



Bellingham Public Library

Bellingham, Massachusetts

"The hub of the community...where people and ideas come together"

Annual Report 2020

Honorable Selectmen and the Bellingham Community:



The library front desk transformed with plexiglass, stanchions, social distancing markers and a self-checkout station.

2020 will go down in world history as a year like no other! We began the year like any other. Library programs and services were proceeding normally. Then in February, we began to hear on the news of a mysterious disease in China that had moved to the Pacific Northwest. On Wednesday, March 11th the World Health Organization declared the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) a global pandemic.

Our Board of Trustees was meeting the following evening and immediately voted to cease all in-person library programming and remove all shared toys from the children's room.

Over that weekend, the library community was trying to determine how this pandemic would affect library services and our communities. Based on the information we were receiving, we decided that the library would not open to the public on Monday

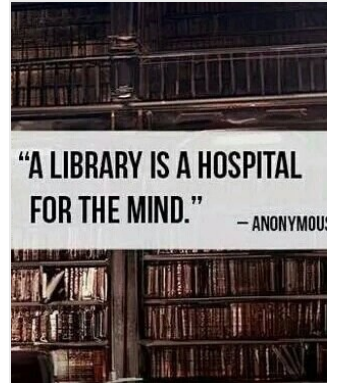
morning. We contacted all patrons who had items waiting to be picked up and asked them to pick up their items within 48 hours as we were unsure of what library services we would be able to offer in the future.

Library staff reported until Thursday, March 19th, when we closed the library and devised a plan for staff to work from home and to continue to offer as many virtual services as we could. Mr. Steve began offering virtual story times, and our book club moved online.

We expanded our purchase of eBooks, promoted our other online resources and made virtual library card accounts for new patrons looking to use library services. We were available to the public through email and library staff worked on not only serving the community, but spent untold hours on personal professional development opportunities to further their knowledge and ability to serve the public.

Staff worked from home through mid-May, and returned to the building to plan for how to offer curbside services to the public. In June we began offering that service.

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BELLINGHAM PUBLIC LIBRARY

BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Carol Bird
Chair

Amy Bartelloni
Vice Chair

Laura Howard
Secretary

Nicole Buckley

Sue Garten

Patrons could call or request items online, library staff would retrieve them, bag them and put them on a cart outside the library door that patrons, once notified they were ready, could pick up during posted hours. In addition, we worked on expanding our online programming to more members of the community.

During the months of June and July we formed a Library Reopening Committee composed of two library trustees and 5 staff members who worked on developing a reopening plan. The committee worked on developing and implementing health and safety measures we could employ to finally open the building to the public. PPE (masks, gloves, sanitizer, etc.) was purchased, plexiglass barriers were installed at service desks, stanchions were installed at the front desk to queue patron lines, floor decals for social distancing reminders were installed, hand sanitizing stations were set up throughout the building and a self-checkout station was installed for patrons who wished to use that service.

On August 3rd we reopened the library doors to the public. To ensure our ability to keep the browsing area limited so that it could be more easily sanitized, high demand collections were moved to central areas.



High demand fiction collections moved near the main desk for ease in browsing.



The children's room was reconfigured so that the play area was blocked off and collections were relocated for access.

Over the summer case counts in Bellingham dramatically improved. At one point we were down to only one active case. Then, after Labor Day, the case counts again began to slowly climb, but they were manageable and we maintained in-person library services and even expanded to offer computer use and study room use by reservation.

Later in the fall, as the numbers began climbing more steadily, the Library Reopening Committee reconvened to discuss if/when the library should revert back to curbside service only. It was decided that if Bellingham was designated a high risk community for three consecutive weeks based on the Commonwealth's guidelines, we would revert to curbside service only.

By Thanksgiving, what became known as COVID-fatigue had settled in, not just in Bellingham, but throughout the country. Many people did not heed public health warnings and proceeded to have Thanksgiving family events. The case count continued to rise. By early December the town of Bellingham, joining many other towns, entered its third week being designated by the Commonwealth as a high risk community. On December 7th, and for the remainder of the year, the library reverted to curbside service for the checkout of library materials and continued to serve the public by phone and email.

2020 was a year like no other, and we are looking forward to the day when we can resume full in-person service, resume library programming, bring back our afterschool programs and return to being "The hub of the community, where people and ideas come together."

AT A GLANCE - COVID'S IMPACT ON LIBRARY SERVICES

Services

- 53% of Bellingham residents have a library card
- Nearly 20,000 visitors in 2020, down from nearly 100,000 visitors the previous year
- Our volunteer program ended in March, with 363 hours logged, less than 25% of the previous year
- Some patrons continued to use our WiFi from the library parking lot, but Internet usage declined to 2100 sessions, from over 10,000 the previous year
- As museums were also closed, our museum pass program usage decreased to 108 from over 600 the previous year
- Public copier usage also declined to under 900 prints per month, from 3300 the previous year

Collections

- Only 45,776 items (books, DVDs, audiobooks and more) were checked out of the library, a little more than half of the previous year
- 10,996 eBooks were checked out; an increase of over 1000 from the previous year
- The library collection has over 54,145 items, including more than: 47,000 books, 4500 DVDs, 3400 audiobooks and music CDs, and 200 magazine issues.
- Each month hundreds of patrons access our online resources including: ancestry.com, online language learning, self improvement courses, newspapers, journal articles and streaming and downloadable music.

The Library Board of Trustees generally meets on the 2nd Thursday of the month at 7 pm. All are welcome to attend.

FY2021-FY2025 STRATEGIC PLAN



As with all things 2020, it was a difficult year to execute plans. Our Strategic Plan for 2020 included plans to:

- Paint interior and exterior portions of the building. This project was delayed as over the summer we experienced great difficulty with the chiller to the library HVAC system, and that (a priority for FY22) was moved up to FY21. The new chiller will be installed before the 2021 cooling season.
- Acquire a vending machine so that snacks would be available for library patrons for consumption in the café and children's programs. This acquisition was delayed as we were closed and have no anticipated opening date for the café.
- The self-checkout station, which was originally a goal for FY22, was moved up so that when we reopened patrons would have the option of checking out their own items without staff intervention.
- Staff training was on the goal for this year. Although the staff training did not take the form that we anticipated (training from our library network, the Mass Library System (MLS) , Mass Library Association, etc.) during shutdown staff accessed online training from MIIA, MLS and other online sources that offered free continuing education to librarians during the shut down. Staff also used the time to familiarize themselves with the electronic resources the library offers to the public so they could be better able to help patrons use those resources remotely.
- All programs were moved, and have remained online. Our goal to maintain vibrant and well-attended programs has been challenged, but is still very well used, and well received.

CHILDREN'S PROGRAMS

The library offered our traditional children's programs from January through mid-March. During the shutdown and for the rest of the calendar year, we moved the majority of programming for children online.

For the first few months of the pandemic, all of our programs were done via pre-recorded videos on YouTube and shared via Facebook. During this time, we saw a large increase in the amount of subscribers we had on our children's YouTube channel, and many of our videos got well over 100 views, which included videos for kids of all ages and interests. Mr. Steve also offered personalized video messages to interested families for kids to see a familiar face, and he ended up sending them to more than 50 families.

As the summer rolled around, we did a virtual summer reading program with middling success. About 65 kids participated and they logged slightly over 33,000 minutes of reading to win free books and gift certificates from *Friendly Neighborhood Comics* and *ConnectED and Inspired*. In non-pandemic times, we have about five times as much participation.

During the summer, we began meeting weekly in person at the Town Common for **Picnic Stories**, which had between 15-60 people attend depending on the day. Also, we began doing story time sessions and virtual book clubs via Zoom - along with continuing to produce pre-recorded content for our YouTube channel.

In September, among other things, we started our annual **Alphabits** program. Kids can participate in two ways for this 26 week program - live on Zoom (with two weekly time choices) or from home at their leisure through our YouTube channel. We estimate about 80 kids attend Alphabits regularly, which is about a third of the more than 200 kids who normally participate. Also in September, we started a Facebook Live story time on Tuesday mornings called 15 Minutes of Fun. These are two of our many opportunities for families to participate in library programming from their homes.

One of our most popular continuous programs is **STEAM Time**. For this program, families sign up and receive a bag of materials curbside along with a link to a video that instructs them how to complete this STEAM project at home using their materials. It has been fun and engaging, and we have received considerably good feedback for it.

All through this time, along with several options for families to participate via Zoom, FB Live, and limited in-person, we have continued adding videos to our YouTube channel. We are hopeful to return to in-library programming at some point in 2021, but we are determined to make the necessary accommodations to be relevant to families regardless of circumstances.



CHILDREN'S PROGRAM STATISTICS

Due to the pandemic, our statistics this year, especially for children's programming, look very different!

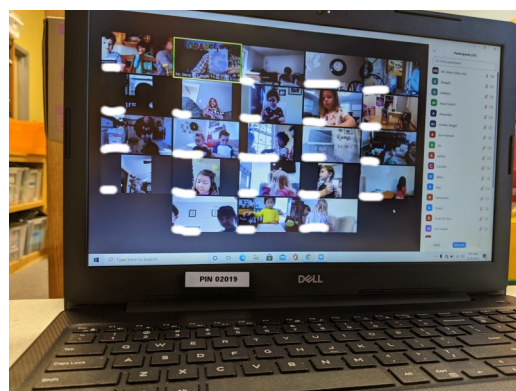
Live Programs

283 Programs
Attended by 7,876 people
(5140 children
and 2736 adults)

This includes:
219 Prepandemic in-person programs
44 Programs on Zoom
20 Programs on Facebook Live

Recorded Programs

In addition, we produced 183 new videos that were viewed 8774 times.



Left:
January Pirate Party
Mother/Daughter Book Club on the Common

Above:
Alphabits story time on Zoom (the ubiquitous way library programming and meetings were held during the pandemic!)

PARTNERS

Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners (MBLC)

The MBLC is the state agency that certifies libraries and ensures state standards for library services are met.

Public libraries are required to meet certain budget and service levels each year in order to maintain certification and receive state aid. By maintaining certification, the library receives over \$15-22K in state aid funds each year.

Due to the pandemic, the Commissioners voted to waive the materials and hours requirement for FY20. Libraries could maintain certification without meeting the normal requirements for those services. However, the budget requirement was not waived, and due to the decrease in our budget, we had to file for a waiver of the Municipal Appropriate Requirement in November of 2020.

Central/Western Massachusetts Automated Resource Sharing (CWMARS)

CWMARS is our library network. Our dues to the network fund the shared library patron and item database, a staff and public computer network, our Wi-Fi network and access to electronic resources, including eBooks.

Massachusetts Library System (MLS)

The library is a member of MLS, which provides delivery of library items between Massachusetts libraries, as well as access to online magazines, newspapers and journals. They also provide continuing education for library staff.

PATRON SURVEY AND EXPANSION OF ELECTRONIC RESOURCES

In addition, in the early fall of 2020, we surveyed library patrons to get input on our focus for 2021. The survey results indicated that patrons wanted us open more hours. Since we resumed services in June, our hours were limited to Monday and Thursday from 11 am to 6:30 pm, Tuesday and Wednesday from 11 am to 3 pm, and Fridays from 10 am to 3 pm. As of January 4, 2021 our hours will expand to: Monday, Tuesday and Thursday 11 am to 5 pm; Wednesday from 11 am to 8 pm; and Friday and Saturday from 10 am to 3 pm.

We also gave patrons the opportunity to rank other electronic services the library could subscribe to in order to expand our electronic resource offerings. Based on their input, the library now offers access to the following electronic resources that patrons can access from home with their library card. Our offerings that were new in 2020 are in bold.

A to Z World Travel, Food & Culture - Recipes, culture, travel and country information at your fingertips!

Ancestry.com - This resource, that was originally only available for use in the library, has been offered by the vendor for patrons to use at home.

Brainfuse's HelpNow - Live tutors available daily from 2 pm to 11 pm to help students from kindergarten through adults with homework, study tips, etc.

Creativebug - Thousands of online arts and crafts classes for kids and adults!

Freegal - Access to download and stream music from the Sony Music Library.

Hoopla—Borrow movies, music, audiobooks, eBooks, comics and TV shows to enjoy on your computer, tablet, phone—and even your TV. No waiting, titles can be streamed immediately, or downloaded for offline enjoyment later. Hundreds of thousands of titles to choose from.

Mango Languages - Learn a language from Arabic to Yiddish, or even Pirate!

Overdrive - Overdrive, through its Overdrive & Libby apps, is the way the vast majority of our patrons access eBooks through their library accounts. Overdrive also offers magazines, videos and other formats.

RB Digital - Access to over 50 popular magazines that can be downloaded and kept by patrons indefinitely.

Universal Class - Access to online courses on topics from Accounting to Yoga.

ADULT PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

The library offered our traditional adult programs from January through mid-March. During the shutdown and for the rest of the calendar year, we moved the majority of programming for adults online.

The library hosts several recurring programs for adults, including a monthly book discussion group, monthly writing group, and a weekly knitting/crocheting group called the Bellingham Skein Artists. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the monthly book group and writing group met virtually beginning in the spring, and continued meeting virtually for the rest of the year.

In addition, the library hosted several special events during the winter, such as a workshop in January called ***Clear Your Head and Clear Your Clutter***, as well as a February ***Voter Information Session*** with Town Clerk Larry Sposato.

An open house to explain an upcoming ***Mass. Memories Road Show*** scanning day was held in January. The Mass. Memories Road Show is a statewide, event-based participatory archiving program that documents people, places, and events in Massachusetts history through family photographs and stories. The actual scanning day had to be postponed due to the pandemic, and we are hopeful that it will occur sometime in 2021.

Over the summer we were given the opportunity to participate in the ***Mass. Memories Road Show's Stuck-at-Home Show***. Photographs with a connection to Bellingham were submitted to begin our virtual connection. You can see the photographs here: <https://bit.ly/3rDMzI5>

Beginning in the spring, all adult programs went virtual. Some of the events that were held included: ***Starting the Conversation about Suicide Prevention, Writing Your College Essay, The Story of the French Neutrals*** (joint collaboration between the Bellingham Library and the Bellingham Historical Commission,) ***Family Cooking Class, Book Buzz for Adults, Healthy Garden Recipes, Holiday Wreath Making, Be a Good Ancestor, Creepy Christmas, and Finding Easy Walks Wherever You Are.***

With funding assistance from the Bellingham Cultural Council, in the fall the library was able to bring two community concerts to Bellingham, despite the pandemic. A concert was held at the Town Common with folk duo ***Raianne Richards and Mark Mandeville***. The second concert was held in the parking lot at the Bellingham Senior Center. This event was a concert in your car with the musical group ***Jumpin' Juba***.

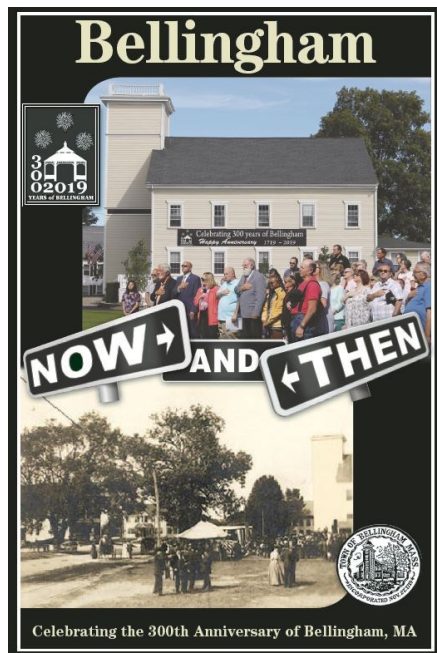


October 3, 2020
Raianne Richards and Mark Mandeville
A socially distanced concert on the
Bellingham Town Common



October 8, 2020
Jumpin' Juba
A Concert in Your Car
at the Bellingham Senior Center

300TH ANNIVERSARY BOOK



In April of 2018 the Bellingham Public Library applied for and was subsequently awarded a Library Services & Technology Act grant from the Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners in the amount of \$15,000. The grant, funded by the Institute of Museum and Library Services, funded the library's participation in 300th Anniversary events and the opportunity to document the milestone.

One of the projects of the grant was to create and publish a book documenting Bellingham's history from the time the last book was written, in 1969. In the fall of 2018, a committee was formed to research, write and publish the book. The 300th Anniversary Book Committee consisted of four members:

- Cecily Christensen, Reference Librarian, Bellingham Public Library
- Bernadette Rivard, Library Director, Bellingham Public Library
- Pamela Johnson, Owner of TechPro Publications and Bellingham Bulletin Publisher
- Marjorie Turner Hollman, Personal Historian and local author

Over the course of nearly one year, their collaboration on research, organization and writing produced a 157-page book. Many of the photos in the book were taken by photographer Amanda Leeland of Discovering Magic in Pixels and Pamela Johnson or other contributing writers to the Bellingham Bulletin.

The book would not have been possible without the assistance of the then-Chair of the Bellingham Historical Commission Marcia Crooks, DPW Director Don DiMartino, Town Administrator Denis Fraine, Town Planner Jim Kupfer, local attorney Bruce Lord (ret.) and resident Ben Stratman.

The book has 11 chapters:

Chapter 1: Introduction	Outlines the scope of the book
Chapter 2: Anniversary Year Events	Photos and descriptions of the events held to celebrate the anniversary
Chapter 3: Growth & Development: 1960-2020	A timeline and narrative of Bellingham's residential, commercial (industrial and retail) and municipal growth and other milestones
Chapter 4: Faith Communities	Stories and photos of current and former churches and faith communities in our town
Chapter 5: Bellingham Schools	Stories and photos of current and former schools and their role in our community
Chapter 6: Municipal Buildings & Public Spaces	Stories and photos of current and former municipal buildings and public spaces and their evolution and importance to our town
Chapter 7: Our Veterans	Interviews with numerous Bellingham Veterans, Bellingham as a Purple Heart Town, and a list of all from town who have served since 1960
Chapter 8: Businesses & Families	The stories of Bellingham's multi-generational businesses and their contribution to our community
Chapter 9: Remembering Bellingham	Restaurants of days gone by, bygone businesses and remembering Bellingham and the First Baptist Church
Chapter 10: Items of Interest	History of the Bellingham Poor Farm, the Lumberjack Sculpture and Sculptor, Evolution from Town Dump to Recycling Center, Bellingham's phone exchanges, Boston Post Cane Presentation, and the Bellingham Athletic Hall of Fame
Chapter 11: In Memoriam	A listing of town employees, elected officials and others who served the town between 1968 and 2019.

Copies of the book are available at the Bellingham Library and can be purchased on Amazon.com

SOCIAL MEDIA

2541	Facebook Followers
2489	Constant Contact Library News & Events (Electronic Newsletter Subscribers)
694	Pinterest Followers
332	Wowbrary New Item Notification (Electronic Newsletter Subscribers)

ELECTRONIC COLLECTIONS

4652	Songs streamed through Freegal
1108	Songs downloaded through Freegal
10996	eBooks downloaded through Overdrive
436	Magazines downloaded through RB Digital Magazines
739	Online language learning lessons through Mango Languages
100	Universal Class courses taken



OTHER STATISTICS - GREATLY IMPACTED BY COVID

	2020	2019	2016
Library Visitors	2066	90,977	113,051
Library Circulation (items checked out)	45,776	87,608	95,593
Museum Passes Issued	108	621	670
Tech Help, Reference Questions and Interviews	316	1485	1070
Children's Program Attendance	4839	16,516	12,991
Teen Program Attendance	844	4288	4106
Adult Program Attendance	453	827	736
eBook Circulation	10996	9939	5812

Bellingham Public Library Staff

Bernadette Rivard
Director

Cecily Christensen
Reference Librarian

Steven Fowler
Senior Youth Services Librarian, Ages 0-12

Amanda Maclure
Youth Services Librarian, Grades 7-12

Pauline Krajcik
Anne Kunczewicz
Barbara Pacak
Library Technicians

Carol Bonnell
Library & Accounts Payable Assistant

Diane Nelson
Library & Children's Assistant, Grades 4-6

Heidi Santucci
Library & Children's Assistant

Renee Milliken
Patricia Honour
Jane Vichi
Library Assistants

Jim Maher
Custodian