

Abington Public Library Annual Report - 2021

To the Inhabitants of the Town of Abington:

The COVID-19 pandemic continued to impact the delivery of Library services in 2021. The building remained closed to the public at the beginning of the year, providing curbside services only. Borrowers were welcomed back into the Library on Tuesday March 9th, and library hours were gradually increased during the spring and early summer, returning to the standard pre-pandemic schedule of 53.5 per week by Labor Day. Late spring and summer were a time of hope and saw the return of in-person programs for children, teens and adults, including the much-loved summer reading program. The Delta and Omicron variant surges of the fall and early winter resulted in reduced attendance, but the Library remained open for public services and limited programs.

The Abington Public Library provided information services for the residents of Abington: 91,287 items – books, eBooks, audiobooks, DVDs, videos, music CDs, magazines and museum passes were borrowed and 25,471 user visits to the library were recorded. Circulation increased by 17.1%; user visits increased by 32.3% over pandemic-impacted 2020. 2,300 curbside pickups were recorded during the year, all but 49 of these happened from January to June. 157 deliveries of library materials were made to homebound borrowers during 2021; deliveries occurred weekly throughout the year.

Patrons borrowed donated laptops and used them in the parking lot to obtain Wi-Fi services when the public computers in the building were not available. In September, the Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners used federal American Rescue Plan Act funds to provide Wi-Fi hotspots for library borrowers across the state; these were a game changer, as patrons could take a hotspot and laptop home resulting in a significantly more comfortable user experience. These hotspots also provide users with Internet access outside of the 53.5 hours per week that the Library is open to the public.

With the support of the Griffin's Dairy Committee, the Library presented two StoryWalks® along the walking path at the Dairy. The StoryWalk® Project was created by Anne Ferguson of Montpelier, VT and developed in collaboration with the Kellogg-Hubbard Library. Storywalk® is a registered service mark owned by Ms. Ferguson. A StoryWalk® places the pages of a picture book in signs along a pathway, encouraging children to both exercise and read. Feedback from the community was universally positive. The books featured were *Over in the Meadow* by Ezra Jack Keats in the summer and *Red Leaf, Yellow Leaf* by Lois Ehlert in the fall.

The Abington High School yearbook collection, housed in the Wales Room, was digitized in the fall by the Boston Public Library in a project organized by Reference Librarian Sarah Roberts. The yearbooks may be found online in the Internet Archive. The completion of this project means that the Library has begun the process of making unique historical records available digitally. The Trustees and Library Director thank the Abington High School Library and the Dyer Memorial Library for sharing yearbooks and contributing to this joint project.

Children's Librarian Amy Hindle pre-recorded monthly story times for the Pre-K and Kindergarten classes from January through May, and provided the 1st grade classes with a virtual field trip to the library. The Abington Public Schools resumed in-person visits in the fall of 2021. Ms. Hindle hosted in-person instructional class visits in library and literacy for the 5th and 3rd grade classes, and was able to get back into the Kindergarten and Pre-K classes for in-person story times.

The Non-Fiction Book Club continued on the Zoom platform until May, resuming in-person discussions in June. The Popular Fiction Book Club chose to remain virtual; attendance for this group tripled during the change to the Zoom platform. The very popular Cookbook Club continued to meet on Zoom. Author Ted Reinstein appeared in person in the Copeland Room in November. 57 live and virtual programs were offered for adults with 531 attendees. Subscriptions to the monthly newsletter, *All Around the APL*, continued to grow.

The Friends conducted fundraising activities with socially distanced book sales in May and November, as well as maintaining their popular “Everyday Sale Shelf” in the Library. A new addition this year was three mini book sales during the popular food truck festivals on Wednesday evenings. The Friends Membership Drive was held successfully in January 2021. The Abington Arts Council provided funding to the Friends for the patron pass to the Museum of Fine Arts. The Friends book discussion groups, Book Talk and the Mystery Group, met virtually from January to May, returning to in-person meetings in September. Friends fundraising supports attraction passes and programs for all ages.

Gifts were received for children’s programming in memory of long-time library trustee Melba Smith, and from the Anderson Foundation. The Library was remembered in the will of local children’s author, long-time borrower, and volunteer Sylvia Hofsepien, and with donations in memory of avid reader Margaret Fratus. Individual residents made donations for library materials, including the many members of the community who contributed to the Donation Jar, which provides additional funding for children’s materials. The Library Trustees and Library Director thank the many generous residents who donated to the Friends of the Library and provided direct financial support for Library services.

During the winter and spring months of 2021, all three children’s and teen book clubs continued to meet virtually once a month. Story hours and toddler times remained virtual through the end of May. Beginning in September 2021, all book clubs, story hours, and toddler times were able to meet in-person through the end of the year. The Teen Advisory Board (TAB) met during the months of September, October, and November to reconnect and guide program offerings for teens. The Pop Up Art School returned to the library in November and December for two in-person teen art programs. The Dinoman returned to the library in September and helped to celebrate Saturday hours being restored for the school year. The monthly Lego club and crafternoon programs -- both funded by the Friends of the Library and the Joyce Lee Bumpus Fund- resumed in-person meetings from September through the end of 2021.

The library celebrated the return to in-person programming for the summer of 2021. Reading minutes were still logged entirely online; kids, teens and adults signed up via our program READSquared to log their reading hours, share book recommendations and occasionally write reviews. 151 library patrons registered for the online summer reading program and read for a collective 1,177 hours.

The Anderson Foundation and the Friends of the Library funded performers for summer readers. Mr. Vinny brought his bubble show to the side lawn of the library and astounded the younger patrons (and their grownups) with bubbles during the summer reading kick-off program. Both Hugh Hanley and Mama Steph made their much-anticipated returns to the library for two mornings of music and movement. After postponing his show in 2020, Bryson Lang finally made it back to the library to perform his juggling routine. Otha Day closed out the summer reading lineup with an afternoon drum circle.

Trustees Gail Bergin, Henry DiCarlo and Mary Gillis were re-elected in the town’s annual election in April.

The two part-time Library Assistant positions which had been left vacant for fiscal 2021 were filled at the beginning of fiscal 2022 in July. Library Substitute Kerri Lohnes was promoted and Jill Monti was hired. Two new substitutes, Rosemary Sheehan and Caroline Ellis were appointed to the on-call list.

The Trustees and Director recognize the dedication and professionalism of the Library Staff: Sandy Bumpus, Ann Bunszell, Susan Donovan, Caroline Ellis, Heidi Hernandez, Amy Hindle, Kerri Lohnes, Jill Monti, Lynne Nickley, Joanne Plunkett, Sarah Roberts, Linda Sampson, Elizabeth Shea, Rosemary Sheehan and Terry Taylor. The Trustees commend several members of the Library Staff who donated their time to help at Abington Health Department COVID-19 vaccination clinics throughout the year. The Library community appreciates the assistance of Public Health Director Marty Golightly, whose help was instrumental in safely offering Library services for residents.

Selected 2021 Library Statistics

Circulation: 91,287

Registered borrowers: 5,344

Total programs/school classes offered: 349. Total program attendance: 3534

Total patron visits: 25,471

Respectfully submitted,
Henry DiCarlo, Chair
Betty Henderson, Vice Chair
Laura Nuttall, Secretary
Gail Bergin
Mary Gillis

Gerry Haas
Barbara McLaughlin
Carrie Murray
John O'Neill
Deborah Grimmatt, Library Director