

Director's Report

August & September-October 2025

Respectfully submitted by Val Finkel on October 17, 2025.

Joys and successes:

- It's such an honor to accept this post as the new Library Director. I'm looking forward to meeting & greeting everyone on the 24th! Thank you to the Friends for hosting this gathering.
- We're very grateful to Jade Mortimer for volunteering to do our snow removal this winter.
- Kudos to Mara Silver, our newest team member, who really stepped up to help out with getting shifts covered on short notice in September while Dominique was out sick for two weeks.
- Thank you to Kate Barrows for continuing to provide support during this transitional period!
- Thank you to Betty Johnson for also providing transitional support, especially with building history and with the Financial Report.
- Chelsea has graciously volunteered to continue providing GML's services to our incarcerated patrons at Franklin County Jail until I have been on-boarded to take over this job.
- The Library received a donation from John & Valeda Peters in the memory of our recently departed patron and library volunteer of many years, Bea Drew. Bea asked that donations in her memory be made to GML.
- Thanks to Ellen Weeks for fixing our chalk sandwich board sign!
- Chelsea's memory book was on display from August through the second week of October, and was thoughtfully signed and drawn in by many patrons.
- The Mike's Maze pass has been very popular, with 8 checkouts so far.

Building & Grounds:

- Dover Signs is still working on the sign and will coordinate with Aaron once it is ready.
- Aaron helped swap two shelves between Adult Fic & Adult Non-Fic, which has allowed us to give the books more breathing room in Adult Fic and lets in more light for the meeting space from the south window. General ideas for further rearrangement: deaccession the magazine tower & replace it with a twirly stand, deaccession the desk at the end of the meeting table, turn the meeting table 90 degrees, and turn the double bookshelf 90 degrees. Another thought is to add an armchair to the children's area so patrons have somewhere to sit and watch their kids, and so teens have a private spot.
- Aaron will mount the swivel monitor (which has been fantastic) to the old circ desk when he has time (probably in a month or so) for a trial run of using it as a circulation desk again.

Programs and services:

- We held the Summer Reading Club Awards Ceremony and StoryWalk Launch event on August 30th, with no attendees. We will consider the future viability of this event, and perhaps reschedule it for a weekend when more families are likely to be in town. One idea is to start program registration sign-ups with every one-off program, and not hold them if not enough people sign up.
- Our "Knit with Friends" program, led by Jan Jones, continues to be held on Wednesday evenings at 6:00. Attendance is low, generally 2-3 people, but steady. We expect that attendance will rise as time goes on and the word gets out.
- Fix-It Day, led by the Library Trustees, was successfully held at Colrain Central School for the first time this year. There were 86 attendees, volunteers, and fixers. 94 items were repaired.
- We co-hosted a new program series with the Select Board on October 1: Select Board Open Office Hours. The first installment was hosted by Selectperson Katie Korby. It was well attended, with five patrons engaging with her in turn for the entire two hour period.
- We displayed books for Back to School week and Hispanic Heritage Month in September, followed by a fall display and then a Halloween display in October. All have been fairly popular. There has been increased engagement with the "Library Favs" display on the circulation desk, likely as a result of the recent shifts in staff roles.

- We set up a display for the third annual Prison Banned Books Week, which takes place from 10/19-10/25. Prisons and jails ban more books than all public schools and libraries combined, and Prison Banned Books Week is a campaign that shines a light on this widespread censorship and advocates for the rights of incarcerated and detained people to access literature and express themselves freely. In partnership with organizations that champion free expression, the campaign underscores a powerful message: censorship has no place in a democracy. This display has not had much engagement so far.
- We ordered books and made a display for the Massachusetts Children's Book Awards, in coordination with Talia Miller, the librarian for Colrain Central School. The Massachusetts Children's Book Awards (MCBA) list is 25 books for 4th, 5th, and 6th graders. They have until March 2026 to read at least five in order to vote on the winner of the award, and the school will host a celebration for the participants. The display has been popular.
- The Friends of the Library are hosting a "Meet & Greet" for the community to meet me, our new director, at GML on Friday, October 24th at 4:00. Word of this event has increased library engagement; several community members, some of whom mentioned that they don't get to the library much, have already stopped by to chat and offer their congratulations.
- We will be offering a movie screening of "Hocus Pocus" on Saturday, October 25th, at 5:00 PM, after the Trunk-or-Treat at the school ends at 4:00. Our "vote for your favorite" Facebook post got significantly more engagement than most of our social media posts, so we are hoping it will be well attended.
- Chelsea visited D-Pod and B-Pod at the Franklin County Jail on October 7th; 55 men and women participated in the offered library services.
- We began a survey to better understand the technology needs of Colrain seniors because in coordination with the Town Administrator, we have begun working with Donna Dusell from GCC to offer their "Cyber Senior" program here at GML. This will consist of two hours of drop-in tech support per week, hosted by a Mohawk Trail student, as well as about two dozen elective classes at various levels we can choose from to offer our seniors. We hope to coordinate on this program with the Council on Aging. The drop-in hours for tech help will be held on Wednesdays from 3 PM - 5 PM.
- Plans in the works: make a "Patron Picks" display to add new perspectives and increase patron feelings of being invested in their library.

Administration:

- We submitted the annual Financial Report for State Aid on October 3rd. We met our full Materials Requirement in FY25, so we remain eligible to participate in the State Aid program in FY26. Awards will be granted starting November through March.
- We submitted a grant application to the Colrain Cultural Council on October 16th to request funding for the Library Movie Nights program series in 2026. Our hope is to screen six movies throughout the year, one every other month, both inside the library and outside on the lawn. Awards will be announced January through March.
- Dominique has joined the Strategic Planning Committee as our employee representative. Our next meeting will be tomorrow, October 21.
- The town Tax Collector recently met with a vendor to discuss opening a town credit card, so we hope to have the Rokus loaded with streaming services and available to loan in the near future. Interest in borrowing these remains high, with five patrons currently on the wait list.
- I have begun the Basic Library Techniques courses, and plan to have them finished over Thanksgiving week. I have begun an application to Simmons University for their MLIS program.

Further reading/Good to know

- Please see the obituary for our friend, longtime library volunteer and patron Bea Drew here: <https://www.smithkelleherfuneralhome.com/obituary/BeatriceBea-Drew>
- In major library news, the supplier Baker & Taylor recently closed their doors. We don't use Baker & Taylor, but will still expect to see some supply chain delays as our main supplier, INGRAM, absorbs the B&T customers. We do not anticipate any major issues for collection development as a result of these delays because we have a robust pre-ordering practice for materials already in place.

Read more about the closure of Baker & Taylor here:

<https://americanlibrariesmagazine.org/2025/10/08/baker-taylor-to-cease-operations/>. A paragraph of particular interest: "B&T's troubles illustrate the fragility of the library book industry. The profit margins on sales tend to be small, while costs for distribution centers and business infrastructure tend to be high. Demand for ebooks from providers like OverDrive continues to increase and take up larger portions of library collection budgets, in turn causing a decrease in print-materials spending."