



Montgomery County Library Board

September 9, 2020

ATTENDEES: Briskin-Limehouse, Chiu, Duval, Melnick, Negro, Rippeon, Roberts, Villar, Wallace, Williams

STAFF: Anita Vassallo, Director, Montgomery County Public Libraries; Regina Holyfield-Jewett, Recording Secretary

GUESTS: Linda Pottner, Chair, Davis Library Advisory Committee; Christopher Bowen, Public

The meeting was called to order by Chair Roberts at 7:09 PM

INTRODUCTIONS:

- Roll call of Board members; guests were introduced.

MINUTES AND LAC APPLICATION APPROVALS:

- The minutes from the July 8, 2020, meeting were approved.
- The following LAC applications were approved:
 - Maggie Nightingale – Hardter, Kandaswamy
 - Noyes – Maloney, McCarthy
 - Rockville Memorial – Snyder

DIRECTOR'S REPORT:

- **Personnel** - The following staff changes took place during the months of July and August:
 - New hires:
 - Mark Parkhurst, Librarian I, Germantown
 - Sharat Buddhavarapu, Librarian I, Maggie Nightingale
 - Laura Bechtel, Senior Librarian, Germantown
 - Kara Schroader, Senior Librarian, Silver Spring
 - Transfers:
 - Megan Johnson, Library Assistant I, from Chevy Chase to White Oak
 - Separated from County service:
 - Mary Spiro, Librarian I, Cataloger, Collection Management
 - Christine Conway, Librarian I, Children's Services, Silver Spring
 - Lorraine Barse, Library Assistant I, Little Falls
 - Irene Lui, Library Associate, Quince Orchard
 - On August 16, Lauren Martino was temporarily promoted to the position of **Early Literacy and Children's Services Manager**. Lauren, who is currently the Librarian II at the Silver Spring branch of Montgomery County Public Libraries (MCPL), has twelve years of experience with children's literature and programming and five years

of experience overseeing a children’s department. She holds a Master’s Degree from the University of Maryland, College Park, in Library Science with focus on children’s literature and children’s services; a Master’s Degree in Communication Sciences and Disorders from Case Western Reserve University; and a Bachelor of Science Degree in Communication Sciences and Disorders from the University of Georgia. Lauren joins Adrienne van Lare (Workforce and Business Development programming) and Clotilde Puertolas (Adult and Senior programming) on MCPL’s Programming Team.

- **Summer Read and Learn** was conducted entirely online this year. Gameboards were delivered to the schools, but if children did not have online access, we could not track their participation, and they could not respond to the questionnaire. There were 1726 participants; we consider this a success.
 - Comparing responses (i.e., percentages of responses) for the outcomes questions from 2018, 2019 and 2020.

"Because of Summer Read & Learn..."

Metric	Year		
	2018	2019	2020
Learn something new	0	86	71
More confident readers	71	72	61
New customer to Summer Program	48	44	52
Read more often	82	76	60
Spent more time sharing ideas/books	77	74	47
Use the library/library resources more often	80	88	49

BACKGROUND

Numbers indicate sum **percentage** of respondents who *Agree* or *Strongly Agree*, broken down by year vs. metric.

Number of customer survey respondents by year:

- 2018 = 56
- 2019 = 103
- 2020 = 88

Metrics are based on outcomes methodology which serves to help libraries understand a program's impact and customer intention to change behavior as a result.

Customer survey is self-reporting and voluntary; response rate not directly correlated to number of participants in program.

"Learn something new" metric was introduced in 2019.

Prepared by Andrea Castrogiovanni, Planning & Evaluation, 9-8-2020.

- **Upcoming Events**
 - **Contemporary Conversations@MCPL, September 12, 7 PM, Virtual** - A dialogue between acclaimed Haitian-American literary writers Edwidge Danticat and Katia D. Ulysse regarding relevant issues like diasporic literature, the writing craft, the importance of people of color being represented in literature and the topic of immigration and deportation.
 - **FY22 Operation Budget Forums**
 - [Monday, September 21, 2020 – 7:00 p.m. to 8:30 p.m.](#)
 - [Wednesday, September 30, 2020 – 7:00 p.m. to 8:30 p.m.](#)
 - **2020 Annual Meeting of the Maryland Library Trustees and Citizens for Maryland Libraries**, October 17, 10 AM, via Zoom. Please register before October 14: <https://citizensformarylandlibraries.org/event-3768904>

- **Recovery Plan**
 - Current services include:
 - Holds to Go pickup service has been ongoing since July 6. There have been 66,000 appointments for pickups during this time. We have been able to support this service. It has been tweaked a lot within these months.
 - Virtual programming
 - Digital resources
 - Reopening has moved to Phase 3 of the County's plan. It is different from the State's Phase 3.
 - There is no date for reopening libraries.
 - Developing computer labs.
 - Looking at particular branches where a meeting room is accessible to the main entrance and to restrooms, but no access to the library proper.
 - The first prototype is being developed at Rockville Memorial.
 - There are eight other libraries that fit the specifications.
 - Operating with reduced staff. Many cannot come into the branches due to underlying conditions and/or age.
- **Budget Update**
 - Operating budget was passed as a continuity of operations budget in May.
 - The budget was then reduced by \$1.6M in August which included:
 - Library Pages (1M) – leave without pay
 - The County Executive returned \$500K from the Page budget
 - Substitutes (\$450K) – leave without pay
 - Two weeks ago, we were asked to plan for \$2M more in cuts. There has been no formal request for these funds. If and when a formal request is made:
 - The \$500K from the Page budget will be given back.
 - Money will be cut from the Collection Budget.
 - Hoping not to get to that point, but there are many competing needs in the County's budget.
 - The County is hoping to recoup some money from FEMA.
 - There is no plan for a reduction in force.
- **Questions and comments:**
 - Will the County continue with outcome based budgeting?
 - There has been no discussion of this since the onset of the pandemic.
 - What is the overall morale of employees?
 - Just visited all of the branches.
 - There is real team spirit at all. They are working together to support the Holds to Go service.
 - Morale is very good considering the circumstances.
 - Ask Me Anything meetings are being held regularly, there is a lot of listening, and the Director has been visiting the branches.

CHAIR'S REPORT:

- Tonight is the last meeting for Jane Williams, Jensen Chiu and Mike Wallace. Chair Roberts thanked these members for their service and commitment. The members were congratulated on the work they have done on behalf of the Board in support of Libraries and the residents of Montgomery County.

- With Jane Williams leaving, there is a need for a vice chair. If anyone is interested, please contact Chair Roberts or Regina Holyfield-Jewett.

REPORT FROM THE TASKFORCE ON ADULT FINES (Laura Briskin-Limehouse, Bill Duval, Dan Melnick, Toni Negro and Mike Wallace)

- The Taskforce was charged in June with pursuing the potential for removing fines for adult materials and bringing these findings and recommendation to the full Board during the September meeting.
 - The Taskforce began its work by reviewing the policies to recommend ways to make MCPL more accessible to the entire population of the County. It addressed the barriers fines create for residents.
 - The Taskforce met in July and August.
- Taskforce preparation included:
 - Surveying the practices of other library systems.
 - Examining data relating to the use of the Library’s services and the circulation of material and the amount and disposition of fines.
 - Reviewing information related to the number of County residents whose library privileges are suspended and the effect of those suspensions on them.
 - Considering the recommendations of professional library associations.
- Recommendation: The Taskforce strongly recommends that MCPL eliminate the imposition of fines for the late return of MCPL owned materials while continuing to recover the cost of materials that are lost or damaged. The policy would not apply to materials obtained from other libraries under the Interlibrary Loan program.
- MCPL key values are not served by the current policy related to fines for late materials.
 - At its core, MCPL’s main purpose is to provide equal access to services and resources for its residents that sustain and enrich their lives. Fines create a barrier that fights against those core values. Libraries have historically relied on fines to bring back materials in a timely manner, without evidence of its effectiveness or the impact on the Library’s mission and core services. Fines instead negatively impact those who can least afford it and who need library services the most.
- Experience of ending fines in other large public library systems:
 - The Taskforce reviewed reports of the effect of ending late fines on the operations of library systems in Maryland and other parts of the United States. These reports show that when fines were eliminated, the first effect was to see the return of larger numbers of overdue books.
- American Library Association (ALA) Resolution – On January 27, 2019, ALA adopted a resolution on “Monetary Library Fines as a Form of Social Inequity.” The resolution asserted that:
 - Monetary fines present an economic barrier to access of library materials and services.
 - There is mounting evidence that indicates eliminating fines increases library card adoption and library usage.
 - Monetary fines create a barrier on public relations, and absorb valuable staff time applying, collecting and managing dues.
 - Libraries will need to take determined and pragmatic action to dismantle practices of collecting monetary fines.
 - Monetary fines ultimately do not serve the core mission of the modern library.

- Implementation Recommendation – In addition to the initial recommendation, the Taskforce further recommends:
 - That the Director of MCPL clarify and publicize the new policy to inform library customers about the circumstances where efforts will be made to recover costs and the discretion extended to Library staff to consider individual exceptions.
 - The Director should also clarify the effect of blocking library privileges and specify that if this occurs, the block should only apply to material removed from the Library and not apply to digital resources or resources used at the branch.
 - The policy should be put into effect as soon as possible.
- Next steps:
 - The report sent by Bill Duval should be reviewed by all Board members.
 - Any questions and comments should be emailed to Bill Duval.
 - The report and recommendation will be discussed at the October Board meeting.
 - If there are no questions, a vote will be taken at the October Board meeting.
 - The recommendation will be sent to the MCPL Director who will forward it to the County Executive.
- Bill Duval noted that the group worked well with James Donaldson, who was incredibly helpful and responsive.

WORKGROUP REPORTS:

- Library Policy and Practices – (Duval, Briskin-Limehouse, Wallace)
 - Nothing beyond the submitted Adult Fines report.
- Legislative and Public Affairs Workgroup – (Rippeon, Melnick, Negro)
 - Dan Melnick reported on his virtual meeting held in July in support of the Library Stabilization Act with Alexandra Wilcox from Senator Van Hollen’s office.
 - The American Library Association (ALA) asked that libraries express their support to the sponsors of this legislation. This was discussed at the last Board meeting.
 - During the meeting, he relayed MCPL’s efforts in response to the COVID crisis and stressed the importance of strongly supporting the needs of public libraries. Ms. Wilcox responded by explaining the impact of the proposed legislation and also discussed additional legislation – the Homework Gap Act. This act would provide additional support to overcome the digital divide. The legislation includes public schools and public libraries.
 - After the meeting with Ms. Wilcox, a report was given to the ALA Washington office, which thanked the Library Board for their efforts.
 - To date, none of the legislations has been adopted, but they are still being pushed forward.
 - James Donaldson, Assistant Director for Technology and Collections was thanked for his help in providing the statistics.
- LAC and Board Activities (Williams, Chiu, Roberts, Villar)
 - Annual reports are due by the end of September. Only half were received this year.
 - A report should be submitted even if the LAC is not active.
 - The branch managers should be encouraged to submit reports for inactive LACs.
 - There may be a period of time when there are not enough Board members to work with all the LACs. The branch managers may need to be made aware of this.
 - The LACs that could be affected are: Accessibility Advisory Committee, Chevy Chase, Little Falls, Connie Morella, Olney, Potomac and Wheaton.

- Current liaisons to the affected branches should send notes about the LACs and frequency of meetings by September 9 to Chair Roberts and copy Regina Holyfield-Jewett.

LIAISON REPORTS:

- Noyes – Had elections. Fifteen people attended, not all were members. With the recent addition of the new members, there are about 13 members, which is good for an LAC and very good for that community. They met acting manager Lauren Martino. While the library is closed, they are interested in working on more virtual programs related to Noyes, such as Penny Theatre. They are brainstorming things to do this year. Five meetings have been scheduled. The Noyes Foundation reported that a bid had been put out for an architect.
- Quince Orchard - Has not been meeting. Has a meeting scheduled for September 22.
- Davis – Had a very good meeting. LAC plans to meet again in October.
- Silver Spring – Will meet on September 21.
- Aspen Hill – Meeting scheduled for September 14.
- White Oak – Meeting scheduled for next week.
- Chevy Chase – Meeting on September 11. They are concerned about the renovation of the library. There is a great deal of community interest on what is being planned for the building. The chair is stepping down this month. Right now the LAC is in a state of flux. The new liaison should be aware that the LAC is very involved in what is happening to the branch. Felicity Brown is very great to work with and very knowledgeable.
- Little Falls – Next meeting is October 6. They have one more meeting scheduled for December. They are very organized. The branch manager is excellent and has a great rapport with the LAC.
- Accessibility – Met last week. Director Vassallo attended and talked with the group about the children’s Braille collection. Notes from Braille discussion:
 - There are 815 items in Braille at six different branches.
 - Statistics for the year show there were 49 circulations of the entire collection.
 - Turnover rate is the number of times an item is charged out and returned to the library. The Braille collection is 0.06, demonstrating that it is not utilized.
 - The collection was purchased 5 years ago.
 - AAC recommended another location for this collection where it will be more utilized.
 - The use of Braille is declining. The State Library for the Blind reports only at 4% usage of their collection.
 - There will be more discussion regarding this collection, which will involve drafting a plan to market it in order to achieve better circulation.
 - According to Elizabeth Lang, ADA Coordinator, Braille books decline over time. The raised dots become worn.
 - Director Vassallo will reach out to Montgomery College which teaches Braille.
- Potomac – Will meet this Friday, September 11.
- Olney – Will meet on September 23. They are very active. Did not meet in July or August to not burden the branch manager. They usually meet the second Wednesday of the month. Happy to discuss the LAC with other Board members. The branch manager, Jan Baird-Adams, is very responsive to the needs of the community. Transition of liaisons should not be a problem.
- Rockville Memorial – Under three members. Members are very dedicated. Met last month.
- Twinbrook – Met last month. Has less than three members, but they are dedicated.

- Gaithersburg – Attempted to meet last Tuesday, but did not have a quorum. Next meeting is schedule for the second Tuesday in October.

OLD BUSINESS:

- None

NEW BUSINESS:

- None

PUBLIC COMMENT:

- Linda Pottern
 - With all the LACs that meet, do they send meeting notes as required, and do they get posted?
 - Yes, both are a requirement per the Maryland Open Meeting Act.
 - Was there an Annual Report submitted by Davis LAC for last year?

ADJOURNMENT:

- The meeting was adjourned at 8:35 p.m.