Fitchburg Public Library
2019 Annual Report

Collection

The library continues to grow and expand its collection of materials for patrons. A total of 13,024 new items were added to the collection in 2019. All items are selected by adult and youth services librarians and processed by the technical services department. The overall collection size is approximately 108,559 items, including books, magazines, music CDs, DVDs, video games, Kindles, Rokus, laptops, and power chargers.

The library collection is maintained through a deselection (or weeding) process. Materials are deselected for a variety of reasons, including poor condition or lack of circulation. We do this on a regular basis to free up space for new items as well as those in higher demand.

Staffing

In April, the administration department welcomed Jenny Bravener as the new Administrative Assistant for the library.

The circulation department was able to promote Molly Krause, a member of our sub pool, to a permanent Library Assistant I position. Emily Kingman also joined the circulation department as a Library Assistant I.

Shelver staff hiring and vacancies were steady the first half of 2019. Amy Jungers, Anne Mueller, Julia Hasselkus, Kade Tracy, Katilyn Peck, Olivia Zokan, Samantha Hwang, and Shawna Wells all joined the Circulation department as shelvers.

Youth Services promoted Kristen Garvey from Library Assistant II to the newly formed Outreach Librarian position in July, which was created after Outreach Manager Liz Zimdars left to take a position with another library.

Additionally, the youth services department welcomed Jessi Neumann in July as an LA II, and Margaret Howard in September as an LA II.

Services

Circulation

2019 was an excellent year for the Circulation department! Our circulation numbers were up, with our check-outs increasing by .87% while overall South Central Library System check-outs went down by 4.25%. Some of our December circulation statistics were reported differently than the rest of the year due to new software, but our numbers on both holds and items returned held steady through 2019. We checked out over 388,000 items in 2019, and we checked in over 712,000 items as well.

Card registration was also up for 2019. We registered 1,133 new accounts in 2019, which is nearly 10% higher than our account registration statistics for 2018. 903 of those accounts were given out to Fitchburg residents, with the remaining 230 accounts going to Wisconsin residents who live outside of Fitchburg.

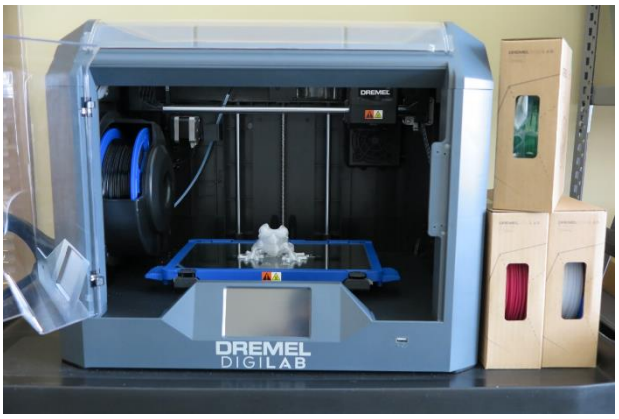
Our circulating technology collection was very popular in 2019, with our Rokus circulating 81 times, our Kindles circulating 158 times, and our in-house laptops circulating 265 times.

Programming

The adult services department hosted a total of 100 programs over the course of the year with 685 attendees. Along with our on-going book clubs and craft program we hosted a variety of programs including After Hours Nerf, Electric Vehicles 101, Roots Chocolate, and Japanese Tea Ceremony. The Great Decisions series was once again very well received. Current topics including state of diplomacy and trade with China were discussed and opinions were shared with the Foreign Policy Association.

Over the course of the year, our electronic services librarian held 61 individual tech tutor sessions with patrons. These one hour sessions cover a technology topic of the patron's choosing. 27 programs on a variety of tech topics were held throughout the year, with 147 patrons attending. Topics included How to Spot Fake News, Digitize Your Photos, Podcasts 101, Computer Basics, Smart Home Security, Microsoft Excel Basics, and Privacy & Security Online.

In addition to these programs, we saw a 25% increase in Overdrive checkouts compared to the previous year. Through a monetary donation made to the library, a new 3D printer (Dremel DigiLab 3D45) was purchased. This new machine will allow the library to continue hosting demonstrations and classes involving 3D printing.



Youth Services hosted 366 programs in 2019 with 15,642 attendees! In addition to story-times, crafts, science and technology programs some of our special programs included: Magician Glen Gerard, Mark Hayward Yo-Yo trick show, Indoor Planetarium, UW Space Place, Snake, Rattle, and Roll, Pete and Greet, Trinity Irish Dancers, Birds of Prey, NERF Lock-In.

Partnerships with outside organizations helped with programming during the year. This was the fourth year that we offered Touch-a-Truck (used to be named Diggers, Dozers, & Dumps). The library partnered with the Fitchburg Public Works Department, Fitchburg Fire Department, Fitch-Rona EMS, Fitchburg Police Department and Wingra Stone Company to bring this program to our patrons. Inside the library we read stories, made crafts and did a scavenger hunt. Outside kids were able to explore, climb in, take pictures and ask questions about some really awesome vehicles (fire truck, ambulance, police vehicles + K9 unit, lawn mower, and construction trucks). An estimated 400 people attended the event.

32 teen programs were held with 102 attendees. Examples of programs include: Candy Sushi, Breakout Challenges, DIY Terrariums, (Sweet) Treat Yourself, Tie Dye, Yard Games and Galaxy Bath Bombs.

Outreach Services hosted 84 programs in 2019 with 4,903 attendees! The outreach librarian collaborated with Leopold Elementary and other partners to continue summer programming at Leopold Park (free lunch and activities on Tuesday afternoons) which

was very successful, with about 900 residents attending. Examples of events attended by outreach included FTC Block Party, Kid's Expo, Family Empowerment Night, Read with a Hero, and Quilt Expo!

Computers and Wireless

Wireless use has decreased to 303,610 due to a new wireless system added in September. This new system provides a more accurate count of wireless sessions than the previous version. As more people continue bringing their own devices, 2019 computer sessions on the library computers have decreased by 17% compared to numbers in 2018.

Volunteers

Volunteers continue to be an integral part of the working of the library. In circulation, 5 volunteers gave 276.5 hours of their time to such tasks as the pick list and shelving books.

Teen volunteers also helped throughout the year, 108 volunteers gave 364 hours of their time assisting with the pick list, preparing supplies for programs, and helping with larger programs. Over the year, 13 volunteers gave 17 hours of their time to assist the library's outreach programming and activities.

Special Events

The library participated in its eighth annual Summer Reading Program in 2019. 1,353 people (124 adults, 80 teens, and 1149 children) registered for the program. Kids and teens were able to earn passes and coupons to several locations including: the Chocolate Shoppe Ice Cream Co., Buffalo Wild Wings, Eugster's Farm Market & Petting Farm, Schuster's Farm, Pizza Hut, the Milwaukee Public Museum, the Madison Mallards and the Dane Co. Fair.

The 12th annual Great Halloween Hunt was attended by an estimated 790 children and their families! Activities included, Searching the library looking for hidden costume characters in our scavenger hunt, games, crafts, balloon twisters and two magic shows. FACTv set up a green screen to take photos of kids with Halloween-themed backdrops. We capped the evening off with popcorn and the movie The Incredibles.

Winter Reading Bingo was a great way for kids to earn prizes for reading. 622 kids (517 children and 105 teens) registered for the program. They were able to earn stickers, small prizes and free books.

Professional Development, Grants, Awards, and Committee Participation

In 2019, the library was a recipient of a grant from Beyond the Page to host Cork n Bottle String Band, a part of the Beyond the Page program series that showcased bluegrass music and its history.

Professional development is generously supported by the Friends of the Fitchburg Library. Thanks to their support, Kristin Garvey and Rebecca Swanson attended the WLA conference in Wisconsin Dells in the fall.

In addition to professional development opportunities, several library staff members served on committees that directly impact the library. Wendy Rawson served on the SCLS Administrative Council, Tanya Bolchen on the SCLS Delivery Committee, and Lisa Stippich on the SCLS technology committee.

Strategic Planning

The library saw a host of positive changes in 2019 thanks to the strategic planning efforts made by staff and supporters of the library.

Fine-free borrowing

Fine-free borrowing discussions began in May 2018, at a Strategic Planning brainstorming session during a staff in-service. The goal of the project was to extend good will to our patrons, and to follow national trends that focus on the elimination of barriers to library services. Our research showed before the change, less than 1% of the Library's budget came from fines. 70% of Fitchburg library accounts had no fines whatsoever.

Once the decision was made and approved by the Library Board, Fitchburg Library staff formed a Strategic Planning work group. From this group, policies were updated and publicity materials were created. The decision to eliminate all outstanding fines that had been accrued at the Fitchburg Public Library was made by the Strategic Planning group. Library staff members were trained on how our new, fine-free system would work, and how and when to remove fines from accounts for our patrons. 5000 accounts were manually checked and cleared of outstanding overdue fines. This process started in December of 2018 with accounts that were blocked for fines, and was completed in March of 2019.

Changing to a system of fine-free borrowing has been an excellent change for the Fitchburg Public Library. It has increased good will with patrons, allowed many patrons to return to the library system to borrow materials, and significantly reduced the number of stressful interactions that patrons and staff experience at our service points.

Discovery tables

Revamping the youth services play area discussions began in April, 2018 with the goal to make the most of the youth services interactive space. Surveys showed patron interest in new play items. The library decided to create an educational space with commercial grade items that would hold up over time. Research began by looking at online vendors, searching other libraries to see what they had used for a similar space. Brodhead library had a wonderful and sturdy Discovery table which had been in place for 2 years and still looked new. Safety aspects where reviewed as well durability for cleaning and maintenance.

The Friends of the Fitchburg Library said they would pay for this project and approved the order of three tables. The tables were delivered in early May and consisted of one for trains, one for Duplos, and a light table. The ribbon cutting ceremony was attended by the Friends of the Fitchburg Library as well as the Fitchburg Star. Since the update of the new interactive space, patron and family engagement have increased. Kids are playing with each other, building things together, and sharing.

Bibliovation migration

The search for a new ILS for the South Central Library System began in September of 2017. Sirsi/Dynix, iii/Polaris, and Bibliovation systems were presented and demonstrated by vendors and SCLS staff members, and Fitchburg Public Library staff members attended each demonstration session. After deliberation and the consideration of many different factors, Bibliovation was chosen for our new ILS.

Official functionality testing began in March of 2019, and is still being done on future updates to the Bibliovation system. Jen Foster, Tanya Bolchen, and Phil Hansen have all contributed to the testing the Circulation systems, and Tegan Karow has contributed to testing of the Acquisitions section of Bibliovation. A Strategic Planning work group was created to handle this large scale migration, with the first meeting taking place in early

October 2019. This group was tasked with internal and external documentation for the migration, with planning for the downtime during a system-wide ILS outage, with publicity for the migration, and with training Library staff on using our new ILS.

The migration to the Bibliovation system involved taking our library system offline on Friday, December 6th. As planned, we came back online on Monday, December 9th. During this time were able to check items out to patrons, but we weren't able to put items on hold, to renew items, to take fine payments, to register new accounts, or even check items in from patron accounts. We prepared for this change with backroom staging and planning, and with front-end documentation to help with patron questions. The transition went much smoother than we anticipated, and our backlog of returned materials was completed by Tuesday, December 10th.

The transition to Bibliovation has not been perfect, but the South Central Library System has remained optimistic and is happy with our progress. The patrons have been very accommodating through this significant change, and they have done a good job dealing with work-arounds for some temporarily broken features. Library staff have worked very hard to make this transition as easy as possible for our patrons, and we've worked directly with many patrons to teach them the ins and outs of the new system. Fitchburg Library staff have done an excellent job staying positive during a difficult transition, and their hard work has made the migration go as smoothly as possible.
We continue to report errors in the new software to SCLS, we will continue to test software fixes in the future as well.

Facility Needs

In reviewing the needs of the library it became aware that allocation of space would have to be addressed. A Strategic Planning workgroup was formed to help address this issue. It was determined that the library would reallocate space and office furniture to move the former Outreach Manager desk down to the Youth Services work area. This allows the new Outreach Librarian to work more closely with her manager and colleagues. Additionally, this allowed the library to move storage cabinets into the Electronic Services office. The work space for the Administrative Assistant was also redesigned, opting to remove the receptionist set up and replace it with more desk space. Four study rooms on the second floor were repainted a lighter color and adding chair rails to prevent continued drywall damage. This was done with the volunteer assistance of Tri-North Construction.