

Library Director's Report March-May 2020

Due to the extraordinary times under the COVID 19 crisis, I am deviating from my traditional format to provide an overview of the state of Madison Public Library and our progress toward restoring services.

There are many new changes and responsibilities that have arisen due to the conditions of the COVID 19 environment. Along with the challenges we have also embraced new opportunities to adapt our services in innovative and creative ways. A long road remains in front of us, and we will need to remain focused on our priorities as we proceed. I am confident in our resilience, and MPL will be stronger and better prepared to meet the needs of our community.

RESTORATION OF SERVICES

Since we closed our library buildings to the public, we have been modifying access and services to adapt to the COVID 19 conditions. One of our first moves was to establish a Virtual Library Card, so residents living within the SCLS service area could establish an account to access our online resources. Since most library staff were teleworking, we established a remote Call Center to reopen our telephone reference service and create a new Madison Internet Access Information Line. Limited access to our physical collections has resumed with our Curbside Delivery Service. The Call Center will assist with placing holds, and reader's advisory for patrons to use the curbside service.

We have completed our building audits to begin planning on how our buildings will need to be modified to accommodate the reopening of our spaces for the public.

REOPENING OF LIBRARY BUILDINGS

We are currently aligning our progress with the *Forward Dane* plan, established by Madison & Dane County Public Health and being used by Dane County and the City of Madison. The Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction is also providing guidance for libraries that we will continue to monitor, but the DPI guidelines do acknowledge local controls may differ across the State.

Our initial plans for reopening our library buildings will focus on restoring public computing. Access to broadband and computers is a high priority within the community. It is also a service that we can more easily maintain control of the number of people in our buildings through appointments. The City of Madison is currently in Phase 1 of *Forward Dane*, which would allow us to begin to open our buildings to a very limited number of people based on the area needed to maintain social distancing and include adequate staffing. We will begin to modify the buildings and establish procedures to allow for public computing. As we continue to progress, our highest priority remains the safety of our staff and the public.

ZOOM & MORE

Although the crisis poses many challenges, it has also been a time to be creative and explore new ways of connecting and delivering services. Communication has been key. During these times, I have been on several different platforms for virtual meetings and planning sessions. The City of Madison has landed on Zoom as its principle platform, and MPL has been taking advantage of the flexibility to provide staff

updates and expand our capacity to meet and plan. It will be an important take-away to retain access to this tool and continue to have the flexibility to bring all staff together on a virtual basis and improve capacity of management communications.

It took the nudge of a crisis but the establishment of a virtual library card will remain a terrific development for MPL. The Call Center was made possible by utilizing the platform of Zendesk, a local help desk expert in Madison. Being able to centralize our phone intake may also become a common practice. Curbside delivery was necessary to adapt to the restrictions of the COVID environment, but it also opened our eyes to another delivery option. And the modification of our buildings with the safety of staff and the public in mind, might become ingrained in the future design of our spaces. There will always be a need, even without a pandemic, for us to be better prepared and responsive to health issues in our community.

ROSEMARY LEE CIVIC ENGAGEMENT INTERNSHIP

This is our first year for this special endowed internship created in the memory of Rosemary Lee by her family to honor her dedication to civic engagement and her deep appreciation of the public library. Rosemary was frequently referred to as the “21th Alder” due to her religious attendance at Common Council and many other city boards and committees. She was a regular at Central Library and an ardent advocate in supporting the values and equity of public libraries.

Our inaugural intern is Hannah Steward. Hannah is a third-year graduate student pursuing a joint degree in Public Affairs and Urban and Regional Planning at the University of Wisconsin Madison. Throughout her studies, Hannah's primary interest has been finding ways to leverage her policy skills and love for the city in order to be an active, positive influence in her community.

The major objectives of the internship will be the examination of how to improve access to government process and services, and to enhance opportunities for civic engagement, particularly the elimination of barriers to underserved populations. Hannah will be exploring some of the virtual practices that recently became essential during the COVID 19 crisis, including the use of online platforms to conduct or connect to a government meeting or agency.

PERSONNEL

Since the last Board meeting there are several personnel updates to report.

Dr. Terrance Newell, supervisor at Meadowridge Library, has left MPL to pursue other opportunities. His position is currently being filled by Yesianne Ramirez on an interim basis.

Sarah Lawton, supervisor at Pinney Library, has left MPL to pursue other opportunities. Her position has been filled by Jane Jorgenson. Jane will now supervisor both Pinney and Hawthorne libraries. The Lakeview supervisor position, previously held by Jane, will be filled by Carra Davies on an interim basis.

Retirements

Lyn Fry announced her retirement for June 15, 2020. Lyn started as a Clerk at Meadowridge Library in 2007. Later she worked at Lakeview and Goodman South Madison before moving to Central Library in 2017 to work in Outer Library Loan.

Dave Hoadley's retirement date has been set for June 12, 2020. Dave was part of our maintenance crew and was truly a jack of all trades, especially his carpentry skills around our libraries.

Tom Karls's retirement was May 29, 2020. Tom is a 40 year veteran of MPL, and he was always my go to resource for his institutional knowledge of MPL. (and on the history of Madison as well) Tom served in numerous positions during his tenure, and most recently at the reception area on the third floor of Central Library, greeting visitors, answering the main phone, and orchestrating public and private events at Central Library, among many other duties.

Recent Librarian Hires

Just prior to closing our libraries to the public, we had completed the hiring process for four new librarians. Unfortunately, we had no idea at the time the impact COVID 19 would have on filling these positions. Based on the uncertainty of the budget, and the possibility we might be faced with future staff reductions, we decided to rescind our offers. Three of the four candidates would have been relocating to Madison, and I did not want to risk that level of investment by the successful candidates. Depending on our upcoming budget proposal we will revisit the vacancies left by not filling these positions.

UPDATE ON MEETINGS, COMMITTEES, & TEAMS

City

Mayor's Management Team
Mayor's Human Service Committee
Performance Excellence Transition Team
Racial Equity & Social Justice Strategic Planning Committee
Deputy Mayor Check-in
Digital Inclusion Team*
Emergency Operations Center (EOC) Planning Team*
Funding and Recovery – Government Services Team*

MPL

Library Management Team (meeting weekly)*
Administration and Communications Check-in (Daily)*
All Staff Town Hall (weekly)*
Netflix Party*

External

South Central Library System Library Directors
Dane County Directors (almost weekly)*
Wisconsin Resource Library Directors with DPI (weekly)*
Urban Libraries Council Directors (weekly)*

*Represents either a new assignment/meeting or the frequency of the meeting has changed since the COVID 19 crisis.