

Date: April 9, 2020
To: The Urbana Free Library Board of Trustees
From: Celeste Choate, Executive Director
Re: Director's Report for Board Meeting of April 14, 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.
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I am so very proud of the excellent Library staff who have worked incredibly hard these past weeks to learn new skills, new laws, best practices, and create new ways of engagement to support our community and each other during this difficult, disruptive, and uncertain time. Being part of the TUFL community fosters a sense of belonging on a regular day, and during these unprecedented times, it is especially comforting and rewarding to be part of this exceptional community. I commend and thank my colleagues at the Library and at the City of Urbana, and am grateful for Board support.

	We cultivate equity, mutual respect, and belonging by learning about and responding to our community. <i>WE WELCOME ALL.</i>
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Goal 1: We provide a welcoming and inviting space for dialogue and personal connections.

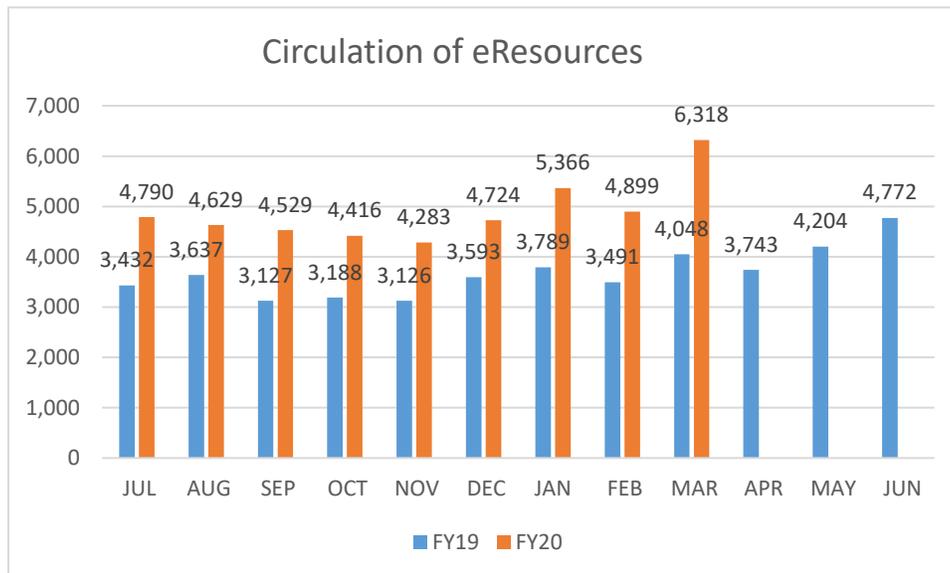
- The Library made the difficult decision to close at the end of the day on March 13th, following Governor Pritzker's exhortation to "stay home if you can" to flatten the curve of the COVID-19 pandemic. TUFL staff had already canceled meeting room reservations and events through April 12th, given guidelines set forth by the CDC. TUFL remains closed through the Governor's stay-at-home orders. We cannot welcome people into the Library now, so staff enhanced our virtual presence on <https://urbanafreelibrary.org/>. Please read more below about how we are engaging and connecting with our community during the COVID-19 pandemic.

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

	We connect people with tools and resources for learning and leading fruitful lives. <i>WE SPARK CURIOSITY.</i>
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Goal 1: We connect people to resources and technology for personal growth leading to greater fulfillment.

- We launched an eCard program to allow Urbana residents to try TUFL eResources for 90 days before they have to come to the Library and convert their card to a regular Library card. So far, about 15 people have taken advantage of the eCard program.
- Though patrons are not physically visiting the Library, staff continue to support patrons by providing reference service electronically. Community members can email staff, submit the “Ask a Librarian” form, and request personalized reading lists. For personalized reading lists, staff are recommending content that is available via Libby and Hoopla.
- On April 3, the Champaign County Historical Archives launched Local History and Genealogy Digital Exhibits. Using the digital content management platform Omeka, Archives staff and volunteers have created five digital exhibits and plan to add many more! Be sure to explore Greetings from Chanute!; C-U at the Movies: Roger Ebert, 1942-2013; Mary E. Busey's Gift: A Centennial Celebration of the Samuel T. Busey Memorial Library; Champaign's Gambling Hotspots in 1937; and Early Jewish Life in Champaign-Urbana. *Omeka is provided by book sale funds raised by the Friends of the Urbana Free Library.*
- To inspire community members to remain active and engaged while they're staying home, TUFL began a new online reading and activity program called Grow at Home using Beanstack, which we've used for the last two reading programs. Community members can earn digital badges for reading and completing a variety of activities like playing games, making art, being physically active, and having fun! So far, over 40 community members have signed up to participate.
- The Champaign County Historical Archives is participating in the International Council on Archives initiative “Archives are open – Search the Map!” The digital map provides archival institutions the opportunity to “share information about an online exhibition, digital catalogue, specific digital collections, or a crowd-sourcing project that people can do while they are #stayinghome.”
- Total circulation of electronic resources has been trending up, and we did see an additional increase in March.





- Amanda Standerfer talked with Chambanamoms.com about What’s Happening at The Urbana Free Library and Celeste Choate talked with UPTV about TUFL to share these opportunities with our community.

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

- On March 10th, the Library hosted an Illinois Authors Exchange Community Reading as part of the University of Illinois’ Year of Creative Writers. Luis Alberto Urrea and Meagan Cass read excerpts of their works and then signed copies of their books for community members. The excerpts read by Urrea and Cass ranged from serious to light hearted; one excerpt even recounted a tale about a parrot crossing the Mexican/American border, which had all 35 attendees laughing out loud.
- The Library held its first online program on Friday, April 10th. *Lunch & Lit: Bring Your Own Book Club* invited community members to meet online, discuss what they’re currently reading, and discover potential new favorites. The five attendees enjoyed it so much, they want to meet every week, and two more sessions have already been scheduled.



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.

- Library staff have begun online training modules, including Diversity and Sensitivity training.

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

- On March 3rd, the Library partnered with the League of Women Voters to celebrate the hundredth anniversary of women’s suffrage. The Library hosted a book discussion on *The Woman’s Hour: The Great Fight to Win the Vote* by Elaine Weiss. That evening, historical context for events discussed in the book was provided by Illinois historian Teresa Barnes, who is also the Director of the Center for African Studies at the University of Illinois. Community.

Turnout for the book discussion was fantastic, with 49 people in attendance! Thanks to the Museum of the Grand Prairie and the Champaign County Historical Archives for also attending and displaying historical materials.

- A popular component of former Executive Director Fred Schlipf's Library Buildings class at the UIUC School of Information Sciences is a tour of TUFL. Due to COVID-19, his class is now being taught online. We value our relationship with the School of Information Sciences and our role in educating future librarians. A volunteer and the current Executive Director provided Fred with photos so he could create a virtual tour and students could still have a valuable TUFL tour experience.



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.

- Collaborating with the Champaign Public Library, TUFL has received a \$7,500 grant from UC2B to purchase and circulate Wi-Fi hotspots. Staff recommend approving Resolution 2020-05 and the FY20 budget amendment to accept the grant and amend the FY20 budget.
- Following guidance from the CU Public Health Department, Café food that would have expired while TUFL was closed was instead given to people experiencing food insecurity.
- The proposed FY21 budget is attached in very much the same form as last month. It now includes funds from the Urbana Free Library Foundation in the 810s. Library Administration requests the Board approve this draft of the FY21 budget. We anticipate that COVID-19 disruptions will impact the budget, and we will propose amendments to the Board when we have more certainty about the impacts and our proposed responses. We anticipate the need to respond to decreasing revenue sources as we work to fulfill the Strategic Plan. Financial pressures include but are not limited to:
 - Depending on the State's fiscal situation, Personal Property Replacement Tax and the Per Capita Grant revenue may decrease.
 - Property tax payments may decrease, given residents' ability to pay them or not. Property taxes are TUFL's primary revenue stream.
 - Extending due dates in FY20 to alleviate stress on patrons will decrease fine revenue now. As people increase their use of eResources, we may continue to see a decrease in fine/fee revenue. If there is another closure in FY21, we would extend due dates again.
 - The Cafe is currently closed, so food and Friends books are not being sold in-house for at least 6 weeks in FY20.
 - The Friends of the Library Spring Book Sale was canceled due to the closure, and their Amazon.com store is also currently closed.
 - Our rental tenants' businesses may be impacted, which may impact rental revenue.

We are a strong organization, and we will work together as a united staff to generate and implement ideas for savings and for additional revenue sources (Enhance, Goal 1).

- Facilities updates:

We continue to make progress on the staff parking lot project and expect the competitive bid process to begin within the next month. A line providing power to part of the HVAC system was burning away the protective sheathing and leaving burn marks. A temporary repair was done so it's now safe, and a more permanent solution is pending.



- We are thankful for our

volunteers' ongoing support:

Between March 1, 2019, and February 29, 2020, our devoted

community members volunteered 3,012 hours. That's an increase of 58 hours over the prior year! Valued at \$26.89/hr for Illinois, their time is valued at \$80,986 according to the most current data released in April 2018 from the Independent Sector (more current data is not available yet, due to COVID-19). A full list of volunteers will be shared and volunteers will be recognized after TUFL reopens. Thank you all!

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

- Through individual work plans developed in partnership with staff working at home, we are tracking professional development hours and capturing learning. We are using Microsoft Teams for departments to share knowledge gained that can be used by colleagues so that we benefit from each other's expertise and can serve our community more effectively.
 - Library staff are participating in online training opportunities provided free through TUFL's insurance carrier, including the State-mandated sexual harassment training. (Also see Enhance, Goal 1 and Empower, Goal 1).
- The Library Board and staff have received email invitations to participate in KnowB4 online cybersecurity training.
- Library staff proposes changes to the General Benefits, Leave, Emergency Closings, and Hours of Service policies. We have been evaluating ways to provide additional benefits to staff in a fiscally responsible manner (Enhance, Goal 1). The COVID-19 pandemic has brought our attention to these policies in that light.
 - We propose that TUFL provide bereavement leave to all employees in the Leave Policy instead of just full-time and part-time employees. We also request that full-time and part-time staff be allowed to take up to 7 days of their sick leave, bringing the total to 10 days. Ten days is the current allowance, but it is currently all taken from a person's sick leave bank.
 - We propose revisions to the Emergency Closings Policy to allow all hourly employees scheduled to work a day in which the building is closed due to an emergency, not just the staff in the building when it is closed. Allowing the Executive Director to use discretion in the case of a special circumstance, such as a pandemic, seems prudent. For example, the current policy requires that "Employees who are absent due to scheduled annual leave, holiday time, illness, or other leave will still have to use their leave / benefit hours for the time the Library is closed." Some employees were scheduled to take vacation time, and then TUFL closed due to COVID-19. Employees were not required to take their scheduled vacation or sick time for scheduled procedures, since no one could take vacation or have procedures in these unusual circumstances.

- The General Benefits policy states that Hourly employees receive no paid leave, which is not true, since according to the current Emergency Closings policy, hourly staff in the building when it is closed are paid for the remainder of their shifts.
- We propose shifting language from the Hours of Service Policy to the Emergency Closings policy so this kind of information is all in one place.



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

Requested FY20 Budget amendments for April:

- If the Board accepts the UC2B grant for the circulation of Wi-Fi hotspots, staff recommend:
 - Increasing the revenue budget for 802 46300 Donations/Contributions/Gifts by \$7500.
 - Increasing the expense budget for 80280802 51802 80103 New Collections by \$7,500.
- Due to additional professional development opportunities, PLA, and Staff Day costs, staff recommend:
 - Moving \$2,000 from 80280801 50210 Insurance to 80280801 52320 Travel, Education and Training.

Library eNewsletters: [Click here to sign up!](#)

April newsletters did not go out since programs were canceled. However, we did start a weekly eBlast to keep patrons updated. Our hope is to send this out every Friday while we are closed to keep patrons updated about resources they can access.

Week of March 22: <https://conta.cc/2QMJgh2>

Week of March 29: <https://conta.cc/2w48ct4>

Update from TUFL: <https://conta.cc/2UyHotf>

Other Library news:

[Ann Panthen book review - 'Motherless Brooklyn' is worth picking up](#)

Budget and current financial information is here: <http://urbanafreelibrary.org/your-right-know#fin>, with FY20 financial reports here: <https://urbanafreelibrary.org/financial-reports>.
