



Griswold Memorial Library

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Annual Report

Respectfully submitted by Chelsea Jordan-Makely on March 13, 2025

In 2024, Griswold Memorial Library was awarded the National Medal for Library Services from the Institute of Museum and Library Services, the highest honor given to American libraries and museums. The award is given in recognition of exemplary services. Fix-It Day, the Pop-Up library at the Colrain Transfer Station, “Read to the Children” at the Franklin County Jail, Crafts with Ms. Betty, the People’s History of Colrain Podcast, the Carol Purington Poetry Collection, and William Apess Day were recognized among the library’s initiatives. The library was nominated by Congressman Jim McGovern with letters of support from members of the community. No other Massachusetts has ever received this award, which was given to five libraries and five museums, who received a framed certificate and medal at an awards ceremony at the Renwick Gallery of the Smithsonian Art Museum, in Washington, D.C.



This photo shows, from left to right: Nancy Turkle, Chair, Library Board of Trustees; Dagoberto Lydgate-Driggs, Library Trustee; Rhonda Anderson, Western Massachusetts Commissioner on Indian Affairs and Colrain resident; Chelsea Jordan-Makely, Library Director; Congressman Jim McGovern; Maureen Amyot, Director of the Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners; Pete Johnson, Colrain resident; Betty Purington Johnson, Library Trustee and Past Director, at the National Medal Awards Ceremony at the Renwick Gallery of the Smithsonian Art Museum, in Washington, D.C.

The Griswold Memorial Library has served the people of Colrain and visitors since 1892, when it was first established by the School Committee, including Arthur A. Smith. The building was constructed and dedicated to the Town of Colrain by Joseph Griswold, in 1908. The library is a department of town government governed by an elected six-member board of Library Trustees, who delegate responsibility for library management, collection development, and provision of library services to the Library Director. The library’s mission is to be a “community hub where open access to current tools, resources and services support the enjoyment of reading and the informational, educational, and communication needs of the public.”

Following a strategic plan helps the library to stay on course with its mission. This outlines two

key priorities: “We stay true to our roots and safeguard what matters,” and, “We adapt to change, and grow our collective future.” This report tells how we took action and achieved results in these two areas this past year.

We stay true to our roots, and safeguard what matters:

Reading and literacy are always at the forefront of library operations. The library fosters a love of reading by maintaining its collection of books for all ages and abilities, and through programs such as Summer Reading Club, a StoryWalk at Pine Hill Orchards, and “Read to Lamby,” which helps readers to gain confidence by reading out loud to a therapy dog. The library also hosted educators from the Eric Carle Museum of Picture Book Art to facilitate workshops for caregivers who are incarcerated at Franklin County Jail, who are able to then make videos of themselves reading a book to their children to give to their families, along with a copy of the book.

Ms. Betty and Chelsea also attended Family Literacy Night at Colrain Central School, and this past year, the library worked with teachers and the school librarian to provide books for service learning projects and to welcome more class visits at the library. Students learn about our library’s history and about using public libraries through CW MARS, the Central Western Massachusetts Area Regional System. The Pop-Up Library at the Colrain Transfer Station has been a great way for the library to let people know what events are happening in the community, what resources the library offers, and to sign people up for library cards.



This photo shows the Library Director, Chelsea, with a Library Trustee, “Dago” Lydgate-Driggs, at the Colrain Transfer Station in April of 2024.

The GML has been fine-free since 2019, and provides access to a variety of materials besides just books: equipment like a movie projector, paper shredder, and snowshoes, new board games, and museum passes help families to save money and time. In 2024, the library loaned 23,186 items, and filled about 5,000 holds. We added more than 1,000 new items to the library collection, which includes about 10,000 items in total, plus about 100,000 eBooks and downloadable audiobooks available through OverDrive and the Libby app.

The library reached over 1,500 people through programs, and answered close to 3,000 reference questions over the year. A “return on investment” calculator shows that the library provided \$550,528 worth of services for \$107,700 in funding—a return on investment of more than 400%.

To stay responsive to community needs, the library led a community input survey, designed to evaluate how well we were delivering on the priorities outlined in our 2021-2024 Strategic Plan. There were 184 responses in total: 134 online, and 50 in print. In answer to the question, “How would you rate the library, overall?,” over 90% of respondents said it was excellent or satisfactory. A strategic planning committee has been assembled to use these data to seek more input from the community and write a new strategic plan for the years ahead.

The library worked with Boston Public Library to digitize several items from the local history collection: The “Personal War Sketches presented to H.S. Greenleaf Post No. 20, Department of Massachusetts, by Lorenzo Griswold, Colerain, 1890, Grand Army of the Republic,” ca. 1890, and “Records, Colrain soldiers in Company B, 52nd Regiment, M.V.M.,” ca. 1888. The original copies are now stored in the vault at Town Office for safer keeping.

A feasibility study got underway to estimate the costs of fixing the library’s drainage and improving access and programming space. Meanwhile, we fixed some electrical problems and refinished the front door.

We adapt to change, and grow our collective future!

The library continued partnering with public health nurses at the Franklin County Regional Council of Governments to provide programs relating to health, and helping people in our communities to find and access resources related to their healthcare.

We launched a new peer-to-peer technology training program to help people with their specific technology needs. The service is led by Bill Dornbusch, who has helped people with a range of skills so far, such as organizing their cloud storage, sharing photos, and managing their email. Library staff also help with technology during regular library hours. The top question they answered was probably how to download eBooks and audiobooks with the Libby app.

The library hosted more “pop-up” services at the Colrain Transfer Station, and was joined there on one occasion by Paul Mark. Annual events included Candidates’ Night, William Apess Day, Earth Day, Fix-It Day, and the Summer Reading Club Kickoff and the Summer Reading Awards/StoryWalk Launch, which celebrate reading and literacy. We had several one-off programs: an eclipse-viewing party, a party to celebrate when the library received the IMLS National Medal for Library Services, in May, and a meet-and-greet with the new town administrator. The library also hosted its first movie matinee, a screening of *Elf* on December 21st.



In this picture: Summer Reading Club participants and their families catch a lift at the StoryWalk Launch Party and Summer Reading Club Awards Ceremony at Pine Hill Orchards in September, 2024. There

were 107 participants in this year's Summer Reading Club.

The Carol Purington Poetry Collective is in its fourth year, and continues to meet the first Friday evening of the month. Online "Crafts with Ms. Betty" continue to be popular on YouTube, and craft kits are available in person at the library. We also experimented with a new program, Yoga with Judith, led by Judith Roberts.

To know by heart
where the sun rises, the moon sets—
I speak the words aloud
and they become
my vow of stability.

-Carol Purington, in *Faces I Might Wear*, Winfred Press, 2013

We produced several new episodes of the "People's History of Colrain Podcast," which is available for free through SoundCloud, and via the library website. Topics include "Carol Purington and the 'Vow of Stability,'" "Mike, Tony, and the Neon Flag," and Marianne Stafford, plus another in the works with David Nims.

The library received a \$10,000 grant from the American Library Association (ALA) to fund the Read to the Children program and other services at the Franklin County Jail and Re-entry Center. This partnership is supported by a Memorandum of Understanding signed by the Franklin County Sheriff and the Library Trustees.

We are grateful to Jill Horton-Lyons for her service as a Library Trustee. Mikaela Whitaker became the newest library trustee, and Betty Johnson and Nancy Turkle were re-elected to their positions.