

## **Library Director Report December 2020**

**President Request:** The fine waiving project continues. Staff have cleared 31% of all fines to date (10,303 patron records) with 82% of the amounts cleared (\$224,000 in fines forgiven). Staff are working their way down the fines by total charge and have gone from clearing fines in the hundreds of dollars to the \$6.00 range. Most of the remaining fines yet to clear are just a few dollars and are not preventing library patrons from checking out.

To date staff have unblocked over 3,000 cards and will be reaching out to these patrons en masse after the holidays to invite them to return to the library, clear up lost and damaged charges that remain, or renew their expired cards. Promotion of this effort will continue throughout 2021.

### **2020**

I really was not sure how to begin a review of 2020. Perhaps that captures 2020 to some degree. It was a year of uncertainty. It was a year of extreme. It was a year of accomplishment. It was a year of yearning. It was a year of trying to predict and plan for the unpredictable.

I was very much looking forward to an amazing 2020. The new Pinney Library was finally going to open. We would be doing pre-design on the Imagination Center. MPL would be helping to host the 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual True Play Conference, featuring AnjiPlay and several attendees from around the world, and we would feature the new outdoor play space at the new Pinney Library. We were set to welcome several new librarians to fill many vacancies. The Wisconsin Book Festival would be building on a fantastic 2019 of programs. And the creativity for programs and community engagement was bursting at the seams. And then... March 17, 2020. Due to the start of the spread of the coronavirus pandemic we closed all our facilities and had staff remain safe at home.

We did not know how long “it” may last at the time, and our optimism for a short time was replaced with the reality of a dangerous pandemic that was not going away any time soon. Beginning with that initial closure it did set our top priority for MPL in 2020 going forward, and that was the safety of our staff and the public. As we began to maneuver our way through the public health reports, the research on virus contamination of materials, the numerous guidelines for keeping each other safe and reimagining our practices, we did so in the safest way we could for our staff and the public.

Oddly enough through these challenges it was a year of accomplishments. Online access was a crucial need and in record time we developed our first virtual library card. The MPL Foundation took up the campaign to provide additional support to our virtual collections, and we began to connect again with our community. We immediately looked outside of our buildings and how we could assist other departments. Staff were deployed to the Clerk’s office and library researchers help guide the Mayor’s office. We pivoted to find a new way to deliver telephone reference and make that service available to other agencies. An amazing Racial Equity Change Team was formed that helped support MPL during the social movement of Black Lives Matter and continue to guide our RESJ growth. We created a curbside service to deliver materials in a safe way. We maintained our all too important civic engagement and our support for the election process. And despite an overwhelming difficult budget, we went fine free.

For 2021, a major lesson will be to continue to think outside of our buildings. We will strive to continue to reach more of our patrons where they are instead of them coming to us. To expand our home

services and improve delivery of materials to childcare providers, particularly those in their homes. And when the opportunity presents itself, to reopen more of our services within our buildings. It will still take patience, but the MPL creativity will always continue full speed. 2020 will be a memorable year for so many reasons. But I am confident it will be best known for how we did take advantage of the challenges of a pandemic and made ourselves better. We did not travel to conferences, but we learned a lot. Lessons learned to better meet the needs of our community and celebrate our resilience and dedication. I am so proud of our MPL team.

## **RESTORATION OF SERVICES and REOPENING LIBRARY BUILDINGS**

The pandemic landscape has witnessed major changes and continues to be unpredictable. We will continue to review our plans for making more services available within and outside of our buildings. We will be creating a few pilots to expand services. We will explore a new delivery scheme for home and place deliveries, and we will be looking at partnering with the Housing Division of the Community Development Dept. to expand our broadband reach to people where they live.

## **IMAGINATION CENTER**

Interviews with the top four designer finalists have been completed. The interview team will be convening in early January to review our scores and determine who will be hired for the design of this project. One common thread among all the finalists was their enthusiasm for the project and their creativity was captivated by the challenge.

## **COVID SAFETY UPDATES**

The most significant change in 2021 will be in the deployment of the vaccine and how quickly it will reach library staff. The Federal guidelines continue to shift, and the priorities beyond health care workers and the most vulnerable may begin to reach our public facing staff. Despite the promise of the vaccine, it will still be a year of maintaining our safety guidelines and close adherence to public health orders. The most promising scenario may be by the end of the year we can begin to reassume many of our standard practices, but as 2020 has shown, it is most difficult to plan for the unpredictable way this pandemic impacts all of us.

## **ORGANIZATIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

The first stage in our Organizational Development of surveying the entire MPL staff has been completed. In early January we will begin to review the results of the survey with ODC and move forward based on what we have learned.

## **IN MEMORY**

It is with extreme sadness that I am reporting the death of Ann Falconer. Ann was a former Library Board member and major advocate as a Friend of MPL. She served Madison and Dane County in so many ways beyond MPL, especially as a huge advocate for people with physical disabilities. She literally was my first memory of Madison -- her holding up a ballpoint penned MICKELLS on a sheet of notebook paper when she met me at the airport as I arrived for my interview. So began my introduction to Madison as we drove downtown, with Ann sharing a history of the city and the nuances of what made Madison, Madison. She continues to inspire me by her constant dedication for self-improvement and her never ending caring for others.

## **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

Deputy Mayor Check-in

Digital Inclusion Team

Funding and Recovery – Government Services Team: Policies Team and Communications Team

Funding and Recovery-City Vaccine Team

Subtle Acts of Exclusion Team

### **MPL**

Library Management Team

Administration and Communications Check-in

All Staff Town Hall

Budget Convenings

### **External**

South Central Library System Library Directors

Dane County Directors

Wisconsin Resource Library Directors with DPI

Urban Libraries Council Directors