

# FLORIDA LIBRARIES

THE OFFICIAL JOURNAL OF THE FLORIDA LIBRARY ASSOCIATION

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Fall 2020

## We're in this TOGETHER

**Libraries continue to step up to serve their patrons  
during a world-wide pandemic**

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## Mission Statement:

The Florida Library Association is a statewide organization that promotes excellence in Florida libraries by advocating strongly for libraries and providing high quality professional and leadership development for a diverse community of library staff, volunteers, and supporters.

## Vision:

The Florida Library Association champions strong, indispensable, user-focused Florida libraries that exceed the expectations of the communities and constituents they serve.

Lisa O' Donnell, CAE, Executive Director

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Florida Libraries Copy should be submitted by email to [journal@flalib.org](mailto:journal@flalib.org). You are encouraged to include press-ready digital photos (300 p.p.i.) and graphics with your articles, which will be included on a space-available basis.

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# From the Editor



## Meeting Challenges with Creativity

By Karen Urbec

When last I sat to write an editorial note, we were at the beginning of a global pandemic and were faced with more questions than answers, more fears than confidence, and more disruption to our daily routines than most of us have probably ever seen. Since then, we have learned more about what the COVID-19 pandemic would ask of us, and we have shifted our ordinary practices to meet a challenge that has not diminished and continues to linger.

Along the way, we have learned how important community is to our individual physical, emotional, and mental health, and we've learned how important libraries are to our broader communities as we all try to manage long-term stress and anxiety. Not surprisingly, librarians are there to meet the needs around us. In this edition, we will read about ways that several library systems have worked to continue serving their communities while coping with this ongoing pandemic.

We still don't know when this challenge will end, but we do know that resilience, flexibility, and creativity will continue to be the tools that we use to meet the informational, practical, creative, and anxiety-reducing needs of our patrons.

Despite the uncertainty of this pandemic, we at Florida Libraries continue to plan for a brighter future. To continue to improve the quality of our journal, and to help with future plans to publish peer-reviewed articles, we have established an editorial board. This expansion is a significant step that will allow us to move closer to our goal of being a journal that offers more to our readers. Whether you are looking for ideas for your next program, considering new ideas to enhance your professional life, or if you are seeking an opportunity to see your research published, we want to be the first source you consider. It will take time and the dedicated work of many people to reach this goal. I am grateful to my colleagues who have agreed to share this work with me.

Renaine Julian is the director of STEM libraries at Florida State University. He is our new managing editor, and will oversee the peer-reviewed side of the journal. Claudia Holland is the chief of the Bureau of Library Development at the Division of Library and Information Services. She is our copy editor, ensuring everything in the journal is clearly written and matches our style guidelines. Keila Zayas-Ruiz is the Sunshine State Digital Network Coordinator. Keila is our new peer review coordinator, and she will encourage new submissions to the journal and will help new writers navigate the peer review process. Mary Daniels is a youth librarian at Maitland Public Library. She is our new book reviews editor, and will encourage and edit book review submissions. I will continue to oversee the journal as a whole, and Karen Layton will continue to be our graphic designer and staff liaison.

I cannot thank my colleagues enough for joining me in this work. I am enthusiastic about all we can do when we pool our talents and work together! I hope you will join me in welcoming our editorial board and supporting our work.



Mary Daniels

*Florida Libraries*  
Book Reviews Editor



Claudia Holland

*Florida Libraries*  
Copy Editor



Renaine Julian

*Florida Libraries*  
Managing Editor



Keila Zayas-Ruiz

*Florida Libraries*  
Peer Review Coordinator

# From the President



## LEAD INCLUSIVELY

May 19-20, 2021

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### FLORIDA LIBRARY ASSOCIATION HYBRID ANNUAL CONFERENCE

In 2019, we made a commitment with our president, Eric Head, to lead forward. To lead with heart but also with vision. And as library workers, we established even better literacy programs, took the funding fights head on, and continued to extend our services and resources to those for whom this may be the only contact they have each day with a kind voice.

And then 2020 happened. What we thought were our problems were sidelined by a need to simply change the air we breathe. COVID-19 has caused us to close our doors, back away from both friends and strangers, to retreat into our homes until it is safe to come out. But still many have experienced first-hand the impact of this disease so our libraries reach out to help and to comfort.

In addition to the exceptional challenge posed by COVID-19, we continue to bear witness this year to racism, bigotry and discrimination, towards our Black, Indigenous and People of Color co-workers, friends and library users. And taking a breath, again, symbolizes in a very basic, devastating way, an often life-threatening experience.

These events affect and diminish us all.

I have witnessed racism against my Black friend at the hands of a middle-aged white retail store employee who was very happily helping my friend select a wrench for his plumbing tool kit. And when they agreed upon the best wrench for the job (while I yawned and rolled my eyes), the employee then offered to show my Black friend where the "slim jims" were kept.

A tool commonly used to break into a car.

Immediately I demanded he apologize and get his manager. But my friend, Andre, took my arm and asked that we just leave the store. And that's what we did.

Yet, from that moment, having witnessed the ugliness of white supremacy intended to insult and oppress another human being, and seeing how immediately my friend retreated away from the confrontation, I realized that this was definitely not his first experience with a racist. And that he knew that things could definitely get worse if the situation escalated.

For me, I still feel great sadness. But more importantly, I am humbled, because my sadness is nothing compared to the burden of Andre and other BIPOC or LGBTQ+ individuals. But as these sad, life-threatening occurrences continue around us, I am also motivated to take the actions in front of us.

And as we continue to lead forward, let us also Lead Inclusively.

To that end, I ask you to join me and commit to kindness, care and decency. To make the promise of libraries - access, democracy, intellectual freedom, diversity, and privacy among others - truly extend to all. Can we agree to re-examine our own spaces, services and resources to make sure that our BIPOC and LGBTQ+ colleagues are represented safe and happy with those?

I think there are areas in this profession that merit some scrutiny so that we truly realize the purpose of our libraries. Intentionally adopting anti-racist structures and ensuring that our behaviors and language reflect the values of inclusivity will demonstrate to Black library workers, and other vulnerable communities, that their lives do matter.

To do this, I am proposing that the actions we undertake for FLA this year, to Lead Inclusively, are guided by this urgent purpose and newly articulated values. I hope you will join in as we undertake the following:

- A Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Accessibility Task Force that will articulate the FLA organizational values to inform our newly developed strategic plan and develop key priorities for us to undertake to further our library mission and support all people.
- Reinvigorate the committees and member groups so that our values are fundamental to their missions and to hold the conversations that include concerns for BIPOC, LGBTQ+ and other emergent but marginalized communities.
- Develop peer-review standards and a process to better engage our academic library members with a view toward profiling our scholarship and understanding our systemic values.
- To fully support the Public Library Directors Member Group, to keep both our public library personnel and our public library users safe during this next year, in which we will be asked to provide services in the midst of unsure conditions.
- And, to support our academic and school media workers, who face unknown challenges as we attempt to re-establish a safe way of delivering our services and resources.

This year, we seek to undo the implicit biases in our profession that harm BIPOC library workers and to focus on serving our communities. To Lead Inclusively, we must look critically at our library spaces, services and resources, to better meet the needs of Black, Indigenous and People of Color and those within the LGBTQ+ communities.

Let's look at this and Lead Inclusively. It's our next chapter.

Laura Spears  
FLA President, 2020-2021

# From the Executive Director



What a year...2020 has been the year of pivots and resilience. We have pivoted at work, at school, at family gatherings, in the way we shop. Life as we knew it came to a screeching halt in March. Then, a few short months later, we were brought up short again when we bore witness to a painful moment in our nation with the very visible and

senseless death of George Floyd. The simmering anger so many have felt for too long was made known. The anger, the fear, the stress, the exhaustion...we all felt it. If I'm honest, I still feel it, albeit with a steadier outlook than earlier this year. It can be difficult to find hope and light amid so much darkness. But, as Dolly Parton famously said, "...if you want the rainbow, you've got to put up with the rain." And, you don't have to look too far beyond a library to understand that truly amazing things have happened in spite of this shared turmoil. Libraries have taken pivoting and resiliency to a new level.

Resiliency. I'm reminded of a story Eric Klinenberg shared with us during his keynote address last month...if you joined us, you likely know it. He shared his experience with a group of designers who were participating in a high-stakes, high-reward competition with a mission to design and create spaces to adapt to both climate and social change. The story goes that this group of young designers had a plan, a plan they were incredibly excited about – they wanted to create and build a space in the heart of their community that was open to everyone, it would include resources for all ages, provide much-needed programming for all ages, incorporate literacy and language classes, offer career resources, and would operate as a public building where people could come in and learn from each other. It would be called The Resiliency Center and it would be run by Resilience Professionals. This group was overjoyed, bursting with pride, and thought they had the winning design. Surely no one had ever had such a vision, such a bold and creative idea as this, right?! There couldn't possibly be another institution so welcoming and encompassing?! And, with a practiced, professorial tone, Eric asked the group, "Have you heard of a library?"

Think about this for a moment. That group of young designers had certainly been to libraries, they had almost certainly asked librarians for help while there. But their perception of the library was off. In their excitement to create the newer, the bigger, the next best thing, they overlooked the obvious...their great idea already exists in



counties and cities across the nation! But somehow, the perception of the library shifted.

How often does that happen when we talk to elected officials about the importance of libraries? How often do we hear those officials say, "We love the library!" and mere months later we learn funding has been cut. What is their perception of the library? How often have they visited? Do they truly know the impact the library has on the community? Do they know how valuable it is, or how many lives have been changed because of it? Do they?

Libraries are pivotal beyond books and periodicals, that we know. And, this year, you took that to a whole new level:

**YOU** handed out PPE to health professionals and citizens,

**YOU** helped feed those who were hungry in your community,

**YOU** assisted with job applications,

**YOU** took programming virtual and didn't miss a beat,

**YOU** helped working parents when they suddenly became pseudo teachers,

**YOU** created new service models,

**YOU** expanded e-resources to reach more patrons,

**YOU** preserved an election process with ballot drop-offs and polling sites,

**YOU** went to work in the library wearing all but a full hazmat suit,

**YOU** learned more about epidemiology than you ever thought, just in case a patron asked you about it.

You, **AMAZING LIBRARIANS**, did all of this amid your own personal struggles, through your own stress. You pivoted your libraries so that your communities remained strong. Your elected officials need to know! And, we will have the opportunity with the arrival of the 2021 Legislative Session in March. We don't yet know what that will look like, or if we'll be able to meet at the Capitol, but we do know that you and your stories from this past year will be vital.

Thank you, to all of you, who stepped up and served your communities. You truly are the best kind of resilience professionals.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Lisa O'Donnell". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Lisa O' Donnell, CAE  
Executive Director, FLA



## The Most Cost Effective High-End Library Automation System

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- ✓ Acquisition Manager
- ✓ Room Booking
- ✓ Summer Reading Program
- ✓ Event Scheduler
- ✓ Computer Booking/Print Management
- ✓ Digital Asset Manager

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- ✓ Access any feature with one click
- ✓ Customize the interface based on user preferences
- ✓ ShowMe Videos for self paced training
- ✓ Online Catalog with Discovery Layer
- ✓ Single search for physical and online resources
- ✓ Automated notifications by email, text message or phone call



# Remembering Cecil Beach

By Kevin Beach

Florida recently lost a true pioneer in the library field. Cecil Prentice Beach dedicated his life to the betterment of libraries and their services for 60 years. His career spanned from the 1940s to well into the 21st century during which he changed the way libraries served the community and interacted with other educational and cultural institutions.

Born in 1927 in a rural community near Knoxville Tennessee, Cecil recalled that as a very young child that his grandfather, though a simple farmer, loved books and often sat with Cecil, reading in lantern light at bedtime, instilling this same passion in him.

Cecil acquired his first taste of librarianship in 1948 as a student at the University of Chattanooga while working as a page in the campus library. He was soon hired by the local library system to drive their bookmobile, a 40 foot long converted school bus. By 1950 he was one of the first men to graduate from Florida State University's newly established College of Information Studies in Tallahassee Florida. His first professional appointment was the directorship of a newly formed four-county library system based in Winder Georgia, a great learning experience for him. During these years he also worked with a congressional representative, Phil Landrum, who drafted the first LSA - Library Services Act that exists to this day as the LSCA, providing funds to encourage the growth and improvement of library systems throughout the United States.

One of the fundamental forces that drove Cecil in these early years was the quest for equality and civil rights in the South. Due to an incident as a six year old when he was slapped by an elderly white man for sharing a sandwich with a black child, he vowed someday to be an agent of change. That opportunity came in 1960 when he accepted the directorship of the Gadsden Public Library in Alabama, one of the focal points of the growing civil rights movement. He only agreed to accept the appointment if he could begin the process of integrating library services there and soon was hiring black employees and abolishing the policy that restricted black citizens solely to the use of a back room of discarded books located off an alleyway at the rear of the library. He and his family soon became targets of the local White Citizens Council and the Klan. A burning cross on the lawn and caravans of racist sympathizers driving by the home wearing hoods and robes did not deter him. His steadfast resolve led to a meeting with Martin Luther King who thanked him for his efforts.

In 1965 Cecil moved the family to Tampa, Florida to manage the burgeoning city / county library system there and he again was greeted by initial struggles with segregated services that were soon corrected. A state of the art main library facility replaced an outdated Carnegie facility and during his tenure there, 10 new branch buildings were added to a growing metropolitan area. One of his fortes was the design of libraries and at this time he began his consulting business, creating library designs and floor plans in dozens of locations throughout the southern United States. He

served as the 4th president of the recently founded Florida Library Association in 1970 and led many annual *Library Day* delegations to fight for funding from our state legislature.

In 1971 Cecil was lured away from the Tampa area to serve as State Librarian in Tallahassee and soon designed a new state library building. Technology was just coming to the forefront of library services and he became one of the founding members of SOLINET with the goal of electronically sharing catalog records and library holdings for all universities and major library systems in the south. Eventually contracting with the recently created OCLC, he served as both the Chairman of SOLINET and as a board member for OCLC. This led to the creation of a State Processing Center in Orlando, Florida that could place orders, catalog and process books, and deliver them to contracting libraries throughout the state, long before jobbers got into the business. During his tenure state aid for Florida libraries grew from a mere \$100,000 annual stipend to over \$30 million per year. Cecil insisted that state aid funding would only be approved for countywide library services. This prompted city run locations to either merge with county operations or contract for countywide service with these entities. A great deal of duplicated effort was thus eliminated as local services consolidated. A new interlibrary loan service was also created by the state library that eventually led to the massive and important service run today through OCLC.

In 1977 Broward County government executives bid for him to come run the newly created county system in the Ft. Lauderdale area that was knee deep in legal issues. Many of the cities balked at the countywide effort so Cecil for his first six months there spent most of his time in the courts, ultimately successful in moving forward with the countywide plan of service. He then secured funds in 1978 to build a new main library and 18 new branches. A magnificent nine-story flagship main library with an Alexander Calder sculpture and controversial atrium was dedicated in 1984. The facility received the Award of Excellence from the AIA and ALA organizations in 1987.

## “Cecil relentlessly battled racism, censorship, and patron privacy over the years.”

Cecil relentlessly battled racism, censorship, and patron privacy over the years. He also innovated in the area of library facility partnerships. He helped pass legislation that allowed for library funding for different categories of libraries to be mingled in order to create multi-use facilities on college

campuses that also served the public. This concept was then incorporated in several public schools and community colleges, ultimately saving millions of dollars in construction and staffing costs for dual facilities in several locations around the state.

In 1989 Cecil was promoted to manage Broward County's Public Service Department that included eight other county divisions besides library services. Now he also coordinated services for the parks, social services, agriculture, housing, mass transit, consumer affairs, cultural affairs, and animal control! A comprehensive tri-rail system was developed during his three year tenure.

In 1992 at the age of 65, Cecil decided to retire for the first time. He returned to Tallahassee and began teaching Library Administration classes, returning to his alma mater FSU. However, after seven years he was once again summoned to Broward County to help get a bond issue passed. His last position was as a grant writer and project developer, spending these new funds for thirty building projects. The economic downturn of 2009 threatened jobs and the viability of his remaining projects so he opted to give up his job to save others in the Broward system. It marked his 60th anniversary since driving that bookmobile years before. At 82 years of age he finally retired for good while continuing to support civic projects.

Unfortunately Cecil struggled with dementia late in life, yet always maintained his Southern charm and easy going manner. His son Kevin recently completed his own 50 year career in librarianship and encourages his daughter Erin, a librarian in Boston, Massachusetts to continue her service as well. Cecil received, among many other accolades, the *Lifetime Achievement* award from the Florida Library Association. A scholarship fund in Cecil's name remains active for students of FSU's library school (now the School of Information).

Imagine the world of libraries in the 1940s and the astounding changes that have developed in his one lifetime. His accomplishments are a testament to his quest for libraries to stay relevant by pushing the boundaries of the traditional in our profession. He will be tremendously missed but we can all be thankful that such pioneers with foresight and passion laid the foundations that helped libraries remain important civic institutions and instruments of change.

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*In 2009 Kevin Beach sat down and interviewed his father about*

*both his personal life and his amazing career. This article is based upon the notes of that interview.*

# Membership Matters

## 2020 Business Members

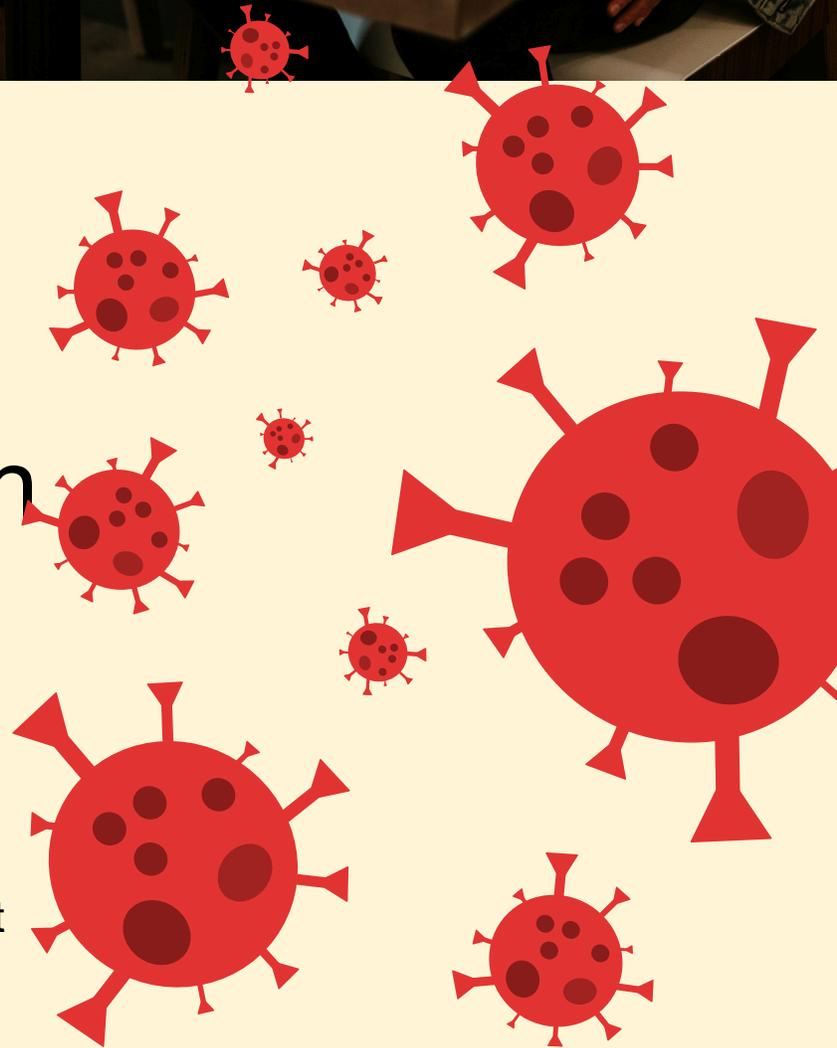


\*Members as of the time of publication



# Staying Connected to Students Virtually through COVID-19

By Paula Knipp, Ethan Hart,  
Kassandra Sherman, Kaitlin Crockett  
& Heather Meyer

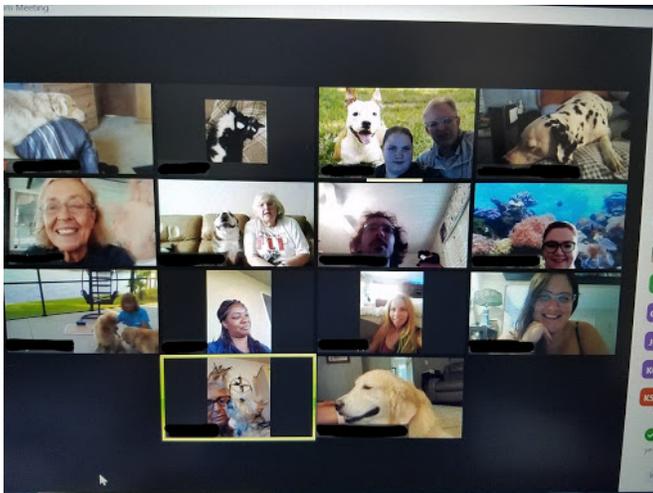


St. Petersburg College (SPC) Libraries and Learning Centers have always been student-focused, and this mission continues despite the sudden shift of almost 1,800 campus-based courses to online modalities during the COVID-19 pandemic. In fact, the pandemic brought our staff together in ways we never envisioned and helped keep our connections with students during these challenging times. As a combined effort among our library administration, librarians, instructional support specialists, paraprofessionals, and library technicians, many creative programs, workshops, and events were developed to continue to foster engagement with SPC students. Using primarily the Zoom platform, programs such as Virtual Therapy Dog sessions, Stitch, Please! crafting group, Virtual Tailgating event, and the Diversity and Databases series kept our staff connected to students. In addition to creating student connections, library staff continued to further the college's mission of supporting the community by reaching out to a local retirement home and organizing a way for SPC to send cards to residents during quarantine.

### Virtual Therapy Dogs

The Libraries and Learning Centers at SPC have worked with therapy dogs for many years to provide an outlet for stress during final exams. During the spring 2020 semester, an even higher level of stress persisted during exams since moving all classes online. This stress was not felt by

just our students but by our staff and faculty as well. To help provide a stress-relieving opportunity, we reached out to some of our friendly pet owners, and within a few days, we had many animals ready to show up (virtually) for our students



and staff. For a few hours during exam week, Zoom was able to bring together both bipeds and four-legged friends, just as we had in the past. We were thrilled to see some of our regular dogs and their owners, and, as you can see, from the many smiling faces, we enjoyed each other's company. We also asked some of the pet owners to send pictures of their dogs with words of encouragement for our students. These images were shared with our students within the SPC Workplace (social media) network. It is safe to say that the dogs gave as much to our students and staff as we, in return, gave to the pet owners. Upon reflection, the one word we took away from this experience was community.

### Virtual Tailgating

In an effort to get students excited and engaged with the SPC Libraries and Learning Centers, the departments hosted two virtual tailgating events during the second week of the semester. At the events, students floated between breakout rooms inside of the Zoom platform.

There, they were introduced to tutors in writing, science, math, and computer technology, as well as our librarians. They received information on the services we offer, including how to access online resources and tutoring and how to make an appointment. Although this tailgating event was much different than our face-to-face event last year, it was exciting to have this opportunity to meet and greet our students online.

### Stitch, Please! Crafting Group

Stitch, Please! was established as a weekly virtual meetup for needle-crafters of all kinds. The goal was to create a social outlet for students, faculty, and staff where they could unwind, share their unique crafting talents, and provide an environment that fosters creative collaboration. The idea to begin a needlepoint group came about as a

response to the



quarantine crafting craze that seemed to erupt after everyone seemingly ran out of bread flour and still needed something to fill their time. So many people were picking up old hobbies and trying to relearn crafting activities, like cross-stitching and crocheting, that it made sense to start a group dedicated to the trend. Stitch, Please! has united felt crafters, cross-stitchers, crocheters and knitters, and even someone that spins their own yarn! Members have enjoyed having dedicated time to de-stress and make progress on their individual projects. The summer semester was our test semester, and now that there is a consistent following for Stitch, Please!, we will include a series of workshops led by local crafters that will teach the participants new and exciting needlecraft skills.

### SPC Writes

One of SPC's visionary statements focuses on community engagement. It encourages "participating in civic learning and community engagement, and cultivating a community of care" To that end, library staff members saw a great need in our community to reach out to elderly people who were quarantined in nursing homes. Our staff decided to adopt a local life care center in the area and encouraged SPC students and staff members to write letters, draw pictures, write poems, or send cards to individuals who may be feeling



isolated. These cards were not written to a specific person but were given to individuals with little to no mail or very few visitors through the center's activities department. Additionally, two local elementary school teachers encouraged their students to write letters to the residents.

## Diversity and Databases

The Diversity and Databases project is a collaboration between Learning Resources and Student Life to encourage the SPC community to become familiar with online library resources while also exploring other cultures. Every Friday during the spring and summer semesters, a recipe from the Global Road Warrior database was shared through social media. Along with the recipe, posts featured cooking demos created by SPC staff. Staff and students were encouraged to try the recipes and join the conversation by posting a picture of each creation or sharing an interesting fact about the featured country. Students also had the opportunity to win gift cards by participating. Overall, the project allowed the SPC community to connect and learn in new ways while also providing an outlet for creativity during a stressful experience.

## Conclusion

The pandemic shifted many of the SPC Libraries and Learning Centers' services, but it did not change our commitment to student success. Librarians have always had a strong presence online, but this prompted staff of all areas to work together as a cohesive unit. Our staff made a phenomenal transition to the online environment by offering remote research and tutoring help, online instructions, and virtual workshops and programs. Along with the support for academics, we also felt that students needed programs to help with their mental wellness. With the combination of online events and programs that were offered, students at SPC could still feel a bit of normalcy and maintain the important connections we have worked so hard to create.

\*All pictures for this article were provided by St. Petersburg College

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## Northern Micrographics

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# SAVE THE DATE

May 19 - 20, 2021



**FLORIDA LIBRARY ASSOCIATION**  
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**Hilton**

DAYTONA BEACH  
OCEANFRONT RESORT

# Pandemic Stress Relief Through Books and Writing:



Photo courtesy of <https://unsplash.com/photos/FHnjk1YJ7Y>

The start of the COVID-19 pandemic caused a flurry of intense, complex stress for people worldwide. Manatee County Public Library System (MCPLS) helped our community channeling stress into art by encouraging people to take photos of their home library and write about the books they were reading. Their photos and words were posted on *My Home Library*, a blog created for the project. The blog was hosted by *805 Lit + Art*, a

literary magazine published by MCPLS. Through this blog, we hoped to help people find comfort in books and feel a connection to the library during a difficult time. Posts can be read at [www.805lit.org/blog](http://www.805lit.org/blog).

## Guidelines for Blog Posts

MCPLS accepted posts of up to 1,000 words and three photos. Posts were written by patrons of all ages, staff, volunteers, and former *805 Lit + Art* contributors. People wrote about their print and ebook collections, as well as their album and table-top game collections. Posts could be written in prose or verse, and many people chose to write poems about their books or their feelings about the pandemic. To stimulate ideas for a blog post, we gave writers a list of topics to consider:

- o Your favorite book cover
- o Your favorite lines from a book
- o Your favorite book in a series and why
- o Books you received as gifts
- o Books you keep meaning to read but never do
- o Books that helped you during a tough time in your life

## Manatee Library's "My Home Library" Blog

By Stephanie Katz



805lit Jun 8 · 2 min

### From the Bookshelf, by Chris...

Like most book lovers, I have many collections on my shelves. But one of my favorite collections has to be my pop-up books.

73 views Write a comment



805lit Jun 5 · 2 min

### Books in the Time of...

Welcome to our home library! I grew up in a home filled with books and reading. My mom read many books to my sister and I such as Finn...

77 views Write a comment

Photo courtesy of [www.805lit.org/blog](http://www.805lit.org/blog)

o What you're reading now as you shelter in place

## Therapeutic Power of Writing

Writing is an accessible, effectiway to discharge stress, process feelings, and promote emotional and psychological healing. The pandemic created new stress, but also stirred up long-buried pain in many people. *My Home Library* writers explored a range of feelings and experiences in their posts. One staff member wrote a humorous post about moving during the pandemic and included photos of her entire personal book collections trapped in boxes labeled "Living Room." One wrote about the book series she read while her father was in hospice. One poet wrote about her desire for freedom from lockdown, and another wrote about the worry she had for loved ones as well as healthcare workers.

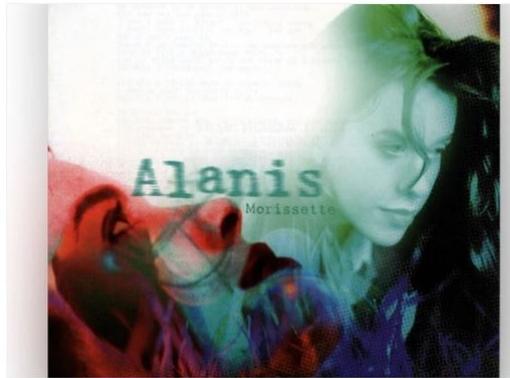


805lit Apr 21 · 4 min

### Don't Panic, by Olivia Tooker

What do you do when your building blocks of comfort are out of reach? What do you do when your favorite literature is boxed up?

109 views Write a comment 2



805lit Apr 21 · 3 min

### Serenity's Playlist: Albums for ...

These albums are but a small part of me, but ones I have no doubt I will continue to press play on during times of uncertainty...

46 views Write a comment 2

Photo courtesy of www.805lit.org/blog

## Feedback from Writers

805lit May 7 · 5 min read

### Fairness, Power, and Happily Ever After, by Molly Saunders

*Librarian Molly Saunders seeks the fairy tales of her youth, not to escape reality, but rather to make sense of it. This post is part of 805's "My Home Library" blog series that features posts by writers and artists enjoying their home libraries during the Covid-19 pandemic. Since 805 is published by the Manatee County Public Library System, and since most libraries have closed due to the pandemic, we hope this blog series will help people show off their home libraries, find comfort in books, and feel a connection to the library during this difficult time.*



Last July, when I moved my whole life to Florida in my little turquoise Honda Fit, it became very clear that I would have to make drastic cuts to my home library. Although the friends who helped me move would assure you that I still have plenty of books, I donated boxes and boxes of book-friends, old and new. I sorted into categories, ruthlessly culled duplicates, tried to intuit which ones most "sparked joy"—it was a process. But the one category I refused to touch was my prized collection of fairy tale anthologies.

Whether illustrated treasures from childhood, German language collections from my time living in Austria, or academic editions gathered in grad school, my fairy

tales were coming along to the next stage of my life. These European stories, ostensibly

Photo courtesy of www.805lit.org/blog

Though writing is therapeutic, many people don't consider themselves writers and don't know how to get started. Writing a short blog post about their own books was an easy way for people to create something meaningful with words. Even seasoned writers felt unmotivated to write during a global crisis, and *My Home Library's* prompt helped many writers tap back into their creativity. One writer told us, "Thanks for the invite to write something. I haven't felt able to write through this ordeal, so it was amazing to get something down." Other writers emailed us how pleased they were to have their work published and expressed their excitement at seeing previews of their posts shared on MCPLS and 805's social media. We continued to get submissions to *My Home Library* through the summer as people used reading and writing to help sort through the prolonged stress of the pandemic.

**Stephanie Katz** is a technology instruction librarian with the Manatee County Public Library System and the editor-in-chief of *805 Lit + Art*, an award-winning literary magazine published by MCPLS. She is the author of *Libraries Publish: How to Start a Magazine, Small Press, Blog, and More* (January 2021, Libraries Unlimited, ABC-CLIO). She runs a free resource for creative library publishers called *LiteraryLibraries.org* and was selected as one of *Library Journal's* 2020 Movers & Shakers.

# Membership Matters

## 2020 Organizational Members

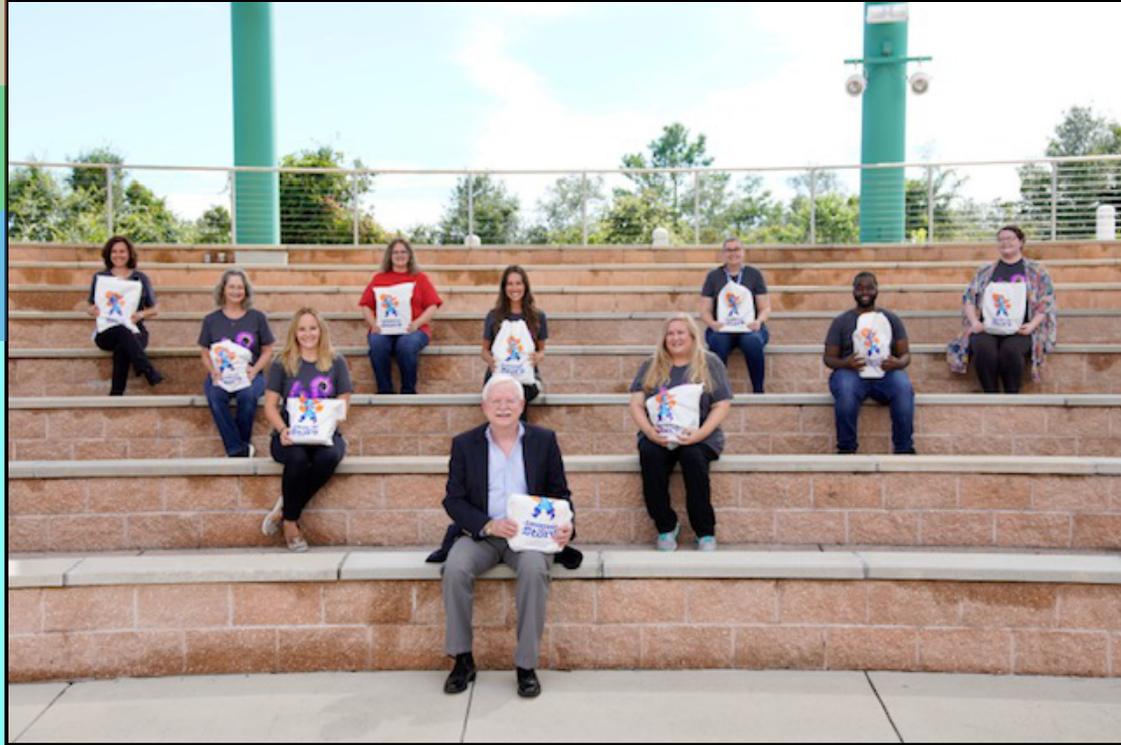
Bethune-Cookman University	Mandel Public Library of West Palm Beach
Broward College	Miami-Dade Public Library System
Broward County Library	New River Public Library Cooperative
Charlotte County Library System	North Florida South Georgia Veterans Health System
City of Parkland Library	North Miami Beach Public Library
Clearwater Public Library System	Orange County Library System
College of Central Florida	Osceola Library System - Hart Memorial Library
Collier County Public Library	PAL Public Library Cooperative
Daytona State College	Palm Beach County Library System
Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University	Palm Harbor Library
Everglades University	Panhandle Public Library Cooperative System
FAMU College of Law Library	Pinellas Public Library Cooperative
Florida Academic Library Services Cooperative/FLVC	Riviera Beach Public Library
Florida Atlantic University Library	Sanibel Public Library District
Florida International University	Santa Rosa County Public Library
Florida National University	Sarasota County Library System
Florida State University, Strozier Library	SEFLIN
Full Sail University	Seminole County Public Library
Gadsden County Public Library	Seminole Tribe of Florida - Library Program
Gulf Beaches Public Library	South Florida State College
Hodges University Library	St. Lucie County Library System
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Maitland Public Library	Washington County Public Library
Manatee County Public Library	Webber International University

\*Members as of the time of publication

# Youth Services in a Pandemic

## From Obstacles to Innovation Services in a Pandemic

By J. Sandy Hutchins



In years past, programming at the Volusia County Public Library (VCPL) meant everything from magicians and concerts to free meals and makerspaces. But not in 2020. Daily programs used to include crafts, gaming, and story times. But not in 2020. In the summer, families regularly filled auditoriums for the presenters who performed thanks to the generosity of the Friends of the Library groups. But not in 2020. This year, things changed and library services had to change as well. Library staff had to get creative during both the closure of the VCPL's 14 branches and their reopening with new social distancing precautions. In a departure from traditional programming, youth services staff had to think outside the box, as well as face unforeseen technical challenges, to provide meaningful experiences for the community. Out of new restrictions emerged not only virtual programs that expanded staff's technical knowledge, but also the award-winning *Lit Kits to Go!* service that has proven popular with families.

For this east coast Florida county, the pandemic did not affect library services immediately. But as staff watched, library systems in other states began announcing closures. By mid-March, closures of everything from theme parks to schools were announced throughout Central Florida. VCPL closed its doors to the public on March 22. Library services did not cease during the closure, however. Staff continued to provide services via curbside pickup and reference assistance via telephone. To make things easier for library users at this time, late return book fees were waived, due dates were extended, and the amount of items library users could reserve was increased. Youth services staff got creative at several branches, decorating their sidewalks and entrances so libraries were welcoming to curbside users. Staff quickly realized, however, that patrons were still missing so many of the usual services that could not be provided with the library closed to the public. Youth services staff made it their mission to find ways to help families at home when libraries and schools were closed.

### ***Lit Kits to Go!***

Studies have shown that access to books during the summer may reduce the loss in children's reading skills from one school year to the next. With the usual Summer Reading Program activities not possible during library closure, staff had to brainstorm ideas to combat this "summer slide." VCPL youth staff proposed an innovative idea to encourage reading-- *Lit Kits to Go!* This service would provide a bundle of recommended titles tailored to a child's



needs to be picked up curbside (or inside library branches upon reopening).

The service works like this: children (or their parent) submit a form requesting a kit to the library. Forms may be submitted once a week. Information such as reading level, hobbies, and interests reported on each form makes it possible for youth staff to tailor a kit for each child. In addition to receiving library books picked just for them, children would receive crafts and educational activities in their bag, including fun items such as stickers, bookmarks, and crafts.

In the first three months that *Lit Kits to Go!* were available, over 800 requests were fulfilled throughout Volusia County. Surveys are included in each kit, and to date, feedback has been overwhelmingly positive. One family at the New Smyrna Beach Regional Library wrote, "My kids were thrilled when they got their kits. My 10-yr old is especially loving the book selections you made and is reading ones I know she wouldn't have discovered or picked on her own. THANK YOU." A family at the Edgewater Library wrote, "Great job on book selections. My daughter loved the crafts too." The kits are a hit with patrons and staff enjoy creating them for each child. One mother at the DeLand Regional Library wrote "I am not a crafty-mom so it is great that you send everything we need in one bag for my children to enjoy a craft activity." Volusia County Public Library was presented the 2020 Innovation Award from the Northeast Florida Library Information Network (NEFLIN) for the *Lit Kits to Go!* program.

Instead of offering meals for minors in the library, bagged breakfasts and lunches were distributed curbside, with over 18,000 meals going to children and teens throughout the county from March through ???.

The Daytona Beach Regional Library also successfully distributed Take and Make S.T.R.E.A.M. activities for children and teens. Libraries gave out coloring and activity packages that included items such as cross word puzzles, nature walk scavenger hunts, and educational worksheets. An Ormond Beach family wrote "Your curbside offerings for me and the kids helped keep me sane!" on a library survey. Take home activities have proven popular for all ages during this pandemic, but one of the most popular library programs, StoryTime, could not be adapted with a curbside model. Staff had to find a new solution to continue providing this popular service to our youngest library users.

Although VCPL did have a social media footprint before 2020, it was minimal. Formerly, the library system's Facebook account was primarily used to promote database options and branch specific programming. However, with the 14 library branches closed to the public, social media quickly became the most effective way to push information to library users. At the outset of the closure, social media was used to promote digital services and curbside pickup. But as time went on, staff started brainstorming ways to adapt existing programming for an online audience. To accomplish this, VCPL youth staff divided into teams that focused on different priorities. In addition to the Lit Kits to Go! team, Storytime, School Age Activities, and Kindergarten Readiness teams were established.

### Adapting Popular Library Programs During COVID-19 Closure



In addition to addressing the summer slide, youth staff were challenged to adapt popular existing library programs such as storytime, crafting, and providing summer

meals to children to align with the current restrictions placed on libraries. Several services were adapted for curbside pickup. For example, the summer meals program became a "to go" program.



The StoryTime team decided three morning programs per week would be offered and held via Facebook Live. Thanks to so many publishers allowing library staff to read aloud and record copyright-protected books online during the pandemic, staff at multiple branches were able to present a variety of titles. The videos do not stay posted indefinitely, as publishers have imposed timelines for how long their stories can air. Youth staff must remain diligent in complying with publisher's restrictions for online usage, which are constantly evolving. A schedule was rapidly set up, with branches taking turns on camera and having assigned days. Each branch took on the responsibility of not only preparing their program, but also acquiring usage rights for the story and any music used.

Library staff recorded each reading using iPads that branches already owned. Staff quickly realized accessories such as tripods and microphones would improve the quality of videos produced, and library branches shared these items when necessary. Video recording is a team effort, with staff on air and behind the camera. Having someone available to respond live to viewers comments on the VCPL Facebook page proved essential. Technological complications sometimes arose, so IT staff were kept quite busy moving Wi-Fi routers to improve connections for streaming video.

The *Volusia Reads* live videos have now been viewed thousands of times. To capture the audience's attention, staff built elaborate sets, played ukuleles, worn costumes, and even brought in pets. Parents and caregivers share children's comments and



pictures with library staff via Facebook to show their appreciation for these programs.

Kindergarten readiness has been a priority of VCPL youth services for many years. Staff wanted to continue to implement educational activities during the libraries' closure, so they looked for online options. Weekly "Fun Fact Friday" posts and videos were created that covered kindergarten readiness topics. These topics include tutorials covering age-appropriate databases, colors, counting, self-care, shapes, kindness, motor skills, and the alphabet. Even as the library reopened, these posts continue to be available as social distancing measures prohibit traditional programming. Several of these topics are also covered in bilingual videos, which air every other Monday. Bilingual staff rotate responsibility for videos that include songs, stories, and basic language learning. The Kindergarten readiness and bilingual videos are

not live, they are scripted, rehearsed, and edited by staff.

Each year, Summer Reading at the Volusia County Public Library's branches includes incentives for reading. While VCPL reopened to the public on June 1 (technically in time for Summer Reading), social distancing restrictions changed things from previous years. So, for 2020, the Summer Reading log went online. This was beneficial to families that were not ready to come in person to the library, and to those that found online tracking easier. If patrons preferred a paper reading log, that option was still available (staff would enter data into the online program to compile statistics). Using Wandoo software, VCPL staff tracked that Summer Reading participants logged over 7,000 days in Summer 2020. The DeLand Regional Library had over 130 participants in the program. While that is a decrease from previous years, it is better than staff had hoped given the current situation. Thanks to the generosity of VCPL's

Friends of the Library groups, children and teens who participated earned fun prizes for reading over the summer.

Reaching school-age children during the library closure brought new challenges. With public schools in the area closing at the same time the libraries did, many families found themselves struggling with virtual classes. VCPL worked to increase awareness of its services including hotspot checkouts, Tutor.com, and Scholastic Teachables. Some branches distributed school supplies, and one even had their Wi-Fi router moved so students could access the internet in the parking lot. Staff made STREAM videos for YouTube, sharing science, technology, reading, engineering, arts, and math projects each week. Many video topics were designed for families that were social distancing, from recycled crafts to gardening to mask making. As summer wound down, videos turned to back-to-school topics like creating a locker organizer and making a lunch box

taco bar. Staff also began creating videos where they read the first chapter of a book. These "First Chapter Fridays" promoted a variety of genres and reading levels. Some staff dressed up for these videos, such as when Charlie from the Lake Helen Library read *I Survived the Sinking of the Titanic* in a life vest!

VCPL had a presence on *GoodReads* prior to the current pandemic, and with teen book clubs unable to meet in person, *GoodReads* filled a void. The Volusia "Teens Read" online book discussion board allows teens to engage with library staff and each other from home. New "Chapter Chats" are added each week to encourage discussion.

On YouTube, "Adulting 101" videos covered cooking, car maintenance, finance, and a variety of useful topics that teens and even adults could benefit from. The library also started an Instagram page to post weekly trivia questions, SAT words, and reviews of YA books. Pictures of staff pets reading, book spine poetry, and selfies have been posted to Instagram as well.

When posting social media, staff quickly learned that communication is key. Coordinating a shared schedule among multiple branches so staff don't repeat content or step on each other's toes is vital. A shared drive and schedule were

developed, along with having one person responsible for all posting. VCPL staff who work with teens also collaborated to develop interactive online programming. The "Escape Room," a patron favorite, went online when staff created digital versions using Google Docs. To escape, teens had to correctly answer a series of questions and solve a variety of riddles. Weekly trivia games were created using Kahoot. These games use popular movies, television shows, and books as their subject matter.

The team at VCPL have learned that everyone has a part to play in virtual programming. Whereas some staff are comfortable on camera, those who aren't participate in the video process by creating flannel boards and sets, using their research skills to find appropriate public domain music, or just pushing the record button on the camera. Before the pandemic, only a few library staff were skilled in video editing, but with the rise of virtual programming, experienced staff have trained their coworkers to edit videos using our Macbook Pros. Creating videos is a group effort, and with a dedicated team, they have proven to be a successful way to provide educational and entertaining experiences to our communities.

With the start of the school year, VCPL's to-go meals and Summer Reading program have ended. But

many of the innovative experiences staff developed will continue. Lit Kits to GO! have proven so popular that the decision was made to continue offering the service. In fact, with the introduction of "*Lit Kit Jr.*," the Lit Kit service has expanded to include our youngest patrons, birth through age five. Virtual programming will also continue since social distancing is still in effect. Videos will continue to be made, be they live (such as Story Time) or pre-recorded. The *Volusia Reads* Instagram account is now no longer limited just to teens, its posts now target library users of all ages. As patrons continue to provide feedback about these new services, staff will continue to adapt and change them.

The VCPL staff will continue to seek ways to provide library users with educational, literary, and enjoyable experiences. As one family at the Hope Place Library responded on a survey, "So thankful for these services especially during these unusual times." The year 2020 has proven to be unusual and unprecedented, but libraries will continue to be innovative. VCPL staff are looking ahead to find ways to adapt upcoming annual programming such as the "Walk of Terror," "How-To Fest," and holiday events for our new socially-distanced world. As always, library staff will provide experiences and services that fit the needs of our communities, even in 2020.

Author:

J. Sandy Hutchins is the assistant Regional Manager at the Volusia County Public Library



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Friends of Fort Myers Library

Friends of Fruitville Public Library

Friends of Indian River County Gift Shop

Friends of Library ACLD

Friends of Pine Island Library

Friends of the Bay County Public Libraries

Friends of the Boca Raton Public Library, Inc.

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Friends of the Stirling Road Branch Library

Friends of the Suntree-Viera Public Library

Friends of the Wilton Manors Library

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Library Foundation for Sarasota County

Library Friends of Bradford County Public Library

Melrose Library Association, Inc

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\*Members as of the time of publication



## Serving our Residents During the Covid-19 Pandemic

By Leila Khalil & Jennifer Shipley

Unprecedented. Strange times. New normal. These are just some of the common descriptions associated with the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic that has impacted all our lives. Like many libraries, COVID-19 forced Miami-Dade Public Library System (MDPLS) to temporarily close its doors to the public in late March 2020 for the safety of our staff and residents. Despite being closed to the public for traditional services, our library staff continued to work to provide essential services to our patrons.

In April, MDPLS began to play a much bigger role in the Miami-Dade County government's COVID-19 response, and many library staffers were assigned to other county departments including assisting CareerSource South Florida call centers to help residents with issues related to their unemployment applications, assisting the county's 311 Contact Center in scheduling residents for COVID-19 tests and senior citizen free meal deliveries, assisting at the many food distribution events, and having staff assigned to the county's Strategic Unified Response to Guideline Education (SURGE) teams deployed in the community to guide residents on COVID-19 safety requirements and provide them with basic personal protective equipment such as masks and hand sanitizer.

In addition to helping other Miami-Dade County departments assist residents in need, MDPLS took on its very own COVID-19 response operation, setting up drive-through distribution and collection operations at 26 of our libraries for residents

who were in need of paper State Reemployment Applications and Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) applications to apply for these programs online. This economic assistance operation continues, with over 119,000 reemployment applications and over 23,000 SNAP applications have been picked-up at our libraries.

While our focus was and is primarily on the COVID-19 response, MDPLS also quickly adapted in many ways to continue providing library services throughout the pandemic, as described below:

### Customer Care Unit

The Miami-Dade Public Library System's Customer Care Unit was established in 2018 and from the beginning has received inquiries covering a diverse set of topics, from standard circulation queries to requests for reference assistance and help accessing digital services, as well as customer comments and donations. At the onset of the pandemic, Customer Care staffing increased its hours of service to meet the higher level of need.

During the peak month of April, Customer Care answered a total of 1,309 emails and 5,655 phone calls on a wide variety of topics. The unit has received calls from all over the state of Florida and as far away as Philadelphia and Puerto Rico from former Florida residents seeking information on applying for reemployment benefits. The Customer Care team was also playing an important role in addressing the isolation being

experienced by many during quarantine, listening to the stories of residents who have lost jobs and/or family members to COVID-19, as well as concerned parents and teachers taking on distance learning, with empathy and extreme customer service.

### Books-by-Mail/Borrow-by-Mail

Our Talking Books Unit offered seamless assistance to our blind and disabled customers because members of the unit had remote access to the Talking Books ILS and were able to order books which were shipped from other Talking Books Libraries around the State of Florida during our quarantine period. Our customers with disabilities expressed that the audiobooks provided them comfort and stimulation and alleviated anxiety. More than 19,000 audiobooks have circulated to 3,912 Talking Books customers since our March 18 closing date. Of these items, 4,400 were shipped by partner libraries across the state during April and May.

The day after we closed to the public, we immediately began using our Borrow-by-Mail service to mail library items that customers were unable to pick up. Over 18,000 books, audiobooks and DVDs have been mailed to patrons since March 19, 2020.

### Virtual Programming

We quickly transitioned our storytime programming to an online platform,

after receiving permission from publishers to record their books. Staff enthusiastically responded and created virtual storytime videos. The video was uploaded in March, and has been followed by over 50 more virtual storytimes. Other virtual programs, including crafts, meditation, book talks, STEAM programs and poetry, were shared on various social media platforms. YOUmedia Miami oversaw the temporary construction and operation of two pop-up video studios to record over 25 virtual programs for our online channels.

YOUmedia Miami has also offered online programming for teens. Since April, over 40 podcasts have been recorded, covering topics ranging from food and fashion to current events. Featuring ten guest speakers, including filmmakers, artists, entrepreneurs, and a Canadian video game developer, the podcasts kept quarantined teens engaged.

Prior to the pandemic, MDPLS offered free, weekly, in-library tutoring by certified teachers to small groups of students grades K-12 at 27 library locations. After a pilot program on March 28, our remote Homework Help and Tutoring program went live on April 4 with 143 sessions in one week. Currently, more than 100 tutors conduct 30-minute one-on-one tutoring sessions in reading and math every Saturday to students grades K-12. Over 9,464 sessions have been offered since Saturday April 4.

## Re-opening to the Public

On May 4, all branches began to allow for curbside walk-up pick-up and drop-off of library materials that were on hold or placed on hold through our online catalog or by phone. We re-opened our doors to the public on June 8 with a comprehensive reopening plan that includes COVID-19 safety measures

vetted by the county's team of medical experts. The plan includes furniture spaced to ensure social distancing, floor stickers to encourage social distancing, removable shields at service desks, an ample supply of PPE supplies, and enhanced custodial service at all our locations. We have clear signage outlining safety measures including mask-wearing requirements, reduced occupancy limits, the sanitizing or washing of hands upon entering the library and enforced social distancing. Since reopening to the public in June, we have provided over 165,000 computer and Wi-Fi sessions.

## Summer Initiatives

In early summer we implemented a drive-up Wi-Fi program so customers can pull up to a marked drive-up Wi-Fi parking spot at one of 19 locations to use the library's free Wi-Fi from the comfort and safety of their vehicle. In July, we began distributing cloth and disposable face masks at all 50 branches to anyone who needed one. Over 75,000 free face masks have been handed out since the end of August and the distribution is ongoing.

MDPLS has been hosting the free summer lunch program, Healthy Bodies, Healthy Minds, since 2014 for children 18 and under. This year we hosted a Grab and Go service outdoors at 17 libraries across the county. The pickup meal box service ran from mid-June to mid-August and provided 90,846 meals to children. Food trucks parked outside the 17 libraries on Fridays handed out seven breakfasts and seven lunches to each participant, enough for an entire week.

## Increased Digital Content

Since March 18, when we originally closed to the public, we have seen a 50 percent increase in use of our

digital content. In response, we have added nearly 10,000 e-books and e-audiobooks to our online library, a 37 percent increase over last year. Our Hoopla checkouts saw a 43 percent increase over the same period last year. We have signed up approximately 8,300 new library card holders. Customers may apply for an eCard online, which instantly grants full access to our online library and digital resources and allows two physical items to be checked out.

In the past six months, the MDPLS Digital Collections site has grown considerably. The Miami Beach Real Estate Listings Collection is now complete with the digitization of nearly 4,000 records, with the addition of keywords identifying relevant aspects to each object, such as historic hotel names and coordinates for geospatial identification. One hundred new records were added to the Florida Promotional & Tourism Ephemera Collection, including unique documents dating back to the 1800s. The digitized documents in the Historical Records of Miami-Dade Public Library Collection has doubled with the addition of scrapbooks, newsletters, historic photographs, statistics, architectural drawings of library branches and announcements, creating a comprehensive picture of the history of our library system for our patrons. According to analytics, there have been 7,352 visits to the site since March 19. Anyone, anywhere with an internet connection can now visit, view and download photos from the collections.

While adapting to and serving the public during the age of COVID-19 can be challenging, our library staff continues to rise to the occasion in seeking new ways and adapting to meet our patrons and residents' needs, enhancing our vision of enriching and inspiring our community through knowledge, creativity and innovation.

Authors:

Leila Khalil, Chief, Communications & Community Engagement, Miami-Dade Public Library System  
Jennifer Shipley, Library Operations Manager, Miami-Dade Public Library System



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# Libraries Overcoming in 2020

By Michael Anderson, Amber Heimlich-Murr,  
Emily Shulyer & Hilary Wagner

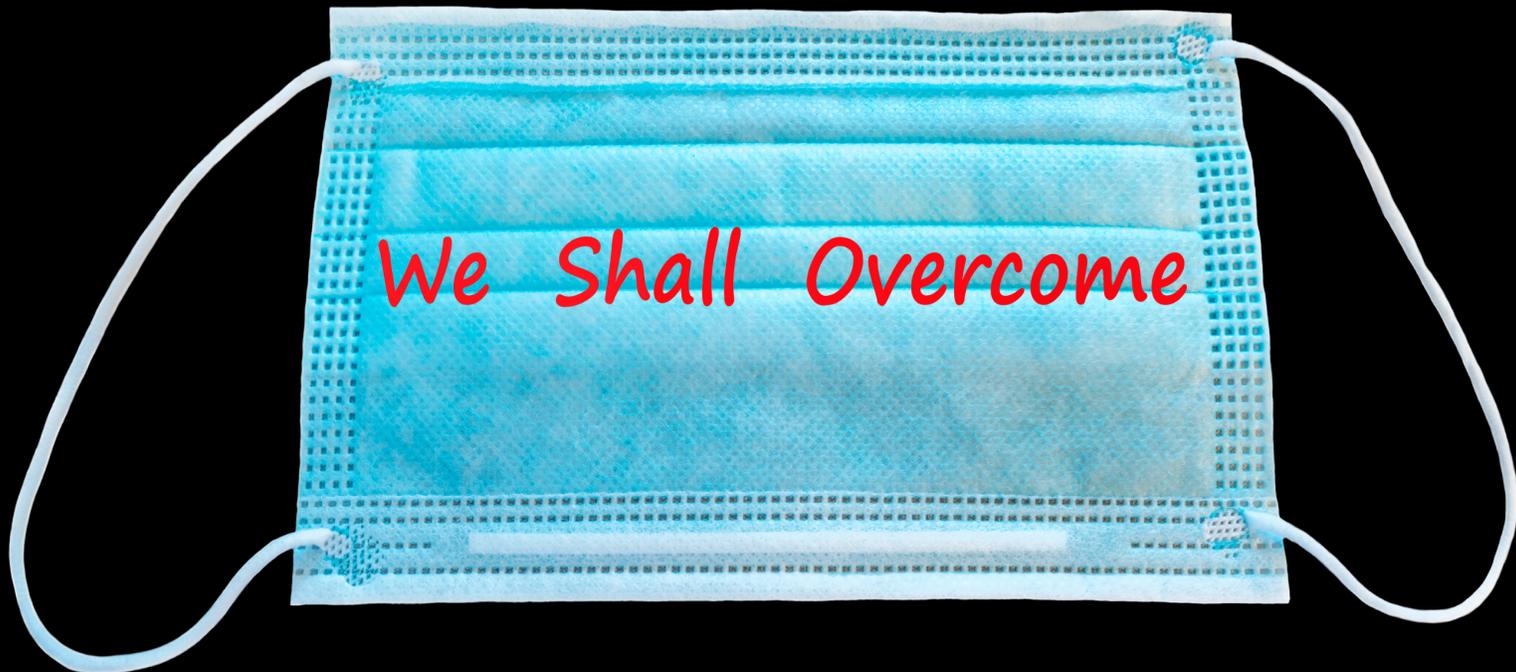
Librarians were all thrown for a loop this past March, and we had to rethink how we serve our patrons, how we keep our communities engaged, and how we provide stability in such unstable times. Every member of the Largo Public Library staff was ready and up for the challenge. While working from home, we collaborated to find the best ways to keep our patrons optimistic, informed, and entertained. We scoured the internet and posted crafts, videos, and virtual park and museum tours to our social media. We kept our website up to date with the latest state and county information, and government resources to keep our community informed. Because we are part of the Pinellas Public Library Cooperative, we were able to offer our patrons temporary library cards for eResources through email. We were able to give patrons access to our digital collection without any of the stipulations put upon patrons checking out physical items. Our Director, Casey McPhee, encouraged imagination and innovation, and gave the green light as we took programs online. She even had a few surprises in store for us. When she came up with the idea for a home delivery service our Outreach Team took the plans and ran with them. When we came back to our facilities we were excited and motivated to provide programs, resources and same-day drive through service to patrons.

Programming staff at Largo Public Library have had to learn a new set of skills, from learning several different editing programs, finding the best angle for books for storytime, or having staff faces all over social media, programming looks very different now. While it is scary to go on camera for the first time or even hit the "live" button, there is a nervous excitement about this new way of doing programs. Staff have come up with creative ideas for videos, finessed their own unique way of editing, and even discovered their own social media personality. Virtual programming has been a learning experience for everyone, with technical difficulties in production and many bloopers left on the cutting room floor, but it has been worth connecting with our patrons virtually. The excitement over craft kit sign-ups or the interaction in Facebook Live is palpable, even if it is through a screen. Emailed photos and masked conversations about craft kits and sign language aren't the same as in-person, but it's how we can connect safely for now.

For the Outreach Team, the virus has posed a unique set of challenges. How can we still accomplish our mission to provide library services to the under-served, but also keep vulnerable members of our community safe? Before the virus outbreak, our work primarily focused on face-to-face interactions with patrons in assisted living facilities, nursing homes, and schools. After the library reopened in May, we adjusted our Bookmobile service to perform contact-free deliveries at our regular stops. To ensure that we eliminate possible community spread, we individually package each patron's items in their own sealed bag. We also handle returned items with the same level of care, isolating books in sealed boxes to prevent any spread between facilities. The program has been a major success with over 470 deliveries in the month of June! We intend to continue this success with our new home delivery service.

This summer we launched an all new outreach service, Library Home Delivery. We offer this home delivery program to those who can't get to the library due to a permanent physical disability, temporary convalescence due to illness, injury, surgery, or childbirth, or any other underlying health conditions that preclude travel from home. Patrons may apply for this service for themselves or for someone they believe needs this service.

The summer of social distancing is over and the outreach team is looking forward to a safe and socially far-apart fall. Reviewing this past summer, it is fair to say that we faced some unprecedented hurdles in our community outreach operations due to COVID-19. Nevertheless, we succeeded in adapting our services to this new normal. Our efforts have



allowed us to increase the number of patrons we serve and reach new patrons who were unaware of our services before the pandemic. As we plan for fall, we are excited for cooler weather and a chance to see patrons at the Drive-o-Ween Spooktacular event. We also hope to build upon our recent successes and further expand our services to reach students in virtual schooling. While we expect there may be some unforeseen challenges ahead, we are confident that we can adapt and change to meet whatever else this year has to throw at us.

Our annual Stanley Shalit Short Story Competition, sponsored by the Friends of the Largo Library, also had to change gears. We had 183 submissions from 64 high school students and 119 middle school students, this included public, private, charter, and homeschooled children. With school closures, we extended the deadline and allowed electronic submissions. Winners were notified by telephone or email and results were posted to our social media pages and in our Largo Public Library magazine. The dedication and enthusiasm for this competition was truly humbling.

Largo Public Library also recognizes the need to work continuously to ensure that every patron we serve is represented at every level of our community. For this reason, we created the Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) Team that focuses on incorporating EDI values into all areas of library work, including programming, collection development, staffing, displays, technology, and marketing. To put our words into action we adapted the Read Woke initiative into an online reading program. Provided in partnership with Beanstack, the online platform we use for our reading programs, and inspired by school librarian Cicely Lewis, Read Woke is designed to challenge people to educate themselves about others through deliberate, thoughtful reading. Lewis determined that "to be Woke a book must meet the following criteria: Challenge a social norm, give voice to the voiceless, provide information about a group that has been disenfranchised, seek to challenge the status quo, and have a protagonist from an underrepresented or oppressed group." We launched the program in August with ten, monthly badges available to earn. Each involves a main activity of finding and reading a book by an underrepresented voice or population, as well as other activities like watching a video or listening to a song. The goal is to encourage patrons to learn about others and actively participate in conversations about equity, diversity, and inclusion. Each month different voices are featured such as African-American, Latinx, and Native American and Indigenous Peoples; we also explore mental health and neurodiversity.

Through all the changes, closures, re-openings, and new standards we have continued to encourage community and be a refuge to our patrons. Our Largo Public Library magazine was published throughout with new online program offerings, take-home crafts, reader's advisory columns, and fun crossword puzzles. We connected with almost 2,000 patrons through our monthly eNewsletter even while under Safer at Home orders. We have found new ways to keep our community engaged and safe and plan to keep moving forward into the future, whatever it brings us. The staff at Largo Public Library looks forward to the return of normal programming and are taking slow and safe steps towards that goal. Until then, we will continue to provide creative and engaging programs to spark a curiosity about the world and a love for learning.

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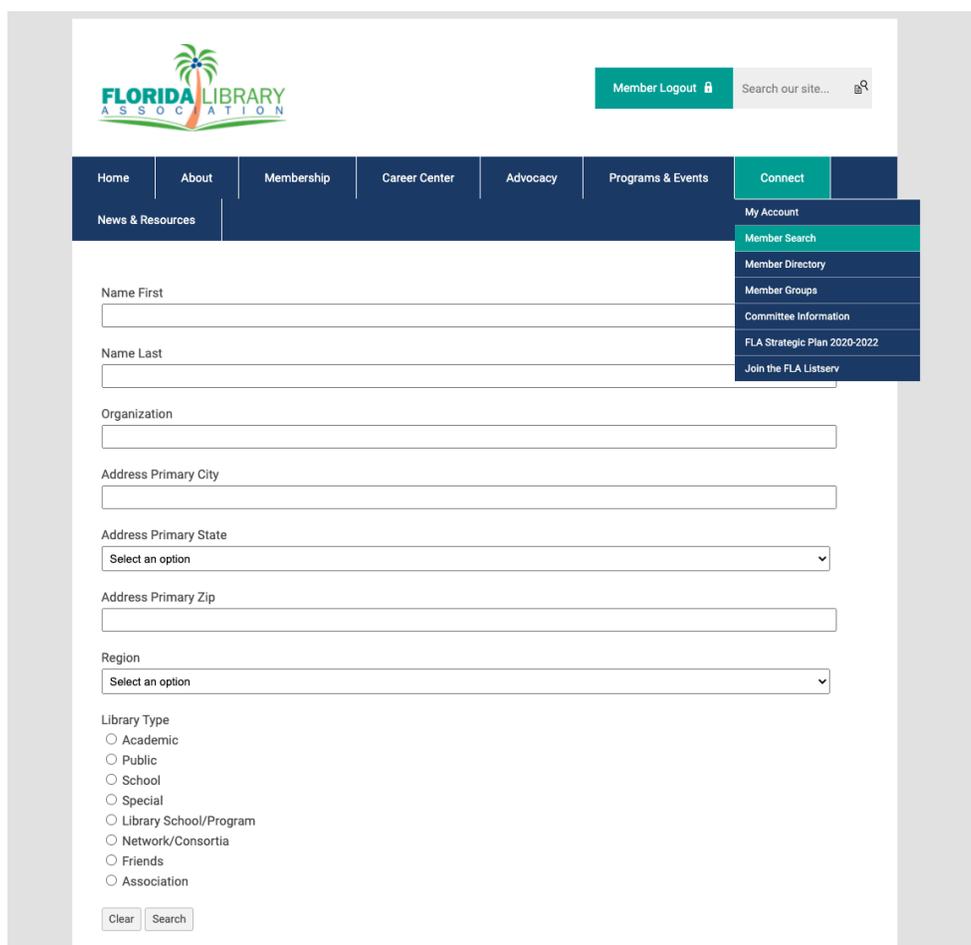
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# Membership Matters

## FLA Member Search

FLA makes it easy to find and connect with hundreds of library staff from across the state through its online **Member Search**. This valuable member benefit features several search filter options including name, organization, city and library type. Go to [www.flalib.org](http://www.flalib.org), log into your account and network today!



The screenshot shows the FLA Member Search interface. At the top left is the FLA logo. To the right is a 'Member Logout' button and a search bar. Below the logo is a navigation menu with 'Home', 'About', 'Membership', 'Career Center', 'Advocacy', 'Programs & Events', and 'Connect'. The 'Connect' menu is open, showing options like 'My Account', 'Member Search', 'Member Directory', 'Member Groups', 'Committee Information', 'FLA Strategic Plan 2020-2022', and 'Join the FLA Listserv'. The search form includes fields for 'Name First', 'Name Last', 'Organization', 'Address Primary City', 'Address Primary State' (a dropdown menu), 'Address Primary Zip', and 'Region' (a dropdown menu). There is also a 'Library Type' section with radio buttons for Academic, Public, School, Special, Library School/Program, Network/Consortia, Friends, and Association. At the bottom of the form are 'Clear' and 'Search' buttons.

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# Hillsborough County Library's Resilient Staff Step Up to Serve their Citizens at Any Point of Need

By Melissa Clark & Cheryl Wolfe

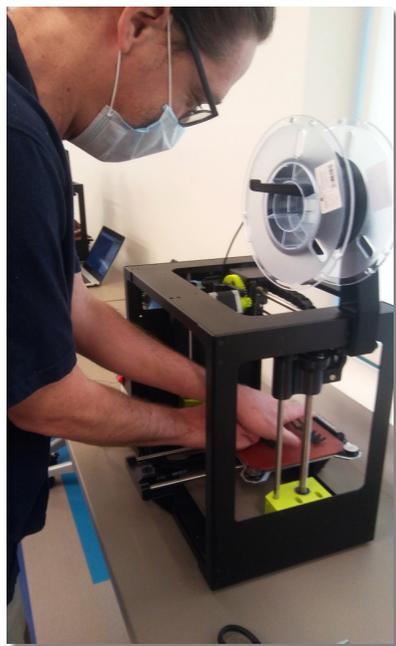
Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, the staff of Tampa-Hillsborough County Public Library (THPL) served the 1.4 million citizens of Hillsborough County, Florida, by providing access to information and technology across 27 branches, two bookmobiles, phone and chat reference, and a 24/7 online library. More importantly, they provided help with anything and everything that customers were looking for in their libraries. When buildings closed in response to COVID-19, library staff rose to the challenge and redefined library service for the residents of Hillsborough County.

## Innovating and Adapting

THPL quickly adapted to contact-free customer service by expanding its call center and virtual reference support to give customers the opportunity to call, text, or chat with a librarian seven days a week. The library also expanded its social media presence to create and maintain a sense of community. Library card registration shifted to an online process with nearly 5,000 new library cards created and 11,000 accounts updated within the first two months. The online library at HCPLC.org is always open, and when eBook borrowing increased by more than 50 percent, staff quickly purchased extra copies of resources to reduce wait times for popular titles. The library surpassed 1 million digital checkouts by June 2020, a feat not normally accomplished until much later in the year.

The library's web services team rebuilt THPL's home page at HCPLC.org as a one-stop shop for up-to-date information on library services and resources. Prominent icons for each service led to dedicated web pages with a similar look and feel and detailed instructions and videos on getting started. Staff recorded library programs from home for the library's YouTube channel, bringing story times, DIY craft projects, bilingual programs, and step-by-step resource demonstrations to thousands of virtual attendees. Our YouTube viewership

increased by 1,300 percent in a single month! A virtual version of the 40th anniversary of the Tampa-Hillsborough County Storytelling Festival celebrated youth storytellers and storytelling. While working remotely, hundreds of library staff logged thousands of training hours to enhance their service skills, and the library increased virtual learning support for county employees and Hillsborough County students.



3-D printing ear guards and bias tape folders for distribution across the County to help ease the strain of wearing protective masks for frontline workers.

## Responding to the Call

Throughout this unprecedented time, THPL staff have clearly demonstrated how resilient and dynamic library employees can be to support the communities they serve. When there was a critical shortage of masks, many THPL staff put their maker skills to work sewing hundreds of cloth masks for distribution to county departments and 3-



Talented library team members create cloth masks for Hillsborough County Aging Services. library team members create cloth masks for Hillsborough County Aging Services.

D printing mask and face shield accessories for county staff and health care workers. Library employees cheerfully assisted the county's Emergency Operations Center with call center support, relief supply management, and a variety of other roles.

Once staff could reenter library buildings, additional services ramped up right away. Library book drops reopened and staff followed a strict quarantine process to check in returned materials. Staff pulled requested items from the shelves and mailed books, music, and movies to customers' homes. They inventoried the more than two million items in the library's collection and coordinated improvement projects within library facilities, including building repairs and solar panel installations. Two library branches with drive-thru windows distributed more than 2,000 printed reemployment forms and mailed over 700 returned forms to the Florida Department of Economic Opportunity at no charge to customers, a service which received over 200 press mentions at the local and national level. When asked to serve as distribution points for free reusable masks for the public, THPL branches gave away 88,000 masks within a week's time while fielding 1,400 phone calls about mask availability and making real-time availability updates to HCPLC.org.

As local and state-supported COVID-19 testing sites opened throughout Hillsborough County, THPL again responded to the call from county Emergency Management. Between June 16 and September 16, 2020, 94 THPL employees provided nearly 37,000 hours of service at the Raymond James Stadium testing site in Tampa. Many others were assigned to additional testing sites, situation units, and call center support. All activated library staff diligently worked with the health care team and other county and state employees to assist with



Distributing and collecting paper reemployment forms at branch library drive-thrus.

Staff from all branches have been assisting at testing sites.

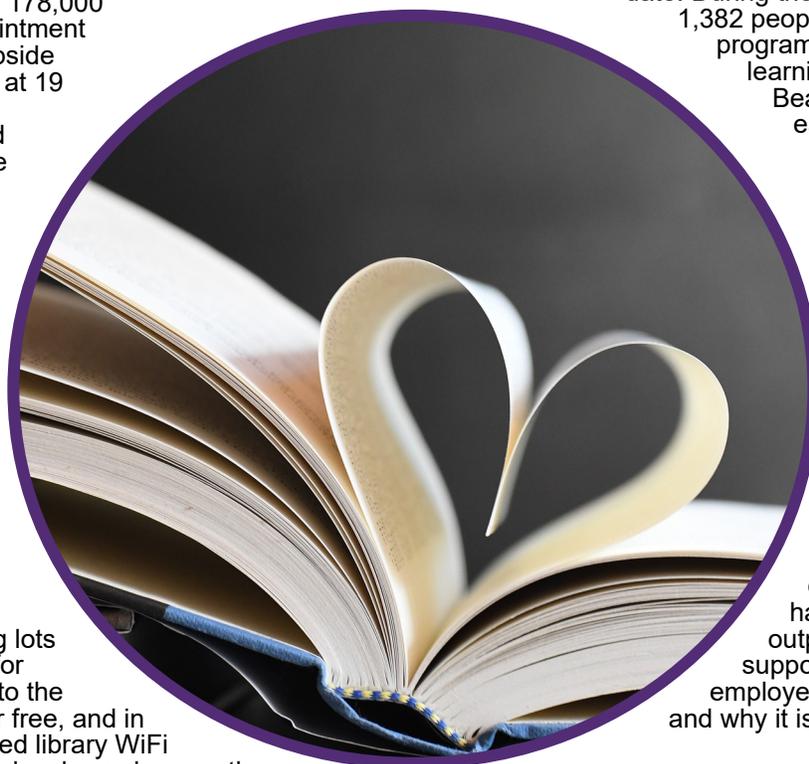
intake, appointments, traffic control, supply inventory and

distribution, and data tracking and reporting.

## Moving Forward

THPL has added many new services while working towards inviting the public safely back into library buildings. As libraries throughout the nation begin to reopen their doors, THPL continues to follow the direction of its local government and maintain a cautious, phased approach, especially with such a large number of staff activated for the county's emergency operations.

Since May 2020, Hillsborough County residents have borrowed 178,000 library materials by appointment through contact-free curbside pickup service, available at 19 libraries throughout Hillsborough County, and 1,100 appointments have been filled for free curbside faxing, scanning, copying, and wireless printing. The library's sudden shift in services expedited THPL's timeline for launching its new Borrow by Mail service, and since May 2020, 15,000 items have been mailed directly to customers' homes via the U.S. Postal Service at no cost. THPL established Park & Surf WiFi zones in the parking lots of nine library branches for customers to park close to the buildings and connect for free, and in June 2020 customers used library WiFi 90,890 times. This usage level equals more than one-third of the total connections in June 2019 when all branches were fully operational. THPL's 165 hotspots are in high demand, and more will soon be added with the support of CARES Act funding. The library's Facebook



engagement has increased by 200 percent with a 500 percent increase in followers, and its Instagram has gained 300 new followers.

THPL's annual summer reading program, funded by the Friends of the Library of Tampa-Hillsborough County and presented in partnership with Hillsborough County Parks & Recreation, was offered virtually for the first time in 2020. Funds earmarked for summer promotional incentives instead purchased books and technology that all registered readers and contest participants were eligible to win in weekly raffles. Staff mailed prizes directly to the 600 winners, and summer reading was extended as the local school district pushed back its opening date. During the 10 weeks of the program 1,382 people attended 70 live virtual programs and 96 percent reported learning something new. In Beanstack, 2,446 participants earned over 5,000 activity badges, youth readers logged over 1.2 million reading minutes, and adults read 4,044 books.

## Meeting the Need

One constant in these uncertain times is that the library will be there for the community, ensuring access to much-needed resources and support for the citizens of Hillsborough County. The library's citizens and colleagues have responded with an outpouring of thanks and support, reminding THPL employees daily why they are here and why it is so important to serve.

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\*All library photographs for this article were provided by the Tampa-Hillsborough County Public Library.