

2020

east brunswick
PUBLIC LIBRARY

ANNUAL REPORT

PROVIDING & REIMAGINING LIBRARY SERVICES DURING A GLOBAL PANDEMIC



With the onset of COVID-19, every organization, business and person spent 2020 trying to adapt to existing in a global pandemic. East Brunswick Public Library was no exception. While the library was physically closed to the public for most of the year, library staff found innovative ways to serve the East Brunswick community.

Circulation was immediately affected. Customers could now only access eBooks, audiobooks, music and movies through the library's digital resources. To better serve the community, cardholder restrictions were removed for all customers, allowing them immediate online access to eBooks, movies and magazines. Staff worked to process new library card registrations that allowed new customers to use our online resources. Children's librarians partnered with local schools to offer virtual class visits, helping students sign up for library cards.

With the library being closed to staff and the public

for an extended time, our reference desk moved into the online world. A virtual reference team answered the community's questions remotely, via e-mail, telephone or the new Zendesk chat service that the



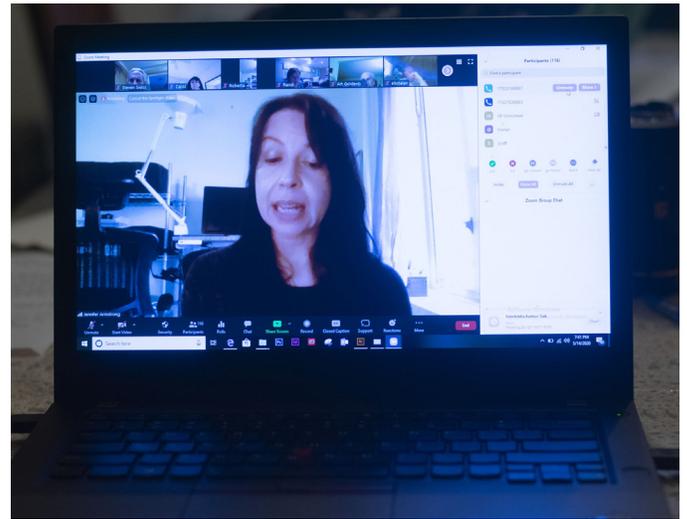
LIBRARY IN THE PARK: While East Brunswick Public Library was closed to the public, the library began the Library In the Park program. This let library customers browse a limited selection of library books, have brief reference questions answered and learn how to use the digital library.

Information Technology department launched.

The library was also able to refer questions about food assistance, mental health and tenant rights to a social work intern through a program with Rutgers University. Customers who needed more help with complicated issues could meet with a social worker funded through a partnership with RWJ University Hospital and Holy Family Parish of New Brunswick.

The Information Technology department used the library's closure to work on projects that would have otherwise disrupted customer usage. These included upgrading staff and public computers, deploying new laser printers, launching a new VPN client to keep the library's network safe, installing temperature sensors in the server rooms to protect the valuable network infrastructure, and installing additional security cameras. The department also deployed staff with laptops and multiple video conferencing platforms, both of which allow East Brunswick Public Library staff to provide services and programming remotely.

The goal of public libraries is to provide accurate and up-to-date information to the community. Staff collaborated to put together a COVID-19 resource web page featuring information about the disease,



REMOTE PROGRAMMING: With the library closed to the public, special events and programs were moved from the meeting rooms to Zoom video conferences. Every day, programs are held for all ages ranging from book discussion to crafting to medical presentations.

symptoms, testing information, cleaning tips and resources for small businesses and the unemployed.

Library programs and events moved from the meeting rooms to various online platforms like Facebook, Zoom, YouTube, Twitter and more. This allowed library customers to participate in our programming from the comfort and safety of their own homes. Many of these programs have been recorded and archived for later viewing. The library offered closed captioning for select programs for the first time, making them more accessible for the deaf, hard of hearing, and

2020 BY THE NUMBERS

1,562,272 ITEMS CHECKED OUT ▪ **148,653** ITEMS IN LIBRARY COLLECTION
▪ **1,900** HOURS OF VOLUNTEER SERVICE FROM TEENS ▪ **950** MEDICAL PRESENTATIONS
TIVE ▪ **61.2%** INCREASE IN EBOOKS CHECKED OUT ▪ **8.2%** INCREASE



SELF CHECKOUT: The library's self checkout stations became increasingly popular for our customers during the periods when the library was open to the public. Customers were able to quickly check out their items while maintaining strict social distancing guidelines.

non-native English speakers.

Several new programming initiatives were launched. Called Take A Business Break, monthly programs featuring Edward Mendlowitz of WithumSmith+Brown, were held to explain important aspects of running a business, tax law, and assessing a business's value.

The Friday afternoon Lunch' N Learn with the Doctors allowed the community to learn about medical conditions and treatments from experts from their own home. Throughout the year, the library held several

programs in the Path to 2020 series, which held discussions that explained how our political system works. Our English Conversation Groups transitioned from meeting in-person to a Zoom chat, resulting in increased attendance and a more diverse group of non-native speakers. The annual summer reading programs for kids, teens and adults still happened, albeit digitally.

With local schools being closed to students, librarians found new ways to team up with teachers. The library was able to partner with schools to expand access to eBooks, including a new purchasing model that allows an entire class or grade to read the same title at the same time. Before the pandemic, weekly trips to Hammarck Middle School were scheduled, allowing students to check out East Brunswick Public Library materials from the school. This program will resume hopefully in late 2021.

Due to the pandemic, the nature of children's programming changed dramatically. The library's YouTube page became a home for storytimes and craft demonstrations. The month-long Girls Who Code program was transformed into an ongoing virtual program.

While the library was closed during the summer,

SECTION ■ **9,000** CUSTOMERS TOOK ADVANTAGE OF CURBSIDE PICKUP
AL QUESTIONS ANSWERED BY OUR JUST FOR THE HEALTH OF IT INITIA-
E IN ATTENDANCE OF YOUNG ADULT PROGRAMS

library staff started a new service called Reference in the Park. A tent was set up in the East Brunswick Municipal Complex to allow library customers to check out a limited number of books, answer quick reference questions and provide information about library resources.

The demand for books was solved in June, when a new curbside pickup program was implemented. Customers are now able to reserve their books and pick them up at the library, just as they would take-out from their favorite restaurant. After its launch, over 9,000 library customers used this new service throughout the remainder of the year.

The pandemic also gave us the opportunity to expand an existing but under-utilized program, Match+Book, which allows customers to request a curated selection of books on a theme, genre or by a particular author. This service is popular for all ages, but specially for younger readers. Over 650 requests for curated children's selections were filled in the four months since the services launched.

With limited public access to the building, staff began scheduling appointments for customers to apply for passports, or to use the library's computers, photocopiers and fax machines. The community has greatly appreciated these appointments.

As one of the goals of libraries is to collect and preserve information, the library launched a COVID-19

Community Time Capsule. Library users of all ages can submit photos, videos, original artwork and written accounts to show future generations how we survived this pandemic.

The library partnered with over eighty outside organizations, including Data Axle, East Brunswick Arts Commission, East Brunswick Department on Aging, East Brunswick Hadassah, East Brunswick Human Relations Council, East Brunswick Public Schools, Friends of the East Brunswick Environmental Commission, Healthier Middlesex, Middlesex County Advisory Health Council, New Jersey Council for the Humanities, Princeton Radiation Oncology, Regional Cancer Care Associates, Robert Wood Johnson University Hospital and Saint Peter's University Hospital, Robert Wood Johnson Medical School, Rutgers Institute for Health, Health Care Policy and Aging Research, and WithumSmith+Brown, PC.



THANKS TO OUR FRIENDS: The Friends of the Library were able to adapt their fundraising events, moving to outside book sales, fishing tournaments, gift purchases and take out nights to continue their support and advocacy of the library.

EAST BRUNSWICK PUBLIC LIBRARY BOARD OF TRUSTEES: Dr. Deborah Cornavaca, Ph.D., President
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