

ACUSHNET PUBLIC LIBRARY

2020 began like any other year. Library staff, with support from the Board of Trustees and the Friends of the Acushnet Public Library, was working towards and looking forward to a year filled with programs and new services for Acushnet residents and the community at large. In January and February, circulation was up from 2019, and many people had already attended special events, including informational talks by Rachel Slade, Tim Weisberg and Andrew Buckley of Hit and Run History. The always in-demand programs for children and tweens were continuing to gain in popularity. By mid-March, however, when it was clear that COVID-19 was about to change everything, the library shut down normal operations.

Shifting to Remote Work with a Focus on Digital Resources

The library building was last open to the public on March 14, 2020. With support from the Board of Selectmen and Town officials, by the end of the month, the majority of the staff was working remotely. Library staff is to be applauded for being able to shift gears completely in a short amount of time. Fortunately, staff had the appropriate equipment, as well as internet access at home, that allowed for an easy technological transition.

The Library has nine staff members, seven of whom work part-time hours, ranging from 9.5 to 19 hours per week. Their jobs are traditionally rooted in face-to-face interaction. With support from the SAILS Library Network, as well as state and professional library organizations, including the Public Library Association and the American Library Association, staff were immediately able to enroll, at no cost to the Town, in a series of webinars and professional development courses. The information and new skills staff were learning at home, from redesigning portions of the library's website and online presence to engaging with the public virtually, were put to use almost immediately.

It quickly became clear that library patronage was willing, and eager, to take advantage of online resources more so than ever before. OverDrive, and its app called Libby, saw an annual increase of 70% overall. Library staff was able to immediately purchase additional copies of popular titles, as well as fill requests, from home. This meant Acushnet patrons were able to access titles with little to no wait. The Library's hoopla subscription also saw an annual increase of 20% overall. To meet demand, staff raised the monthly download limit to 10 items. Online databases, made available on the state level, were accessed at a higher rate. By the end of 2020, the Library added one more online resource – Creativebug, which features thousands of project ideas and how-to videos.

Working again with the SAILS Library Network, staff was able to facilitate online patron registration, so that people were still able to obtain new library cards. The due dates for items checked out prior to closure were modified many times. The last extension was to July 31, well over a month after the library had resumed in-person service.

Summer Reading looked somewhat different in 2020. Readers were still able to take part in the popular Read and Bead program, and there was also an online component. Utilizing Beanstack, software obtained through a state grant, staff created reading challenges and other online activities for all ages. By the end of summer, Acushnet readers had logged over 46,000 minutes of reading. Inspired by their success, staff extended a reading challenge of 100,000 minutes logged by the end of 2020. Acushnet smashed the goal, ending the year by logging over 130,000 minutes of reading!

Designing a Phased Reopening Plan

With plexiglass shields in place and a reconfiguration of the workspace, as well as safety guidelines from the local and state level and personal protective equipment at the ready, staff began to return to the building in mid-May. By early June, all staff was working their regularly scheduled hours within the building.

The Library Director, in consultation with state entities and the local Board of Health and town administration, developed a Phased Reopening Plan that was approved by the Board of Trustees in June. The key piece to the plan included a new service - Library Takeout.

Introducing a New Way to use the Library Because of COVID-19

Library Takeout officially began on June 11, 2020. Patrons were thrilled to have access to physical library materials once again. They were also happy to return materials that had been checked out since the building's closure in March. Per the Board of Trustees, overdue fines were waived through 2020. Returned items were quarantined for seven days.

Initially, the hours were limited to Monday-Friday, 1-5 and Saturday 10-2, and patrons could only return materials during those hours. By July, the hours were expanded to Monday and Wednesday, 11-7, Tuesday and Thursday, 1-7, Friday 1-5 and Saturday 10-2 for a total of 36 hours of service. The exterior drop was also unlocked in July.

Staff had maintained the same level of print purchasing while working remotely, so brand new material was readily available. By July, the statewide delivery service resumed. In September, the Commonwealth Catalog reopened, allowing Acushnet residents to borrow material from throughout the state and not just from within the SAILS Network.

Any material that circulates – books, audiobooks, DVDs, CDs, magazines, and items from the Library of Things - could be borrowed during Takeout. Museum pass availability depended on the location itself, and passes to Buttonwood Park and the Mass State parking pass were most requested. Through Takeout, patrons could drop off and receive print jobs, photocopying and FAXes. Beginning in October, patrons were able to enter the building, by appointment, for one 45-minute computer session per day.

As of mid-December, with the holiday season and a surge in case numbers, the BOS announced a partial remote work plan. Once again, library staff was able to shift with little to no issues, while maintaining the current level of service.

Support from Other Town Departments

While Town Department Heads met regularly with Town Administration and offered support, the library, and its patrons, most benefited from Fire Chief Kevin Gallagher and his procurement of PPE, Building Commissioner James Marot, whose staff built and installed window trays and a pergola for outdoor programming, and the DPW for providing recycling bins that were used to quarantine all material entering the building. Advisement was regularly provided by Board of Health Agent Joe Correia and Town Administrator Julie Hebert. A team effort, across departments, certainly made the experience more bearable.

State Certification and Interlibrary Loan Benefit for Patrons

The Library maintained state certification in 2020. Required: a Director with a Master's Degree in Library Science from an accredited institution and certification by the

Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners; a minimum of 40 hours open per week; a minimum of 16% of the total budget expended on materials; a municipal appropriation that increases by 2½% each year over a three year average. In April 2020, the MBLC, through an emergency preamble, announced that as of March 2020 all libraries had met the hours and expenditures requirements for FY2020. Even still, Acushnet spent over 16% of the total budget on new materials for patrons.

Certification is of the utmost importance, as it entitles Acushnet residents to borrow materials from other Massachusetts libraries and qualifies the Town to apply for state aid and state grants to libraries, which allows the Library to provide residents with a wider variety of materials and services.

The Library is also a member of the Massachusetts Library System. MLS provides delivery of materials between libraries, regional reference and inter-library loan service, on-line databases, staff training, Summer Reading materials, and professional consultants at no charge to the Library.

SAILS Library Network Membership

The Library is a full voting member of the SAILS Library Network. Through SAILS, library patrons have access to the collections of over 70 libraries. In addition to the automated system, SAILS provides cataloging services, technical support and continuing education. The SAILS system allows users to search the catalog, reserve materials, and renew items from a home PC or on a mobile device through the SAILS website or app.

Staff and Board of Trustees

Staff of the Acushnet Public Library: Dina M. Brasseur, Director, M.S.L.I.S., Sandra Medeiros, Patron Services Associate; Bethany Vieira, Children’s Room Assistant; Elisabeth Botelho, Dolores Henry, Kate Lindia, Lesley Perkins, and Cynthia Souza, Library Technicians; Richard Sevasin, Custodian.

The six-member Board of Trustees has the custody and management of the Library and all related property. The Board typically meets monthly. Acushnet Public Library Board of Trustees (2020-2021): Jennifer Alves (Chair), Diane Ferreira, Nancy Francis, Danielle Guillemette, Jeri Howland and Stephen Reale.

Throughout 2020, and the pandemic, library staff remained dedicated to the library’s mission - to inspire lifelong learning and to strengthen the entire community, through its materials, programs and services. While acknowledging that service was indeed different, staff worked tirelessly to provide material to patrons and to create fun at-home projects and activities.

On behalf of library staff and the Board of Trustees, Director Brasseur wishes to thank the Acushnet community for its support, especially this year. Through conversations had by phone, email and in person at the Takeout window, we understand how vital it is to you to enter your library building to browse again soon. We end 2020 feeling hopeful for the future and looking forward to providing the best possible service to you in 2021.

Respectfully submitted,

Dina M. Brasseur, Library Director and the Acushnet Public Library Board of Trustees

To learn more about the Library, visit www.acupl.org or call 508-998-0270.

LIBRARY STATISTICAL REPORT 2020

General*

Children’s Programs Held.....	35
Attendance at Children’s Programs.....	495
Tween/Teen Programs Held.....	3
Attendance at Tween/Teen Programs.....	19
Adult Programs Held.....	13
Attendance at Adult Programs.....	183
Computers Available for Public Use.....	11
Computers Available with Internet Access.....	9
Sessions Held on Computers Available with Internet Access.....	810
Community Room Use.....	107
Study Room Use.....	326
Patrons Registered	4,995

*Program and room usage statistics reflect January 1 – March 14, 2020 only. Computer sessions reflect January 1 – March 14 and October – December by appointment only.

Materials Holdings (Number of Items)

Books.....	22,447
Periodical Subscriptions	75
DVDs.....	3,531
Audio.....	613
Downloadable eBooks/Audio/Video (does not include hoopla count)	49,539

Circulation (Times Borrowed)

Books – Adult and Teen	13,939
Books – Children	16,773
Periodicals	1,281
DVDs.....	5,266
Audio.....	996
eBooks/eMagazines	6,256
Downloadable Audio/Video	3,565
Museum Passes.....	89

Total Items Circulated: 48,165

It’s also worth noting the staff distributed 1,122 Take and Make craft kits to the children and families of Acushnet and the greater community between July and December.