February 15, 2022

To: Board of Trustees, Rockville Centre Public Library
From: Catherine Overton, Library Director

State of the Library Report for Year 2021

COVID-19 and its variants continued to upend our lifestyles and social interactions in 2021 but the Library was unwavering in its mission to deliver quality services to the community despite the challenges of the pandemic.

The last two years confirmed that the Library is a vital part of Rockville Centre and is important to so many of its residents. They told us regularly that the Library was and continues to be a lifeline for them in these trying times.

Over the year, as COVID guidelines started to relax, we gradually reduced restrictions on in-person visits, computer use, seating and eating in the building. The Library fully reopened in September 2021. We were excited to eliminate physical visit limitations, safely bringing back more in-person programs and events, including opening meeting rooms to our community groups.

COVID may have dampened Library operations but a look at the Year in Review statistics will confirm that it was still a very active year! We look forward to our continued return to normalcy in 2022 – we are eager to provide even greater value to the Rockville Centre community.

State of the Library

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STATE OF THE LIBRARY

Year in Review

RVCPL Community: 12,822  Total patrons
    781  New patrons
    335  New Overdrive users
    205  Bestsellers Club members
    56   Library-to-Your-Door participants

Programs & Events: 560  Adult programs
    325  Children’s programs
    75   Young adult programs
    89   Book discussions
    23   Author visits
    200  Exercise classes

Circulation: 100,532  Library checkouts
    47,873 Overdrive digital checkouts
    2,680 Overdrive magazine checkouts

Webpages: 161,645  Visits

Social Media: 16,106  Engagements

Computer Usage: 4,516  Public computer sessions
    990  Public computer users

Museum Passes: 879  Circulated

Facilities Management

The Library maintained its program to keep the building in good repair, visually appealing, and efficient in its use of resources. Both routine and unexpected facilities matters were addressed in a timely and effective manner. In response to the COVID situation, the Library increased the maintenance of the HVAC system, replacing the air filters with rigorous MERV 13 filters at a more frequent schedule. In addition, diligent cleaning protocols were maintained throughout the Library.

Projects Completed:

- Lighting project in the Children’s Room – Upgraded the fluorescent light fixtures in the Children’s Room to LED fixtures. The six light pendants over its Reference Desk, that had been problematic, were replaced with four new fixtures.
• Second Floor – The study tables, chairs, study carrels and comfortable seating in this area were fully opened after being partially closed for a period due to pandemic safety limitations.
• 2019–2020 New York State Public Library Construction Grant – Installed emergency exit handrails and security cameras. The project was closed out and the Library received the remaining 10% of the funds, $475. The initial 90% of the funds, $4,266, was received in 2020.
• 2020–2021 New York State Public Library Construction Grant – Upgraded the fluorescent light fixtures to LED fixtures in the Main Floor stacks. The Library received $3,249, which is 90% of the funds. The remaining 10% should be forthcoming and is pending the State closing out grant documents.

Projects Ongoing:

• 2021–2022 New York State Public Library Construction Grant – Upgrade emergency and exit lighting and installation of security cameras in the Children’s Room. The project was submitted to the State Education Department.
• 2022–2023 New York State Public Library Construction Grant – Elevator Upgrade. The elevator hydraulic system is nearing its replacement age. The pre-construction activities associated with the project are underway. The estimated cost is $240,000. The Library will use its Capital Funds. This work will be submitted as the Library’s 2022–2023 New York State Public Library Construction Grant project.

Management- Miscellaneous:

• Utica Insurance Group – Placed the Library in a low-risk category due to a high level of building maintenance, security, and general housekeeping procedures.

**Budget / Operational Policies**

The Board’s continued its practice of sound fiscal and operational practices and policies. During the past year, the Library’s operational policies followed the changing guidelines from the state and local health departments and the Centers for Disease Control to ensure the safety and well-being of staff and patrons.

• The 2020–2021 Budget maintained the State tax cap limit and concluded with a year-end budget surplus. On advice of the Library’s accountant, a portion of the surplus was transferred into the Capital Fund in consideration of the upcoming elevator replacement.
• In deference to the continuing challenges caused by the pandemic for the community, the Board presented a fiscally conservative 2021–2022 Budget with a 1.99% tax increase, well under the State tax cap of 2.45%. The budget passed with a wide margin. The budget is tracking well at the fiscal mid-year point.
• The Library, having followed proper accounting practices, received a positive report from the Library’s auditor for the Financial Statement for Year Ended June 30, 2021. A year-end surplus was primarily due to reduced operational expenses, the result of having decreased hours and programming due to the pandemic.
The Library continued its practice of lending more items to other system libraries than it borrowed. The Library was compensated with a Direct Access payment of $2,091 from the Nassau Library System.

The services provided to the Library by Unique Management Services were reinstated in July 2021. The Library had suspended those services at the beginning of the pandemic in March 2020. The collection agency was able to secure a sizable amount of material and fees from items that needed to be returned.

The Library continued to follow policies that were initiated in 2020 to comply with safety guidelines regarding COVID-19 including working remotely.

Curbside pick-up service continued to be available although demand for this service was greatly reduced once the Library opened to the public.

**Technology**

- **RVCPL website redesign** – The website was professionally redesigned with input from a staff committee. It was launched on December 9 and immediately garnered positive feedback. Selected staff started training on WordPress for the site’s maintenance. The website’s new logo, designed by a staff member, is also being used on letterhead.

- **Social media platforms** – The staff honed their skills in using video conferencing platforms such as Zoom and the Library’s YouTube channel for the presentation and promotion of Library services and programs. They improved their marketing design skills using tools such as Canva and Library Aware. The number of hits on the Library’s social media accounts, Instagram, Twitter and Facebook greatly increased.

- **Hoopla** – Subscribed to this digital streaming service for accessing eBooks, audiobooks, music, movies and TV shows.

- **Eventkeeper calendar** – The EKRooms module was added to our Eventkeeper calendar subscription. This software allows staff to easily manage room bookings, room set-ups and track program attendance.

- **Princh** – A mobile printing app, Princh, provided patrons with an option for mobile printing from their devices directly to the Library’s copiers.

- **Digital library cards** – The digital cards continued to be popular with patrons solely interested in the digital resources of the Library.

- **Digital collection usage** continued to rise including eBooks, eAudiobooks, digital magazines and streaming services to borrow movies, music, comics and TV.

- **The New York Heritage Digital Collection** – The Library’s website was expanded with downloaded maps, brochures and booklets of local interest.

- **Library parking lot wireless access points** – The Library participated in a Nassau Library System grant that supplied wireless access points for the parking lot. It strengthened the Wi-Fi signal, improving patron access to the internet 24/7.

- **Staff laptop computers** – Several laptops were purchased to replace aged staff computers; these laptops can be used for remote work should the Library need to close in the future.

- **WiFi hotspot devices** – These devices were added to the Library’s borrowing collection which also includes Kindles, Rokus, a telescope, a go-pro camera, and museum passes.
**Programming**

In the early days of 2021, most of the Library’s programs were virtual. By the spring of 2021, vaccines had become readily available to portions of the population and was becoming increasingly available to the adult population in general. We hoped the restraints the pandemic had placed on the Library’s operations were behind us. However, not all patrons were comfortable coming back to the Library for in-person programs. Mindful of this fact and also that patrons were enjoying the flexibility of choosing to attend programs in-person or virtually, we maintained three formats of programming – in-person, virtual and hybrid. When infection rates rose in the latter part of the year, the staff was swiftly able to pivot to all virtual programming for a few weeks.

A sampling of Adult programs that were offered in 2021:

- Varied programs – Art, history, entertainment, current events, cultural and wellness lectures, cooking and craft demonstrations, movie, technology instruction and exercise classes.
- Readers’ Advisory
  - Multiple monthly book, short story and poetry discussion groups led by staff or outside moderators and a bi-monthly non-fiction discussion group
  - Title Swap book discussions led by staff who compile a book list
  - Themed reading lists, tabletop displays, librarians’ reader recommendations on the webpage
  - Summer Reading Program
  - Bestsellers Club – A readers’ advisory tool that continued to be a patron favorite, doubling its membership from 100 to 205 patrons in a year.
- Virtual live author visits – 18 authors reached a wide audience (Melanie Benjamin, Jennifer Robson, Alka Joshi, Peter Swanson, Christina Baker Kline, Anna North, Nadia Hashimi, Chris Whitaker, Katherine Heiny, Jess Walter, Cynthia D’Aprix Sweeney, Jennifer Ryan, Lauren Wolk, Sarah Penner, Laurie Frankel, Jean Hanff Korelitz, Ash Davidson, and Daniel James Brown)
- Archival services – Local history queries researched. The archives collection was re-boxed, rearranged and re-labeled. The finding aid was updated.
- Museum and garden memberships – Increased to 17 with the addition of Raynham Hall
- Historical videos – Five additional 90-second videos on the history of Rockville Centre and surrounding area brought the total to 20.
- Food for Fines February – Second annual food drive for the Mary Brennan INN
- Paper shredding event

Scheduling in-person programs in Youth Services was more challenging as children did not have access to the COVID vaccine until much later in the year. In the beginning of the year, most toys in the Children’s Room were placed in storage due to a concern of spreading the virus among the children. The availability of readily cleanable toys was gradually increased as the year progressed and some new toys, for example, a train table, were added.

Examples of Youth Services activities and programming in 2021, a mix of virtual, in-person and hybrid:
• Varied programs – Storytimes, book discussions, yoga classes, coding club, cook and share, craft programs, video gaming club
• District schools
  o Collaborated on reading lists and curriculum support
  o School visits – Limited numbers returned to the Library in December
  o Preschool artwork displays – Decorated the Children’s Room
  o Pre-K visits – Held Zoom visits as the students could not come to the Library
  o Mock Caldecott – Held virtually with all interested students in grades 4-6
• Kids Talk at RVCPL – Available on Apple podcasts as well as Spotify
• Ukulele lessons – provided to children
• Halloween programs
  o Trunk or Treat – transferred to an indoor event with several candy stations.
  o Haunted Library – a spooky scavenger hunt
  o Halloween craft – ghost door-hanging
• Take and Make crafts – Patrons kits with the supplies needed to make a craft and directions to a prerecorded storytime
• Take and Make crafts – Expanded for tweens, Crafternoon at Home
• Baby Bundles– For birth to 2 years: A tote bag with board books, finger plays, songs and a flannel board to hold a storyline at home; patrons keep the handouts and the flannel pieces and return the rest.
• Matters of the HeART – Art therapist provided art therapy for kids during these stressful times. The Library provided the accompanying supply kits prior to the Zoom program.
• Summer Reading Kickoff (in-person) – Adopt a Stuffed Kitten or Puppy was a huge success with 331 children registered, which is close to pre-pandemic numbers
• Summer Program for Teens – 93 teens participated in summer programs, again, a very good number
• Summer Programs – Transitioned from virtual to a mix of virtual and in-person. Held larger registered programs such as Play Hooray, Book Buddies, storytimes and craft programs outdoors. Smaller groups were held indoors.
• Increased social media content including virtual programs with pre-recorded and live videos of storytimes, short songs/finger play and other online resources for children. Life Skills presented different weekly topics and advice.
• Developed color-coded system for non-fiction collection – Made the collection more patron-friendly
• Family Place collection – Provided information and support to young families regarding the social and emotional development of young children
• Mothers’ Center Circle – A support group to discuss parenting and family issues
• RVC Heroes Day – A tribute to our first responders on the 20th anniversary of 9/11

Outreach/Community Partnerships

All staff members participated in community outreach whether from behind a Library service desk or out in the community. The Adult and Youth Services Departments have community partners and offered regular outreach efforts although the pandemic continued to restrict a number of activities. Outreach activities included:
• Library-to-Your-Door – This personalized reader’s advisory service continued to be popular and much-appreciated by its participants.
• Sandel Senior Center book discussion – The monthly meeting has been moderated by one of our librarians for 20 years. Although she retired, she still moderates the meeting as a Sandel member and interloans the book selection from the Library, maintaining a community connection.
• Maple Point Assisted Living Center – A librarian selects a title for their monthly book discussion, interloans large-type books from within the county. Books are delivered to the facility with book discussion questions.
• RVC LIRR train station – Maintained a book cart for commuters. The number of borrowed books slowly increased throughout the year, reflecting the increase in ridership.
• South Side High School’s School-to-Work Vocational Program – This program restarted in February after an almost year long hiatus due to the pandemic. Students, their aides and staff were all thrilled to be back in the Library.
• Head Start, Rosa Lee Young Center, Hispanic Brotherhood and the Martin Luther King, Jr. Community Center – Conducted virtual and in-person children’s programs; offered hotspot devices for their members’ use.
• Head Start – Gave 29 literacy kits to the RVC group when they moved to Wantagh. This sadly ended a long-time in-person collaboration. We sent them a prerecorded storytime each week until they established a relationship with their new library.
• Hispanic Brotherhood – Provided a summer intern in Adult and Children’s Departments.
• Girl Scout troop from Watson School – Added squares to complete the Kindness Quilt Project, an art installation in the lower lobby that was interrupted due to the pandemic.
• Daisy troops from Wilson and Hewitt schools – Planted a pinwheel garden in front of the Library sign as part of their peace-builders badge.
• Local legislators – Collaborated by hosting food, school supplies and toy drives.
• Eagle Scouts – A project provided the Library with a picnic table for public and staff use.
• 2021 Best of Long Island competition – Nominated for the fifth time.
• Lions Club – Collection site for discarded eyeglasses.
• The Philips House Museum – Made their archives available to our librarians and provided artifacts for semi-permanent exhibits in the Library’s new display case.
• The Great Give Back, a joint Nassau and Suffolk Counties program – Held a food drive of lunchbox items for Bethany House.
• Chamber of Commerce – Participated in the annual Snowman Hunt as a member.

Grants/Donations – Community and Legislative

In addition to the New York State Public Library Construction Grants listed under Facilities Management, the Library received the following funding:

• Senator Todd Kaminsky and Assemblywoman Judy Griffin secured $10,000 in Bullet Aid for refurbishing the Teen Centre.
• Rockville Centre Library Friends continued to supplement the Library’s budget by sponsoring most of the museum memberships, totaling approximately $6,000. The Friends periodically support programs for children and adults.
• Signature Bank sponsored the $1300 membership to the Long Island Children’s Museum, for an eighth year; LICM is the Library’s most popular pass.
• Joseph Price of EPIC Insurance continued his annual donation of $500 for the Library’s Family Place Center.
• The Library’s application for Federal funds under the Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security Act (CARES Act) was approved by the Town of Hempstead. The Library received $24,415 to defray additional expenses incurred as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.
• The Library was included in Nassau Library System’s application for reimbursement under the Federal CARES Act for PPE supplies purchased by member libraries. The Library’s portion was $476.
• Kajeet Digital Equality Grant provided 20 WiFi hotspots and a year of connectivity. The Library gave a supply to both the Martin Luther King, Jr. Center and the Hispanic Brotherhood for use at their facilities. The RVC Schools were contacted as a community partner if there are any students or families who could use this technology. The remaining units are available for borrowing.