

# Abington Public Library Annual Report - 2020

To the Inhabitants of the Town of Abington:

The COVID-19 pandemic dramatically changed the delivery of Library services in 2020. The building closed to the public on March 13. In accordance with the Governor's emergency orders, the Library did not begin circulating physical materials to residents until late May. On May 26<sup>th</sup> the Abington Public Library became one of the first public libraries in the state to offer curbside pickup to patrons. The Library was also one of the first libraries in the state to open the building to patrons for limited browsing and borrowing on July 14 and continued to stay open through December 5, when the increasing surge of COVID-19 cases and the climbing test positivity rates forced a return to curbside pickup and delivery services only.

The Abington Public Library continued to provide information services for the residents of Abington: 75,667 items – books, eBooks, audiobooks, DVDs, videos, music CDs, magazines and museum passes were borrowed and 16,911 user visits to the library were recorded. Due to the pandemic, these numbers were less than 2019. 4,100 curbside pickups of library materials prepared by library staff occurred between May and December. During this same period, 134 deliveries of books, magazines, puzzles and other library materials were made to homebound borrowers. Library staff answered reference questions via telephone and email, provided technological assistance, and initiated regular wellness telephone checks on vulnerable library patrons during April, May and June.

Downloadable materials, electronic books, audiobooks and magazines, were a lifeline for borrowers as digital materials accounted for 29% of total library circulation in 2020, up from 15% in 2019. Library staff provided telephone assistance to many individual patrons to teach them how to borrow downloadable materials. Demand for library computers was steady from July to December as adults, children and teens used the computers for work, schoolwork, research, job seeking, filing federal and state taxes, email, social media, word processing and countless other applications. At the time of the building closing in December staff was preparing donated laptops for circulation to the parking lot.

Prior to the COVID-19 shutdown, the Library was closed from February 18 through March 3, for the replacement of the twenty-two year old original carpet throughout the building. Capital Carpet of Wilmington, MA installed the new carpet. The Trustees and Library Director thank the residents of Abington for the funding to complete this project as part of the town's Capital Plan. The new carpet is Milliken commercial-grade carpet squares, which will allow for easier maintenance and area replacements. The moving of library collections and steel shelving was completed by National Library Relocations.

Abington Public School classes visited the Abington Public Library in January, February and March. Children's Librarian Amy Hindle visited the Kindergarten and Pre-K classes monthly at the beginning of the year. For the fall of 2020, Ms. Hindle recorded monthly storytimes for Pre-K and Kindergarten classes, as well as recorded instruction in library skills and literacy. The last large in-person event hosted by the Library was the Beaver Brook Art Show, featuring student work, in early March. Library staff completed acquisition of a new language database, Pronunciator, during March, and were able to negotiate access without a library card for all Abington public school students for several months.

The Non-Fiction and Popular Fiction discussion groups continued their monthly meetings, in person through early March and then moving to the Zoom platform for virtual discussions in April. The very popular Cookbook Club and monthly craft evenings for adults also changed format in the spring,

offering well attended virtual sessions throughout the year. Thirty-three virtual programs were offered for adults with 337 attendees. Library staff began an electronic newsletter, “All Around the APL” to connect with patrons. Social media, particularly the Library’s Facebook page, allowed staff to communicate and engage with library borrowers.

The Friends conducted fundraising activities with a socially distanced mini book sale in October, as well as maintaining their popular “Everyday Sale Shelf” in the Library. The Friends Membership Drive has been rescheduled to January 2021. The group typically provides museum passes and funding for children’s, teen and adult programs. The Friends book discussion groups pivoted to virtual meetings in May, continuing their very successful daytime literary fiction book group, and the popular evening mystery book discussion group on Zoom.

The community was again generous to the Library in 2020. Gifts were received for children’s programming in memory of long-time library trustee Melba Smith, and from the Anderson Foundation. The Abington Lions Club continued funding the family pass for the Boston Children’s Museum; this pass has been funded by the Lions for more than 30 years. Many individual residents made donations for library materials, including the many members of the community who contributed to the Donation Jar, which provides additional funding for children’s materials. The Library Trustees and Library Director thank the many generous residents who donated to the Friends of the Library and provided direct financial support for Library services.

While the library building was open, the Teen Advisory Board (TAB) met during the months of January and February to guide program offerings for teens. Barn Babies made their annual visit to the library and the teens- along with children of all ages- spent an afternoon playing with baby farm animals. During the winter months of 2020, the library was able to host a few weeks of story hours, toddler times, Lego clubs and after-school story and craft programs, all of which were funded by the Friends of the Library and the Joyce Lee Bumpus Fund. In-person book club meetings for children and teens continued until March. Story hours and toddler times went virtual beginning in June and have continued to do so through the end of 2020. Book club meetings continued weekly throughout the summer and were held via Google Meeting. Since the start of the current school year, the three respective book clubs have resumed their monthly meetings and continue to meet via Google Meeting.

The summer of 2020 became a virtual one. The summer reading program went entirely online; kids, teens and adults signed up via our program READsquared to log their reading hours, share book recommendations and occasionally write reviews. 282 library patrons registered for the online summer reading program and read for a collective 1,321 hours. Thanks to the Anderson Foundation, we were able to offer some virtual programs to our dedicated library patrons. Audiences were able to stay safe at home and participate in programs via Zoom or Youtube. The Hampstead Stage Company did a live virtual performance of *Alice in Wonderland*, educators from the Pop-Up Art School ran two art classes via Zoom -- one for kids and one for teens, and The Toe Jam Puppet Band recorded a show specifically for Abington and released it on YouTube. The Friends of the Library funded an interactive and informative virtual program called *Learning Facts about Sharks*, which was presented by the Atlantic White Shark Conservancy.

Trustees Betty Henderson, Barbara McLaughlin and Jake O’Neill were re-elected in the town’s annual election, which was delayed from April until June due to the pandemic.

Assistant Librarian Susan Durand retired in June, after thirty-two years of service and Library Assistant Barbara Libby retired in May after sixteen years of service, with two additional years as a substitute.

Both are greatly missed by the public and the Library Staff. Library Assistant Lynne Nickley was promoted to the full-time Assistant Librarian position on July 1. The two part-time Library Assistant positions were left vacant for fiscal 2021.

The Trustees and Director recognize the dedication and professionalism of the Library Staff: Sandy Bumpus, Ann Bunszell, Susan Donovan, Susan Durand, Heidi Hernandez, Amy Hindle, Barbara Libby, Kerri Lohnes, Lynne Nickley, Joanne Plunkett, Sarah Roberts, Linda Sampson, Elizabeth Shea, and Terry Taylor.

### **Selected 2020 Library Statistics**

Circulation: 75,667

Registered borrowers: 6,297

Total programs offered: 194. Total program attendance: 2,451

Total patron visits: 17,259

### **2020 Pandemic Statistics**

Total curbside pickups: 4,100

Total deliveries to patrons: 134

Circulation in building under COVID protocols (July – Dec.): 15, 717

Hours open under COVID protocols (July – Dec.): 497

Patron visits under COVID protocols (July – Dec): 3,595

Virtual programs offered: 122. Virtual program attendance: 944

Respectfully submitted,  
Henry DiCarlo, Chair  
Betty Henderson, Vice Chair  
Laura Nuttall, Secretary  
Gail Bergin  
Mary Gillis

Gerry Haas  
Barbara McLaughlin  
Carrie Murray  
John O'Neill  
Deborah Grimmer, Library Director