



Bellingham Public Library

Bellingham, Massachusetts

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

Annual Report 2021

Honorable Members of the Select Board and the Bellingham Community:



Our plexiglass, self-checkout stations, and stanchions remained in place throughout 2021 for patron and staff safety.

Due to the continued coronavirus pandemic, the library started 2021 much like it operated off and on throughout 2020, with the building closed to the public and with lobby pickup and phone service only.

Opening to the public in March 2021, we offered Grab & Go service and lobby pickup of library materials until June. In June, services expanded to include opening all browsing areas and returning some study tables and chairs, and adding more public computers that no longer required advanced reservations.

In July, we expanded open hours and made a short-lived decision for masks to be optional for vaccinated staff and patrons, with masks still requested in the children's room. By August, the beginnings of the Delta variant were starting to be reflected in rising case counts and we went back to requesting all staff and visitors wear masks, regardless of vaccination status, due to Norfolk County being in the CDC designated "moderate" risk category.

In September, we expanded our hours to be open 51 hours per week, meeting our state requirement of 50 hours. We reopened our meeting rooms for reservations and resumed our afterschool programming. In early December the Omicron variant was identified and we saw case counts rising again. No services were pulled back in late 2021, but library management was closely monitoring the situation in the event another adjustment might be needed in early 2022.

The past two years have been very challenging for us to offer the level of service that the library had offered in the past, but with a dedicated staff we have been able to offer virtual and remote services, and many, if not most, services in person since June of 2021.

We hope the late 2021/early 2022 setback in progress in fighting the pandemic is short-lived, and we can return by early spring of 2022 to expand services to best meet the needs of the Bellingham community.

BELLINGHAM PUBLIC LIBRARY

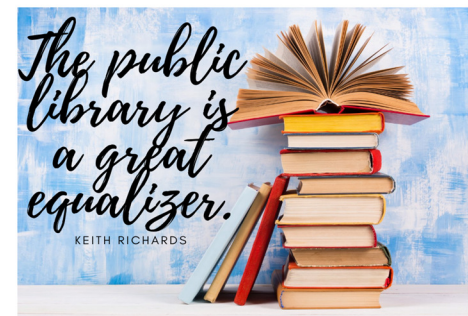
BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Suzanne Garten
Chair

Nicole Buckley
Vice Chair

Laura Howard
Secretary

Carol Bird



AT A GLANCE - COVID'S CONTINUED IMPACT ON LIBRARY SERVICES

Services

- Nearly half of the residents have a library card.
- Nearly 30,000 visitors in 2021, up from only 20,000 in 2020, but still way behind our 100,000 visitors we had in 2019.
- Our volunteer program resumed in September of 2021, with 245 hours logged, less than the 363 hours in 2020 and less than 20% of the 2019 hours.
- Our WiFi usage is still significantly down from 2019, from over 10,000 sessions to under 2,000. This is equal to the percentage decline in library visitors.
- As museums slowly reopened, our pass usage increased to 171 from 108 in 2020, but lags behind our 2019 use of over 600.
- Public copier usage increased to about 2,000 prints per month, up from under 900 prints per month in 2020, but still significantly down from 3,300 in 2019.

Collections

- 63,406 items (books, DVDs, audiobooks and more) were checked out of the library in 2021, 28% more than the 45,776 in 2020, but still 22% lower than in 2019.
- 12,527 eBooks were checked out in 2021, a 13% increase over 2020 and a 21% increase over 2019.
- The library collection has nearly 58,000 items, including more than: 50,000 books, 4400 DVDs, 3300 audiobooks and music CDs, and 250 magazine issues.

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 and 2021, it was a difficult year to execute plans. Here's the status of our strategic planning projects.

- A new air conditioning chiller unit was installed in the building in the spring of 2020, providing more reliable temperature control for staff and patrons.
- Paint interior and exterior portions of the building. This project was funded at the November 2021 town meeting and will be scheduled for the spring of 2022.
- 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.
- We had hoped that updating the air conditioning unit would free up some storage space in the mechanical area. That did not happen so the library still has storage issues that we will need to find a solution for in the future.
- Scheduled for 2022 was a lighting upgrade, a plan to secure funding to upgrade the 30-year-old lighting fixtures. Depending upon other priorities, it might be a priority for 2023.
- Many of our plans for 2022 are on hold due to the ongoing pandemic, including: school outreach, starting a more formal homework club, and other programming.
- The good news is we are exploring the possibility of using town ARPA funds to create two outdoor-spaces: a deck outside the Children's Room for outdoor programming, and a patio outside the Teen Room with tables and chairs for people to enjoy our outdoor spaces.

CHILDREN'S PROGRAMS

As with the rest of the country, we did our best to return to normal during 2021 in terms of children's programming. Early 2021 included virtual programming of all sorts, with some of our most popular being Alphabits on Zoom and the daily Boredom Buster videos that we released on our YouTube channel during the month of February. As the weather got warmer, we were able to get outside for a variety of programming including our Alphabits graduation ceremonies and Picnic Stories.

We purchased a couple of outdoor tents, which enabled us to do more programming outdoors throughout the spring and summer, including Krafty Kids and Ravenous Readers. We also took advantage of the Town Common to have some bigger events including the Toe Jam Puppet Band, which kicked off our summer reading program in front of a crowd of more than 150 people. We also had visits from Bruce the Bear and Elephant & Piggie, which helped make the summer programming successful.

The reading portion of this summer's reading program was mostly in-person, and was much more successful than last summer. We had three times as many participants (145) and nearly four times as many minutes read (121,813). We are hoping that this will lead us to even better numbers next summer!

The second half of the year, particularly starting in September, was really a return to normal - with masks, of course, as we adopted the school's mask guidance which mandates masks for everyone ages 3 and up regardless of vaccination status. With that in mind, our normal storytimes and after school programs returned in-person and in full force. Attendance at Alphabits, for example, was at about 75% of pre-pandemic numbers, which is better than expected. We also have a Zoom and a YouTube option for those families who wish to stay home but still want to participate in Alphabits. Ring a Ding and Baby Time returned with competitive numbers to the past. We also restarted homeschool programming and a Graphic Novel Book Club, which have also been good successes. The After School Kids (ASK) program, on the other hand, has seen a considerable drop in attendance as many parents are trying to limit their children's Covid exposure and limit after school mask-wearing. We expect those numbers to bounce right back when conditions allow them to.

In December, we were able to sneak in our fun annual (if smaller and lower attended) Polar Express Extravaganza and Gingerbread Mania programs, and it reinstalled a sense of normalcy for many families. This feeling, however, did not last long as the Omicron variant began exploding in mid-December and we canceled our New Year's Eve party. We anticipate Omicron and any other variants of the COVID-19 virus will affect programming in early 2022, but we are hopeful that the worst is behind us. Either way, we will make the adjustments necessary to best serve the families of Bellingham.

CHILDREN'S PROGRAM STATISTICS

Due to the ongoing pandemic, our statistics, especially for children's programming, look very different again this year compared to 2019!

	2021	2020	2019
Number of In Person Programs	298	219	877
Children Attendance	4,839	5,140	15,455
Adult Attendance	2,675	2,736	9,502
Recorded Programs	169	183	
Recorded Program Views	3,554	8,774	



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 approximately \$25,000 each year.

The requirement that libraries meet the MBLC standards were reinstated in September of 2021, after many being waived since the pandemic began in March of 2020. The library applied for a waiver of the municipal appropriation requirement standard for the second consecutive year.

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 many 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.

In 2021 over 16,000 items (books, DVDs, audiobooks and more) were borrowed from our partner libraries through MLS delivery. In addition, we sent out over 14,000 items to other libraries for their patrons. This resource sharing is a benefit to all libraries and library patrons.

CONTINUED EXPANSION OF ELECTRONIC RESOURCES

We continue to expand the resources that people can access online. Most are available offline. Those that are in library only are noted with an asterisk *.

In 2021 we offered:

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

***Ancestry.com** - This resource, to research family history and genealogy, that was originally only available for use in the library. It was offered to patrons for at home use in 2021. It has since reverted back to in library use only.

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.

Flipster— Online magazines. Offerings may vary from time to time based on patron demand.

***Fold3** - Premier collection of hundreds of millions of U.S. military records.

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

Great Courses Library Collection - Access over 250 unique courses to capture your curiosity or help you improve in areas you are passionate about.

***Heritage Quest** - Access to millions of census records, family histories, military and bank records.

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.

IndieFlix - Stream thousands of full-length feature films, shorts, documentaries and series from around the world.

Journal & Magazine Articles - Access an extensive database of journal, magazine and newspaper articles from reliable sources on topics including: biographies, business, health and wellness, popular magazines and history.

Learning Express Library Job & Career Accelerator - Build resumes, find a career match, explore occupations, search for jobs and internships and more!

Lingo Lite - Image - and video-based foreign language tool for 260 of the most basic words and terms in 30 languages.

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

Newspaper Archives - Access archives of the Boston Globe from 1980 to the present and the New York Times from 1985 to the present.

Niche Academy - Provides online tutorials on how to use many of the library's online resources, as well as popular websites like Facebook, Gmail, Instagram, Pinterest and Twitter.

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.

Qello Concerts - Stream thousands of concert films and documentaries.

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

ADULT PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

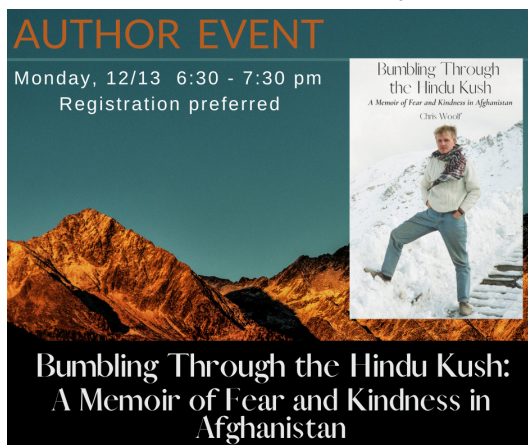
The library began 2021 offering all adult programs virtually. Beginning in July, with the advent of better weather, the monthly writing group began meeting outside but also offered a Zoom option for those who preferred to remain at home. Beginning in September, all adult programs were held in person or were hybrid.

The library hosted 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. With the purchase of a Meeting Owl by Owl Labs, the library was able to host more professional hybrid meetings. The book discussion group was able to hold hybrid meetings beginning in November, with some members participating virtually and some in person.

In addition, the library hosted a number of virtual programs from January through August. These included ***Tips for Job Seekers, Resumes That Get Noticed, Using LinkedIn, SAT Tips and Tricks, Homebuying Seminar, Meet Milford Native and Author Catherine Marenghi, The Call of Kilimanjaro with local author Jeff Belanger,*** and ***Presidential Landmarks in New England.***

With Covid numbers decreasing in the fall, programming went either in person or hybrid. In person programs that were held from September through December included ***Medicare and Social Security, Saving for Retirement, Investments, Growing Your Retirement, Protecting Your Assets, Holiday Pizza Pan Wreath Making,*** and an ***Author Meet and Greet with Chris Woolf.***

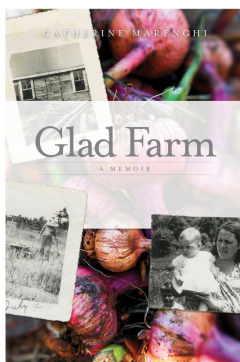
With funding assistance from the Bellingham Cultural Council, the film ***Stephano: the True Story of Shakespeare's Shipwreck*** was shown in the Community Room in September. The producer of the film, Andrew Giles Buckley, answered questions after the showing.



*Franklin Resident and
Local Author Chris Woolf*



*Holiday Pizza Pan Wreath Making Workshop
with Ana Mendes of AfonsoWay*



Glad Farm by Milford Native
Catherine Merenghi



*Library staff using the Owl, our technology that
bridged the gap to make hybrid meetings a reality.*

SOCIAL MEDIA

2,613	Facebook Followers
2,213	Constant Contact Library News & Events (Electronic Newsletter Subscribers)
658	Pinterest Followers
385	Wowbrary New Item Notification (Electronic Newsletter Subscribers)

ELECTRONIC COLLECTIONS

3,354	Songs streamed through Freegal
768	Songs downloaded through Freegal
12,527	eBooks downloaded through Overdrive
688	Magazines downloaded through Overdrive & Flipster
751	Online language learning lessons through Mango Languages
60	Universal Class courses taken



OTHER STATISTICS - STILL GREATLY IMPACTED BY COVID

	2021	2020	2019	2016
Library Visitors	29,744	20,645	90,977	113,051
Library Circulation (items checked out)	63,406	45,776	87,608	95,593
Museum Passes Issued	171	108	621	670
Tech Help, Reference Questions and Interviews	602	316	1485	1,070
Children's Program Attendance	6,316	4,839	16,516	12,991
Teen Program Attendance	937	844	4,288	4,106
Adult Program Attendance	448	453	827	736
eBook Circulation	12,527	10,996	9,939	5,812

Bellingham Public Library Staff

Bernadette Rivard
Director

Cecily Christensen
Reference Librarian

Steven Fowler
**Senior Youth Services
Librarian, Ages 0-12**

Amanda Maclure
**Public Services & Teen
Librarian, Grades 7-12**

Pauline Krajcik
Anne Kuncewicz
Barbara Pacak
Library Technicians

Carol Bonnell
**Library & Accounts
Payable Assistant**

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

Ashalena Rua
Renee Milliken
Patricia Honour
Jane Vichi
Library Assistants

Jim Maher
Custodian