

Director's report

March 29, 2021

1. Gratitude

- Thanks to Kate for her “growth mindset” in agreeing to facilitate the GML Reads book discussion on April 9th! Also, for choosing to take part in the Carol Purington Poetry Collective. On that note, thanks to everyone else who has attended a program recently, or plans to—this is a great way to show support and build community!
- Betty's April craft is already sprucing up our desk. Together with Nancy's posters (quite a few this month, as we have more programs planned than usual), the library is looking very nice! Indeed, we've received lots of compliments from the folks who have come back in for browsing.
- We're grateful to the Select Board for taking time to learn about our Libraries Transform grant, and approving our request to set up our “pop up library” at the transfer station!
- Thanks to Ellen for doing some clean-up in the front gardens, and keeping in touch with me about library news, donations, and the Libraries Transform grant.
- Thank you Jill and the Board of Trustees for centering the discussion about land acknowledgements and social justice statements, and sharing your thoughts and concerns. I look forward to continuing this important conversation and work.

2. Building/grounds

- The library reopened for Express Browsing on March 13th, with new, extended service hours. Folks have gradually been catching on that the library is open. So far, we're averaging about two visitors per hour, but that is partly by design, as we intentionally didn't advertise when we first reopened. So far, it is good that there hasn't been a wait for visitors.
- A patron who noticed our dirty windows recommended a service called Joe's Window Cleaning. Indeed, the dirty windows are bugging me, too!
- There is no news to report on other library building projects as of this time, but I anticipate that we may be able to get the soil samples this coming month.
- Chelsea went before the Select Board for approval to put up the “pop-up library” at the Town Transfer Station. They approved a motion directing us to follow up with the town administrator and highway boss. We will meet next month after Scott has gotten through mud season.

3. Administration

- Our new surveys to evaluate our adult programs and Stories & Songs are now live, so we will be better able to share evidence about what is working, and collect suggestions and ideas for improvement. Look for this upgrade to the Director's report next month!
- Nancy and Chelsea met with Maura Deedy and Rob Favini at MBLC in regards to Board governance. They shared links for resources for Trustees, but mostly, the meeting affirmed that GML is on the right track with its approach to revising its policies.
- We will share statistics for the month of March prior to our meeting on April 5th.

4. Public services

- Five people attended the March 5th meeting of the Carol Purington Poetry Collective. We began with a haiku by Carol, then heard several poems by Naomi Shahib Nye. We then heard a religious poem called Spring that was special to Carol. One participant shared a poem in celebration of the grandchild his family is expecting. The group began picking on references to an owl, and before long, the evening had taken a dark turn. Nevertheless, it was great to gather on a Friday night with other individuals from across the hilltowns. The next meeting will take place on April 2nd at 6:00 p.m. We have created a recurring Zoom link for easier access. New participants should email griswold@colrain-ma.gov to register.
- Programs this month include:
 - The Carol Purington Poetry Collective on Friday, April 2nd at 6:00 p.m.
 - GML Reads: *Betty*, by Tiffany McDaniel, Friday, April 9th at 6:00 p.m.
 - No Sh*t! Getting real about misinformation, Monday, April 12th at 3:00 p.m.
 - Bug-out bags and books! Monday, April 12th at 6:00 p.m.
 - NEA Big Read: Pocumtuck Valley presents an evening with Emily St. John Mandel, author of *Station Eleven*, Tuesday, April 27th at 7:00 p.m.

5. Youth services

- Chelsea attended the Colrain second graders' class on Wednesday, March 17th, by Zoom. The students asked lots of great questions, and several were very excited to hear that the library reopened for Express Browsing.
- Ms. Betty's Take & Make Craft went out to 38 homes in March—25 via the school, and 13 here at the library. We received one nice social media message about how the shamrock suncatcher had brightened someone's home. Ms. Betty's Take & Make Craft video was viewed 15 times in total.
- We produced another three Stories & Songs Online in March. These were viewed 14 times in total.

6. Aside . . .

Our strategic plan states: "Our team models empathy, self-care, and critical thinking." On that note, I wanted to share a little about what I have been up to on the side of late. Last month, I took on a new role as co-lead of Library Services to the Justice Involved, an ALA special interest group. As well, *Library Journal* has commissioned me, along with Dr. Jeanie Austin of the San Francisco Public Library, to write a series of feature articles about how public libraries can better serve people impacted by the prison industrial complex (PIC). This was something I started researching last year,

first out of curiosity, and then disbelief; I found that there are fewer than two dozen programs or initiatives across the U.S. that explicitly support people impacted by the PIC, though there are simple things that even small libraries like GML can do, such as donating paperback discards to organizations such as Books Through Bars, or ensuring that our collection includes books that can help people who are navigating the system. On that note, did you know that rural areas are the most impacted by the growth of the PIC in recent years?

I have been organizing with a larger group of library workers across the U.S. and a little cohort here in MA, as well, including one other director in the hilltowns. The MA-based group is working on a zine that could go out to people who are about to be released from jails and prisons about what services and resources are available at public libraries. All of this work has me reading and learning lots about the carceral network and advocating for people swept up in the system. I especially enjoyed *We Do This 'til We Free Us*, by Mariame Kaba.

Besides these projects, an acquaintance at NYPL and I put in a proposal to speak at the Critical Pedagogies symposium in May, and have just heard that our idea was accepted. The talk is called: "Breaking bureaucracy and the status quo: A conversation about the systems that shape library culture versus radical change." On a related note, I thought I would share [an article that I came across this week](#) as it applies also to the conversation we are having regarding land acknowledgments and symbolism. More on that in the attached letter!

Thank you for taking the time to read this report and the attached. I look forward to hearing everyone's thoughts and questions when we meet on Monday!