



# ESSEX LIBRARY

ASSOCIATION

*Your Community Center for Lifelong  
Learning and Cultural Enrichment*



## ***2020 ANNUAL REPORT***

*Covering the period from July 1, 2019 – June 30, 2020*

Above: "Essex Library" by Donna Richard, gift of the artist

Welcome,

October 2020

This has been a challenging year for the Essex Library Association as it has for everybody else. Through it all, we have tried to serve our patrons, using the resources of the Internet when in-person visits to the library were not possible.

During the three months when the library, complying with government regulations, was operating only online we had various electronic sessions – virtual coffee hours, virtual adult programs and electronic story hours for children.

In Phase Two of the shutdown, we have had library visits by appointment as well as call-in service where our staff assembled book requests that patrons could pick up at a table outside the library.

Now, in Phase Three, we welcome patrons without appointments to the library, up to 25 people at a time. We will continue our pick-up service for people who prefer that method of getting books.

We owe a great debt of thanks to Executive Director Deb Smith and the library staff, who have worked extremely hard in these most unusual situations to make sure the library fulfilled the needs of the community. My most heartfelt thanks and appreciation to all of them for their work.

Finishing my terms as president of the Library Board, I want to take this opportunity to thank the Board members for their support and for the extra effort and extra meetings that have been a regular part of our work over the last year. The board's hard work made my work easier and I want to commend every one of them. Our goal always remained the same: the best for our community.

I particularly want to recognize the contributions of three board members whose terms will be coming to an end: Howard Tuttle, who has been both president and treasurer; Sherry Clark, who has served as secretary and Lois Thomsen, who has brought her expertise and her good humor to several library committees. They will all be missed.

With thanks for the past and hope for the future, it is time for me to turn over the presidency with my best wishes to Kathy Bonomi, who has been serving as vice president. She has been my constant support and my reliable sounding board. I wish her the best as she takes over leadership.

Yours truly,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Rita".

Rita Christopher  
President, Board of Trustees

## **Executive Director's Report:**

The 2019-20 year, my first as director for the library, was remarkable in so many ways. Between July 2019 and March 2020, we had more than 35,000 visits to the library and loaned 47,000 items from our physical collections. During the year we also loaned more than 8,400 items from our electronic collections (e-books plus downloadable audio and videos).

Our pre-pandemic work included a new brochure, making repairs to sidewalks, and professional cleaning of the carpet and windows. The library continued to cultivate and expand extensive community partnerships.<sup>1</sup> In October we launched a "Book Nook" at Valley Shore YMCA with the Friends of the Essex Library. The Friends held successful fall fundraisers, including a book sale, Swallows Cruise, and Festival of Dinners. Four new trustees were installed at our Annual Meeting; trustees and the director attended the Association of Connecticut Library Boards conference. In the winter, the Board formed a Strategic Planning task force. Trustees were then heavily engaged throughout the spring in responding to the twin pandemic and economic crises.

The major challenge for the Essex Library in 2019-2020 was keeping library services going even when the building itself, complying with government regulations, was closed to staff and patrons from mid-March to late May. However, we rapidly adapted programs to an online format and provided Zoom meeting space and training in virtual programming to local organizations. We continued book discussion groups, children's story times, and adult lectures and programs using Zoom. We also issued library cards online and provided e-notary services. By April we had added 15,000 e-books and 90 e-periodicals to the collection. We were one of the first libraries statewide to offer curbside pickup and began in-building appointments in August 2020. As I write, we are now open under Phase 3 for short visits to browse or use computers. We have restored more than 95% of our pre-pandemic weekly service hours.

The library employs three full-time and six part-time staff. In 2019-20 all staff trained in CPR, first aid, and harassment prevention. Under our Continuity of Operations Plan we transitioned staff to remote work on March 13<sup>th</sup> and provided 24/7 digital services. In the early spring, we donated personal protective equipment to the Essex Ambulance Association. Library staff also closely monitored and shared town, state, World Health Organization and Centers for Disease Control updates. We increased employment and job searching resources, provided info to small businesses, and continued safe deliveries to Essex Meadows. In May, we bid farewell to long time employee Jessica Branciforte. During her 12 years with the library, Jess solidified Essex Library's service to young patrons and families in the community. In August, we welcomed Christina Carpino to continue this commitment as our Librarian for Children's & Teen Services.

The library receives 76% of our funding from the Town of Essex and our endowment, with an essential 22% of additional funding coming from donors like you. We are grateful to all of our supporters who made gifts in 2019-20, enabling us to reach funding targets during an unprecedented global health and economic crisis and to carry a surplus to cushion against expenses in 2020-21.

Respectfully submitted,



Deborah Smith - Executive Director

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<sup>1</sup> Our 2019-20 community and program partners included: Audubon Society, Community Foundation of Middlesex County, Connecticut Banking Department, Connecticut Coastal Academy, Connecticut DEEP, Connecticut Medicare Group, Connecticut River Museum, Eastern Connecticut Ballet Company, Essex Garden Club, Essex Fire Department, Essex Land Trust, Essex Historical Society, Essex Meadows, Essex Parks and Recreation, Essex Public Schools, Essex Rotary Club, Florence Griswold Museum, Ivoryton Library, Middlesex Hospital, Mystic Seaport, Shoreline Soup Kitchen, Slow Gris, Sustainable Essex, Valley Shore YMCA, Tri-Town Youth Services, and the U.S. Census Bureau.

## Financial Summary for Fiscal Year 2020

### Final Cash Flow Statement for FY 2020

Revenue	Actual	Budgeted
From Town of Essex	\$299,876.00	\$299,441.00
From the Community of Essex	\$115,889.31	\$105,000.00
Endowment Withdrawal	\$107,800.00	\$119,699.00
State of CT Grant	\$4,154.00	\$3,000.00
Misc. Income	\$7,014.34	\$11,500.00
<b>Total Revenues</b>	<b>\$534,733.65</b>	<b>\$538,640.00</b>
Expense	Actual	Budgeted
Payroll	\$352,836.63	\$379,740.00
Maintenance and Utilities	\$66,522.04	\$57,200.00
Supplies and Administrative Expenses	\$61,829.35	\$63,150.00
Materials & Services	\$37,849.26	\$38,550.00
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>\$519,037.28</b>	<b>\$538,640.00</b>
Operating surplus	\$15,696.37	N/A

### Monthly Endowment Value Statement

FY 2020 Month	Beginning Value	Contributions	Deposits & Withdrawals	Adjusted Begin Value	Investment Return	Period End Value	% Change
July	\$3,070,296.11	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$3,070,296.11	\$14,926.90	\$3,085,836.80	0.5%
August	\$3,085,836.80	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$3,085,836.80	-\$28,661.64	\$3,057,175.16	-0.9%
September	\$3,057,175.16	\$0.00	-\$50,000.00	\$3,007,175.16	\$34,246.80	\$3,041,421.96	-0.5%
October	\$3,041,421.96	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$3,041,421.96	\$49,145.15	\$3,086,734.08	1.5%
November	\$3,086,734.08	\$100.91	\$0.00	\$3,086,834.99	\$54,260.26	\$3,140,995.25	1.8%
December	\$3,140,995.25	\$36,850.92	-\$7,800.00	\$3,170,046.17	\$74,744.48	\$3,244,790.65	3.3%
January	\$3,244,790.65	\$36,797.84	\$0.00	\$3,281,588.49	\$7,098.06	\$3,284,652.72	1.2%
February	\$3,284,652.72	\$3,855.80	\$0.00	\$3,288,508.52	-\$165,254.54	\$3,123,253.98	-4.9%
March	\$3,123,253.98	\$0.00	-\$50,000.00	\$3,073,253.98	-\$403,401.87	\$2,669,852.11	-14.5%
April	\$2,669,852.11	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$2,669,852.11	\$211,179.03	\$2,877,712.06	7.8%
May	\$2,877,712.06	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$2,877,712.06	\$123,030.59	\$3,000,642.65	4.3%
June	\$3,000,642.65	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$3,000,642.65	\$64,649.00	\$3,065,291.65	2.2%

# Committee Reports

## Buildings & Grounds Committee

During 2019-20, in addition to ongoing basic maintenance the following projects were completed:

- All of the library's windows and carpeting were professionally cleaned
- The front sidewalk was put out to bid with three contractors. We selected the low bid and they repaired and replaced the concrete sidewalk as needed. Edge paving bricks were reset and leveled. Some back step repair was also completed
- The committee conducted a review of the library's insurance coverage and obtained more comprehensive coverage at a lower cost after a competitive bid process.
- The committee worked with the director to obtain necessary Covid-19 Personal Protective Equipment for staff and patrons (gloves, masks, sanitizer) and sneeze guards for the circulation desk and staff work areas. We reviewed the possibility of a permanent glass sneeze guard, but for now concluded temporary Plexiglas will do.
- The committee began evaluation of the library's phone and internet, electricity, and water delivery services to identify long term cost savings and efficiencies
- Met with the fire marshal for a full review and inspection of the building. No serious problems were found. There are a number of small items that needed attention, many of which have already been completed.

Gary Riggio, Chair  
Buildings & Grounds Committee

## Development Committee:

For the fiscal year of 2019-2020, Essex Library raised \$166,340.84, as compared to \$162,135.93 the previous year and \$127, 167.70 for the fiscal year 2017-2018.

411 households and 16 organizations contributed to the Annual Fund.

Personal notes, written by Board members, were included on many of the Annual Appeal letters that were mailed in October, 2019.

Individual, personal notes were mailed to all those donors from fiscal 2018-2019 who had not yet made a donation by the end of May, 2020.

The Development Committee, in conjunction with Rita Christopher and Deb Smith, developed a brochure highlighting the Library's primary services and programs. Brochures were given to all local realtors for distribution to potential homebuyers. The brochure and a personalized letter is currently mailed to new Essex residents on a monthly basis.

A small cocktail reception was held in February to express appreciation to donors giving \$750 and more. The event was well attended.

A generous gift of \$200,000 from the estate of Barry Fulford was announced during the 2019-2020 fiscal year; it is anticipated funds will be received in 2020-2021.

Betsy Sandberg, Chair  
Development Committee

### **Finance Committee**

The Library Finance Committee has met quarterly over the last year. Meetings have been with our investment advisors at Essex Financial Services. Our focus has been on the performance of our Endowment and Capital investment funds which at the start of the recently completed fiscal year totaled just over \$3,000,000. Both these funds were very negatively impacted by the economic decline caused by the Covid 19 shut down. The combined market value of these two funds declined from \$3,284,000 at the end of January to \$2,670,000 at the end of March. A loss of \$614,000 or 18.7%. Fortunately these values have recovered to just over \$3,000,000 by the end of June.

Howard Tuttle  
Finance Committee Chair

### **Nominating Committee:**

The Nominating Committee put forth to the current Board of Trustees for their approval the nominations of new candidates for the Board.

The Board approved the nominations of Sandra Cahill, Jo Kelly and Nancy McDonald for three-year-terms starting in October 2020. The three candidates have a desire to serve, possess excellent qualifications for serving as Trustees, and have much experience performing other community service. In addition, Betsy Sandberg is nominated for one additional three-year-term starting in October 2020. The Nominating Committee Chair will present these nominations to the Essex Library Association at their Annual Meeting for approval by the members.

The Committee will also present the slate of officers for the 2020-2021 year to the Board for their approval. The slate is as follows: President, Kathy Bonomi; Vice-President, Betsy Sandberg; Secretary, Sandra Cahill; and Treasurer, Michael Delouchry.

Lois Thomsen and Howard Tuttle have each completed two terms of three-years and Sharon Clark has completed one three-year term. They will be departing the Board in October 2020. The Committee and Board thank them for their dedicated service to the Library.

Michael Hammond  
Nominating Committee Chair

### **Personnel Committee:**

The Personnel Committee is tasked with reviewing staff changes, industry trends affecting employment, benefits, staff policy, and personnel issues as they arise. Over the past year the committee developed and administered a performance evaluation process for the library director as well as methods for obtaining regular feedback from library staff on the work environment. We engaged a pro bono consultant to review the employee handbook and have worked with the director to update several library policies.

Kathy Bonomi, Chair  
Personnel Committee



## **STAFF MEMBERS**

As of October 2020

**Deborah Smith, MA/MLIS - Executive Director:** Deb leads and is responsible for day-to-day management of all library operations. She supervises staff, prepares and manages the budget, and advocates for the Library.

**Shea Champion, Library Assistant Trainee:** Having volunteered for the library in FY19, Shea joined our team in August. She delivers circulation services as a trainee.

**Christina Carpino, MLIS - Children's & Teen Services Librarian:** Joining the library team over the summer, Christina oversees delivery of all services for children & youth, including materials, programs, and outreach to area schools.

**Anna Cierocki, MLS - Reference Librarian for Technology Services:** Anna is responsible for delivery of reference services to all patrons and is the library's certified U.S. passport agent. Anna updates the website and manages our new digital archive.

**Cameron Dodge, Page:** Cameron ensures a quality patron experience by shelving and filing materials.

**Jana Pietrzyk, Mending:** Jana works on a monthly basis to care for and extend the use of the library's materials.

**Diane Simoneau, Cataloger:** Diane catalogs materials that are added to the collections and purchases DVDs for the Library. She also provides acknowledgment for and recording of gifts from library donors.

**Susan Skaza, MLS - Borrowing and Outreach Services Librarian:** Joining us in September, Susan coordinates inter library loan, manages statistical reporting needs, and strategizes our social media and marketing outreach services.

**Ann Thompson, MLS - Head of Adult Services:** Ann oversees all services for adults at the library, including the front circulation desk operations and staff, adult materials and acquisitions, and adult programs. Ann is the library's notary public.

### *Celebrating service anniversaries in 2020-21*

Ann Thompson - 20 years of service  
Diane Simoneau - 15 years of service  
Anna Cierocki - 10 years of service

**THANK YOU!**

## **2019 - 2020 BOARD OF TRUSTEES**

**Rita Christopher (President)**  
**Kathy Bonomi (Vice-President)**  
**Howard Tuttle (Treasurer)**  
**Sharon Clark (Secretary)**  
**Suzy Baird (Friends Representative)**  
**Michael Delouchry**  
**Michael Hammond**  
**Susan Hosack**  
**Peter McAndrew**  
**Emily Rapp**  
**Gary Riggio**  
**Betsy Sandberg**  
**Andrea Schaffner**  
**Lois Thomsen**  
**Hans Ullstein**

## **2020 - 2021 TRUSTEE & OFFICER NOMINEES**

**Kathy Bonomi (President)**  
**Betsy Sandberg (Vice President)**  
**Michael Delouchry (Treasurer)**  
**Sandra Cahill (Secretary)**  
**Suzy Baird (Friends Representative)**  
**Rita Christopher**  
**Michael Hammond**  
**Jo Kelly**  
**Peter McAndrew**  
**Nancy McDonald**  
**Emily Rapp**  
**Gary Riggio**  
**Andrea Schaffner**  
**Hans Ullstein**