

GRAL Director's Report

JANUARY 2022

ADVOCACY

-City of Grand Rapids

The 2022 Library budget was set at the City Council at the 12/20/2021 meeting.

-Itasca County

The 2019 increase the Regional Library line item was included in the final 2022 County budget.

-The Library as a Community Partner

The Library has an opportunity to collaborate with other community organizations in hosting Grand Jam in late July. As with Riverfest, this is great exposure for the Library and the contract includes a 5% share of any profits payable to the Library Foundation.

LIBRARY MANAGEMENT

-Borrower Purge

I have been working with Arrowhead Library System to keep our borrower records up to date. A large part of this project is purging records that have been expired for 7+ years. Over the year, a backlog of expired accounts with small issues or fines have built up. I examined these individually and, in many cases, was able to clean up the record or delete it. Current (and accurate) records help Library staff avoid customer service issues in the form of an unwelcome surprise when someone returns to the Library after years away.

-Grand Rapids Riverfest Data (Courtesy Jeremy Dewey, Reif Center)

Attendees traveled from 228 cities spanning 24 states to include Florida, California, Washington, Texas, Wisconsin, Iowa, North Dakota, South Dakota, New York, et al.

4.4% of attendees were from out-of-state.

Outside of MN, Wisconsin was the 2nd highest state to attend, BUT... More attendees traveled here from Texas than from South Dakota...figure that one out.

The average distance traveled, one-way, was 85.4 miles.

The furthest attendees came from San Diego, CA (2,018 miles)

36.7% were locals from Grand Rapids

48.7% percent of ticket buyers were from outside of Itasca County.

45.4% of attendees traveled 50 or more miles, one-way, to attend.

New Temp

David Olmscheid started training in at the CIRC desk.

FACILITIES MAINTAINANCE / SPACE

-Study room update

The Friends have pledged \$500 toward a new installation in the study room. John is working with the Itasca County Historical Society to select a historic photograph – to be enlarged and framed. This promises to be a welcome enhancement – stay tuned.

-Nature Playscape

I have been exploring ideas for making use of the Library grounds. Some, like the pavilion, did not work out for technical reasons. Others, like Story Walk, have been very successful. Recently, I talked with Marcia Larson, Parks and Recreation Director for the City of Bemidji, about the North County Park – a natural playscape collaboration between the City of Bemidji and the Rotary Club.

FIRE RESPONSE

I responded to 14 fire calls in December – 7 from the Library.

END OF REPORT

Equitable City/County Funding Needed For Grand Rapids Area Library

The Library is a valued community resource, providing free services to people throughout Itasca County. The Library is funded by local City of Grand Rapids and Itasca County tax dollars.

In recent years, the Library has undergone service cuts (both in open hours and staffing), due to inadequate funding from Itasca County. The City needs cooperation from the County to sustain Library services with an equitable funding model, based on actual use.

	CITY OF GRAND RAPIDS	ITASCA COUNTY
Library Use (check-outs)	>50%	<50%
Library Support (in tax dollars)	84%	16%
Per Capita Support (in tax dollars)	\$66.67	\$13.50

- The City of Grand Rapids has continued to increase their share up to \$350,000 above their minimum required level, as calculated by the State of Minnesota (Department of Education), and faces challenges to sustain this level.
- Itasca County is supporting the Library near the level it did in 2012.

A Joint Powers Agreement between the City of Grand Rapids and Itasca County to ensure equitable funding is the only way to maintain this community resource and prevent further service cuts. The City of Grand Marais and Cook County have had a successful agreement since 1992, illustrating that this type of partnership is successful and sustainable.

December in Children's

I am quite glad to close the calendar pages of 2021, and look forward to 2022. I am greatly looking forward to an effective vaccine for littles, so we can get back to in-person programming, particularly in-person Storytime. But, before looking forward, let's look back.

December is one of our quietest months of the year, and this year was no different. Between school programs, holiday preparations, and general busy-ness, I find that people like to return all their books, and get on with things. The advantage that brings us, however, is a chance to SEE most of our books, and the time to weed (remove books that are not being checked out) or repair as needed. I did no weeding last year, except for books that were damaged, so I knew I needed to hit it hard this year. Thus, the last week of December I dedicated to weeding our picture books. Why get rid of books that have not yet fallen apart? Because if books are not being read, they need to be replaced with books for which my young patrons are looking. A library needs to be responsive to its patrons, and books need to "earn" their place on the shelf. I look at every book that hasn't checked out in the last 18 months. I certainly don't pull them all, but this time allows me to see, perhaps, WHY a book hasn't checked out. It's not uncommon to open a "dusty" book and see crayon or marker all over the pages, or perhaps water damage that has gone undetected. Ah! I see why this book hasn't gone out! I might choose to move a book to a different section of the library, in hopes that it might circulate. (For instance, I moved a book that describes a child doing yoga with her Dad to a non-fiction yoga section, and a book-in-verse to poetry.) Oftentimes it's apparent why a book doesn't circulate, sometimes I just wonder. Many times I'll leave a "wonder" book in the bins, and decide to look at it again next year. Weeding is a vital part of collection development, and it assures us a much richer, much more responsive collection. December offers us a chance to weed.

I, again, contributed a segment to KAXE's "What We're Reading" program. I've started to receive comments from patrons about how much they enjoy that segment, and I think it's great PR for the library. I'm scheduled for two more chats in January...before and after the Newbery awards are announced. (EEEE! Can't you feel the excitement already???)

I also attended a couple of Zoom meetings, which has become so commonplace...try explaining that to anybody 2 years ago! Online Storytime filming continues, and while we didn't do Artastic in December, we are prepping for January. All in all, it was a month of opportunities to get things done...and I did. Happy Reading!