

# The Ayer Library

## Director's Report for January 2021

### January Updates to Library Operations

- **New “Curbside Branch” opens for business January 12<sup>th</sup>!**
  - Now complete with interior lighting, shelves, bulletin boards, and a table, our 8' x 10' shed now allow us to put out more curbside orders at once – no more timed pickup appointments necessary! - while also giving us plenty for room for displaying curbside craft kits and additional information about library and community services.
  - Opening the shed has allowed us to free up the limited space in the Library's Main Entrance vestibule so that it can be used as a service area for patrons stopping by to send a fax, pick up a print job, or request photocopies.
  - We're grateful to Ayer's Director of Facilities Maintenance Chuck Shultz for doing most of the work to make the shed patron-ready by installing the shelving, an extra light, the bulletin boards, grab bars at the entrance, and some safety tape.
  - We're also grateful for Alan Manoian and Alicia Hersey from Ayer's Office of Economic and Community Development for stopping by prior to opening on the 12<sup>th</sup>. They recorded an off-the-cuff video introduction and tour of the “Curbside Shed” with Assistant Director Samantha Benoit and Director Tim Silva that was posted on the Library's Facebook page.
- **Library WiFi speed increased.** In an effort to provide better service both during and after the pandemic, we have paid for an internet connection speed upgrade from 30 MBPS to 100MBPS. This is a fiber optic connection, so the upload and download speeds are the same. The upgrade went into effect on January 12<sup>th</sup>. Although higher connection speeds are available, we are currently limited to 100 MBPS until we can upgrade the existing IT infrastructure and cabling in the building, most of which is now more than 20 years old.
- Curbside orders picked up in January: 502
- Updated the Kids Play Page on our website with new links to learning content and games, including National Geographic for kids, Chop Chop Kids cooking, and Boston Children's Museum play.
- Adult Creative Crafting: Macramé hanging jars
- Strega Mama Story Time: *The Mitten* by Jan Brett
- Video Story Time with Library Clerk Eben Goldman: *Old Bear and His Cub*. Eben also introduced his pet bunny Mr. Tumbles.
- Kids and Teen Curbside Crafts for January:
  - Teen - Pom Pom Snowmen, inspirational word magnets
  - Kids - Winter mouse mittens, snowflake wands, potbelly snowman, bouncy polar bears.
- We put out a flyer to advertise some new YA fiction and updated a letter with basic information for new library card holders.
- More board games were added to the circulating collection.
- Behind the Scenes:

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- Assistant Director Samantha Benoit continues to direct ongoing weeding of adult fiction and non-fiction collections, making space to shift the adult biographies from the Reading Room into the Main stacks.
- Head of Adult Services Barbara Cheeks is preparing to launch a new Adult curbside program about spices in February.
- We have restarted a collaborative project with the Ayer Parks & Recreation Department to create a Story Walk for the walking path at Pirone Park. We have another collaborative project in the works for April with Ayer Conservation Agent Jo-Anne Crystoff at the Pine Meadow Pond Conservation Area.
- A virtual All-Staff Meeting took place on Friday, January 29<sup>th</sup> via Google Meet. Library staff members received updates about the operating budget and a review of COVID-19 protocols and available support from the Town during the pandemic. We also discussed the still-uncertain near future of library operations; when vaccinations might be available, when all of the staff might once again begin working together, and how soon we might safely be able to open the building to the public.
- In January, the Library contracted with the IT Department of our C/WMARS library network for basic desktop PC support service.
  - C/WMARS already provides and supports the Library's internet connection and its WiFi network. The organization will now take over the routine software updating and maintenance of 27 desktop and laptop computers in the library.
  - These machines are routinely used by staff and/or made available to patrons (in non-pandemic days), and this contract will free up several hours of staff time each week that we used to spend running the updates ourselves.
  - Library Director Tim Silva assisted C/WMARS by connecting the computers to the C/WMARS internet network and installing the remote management software that will allow C/WMARS to access the library's computers as needed.
- The Library was closed January 16<sup>th</sup> in observance of the Martin Luther King, Jr. holiday.

#### **"Normal" COVID-19 Operations at the Library**

- Library staff are working at the Ayer Library Tuesday, Thursday, and Friday from 10 AM to 5 PM, Wednesday from noon to 7 PM, and Saturday from 10 AM to 2 PM. The library building remains closed to the public but curbside pickup of books, DVDs, and other physical items is available by appointment.
- Faxing, photocopying, and document printing are also available at curbside. More details are available on the Library's website ([ayerlibrary.org](http://ayerlibrary.org)) and on our Facebook page.
- Book drops are open to accept returns. No late fees will be charged on overdue items.
- All in-person Library programs have been canceled or postponed, but video Story Times and other online programs continue.

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- Even though the building is closed, library staff members are available to fill requests for books and DVDs to be picked up curbside, to help answer questions, or assist you with online library materials, etc.
- To request assistance from one of our staff members
  - By telephone: Please call 978-772-8250.
  - By email: Send your message to [ayerlibrary@cwmars.org](mailto:ayerlibrary@cwmars.org) and someone will be in touch with you as soon as possible.
  - On Facebook: Message us or post a question to [www.facebook.com/AyerLibrary](https://www.facebook.com/AyerLibrary) and someone will respond as soon as possible.
- The Library's WIFI network remains on and available 24 hours a day and seven days a week. The signal extends far enough to cover the library parking lot.
- The staff of the Ayer Library continue to work hard to restore library services while also working safely:
  - The staff is divided into two teams of five, with the teams working alternating days to maintain separation.
  - Returned items are being quarantined on tables in the historic Reading Room for 72 hours before being re-shelved or checked out to another patron.
  - Workstations and desk surfaces are being cleaned by staff at the end of each day, if not more frequently, in addition to the disinfecting provided by our cleaning contractor on a daily basis.
  - Staff members do their best to remain physically distant from each other while working, and wear face masks inside the building when they can't do so.

#### **Library Director's Activities:**

- On January 7<sup>th</sup>, I sat down over Zoom with Town Manager Robert Pontbriand and Finance Director Lisa Gabree to review the Library's FY2022 operating budget request.
- Over the first two weeks of January I reached out to a number of library planning consultants to request information about their strategic planning services. I spoke with two consultants in depth and, by the end of the month I'd received detailed outlines of their processes and associated costs. My goal is to have someone on board by the end of February and to have a draft plan for the next 3-5 years ready for the Library Board of Trustees' review and approval by August.
- Assistant Director Samantha Benoit and I met Library Trustee Sharon Slarsky on January 28<sup>th</sup> to lay out a research project Sharon has agreed to undertake. She will be reviewing the Ayer Library's records of gifts and donations received over the years. This is to ensure that we are aware of any and all obligations or wishes of the donors of a wide variety of objects, documents and photographs, memorial plantings and benches, and funds currently held in trust by the Library's Board of Trustees.
- I attended a Public Forum for the Town of Ayer's FY2022 Budget on January 27<sup>th</sup>, prepared to answer any questions about the Library's portion of the current proposal. The forum took place over Zoom and, following a presentation by Town manager Robert Pontbriand, provided an opportunity for the public to ask questions about the draft

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FY2022 omnibus budget, the financial status of the Town one year into the COVID19 pandemic, or any related topics. The meeting ended without any questions from the attendees.

- The Ayer Library Board of Trustees met via Zoom on January 21, 2020. The meeting recording is available on the Ayer Public Access Corporation (APAC) website.
- On Wednesday, December 13<sup>th</sup>, I attended the Town of Ayer's Department Heads' Meeting via Zoom.
- Along with Samantha and Circulation & Outreach Librarian Christina Zoller, I attended the Friends of the Ayer Library's quarterly meeting on January 21<sup>st</sup>.
- The Library's administrative STAB (Samantha, Tim, Amy, Barbara) team met on January 7<sup>th</sup>, 15<sup>th</sup>, 21<sup>st</sup>, and 27<sup>th</sup> to discuss ongoing operations and future plans.

My thanks to Amy Leonard, Barbara Cheeks, Samantha Benoit, and the rest of the Ayer Library staff for their contributions to this report.

Respectfully,

Tim Silva  
Library Director