

Date: July 10th, 2024

To: David & Joyce Milne Public Library Board of Trustees

Prepared by: Angela Zimmermann, Library Director



Administrative and Staff Reports for July 10th Board Meeting

Library Director, Angela Zimmermann

The past month appeared to pass quickly due to the numerous projects and activities happening at the library. There was not only the Summer Reading Kick-off event last month but also several well-attended programs in both the children's and adult departments. We were also 'Out and About' throughout the community several times this past month. It was all very exciting to see!

Various meetings

Outside of regular monthly meetings, I was also invited to participate in the second round of interviews for the Town's new IT Manager. The Town Manager, Police Chief, Head of DPW, and I conducted interviews with second-round candidates one day, and unanimously selected an excellent candidate, which I believe has been offered the position.

Andi Bryant from Remedy Hall and board member Carrie Greene addressed the staff at our June staff meeting. We have decided on designated specific locations for these items within the library: the former copier area near the front door (the copier has been relocated to the computer area), and a separate shelf will be allocated in the Teen Room.

I participated in a virtual meeting with other directors from Berkshire County who are members of the Legislative Committee. This committee organizes, fundraises for, and oversees the annual breakfast event. This event serves as an opportunity to advocate for enhancements to all MBLC programs, support our legislative agenda, allow libraries to raise concerns with legislators, and share success stories from libraries. I know that Williamstown was the host this past year, and Pittsfield shall be this coming year. The legislative breakfast is set for Friday, January 31st at 8:00 am.

I had a meeting with Pam Art, President of the Friends Board, and Ray Hiley, Treasurer of the Friends. Together, we devised a plan to acquire the items needed for Thingdom. Due to constraints with the library's Amazon credit limit and our credit card limit, we could only purchase a limited number of items each month. Therefore, the Friends generously agreed to handle the entire purchase of The Thingdom items in two substantial transactions. They are currently in the process of making the purchases using our provided links and guidance. We are immensely thankful to them not only for their financial support but also for taking on the responsibility of actually purchasing the items. After the Friends also generously funded the entire amount this year of my budget request, Pam and Ray also were able to provide me with a rough idea/amount of what the Friends could safely provide each year to the library.

I also worked with the Executive Director of Literacy Volunteers of Berkshire County, who utilized our meeting rooms for training volunteers back in April and early May. They also plan to use the library as a satellite location where volunteers can meet one-on-one with their students to help them acquire basic English language skills.

Next staff meeting is Friday, July 12th at 9:00 am with Narcan Training through Berkshire Harm Reduction. Again, trustees are invited to attend!

Personnel

Both of our interns have joined us since the last trustee meeting. Emery has been diligently working in the Children's department assisting with patrons and with Summer Reading programs and preparation. Douglas has begun leading 1:1 tech assistance programs (which have been a huge hit!) and has collaborated with library team member, Ella, to design a robust coding week aimed at 5th to 8th graders at the end of July. We're so thrilled it worked out to have both Douglas and Emery with us this summer!

Milne Out and About

This past month, the library (myself and Kirsten) was present at the Farmers' Market where we spoke with roughly 125 people about the library, its resources, services, and forthcoming summer reading program. Kira and I also went to a Saturday evening Book Talk and Walk event hosted by Provisions. This event was their inaugural attempt at this, so none of us really knew what to anticipate. Despite that, we successfully signed up several people for library cards! Rocio attended a Juneteenth program at WCMA (more in her narrative about this)! Debbie B. and Kirsten will also be attending the Farmers' Market on Saturday, July 6th.

The Thingdom

I want to acknowledge the entire committee for their hard work in initiating this entire collection (Debbie B., Jack, Jenna, Kira, and myself as well as the assistance of Debbie M. and Ella in clearing the current shelf The Thingdom is displayed on). It's no small feat to implement the how-tos (processing, cataloging, deciding upon items in the collection, procedures, policy, etc.) of this entire collection and in such a short amount of time! Jack has also done a tremendous job at designing the template for the laminated card that patrons will use to browse from. Here's an example:

Front of the card:

Back of the card:

OUTDOOR RECREATION

Ladder Golf Set



Barcode

Compete to score points by tossing and wrapping bolas around the ladder's rungs.

See back for list of contents.

Contains:

- 6 white tubes
- 2 red tubes
- 2 blue tubes
- 3 blue bola
- 3 red bola
- 6 blue edge connectors
- 6 red edge connectors
- 6 blue tube connectors
- 6 red tube connectors
- 20 short white tubes
- 1 carry case
- 1 instructions

Loan Duration: 1 week

Replacement Cost: \$39.95

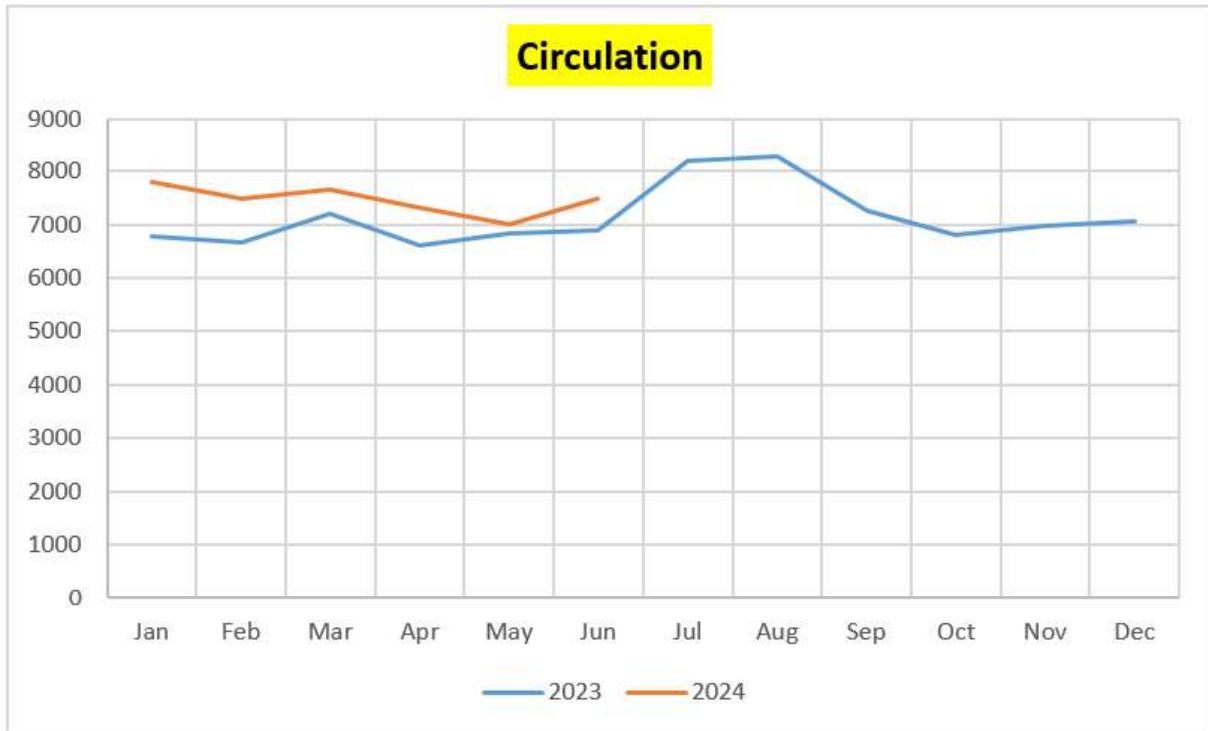
Patrons will then bring the card to the circulation desk for check out and staff will retrieve it from storage. Right now, we're in the midst of preparing laminated cards for the ordered items, which will expedite the process once the items arrive. My hope is that by the end of September we'll have everything ready and officially in the collection.

Looking ahead:

The online ARIS (Annual Report Information Survey) form opened and is due on August 16th so I'll work on compiling and filling-in all of that information. Micah will need to sign it along with myself. And the Financial Report and State Aid Compliance form opens on August 5th and is due October 4th. I'll be attending online workshops in relation to both of these forms since this'll be my first time conducting the annual report in MA (however a quick glance at the ARIS and past forms of the financial aid indicate it's not entirely different at all from state reports I've had to do in the past).

In August, I will start meeting individually with each staff member to establish goals and expectations for the upcoming months, aiming then to facilitate comprehensive and constructive performance evaluations later on.

Milne By the Numbers in May



	May	June
New Library Card Registrations	18	44
Monthly Door Count	4638	6535
Creativebug (hours viewed)	1.05	0
Hoopla checkouts	140	102
Kanopy checkouts	159	212
Libby checkouts	2026	1978
Mango Language total sessions	26	38
Newsletter total subscribers	2615	2600

Newsletter unique opens	4623	5233
Website unique visitors	1630	1670
Website site sessions	2937	3129

Assistant Director, Kirsten Rose

Purchasing

- Buying lots of things - for the Thingdom, etc. - cart, door hanging organizer, display racks for the cards for patron browsing
- New display case for passes at the circulation desk
- Cart for a patron coffee station
- Craft tables for YA programs and a whiteboard for the YA room

Accounting

- Some time tracking down mispaid invoices and checks that went to the wrong vendors.
- Wrapping up financial details for Fiscal Year 24.

Scheduling

- Lots of scheduling new people and accommodating summer schedules

I also continue to work more in assisting with cataloging.

I attended the American Library Association conference in San Diego June 30-July 2 and below are some of the sessions I attended (with some highlights or moments from each):

Breaking Boundaries: Using AI and ChatGPT to Transform Library Services

See more at go.fiu.edu/breaking or library.fiu.edu/ai

(I walked out of this session because it was so problematic - very rah-rah about AI rather than looking at it critically and examining the issues)

Uplifting Diverse Voices Through Inclusive Library Services

Do outreach emphasizing all the services / resources we have beyond traditional print books (i.e. LoT, databases, lang learning, etc.)

Attend Chamber of Commerce meetings - establish community partnerships - then if you need support later, you will have existing relationships with community organizations already in place

Partner with nonprofits that focus on career readiness, language and literacy, digital literacy, citizenship

See a need, fill a need

Soft Censorship of LGBTQIA+ Content and Its Chilling Effect on the Children's Book World

Feel empowered to ask the questions: "what are you worried about?" "What is your fear about X?" - that could open a crack in the wall

How do you count / know about opportunities that don't happen? (i.e. you were never invited because of potential controversy)

Data Analysis: A New Skill Set for Improving Library Services

Look at top-circling genres and build programming around those

Figure out ways to reach out to lesser-served groups, i.e. New Adults

Offer paper and digital tracking to reach everyone

Survey - "Did you learn anything from this program?" → outcomes!

Organizing for Libraries: Skills for Successful Advocacy

Politics is "who gets what, when, how"

Organizing stems from a collective view of power (as opposed to an elite authority in control)

Agitate, Educate, Organize

Make an ask and let them answer - every time

Figure out the web of relationships - how are you connected to the decision-makers?

Give library tours to legislators

Some libraries / towns / counties are declaring themselves as Book Sanctuaries (declaration or resolution) - a local antidote to fighting censorship

It's a public statement of values by the governing body reflecting the majority sentiment

UniteAgainstBooksBans.org (there is a toolkit and a voting info page)

bit.ly/BookResumes - resources to help defend against book bans

Turning the Page: Designing a Library for the Future

"We are building your community living room."

Flexibility and accessibility

Penguin Random House Adult Library Book Buzz

Back to the Future: Predictions from Library 2035

LLMs (large language models) and AI

Gell-Mann Amnesia Effect

Make sure patrons leave delighted

The library as the memory of their community

If we expand our services too far, what distinguishes us from a community center?

What's Love Got to Do With It? Why Reading Romance is Good for You

\$1.44B in sales on 2022

18M units in 2020 - 326M in 2023 - doubled!

84% of romance readers are women

The most popular and best-selling genre, especially over the last few years

Who gets to have joy and happiness?

Centering women's joys, wishes, desires and pleasures

Celebrating female power

Complex Characters in Women's Fiction

ALA Trivia Championship (my team came in second overall!)

Beyond the Audit: Embracing the Freedom to Read Through Curation and Promotion of Inclusive Collections

If people are turned off by the phrase "DEI" try reframing it as "Access and Opportunity" link to priorities and goals from strategic plan

Collection Development is community engagement

Harlequin Book Buzz

The Library is Open to All: LGBTQIA+ Community Engagement at San Diego Public Library

Creation of safe spaces

Engage the community where they already are

You Are Not Alone: Leveraging Community Advocates Against Book Bans

Reconsideration policy - you have to read the book, one item at a time, they have to be specific (i.e. I don't like this paragraph on p. 52)

Advocacy is story-telling - make sure you are telling the right stories and to the right people - and that others can tell their stories.

Reader.Voter.Ready. - ALA partnering with LWW on voting initiative

Circulation Manager, Jenna English

-I attended a ComCat training webinar. It was mostly stuff I already knew, but there were a few new, useful tidbits.

-Welcome Oliver Bingemann to the circulation team! We are very happy to have him!

-The audiobooks were weeded & shifted to make room for the nonfiction audiobooks shelved in the nonfiction room. It's great having all the audiobooks shelved together, especially the Modern Scholar ones which had been relegated to an out of the way shelf where no one saw them. I also created new signage for the audiobooks reflecting the shift.

-In other weeding news, Debbie M & Ella are working on weeding the 500s & 700s.

-There are now 2 Friends Freebie Carts. We've been putting the larger one outside with the library Freebie Cart.

-The Thingdom display has been set up. It's limited to the Outdoor Recreation items thus far, but that will change as more items are added.

-I created new covers for the Experience Passes & put some of the older ones in new cases. They look fantastic on their new display stand!

-The new Sand Springs Pass has proven to be very popular thus far!

-I am currently working on creating a brochure for the Experience Passes & will also be helping out with the Thingdom Cards.

From the Adult Services Department: Adult Services Librarian, Kira Williams

June was a busy month for Adult Services due mainly to the many programs that took place. In addition to the ongoing meetings for dementia-friendly caregivers, yoga students, and the board game players, it was also Alzheimer's and Brain Awareness Month. I highlighted this issue in part because Williamstown has been designated a Dementia-Friendly town in Massachusetts through the initiative of the Council on Aging. The CoA gave the library over \$1000 to spend on books in Adult, Teen and Children's collections about dementia in general, which were highlighted in June in a display. We also hosted three talks (two in partnership with the CoA), a fictional film about Sherlock Holmes in his 90s, and a blog about Alzheimer's in general and the June events.

It was also great to have Dr. Pat Wilk (also a previous trustee) provide a workshop about college essay writing again. Since few teenagers came in June, she will be doing it again in the fall. In addition, Sam Trudel spoke about the book he published about his grandfather, Samuel M. Jones, who ran the Arnold Print Works in North Adams before WWII. And, locals Jim and Diana Walczak (father and daughter) gave a talk/slideshow about Jim's life as a printer and typesetter, and the effects of the printing press on the information world when Gutenberg made printing en masse possible. Jim and Diana also gave many people the chance to make their own print on a vintage press after the talk.

In addition, I got Book Bingo for Adults ready earlier than in previous years, in part to catch parents when they bring their kids in for summer reading, and also to give adults more time to read and fill out their cards. I also met Ryan Miller, the Adult Services Librarian at the North Adams Public Library, to share ideas about finding and organizing programs for adults in this area. And I moderated a MLA meeting about programming for adults which focused on the topic of publicity, calendars and registration.

In between planning programs, I, along with Jack, answer "reference" questions periodically, which can be anything from "how can I print something from my phone?" to "what books do you have about art and math?" to "I need a new dishwasher, where are the *Consumer Reports* kept?" I love this last question because I can then show them our relatively new Consumer Reports database which is much more thorough and also more efficient than seeking reviews in print copies of CR. This database also makes it very easy and fast for staff to find reviews for patrons if they'd rather not use the database themselves.

I have also spent some time deleting or adjusting the records of "Classics" books which are now mostly available to browse, and some can be checked out (and have been!). I've applied the same process to many titles in the local history section of non-fiction. I am also attempting to maintain a list I started a few years back of "Local" authors since we have quite a few titles by writers who live in Williamstown now or who used to, and patrons ask about local authors on occasion. I am still trying to decide how to define "Local" in our library in particular, since there are not just many successful authors in Williamstown but also in the Berkshires overall.

Adult Program Attendance Numbers:

Program	# of attendees
Book Talk: Samuel M. Jones and the Arnold Print Works	15
College Essay Workshop with Pat Wilk	3
Berkshire Gamers Board Group	4 adults and 5 teens
Printing and Typesetting from Gutenberg to the Chesapeake Chapter	28
Gentle Yoga (3 classes)	34

Dementia Caregivers Support Group	6
Friday Film: Mr. Holmes	14
Understanding Dementia and Alzheimer's	6
What is Dementia?	7
Important Legal Considerations for Alzheimer's caregivers	5

Digital Resources Librarian, Jack Sarr

Digital Resources

In June, we added four new offerings to our collection of digital resources. We will be announcing these gradually over the next few weeks. We announced Little Pim, a language learning platform for young children, last week. This provides short videos in 12 languages (including English as a second language), designed to teach foundational words and phrases.

We will soon be announcing online access to both Wall Street Journal and New York Times, as well as Comics Plus - a platform not unlike Hoopla, that specializes in comics, graphic novels and manga. We will be offering access to both the childrens' and young adults' collections in Comics Plus.

Marketing

We have decided to work with local artist Sophie Gerry to create a new logo for the library. I discussed our initial ideas with Sophie, and we will be receiving an update for her in the coming weeks with her ideas and suggestions.

Thingdom

The Thingdom is very much happening! All the lawn games we purchased have been cataloged and are now available to the public. I have created templates for the cards that will be on display at the front of the library for all categories of items, and we are now working on populating these with information in preparation for the items being here and ready to catalog.

Graphic Novels & Manga

I've enjoyed expanding our collection of graphic novels and manga over the past few years, and have delighted to see how popular they have been. We were starting to run out of space, and thanks to some weeding done of the spoken word books, I was able to shift the manga to their own shelf beside the fireplace, and now have much more room for the fiction and non-fiction graphic novels too. The additional space for the face-out display will definitely catch more eyes!

*From the Children's Department:
Children's Librarian, Debbie Baker*

June is always busy in the Children's Room as we prepare for the Summer Reading Program; much of this work is unglamorous and repetitious - cutting out shapes for craft programs or

tweaking our marketing flyers yet again - but we have a great crew of staff and volunteers who always get it done to the highest standards.

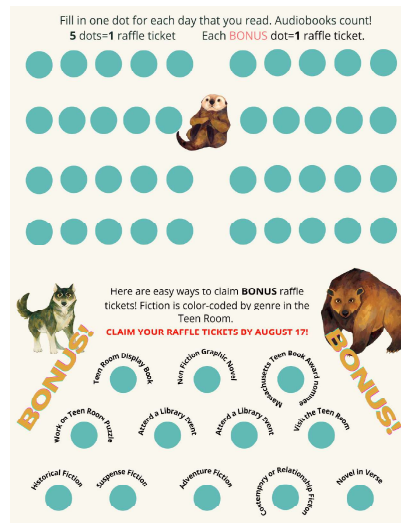
This year we started the program with a Kickoff Party on the 29th, which was very well attended - we estimate over 150 people came but we freely admit we lost count in the chaos. It might have been the ice cream truck or maybe the popcorn machine that brought people in but we were really happy for such a good turnout in the gloomy weather. More than 50 paper crowns were constructed, some very simple and some dazzling to behold. The new lawn games from the Thingdom made their debut appearance, and were widely appreciated by all. We also ran two iterations of Wicked Fun Games' "Escape from The Wizard's Tower" during the party, and all the tweens and teens who participated said they really enjoyed themselves.

Onward to summer!

Teen Librarian, Rocio Carrera

May is always a big month for Summer Reading Program preparation. Debbie and I finalized our combined (kids and family drop-ins) calendar and also my tween/teen calendar. I lead children's room storytimes for toddlers weekly and also run art drop-in events for all ages as well as plan tween and teen events.

Planning also includes creating the teen summer reading log, purchasing tween/teen prizes and putting up the Teen Prize wall.



I had my first Summer program for tweens and teens. 15 teens participated in a showing of *Wonka*. We provided both sweet and savory snacks. 5 teens participated in Berkshire Gamers Thursday game day and 3 teens came to Kira's College Essay prep workshop.

For Milne Out and About, I participated in a Juneteenth Family Storytime event at Williams College Museum of Art. I set up outside the Emancipation Gallery with a table of Juneteenth themed books for children, teens and adults. Using our new iPad I was able to check out books to patrons on the spot! Very convenient.

I participated in a four week e-learning course, Supporting Teen Services: Fostering Community, Programming, and Outreach. This was a thorough course on assessing the needs of our teen community and how we implement programming for our teen patrons. The presenter felt very strongly that a teen librarian needs to make a clear distinction between kids and teens and should only serve teens ages 13-18 (rather than lumping tweens in as well). She feels that true teens are at a very different stage developmentally than 10-12 year olds and putting both together discourages teens from wanting to participate as it feels like they are still being treated as children.

The line that really stood out was "Build new user expectations" though honestly I think it will apply to myself as the Teen Librarian and the library as a whole well before it trickles down to the teen community. My biggest frustrations over lack of participation and buy-in were addressed. I have been running programming like a toddler storytime, performing for them and letting them be the audience rather than finding ways to build communities of interests so they can take the reins! Teens need a space to create in the company of caring adults but they should also feel that they are taking ownership in the creation and implementation of each event. As I had so little teen participation in the past I began letting younger and younger patrons into our teen space, in other words I dropped participation ages from 13 to 11 (and I hate to admit 10 for some events). Because there was enthusiasm from the tween community, it was exciting to see programming stats grow and that made it seem like our teen programs were successful.

It is obvious to me that I have to reprogram my brain if I am to truly serve our teen community (13-18) and fight the misconception that numbers are all that matter if I am to build a true teen program.

I do feel that I have organized the teen room as a haven for teens including providing books, displays, art materials and games that are theirs alone and I have seen greater numbers enjoying our relatively new space. It seems that passive programs (i.e. letting them decide what, where and when they wish to participate) have been really successful and I am seeing books reach appreciative readers from my two monthly displays. The teens are there, I just need to find ways to connect that respect their autonomy and interests!

In the Teen Room:

Passive Program, Decorate Mini Journal (posted my first IG reel!).

June Display: *PRIDE Teen Reads*. Decorated the entryway to the teen room with a rainbow "cloud".



In June I prepared two displays that stay up throughout the summertime. Massachusetts Teen Choice Book Award (voting is in September) and Mt. Greylock Summer Reading collection. I also put up the summertime puzzle (an extra bonus raffle ticket is given to teens that work on it with us!)

Children and Teen Program Attendance Numbers:

Program	# of kids	# of teens	# of families	# of programs
Storytimes	49			6
Author Hannah Moushabeck Storytime		5	45	
Teen Movie - Wonka		15		
Outreach - Juneteenth at WCMA		28		
Summer Reading Kickoff Party			160	
Passive - paper crowns (at party)			57	
Wicked Fun Games (ages 10+)		17		2

Building & Grounds Supervisor, Alex Charron

In June and outside of regular daily duties, I either assisted, oversaw, or completed the following projects:

- Massive clean out of classics room
- Mulching of trees on the library grounds
- Stripping of ladies room floor
- Installation of foundation for gazebo
- Tree removal on west end of the library ground

- Tree trimming on northern property line
- Tree removal of large locust tree at entrance to parking lot
- Installation of new air conditioning units and rewiring
- Removal of old garbage shed
- Installation of new rubbermaid shed
- Installation of replacement light pole in parking lot