

ACUSHNET PUBLIC LIBRARY

At the start of 2021, Covid-19 was still dictating much of our day-to-day lives and, therefore, library operations. Library staff was following the Board of Selectmen's partial remote work plan, which had gone into effect in December 2020 and which featured alternating shifts at work and at home. This plan was designed to limit contact amongst staff members. Regardless of where they were working, staff was completely focused on the successful Library Takeout program, which had launched in mid-2020 and allowed patrons to borrow library material even though they couldn't enter the building. By mid-February, all staff members were working their full hours in the building, and it remained that way throughout the rest of 2021. The return to regular work hours, along with a decrease in Covid-19 cases, allowed staff and the Board of Trustees to move forward with their Phased Reopening Plan by March.

Reopening the Library Building

Library Takeout started in June 2020 and continued through July 3, 2021. During that time period, 6,792 pickups were scheduled and just less than 45,000 items were passed through the windows of the Community Room. Patrons could also receive print jobs, send a FAX and have documents photocopied through Takeout. Beginning in October 2020, patrons were able to enter the library, by appointment, to use the computer. Staff frequently heard that patrons, though happy with the services they were receiving, missed being able to browse the shelves.

Following the model used for scheduling computer appointments, staff began testing browsing by appointment in mid-March 2021. Following state and local guidance, safety protocols were followed. Masks were required, and patrons were asked to take their temperature upon entry. Directional signs and floor markings were in place. Appointments could be made by phone, and patrons were allowed one 45 minute appointment per day. Appointments could be made 6 days per week, though hours were limited. By the end of May, as the state of Massachusetts began to lift certain restrictions, patrons were able to visit without an appointment. During that two month period of by appointment browsing, over 400 patrons visited.

While appointments were not needed as of May 29, 2021, hours were still limited until June 21, 2021 when the Library reopened at a full 45 hours per week, no appointments necessary. Previous to that date, the Board of Trustees, along with the Library Director, evaluated the Library's pre-Covid hours. For many years, patrons had requested additional morning hours, as well as consistency in open hours. Officially reopening gave the Library the opportunity to introduce new hours, which were well received and have remained in place since. The Library is open Monday – Thursday, 10:30-7:30, Friday, 1-5 and Saturday, 9:30-2:30.

Summer is typically the busiest season at the Library, and 2021 was no exception. The door count remained consistent throughout the fall and end of the year. Patrons expressed their happiness in being able to visit without an appointment. Many commented how visiting gave them a sense of normalcy. From June – December 2021, 9,865 people entered the Library. Though Library Takeout officially ended in July, staff made accommodations for those not yet ready to browse through the end of the year and with plans to continue the service on an as needed basis in 2022.

Reintroducing Library Programming

Prior to Covid-19, much of the Library's success could be credited to the various programs offered for children, teens and adults. While not ready to reintroduce indoor programming, staff felt that summer was the perfect time to launch a few outdoor programs. Families eagerly accepted the invitation to attend the weekly free outdoor Story Times, which ran, weather-permitting, from July through mid-November 2021. Families were also entertained by Henry the Juggler, thanks to a grant administered by the Acushnet Cultural Council. The Reader's Group and Cookbook Book Club also resumed in-person meetings.

Children, primarily in grades K – 8, participated in the Library's annual Summer Reading program. Participants had the option to take part in the Read and Bead incentive program and/or the online component, Beanstack. Beanstack was first introduced to Acushnet patrons in the summer of 2020. This software features online reading challenges and other activities for all ages and was obtained through a state grant that will provide this resource through 2023.

In October 2021, the Board of Trustees approved a plan for indoor programming, limited to 10 people at a time, in the Library's Community Room. This has allowed for local scout troops, as well as the Library's book groups, to meet indoors.

By the end of 2021, construction was well underway on a pavilion on the Library's back lawn, which will provide more options for future outdoor programming.

Library Mission and Offerings – Materials and Services

The mission of the Acushnet Public Library is to inspire lifelong learning and strengthen the entire community, through its materials, programs and services, in a welcoming space that is open to all.

The Library offers books, DVDs, audiobooks, music CDs, eBooks, newspapers, magazines, public computers, Wi-Fi, online databases, and mobile device and technology assistance, all at no cost. Thanks to a grant from the Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners, hot spots are available to borrow with a one-week loan period. There are two ways to download books, DVDs, music, and more to personal devices and at no cost to Acushnet Public Library cardholders: OverDrive, via its app Libby, and hoopla. Subscriptions to The Standard Times, The Advocate and the Sunday Boston Globe were resumed in late 2021. Patrons are able to read the newspapers at their leisure in our Periodicals Room. Printers, a copy machine and a fax machine are available to the public for a small fee.

The Library currently holds visitor passes to Buttonwood Park Zoo, Massachusetts Parks Pass Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR), Robbins Museum of Archaeology, Roger Williams Park Zoo, and USS Constitution Museum. Patrons are able to check out passes, which provide free or discounted admission to these destinations. The pass program is funded by the Friends of the Acushnet Public Library.

To obtain a free library card, please present a photo ID and proof of address. Children ages 5+ may have a card with parental permission. A card is not required to use materials and services within the Library.

State Certification and Interlibrary Loan Benefit for Patrons

The Library maintained state certification in 2021. 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 21/2% each year over a three year average.

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 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. St. Pierre, Director, M.S.L.I.S., Sandra Medeiros, Patron Services Associate; Melissa Freitas, Dolores Henry, Ann Lapienski, Kate Lindia, Kimi Martin and Lesley Perkins, Library Technicians; Richard Sevasin, Custodian. Three Library Technicians – Elisabeth Botelho, Cynthia Souza and Bethany Vieira - left Acushnet for new employment opportunities during 2021 and each of them are thanked for their service and commitment to the Library community.

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 (2021-2022): Jennifer Alves (Chair), Diane Ferreira, Nancy Francis, Danielle Guillemette, Jeri Howland and Stephen Reale.

The Acushnet community is thanked for its continued support of the Library. Library staff members are committed to providing excellent service and look forward to expanding program offerings for all ages in 2022.

Respectfully submitted,
Dina M. St. Pierre, Library Director and the Acushnet Public Library Board of Trustees

LIBRARY STATISTICAL REPORT 2021

General*

Children’s Programs Held.....	21
Attendance at Children’s Programs.....	406
Tween/Teen Programs Held.....	0
Attendance at Tween/Teen Programs.....	0
Adult Programs Held.....	6
Attendance at Adult Programs.....	33
Computers Available for Public Use and with Internet Access.....	9
Computer Sessions.....	463
Community Room Use.....	13
Study Room Use.....	92
Patrons Registered	4,974

*Program and room usage statistics reflect July – December 2021 only. Computer sessions reflect the full calendar year.

Materials Holdings (Number of Items)

Books.....	23,892
Periodical Subscriptions	59
DVDs.....	3,575
Audio	607
Downloadable eBooks/Audio/Video/Magazines (does not include hoopla).....	62,109

Circulation (Times Borrowed)

Books – Adult and Teen	20,688
Books – Children	29,008
Periodicals	2,416
DVDs.....	7,008
Audio	1,388
eBooks/eMagazines	5,927
Downloadable Audio/Video	4,770
Museum Passes.....	150
Hot Spots (Oct.-Dec. only).....	31
Total Items Circulated:	71,386

It’s also worth noting the staff distributed 1,433 Take and Make craft kits to the children and families of Acushnet and the greater community in 2021.