

Director's Report

October-November 2025

Respectfully submitted by Val Finkel on November 8, 2025.

Joys and successes:

- We're grateful to the Highway Department for coming by with the bucket truck to clear out a clogged gutter on 10/24.
- We're very grateful to the Friends of the Library for hosting the new director's Meet & Greet on 10/25, which was a joyous and well attended occasion.
- The Library received several more kind donations in the memory of Bea Drew.
- We received a generous donation from our patron Maria Stewart, who checks out many books for her homeschool program. Maria mentioned that she donates every time she renews her card, so we are especially grateful for her continued support.

Building & Grounds:

- Dover Signs is almost finished with the sign and will transfer it to Aaron's keeping shortly. He will secure storage until he's ready to install it, which should happen within the next month or so. It shouldn't be an issue if the snow comes before he's ready because he doesn't anticipate the ground freezing by that point. He also thinks he may be able to use both existing post-holes.
- Aaron replaced eight lights around the interior of the building and hooked up the outside tree lights.
- We experienced a flooded basement on 10/31, the day after a large rainstorm. The fire department responded promptly with assistance, and got the basement clear in short order. The flood happened in part because when the gutters were cleared by the highway department on 10/24, the release of that water swept lots of pine needles and detritus from the gutter into the basement, which were then pulled down into the sump

hole when the rainwater entered, and clogged the pump. The Fire Department advised that we immediately raise the sump pump above the bare dirt of the bottom of the sump hole, which Aaron completed on 11/5.

Programs and services:

- The Halloween display continued to be popular with patrons for the remainder of October. We've now set up a Native American Heritage Month display for November, which has had moderate engagement so far.
- We held a movie screening of "Hocus Pocus" on 10/25, after the school's Trunk or Treat event. Attendance was low, with a family of four plus one adult. We plan to address this low turnout by promoting future screenings in more places around town and with large signage out in front of the building, and will more heavily promote the available snacks at the screenings. We also plan to add quiet activities for kids to do while watching a movie, such as coloring. Finally, we will hold screenings of family movies earlier in the afternoon.
- We missed highlighting a program at our last Trustees meeting: "Mending at the Library" with Elsa from Swanson's Fabrics in Turner's Falls, which took place on 8/25. This event was attended by six people but had good outreach, as several of the attendees were not regular library users.
- Our "Knit with Friends" program, led by Jan Jones, continues on Wednesday evenings at 6:00. Attendance is steadily rising, up to 5-6 regular attendees over the past two weeks.
- The survey to better understand the technology needs of Colrain seniors is ongoing, and we have had seven returned so far. We have had a positive response to this outreach effort from Janice Barnes, the head of the Council on Aging, who will distribute the surveys and describe the program offerings at the next Foot Clinic on 11/25.
- We are still on the lookout for a Mohawk Trail or other local high school student to host the Tech Help hours on Wednesday afternoons, but for now Donna Dusell with GCC continues to do an excellent job. We've moved to a hybrid offering for the Tech Help: by appointment from 3 PM - 4 PM and drop-in from 4 PM - 5 PM. After a slow start we've had somewhat promising initial attendance: zero attendees the first day; two attendees who worked with Donna the whole time on the second day, and only one attendee, but who was a repeat visitor by appointment on the third day, and who says she'll be back for the next one.
- Judith Roberts will host a Colrain Community Meeting at GML on 11/17, in person and by Zoom. This will be an opportunity to join with friends and neighbors to discuss topics

of interest including the Wood Bank, Colrain Food for All (supported by the Western MA Food Bank) and any ideas people may have to share on how we can support our community and each other during these times.

- Display plans in the works: in addition to the “Patron Picks” display still to be created, we’re going to put up a “Book Bingo” game that was popular at the now-closed Imaginary Bookshop in Greenfield, and a “Wildlife Watch” pad for patrons to add to, which is a popular interactive display at the Old Creamery Co-op in Cummington.
- Collection plans in the works: a Seed Library, with Hadley Looman & Anna Turkle organizing. Hadley is doing research on other seed libraries and how to run them, and we will touch base with her after the new year. Our hope is to debut the Seed Library at the same time we get in the seed catalogs in January/February or, if we’re not ready then, at the Earth Day celebration in April.
- Program plans in the works for December:
 - Sourdough program with Nicholas of Hearthstone Artisan Bakery - 12/1. Athol Library and Shelburne Free Public Library have recently held sourdough programs that were very popular, so we have hopes for this one being well attended. However, we will do program sign-up by registration so we know ahead of time if we have enough people, or if we should postpone or cancel it.
 - Sewing program - tentatively 12/6. Our recent mending program was well attended, and this presenter’s programs are well attended at the Ashfield Library, so we also have hopes for this one, but again will be running it with registration.
 - Our longtime library friend and performer Davis Bates will come on Saturday 12/13 to present “A Stories and Songs Celebration,” which will have a winter holiday theme. This will also be a program with registration.
 - The Winter Party will be held on Saturday 12/20 at 3 PM, with a cookie swap and a holiday movie TBD. We are in talks to preview the main feature with the short film “Deep Sea,” which won the Audience Choice Award and Grand Prize at the 2024 Ashfield Film Festival, and was created by our patrons Cole & Juniper Whitaker.

Administration:

- Northeast IT has been working with us to get the BenQ operative for meetings. We have had a remote troubleshooting session with them where we made some progress. They

are scheduled to send out a tech to meet with us for in-person troubleshooting on Wednesday, 11/12.

- We were approached by one of our neighbors regarding a complaint that had been made by another of our neighbors to the dog warden that the first neighbor's dogs were loose and running around in the library yard. The dog warden was dispatched and came to the library to observe the grounds. The first neighbor requested a statement from us regarding library staff's observation or lack thereof of the dogs on the library grounds, which we provided, to the effect that we did not see the dogs on the grounds at any point.
- Strategic Planning is progressing. We are in the final stages of editing the draft of the new Plan to be submitted to the focus group or focus groups.
 - Crisis Center priority: Nina will consider and will shortly advise on the language we will use for this, which should be careful and circumspect and accurate, with limiting clauses designed to keep us and others from overestimating our abilities and intentions.
- The Town Tax Collector's meeting with the credit card vendor was fruitful, and the Town of Colrain is now the proud holder of a municipal credit card! The Tax Collector will write up the policies to govern its use in the next week or so and then will release the card for use, so we should hopefully have the Rokus back in action with streaming services loaded by the end of the month.
- We met with Colrain's Emergency Management Coordinator Nina Martin-Anzuoni on 11/4. Takeaways:
 - One of the main ways the library could function as an emergency management center is as a place with power during an outage. People need a place to power devices, make phone calls, to sit & decompress, and where they can get water, a light snack, and use a bathroom. To this end, Nina suggests that we look into acquiring a generator.
 - Our current service as a heating/cooling center is valuable but underutilized, but could grow with greater promotion of this service and awareness of it over time.
 - Nina recommends that library staff get Incident Command System training, which outlines both the framework & chain of command that is set up around disasters, and also everyone's specific responsibility - for example, this system guides policy on how many people one person can effectively supervise at a time. Doing these trainings will help with applications for grants to support the library's operation as an emergency management center.

- We can't use the basement as a shelter until we can open it to the public, which at minimum can't happen until the Feasibility Study is enacted and the basement stops flooding. There is also a question of how appropriate the library space on both levels would be for a shelter, since shelters value having separate spaces for families, for sitting and decompressing, and for other purposes - and we essentially have only one large room on each level. Right now the designated emergency shelters for the town are the Colrain Community Church and the school, which seem like more appropriate choices for that reason.
- Another way the library could help is by promoting Community Emergency Response Training, which is training for volunteers in basic disaster response skills and to support first responders. Though funds to run this program have recently been curtailed, Nina & her network from her time as a public health nurse know the trainings & could do them for interested people, and could get them badged in CERT through the Medical Reserve Core (which does still have funds because it's the Navy's public health arm). Nina is waiting to hear more on this and will keep us updated. We can promote this program by looking for volunteers, recruiting people, and holding trainings at the library.
- We can hold more general workshops on emergency planning & skills, led by Nina. These will go over how to identify hazards after a disaster, who to call in different situations, and family and individual planning based on the previously run popular public health program "Lets Make A Plan," which includes things like how to pack a go-bag, chainsaw skills, and what you can cook on a woodstove. We will aim to offer these workshops next spring, summer, and fall.
- Nina can join a Trustees meeting to give us more details and keep us updated after the new year.
- We began work on a grant application to the ALA's fund for Libraries Transforming Communities: Accessible Small and Rural Communities, with an eye to increasing accessibility of the entrances and walks. We are coordinating with the Town Administrator and with Stephen Laroque to ensure that this effort doesn't duplicate goals that are already addressed by either the Town Administrator's grant application to update Colrain's Self-Evaluation and Transition Plan - awards will be announced this week - or by the Feasibility Study. If it turns out that it does duplicate either of those efforts, we plan to pivot the ALA grant request to add support for our home delivery program.
- We have onboarded a new Library Substitute, Roxane Trombly. You may know Roxane, a longtime Colrainer, from our "Read to Lamby" program and from her time as a teacher at Mohawk Trail. Roxane began training on Friday and is doing well.
- The Town Administrator has informed us that she anticipates the FY25 budget will be much tighter and more restricted than FY26, which we will keep in mind as we start on the FY27 budget. Diana has requested the budget by 1/1/26 this year, and will have

budget worksheets sent out to all department heads within the next week to begin the work. I will attend an MBLC meeting on budgeting & best practices for library directors and Trustees on 11/19; please register [here](#) if any of you would like to attend or to have access to the recorded session & slides after the event.