

West Des Moines Public Library

ANNUAL REPORT

2020
2021



Starting a New Chapter



A message from the Director:

The week before this writing, the West Des Moines Public Library held its Grand Reopening/25th Anniversary celebration after over a year of disruptions, some in the form of building renovation and some in the form of the pandemic that affected so much of American life. Crowds of people came out to see the changes, meet library staff, Board of Trustees, members of the Friends Foundation, etc. The enthusiasm for the library on that Saturday was palpable, and there was a general sense that there were as many people there to simply urge us along towards returning to normal as there were people there to see the changes to the building. People are ready to move on.

Many people who come to the library come with the expectation that staff can help them. They seek help with using technology, doing research for projects or homework assignments, solving problems. Staff is trained to help users find the materials they need so that they leave as satisfied as possible. To make that happen, sometimes staff needs to import books or other materials from other libraries through our extensive interlibrary loan contacts. One thing we have learned in the last few years (a lesson underscored by the needs expressed by the public during the height of COVID and the concomitant economic impact)—is that many library users come to the library because they simply aren't sure where else to find answers. While that fact is gratifying, we know that the skillset and ethical boundaries of public librarians can mean limitations. To that end, starting this fall, the West Des Moines Library will host a social work intern made possible by the University of Iowa's practicum program and trained to meet the needs of our citizens with the help of West Des Moines Human Services. Through this internship, we want to explore the usefulness of and response to having someone on staff with the special training needed to help library users find answers to personal and family issues from which librarians have been traditionally—and rightly—walled off.

Another theme that many of us at the library heard in 2020-2021 was that the library was sought (and, at times, missed) because it is a space free of advertising, political contentions, and social tension. While the library has always been and remains a place where the curious can find the information about whatever is in the news cycle, they can be confident that the West Des Moines Public Library does not see itself as being in the "convincing business." As opposed to the efforts of so many in media, on the Internet or on social media, the library does not seek to turn researchers into believers of any sort. In that regard, the library is a welcome break for many people today.

Finally, we are looking forward to getting back to the regular daily business of just being a library, without undue worry about public health crises. As someone who grew up in a part of the country where there are frequent weather-related evacuations, I can say from experience that people look to the public library to figure out just how worried about something they should be. As we emerge from a difficult year (June 2021 was the first month since March 2020 with pre-COVID-level usage), we're looking forward to being a cue that things are getting better.



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Darryl H. Eschete".

Darryl Eschete

Director

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\$493,000 **donated by**
the Friends

HIGHLIGHTS



24-hour Valley Junction Kiosk opens

New public website goes live

Library reopens to visitors after COVID closure

New mobile app goes live



Library reopens after renovations

Storyroom mural completed

Grand Reopening Celebration!



BY THE NUMBERS

It was a different year for everyone BUT our community still showed us lots of love! Here is an overview of our year:



3,142
new library cards



27,000
reference questions answered



584,300
physical items checked out



59,359
e-books downloaded



46,981
e-audiobooks downloaded

49,000
card holders

50%
of West Des Moines residents hold library cards

128,000 library visitors

93,534 visits to our website

SOCIAL MEDIA ENGAGEMENT

FACEBOOK
28,282
engagements

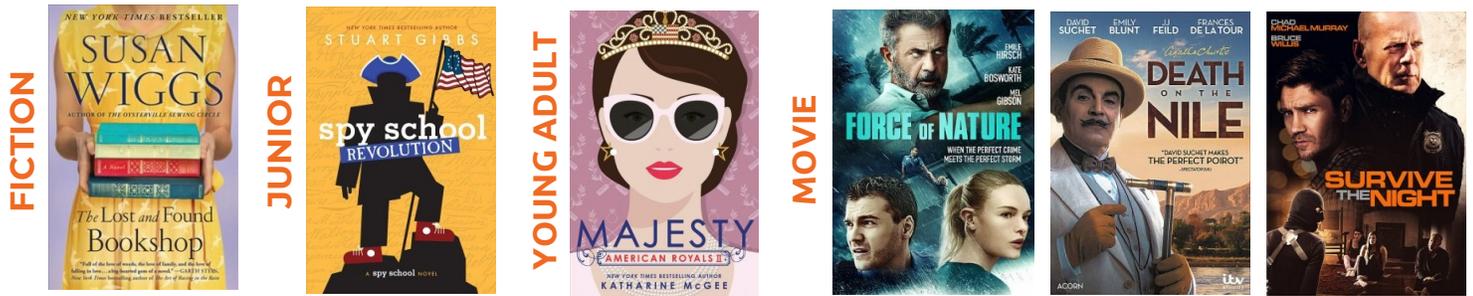
FACEBOOK
489,715
impressions

INSTAGRAM
1,567
engagements

TWITTER
98,700
impressions

MOST POPULAR CHECKOUTS

Of all the items borrowed this year, these were the most popular.



PROGRAMS



271
programs & events

8,703
attended programs

HOMEBOUND & OUTREACH

The West Des Moines Library continues to serve patrons who are unable to access our physical building by delivering via our Homebound and Elder Care Outreach programs.

801
individual
homebound
deliveries

92
care facility
deliveries

1,300
patrons served
via homebound
or elder care

14
participating
care facilities

1,050
materials in
elder care
facilities

VOLUNTEERS

62 volunteers

498 volunteer hours