INSIGHT





Youth Librarian Mary Slattery films a virtual children's program at Central Library.

WHEN COVID-19 HIT, THE LIBRARY ADAPTED AND EVOLVED ITS SERVICES

The shutdowns started in March, as COVID-19 began to creep into Iowa and Des Moines. By mid-March, all six locations of the Des Moines Public Library closed to the public to help stop the spread. No one knew how long the doors would remain locked, but one thing was certain: We were an important part of the fabric of our communities, and we would have to quickly find a new way to serve our patrons. And that is exactly what happened. Read on to see how the Des Moines Public Library stepped up to meet the needs of its communities during an unprecedented crisis.

'YOU CAN'T KEEP BOOKS FROM READERS'

A conversation with Library Director Susan A. Woody



Q: How will this closure and the changes the library has made to its public services affect the library moving forward?

One thing libraries excel at is adaptability. The pandemic has certainly accelerated the rate of change we've experienced, but not all the changes have been bad. More people than ever have embraced our digital offerings, including those who might have been reluctant to do so in the past.

Our method of book delivery through our curbside service has been greatly

appreciated by our customers. You can't keep books from readers, and we've been there doing all that we can to provide them in one way or another.

Q: What are the values and priorities that have guided the decisions DMPL has made since March?

We take our obligation to our community very seriously. We pledge to equitably serve our customers and promote a diverse offering of materials and programs. We strive to be good stewards of the public's investment to accommodate literacy and lifelong learning needs for all in our community.

There's never been a better time to read and we'll do everything we can to get everyone — especially children — reading for escape, pleasure, learning, understanding, and more.

Q: How would you describe how the library has responded?

We put the safety of our patrons and our staff first. We looked at the services we provide and found alternative means of delivery. We looked for ways to provide books, movies, music, and information to our community through virtual options and contactless curbside pickup. Customer response has been overwhelmingly positive throughout, and we're thankful for that.

Q: What are some of the lessons you've learned during the pandemic?

We've learned that the need for information during times of strife is much greater than in times of peace. Libraries have always provided information to those in need but during difficult times, we need even more than information.

We need patience, understanding, and empathy. Reading gets us there in so many ways. We learn about others, as well as ourselves, through literature, news, and study. And that's what a library provides.

Susan A. Woody is the director of the Des Moines Public Library.

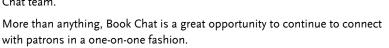
BOOK CHAT HELPS PATRONS FIND THEIR NEXT GREAT READ



Book Chat is a DMPL team of librarians whose goal is to help readers start their next reading journey. After sharing information about reading habits by filling out a simple online form or calling a live Book Chat hotline, patrons get customized book suggestions from our expert librarians. The team will also put the books on hold for a patron to pick up via curbside.

For patrons who want books right now, there's also the Book Bundle option. Team members choose a stack of books of one genre or age range and have it ready to be picked up within one business day.

"We'd been getting requests from parents early on, saying 'Help! I can't read *Give A Mouse A Cookie* anymore, just give me anything!" says Paige Knotts, the Senior Librarian at Franklin Avenue Library who also supervises the Book Chat team.



"We knew we'd need a way to connect with our patrons beyond the computer," says Knotts. "Offering this form and phone line was a way to say, 'Hey, we're still here and ready to help you find books. It's just going to look slightly different."



Book Chat: How it Works

Get customized book suggestions from our Book Chat team one of two ways:

- 1. Fill out a simple online Book Chat form.
- Call the dedicated Book Chat live hotline between 10 AM and 5 PM Monday through Friday: (515) 248-6286. We'll ask a few questions and start putting together your book list.

Book suggestions will be delivered to your inbox in 3-5 business days. If you want, the Book Chat team can also place the book picks on hold for you, to pickup via curbside pickup.

Also at dmpl.org/book-chat:

- Meet the Book Chat team!
- Borrow a Book Bundle!
- Sign up for email newsletters with book picks for your favorite genre!
- And more!

LIBRARY PROGRAMS GO VIRTUAL

The library's programming team had to quickly shift focus and learn how to create and distribute programs virtually.

Even more challenging was the upcoming Summer Reading Program, one of the library's most vital and popular initiatives each year.

"Normally our summer reading program takes months of preparation," says Katie McKenzie, DMPL Program Coordinator. "This year, our programming team had just five weeks to redesign the program."

Book Your Summer! ran from July 1 to August 15. It featured virtual programs across multiple platforms, as well as weekly grab-and-go activities families picked up curbside at library locations.

"Nearly every day of the program, families had the opportunity to engage in content created by our staff that promotes literacy, STEM education, and creative expression, as well as enjoying performers," McKenzie says.

Youth librarians have recorded programs to be distributed over Facebook and YouTube, and the library worked with organizations and individuals

like the Blank Park Zoo, After School Art Program, and nationally known storyteller Donna Washington to create fun, inspirational, and educational programs for families.

Virtual programs for adults are also growing in popularity. Using Zoom, the library has hosted programs about crime scene DNA, crocheting, and a series of new online book clubs, giving adults a chance to chat with others and continue learning.

Among the most anticipated programs was an author event over Zoom with Dr. Jennifer Harvey, the author of *Raising White Kids*, scheduled for August in partnership with the West Des Moines Public Library and Clive Public Library.

The programming teams are pushing new programs and new ideas going forward into the fall as the library continues to create a fulfilling experience for our patrons — even without meeting rooms full of people.

"Zoom allows for personal connection with other patrons and library staff in a time when we are all craving connection," McKenzie says.

"Zoom allows for personal connection with other patrons and library staff in a time when we are all craving connection"

Katie McKenzie, DMPLProgram Director

See information on upcoming virtual programs at dmpl.org/events



INVESTMENT IN DIGITAL MATERIALS PAYS OFF



The first question when the COVID-19 pandemic caused the library to close its doors to the public was: "How do we serve our patrons without being open?"

The answer: Focus on the many digital services at dmpl.org.

The Des Moines Public Library's Technical Services

team sprung into action. For the first time, community members could sign up for a digital card, allowing new library users a chance to get access to library digital materials without setting foot in a building. More than 3,000 digital cards were created as of mid-August.

The shutdown was the first time many of our patrons used Libby, the app that houses the library's eBook and eAudiobook collection that contains tens of thousands of titles. Staff spent time at the beginning educating patrons, and it's paid dividends, with record usage among many of our digital services.



The Tech Services team reallocated funds from print to digital to keep up with increased demand, and usage of eBooks and eAudiobooks shot up year over year

"Reading seems to have a big appeal right now," says Kathy Leonard, Technical Services Librarian. "Even with the popularity of our curbside pickup and access to physical materials, our digital collection circulation is strong. It has been wonderful to see this investment pay off."

The library also promoted other digital services, such as Kanopy, which has a large collection of streaming films, and Acorn TV, a streaming service that features popular British television programs. Since March, Kanopy has been used by patrons more than 1,000 times per month, and Acorn TV averages about 300 active users at any given time.

Go dmpl.org/stream-download to find all of the library's eBook, eAudiobook, and streaming video options.

CURBSIDE PICKUP PROVES POPULAR DURING PANDEMIC

Early in the summer, when it became clear buildings were going to be closed to the public for the long haul, library staff knew drastic changes were in order. Even though usage of digital services was skyrocketing, patrons were clamoring for physical books and materials.

Staff went into research and planning mode, and on June 1, the brandnew curbside pickup service launched at all six library locations.

"For us, it was a complete pivot from the type of service we usually provide. We're used to one-on-one services, and we had to figure out what this would look like," says Nikki Hayter, Manager of Franklin Avenue Library.

Franklin Avenue Library is the most popular branch for curbside pickup, serving as many as 200 cars in a single day.

Staff quickly adapted to the new normal of curbside, getting creative with the way they interacted with patrons.



109,997
Items checked out using curbside pickup through August 18



Curbside pickup in action at Franklin Avenue Library.
4 www.DMPL.ORG | 515.283.4152

The service has also provided a vital social interaction for patrons who have been isolated at home for months, and provides access to materials to those with physical ability issues, people without internet, and more.

"We have gotten so many positive comments, so many written thank-you notes returned in our holds," Hayter says. "We've even had some patrons deliver us doughnuts to show their gratitude."

Curbside has been a strong example of how a public library can quickly do things in new ways to better serve their communities.

"Libraries have always adapted," Hayter says. "We responded quickly to what our community needed during this pandemic. We should be able to continue maintaining that flexibility, listening to what people need and responding and engaging with those needs."

Curbside: How it Works

- 1. Place materials on hold online at dmpl.org, or by calling (515) 283-4152.
- 2. Wait for a notification that items are ready to be picked up at your preferred location.
- Drive to the library, follow the posted instructions, and pick up your items curbside (or use Central Library's pickup window).

Find more info at dmpl.org/curbside



DES MOINES PUBLIC LIBRARY FOUNDATION

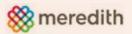
Opening Doors. Books. Minds.



HIGHLIGHTS FROM A SUCCESSFUL (VIRTUAL) TRIVIA SMACKDOWN!

This year we moved the August 7 fundraiser to Zoom for a virtual, safe, social-distanced event. There was still raucous laughter, sighs of frustration, and some intense competition.

The winning trivia team was Dewey's Decimators, and the last place team was Scott's Tots. The prize for best team name went to You Get What You Putin, and the honor of the night's worst answer went to Masked Marauders.



A special thank you to our event sponsor Meredith Corporation and to those contributing prizes and event items: Belinda Alexander, Kum & Go, Casey's, Wells Fargo, 1717 Brewing Company, Sandy Deyoe, Cyd's

Catering, Steve Jayne and Karen Shaff, Dory Briles and Jim Christenson, Deb and Toby Gordon, Chris Nebons, RAYGUN, Ellen Yee, Cory McAnelly, and Tim Hickman and Frank Vaia.

A HEARTFELT THANK YOU TO CATHERINE WILLIAMS



The Library Foundation was honored to be included as a beneficiary of Catherine Williams' will. She was an amazing human being who has been described as an Iowa Icon.

The following is taken from her official obituary: Catherine Gayle Virginia Williams was born on November 21, 1914. She married Richard Williams, Jr. in 1963. Catherine passed away on May 20, 2020. Catherine attended the Des Moines schools, graduating from North High School in 1932.

Following a dancing career of 16 years, she received a business college degree from Cortez Peters in Chicago, a B.S. degree from Drake University, and her master's degree in social work from the University of

Iowa. Catherine was an Iowa State employee for 33 years, beginning as a secretary and retiring in 1981 as Deputy Commissioner for the Iowa Department of Social Services.

During her career, Catherine received an Honorary Doctoral degree from Simpson College, Distinguished Alumnus from Drake University, Social Worker of the Year, Mark Hale Lecture Award from the University of Iowa Women's Hall of Fame in 1982, North High School Distinguished Alumna, Mary Louise Smith Award from the Y.M.C.A., and the Iowa African American Hall of Fame. In 2010, the local chapter of N.A.S.W. initiated an annual award in Catherine's name for social workers in diversity. In 2018 she earned both the Sages Over 70 Award, and the Drake University National Alumni Award in Community Service. In 2019 she was inducted into the National Association of Social Workers Foundation Pioneers Program.

WE LOVE OUR DONORS!

Community Foundation of Greater Des Moines: \$5,000 grant for the Library's new strategic planning effort.

National Endowment for the Arts Big Read grant: Big Read: Des Moines 2021 program. The book selected is Ray Bradbury's *Fahrenheit 451*.

Nationwide Foundation: \$20,000 grant for AViD and Summer Reading & School Readiness.



We would like to thank and recognize the sponsors for this year's summer reading program:





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MEET THE NATIONAL LIBRARY GIVING DAY WINNER!

Kelly Marble, Marketing and Community Outreach Specialist at Primary Health Care, was the winner of the April 23 National Library Giving Day essay contest. She responded to the question "How has the Library inspired you?" with the following:

The sliding glass doors open. The smell of books hits my nose and tickles my senses. The air of the library in the whispered silence has a familiar pulse. The library is my sanctuary in adulthood. It is one of the last places in our society where no one is trying to sell you anything, and everything is available free of charge.

As a child, the library inspired me to read. It taught me the power and importance of stories. My mom would take my sister and me on trips to the library. We would check out a stack of twenty books, and I would tear through them.

Before I was able to read on my own my mother would sit with me and read books every night. In elementary school, we were supposed to fill out a reading log, and we would run out of space, and start writing on the back of the paper. My teachers had a hard time believing that a child could read that much.

My love of reading stems from the fact that as a child I had access to hundreds of books for free from the public library. My family never would have been able to afford to buy all of the books I read that shaped my childhood and it was the public library that made reading accessible and a lifelong passion.

Please consider a gift to the Des Moines Public Library Foundation.

Leave a legacy by designating a planned gift today – you will make a difference in the future. Planned gifts can show a lifetime of caring and be in the form of a bequest, gift of life insurance, stocks or annuities. Please contact Foundation Executive Director, Dory Briles at 515-412-0180.

JOIN US FOR A NEW EVENT

Over the past few years, the Des Moines Public Library Foundation has been thrilled to bring you authors like Bill Bryson, John Irving, Jane Smiley, Dayton Duncan, Marilynne Robinson, and even Nick Nolte with our annual fundraiser. Due to the global pandemic, there will not be an Iowa Author Awards Dinner this year. Instead, we will be hosting a new event in October. All you have to do is enjoy an evening at home knowing you have made a difference in the lives of the thousands of people utilizing your public library.

If you have found the Des Moines Public Library of value these past few months, indeed throughout your lifetime, please choose to join us. Watch for information in the mail and on our website at dmpl.org/foundation.

THE NEXT CHAPTER SCAVENGER HUNT



The Library After Dark – Scavenger Hunt was held on Friday, March 6 at the Central Library. Sponsored by The Next Chapter, a group of young professionals who support the library and library foundation, the event had seven teams. After solving mysteries and learning about all the great library resources, players took their free drink tokens to Americana where the group continued their evening.

MEMORIAL FOR SONDRA McALLISTER

A book memorial for the Forest Avenue Library was given in memory of Sondra McAllister by former Washington Irving Junior High School teachers. Sondra was a teacher at the school from 1972-1976. She loved the kids and her teaching experience. The donors stated: "We believe books for the young child up through high school will be the best. These should include all races and ethnic groups. We want these kids to be as proud of themselves as we are of them."

2020 Forest Avenue Library Love 4 Learning Scholarships



TyDarria Griffin

Emedi Abahenya.

In describing how they used the Forest
Avenue Library to be successful in school
the winners stated:

Four scholarships were awarded to high

school seniors who use the library to succeed

in school. The winners this year are: TyDarria Griffin, Yamam Hussein, Esther Ubadigbo, and



Yamam Hussein

"As a small child I would play on the children's computers and look through children's books while my mom used the adult computers for work. The library has great printing and is a convenient place to meet up with classmates for group projects."



Esther Ubadigbo

"I can always rely on the Forest Avenue Library to give me a peaceful place where I can study for an upcoming test, do projects, have group sessions and write essays for school or scholarships. The library allows me to print and scan schoolwork without worrying where I can get the money. Thank you Forest Avenue Library."

The scholarship is made possible with a generous contribution from our anonymous donors via the Community Foundation of Greater Des Moines.

THANK YOU TO OUR DONORS

The following donations were received by the Des Moines Public Library Foundation from February 3, 2020 through July 31. We apologize for any errors or omissions. Please contact us, and we will make corrections.

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DMPL BY THE NUMBERS

Usage of the library since March shows just how much library services have evolved and adapted.

4,276 Items added to Libby between March and mid-August

50,795 eAudiobook checkouts between mid-March and mid-August

71,706 eBook checkouts between mid-March and mid-August

Percent increase in digital checkouts over same period in 2019

3.212 Digital cards made through mid-August

109,997 Items checked out using curbside pickup through mid-August

21,805 Cars/customers served by curbside pickup through mid-August

Record high of curbside customers served in one day, at Franklin Avenue Library, Friday, August 14

1,015 Public computer sessions through mid-August

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Sue Woody

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Fall Holiday Closures:

- October 12
- November 11, 26-27



Funding to print *Insight* is provided by the Des Moines Public Library Foundation.











Phone: 515.283.4152



Email: reference@dmpl.org

CENTRAL LIBRARY

1000 GRAND AVENUE PICKUP WINDOW HOURS: Mon, Wed, Fri: 9 AM - 5 PM Tue, Thus: 9 AM - 7 PM Saturday: 10 AM - 4 PM

COMPUTERS BY APPOINTMENT: Mon, Wed, Fri: 9 AM - 5 PM Tue, Thu: 9 AM - 8 PM Saturday: 10 AM - 5 PM

EAST SIDE LIBRARY

2559 Hubbell Avenue

CURBSIDE PICKUP HOURS: Mon, Tue: 10 AM - 7 PM Wed-Sat: 10 AM - 4 PM

FOREST AVENUE LIBRARY

1326 FOREST AVENUE

CURBSIDE PICKUP HOURS: Mon, Thu: 10 AM - 7 PM Tue, Wed, Fri, Sat: 10 AM - 4 PM

Franklin Avenue Library

5000 FRANKLIN AVENUE

CURBSIDE PICKUP HOURS: Mon-Thur: 10 AM - 7 PM Frid-Sat: 10 AM - 4 PM

NORTH SIDE LIBRARY

3516 FIFTH AVENUE

CURBSIDE PICKUP HOURS: Mon, Thu, Fri, Sat: 10 AM - 4 PM Tue, Wed: 10 AM - 7 PM

SOUTH SIDE LIBRARY

1111 PORTER AVENUE
CURBSIDE PICKUP HOURS:
Mon, Wed: 10 AM - 7 PM
Tue, Thu, Fri, Sat: 10 AM - 4 PM

Hours subject to change. Visit dmpl.org to find up-to-date hours for public library services.