



## DIRECTOR'S REPORT

### Annual 2020

The events of the year 2020 impacted the operations and services of the New City Library like no other. It was business as usual until mid-March when the effects of the global pandemic COVID-19 rippled through the nation and wreaked havoc on our American way of life.

By the week of March 9, it was apparent that nationwide shutdowns might occur to halt the spread of the virus. The Library eventually closed its doors to the public on Friday, March 13, in order to assess the situation. They would not open again until Monday, July 20.

From Monday, March 16, until Monday, June 8, Library staff worked remotely from home as they learned new methods of productivity and collaboration. The videoconferencing software Zoom became the app of choice for conducting meetings and providing programs.

The Library's YouTube channel was reinvigorated with a plethora of content for all ages.

The year began with a celebration of staff milestones; several staff members received service award pins marking significant work anniversaries:

- Head of Adult Services, Brian Jennings (5 years)
- Head of Community Relations, Veronica Reynolds (10 years)
- Children's Librarian Amy Chesman (10 years)
- Page Karen Berkowitz (15 years)
- Library Assistant I Roopa Vasa (20 years)
- Teen Librarian Mary Phillips (30 years)

In June, we welcomed full-time Library Assistant I Stephanie Roberts to our team. Her previous experience in the hospitality industry makes her a welcome and welcoming presence at the front desk. Part-time Library Assistant Is Susan Kessell and Madeline Messina both retired after 14 and 33 years, respectively.

In-person adult programming started the year with record attendance for the month of January (720 vs. 544 for 2019). Mitch's Mellow Madness played to a full house in January and Diane Cypkin offered a musical lecture to a crowd in February. These would be among the final in-library events before the shutdown. Concerts, lectures, plays, and learning experiences would soon have to shift to the online environment when the Library closed its doors. Head of Community Relations Veronica Reynolds immediately took to the task of learning how to create quality digital video content and sharing that knowledge with other librarian staff. Soon they were all producing craft programs, storytimes, and local history content that slowly and surely found an appreciative virtual audience.

There are currently 622 videos on the New City Library YouTube channel. One hundred and eighty-two viewers have subscribed to our channel, and the content has been viewed almost 27,000 times.

Performers, musicians, and lecturers unaccustomed to online programming eventually warmed up to the idea of an online audience. Some allowed us to record performances and offer access to our patrons for a length of time after the event.

Our inaugural online program was a conversation with popular local author MaryBeth Keane at the end of April. Over 30 patrons participated and expressed gratitude for the opportunity to enjoy Library programming during a time of great uncertainty and stress. Subsequent programs that were successful were art history and travel lectures, as well as chair yoga, book groups, and tech instruction. Unique, original content like “Mary’s Garden” offered a personal connection to staff like Mary Phillips who conducted informative tours of her lovely home garden.

Children’s programming proved slightly more challenging. With the closure of local schools, students were spending a lot of learning time in front of digital screens, and so the appeal of even more time online for library programming dimmed. Nevertheless, children’s librarian staff produced plenty of online storytimes, singalongs, and more personalized content like Nature Walks with Mrs. B and Pup Reviews with Amy Chesman and her family dog. Take-n-Make craft kits and “surprise bags” (a curated selection of library materials for kids) were runaway hits.

Technology upgrades this year included the full implementation of our RFID self-checkout system, an arduous update to Windows 10 on all computers both public and staff, and at the end of the year, a new server to accommodate our significant digital local history collection.

The Library facilities saw some significant changes in order to comply with recommended health protection against the spread of COVID-19. Every public service desk was fitted with Lexan “sneeze guards.” Some public bathrooms were sealed off to minimize the need for continuous cleaning and disinfection of all public areas and high-touch fixtures. The occupancy of the building is controlled to ensure safe conditions and social distancing for staff and visitors. Hand disinfectant dispensers were placed throughout the building.

A new service delivery method that arose in pandemic conditions was curbside pickup of materials. It has been proven so popular that it will become a permanent option for our patrons.

And finally, the Library Board bid a grateful and fond farewell to trustee Ed Bertolino at the end of 2020. Ed was instrumental in the interviewing and selection of an architect for the

Library’s imminent renovation. His construction expertise was an invaluable asset in informing the decision of the board to hire VMDO of Charlottesville, VA. Taking Ed’s place on the Board is newly-elected Lisa Coughlin. Incumbents Phyllis Morena and Denis O’Hanlon were re-elected in December, and we are pleased that they volunteered to continue their service to the Library and the community.

The New City Library’s commitment to its mission remained strong during this difficult year. Both staff and trustees exhibited an unwavering dedication to their community that did not go unappreciated by its weary citizens. In 2021, we pledge to continue this public service while looking forward to a return to normalcy within the new year.

Respectfully submitted,  
Marianne Gallagher, Director  
NEW CITY LIBRARY  
January 21, 2021

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