooks	9,138
Downloadable audio (books, music, etc.)	3,254
Materials in electronic format	1,658
Miscellaneous (kits, museum passes, etc.)	767
TOTAL	88,196
Number of reference transactions	7,665
Number of users of public wireless access	6,570

Collections

The staff continued to use the Evergreen Acquisitions program this year. Helene O'Connor, Angela Sanches, Dan Meadow, Olivia Chartrand, 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 our "Library of Things." This new collection includes everything from lawn games to sewing machines to cameras. Board games, Wi-Fi hotspots, and even jumper cables became available for patron check out! Cataloger

Ashley Ngan continued to work on scanning and digitization of the Palmer Journal Register, and Amy Golenski and Helene O'Connor launched a new local history project called "Palmer Villages, Palmer Voices." This oral history project hopes to collect family history and diverse personal accounts of life and experiences in the Villages of Palmer from every generation. The

project is also interested in scanning photographs, letters, maps, and scrapbooks from participants.

In 2020, due to the closure of libraries across the state, the members of the CW MARS 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 continued to dramatically increase in 2021. This resulted in our e-book collection increasing by close to 20,000 holdings and our e-audio collection increasing by about 35,000 titles.

<i>Library holdings by type of material:</i>	
Books	57,122
Volumes of print magazines & newspapers	1,313
Audio (CDs, Playaways, etc.)	8,876
Video (DVDs, VHS)	6,816
Ebooks	120,962
Downloadable audio (books, music, etc.)	64,705
Downloadable video	126
Materials in electronic format (CD-ROMs)	901
Microfilm	100
Miscellaneous (kits, museum passes, etc.)	316
TOTAL	261,237

Fundraising and Donations

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. We are especially appreciative of those who donated to support our food pantry. Contributions from patrons have ensured that the pantry is well-stocked with items needed and requested most by our patrons.

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
Library Director