

# **Director's Report to the Board of Agents**

## **Silas Bronson Library**

**October 18, 2022**

**Raechel Guest, Director**

### **Staffing Levels**

We now have eight vacancies: two Admin 1, one Admin 3, one Maintainer 1, three librarian 2, and one Page. When fully staffed, we have thirty-five employees. Many employees have been unable to use all of their vacation time, because we don't have enough staff to accommodate all of their requests.

Chantal Johnson, Admin 3, resigned this month for a job with better pay and benefits. Her last day was October 14. Chantal was responsible for all of our marketing, data collection and reporting, and assisting with grant applications and reports, annual reports, and the newsletter. She ensured that our grant application for the elevator project was submitted during my medical leave last year, coordinating with several City departments in the process. Due to our ongoing staffing shortage, the work that was done by Chantal will be shared by several librarians and myself.

Our temporary Blue Collar employee who was assisting Circulation was transferred to HR to assist them for several weeks.

The staffing shortage has created a growing backlog of work in the Administrative Office, where we are short one Admin. When daily staffing levels permit, the office is able to borrow an Admin from Circulation to assist with payroll and accounting.

### **Parking Lot**

The closure of the parking lot for construction has been a challenge for many of our patrons. Parking on the street was further limited by the Alex Jones trial, as many spaces on the street were taken up all day long by news vehicles. The latest update from WDC is that the parking lot construction should be finished on time in mid-November.

## Grants

Corporation Counsel has finished reviewing and preparing the final grant contract from the Connecticut State Library for the elevator project. The contract was approved by the Board of Alderman on October 11. After the contract is signed by the Mayor and returned to the State Library, we will receive the final copy with the State Librarian's signature. Once that is received, we will be able to move forward with the project. The State Library guidelines require that the Library Director and representative members from the Library Board serve on the Building Committee for the project.

Our Summer Enrichment Grant from the State Library has wrapped up and the final report has been submitted. The grant of \$2,000 helped fund children's programs which included two multi-week technology, design, and application workshops with Brass City Gamers, and three interactive science, reading, and physical fitness experiences with Talewise.

This year's BRASS Grant includes \$4,500 awarded in June 2022, plus \$8,103.38 in funds from the previous two years which we were unable to expend due to our staffing shortage, the roof collapse at the Mt. Olive Senior Center, and pandemic-related issues in 2020 and 2021. The Finance Department finished setting up the account line for the grant in August 2022, making it possible for us to move forward with spending the funds. The BRASS Grant is specifically for making technology accessible and available to seniors. We plan to spend the funds on VR equipment, WiFi hotspots, and laptops for instructor and students at the Waterbury Senior Center and Mt. Olive (once it reopens). We typically use the BRASS Grant to ensure that both senior centers have fully functioning technology for the seniors.

The City of Waterbury has allocated approximately \$1.5 million in ARPA funding as grant money for nonprofit agencies working in the health and human services area, and agencies in need of assistance with recovery efforts from COVID-19. While the library, as a City department, does not qualify as a nonprofit, the Friends of the Library is a separate 501c3. The president of the Friends of the Library attended the public information session and reviewed the application material. She has determined that the Friends does not meet the project eligibility requirement for this grant.

The Friends of the Library did not apply for a Leavenworth Foundation grant in 2021, because they were not current with their 501c3 status. The library's staffing constraints prevented us from working

with the Friends to apply for a grant in 2022, when the Foundation specified an interest in programs focused on mental health services for youth, as well as other initiatives that focus on youth.

Christine Rinaldi, Librarian 3, is taking a certification class for grant writing using our UniversalClass subscription. While she is very busy with her current responsibilities, she hopes to have time to assist with grant proposals and reports.

## **Donations**

We are currently working on getting quotes for genealogical resources which would be paid for by the \$2,500 anonymous donation for genealogy at the library.

In April, Philip Benevento, former library Board president, brought a group of visitors to the library and I gave them a brief presentation. The group included Elias and Annette Aburdene, who have provided significant funding for the library over the years. As a result of their visit in April, the Aburdenes made a \$4,000 donation to the Benevento Fund, which is managed by the Friends of the Library. The fund is used to support cultural programs for adults at the library which we would otherwise be unable to afford.

## **Annual Renewals**

The summer and fall of every year are spent reviewing annual services and either negotiating with vendors for better pricing, dropping services no longer needed, setting up service with new vendors, and ensuring that bills are paid. Services with vendors that are used City-wide are negotiated by other departments, but all services that are specific to the library are handled internally by Mary Jane Boucher, with assistance from other staff as needed and appropriate. This includes but is not limited to newspapers, databases, and building alarm systems. We regularly review and adjust our magazine subscriptions based on patron interests.

## **Bibliomation**

We have been a member of the Bibliomation Consortium since it was founded in 1981. Bibliomation provides the library's integrated library system (ILS) which manages the circulation, reserves, interlibrary loan, and online catalog functions supporting a shared database of 4,126,085 items and 967,000 patrons. Library staff benefits from cataloging, training, reports, Help Desk support (troubleshooting) and group purchases. Bibliomation secures group discount pricing on other library databases as well. The Bibliomation Board, staff and members continually review and evaluate the suite of offerings provided to ensure that the member libraries receive the best services and support in the most economical and efficient manner.

The base fee we pay to Bibliomation (excluding add-ons such as databases and library supplies) is currently about \$58,000 per year. The City has previously allowed us to pay this fee without going through the standard review process with Corporation Counsel and the Board of Aldermen – no one knows when it last went through the review process. This year, we are following the standard procedures.

The bill from Bibliomation was due in July and has not yet been paid. We submitted a Request for Assignment to Corporation Counsel on July 21. We then worked with the Purchasing Department in August to confirm that Bibliomation conforms to the City's Sole Source Procurement ordinance. This step was completed on August 18. We also worked with the City's Risk Manager to confirm that no insurance was required for our use of Bibliomation. On August 19, we submitted a Contract Information Sheet to Corporation Counsel along with the Sole Source and Insurance documentation. On September 9, Corporation Counsel followed up asking for more details and the same documentaion. We re-submitted all of the paperwork on October 3. We are now waiting for further action from Corporation Counsel.

## **Payroll Audit**

The City's Auditor has been conducting an audit of our payroll operations, following up on the payroll/overtime audit conducted in 2014. This required a significant amount of time for a number of myself and John Ditoto in August and September to provide him with the information he needed. We have finished our end of the audit (several sections pertained specifically to other Departments). The final report was issued on October 14.

## **Security Cameras**

We have been working on replacing our security camera system since 2017. The first hurdle was pricing and vendor negotiations. The City, over the course of multiple years, increased their commitment to this project, so that we now have \$57,609 in capital funds available to replace our security camera system.

Under our old system, our cameras were on their own system with a recording device in our server room, with no external access. With the new system, we will “piggy-back” onto the Police Department’s system, adding new cameras to our building and retaining a recording device in our server room while having remote access capability.

John Ditoto and I finalized the locations for the new security cameras in March, 2022. In addition to replacing our previous cameras, we will be adding cameras to more than a dozen new locations, inside and outside the building, dramatically increasing our coverage.

The old system no longer works. Mary Jane Boucher has spent time haggling with our old vendor on their final bill. They sent a technician last month to remove their old system, but he did not take any of their cameras, as they are too old to be of any value. The cameras and wiring will have to be removed when the new equipment is installed.

We received a revised quote from the vendor on May 31, 2022 and the City issued two POs for the project on June 10, 2022, leaving us with an available balance of \$1,390 in capital funds for the project. The anticipated lead time was 12-14 weeks, as the cameras were on back order. As with so many things, the project has been delayed by pandemic-era supply chain shortages.

We are currently waiting for our vendor to receive all of the cameras from the manufacturer. The vendor has informed us that they are still waiting for seventeen cameras and the NVR (recording server), but all other parts and equipment are ready.

## **Everybody Learns WiFi Initiative**

In the fall of 2020, the Connecticut Education Network (CEN) announced an Everybody Learns Initiative to install outdoor WiFi access points at the library, increasing the amount of free WiFi for

the public. We were selected as a directly connected CEN member institution in one of the top 20 urban and 20 rural municipalities with the highest percentage of citizens not connected to the Internet. Physical installation of the device, 5 years of licensing, material, and two years of Internet service were paid for by the Office of the Governor.

We are currently in discussion with the CEN about options for continued use of the access points, what the costs would be, and whether or not they might have a spare access point which could be installed at the Bunker Hill Branch, now that we have a CEN fiber connection there.

### **Microfilm Reader**

We have finally installed a second digital microfilm reader and removed the obsolete analog microfilm readers. We began the process in the spring of 2021, seeking to purchase a machine identical to the one we purchased in 2019. Unfortunately, the pricing had doubled in that time period. John Ditoto was able to negotiate with the vendor to lower the 2021 quote by \$1,650 for a total cost of \$7,995. We then submitted the quote and a sole source letter to the Purchasing Department, seeking permission for a sole source exemption from the bidding process. Permission was granted in May, 2021, and we proceeded with ordering the machine. It arrived the same month, but we were not able to deploy it. The microfilm reader requires a dedicated computer and monitor. Due to supply chain issues, we had to wait almost a full year for the computer and monitor to arrive. The IT Department finally had time to image the computer and install the equipment this month.

### **Inventory Cart**

Our librarians have been conducting a massive inventory of our collection. The project involves scanning each item on the shelf and comparing what is here or what is checked out to what is listed in our catalog. If an item is missing, a staff member will spend time looking to see if it is in the wrong location. Additionally, the inventory project is part of the routine weeding of the collection. As each item is scanned, the librarian checks to see the circulation history. If the item has not circulated in many years, it will be relocated to storage, making room upstairs for items that are still popular.

This project is done using a laptop and scanner on a cart, so that the librarians can work in the stacks the laptop is about ten years old and is increasingly difficult to use. We currently have no funding available for its replacement, so its use is limited.

## **E-Rate Funded IT Equipment**

Last year, we went out to bid for Cisco managed switches and associated CyberPower UPS, which are used to connect the library's computers to the internet and to our internal network through our servers. The bid was awarded in March 2021 to Mola Group Corp. The purchased was partially funded through the USAC e-rate program, which covered 85% of the cost. The remaining 15% was covered by the City's IT capital budget and MRSA funding. The POs for the equipment were issued in September 2021.

Normally, for this type of equipment, the vendor would send the entire product to us in a single shipment. Due to the pandemic's impact on manufacturing and supply chains, the vendor received the component parts a little at a time, and subsequently shipped the items to us a little at a time over the course of eight months. This created significant problems for receiving the order in the City's accounting system (Lawson) and created a delay in our ability to pay the vendor. Because the PO was initially issued for a single shipment, when we reported receiving a portion of the shipment, Lawson would close out the account, which then caused other items we received to be reversed and sent back to us.

Because this was an e-rate project, we were required to pay the vendor our 15% cost share before the vendor could file the FCC Form 474 to receive the remaining 85% from USAC. If we did not pay the vendor on time, we would be in default and would have to pay the 85% ourselves. The deadline for filing the Form 474 was September 30, 2022 (extended from the original deadline of January 10, 2022 due to the supply chain delays).

Mary Jane Boucher and John Ditoto spent a good portion of August working with Purchasing and Finance to resolve the receiving issues. They tried several different requisitions, as instructed by Purchasing and Finance, before we were finally able to process payment for the vendor at the beginning of September. There was an additional delay in getting the check cut, but we finally received it on September 26 and overnighted it to Mola that day.

## **Archival Collections**

We had planned on launching a project to improve the storage of and access to our archival collections in 2020. The project was derailed by the pandemic, but we are now finally able to start moving forward with it. The first step is to reorganize some of our basement storage areas so that we can relocate IT equipment from the vault and genealogy/local history stacks. There is a "cage" area in the basement which has a locking door. It has been used for many years as a catch-all storage space. We are in the process of cleaning and organizing the cage so that additional shelving can be installed, which will allow us to move the IT equipment to that location. Once this is done, we can install new cabinets in the vault for the archival collections and begin moving items such as the City Directories to the genealogy/local history stacks in Tech Services.

## **Bunker Hill**

On Tuesday, October 11, we discovered that a construction crew had taken over the Bunker Hill library parking lot, installing a port-a-potty and setting up their supplies and machinery in the parking lot, leaving no room for any library use of the parking lot. We eventually determined that this is part of the City Engineer's project to repave Aurora Street and install sidewalks in the area. We asked the City Engineer's office to find an alternative location for their equipment, as the parking lot is the only place our staff and patrons can park at the branch. The equipment was relocated immediately.

The Bunker Hill Branch Library has seen a steady increase in usage since last year. In July, August, and September of 2021, the branch averaged 14 patrons per day. For that same period in 2022, the branch has averaged 23 patrons per day.

There been a dramatic increase in the number of items returned to the branch's book drop since the downtown parking lot closed. When the parking lot was open, patrons could drive up to a book drop and return items without getting out of their car. That service is not currently available due to the construction project. The drive-up book drop was relocated to Grand Street, but due to parking difficulties downtown, many patrons are instead returning their items at Bunker Hill. Those items are brought back to the main library by our Maintainers using the library's car.



## **Mobile Library**

From September 1 to October 13, the mobile library made seventeen home deliveries with a total of forty-eight items delivered to home-bound patrons. These deliveries took place at locations as close as half a mile from the library to just over three miles away. There are currently thirty-eight patrons signed up for the service.

Outreach events attended during this period include visits to the Hispanic Coalition at the River Baldwin Recreation Center, a Wilby High School football game, Community Day at Waterville Park, and the Hopeville Community Center. During these events, promotional materials such as flyers, pencils and our newsletter were distributed and library cards made on the spot using the laptop purchased for the mobile library with ARPA funds from the State Library.

It has been challenging to accommodate all off-site requests. The library has only one vehicle, which is shared by the Maintainers, who need it to get to the Bunker Hill Branch Library. This situation has caused conflicts which required some work to resolve.

The Library Board previously approved a tentative plan to use a portion of the Warshasky bequest for the purchase of a bookmobile, as this was something that Warshasky repeatedly stated we should have. We reached out to Public Works to get pricing for a van as requested by the Board. It took more than half a year for Public Works to reach the point in the process where they could provide us with pricing, by which time the Board revoked their commitment to this purchase. Public Works can't move forward with getting pricing if funding is not in place.

## **Plumbing Issues**

The fountain was shut down for the winter a few weeks early, as the equipment in the basement sprang a significant leak. We are waiting for the City plumber to see if he can repair it.

The employee bathrooms on the first floor were shut down for a day and a half this month when the toilets were blocked up. Our Maintainers were able to clear the blockage.

In July, the main sewer pipe going out of the building sprang a leak in the boiler room. The City plumber was able to fix the leak, but he observed that the age and corrosion of the pipe will lead to more leaks in the future. We are working with the plumber to replace the pipe completely.

## **Elevator**

The elevator stopped working on October 7. KONE Inc., the City's new elevator service company, sent a technician the same day. The problem was diagnosed as a "damaged starter." The total estimated repair cost is \$5,369. We are now waiting for the replacement starter to arrive.

## **Patron Feedback**

Here are some of the positive reviews and comments we have received from our patrons in the past month.

"I love Silas Bronson Library, I've been going since I was a kid and I'm 57ys old now and they've gotten even better. The staff is always friendly and helpful."

"Great place to go to relax to read and look at a great selection of books. Very very clean and organized."

"It's great"

And here's an account of a positive patron experience from one of our librarians: "While in the East Wing this afternoon one of our patrons complimented the library to me about library services. This gentleman is job searching, and was pleased to discover that the library has resources to help him. He's so delighted at our resources that he's planning on returning in a few days to continue his job search."

We have received a couple of complaints about noise and the presence of homeless people in the library. Those complaints have included two instances in which a patron was upset about a librarian helping someone use a computer. Complaints about the homeless were not related to any

interactions, they were more about being able to see someone who appeared to be homeless in the library. There was also one complaint that the library is very busy.

At the beginning of our Sinatra tribute program on Saturday, October 8, one of our regular patrons became highly disruptive, heckling the performer. The supervisor on duty intervened, but the patron refused to comply with instructions to leave, so the police were called. At this point, the patron left. The police followed up with the patron at his home and informed him that he is temporarily banned from the library.

### **Celebrating Downtown**

The library has contributed an article each year for Main Street Waterbury's Celebrating Downtown insert in the Rep-Am. This year's article was written by our Head of Youth Services, Clivel Charlton, highlighting our services for teenagers. The insert appeared in the Rep-Am on Sunday, October 2. Main Street Waterbury provides us this opportunity each year at no charge.

### **Abandoned Cat**

On September 29, an unknown person left a cat in one of our public restrooms. After being freed from the restroom, the cat disappeared into the library. After about a twenty-minute search, we found her hiding in a cubbyhole under the mezzanine stairs. The cat appeared to be healthy, well-fed, and very scared. The cat was taken the Director's Office, where she found a new cubbyhole in which to hide. We were unable to find any information about where she came from, and she does not appear on any lost pet listings that we could find. We posted a photo on social media which has received more than five thousand views, but no one has come forward to claim her. After two days in our building, the cat was adopted by a librarian from another library.

## Circulation Division

### September Statistical Reports: Main Library

Total Collection Size: 266,478  
Total Items Added to Collection: 1,029  
Total Physical Items Circulated: 8,320  
Total Circulation In-House: 343  
Total Circulated at Other Libraries: 1,645  
Total Circulated from Other Libraries: 370

Total Active Patrons: 43,713  
Total Expired Patrons: 354  
Total Patrons Added: 181

### OverDrive Circulation: September

Audiobooks: 509  
Ebooks: 561  
Total Checkouts: 1,070

### September Statistical Reports: Bunker Hill

Total Collection Size: 11,232  
Total Items Added to Collection: 48  
Total Physical Items Circulated: 672  
Total Circulation In-House: 0  
Total Circulated at Other Libraries: 93  
Total Circulated from Other Libraries: 262

Total Active Patrons: 1,407  
Total Expired Patrons: 16  
Total Patrons Added: 5

Adult: 885  
Teen/YA: 101  
Children: 84

## Museum Pass Use – September

Pass	Pass Type	Number Reserved	Checked Out	No Shows
Beardsley Zoo	Pick Up/Return	2	1	1
Connecticut State Parks	Pick Up/Return	2	0	2
Institute for American Indian Studies	Print from Home	1	1	0
Mattatuck Museum Art and History Center	Print from Home	12	12	0
Mystic Seaport	Print from Home	1	1	0
New Britain Museum of American Art	Print from Home	2	2	0
New England Air Museum	Print from Home	1	1	0
White Memorial Conservation Center	Print from Home	1	1	0

### Online Presence: September

Facebook Followers	as of 10/11/2022: 2,800
Facebook Reach	September 1 – September 30: 13,427
Instagram Followers	as of 10/11/2022: 1,032
Instagram Reach	September 1 – September 30: 647
Bronson Teens Instagram Followers	as of 10/11/2022: 321
Twitter Followers	as of 10/11/2022: 495
Twitter Impressions	September 1 – September 30: 3,283
Wowbrary Active Subscriptions	as of 10/11/2022: 88
Wowbrary Webpages Viewed	September 1 – September 30: 616
Wowbrary Clickthroughs to Catalog	September 1 – September 30: 143
Website Visitors	September 1 – September 30: 1,727
Website Sessions	September 1 – September 30: 2,587
Website Pageviews	September 1 – September 30: 4,844

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

Home Page: 2,496	eBooks: 74	New Movies: 25
Programs: 316	Calendar: 74	Library History: 17
Research: 244	Museum Passes: 72	Board of Agents: 13
How to Find Books: 154	Borrowing Questions: 69	Friends: 13
Ask A Librarian: 136	Hall of Fame: 47	Computer Classes: 11
Children's Division: 132	Newsletters: 45	Business Resources: 11
Bunker Hill Branch: 131	Geekdom: 44	Directions: 10
Genealogy/Local Hist.: 108	Teen/YA: 32	Book a Librarian: 9
About Us: 107	Book Sale: 30	Meeting Rooms: 7
Digital: 103	Program Registration: 30	Requests: 6
How to Get a Card: 88	Home Delivery: 25	GovDocs: 4