

Director's Report to the Board of Agents

Silas Bronson Library

July 20, 2020

Raechel Guest, Director

Operational Changes

Since the last meeting of the Board in February, the library has completely changed its operations twice – first when we closed the buildings, and second when we reopened with new safety protocols. It's been a challenging time for everyone, and we are still figuring things out as we go, but our employees have done a great job of learning new skills and developing new procedures on the fly.

The library's last day of being open to the public was Saturday, March 14. All employees reported to work at the library for the week of March 16-20. Starting on March 21, most employees either worked from home or were placed into "on call" status if it was not possible for them to work from home; some employees worked in the building on alternating schedules for essential work that could not be done from home; and the Maintainers worked in the building daily.

While the building was closed, we transitioned to offering online programs and digital library cards, and we increased the size of our ebook and downloadable audiobook collection. Employees also used the time to focus on professional development, holding weekly Zoom meetings to practice Spanish, taking social media classes offered to our staff by Brass City Gamers, and using online tutorials for a wide variety of work-related skills.

One of our Librarians, Michael Tierney, volunteered as a driver for the City's meal delivery program to seniors and others staying at home due to the pandemic. He is continuing to participate in the delivery program every Tuesday and Thursday morning. We are looking into ways to add library delivery and pickup services to this service, which would be done in collaboration with the Senior Center.

Patron cards that were due to expire were all automatically renewed for one year. We added a digital card signup, letting patrons get a new library account for use with our ebooks. The digital cards can be replaced with physical cards now that we are open.

While the building was closed, our Maintainers took care of a backlog of projects that are difficult to do with people in the building. Two of our Maintainers were temporarily reassigned to the Public Works Department while our buildings were closed.

All employees returned to the building on Monday, June 15. The two Maintainers at Public Works returned on June 22.

The main library reopened for "takeout" service on Monday, June 22 and the branch library reopened on June 25. Patrons request items to borrow online or over the phone, then pick up their orders at a schedule appointment time. Browsing the shelves is not permitted, per state guidelines.

We are finalizing our preparations to allow patrons to use the public computers in the East Wing.

All programs will continue to be held online for the foreseeable future. We have also increased our budget for ebooks and downloadable audiobooks.

Safety Protocols

Although Connecticut is currently leading the nation in controlling the pandemic, another outbreak is possible. Therefore, we are continuing to maintain strict protocols to ensure the safety of our employees and patrons.

Anyone entering the building is required to wear a mask and practice social distancing. Hand sanitizer is readily available at all entrances. Employee temperatures are checked daily, and employees have been instructed to stay home if they have any COVID symptoms.

Some employee desks have been relocated to new makeshift areas to comply with state guidelines for offices. The number of people allowed in the elevator, break room, and multi-stall restrooms has been restricted to ensure social distancing.

All employees have been issued a supply of disposable masks; we are in the process of acquiring reusable masks for all employees. Plexiglas barriers have been installed at the public service desks. Face shields are available for employees to use if they have to interact with the public elsewhere in the building. Gloves are also available for employee use.

All shared keyboards have been placed inside a plastic sheet, making it easier to disinfect them between users. Disinfecting wipes are kept readily available for use on all shared surfaces (keyboards, phones, etc.).

The Maintainers are disinfecting railing, handles, and other high-contact surfaces every hour.

The Auditorium is being used as the quarantine room for returned items. Following IMLS guidelines, all returned items are quarantined for 72 hours.

We will not be holding any in-person programs or allowing any room reservations by the public. Our goal is to minimize the number of people entering the building and to keep essential visits to short durations of time.

Late Fees

In accordance with the State Guidelines for public libraries, we are waiving all late fees to avoid cash handling and to encourage patrons who aren't feeling well to keep their library materials at home until they are better.

Chromebooks & Hotspots

Thanks to funding from the federal CARES Act and the Institute of Museum & Library Services, the Connecticut State Library has donated to us a set of 10 Chromebooks and Wi-Fi hotspots for supporting families in their homes, supporting senior citizens, job seekers, those who need to apply for basic needs, and community college students lacking resources.

Although the devices were donated, there are still licensing and management fees which we will have to cover, for a total of \$1,585. This is approximately the same amount of money we are saving by not renewing our movie licenses this year (we do not need the licenses, as we will not be showing any movies).

Once we have finished configuring the Chromebooks, our patrons will be able to borrow them. Every library handles the loan of technology in different ways. A one-week loan period is common. Some libraries charge large late fees, but this defeats the purpose of the program – the idea is to make the internet accessible to people who can't afford it. However, we can configure the Chromebooks and the hotspots with a remote disable option, allowing us to shut them down if they aren't returned, which should motivate patrons to return the equipment. Other libraries have found this to be effective.

We have also received a BRASS grant from the Connecticut Community Foundation to purchase Chromebooks and hotspots for seniors to borrow from the library. We normally use BRASS grants to purchase or upgrade computers at senior centers. Due to the ongoing health concerns, we decided to use the funds this year to increase seniors' ability to stay safely at home.

Warshasky Bequest

Probate for the Stanford Warshasky estate is finishing up. The City's Finance Department is working with the estate's attorney to facilitate the transfer of cash and securities without liquidating the securities.

Bunker Hill

The ornamental crabapple trees at the branch library have reached the end of their lifespan and are infected with apple scab. The Parks Department will be removing the trees in the coming weeks. After the trees are removed, we can develop a landscaping plan for the library.

150th Anniversary

Our plans to celebrate the library's anniversary were put on hold due to the pandemic, but our website has been updated with some of our history at bronsonlibrary.org/libraryhistory.

Bronson Fund Budget FY20 & FY21

During the last fiscal year, we budgeted a total of \$91,000 for special projects from the Bronson Fund. None of the money was spent, primarily due to the pandemic.

We allocated \$1,200 to cover any cost overage for a grant-funded purchase of new chairs for patrons, but the bids came in under the grant amount, so we didn't need the \$1,200.

Completion of the Teen Zone, budgeted at \$25,000 for a glass dividing wall, has been put on hold. Since use of the building is by appointment only for the time being, this project is less of a priority than it was before. It should still be done, perhaps next spring.

Similarly, installation of a new a/v system for the auditorium (\$5,000) is not a current priority, as we are not holding any in-person programs.

Relocation of the Data Cabinet (\$4,800) has not yet happened, but is still in the works.

Costs (\$21,000) related to improving our storage of irreplaceable archival material and digitizing that material for online use is just as high a priority as ever, if not more due to restrictions on in-person research. I hope to begin moving forward on this project in the next month or so.

The balance of the FY20 budget was allocated for contingency funds and for any costs related to the completion of the Front Plaza project. There may be a need for additional funds to be allocated for exterior work in conjunction with the current Library Park project, such as improvements to the rear patio. Additionally, we need to make some repairs to the building exterior where metal panels were removed.

For the new fiscal year, I would like to roll over the special projects budget as described above.

We are still working on the final operations budget for the new fiscal year. I'll have it available at the next meeting. My current estimate is that we will need the following amounts from the Bronson Fund:

\$56,125 for physical media (books, etc.)

\$4,000 for patron supplies

\$3,300 for institutional memberships and staff professional development

Circulation Division

While our buildings were closed, we issued more than 200 new library cards online, giving people access to our ebooks, downloadable audiobooks, and databases. We worked with Bibliomation to extend all due dates to encourage patrons to keep their library materials at home until our buildings reopened.

February Statistical Reports: Main Library

Total Collection Size: 256,873
Total Items Added to Collection: 589
Total Items Circulated: 9,829
Total Circulation In-House: 372
Total Circulated at Other Libraries: 617
Total Circulated from Other Libraries: 391

Total Active Patrons: 10,169
Total Expired Patrons: 13,015
Total Patrons Added: 158

February Statistical Reports: Bunker Hill

Total Collection Size: 15,715
Total Items Added to Collection: 38
Total Items Circulated: 408
Total Circulation In-House: 0
Total Circulated at Other Libraries: 80
Total Circulated from Other Libraries: 168

Total Active Patrons: 366
Total Expired Patrons: 393
Total Patrons Added: 0

March Statistical Reports: Main Library

Total Collection Size: 255,799
Total Items Added to Collection: 580
Total Items Circulated: 6,474
Total Circulation In-House: 129
Total Circulated at Other Libraries: 468
Total Circulated from Other Libraries: 172

Total Active Patrons: 40,659
Total Expired Patrons: 0
Total Patrons Added: 136

March Statistical Reports: Bunker Hill

Total Collection Size: 15,568
Total Items Added to Collection: 36
Total Items Circulated: 284
Total Circulation In-House: 0
Total Circulated at Other Libraries: 42
Total Circulated from Other Libraries: 86

Total Active Patrons: 366
Total Expired Patrons: 378
Total Patrons Added: 0

April Statistical Reports: Main Library

Total Collection Size: 256,109
Total Items Added to Collection: 84
Total Items Circulated: 66
Total Circulation In-House: 0
Total Circulated at Other Libraries: 7
Total Circulated from Other Libraries: 7

Total Active Patrons: 40,703
Total Expired Patrons: 0
Total Patrons Added: 41

April Statistical Reports: Bunker Hill

Total Collection Size: 15,579
Total Items Added to Collection: 6
Total Items Circulated: 15
Total Circulation In-House: 0
Total Circulated at Other Libraries: 8
Total Circulated from Other Libraries: 0

Total Active Patrons: 1,336
Total Expired Patrons: 0
Total Patrons Added: 0

May Statistical Reports: Main Library

Total Collection Size: 256,642
Total Items Added to Collection: 27
Total Items Circulated: 54
Total Circulation In-House: 0
Total Circulated at Other Libraries: 17
Total Circulated from Other Libraries: 11

Total Active Patrons: 40,732
Total Expired Patrons: 1
Total Patrons Added: 32

May Statistical Reports: Bunker Hill

Total Collection Size: 15,614
Total Items Added to Collection: 5
Total Items Circulated: 100
Total Circulation In-House: 0
Total Circulated at Other Libraries: 9
Total Circulated from Other Libraries: 0

Total Active Patrons: 1,335
Total Expired Patrons: 0
Total Patrons Added: 0

June Statistical Reports: Main Library

Total Collection Size: 256,835
Total Items Added to Collection: 1,997
Total Items Circulated: 1,249
Total Circulation In-House: 1
Total Circulated at Other Libraries: 151
Total Circulated from Other Libraries: 56

Total Active Patrons: 40,766
Total Expired Patrons: 1
Total Patrons Added: 33

June Statistical Reports: Bunker Hill

Total Collection Size: 15,619
Total Items Added to Collection: 79
Total Items Circulated: 90
Total Circulation In-House: 0
Total Circulated at Other Libraries: 43
Total Circulated from Other Libraries: 69

Total Active Patrons: 1,335
Total Expired Patrons: 0
Total Patrons Added: 0

Museum Pass Usage, February - June 2020

American Clock & Watch Museum: 0
Barker Comic and Cartoon Museum: 1
Beardsley Zoo: 0
Children's Museum/Roaring Brook Nature: 2
Connecticut Forests & Parks: 0
Connecticut Science Center: 1
EverWonder Children's Museum: 3
Harriet Beecher Stowe Center: 0
Imagine Nation: 7
Institute for American Indian Studies: 1
KidsPlay Childrens Museum: 1

Maritime Aquarium at Norwalk: 1
Mattatuck Museum: 2
Mystic Aquarium: 0
Mystic Seaport: 0
New Britain Museum of American Art: 1
New England Air Museum: 0
New Haven Museum: 1
Old Sturbridge Village: 0
Peabody Museum of Natural History: 0
Wadsworth Atheneum: 2
White Memorial Conservation Center: 0

Online Presence

Facebook Followers as of 7/15/2020: 2,360
Facebook Reach June 17 – July 14: 11,662
Facebook Post Engagements June 17 – July 14: 3,536

Instagram Followers as of 7/15/2020: 722
Bronson Teens Instagram Followers as of 7/15/2020: 226
Twitter Followers as of 7/15/2020: 426

Website Visitors

February 1 – February 29: 1,965
March 1 – March 31: 2,073
April 1 – April 30: 1,139
May 1 – May 31: 1,156
June 1 – June 30: 1,639

Website Sessions

February 1 – February 29: 3,421
March 1 – March 31: 3,295
April 1 – April 30: 2,055
May 1 – May 31: 2,162
June 1 – June 30: 3,115

Website Pageviews

February 1 – February 29: 6,493
March 1 – March 31: 5,919
April 1 – April 30: 4,808
May 1 – May 31: 4,694
June 1 – June 30: 7,381

Most Visited Website Pages (February 1 – February 29):

Home Page: 3,294	Bunker Hill Branch: 114	Board of Agents: 22
Programs: 389	eBooks: 106	Directions: 21
Calendar: 283	How to Get a Card: 89	Friends: 21
How to Find Books: 226	Borrowing Questions: 87	Email Signup: 17
Genealogy/Local Hist.: 224	Newsletters: 65	Requests: 17
Research: 213	Computer Classes: 58	Library History: 16
Museum Passes: 172	Hall of Fame: 53	Homework Help: 11
Ask A Librarian: 163	Book Sale: 38	News: 5
Children's Division: 125	New Movies: 38	
About Us: 119	Teen/YA: 27	

Most Visited Website Pages (March 1 – March 31):

Home Page: 3,061	About Us: 113	New Movies: 29
Research: 233	Calendar: 100	Borrowing Questions: 27
eBooks: 219	How to Get a Card: 77	Library History: 24
Digital Card: 204	Museum Passes: 73	Friends: 22
Programs: 190	Newsletters: 43	Email Signup: 21
How to Find Books: 171	Bunker Hill Branch: 34	Hall of Fame: 16
Genealogy/Local Hist.: 136	Teen/YA: 31	News: 16
Children's Division: 124	Computer Classes: 31	Board of Agents: 12
Ask A Librarian: 120	Book Sale: 31	

Most Visited Website Pages (April 1 – April 30):

Home Page: 1,915	About Us: 77	New Movies: 17
Genealogy/Local Hist.: 380	How to Find Books: 76	Hall of Fame: 17
Research: 339	News: 55	Book Sale: 17
eBooks: 286	Borrowing Questions: 47	Museum Passes: 16
Digital Card: 270	How to Get a Card: 43	Newsletters: 14
Programs: 176	Calendar: 40	Friends: 10
Children's Division: 122	Teen/YA: 38	Bunker Hill Branch: 8
Ask A Librarian: 94	Board of Agents: 17	
Library History: 83	Computer Classes: 18	

Most Visited Website Pages (May 1 – May 31):

Home Page: 1,884	Children's Division: 96	Bunker Hill Branch: 17
Program Registration: 336	Ask A Librarian: 86	Newsletters: 16
Programs: 332	About Us: 80	Book Sale: 16
Digital Card: 297	Teen/YA: 35	Friends: 14
Genealogy/Local Hist.: 255	How to Get a Card: 34	Hall of Fame: 14
eBooks: 227	Museum Passes: 27	Library History: 11
News: 203	Homework Help: 26	Email Signup: 10
Research: 175	Calendar: 21	New Movies: 10
How to Find Books: 101	Borrowing Questions: 19	

Most Visited Website Pages (June 1 – June 30):

Home Page: 2,901	Research: 158	Museum Passes: 33
Programs: 691	Library History: 36	Bunker Hill Branch: 25
News: 571	About Us: 120	Email Signup: 25
Program Registration: 346	Teen/YA: 87	Computer Classes: 15
How to Find Books: 291	Calendar: 58	Homework Help: 14
Children's Division: 275	Hall of Fame: 58	New Movies: 14
Genealogy/Local Hist.: 249	How to Get a Card: 57	Friends: 10
eBooks: 232	Newsletters: 43	Board of Agents: 9
Digital Card: 191	Borrowing Questions: 38	
Ask A Librarian: 170	Book Sale: 36	