

Date: October 8, 2020

To: The Urbana Free Library Board of Trustees

From: Celeste Choate, Executive Director

Re: Director's Report for Board Meeting of October 13, 2020



VISION

Nurturing growth by sparking curiosity and fostering a sense of belonging.

MISSION

We encourage learning and enrich lives by providing access to diverse resources and programs.



We cultivate equity, mutual respect, and belonging by learning about and responding to our community.

WE WELCOME ALL.

Goal 1: We provide a welcoming and inviting space for dialogue and personal connections.

- The Champaign County Historical Archives continues to accept community submissions for the Archives-at-Home project, which provides a space for all residents of the county to have an equal voice in preserving the history of our community. CCHA is working with institutions collecting similar data – such as the University of Illinois, Urbana Business Association, and the Champaign County Chamber of Commerce – to direct community members to the correct institution and prevent extensive overlap in collecting scope.

Goal 2: We engage the community to understand and respond to unique needs of our community.

- The Champaign County Clerk's office installed a ballot box in the Library's parking lot to support community voting. The Library is one of five locations in Champaign-Urbana with a ballot box, and the box will be open twenty-four hours a day so community members can submit their ballots at any time.
- Personalized reading lists, which are available for community members of all ages, continue to receive positive feedback. During this time especially, staff are making extra effort to offer titles available physically and digitally so that patrons can be well served whether they prefer to visit the Library or enjoy the Library's resources from home.
- TUFL and Cunningham Township have begun conversations about the possibility of an Intergovernmental Agreement which could address issuing library cards to people who live in Urbana but do not have an address to use to apply for a library card while complying with state laws, administrative rules, and the Illinois Homeless Bill of Rights. More information will follow in the coming months.



We connect people with tools and resources for learning and leading fruitful lives.

WE SPARK CURIOSITY.

Goal 1: We connect people to resources and technology for personal growth leading to greater fulfillment.

- There were 134 new library cards issued during September as part of National Library Card Sign-Up Month. Due to the pandemic, staff were unable visit community locations and host traditional outreach events, but teen specialists Joel and Jordan made virtual visits to several Urbana Middle School classes. During the classroom visits, they talked about Library services, how to get a card, upcoming programs, and delivered a book talk. They are visiting more classes in October and have spoken to over 160 students so far.
- Led by Lisa Connery of Crass Stitching, the Library held its second round of cross stitch programs on September 10th and 17th, which focused on irreverent patterns featuring plants. Over 30 community members attended, and the Library received wonderful feedback from one participant about the importance of offering this kind of program. They wrote, "Thanks so much for hosting this workshop. I finished the cross stitch this morning. It's a great new hobby, keeps me from doomscrolling in bed. ☺...These activities really do have a positive impact on people's lives. Thank you for taking the time and energy to put together the stitching workshop."

Goal 2: We expand horizons and facilitate knowledge exchange by offering diverse programs.

- The Library participated in the virtual Champaign-Urbana Pride Fest on September 26th. Drag performer Karma Harrington appeared on the Library's Facebook page where she read two books by Mo Willems: [Naked Mole Rat Gets Dressed](#) and [That is Not a Good Idea](#). Karma is a dynamic reader who has performed previously at the Library's Drag Queen Story Hour, and the Pride Fest has had 35 viewings so far. *This event was co-sponsored by the UP Center of Champaign County.*
- On October 7th, CCHA hosted students from UIUC's IS 562: Administration and Use of Archival Materials. The students learned about CCHA's collections and day-to-day operations.



We help our community thrive by creating connections and working with partners.

WE CONTRIBUTE TO A STRONG SOCIAL FABRIC.

Goal 1: We make the community better for all by promoting diversity, equity and inclusion through our collections and programs.

- The 7th Annual Immigrant Welcome Awards was held on September 19th. The awards recognized individuals and organizations who have created a welcoming atmosphere for immigrants in the community. This event was part of Champaign-Urbana's Welcome Week, which celebrates the diversity of our community. The Library recorded the award ceremony on Zoom and then posted the recording on Facebook for those who were unable to attend live. Between the live program and the recording, the award ceremony has been viewed 50 times. *This program is sponsored by C-U Immigration Forum with co-sponsors CU FAIR, The Urbana Free Library, Urbana Arts and Culture Program, University YMCA New American Welcome Center, the Channing Murray Foundation, the City of Champaign, and the City of Urbana.*
- As part of Pygmalion 2020, the Library held a virtual author event on September 26th. Over 350 people viewed a book reading by author Bernardine Evaristo, who is the first black woman to win the Booker Prize, and poet Terrance Hayes, a past winner and finalist for the National Book Award for Poetry. After the reading, author Chris Abani moderated a discussion between the two that examined blackness in the US and UK, their work as activists to promote artists of color, and their writing processes. A recording of the event has been made available online for 30 days. *This special author event was generously sponsored by The Urbana Free Library Foundation.*
- The Library partnered with the Center for Latin American and Caribbean Studies at the University of Illinois for Hispanic Heritage Month Celebration. The program, which was attended by 14 community members, featured activities in different Latin American languages. There were stories in Spanish, Quechua, and English, and songs in Spanish, Quechua, and Q'anjob'al. There was also a showcase featuring Mayan dresses.

- The Champaign County Historical Archives accepted an accrual to the League of Women Voters of Champaign County collection as well as a new collection from the United Nations Association, sponsored by the Baha'i Center of Urbana. In addition, CCHA received several ledgers from the local bricklayers' union with dates beginning in the 1920s.

Goal 2: We stimulate connections and partnerships to create a vibrant, engaged community.

- The Library is partnering with two different music festivals to offer virtual performances this month. On October 8th, Melvin Knight performed as part of the 6th Annual CU Jazz Festival. He's known for music that elevates melodies and has an infectious energy. Then on October 24th, Jean Rene Balekita and Laetitia Kyungu are performing for CU Folk & Roots Festival. Their performance mixes African traditional music, Congolese rumba, gospel music, and jazz. Both performances are prerecorded and have been--or soon will be--shown on the Library's Facebook page. The Library previously hosted performances for both festivals and is excited to be able to do so again this year as they move online due to the pandemic.
- The second event celebrating the Year of the Creative Writer, a University of Illinois initiative, takes place on October 13th via Zoom. Illinois authors Daniel Borzutzky and Christopher Grimes will read selections of their works and answer participants' questions. Daniel Borzutzky is a poet and translator whose book [The Performance of Becoming Human](#) won the 2016 National Book Award for Poetry. Christopher Grimes' work is known its experimental nature, and one of his books is told in the form of one long sentence that is grammatically correct. *Supported by the Presidential Initiative to Celebrate the Impact of the Arts and the Humanities. Presented by the Humanities Research Institute and the Department of English/Creative Writing Program (U of I). Cosponsored by the Institute for the Humanities (UIC), UIC Program for Writers, UIS Creative Writing, The Champaign Public Library, The Urbana Free Library, Illinois Public Radio, and the Illini Union Bookstore.*
- In partnership with the Urbana Business Association, the Library is holding Fall Family Fun on October 30th. The event will feature a socially distant sidewalk chalk obstacle course in Cherry Alley and a take-home craft activity for families.
- The Champaign County Historical Archives is working with Visit Champaign County, as well as a number of cultural heritage institutions throughout Champaign County, to create an African American Cultural Heritage Trail. The project represents a cultural heritage tourism program incorporating murals, public art, historic buildings, churches, parks, throughout the entire Champaign County area, including the UI campus.
- Rachel and Donica attended the GLAM Virtual Career Fair for Government, Library, Archives, and Museum Employers on October 7th. The event is sponsored by the iSchool at the University of Illinois and gave students from UIUC and seven other iSchools the opportunity to connect with Library staff and learn more about TUFL employment opportunities.



We are mindful of the wide array of resources needed to serve evolving community needs and are transparent with our operations.

WE ARE A STRONG ORGANIZATION.

Goal 1: We steward our physical and financial resources to allow for growth and sustainability.

- The City's revised [Financial Forecast](#) is now available online and will be presented at the City Council meeting on Monday. From page 5 of the Forecast, "No budget reductions or revenue increases are required to maintain current services this fiscal year. However, we should plan for budget reductions and evaluate potential revenue sources over the next year so that we are prepared to take action when we have a better understanding of the timing and pace of recovery." TUFL is seeing a decrease in revenue, and we do not have as large a fund balance as the City does. Minimum wage will be increasing, which will also have an impact on TUFL's budget. We will begin our FY22

budgeting process earlier this year, given the complexity of the time we are in. Also, [an extension to the start date of the redevelopment of the Landmark Hotel is proposed.](#)

- In accordance with the Finance Policy, the Board budgeted \$425,000 of restricted funds (Vincent Greene’s \$300,000 gift and Helen Widick’s \$125,000 gift) to be transferred to The Urbana Free Library Foundation once the Foundation put relevant policies in place. The Foundation reaffirmed its Investment Policy in September, which was also given a thumbs up from its Busey Wealth Management representative. The Foundation is working with Busey to develop a scaffolded approach to its long-term investments (specifically those funds set aside for future building expansion). The Foundation also approved a Gift Policy at their August Board meeting. At the November Library Board meeting, Director Choate will provide the Library Board a Gift Agreement between TUFL and TUFLF Boards to transfer the \$425,000 in restricted funds to the Foundation and establish guidelines for future use.
- While expansion of the Library is not a pressing concern, we know that our current space doesn’t best fit our needs and that a remodel and expansion is likely in our future. Part of our activity plan for Enhance, Goal 1 is to explore options over the next three years and this process starts with updating our building program. Former Library Director Fred Schlipf is a recognized expert in library buildings. Fred has indeed [written the book](#) - twice - on how libraries can plan their buildings to maximize space for the benefit of the community. He teaches the “Library Buildings” class at the Illinois School of Information Sciences and has discussed library design on [ALA’s Dewey Decibel podcast](#). Fred has generously offered to help TUFL update our building program so we will be ready to move forward with a building remodel/expansion project in the future. We anticipate the creation of this document taking around 6-8 months and would like to get started in the spring when Fred’s schedule is free. Next month, the Board will receive an agreement detailing the terms of this gift of service. This month, we’ll respond to any questions the Board has in order to work out the details of the agreement prior to asking for approval to move forward.

Goal 2: We cultivate continuous improvement among Board and staff members to create increased engagement, satisfaction, and retention.

- Amanda is working with UIUC students to create a video for the disABILITY Expo highlighting ways the Library can be accessed for people of all abilities.
- Beginning spring semester 2021, TUFL will have one tuition waiver it can award to a staff member for one iSchool course in exchange for the practicum students hosted by staff at the Library. An application process for staff has been developed. The waiver is a benefit awarded to TUFL staff for hosting UIUC iSchool practicum students each year.
- Associate Professor Masooda Bashir has invited Celeste Choate to join the Advisory Board being created as part of the [Institute of Museum and Library Services National Leadership Grants \(NLG\) for Libraries](#), "[Securing our Public Libraries: A Forum on Privacy and Security](#)" grant Dr. Bashir recently received.



Look here for additional information and action item details that are outside of the scope of the strategic plan.

To meet the requirements of the Per Capita Grant, Rachel Fuller, Donica Martin, Lauren Chambers, and Amanda Standerfer will be presenting on the following chapters from *Serving Our Public 4.0 Standards for Illinois Public Libraries: Collection Management; Public Services: Reference and Reader’s Advisory Services; Programming; Youth/Young Adult Services; Marketing, Promotion, and Collaboration*. Please read these chapters in preparation for the Board meeting. The following is information from Amanda:

Serving Our Public: Chapter 13 (Marketing, Promotion, and Collaboration)

This chapter spells out best practices for how libraries can be patron-centric when developing programs and services and communicating about all the library does. Marketing and promotion are not just external functions of the library; staff must also be aware of all the library offers to be able to holistically assist patrons by connecting them to other resources and services within the library and community. The end goal: satisfied patrons that return to the library frequently.

When reviewing the standards in Chapter 13, The Urbana Free Library meets or exceeds all the standards. Many of these standards include activities that will support strategic plan goals.

For example, standard 1 references having a marketing plan that is regularly reviewed and supports the strategic plan. TUFL has developed an engagement plan that includes all the ways we interact with patrons, the mode of interaction, the goal, and how we hope to use those interactions to develop or deepen relationships.

Throughout the COVID-19 closure, we regularly adapted our marketing practices to increase communication and standardize how we were reaching community organizations and businesses. Open rates for our eNewsletters are well above industry standards and we continue to add new subscribers.

One possible area for improvement is how we bring back ideas from other libraries related to marketing. We currently do this in an informal way and could easily create a cohort group of libraries that we regularly check their social media, website, services, and programs to spark creativity.

In FY21, TUFL will undergo rebranding as part of our website update. This effort started with the new look used in the strategic plan and will expand to other marketing and communication elements. Currently, this is happening informally, but we will create a new brand guide that will roll out to all departments.

Two other areas that we are intentionally focusing on:

- 1) We are spending more time learning how other sectors coordinate their marketing, promotion, and collaboration by attending webinars.
- 2) We will start to regularly survey patrons about awareness of library programs and services now that we have a baseline of awareness from the strategic plan community survey.

Throughout the next year, we will build on our already strong approach to marketing, promotion, and collaboration by continuing to grow and build on the standards in Chapter 13.

Library eNewsletters:	
September 18 News & Events: https://conta.cc/3mt513A	September 18 Youth & Teen: https://conta.cc/35MuFdC
October 2 News & Events: https://conta.cc/2GeSIHS	October 2 Youth & Teen: https://conta.cc/3ihwi5H
October Archives Newsletter: https://conta.cc/2ZZMEtI	Library Board Openings: https://conta.cc/2RGiZ3R

Other Library News:

Per the ILA standards for public libraries in *Serving Our Public 4.0*, staff have reviewed UFL's Internet acceptable use policy (IV-B Computer and Internet Use Policy) and have no recommended changes. Therefore, the policy has been included on this month's agenda with the request that the Board reaffirm it as it.

Book Review: Jacob Roden | 'Gender Queer' helpful in learning gender identity: https://www.news-gazette.com/arts-entertainment/books/jacob-roden-gender-queer-helpful-in-learning-gender-identity/article_c6a957e7-7190-5e01-849e-b8049f74fa52.html

October 2020: It's All About "U" City of Urbana e-Newsletter: <https://mailchi.mp/urbanaininois.us/its-all-about-u-october-2020?e=26695a71c3>

ciLiving: Urbana Free Library to Participate in Pygmalion Festival: <https://www.wcia.com/ciliving-tv/urbana-free-library-to-participate-in-pygmalion-festival/> and <https://www.newsbreak.com/illinois/urbana/news/2061124169213/urbana-free-library-to-participate-in-pygmalion-festival>

What to Do in Champaign-Urbana in October: <https://www.chambanamoms.com/2020/09/29/october-things-to-do/>

A Hispanic Heritage Month salute to Illini present and past: https://www.news-gazette.com/news/a-hispanic-heritage-month-salute-to-illini-present-and-past/article_af9e4f72-c705-505d-a7b5-da110ebdecdb.html

Even online, Young Artist's Studio remains a staple for youth arts: http://smilepolitely.com/arts/even_online_Young_Artists_Studio_remains_a_staple_for_youth_arts/

Take a Field Trip as a Family: <https://www.chambanamoms.com/2020/10/02/take-field-trip-family/>

Budget and current financial information is here: <http://urbanafreelibrary.org/your-right-know#fin>, with FY21 financial reports here: <https://urbanafreelibrary.org/financial-reports>.
