



ESSEX LIBRARY ASSOCIATION

*Your Community Center for Lifelong
Learning and Cultural Enrichment*

2021 ANNUAL REPORT

Covering the period from July 1, 2020 – June 30, 2021



Sanitizing cars between use keeps our children's trains chugging during the Covid-19 pandemic



October 2021

Welcome to the Annual Meeting of the Essex Library Association!

The library has decided to go virtual this year to allow everyone, including our special guest, to join us from the comfort of their homes. But we hope you've all been taking full advantage of the reopened building for browsing and in-person services – or simply to enjoy being in the company of our great staff and your neighbors.

As of this writing, the library board is winding down a months-long strategic planning process, carried out with the able assistance of consultant Patty Dowling. We'd like to express our gratitude to those members of the community who responded to our survey, participated in focus groups, or otherwise provided valuable input. The feedback and conversations along the way to a plan have given board and staff a renewed sense of purpose and greater understanding of our mission.

On the financial front, the board is happy to report that, in spite of a year of pandemic ups and downs, the library remains in a strong position. This is in large part a credit to the donors who so generously give to the library through our Annual Appeal. We were especially fortunate this past year to receive a major gift through the estate of Barry Fulford, who included the Essex Library in his will.

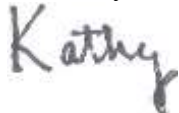
The library applied for and received federal grant money via the Paycheck Protection Program. Further funding came from a number of private and corporate sources, including the American Library Association, Bauman Family Foundation, Community Foundation of Middlesex County, Enid Storm Dwyer Foundation, Kitchings Family Foundation, Essex Lions Club, and Essex Savings Bank. As always, we want to thank the Friends of the Essex Library for their vital support and their role as ambassadors within the community.

I'd like to acknowledge the trustees whose terms are coming to an end: Nancy McDonald, Gary Riggio, and Rita Christopher. Nancy brought her background as an educator, and Gary his expertise on every aspect of the physical plant, to bear on the board's proceedings, the strategic planning process, and the library's safety protocols, capital needs, and so much more. And Rita -- who has served in numerous capacities over the past six years, including president of the board -- not only led us through hard times, but kept all our spirits up along the way with humor and her keen sense of fun.

We're delighted today to recommend a slate of three new board officers: Elizabeth Reinhart, Jill Schwartzman, and Pamela Dumas Serfes, each of whom is committed to community service and brings a wealth of experience and knowledge to the board.

Thank you all for joining us!

Sincerely,

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

Kathy Bonomi
President, Board of Trustees

Executive Director's Report:

Having adapted our service model due to the Covid-19 pandemic last year, Essex Library operated smoothly and continuously during the second pandemic year of 2020-21. The library worked in compliance with local and state public health mandates, acquiring personal protective equipment which quickly enabled us to offer curbside pickup during the summer of 2020. In August 2020, we launched an appointment service. By September 2020 we had fully re-opened for in-person visits, hosting 16,633 visits to the building over the year.

In fall 2020 we welcomed new staffers Christina Carpino (Children's & Teen Librarian) and Susan Skaza (Outreach Librarian) to our team. We also continued to partner with Valley Regional High School and Connecticut Coastal Academy, providing employment to four area teens. All staff worked adroitly to offer programs and services in-person, virtually, and in hybrid formats. Adult programs during the year included author talks, book discussions, and the Centerbrook Architects lecture series, plus sessions on digital photos, calligraphy, propagating native plants, naturalism, astronomy, virology, and how chemistry affects our ecosystems. Many of our Zoom programs attracted more than 100 attendees. Programs for Children & Teens included weekly virtual story times, creative movement, trivia nights, outdoor story times, and a stuffed animal sleepover. In October we designed a Harry Potter scarecrow and hosted an outdoor Drive-In Trick or Treat, with staff costumed as "Hogwarts Library Books." In February we celebrated *Take the Library to Your Child Day*, offering projects and activities that could be completed at home.

Our weekly Children's Take-and-Make Craft kits were popular with old and young; in May 2021 we expanded the service to include craft kits for adults. In 2021 we joined the Community Webs ArchiveIt program. As part of this initiative, we collect and preserve digital information from area organizations as a service to the community. In the spring, students at Connecticut Coastal Academy designed and built a Little Free Library for the library's grounds. The structure, which replicates the library's architecture, was dedicated on Founder's Day, Saturday, June 12th.

Our service focus in 2020-21 emphasized mitigating the economic impact of the Covid-19 pandemic and income inequality. We added new database resources for veterans and job seekers. In January our new "Library of Things" was featured in *The Valley Courier*. This collection includes Google chrome books, Wi-Fi hot spots, tools, interview accessories, toys, and games. In October and February we collected non-perishable food items for Shoreline Soup Kitchen & Pantries. During the winter, we held a series of financial literacy talks on *Preparing for Life's Financial Storms*, *Managing Your Money in Challenging Times*, and *Creating and Following a Spending Plan*. In January, we received a \$3,000 American Library Association grant for a six-part discussion on income inequality. The series culminated with a special discussion in May with Deborah & James Fallows, authors of *Our Towns: A 100,000 Mile Journey Into the Heart of America*.

In the spring, we re-launched our Strategic Planning process, which had been on hiatus due to the pandemic. Our survey of residents about the library received more than 250 responses. We held three focus groups and conducted extensive demographic and industry assessment. The Board of Trustees then drafted new mission, values, and vision statements during a two-part retreat. The final strategic plan will come to the library board for a vote in fall 2021. Thank you to the planning committee, our consultant, and residents for your engagement.

Respectfully submitted,



Deborah Smith - Executive Director

Financial Summary for Fiscal Year 2021

Final Cash Flow Statement for FY 2021

Revenue	Actual	Budgeted
From Town of Essex	\$307,776	\$307,676
From the Community of Essex	\$102,055	\$60,000
Endowment Withdrawal	\$100,000	\$100,000
State of CT Grant	\$2,202	\$3,000
Misc. Income	\$71,258	\$77,022
Total Revenues	\$583,291	\$547,698
Expense	Actual	Budgeted
Payroll	\$325,892	\$346,500
Maintenance and Utilities	\$83,201	\$72,150
Supplies and Administrative Expenses	\$60,803	\$53,100
Materials & Services	\$32,405	\$33,050
Total Expenses	\$502,301	\$504,800
Operating surplus	\$80,990	\$42,898

Monthly Endowment Value Statement

FY 2021 Month	Beginning Value	Contributions	Deposits & Withdrawals	Adjusted Begin Value	Period End Value	% Change
July	\$3,065,291.65	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$3,065,291.65	\$3,189,191.56	4.0%
August	\$3,189,191.56	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$3,189,191.56	\$3,312,425.24	3.9%
September	\$3,312,425.24	\$0.00	-\$50,000.00	\$3,262,425.24	\$3,193,688.03	-3.6%
October	\$3,193,688.03	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$3,193,688.03	\$3,136,271.93	-1.8%
November	\$3,136,271.93	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$3,136,271.93	\$3,362,931.38	7.2%
December	\$3,362,931.38	\$20,000.00	\$0.00	\$3,382,931.38	\$3,480,332.79	3.5%
January	\$3,480,332.79	\$200,000.00	\$0.00	\$3,680,332.79	\$3,639,650.37	4.6%
February	\$3,639,650.37	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$3,639,650.37	\$3,680,285.73	1.1%
March	\$3,680,285.73	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$3,680,285.73	\$3,743,976.16	1.7%
April	\$3,743,976.16	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$3,743,976.16	\$3,871,964.32	3.4%
May	\$3,871,964.32	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$3,871,964.32	\$3,904,976.46	0.9%
June	\$3,904,976.46	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$3,904,976.46	\$3,962,587.35	1.5%
YTD						29.3%

Thank you to our FY21 partners!

Alzheimer's Association CT chapter, American Library Association, Centerbrook Architects & Planners, Community Foundation of Middlesex County, Connecticut Audubon Society, Connecticut Coastal Academy, Connecticut Women's Hall of Fame, CT DEEP, CT Department of Banking, Deep River Roasters, Essex Garden Club, Essex Meadows, Essex Parks and Recreation, Friends of the Essex Library, Hill-Stead Museum, Ivoryton Library Association, Mystic Aquarium, Peach Pit Foundation, Region 4 Schools, Shoreline Soup Kitchen & Pantries, Stewart R. McKinney National Wildlife Refuge, Study Skills 4 You, Sustainable Essex, Town of Essex, Yale Science in the News, U.S. Social Security Administration, UCONN Extension Financial Education Program, UCONN Department of Virology

Committee Reports

Buildings & Grounds Committee

During 2020-21, in addition to ongoing basic maintenance the following projects were completed:

- The library conducted preventative grounds maintenance, including shrub and tree work, repair of a sinkhole, and reducing glare on our exterior pathway lighting.
- The library passed fire inspection and made enhancements to exit doors and the south facing memorial garden for improved emergency egress; a gate between the children's area and an exit hallway was removed and auctioned with proceeds benefitting the library.
- The exterior book drop bin was repainted and weather stripping was installed underneath exterior doors.
- Long-standing ceiling and window leaks were professionally examined; capacity to add a generator system was evaluated.
- In August 2021, the library applied for a matching grant with the State Library of Connecticut's construction program to replace windows in the library and enhance handicapped accessibility of the four restrooms. We expect to hear if the application was successful later this year.
- Drywall was repaired in an area in the children's room.
- The fire sprinkler system was repaired and the library retained Central Systems, Inc. for ongoing sprinkler maintenance.
- The library is establishing a list of ongoing and recommended facilities maintenance needs, seeking competitive bids on snow removal services, and scheduling repairs to masonry and gutters during FY22.

Gary Riggio, Chair
Buildings & Grounds Committee

Development Committee:

For the fiscal year of 2020-2021, Essex Library raised a total of \$321,021.22 from 459 donors. The total revenue includes the largest gift ever presented to the Library, a \$200,000 bequest from Barry Fulford, who passed away May 27, 2020. Additionally, the total revenue figure includes a restricted gift directly to the endowment fund.

The Annual Fund raised a total of \$102,054.74 (the Fund \$69,415; Gifts \$29,437; Restricted Operating Gifts \$3,202.74). As a point of comparison, during the fiscal year 2019-2020, Essex Library raised \$166,340.84.

The Development Committee developed an extensive Annual Appeal mailing list for the upcoming Appeal (October 2021), tripling the numbers of earlier mailings.

The Committee initiated new efforts to pursue grants.

Discussions for a re-launch of a Planned Giving program were begun, with plans for a new Legacy Society in the upcoming fiscal year.

Betsy Sandberg, Chair
Development Committee

Finance Committee

The Finance Committee has continued to meet quarterly over the last year in addition to a couple of ad hoc meetings to assess the impact of the pandemic. The meetings included reviews with our investment advisors at Essex Financial Services. The focus has been on the performance of our Endowment and Capital investment funds, the short-term and long-term health of our cash flow position and collaboration with Building & Grounds and Strategic Planning.

While supporting the application and management of pandemic relief and grant programs, the library was able to complete and plan a number of necessary building repairs and improvements, finishing the fiscal year with a cash surplus and annual investment growth of over 29%. In early 2020 both the Capital and Endowment funds were very negatively impacted by the economic decline caused by Covid 19. As of the end of June 2021 they more than recovered to a combined market value of \$3,963,000, an annual increase of about \$773,000.

Michael Delouchry
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 Elizabeth Reinhart, Jill Schwartzman and Pamela Dumas Serfes for three-year-terms starting in

October 2021. 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, Michael Hammond and Peter McAndrew are each nominated for one additional three-year-term starting in October 2021. 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 2021-2022 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.

Rita Christopher has completed two full terms of three-years. Rita served as President of the Board from 2018-2020 and is departing the Board in October 2021. Gary Riggio and Nancy McDonald are also departing the Board. The Committee and Board thank them for their dedicated service to the Library.

Michael Hammond
Nominating Committee Chair

Personnel Committee:

The Personnel Committee reviews staff changes, industry trends affecting employment, benefits, staff policy, and personnel issues as they arise. Over the past year the committee has developed and implemented a regularly scheduled staff survey and an exit interview process, and we have completed an update of the employee handbook, including a review of the library's vacation and leave policies, benefit programs, and safety protocols.

The chair and another member assisted in the search for a new children's librarian, who joined the staff in August of 2020. The committee and Executive Director together defined goals and objectives for the coming year. The director was recommended for and completed a leadership program through the New England Library Association.

Kathy Bonomi, Chair
Personnel Committee



Photos, above: Our re-painted book drop; Stories in the Park; Little Free Library; Library of Things

STAFF MEMBERS

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.

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.

Claire Majewski, Circulation Trainee: Claire works at our circulation desk and assists with shelving materials and preparing activities for our children's programs

Ellen Miller, Circulation Assistant: Ellen provides friendly and accurate service to library users at our circulation desk.

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

Diane Simoneau, Manager – Donor & Technical Services: 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 – Assistant Director for Public 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.

2020 - 2021 BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Kathy Bonomi (President)

Betsy Sandberg (Vice-President)

Michael Delouchry (Treasurer)

Sandra Cahill (Secretary)

Lisa Burkarth (Friends Representative)

Rita Christopher

Michael Hammond

Jo Kelly

Peter McAndrew

Nancy McDonald

Emily Rapp

Gary Riggio

Andrea Schaffner

Hans Ullstein



Above: The library received one-time funding for new furniture and equipment in FY22 as part of the American Rescue Plan Act