THE FUTURE OF LIBRARIES

The future of libraries has been a topic of interest and debate for many years now. In the Internet Age, the thinking goes, who needs books when you can “collaborate work and play.” But libraries have always been so much more than just the books on their shelves. Thoughtful programming embraces not only new forms of digital information and media, but provides the means and space to access them.

Leaders in the tech world (at Foundation sponsored forums) have reminded us the community still wants books in a building, a place where patrons can work alone while being with other people, and where young children experience the joy of holding a book or more in their hands. But, the demand for new ways of delivering information and entertainment will mean an expansion of electronic services and some new ways of organizing the library's physical space.

Designed for the Future

Thanks in large part to Foundation donors, the San Mateo Public Library has been at the forefront of library innovation in the digital age. The Main Library building was designed with the future in mind, and anticipated that as more information moved online, library spaces not needed for physical collections would be redesigned, repurposed and redefined. Since the Library also provides access to technology with free WiFi in the branch buildings, desktops and printers for public use, and digital device lending collections so that patrons do not need to be in the library to access the internet.

What else does a 21st Century “Library of the Future” offer? E-collections and creative online programming over social media. Your San Mateo Public Library card is a passport to over a million e-titles and digital resources you can access from the comfort of your own home: almost half a million e-books and audiobooks, 50 e-magazines, 124 technology lending devices, 26 database subscriptions, 288,734 other e-media, including streaming services like Hoopla and Kanopy with tens of thousands of movies and television selections available to check out and view on your personal device or smart TV.

Creativity in Crisis: Crucial Digital Access

The COVID-19 pandemic has shown us how critical an eLibrary can be as we shelter in place. It has also demonstrated how creative and adept our librarians are in moving from in person programming to meeting patron needs online and outside in the community. Almost every day, San Mateo librarians can be spotted on Instagram reading children’s books, presenting bilingual rhyme and song exercises, conducting science experiments and demonstrating craft projects. No longer considered trendy or novel, these posts are providing vital learning opportunities to school age children who have spent the last few months of the school year at home.

As we continue to embrace the opportunities and necessities of digital collections and online programs, we must also acknowledge that for many patrons, when the library is closed, their access to information and entertainment is limited. Librarians have distributed books to families in need at food distribution points and at schools, but that work only meets a small part of the actual need. Ensuring digital information access has been a focus of SMPL for years. When the Library’s doors are open, patrons have access to desktop computers and free wifi in the branches, averaging about 4500 internet and database sessions a day! Even with the Library’s ongoing expansion of its very successful technology device lending collection, however, COVID-19 has demonstrated that we have much more work to do to close the digital inclusion gap. The Library and the Foundation are committed to addressing this issue to ensure that our entire community has access to 21st Century information and learning.

Resuming Services

Now as we move slowly to resume some traditional services, the Library will continue to embrace and explore new ways to engage and inform patrons. Digital collections will continue to see increased usage as patrons familiarize themselves with our offerings and librarians will continue to meet our patrons wherever they are, whether those places are online or out in the community. Major changes in the library’s physical space will have to await better city planning. We look forward to when our beloved library once more becomes the community’s living room.

We are most grateful for the generosity and steadfast commitment of Foundation volunteers, staff, donors and sponsors throughout the past year. This edition marks the end of my term as president, and as we bid farewell, we cannot express enough gratitude to all of our wonderful donors!

We are most grateful for the generosity and steadfast commitment of Foundation volunteers, staff, donors and sponsors throughout the past year. This edition marks the end of my term as president. Sunil Pandya has stepped down as the Foundation’s leader (see inside for more on our new Board president and members). It has been an honor and a joy to work with all of you in this role. Let’s carry forward the spirit of our milestone anniversary and our commitment to supporting the Library of the Future!
**Online with Franklin Templeton and the Business Resouce Center**

We are grateful for Franklin Templeton’s sponsorship of our BUSINESS RESOURCE CENTER, the Foundation’s largest sponsor, and their ongoing financial support. With support from Franklin Templeton, the Business Resource Center has continued to offer programming and general business updates for the business community. Thank you for helping us stay connected.

**CELEBRATIONS OPEN DOORS, OPEN MINDS, OPEN COMMUNITY.**

The San Mateo Public Library Foundation’s very special 25th Anniversary year was a time to pause and appreciate our patrons, our generous supporters, our world-class library staff, and the many programs that support our community... and to celebrate!

**25th Anniversary Celebration Day**

In October 2019, we celebrated Community Day at the Library, an all-family community supported virtual Anniversary event. Despite the award of a $100,000 grant, the Library opened its doors and the celebration commenced! As guests arrived, they found their seats on the Library patio to hear bluegrass and folk music. Dementia-friendly programming of special general interest included BMRF reading for children, the call to order with the San Mateo High School Bronco Band and the dedication of the “被告人” (defendant) monument. The reception featured meatless meatballs and Three Restaurant catered a gourmet brunch. Kicking off the program, we acknowledged the contributions of San Mateo restaurants and caterers that supported the event and, at the conclusion, we celebrated with a special 25th Anniversary video.

**Leadership Circle Brunch 2020**

The 2020 Leadership Circle Brunch was a time to look forward to expanding digital options and taking more online seminars. Thank you for your ongoing support.

**Presidents Reunion**

In September, past SMPLF Presidents reconvened to celebrate the Foundation’s 25th anniversary and discussed the need for LiveOnline with Franklin Templeton and the Business Resource Center.

**Thank you to our many donors!**

Your gifts to the library are a tremendous investment in our community and impact many lives.

Through our Gala, Friends Book Sale, and general support, you made this happen year after year. You supported the Library throughout the challenging year by increasing your gifts to a critical initiative such as Makers (our outreach vehicle), children and teen programs, Project READ, and more.

A major focus has been supporting the Library in the digital world. Technology To Go provides free access to e-books on Chronologies, personal wellbeing units, robotics, inventors, and STEM kits, coding tools, Digital Arts, and other items. The Library’s current and future members enjoy digital robustness. Our colleagues, staff, and volunteers have worked tirelessly to enhance our community’s online resources, enhance our library, and retain our online library.

Thank you for your ongoing support.

**The Future Is Now**

We decided On our “Library of the Future” theme for the edition of this newsletter we were publishing during our 25th Anniversary celebrations. The Leadership Circle Appreciation Brunch in January kicked off our forward-thinking discussions with businesses and individuals like Sosnick, McCarthy, LLP, and Concar Enterprises, Inc. Little did we know then that the conversation we thought we would be having this year about the Library’s technological and financial needs that has been transformed into everything from cultural programming to technology, access, and expanded online collections to space modernizations for enhanced patron experience. This nimble and responsive adaptation is a key element of the Foundation’s success at adapting the Library to fit the needs of today’s community.

**Thank you for your ongoing support!**

Thank you for your ongoing support of the San Mateo Public Library Foundation.
9TH ANNUAL
Authors Gala

T he Annual Authors Gala is the Foundation’s biggest
fundraiser of the year, and our dedicated volunteer Gala Team
prepares for the event in months in advance. Scheduled for
April 18th, 2020, we were excited to welcome Pulitzer Prize-
winning author Viet Thanh Nguyen as headline speaker.
The fabulous Caitlin McGinty was also slated to return as our enthusiasts-
omatic and musical talent auctioneer. Alas, by early March, increasingly
worrisome news about COVID-19 made it clear that holding an in-person
gathering was inadvisable.

The following days and weeks upended routine in our daily lives. And as the community reeled with a prolonged stay at home, the need for Library services was greater than ever—demand for online Library services was skyrocketing! With that understanding, the Gala Team went virtual and what happened next was a remarkable experience of generosity and much greater success than we could have imagined.

Words are inadequate to convey our gratitude to all the corporate and individual sponsors who stuck with us despite the cancellation, and we were blown away by the huge community response to our email campaign for the Fund to Support eLibrary Services. When all was said and done, the virtual Authors Gala completely exceeded our expectations, raising over $117,000 for the Library and broadening our family of supporters in the process.

Thank you! We are truly touched by our community’s generous spirit and support for our Library!

Reckoning With Racial Injustice

James Moore | City Librarian

As the director of the San Mateo Public Library, an American citizen, and an African-American man and father, I unequivocally condemn the longstanding and systematic racist law enforcement practices that lead to the recent killings of Mr. George Floyd, Mr. Ahmad Arbery, Ms. Breonna Taylor, and a grievously long list of too many others. I mourn the human cost of these fatal encounters, and am pained that we continue to accept how much distance these events reveal between our society’s espoused ideals and the reality of the lived experience for people like me. I am shaken to my core by each heart-breaking news report because I know that for every incident captured on an iPhone or by eyewitnesses, many more have not been. What many Americans are finally seeing is the tip of the iceberg of the many years of humiliation, targeting, and abuse the Black community has endured at the hands of a people and a system ostensibly sworn to protect and to serve all citizens and communities. Where there should be trust and accountability, too often we experience fear and violence. I strongly condemn unlawful acts by those who would justify more violence or destruction in response to each unjustifiable death, but I understand the pain and anger fueling the turmoil.

I am fortunate to live and work in San Mateo. I am humbled by the many colleagues and community members who have reached out to express interest in working together to ensure that all our neighbors are treated fairly and are free to peacefully coexist. Since agreement that a problem exists does not mean complete agreement on its causes and solutions, they ask, “How can we have productive conversations around these highly sensitive issues that are honest and passionate, but still generous and respectful?” These are tough conversations to have, but the good news is that by finally acknowledging this problem, we can begin to truly address it.

The Library has always been a haven for civil discourse, and we at SMPL believe this is a critical part of our mission. Our Cultural Advisory Committees have brought people together for programs that speak to the distinctive journeys, struggles and triumphs that make each culture unique and valuable to our community. Our professional librarians also curate valuable information resources for learning about our shared historical, political and social experiences. In these ways and others, the Library is creating forums and learning opportunities to support citizens truly committed to understanding, addressing, and, finally, healing the inequities that have damaged and divided us for so long. COVID-19 continues to limit our operations, so until we can return to live programming, these resources will be online. To learn more, visit our website.

Being a librarian, I am an avid reader. Beyond resources directly addressing issues of racism, I have found the most powerful lessons for building empathy are stories. The stories told in great literature and those shared by the diverse range of people I have met at libraries have done the most to increase my empathy for my fellow humans. I encourage everyone to read or listen to stories outside of their own personal experience, for they have shown me that, though the settings may vary, the range of human emotions and aspirations are, at their core, universal in nature.

The communities of the upper Peninsula can be proud of the openness and diversity they have cultivated over the years. This beautiful part of Northern California sometimes feels insulated from the overt prejudice and discrimination scar-
ning our nation. Alas, we have work to do here too. Let us not become complacent. Let us continue to cultivate and build upon the good and courageous work that has been done thus far. Let us build something that future generations may not only benefit from, but that also allows them to be proud of us for having done it the right way. Let us be leaders in ensuring that there is equal fairness, respect, and freedom across this land we call home.

Friends of the Library Annual Book Sale

The Friends of the Library held their annual Fall Book Sale last September. Once again, the Friends raised over $20,000 for the Library in four days! No date is set for this year’s Book Sale but we are crossing our fingers and toes that we can all get back to business soon. Please hold on to your donations for the moment.

If you are interested in learning about the Friends of the Library and helping us raise money for the Library’s collections, please contact Maria Mendoza (mnreddocca@cityofsanmateo.org) or Lynne Esselstein (info@smpl.org).

Did You Know…?

You Set Some Records in 2019!

Total circulation reached a record 1,129,127 items borrowed.

764,469 patrons used their 73,161 library cards to borrow from a collection that includes 444,021 eBooks/AudioBooks among other materials. Library visitors also enjoyed 1,545 programs offered to both children and adults.

Thank you for supporting the San Mateo Public Library. We miss you and look forward to seeing you back in the branches when the time is right. Until then, stay safe, healthy, and strong. The Library is still here for you.