

2020

Annual Report

Milwaukee Public Library

Inspiration starts here – we help people read, learn, and connect.



MILWAUKEE
PUBLIC LIBRARY



When 2020 began, we held programs in our libraries; invited people into our buildings; placed books into the hands of children; and celebrated our neighborhoods.





It is inspiring to me that in the midst of the many challenges 2020 presented to us, Milwaukee Public Library staff opened a new branch, developed an online Summer Reading Program, assisted in COVID-response efforts citywide, provided help to residents and the Election Commission in various aspects of the presidential election, and produced hundreds of online storytimes, book discussions, author visits, and informational programs.

Staff found new ways to recommend books, teach new skills, and to continue to connect with our community. Our online presence afforded us the opportunity to extend that connection to readers in other states - and other countries.

We helped people read, learn, and connect - even in 2020.

- *Library Director Joan Johnson*

Programs & Accomplishments

Browser's Birthday Bash

Browser celebrated his birthday with stories, songs, crafts and special friends throughout the system.

Innovative Green Infrastructure

Milwaukee Public Library is a showcase for innovative technologies, such as solar arrays at the Center Street and Tippecanoe branches and at Central Library downtown. Work this year added solar panels and enhanced stormwater management at branch libraries.

MLK Day 2020

The incredibly popular MLK Day Celebration was held on January 20. More than 1,280 attendees attended the celebration at the Martin Luther King Branch with music, poetry, trivia and dance.

Good Hope Branch Opening

The Good Hope Branch opened on Wednesday, July 29, 2020. Library Director Paula A. Kiely and Mayor Tom Barrett opened the 18,400 square foot branch which represents a \$6.35 million investment in the neighborhood and replaces the former Mill Road Branch Library. Special features of the branch include a Makerspace, a Community Room, Fireplace Room, Children's and Teen Spaces, and upgraded technology throughout the building.

Public Space Enhancements

A Makerspace was added to the Washington Park Branch, the Central Community Room was remodeled and upgraded, and a brand new co-working and meeting space - the Business Commons - was added at Central and will open to the community in 2021.

Then we reevaluated, rethought, remade ourselves as we learned to reach our audiences as we could, where they were, while assuming new roles and community services.



COVID Response

COVID 19 Response

MPL created a COVID-19 Response Team and initiated the Stay Connected COVID-19 resources and available services webpage containing information on testing sites, jobs and finances, basic needs, health and wellness, and combating cabin fever.

MPL Staff in Action

Staff were assigned to assist the Health Department with COVID research, data entry, and contact tracing. The Election Commission received help with voter assistance, in-person early voting, polling sites, absentee ballot drops, and processing. 2020 Census information was promoted online and through window art at several libraries.

Contactless Material Service

Contactless material service began at Central Library on Tuesday, May 5. Service was extended to Tippecanoe and Washington Park on Tuesday, May 12, and eventually all branches provided curbside service.

Online Programming

Unique programming was developed to include weekly story times, special collections, DIY projects, yoga, book chats and recommendations, author visits, technology help, Virtual Teacher in the Library, Curbside Crafts, and many educational and informational programs.

Special Guests

Online programming provided the opportunity to present interviews with guest authors including Milwaukee Poet Laureate Dasha Kelly Hamilton, Nancy Pearl, Matt de la Pena, Casey Cep, Chad Sell, Kao Kalia Yang, Sharee Miller, Anna Lardinois, and Larry Tye.

Book Bundles

MPL introduced Book Bundles as a response to patrons looking for the “browsing experience” they were missing. An online form provides an opportunity for them to let staff know what kind of books they are looking for and then up to five items are selected and “bundled” for pick-up.

Return to In-Person Service

Staff returned to library buildings in July to provide Wi-Fi, copying and printing services, catalog access, item retrieval, library card registration and renewal, 2-hour access to computers, scan stations, fax machines, copiers, reserved items (holds) pick-up, and quick reference assistance.

2020 in a Snapshot

Programming and Services

237,460

Reference Transactions



A record number of calls were answered in October.

668+ Early Literacy Programs

Story times in English, Spanish, ASL and Hmong



993 attended

Meet Author Sharee Miller, MPL's most popular live and posted online program



2020 Online Summer Reading

9,000+ participants

8,379 Children
202 Teens
458 Adults



43 Online Programs for Children



1,300+ attended

23 Online Story Boss Workshops for Teens plus a Grand Story Slam

89 attended



17,601

books distributed through community partners serving children and teens at over 200 sites



1,100+ Curbside Crafts and Take and Make STEAM projects distributed at MPL branches



Email reference interactions 70%

Chat interactions 74%

UP

2020 in a Snapshot

Online Resources and Social Media

10,812

page views of MPL's
COVID Resource site



MPL.ORG

616,522 users

2,534,550 page views

2,058,636
unique page views

Average of 1,438
unique devices connecting
to the MPL Wi-Fi
network per
branch each
month



40% +
increase in
Instagram followers



21% increase in

LinkedIn followers

YouTube 242% increase in YouTube users

double the users triple the views

5X the number of hours watched

100+ unique videos



73% more page views
on main Facebook page

39%
more users



19% Increase
in eCirculation **Record Year**

111,995 Freegal
49,865 Hoopla
282,410 OverDrive
43,272 RBDigital Magazines

39% increase
in usage of
CONTENTdm
MPL online
resources



Tomorrow we will bring back what we cherish, maintain what we've created, and ignite ideas for new possibilities.

"The Library" by Dasha Kelly Hamilton

Milwaukee Poet Laureate 2019-2021



Bend pages at the corner
Folding into the stories
We tell about ourselves
About each other
About days dissolved
and seasons yet to come

Circulate riches to every spirit and spine
Stack rhyme schemes and prophecy
Humanity and hypotheses
Guard our stories, stretching from soil to sky
Common and crown, ground level to grand heights
And all of our mass in the middle
Mass, in the middle

The accumulated weight of all our question marks
Our catalog of anxious cells and eager breaths

Warm the hallways, the portals, the platforms
Ignite heartlights and hope against dim landscapes
Archive the shine of our collective living
Our electric resistance to darkness





My great enthusiasm for the Milwaukee Public Library increased over the past year as the library team rose to the challenges brought on by the global pandemic. With improvisation and adaptation, service to library patrons continued. Library employees also lent their talents to other city departments to meet the unusual demands of 2020. The people at MPL found new ways to connect Milwaukee residents with vital – even lifesaving – information.

We are well on the way to a full reopening of our branch libraries. At the same time, we have embraced the lessons learned during the pandemic to reach our patrons where they feel most comfortable.

As you can read below, others in Milwaukee share my positive view of the library. The friendly and helpful library staff continued offering great programs and services. The Milwaukee Public Library remains a most amazing community asset.

- Mayor Tom Barrett

Public Praise & Response

Thank you! The Tech Tuesdays have been very helpful. I'm sharing this one with my sister in LaCrosse and my in-laws in Chicago !

Hidden Voices was an absolutely wonderful program; thank you for presenting it. I had never heard of Jean Toomer and Sarah Webster Fabio but I will look up their works now.

Thank you so much for all your webinars. They are so interesting! I love going to talks and presentations about all different topics. Now, with COVID and needing to stay away from crowds, you bring it to me! Please continue to do these webinars...even when we are back to the "old" normal.

The Request a Book Bundle video was beautifully done. Incredible how many options are open to the public. Cheers MPL!

I happened to pick up two Take and Make kits from Capitol Library. My grandson enjoyed putting the catapult together and it led to some discussion about simple machines. Thank you to your staff and those interested in trying to keep kids learning and taking the time to put these projects together.

I enjoyed yesterday's webinar and am looking forward to the next two. I retired to NZ because my grandchildren are here, but Milwaukee will always be the hometown of my heart.

Thank you so much for the webinars. I first joined a webinar when you featured Fox and Branch. I wasn't sure it would be possible to do so, as I am now living in New Zealand. What a delightful surprise to learn that I could successfully participate from this distance!

I am very much impressed by all that MPL is offering during these difficult COVID times. Stay well.