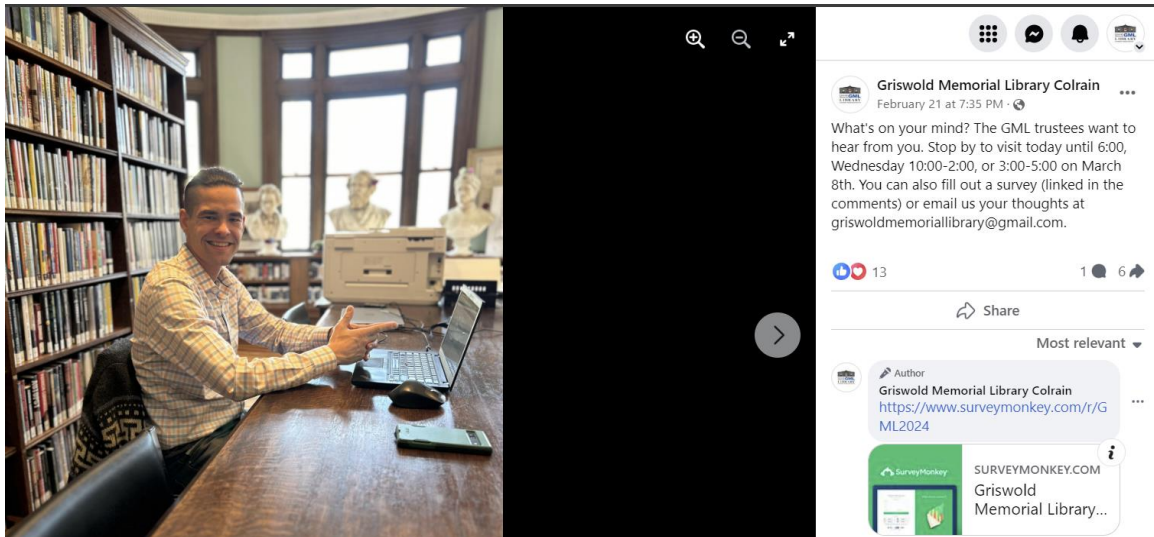


## Director's Report March 2024

Respectfully submitted by Chelsea Jordan-Makely on March 6th, 2024

### Joys and successes:

- The library staff got together for a staff meeting on February 29th. We talked about how we can be more Agile, how we are improving tech help at the desk and through new programs, and about the library's action plan for 2024.
- The "office hours" to meet with a library trustee seem to have been well-received, based on comments and reactions to our posts on social media:



- We've updated the Library/Town website with all of the Library Trustee minutes, agendas, and Director's reports dating back at least to 2021. Visit the Library Board of Trustees page at <https://colrain-ma.gov/q/49/Library-Board-of-Trustees>
- ["Aspen," the new interface of the CW MARS catalog launched on March 4th.](#) The new system links search results in a variety of formats and makes it easier to discover online resources, and it is more forgiving of misspellings to provide users with better search results.
- Nancy and Betty have taken out papers for re-election!
- We have collected more than 90 responses so far to the Griswold Memorial Library Community Questionnaire. This is a good start! A statistically representative response rate for a community of 1,600 people would be around 310. Everyone can help—please share this short link (<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/GML2024>) or QR code:



### **Building & Grounds:**

- Bill Ferenc points out that we need to understand where the water from the roof is draining; maybe if we knew that, then maybe the sump output could hook into the same output as the roof drains. Second, the sump pump needs to have a check valve so that it will run more efficiently.
- The Cornerstone Committee is reviewing the three proposals we received in response to our RFQ. Next steps are to meet and discuss our impressions of the candidates, decide whether we would like to conduct interviews with all three, follow up with the candidates' references, and ultimately make a decision as to which firm will lead the Library's feasibility study.

### **Programs and services:**

- The library is now loaning two Roku streaming sticks. Channels include AMC Plus on the Roku Channel, Amazon Prime Video, Apple TV, Discovery Plus, Disney Plus, Hulu, Netflix, and Paramount Plus.
- Bekki Tippens has provided us with audio interviews from David Nims, Marion Stafford, and Kenny Noyes that she hopes we will be able to edit and use for the People's History of Colrain Podcast. Meanwhile, Marcie Savoie has finished transcribing the other, finished podcasts.
- Besides our regular, ongoing collection development, we received some funding from CFCE to refresh our collection of Busy Bags, and we have also purchased new books (for children and adults) about the eight historical figures memorialized in plaster busts in our library.

- On March 9th, we will launch Library Yoga with Judith, an all-ages and abilities event that will connect movement and literacy. [See the event link here.](#)

# Library Yoga with Judith

Second Saturdays of each month at  
Griswold Memorial Library in Colrain.



**11:00 a.m.**  
**beginning March 9th**

**All ages and abilities  
are welcome!**

---

**Join Judith for  
Fun and Flexibility!**

---

Try some breathing and gentle movement in the library's children's area. Wear comfortable clothing and bring a water bottle. The library has yoga mats to share.

Email [griswold@colrain-ma.gov](mailto:griswold@colrain-ma.gov)  
Website [colrain-ma.gov/GML](http://colrain-ma.gov/GML)  
413.624.3619



- Two new members joined the Carol Purinton Poetry Collective on March 1st. There were seven participants at this meeting.
- Lamby and Roxanne will be back for Read with Lamby on March 30th for people of all ages to read or visit with Lamby, a certified therapy dog. [Ms. Betty created a tie-in craft, cosmetic-puff lambs, for the monthly Take and Make Craft with Ms. Betty.](#) Ten people viewed [Ms. Betty's February video.](#)
- Matt Allen (MACC) presented "Know Your Rights," a workshop/primer about the Bill of Rights, on February 26th. There were only four participants, including Kate Barrows from the Heath Free Public Library, who "co-hosted" the event, and Ian Hamilton of GCTV, who filmed the event so that we could then share it online.
- We will host an Earth Day Celebration on April 20<sup>th</sup> at 11:00 a.m., featuring presentations about local pollinator projects, a craft with Ms. Betty, and the Colrain Seniority Dancers.
- Candidate's Night is scheduled for May 1st at 6:00 p.m.
- William Apess Day is coming! Planning has been placed in the hands of the Mashpee Wampanoag community; please stay tuned for details. Meanwhile, read the full Proclamation from the Colrain Select Board, which states:

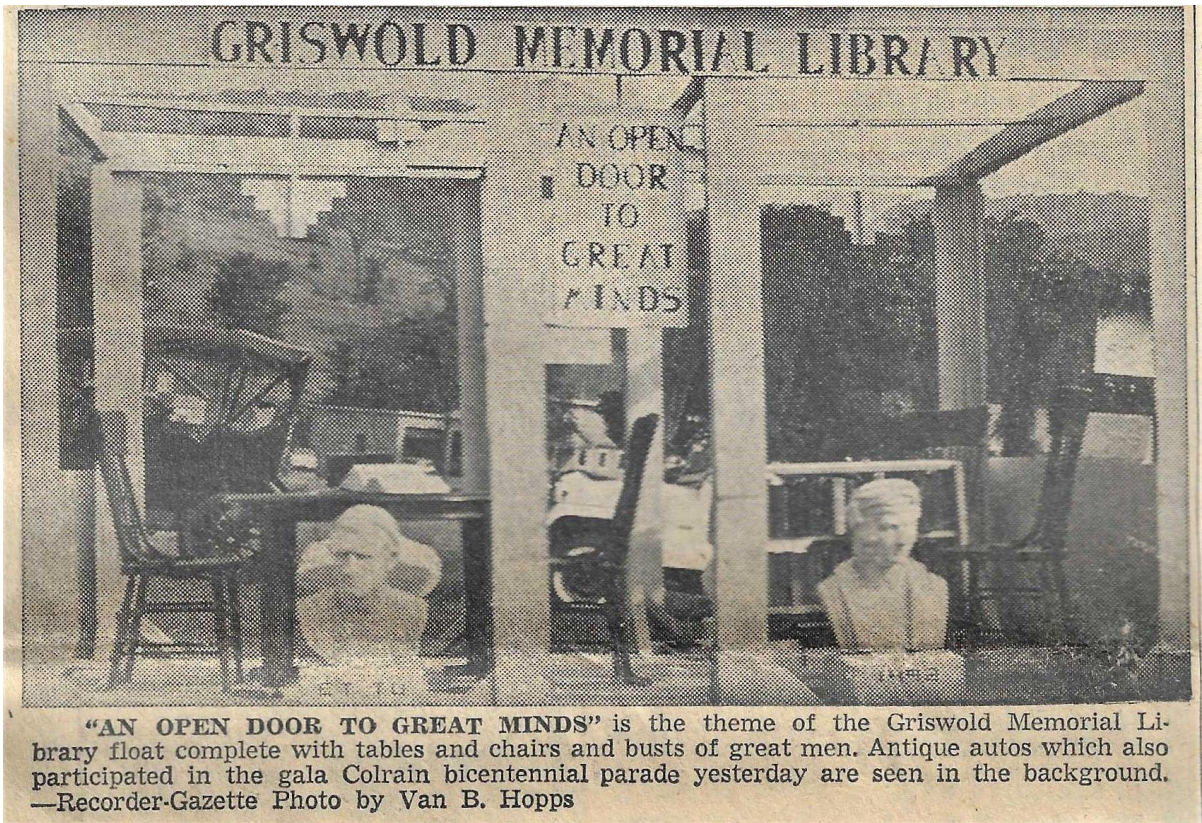
*Whereas we, the members of the Select Board share in responsibilities to act as stewards of our land, water, and resources, and to improve our relationships to the Tribal Nations in Massachusetts; Now, therefore, the Select Board of the Town of Colrain, Massachusetts, does hereby proclaim May 21st William Apess Day. We urge the residents of Colrain and surrounding towns to read works both written by and about Apess, and to consider how they, too, can honor Apess' brilliant legacy.*

Read the whole proclamation at at [https://colrain-ma.gov/files/William\\_Apess\\_Proclamation-1.pdf](https://colrain-ma.gov/files/William_Apess_Proclamation-1.pdf)

- Rachel Stoler, the Community Health Program Manager for FRCOG; Meg Ryan, a Public Health Nurse with FRCOG who regularly visits GML for “Wellness Wednesdays,” and Kathy Steinem and Robbie Murphy, both members of the Council of Aging have met twice at the library to discuss how the “Mass in Motion” grant funding may be best put to use. Ideas include new additions to the Library of Things, books for our collection, Wii games, tournaments, and other programs. Kathy and Robbie are ranking these items and will circle back to us with their top priorities.
- Next month, we will launch a new program, Drop-In Tech Support, with Bill Dornbusch. We will continue to offer help at the circulation desk, as well, but this will provide another opportunity for patrons to connect with someone and learn and practice tech skills. Please stay tuned for details.
- Services to the Franklin County Jail are back in full-swing, following a brief service disruption during which time we refined our security protocols, and had some interesting conversations about censorship and information access. The books *Gender Queer* and *48 Laws of Power* are not permissible according to the jail administrators. Both titles are on other lists of challenged materials. Besides library services inside the jail, we will be launching outreach with the Greenfield Public Library and Athol Public Library at the new Franklin County Re-entry Services location on Beacon Street.

#### **Administration:**

- We submitted our [2023 Annual Report](#) to the Town, which closely resembled the report delivered in-person to the Library Board of Trustees on February 12, 2024. The video recording from that meeting, including a public comment period, is available now at [https://drive.google.com/file/d/1vci\\_5CEiBHvBllocibEydfyBwrJeWaEc/view?usp=sharing](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1vci_5CEiBHvBllocibEydfyBwrJeWaEc/view?usp=sharing)
- GML received two FOI requests in February, one which was sent to all area libraries, and another that was local, and pertained to the collection of eight historical plaster busts.
- Joel DeMelo the Statewide Digitization Assistant (Boston Public Library) says they are “hopeful we’ll be able to plan a trip to Colrain (and some of your neighboring towns) in April or May” to assess our request to digitize the vital records, etc. per our recent request. The Digital Commonwealth has so far declined to post the photos of the busts and other related information that I sent, but they suggested that in the future they may be able to accommodate 360-degree objects on their site.
- We created [a folder in Google Drive with information and photos pertaining to the busts](#), including this new photograph that Don Purington found via the “Colrain, Yeah, I’m from there . . .” Facebook page. This photo shows the busts on the Centennial Parade float in 1961.



- Also pertaining to the busts, Rob Favini suggested that we reach out to some other organizations. These included Historic New England, and circling back to the NEDCC (who previously completed our Preservation Assessment in 2020). Chelsea also connected with the Librarian at Historic Deerfield, who wrote that the busts may be better off in storage, until the library can find a more permanent solution. Chelsea is also looking forward to another appointment with the MBLC regarding follow-up to the Preservation Assessment report, and ensure that we are in a good position for the next round of LSTA funding.
- In regards to the library's Community Survey, Foster Ranney submits that he is available to objectively analyze and present the survey results. His contact and references are available upon request.

Though the survey should remain open until we have collected more responses, we were able to download the existing responses and search for the term “busts” in order to pass this information on to the library trustees. Note that where one respondent mentioned the busts in answer to two different questions, their responses have been combined, to show that out of 90 survey responses, seven people weighed in on this issue specifically. Comments are shown in the order in which they were received:

- One that is safe and welcoming to everyone. The library can better support this vision by removing the problematic busts. Remove the problematic busts both to foster a welcoming space and to eliminate the atmosphere of threat that has developed as a result of their retention. The vitriol of the response makes me regret that I chose to live in this community, and makes me feel targeted and unsafe as a library staff member and worried for my coworkers' safety.
- No suggestions, you're doing great! Regarding the busts, I am neutral on whether they should stay or go. I'm not offended by them being in the library and I wouldn't miss them if they weren't there. However, if the library is to be truly inclusive of everyone in town, then old-Colrain's nostalgia for keeping them, for whatever reason, can't be dismissed. If the busts are retained, consider using them more actively for education. Perhaps one a

month displayed in the rotunda with a selection of books nearby where people could learn more about each person? Most of us probably know a little surface info about each person (good and bad), but probably not much in depth.

- The "rumor" of removing busts because they are offensive is offensive. Erasing, removing history/historical things is not worthy of you. Do better, if true. I no longer feel welcome at the library, and have not gone in some time. Very sad as I love books you can hold in your hand, and the access that a library provides. Get back to being a library, not a political pawn.
  - I do hope the busts stay just because I want my children to see all aspects of history not just the stuff we know better now to allow but the gritty truth as we go like my childhood
  - Regarding the busts, I can see removing Columbus, but it's nice to celebrate musicians, poets, etc. Maybe we could add a few more modern visionaries to update the collection.
  - In light of the recent posts about removing/destroying history by removing the busts of historical figures, I am very unsure what to think. Who initiated this? The Librarian or someone else? I am 100% opposed to this!
  - The preservation of the architectural history of the building, including the contents, artwork (paintings, busts, etc.).
- There were more in-person visits to the library in January of 2024 (401) than in 2023 (346). On average, there were more than 3 visitors per hour. We have been answering about four questions per day relating to the busts.

#### **Further reading and reflection:**

- Please be sure to check out the [MBLC's Legislative Agenda](#), which includes funding for state aid to local libraries, and support for eContent lending.
- You may also wish to borrow the March 2024 issue of *Library Journal*, "Election 2024: What's at Stake," for coverage on how libraries across the country are helping to "defend democracy, fight for funding, and educate the electorate."
- We have been taking in a lot of information from the community, and reading a variety of historical perspectives regarding the busts on display in the Library, and the question of whether they should be deaccessioned. This ongoing conversation seems to reflect other political divisions and questions that are playing out in our community, and across our country, in libraries and in other public spaces. It is no wonder that these questions should present themselves through our library, as public libraries are reflections of the communities we serve. Besides holding up local ideals and values, libraries also serve to connect our communities with the world more broadly, keep pace with change, and process new information in order that we can grow and succeed. This delicate balance is reflected in the Library's Strategic Plan, which upholds our commitments to preserve local history while also leading sustainable growth and change.

The information that we have collected since 2021 clearly shows that the eight historical busts hold value for some people in our community, as well as for art collectors; yet, the problem remains that they are not a good fit for a growing and busy public library with environmental and space challenges, limited resources, and a vision to be, "the social and cultural epicenter for all citizens of Colrain. A vital and widely relevant place to gather and discuss, and a steadfast encourager of reading . . ."

Given these challenges, Chelsea suggests that we *continue to seek a more appropriate long-*

*term location, or deaccession by sale through public auction, all eight busts, or at least to remove the busts which are located above the children's and adult fiction collections and put them into storage for the time being. The Library may also consider working with the Historical Society and Council on Aging to renovate the basement or other space that could then be used as an archives/storage for these and other items of local interest.*

Lastly, we should continue to move forward with community conversations, and use these discussions to help shape the next iteration of the Library's Strategic Plan, which will guide decisions from 2025-2030.