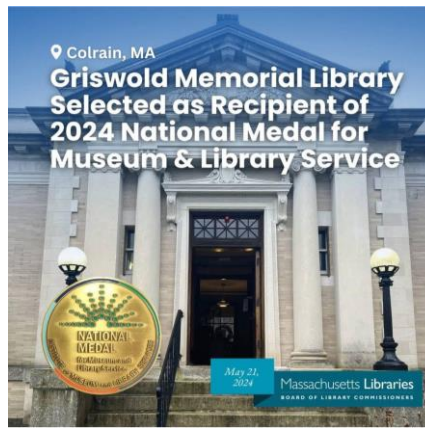


Director's Report June 2024

Respectfully submitted by Chelsea Jordan-Makely on June 14, 2024

Joys and successes:

- We have received a lot of congratulatory emails, phone calls, and even an official citation from Paul Mark and the Massachusetts State Senate following the announcement from the IMLS that Griswold Memorial Library is the recipient of the National Medal for Library Services. Further to the medal itself and official awards ceremony in Washington, D.C. this summer, the award includes a \$10,000 prize!



- The library has been awarded a [\\$10,000 Building Library Capacity Grant from the American Library Association \(ALA\)](#)! The ALA Building Library Capacity Grants are supported through a three-year grant from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation and are intended to bolster library operations and services including literacy and other skill development, developing collections, staffing, expanding outreach, as well as maintaining and amplifying existing service strategies or adding new ones to make an impact. A press release with more details is available on the Town/Library website.
- Congratulations to Ms. Betty on her new grandson, Leo! Also, did you know that counting her time as a Trustee, Betty has served the Griswold Memorial Library for more than 30 years!
- We are grateful to everyone who contributed to William Apess Day, and to the party we hosted on May 24th to celebrate winning the National Medal. Good food, flower arrangements, and music helped to make both of these events special, and there is no way we could have pulled off these events or this win without so much help from the community!



- Thanks to all who were able to attend the Annual Town Meeting and to help respond to questions and concerns about the library.
- We're grateful to the volunteers who helped to pack the busts for storage, and to Colrain Central School and Mr. Mike for moving these into their clean, dry basement storage area.

Building & Grounds:

- Visit from FRCOG June 10th at 1:00 to follow up on the letter that was forwarded to the Board of Health from the Town Administrator regarding concerns about mildew and mold. They noted "lots of areas of concern" and said they will probably submit a notice of violation and order to correct. They had told Chelsea that they would be communicating with the Select Board, but a message states that the order would be to the Trustees.
- The sump pump keeps getting stuck in the on position even when all of the water has been pumped out.
- Aaron Foster cleared the roof drains, but one of the drains or pipes was clogged or has failed, and a lot of water was released into the basement. Aaron suggests that it needs to be scoped so that we can identify the problem and resolve the issue before it happens again.
- The patron who had volunteered to power wash the building sends regrets that he is no longer able to help with this project.

Programs and services:

- We celebrated William Apess Day on Saturday, May 18th, as the 21st fell on a Saturday. Members of the Mashpee Wampanoag thespian group performed pieces from "We Are the Land," a play about the Mashpee Declaration of Independence, which was co-authored by William Apess. Rhonda Anderson, Western Massachusetts Commissioner on Indian Affairs, founder and Co-Director of the Ohketeau Cultural Center and the Native Youth Empowerment Foundation, and a member of the Advisory Council for the New England Foundation for the Arts moderated a residency which featured Jim Peters, executive director of the Massachusetts Commission on Indian Affairs, Hartman Deetz, and Dr. Drew Lopenzina took part in a "residency" to unpack the meaning behind the play and the historical events which it depicts. Dr. Lopenzina unveiled a portrait of William Apess painted by Debora Spears-Moorehead, and

shared his hope that it can be put on display here at Griswold Memorial Library, even if only for a short time. In total, 46 people attended the event, most of whom were from Colrain.



- On May 21st, the IMLS announced the ten recipients of the National Medal for Library and Information Services, and we shared a local press release, and invitation to celebrate the honor here at the library on May 24th. We quickly arranged for a band, "Brook Batteau and the Party Emergency," pizza from Catamount Country Store, and Hot Dogs by Steve, and sent invitations. About 80 people came out to party with us, including Representative Natalie Blais, who was also the first person to call and offer congratulations. Other libraries also attended the event, and Karen Traub of the Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners.



- We took our “Pop-up Library” to the Transfer Station on May 25th to talk up voter registration, Town Meeting, and the start of Summer Reading Club, and connected with 30 people in total.



- The library hosted seven class visits this month—more than 80 visitors in total. These were organized by the school media specialist, Talia Miller, and attended by teachers and teachers’ assistants. Caregivers had the option to complete a library card application in advance of the visits, and we created about 30 new cards as a result. Students were offered a quick introduction to the library and its history, and then selected a few books to borrow.
- Bill Dornbusch has been offering “Drop-in tech help” and has also been meeting with patrons by appointment. So far he has helped three people, and our staff continue to offer tech help as much as possible. Topics this month have included accessing a health care portal, and email settings.
- The Carol Purington Poetry Collective met on Friday, May 3rd, with five people in attendance.

- We provided services to patrons at the Franklin County Jail on May 7th and May 14th, reaching about 70 people in total.

Administration:

- Chelsea has been communicating with the Town Administrator and Northeast IT to order the new smart board, paid for by the Mass in Motion in grant. When it arrives, techs from Northeast will come in to set it up and to show us the basics.
- We updated our paper library card applications to explain the library's "fine free" and renewal policies, in advance of class visits from the school.
- The Digital Commonwealth postponed their visit to Colrain to assess and begin digitizing materials from the local history collection.
- We have completed the administrative processes to receive the ALA Building Capacity grant and have been in communication with the IMLS to name Paula Harrison and myself as contacts for the \$10,000 award that they will release later this summer.
- Chelsea and Sarah Hertel-Fernandez from Belding Memorial Library have been attending the CW MARS Users Council and helping to reshape cataloging practices to improve the discoverability and accessibility of paperback books.
- The plaster busts were all packed and stored as of May 30th. Per the advice of consultants and conservators, each bust was inspected and photographed before being packed. This process revealed some damage that should be noted for the record: Dante's base was broken and missing about ¼-½, and its name plate was not attached; there were black markings on Caesar's face; there was a strange cut/marking on Washington. All of the busts were very grimy. Caesar and Longfellow were flaking pretty severely, and Homer had some rust-colored discoloration. The busts were packed with "ethafoam" in boxes made to order by Kevin French.



- Answers to questions from Joe Slowinski are as follows:
 - What date was the piece of cloth placed over the bust?

The cloth was placed over the bust of Christopher Columbus in May of 2022, in advance of William Apess Day celebrations.

- What were the events or circumstances that caused Chelsea to cover the bust?

Because the trustees had not been able to hold conversations and reach a decision about deaccessioning the busts as of May 2022, my decision to place a cloth over Columbus represented something of a compromise. William Apess Day was approaching, and delegates from the Mashpee Wampanoag Tribe, and from other indigenous communities were expected at our library. In 2020, the Colrain Select Board had proclaimed May 21st “William Apess Day,” and stated an intent “to improve our relationships to the Tribal Nations in Massachusetts.” The Library Trustees adopted a land acknowledgment that says we will “move beyond words into actions that support Native rights, [and] forward cultural equity.” The Library’s Strategic Plan, and Statement on Social Justice assert that we “will do our best to foster an environment that is safe and welcoming,” and that our staff will model “empathy [. . .] and critical thinking.” Putting two and two together, it seemed hypocritical, disingenuous, or obtuse that Columbus was on a pedestal, so to speak but also literally, in a public room in our small library.

- When was the bust removed from public display in the library?

May 9, 2024

- If the covering was removed before the bust was removed from public display, what events or circumstances that caused the covering to be removed?

Staff safety is the reason that we removed the covering from the Columbus bust. Other area libraries had been doxxed after someone with a following on YouTube had posted videos of their libraries and staff, and we were expecting that they were going to be visiting.

- If the bust was covered again before the bust was removed from public display, please provide the following:
 - ii. Date the bust was covered.
 - ii. Events or circumstances that caused the bust to be covered.
 - iii. Date the covering was removed.

N/A, the bust was not covered a second time.

Further Reading:

- [*The 12 Steps to a Community-Led Library, by Audrey Barbakoff and Noah Lenstra, 2024, ALA Editions:*](#)

[C]ommunity-led planning is an intentional method for sharing power with communities, especially the most impacted and excluded. Rooted in asset-based community development, it helps libraries and librarians decenter ourselves, our perspectives, and our assumptions so we can truly put community at the heart of our libraries. When communities that have been systematically denied access to authority get to make important decisions about the library’s actions and resources, the resulting library services, spaces, programs, policies, and strategies become more equitable and culturally responsive, and they make a larger impact. (p. 7)