

# REPORT OF THE AVON FREE PUBLIC LIBRARY

GLENN GRUBE, *Library Director*

In the first full year of COVID era library services, users accessed Avon Library's collections, programs, and services in a very different manner, as demonstrated by the statistical report on this page. Following a surge of library card registrations in the first months of the pandemic, the 2020-21 year ended with fewer registered cardholders than in 2019 as the temporary cards offered to users during the initial months of 2020 expired. In-person library visits were also down significantly, as our programs remained online, our meeting and study rooms remained closed, and many borrowers used curbside pickup to retrieve books and other materials. While many residents accessed library wifi during these months, in-library computer use plummeted, due to limited library hours and reluctance to spend long periods of time indoors close to others.

Despite that, circulation of e-books, e-audio, streaming video, and digital magazines increased significantly, as did searches of online databases and website visits. Library staff also produced many more virtual programs than in the previous year, resulting in only slight drops in overall circulation and program attendance.

Throughout the year, additional in-person services were phased back in as it became safe and prudent to do so. In July, the library installed new self-checkout stations and added Plexiglas barriers at service points in order to begin appointment-based access to the building. Open browsing of our collection began outside, with "Courtyard Checkout" days, when a selection of materials was moved to the courtyard for outdoor access to books, DVDs, and other items. In the fall, we began allowing indoor browsing without an appointment for the adult collection, while keeping our children's and teen floor appointment based to ensure proper social distancing.

Many of the changes spurred by the pandemic proved popular with users, and will likely remain long after the coronavirus crisis fades away. Most important of these is the fine free policy the Library Board formally approved in February 2021. While our initial suspension of overdue fines was due to the recommendation of quarantining returned materials, the decision to permanently remove fines on most library materials was made in order to eliminate barriers to borrowing and ensure equitable access to all. Similarly, our online library card application and curbside pickup options began as ways to minimize close contact between staff and patrons, but continue as popular and convenient ways to access library services for busy residents.

Local history moved online this year as well, with the start of *Unearthing History*, a series of virtual lectures on the Paleo-Indian site discovered in Avon along the banks of the Farmington River. Library staff also digitized the 10,000<sup>th</sup> item from the Marian Hunter Local History Room. Digitization of these historical artifacts provides not only a way to preserve our historical documents, but also allows wider access to the content.

Children's and teen staff found ways to reach out to Avon's younger readers both virtually and in person. Outreach to Avon Public Schools went virtual this year, with librarian's appearing on classroom smartboards, via Zoom, and posting videos on Avon Library's YouTube channel.

Avon's youth also had opportunities to submit articles, stories, poems, and artwork to *Imagine Avon*, a literature and arts magazine published by the library. Children and teens also helped keep local senior citizens feel connected during the pandemic with a greeting card campaign. Partnering with the Youth Services Bureau and the Avon Senior Center, 1,439 cards were handmade and sent out for various winter and spring holidays.

The first half of 2021 also saw Avon Library's geothermal powered heating, ventilation, and air conditioning system replaced. This large and complex project provided a good deal of disruption inside the library building and on the grounds, so it was actually a good thing that in-person library use was less than usual this year. It allowed contractors more unfettered access to the building and disturbed fewer people than it might have at another time.

While 2020-21 was unlike any other year that Avon has experienced, it is clear that the resilience demonstrated in the face of a pandemic means the Avon Free Public Library and the Avon community can rise to meet almost any challenge.

LIBRARY STATISTICS			
Library Use	FY 18/19	FY 19/20	FY 20/21
Resident Card Holders	7,769	8,257	6,197
% of Population	42%	45%	33%
Library Visits (door count)*	156,168	125,605	40,762
Visits per capita	8.5	6.8	2.1
<b>Circulation</b>			
Adult Collection	104,549	85,304	84,717
Children's Collection	109,474	85,334	71,409
Young Adult Collection	17,557	15,659	11,293
Downloadable Collection**	23,738	31,297	37,396
Total	255,318	217,594	204,815
Circulation per capita	13.9	11.9	10.8
<b>Programs &amp; Services</b>			
Library Programs***	1,157	1,032	1,059
Program Attendance***	34,663	30,182	25,538
Reference Questions	31,074	21,174	16,989
Internet Usage*	26,556	19,162	4,322
Database Searches	94,212	75,012	83,528
Website Visits	92,586	100,776	110,673
<b>Library Collection</b>			
Print Collection	100,390	98,456	96,062
Non-print Collection	95,247	92,539	103,631
<b>Added to the Collection</b>			
Print Collection	8,537	7,039	7,669
Non-print Collection****	12,167	13,513	29,742
Magazine Subscriptions- <i>includes digital titles</i>	217	214	3,616

\*Library building was closed to the public from March 15 to September 9, 2020 due to Covid-19

\*\*Total includes downloads of e-books, e-audio, streaming video and digital magazines for all age levels

\*\*\*Includes online programs and attendees

\*\*\*\*Includes approximately 8,000 records that had to be re-loaded in 2020-21