



Northfield Public Library

Director's Report

October 2019

Director's Report

Submitted by Teresa Jensen, Library Director

Lately we at the library have been thinking a lot about the biases—conscious or unconscious—that we all have; we have attended workshops on cultural awareness for staff on the Hispanic and Somali communities in and around Northfield, and in the state of MN, and we will soon be participating in an upcoming LGBTQ awareness workshop as well. But there are many other biases that we carry—ageism, political biases, sexism, race/color, religious biases—the list can go on and on. The sign above our door says “All are welcome here”. Is this really true? How do we ensure that our own unconscious biases won’t creep into our programs, practices, and collection? Just recently we have been confronted with a question about our own neutrality regarding political bias. How do we guarantee our neutrality in a partisan world?

The question referred specifically about our collection purchasing practices; the patron perceived a bias among the books designated “Lucky You”, which are additional copies of items that are purchased to accommodate demand from hold requests and best-seller lists, where patrons can walk in and check out without having to wait for the requestable copy of the item. What is on that table is based on what the majority of Northfield patrons ask for.

Our magazine selection is another case in point, based on popularity. Decorating and cooking magazines, very popular, very used. Traditional men’s interest magazines, not so much. But what people see on the “Lucky You” table, or what they see on the magazine shelves, impacts how welcome they feel in the library. If their interests are not represented front and center as a part of the mix, what message does that send?

Katlin Greene did a review of her non-fiction, topical news purchases for 2019 and found that both conservative and liberal views were represented fairly evenly in her regular collection budget, but “Lucky You” items skewed to more progressive/liberal titles. We still want to purchase items in the “Lucky You” category that will have the highest checkout rates, which represent the majority interest and views of Northfielders. It really is about how we are presenting these collections physically in the library. To that end, we will be shifting our display areas, creating a “Staff Picks” table along with a reduced “Lucky You” display to present more diversity on that first floor entryway/atrium.

And related to a shifting collection, we are discontinuing the purchase of our digital magazine platform RB Digital, formerly known as Zinio. We have found that the price that we have paid in past years-- \$2,000 for a platform fee, plus \$1,790 for 14 magazines, does not warrant our continued subscriptions, especially based on the chronic low use among our patrons. Currently the Friends have paid for the magazines, while we have paid the platform fee. Instead, we will now purchase an additional 15 print subscriptions for the library (all we have room for) to help

us balance our magazine selections, and reallocate any remaining dollars to other collection needs.

We continually review and question our practices and policies so that we can say with confidence, “All are Welcome Here”.

Adult Services

Submitted by Katlin Heidgerken-Greene, Reference Services Manager

This September, I experienced my first Defeat of Jesse James Days celebration in Northfield! It was a blast, from the rodeo to the reenactment to the carnival. I enjoyed the chance as a City employee to walk in the parade and represent the library at such a fun event! It was a great opportunity to promote the library and give out lots of bookmarks and candy to all in attendance.

The next weekend, the library’s 2nd annual Hispanic Heritage Celebration Kickoff was held, which was a resounding success. I had very little part in the celebration beyond handing out wristbands and acting as a gofer for the stage manager, but thoroughly enjoyed being there for the wonderful community turnout and amazing vendors and performers who showcased their talents.

My work this September included my first Saturday storytimes, which have been going well and drawing an enthusiastic audience so far, with 15 people the first week and 16 the next. I’m planning to do a storytime every Saturday until November 23rd, then take a holiday break and start up again in January 2020. I have high hopes that the turnout will continue to grow as word gets out, but for now I’m pleased with the reception we are getting, and families seem really happy with the program!

I was able to attend Day 1 of the Minnesota Library Association conference September 19. I always learn something new and am glad I attended, and this year was no exception. Sessions I attended on State Library Services, integrating library services into the City’s strategic plan, and how one library implemented new diversity and equity measures were helpful and informative. I learned about several new titles in the exhibit hall that I have since ordered for our collections. The conference is a good chance to get a sense of what is happening in libraries statewide—what the big initiatives are and new projects that are in process. In the future, I’d love to see NPL staff presenting at this or other conferences—we have a lot of knowledge that is worth sharing!

For programming, I am working with Beth Kallestad to arrange a program on recycling to be held at the library this fall. There is a lot that has changed with respect to what should and shouldn’t be recycled, and she can also share tips for our specific Northfield/Rice County community resources that will be of interest. I am also planning a book discussion event in conjunction with the Northfield Advanced Care Planning Advisory Council, which will be held at the library November 21. The book is a memoir called *Driving Miss Norma*. This is the 2nd of 2 book discussions that are planned for the year (the first was in June).

I am hard at work ordering books for the collection as the last quarter of the budget year is upon us. It is exciting to see the new titles coming in! If there is something in particular you'd like to see me purchase, please let us know (you can always suggest a purchase on the library website).

Submitted by Joan Ennis

- Students are back in school and we are busy helping students and planning new programs.
- The Northfield Reads committee met on September 17 and is planning several events on climate change during the next few months. Our fiction books selection is *Flight Behavior* by Barbara Kingsolver, and we will have a book discussion at the library on November 12. We are in the process of selecting a nonfiction book for a winter discussion.
- On September 10, I gave a book talk at Three Links apartments on Irish Literature. I returned on September 16 for the Brain Fitness activity. We continued an activity we started in August, creating a family saga. The residents have had fun creating a story with different characters, various plot twists and conflicts! Since we had just discussed Irish Literature, one of the characters has family in Ireland!
- On September 17, the Contemporary Women Writers Book Group discussed *A Gentleman in Moscow* by Amor Towles. We had 22 people at the discussion! That is the largest number of participants I have ever had. People loved the book, and brought guests, including a Russian literature professor from St. Olaf. We had a great discussion.
- The Memoir Writing Group met on September 16. Orlo Otteson is providing structure for the group, and the members are very happy with the group, and the fact that the group meets during the day.
- The Open Writing Group met on September 18 and that group is also very successful, and participants are coming regularly and reading their work.
- Layna and I will be speaking to faculty at the Northfield High School and Northfield Middle School in the next 2 weeks, about library resources.

Submitted by Jamie Stanley

The theme of the 2019 Annual September Minnesota Library Association (MLA) Conference held September 19-20th was Libraries: Stronger Together and the program lineup this year reflected the theme. Engagement, collaboration, partnership, reach and social capital were the watchwords at this two-day event.

Libraries are collaborative institutions, but over the past few years, they have made a concerted effort to leverage their bedrock principle of library inclusiveness, their community connections, their deep knowledge and belief in the power of books to change lives to spark and facilitate discussions on subjects of concern to the body politic.

Library staff from the Saint Paul Public Library gave a presentation about how they took an established reading program called One City One Book and at the behest of St. Paul Mayor Melvin Carter greatly expanded it.

The library selected two books: Burn Baby Burn by Meg Medina (2016), and Evicted: Poverty and Profit in the American City by Matthew Desmond (2016), and developed a wide range of programs centered on the issues central to these books. They worked with a variety of organizations in St. Paul including, the Friends of the St. Paul Public Library, the Office of the Mayor, and Saint Paul Public Schools.

The revised Read Brave St Paul program was a major undertaking for the St. Paul Public Library (SPPL) that required a substantial investment in staff time and funding. It was a carefully developed program and included both a charter and a plan to capture hard and soft evaluative program success data. At present, the SPPL is in the early stages of planning for their 2020 Read Brave Program. The focus on that program will be climate change.

Slide of the Read Brave Program can be found at:

https://static.sched.com/hosted_files/2019mlaannualconference/be/Read%20Brave%20Slides.pdf

Submitted by Tyler Gardner

One highlight of September was attending the 2019 Minnesota Library Association conference in Prior Lake. It is great to be able to gather with professional peers and hear about all of the good things they are doing in their libraries and communities. It feels like a majority of the sessions are libraries patting themselves on the back, but there are elements of each presentation and each experience that can translate to the work that we do here. One of the things I was most intrigued by was Hennepin County Libraries Community Embedded Library Services model. HCL hired ambassadors to go in to Latinx, East African, and Native communities to attend community meetings, hear the needs of the communities, and then work with these communities to see what the library could do to help support the community. While we aren't necessarily in the position to allocate resources specifically for this purpose I think the work that Angelica and Laurie do with Outreach is moving in the direction of what HCL is trying to do. I think the major difference, from what I can tell, is that in the metro area there are numerous organizations being led by ethnic communities which are responding to the needs of their own communities. I found myself wondering what kind of, if any, Latinx groups/ or organizations there were in town. For instance, is there a group of Hispanic business leaders in town? Are there enough interested parties in town to warrant such a group? It's interesting to contrast the differences between the Northfield Latinx community and those in the cities. There are many more Latinx people in the cities so it is easy for those groups to develop naturally. Well, how can we expect Latinx people in our community to form groups that would ultimately serve their own interests when they can't afford adequate shelter, are on edge about immigration status, or feel unaccepted by people in town? I am glad to be working towards providing services and experiences that help

lift our Latinx community. Now I am going to commit myself to re-learning Spanish and finding ways to make it a part of my everyday life.

That being said, the coolest part of September was being present for the 2019 Hispanic Heritage Celebration. It was such a huge success for all involved. We showed a commitment to the Hispanic community and provided an opportunity to share and celebrate their culture. It's so cool that the library is leading the charge with this event. I loved watching members of the Hispanic community coming together to share their food, their art, and their culture with the city. It was so well attended and totally worth the little bit of sunburn I got on my face.

Another exciting, albeit short, event from September was driving the bookmobile in the DJJD Parade. It was awesome to get to see so many people from our community lined up on the street, even if it was just to be pelted with free candy. I feel so privileged to be able to participate in events like that and represent the library and the city. We do so much for the city and our patrons and I feel that we are an invaluable resource for this whole community. When I consider the work of the library and its place in a community I am reminded of the 12th century quote attributed to Bernard of Chartes but made famous by Isaac Newton more approachable phrasing, "If I have seen further it is by standing on the shoulders of Giants." Of course, he is referencing the accumulated knowledge of his predecessors as the catalyst for his own discoveries. I find that we are also the catalyst and we are the giants whose shoulders we offer in service to the community. I think parades are a celebration of the giants of the community.

Youth Services

Submitted by Emily Lloyd, Youth Services Librarian

- September brought the year's first school visit book talks, an opportunity to showcase some favorite new books to 3rd grade classes at Sibley.
- On October 1st, I'm booktalking to 2nd graders at St. Dominic's, and I hope to secure a few booktalking dates per month going forward as it helps build not just excitement for books but strengthens school-library relationships.
- We held our first "Arty Pants Storytime" with Bridget from the Northfield Arts Guild on September 25th. It was a smash with both regulars and new families looking for Wednesday morning early childhood activities. Given the crowd's enthusiasm, I plan to schedule at least two Wednesday morning early learning-related programs per month in addition to our usual storytimes.
- In October, we're having special guests Occasions with Character in for a "Unicorns, Fairies, and Mermaids" costumed storytime and holding our second Arty Pants. Future months' early learning programs are mostly to be determined, with one music class with early childhood Suzuki teacher Arielle Loy scheduled for December.
- On September 17th, we welcomed first-year Carleton Student Maggie Yang as this year's student youth services worker.

- Saturday morning storytimes with Katlin kicked off on September 21 with healthy attendance that is likely to build as awareness grows.
- Readers' Advisory in Children's has picked up with the return of school. Many in the community (including the library's Sue Pokorney) volunteer as Breakfast Buddies, reading to kids who eat breakfast at elementary schools. I've compiled a list of suggested books for Breakfast Buddies to have on hand for all staff at the children's desk, and shared it with Northfield Promise's Reading Team who will pass it on to other volunteers. Projects in the works include several new backpacks (Pokemon, Sharks, one specifically for babies, Latinx Voices), an Everyday Diversity book list, and a continued heavy weed of the juvenile nonfiction collection and assessment of what our greatest needs are.
- October is rich with programs that were mentioned in last month's report, but briefly: a Day of the Dead-themed puppet show, a DIY button-making program, a Halloween Celebration for families, a Catch a Chapter Homeschool Read-Aloud, a visit from Half-Pint Horses (miniature horses), and the aforementioned Arty Pants and Unicorns storytime.
- On November 1, I'll be giving a staff training on serving LGBTQIA+ patrons, an extension of a 10-minute "Gender 101" presentation at August's staff meeting.

Submitted by Layna Mestad, Youth Services/Teen Librarian



September kicked off fall teen programming, with our big event being the Hispanic Heritage Celebration Kickoff. Our TAB members were a great help with managing the craft tables throughout the day and recruiting other teens to join TAB. We added country flag button making to the craft tables this year, and it was a huge hit! Melanny had pre-cut county flags and organized them into envelopes, which helped greatly!

Arcadia middle schoolers visited the library this month, each grade coming a specific day to tour the space, receive mini tutorials of the



resources available to them with their library card, and a chance to explore the library's collections on their own. This was a great opportunity for Arcadia students to become familiar with the library both as a space and resource, especially because Arcadia does not have a library of their own. We are in the process of registering library cards for the students. We had a total of 10 6th graders, 21 7th graders, and 15 8th graders here for visits.



We partnered with the Northfield Arts Guild for our Anime & Manga Club meeting. The Guild hired artist, Alexa Ochoki, to lead the anime/manga inspired art workshop that took place at the Guild. We had a total of 10 people attend the program, and I am still beyond excited about this turnout. This group has had inconsistent attendance over the past year, so to have this turnout is both encouraging and amazing. Alexa did a fabulous job leading the workshop, and I received great feedback from

the teens about anime and manga they recommend be added to the library's collection. They asked when the next group meeting was before they left—did I mention how excited I am about how this program went?! I am over the moon.

One of the big projects I've been working on over the past couple of months is our Comfort Cabinet for teens. It's an idea that I came across via social media from another youth services librarian (librarians are great resources ☺). It is a cabinet full of basic health products available in the library for teens to take what they need free of charge, no library card required. The idea is for them to take what they need and leave some for others. We will be repurposing the card catalog that currently sits empty in the genealogy area. It fits perfectly within the YA shelves. It will be located toward the end of the YA row so people have privacy when they take what they need. We will fill our cabinet full of toothbrushes, toothpaste, floss, tampons, antiperspirant wipes, combs, body wash wipes, and granola bars (as allergen free as possible). The Community Action Center offers many of these basic health products, but it's located on the other side of town. As we all know, the public library is a place that connects the surrounding community to a variety of resources and information. In this case, said resources take the form of basic health necessities that some young adults in our community do not have easy access to. Special thanks to the Friends of the Library for funding this initiative. I've been busy planning fall programming lately, so this project has progressed quite slowly. The supplies have been purchased, and I plan on getting this in the YA stacks within the next couple of weeks!

Circulation Services

Submitted by Kathy Rush, Technology Circulation Services Manager



A common question we are asked at the Circulation Desk is “Can we donate our old books, magazines, music CDs and DVDs to the library?” We do take these donations and the circulation staff will go through these donations and decide if they it something we should keep for our collection, or try to sell on the book sale shelves. Sometimes we are able to replace our circulating copy with a donated copy that is in better condition. We also weed books from our collection due to age or condition. Most items that we received in donations and our withdrawn books first go out to the book sale for a couple of weeks. You would be surprised how many are snatched up by our patrons especially since we have had a sale of all the items you

can fit in a bag for \$3.00. In September, we collected \$440 in sales from our book sale. The items that we do not sell we send to Better World Books. They will try to sell the books, and those they sell we get 9% back from them. Those they are unable to sell they will send to “Books for Africa” or recycle. They never throw a book away!

Outreach, Shelving and Volunteer Services

Submitted by Laurie Kodet, Shelving/Outreach Services Supervisor/Volunteer Manager and Angelica Linder, Outreach Coordinator



Volunteers-Many volunteers helped make the second annual Hispanic Heritage Celebration a great success. Eric Linder, Robert Kodet, Bill North, Leesa & John Wisdorf, Debby Nitz, Derek & Laura Meyers, Rachel Miessler, Tania Duarte, Max Gordon-Mercer, Gracie Svien, Shelby Svien, Kiara Orihuela Rivera and Mariangely Linder. Each one of these volunteers worked hard, putting up and taking down tents, decorating,

filling water coolers, making buttons, and much more. Volunteers enable the library to do so much! We are very thankful for each of our volunteer’s time and talents.





Bookmobile

- September 5- Sun Program at Laura Baker with storytime- 6 visitors, 4 storytime attendees
- September 8- DJJD Parade
- September 17- Sun Program at Laura Baker- 8 visitors



Library Services Outreach

- September 3- New Student Event- St. Olaf- 128 visitors, 66 library cards issued
- September 10- New Student Resource Fair- Carleton-98 visitors, 40 library cards issued
- September 20- Student Activities Event- Carleton-125 visitors, 56 library cards issued

Other

On September 14, the library hosted our second annual National Hispanic Heritage Month kickoff. Weeks of preparation included finding performers, vendors, and food trucks, filling out forms for the showmobile and street closure, and collecting W9's. Many people canvassing the area with posters paid off- more than 1,100 people attended this year's event! Library staff and volunteers worked together to set-up, run the activities, and clean up, helping to make the day run smoothly and successfully.

Mayor Rhonda Pownell gave opening remarks and Angelica Linder emceed the event in both English and Spanish. The day featured two bands, four different dance groups, Zumba, food and craft vendors, face painters, and children's games and crafts. The Key served free cotton candy and several community groups (including the Northfield Police staffing an information table) all

came together to make this a successful event.

The celebration continues with in-depth programming on Latino history and culture throughout October, giving the community opportunities to learn about Latino history, culture and cuisine.

SEMAC (Southeast Minnesota Arts Council), FFOL (Friends and Foundation of Northfield Public Library), City of Northfield, and Northfield Public Library sponsor these National Hispanic Heritage events.



Poet Laureate

Submitted by Rob Hardy, Northfield Poet Laureate

No reports were submitted for June, July, and August. I was out of town for nine weeks during that time (22 days in June, 29 days in July, 21 days in August).

Upcoming Events

Thursday, October 3. 7pm. Content Bookstore. Poet Laureate Rob Hardy in conversation with Lizzie Ehrenhalt (Minnesota Historical Society) about the book she co-edited, *Precious and*

Adored: The Love Letters of Rose Cleveland and Evangeline Simpson Whipple, 1890-1918 (Minnesota Historical Society Press).

Thursday, October 24. 7pm. Content Bookstore. Book launch reading for Doug Green's first collection of poetry, *Jumping the Median* (Encircle Publications).

Tuesday, November 5. 7pm. Northfield Public Library. Poetry reading by Steve Schild.

September Events

Hispanic Heritage Month Kick-off

September 14. Oscar Mireles, Poet Laureate of Madison, Wisconsin.

3rd Northfield Poetry Festival

September 26. Monica Berlin (Carleton College, co-sponsored with the Center for Community and Civic Engagement). Attendance: 15 (mostly Carleton faculty, staff, and students)

September 28. 10am. Group reading at Content Bookstore, with Doug Green, Becky Boling, Brent Christianson, Marie Gery, David Walters, and Steve McCown. Attendance: 35

2pm. Group reading at Northfield Public Library, with Joanne Sullivan, Andrea Een, Alexis Hernandez, Riki Kölbl Nelson, Diane LeBlanc, Leslie Schultz, and Rob Hardy. Music by Mestifonía. Attendance: 35

The poetry festival included seasoned readers as well as one or two poets who were reading publicly for the first time. It included a poet who has lived in Northfield for 50 years and another who has lived here for 14 months. It included seven women and six men. The band, Mestifonía, was enthusiastically received, and at least one audience member commented on how well the music fit with the poetry. One of the poets emailed to say: "Kudos to you for bringing us poets together in community places and for getting that fab group of musicians to play. Loved them!" In my opinion, this was the most successful of the three annual poetry festivals I've hosted.

Poetry Post Update

The Poetry Post, designed and fabricated by local artist Jen Wolcott, was unveiled at the library on September 28. Jen still has some work to do on the piece, which will be installed in October. The first poem to be displayed will be "The 19th Letter," by local poet and artists Toni Easterson, who read her poem at the group reading at the library on September 28.

LBSA Poetry Workshop

On Wednesday afternoons in October, I'll be leading a poetry workshop with two residents of one of the Laura Baker (LBSA) off-campus houses. The goal is to write poetry together that can

be read at the LBSA annual gala in December. A poem we wrote together in March was featured in a recent issue of the LBSA newsletter. This activity is a collaboration with Bridget Novak, the LBSA art specialist.

Greenvale Park Elementary Sidewalk Poetry

Superintendent Matt Hillmann has asked me to compose a special sidewalk poem for installation outside the new school building. The planning is in the early stages, but I may work with MaryBeth Youngblut to create a poem with some of the children at the school, as I did with children at Prairie Creek.

SEMAC Grant

After consultation with Teresa Jensen, I have decided not to apply for a 2020 SEMAC grant to support the Poet Laureate program. In all three years of the program's existence, we've entered December with a significant fund balance. The poetry reading series can be run at minimal expense by inviting local poets to read, or through working with Content to bring to town poets with books they want to promote. Carleton and St. Olaf, with much greater resources, often bring more well-known poets to town (recently, Li Young Lee, Jimmy Santiago Baca, and Hanif Abdurraquib). Other organizations I've worked with, like Prairie Creek and LBSA, have offered to pay for services. In the past, I have declined payment because of the grant. But instead of relying on outside grant funding each year, it might be better to move to a funding model that demonstrates local support for the program.

Frankly, after three years, I find that applying for and administering a grant adds significantly to the workload of the position. At this point, I think I need to scale back expectations a bit. Although a search for a new Poet Laureate was open for two months in the spring, no one applied. It is, of course, flattering to be told that I've "set the bar too high." I wanted the Poet Laureate program to have a strong start, but I don't want it to come with unrealistic expectations.

Finally, because of my wife's sabbatical from Carleton in the fall term of 2020, I may be out of town for much of the second half of next year, which would of course make it impossible for me to make use of grant funding during that time.