



SIMI VALLEY PUBLIC LIBRARY

ANNUAL REPORT

Fiscal Year 2019-2020

library systems  services

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LETTER FROM THE LIBRARY DIRECTOR

The COVID-19 pandemic brought unexpected and unprecedented challenges to the Simi Valley Public Library. Challenges, however, are always opportunities and a new perspective provides a better understanding of the Library's role in the community and a clearer picture of potential changes to our service model.

The Library closed to the public on Friday, March 13, 2020, in response to the rising number of COVID-19 cases in Ventura County. Staff worked in the building for an additional week before the Governor of California's Stay at Home Order. Library services never ceased, in fact they changed and grew out of immediate necessity. A strong staff effort by phone and email helped existing Library users become accustomed to borrowing digital materials. The Library registered 427 new users interested in borrowing digital items while isolated at home. Programs were shifted to virtual delivery and activity ideas for all ages were provided through social media. Staff also focused on offering programs and ideas for engaging activities that do not involve using a screen.

Before the pandemic-related shift in services, staff provided more roving service with enhanced customer interaction at point of need rather than at service desks. The progress was upended due to the need for social distancing, but the desire to offer personalized service remains. When outdoor walk-up and curbside services began in June, the barriers were deeply felt by both customers and staff. The challenge of limited patron contact was most poignantly expressed in a handwritten letter delivered by mail during the period that staff were not in the building to answer phones. The writer – not unkindly – asked, “How am I to get my books? Surely, I'm not the only person in Simi Valley without a computer?”

High quality service delivery during the closure was made possible by an agile team of technology specialists. The Integrated Library System (ILS) team made frequent updates to patron due dates, notification messages, and preserved hold queues for months. Remote ILS modules were activated so that staff were able to register hundreds of new customers while working from home. Numerous website updates were made in order to provide authoritative information sources, highlight digital materials, and to let customers know about the rapidly changing hours, services, and ways to get in contact with the Library.



Fortunately, COVID-19 did not occupy the entire year. In October the City of Simi Valley's 50th Anniversary was celebrated with a month-long display of artifacts, mounted photographs, and interactive materials that featured the Simi Valley community's history. The Museum of Ventura County, the Strathearn Historical Society and Museum, and Grandma Prisbrey's Bottle Village graciously loaned interesting pieces for this celebratory display.

The Simi Valley Public Library staff are grateful for the commitment and support of the Library Board of Trustees, the Simi Valley Friends of the Library, Library Systems & Services and the many local partnerships that make this organization an essential part of the community. Together, we look forward to meeting current challenges, finding new ways to meet new needs, and building on the solid, strong framework of the Library's position as a well-loved and well-used resource in the community.

Long-term Library users who have grown to enjoy e-books and e-audiobooks during the past few months will certainly want to visit for a full Library experience. To new users who recently became part of the Library family – welcome! We can't wait to see all of you – in the building and in person – during the upcoming year.

Kelly Behle | Director



SIMI VALLEY PUBLIC LIBRARY

BY THE NUMBERS

58,358

DIGITAL ITEMS BORROWED

333,683

TOTAL ITEMS BORROWED

38,423

CARDHOLDERS

3,713

NEW REGISTRATIONS
THIS YEAR

973

JUVENILE AND TEEN
REGISTRATIONS THIS YEAR

101,136

LIBRARY VISITS
JULY 1, 2019 - MARCH 13, 2020

566

IN-PERSON PROGRAMS
AND OFFSITE EVENTS

10,196

IN-PERSON PROGRAM
AND OFFSITE EVENT
ATTENDANCE

54

VIRTUAL PROGRAMS
MARCH 14, 2020 - JUNE 30, 2020

3,514

VIRTUAL PROGRAM
ENGAGEMENTS/
ATTENDANCE

MARCH 14, 2020 - JUNE 30, 2020

599

New CloudLibrary Users

205

AskUs Questions

496

New Hoopla Digital Users

STRATEGIC PLAN IMPLEMENTATION AND CAPITAL PROJECTS UPDATES

The Library entered the third year of a five year Strategic Plan, continuing to pursue the goals of Make Access Easier, Tell the Library's Story, Empower Customer Service, and Support Educational Pursuits. During the past year, the Library:

Making Access Easier

- Joined a new CloudLibrary digital platform which allows member Libraries to share collections
- Delivered 41,353 items to cardholders, registered hundreds of residents for immediate use of digital materials during facility closure
- Launched an improved and easier-to-use website featuring one-click buttons for the most popular resources

Telling the Library's Story

- Posted on social media to keep communication flowing freely and ensure residents knew the Library was still open virtually when the facility was closed
- Communicated through social media and other channels that staff were available to help with information, education, and entertainment needs during the difficult time
- Served as an information source for Census2020, COVID-19, and tax information;
- Ensured the new website clearly communicates what resources and services are available
- Highlighted the SVPL's and the Friends of the Library's organizational history in Simi Valley's 50th Anniversary celebrations

Empowering Customer Service

- 'Suggest a Purchase' form was included in new website design, allowing customer participation in the collection development process

Supporting Educational Pursuits

- Homework Help, school visits and Library tours for students as well as Adult Literacy continued to be areas of focus

Capital Project Updates 2020-2025

The City of Simi Valley's Capital Projects Budget allocated funds for building upgrades. Library Designer Kathryn Taylor provided a general renovation proposal and a furnishings contractor was consulted for recommendations. Proposed design elements include:

- | | |
|---|-----------------------------------|
| • Updated staffed service touchpoints | • Group study rooms |
| • Self-service kiosks | • Updated seating |
| • Express service area for holds, check out, computer access, and printing | • Charging stations |
| | • Collaborative work space |

SPECIAL PROJECTS AND ADDITIONAL FUNDING

WEBSITE REDESIGN

A new website launched in July 2019. One of the design priorities was to better communicate current information such as holiday closures, local events or a fire in the area. Another priority was to make access to materials as simple as possible. Messages can be sent directly to patrons from the CloudLibrary platform and a notification bar for these messages was added to the website. Digital resources and new materials are featured front and center on the front page with four boxes of featured content, one of which highlights a different special event or focus each month.

It could not have been predicted that communicating via the new website would be so vital so soon. In March 2020 when SVPL other libraries across the nation had to temporarily close or minimize in-person services, the website became the key access point for a digital model of resources and services provided to a community coping with radical change.

The four panels on the website made it easy to feature CloudLibrary and Hoopla on the home page, making it easier for patrons to find resources. At the suggestion of a City Council member, text was added right below the panels describing the exact information needed to make it as easy as possible for new digital users.

Alongside information about the facility closure in the notification bar, links to current and authoritative COVID-19 information was kept updated for easy resident access. In addition to Ventura County specific information, links to the World Health Organization reports and the Center for Disease Control's page were provided.

The unique situation prompted a host of questions from residents. A Frequently Asked Questions page was created and included information about rapidly changing hours and services. This page was linked directly from the home page notification bar. Staff also directed callers to the FAQ page for future updates about service.

CALIFORNIA STATE LIBRARY EMERGENCY FUNDING

In response to the COVID-19 crisis, the California State Library made grant funds available for the enhancing local Eresources. Simi Valley Public Library applied for and received \$3,000, which purchased an additional 94 Ebooks and Eaudiobooks. Additional funding opportunity is possible in the upcoming year.

SIMI VALLEY FRIENDS OF THE LIBRARY: HOOPLA

During the first three quarters of the year, the Friends of the Library continued to fund Hoopla, a pay-per-use downloadable and streaming digital service. Prior to the Friends of the Library Bookstore closure due to COVID-19, the Friends generously provided \$41,635 in Hoopla credits, resulting in a 50 percent increase in Hoopla use compared to 2018-2019.

LIBRARY COLLECTIONS

CLOUDLIBRARY: JULY 2019

A new Ebook and Eaudiobook platform was introduced to coincide with the new website launch. CloudLibrary by Bibliotheca Library Solutions offers a consortium in which California libraries can share their Ebook and Eaudiobook collections. With CloudLibrary, Simi Valley Public Library residents now have access to 105,000 e-books and e-audiobooks compared to 4,500 in the OverDrive platform. Local purchases are available for local cardholders first, and if not in use, they can be borrowed by consortium patrons. Local funds expended on CloudLibrary materials totaled \$49,768 and 16,683 items were borrowed by Simi Valley cardholders. Items in the collection were borrowed by consortia cardholders 41,353 times.

QUICK PICKS: DECEMBER 2019

In December 2019, Quick Picks DVDs were added as a new collection. From donated DVDs, 196 popular titles were chosen, minimally processed, and placed on a display near the customer service desk for easy customer browsing. These items circulated a total 989 times between December and February.

COLLECTION INVENTORY: APRIL 2020

With fewer opportunities for customer interaction during facility closure, staff time and efforts were focused on a full collection inventory. Every item in the library was scanned and compared to catalog records for accuracy. The inventory allows the Library to ensure that the catalog accurately reflects the items that are physically on the shelves. Completion of this project will improve customer access to library materials, particularly during facility closure, since the majority of access is limited to hold requests through the online catalog. This project was completed in July 2020.

LIBRARY PROGRAMS

Library programs took a different turn this year. In-person programs featuring literacy, STEM, arts, teen topics, and educational support for K-12 students and lifelong learning for adults were continued and program delivery became virtual after the temporary facility closure in March. Some virtual programs were delivered as livestreamed events, and others were pre-recorded and posted at regularly scheduled times. Continuation of programming helped provide ease of mind for some regular attendees.

Summer reading was completely revamped. Registration and reading logs were completed online, programs for all ages were transitioned to a virtual format and free or low-cost activities to do at home were developed to keep the community engaged and learning. The 2020 summer experience provided lessons for integrating more community-building elements into the programming. This insight will also be valuable when the facility is open to the public.



LITERACY

Adult Literacy tutoring is offered six hours each week. The program is executed in partnership with Ventura County READ and the Simi Institute. Trained tutors meet, one on one, with students who need assistance with reading proficiency, conversational English, and the citizenship process.

Early Literacy and Family Literacy are purposefully included in story time programs. Young children learn print awareness, vocabulary, phonological awareness, letters and symbols or shapes, story comprehension and narration, and reading motivation. Parents are given techniques that can be used at home to talk, read, sing, write, and play with their children - making early literacy learning a whole-family endeavor. In the fall, a weekly Bilingual Storytime was started for children and families whose language at home is either Spanish or English.



Emerging young readers of Simi Valley were offered more early-reader books this year. Children's staff updated the collection and also displayed the books right at kid-level for easy access. The refreshed collection and improved display resulted in an eight percent increase in use from July 2019 to January 2020, compared to the same period in the previous fiscal year. Elementary school children were also supported in the quest for reading success with programs in which they read to dogs. A weekly average of 39 children practiced reading to dogs, gaining confidence and fluency. Plans were made to continue to the program in a virtual format beginning in summer of 2020.

STEAM: SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY, ENGINEERING, ART, AND MATH

STEAM programs for children included a weekly "Coding and Art" program in summer 2019, where children learned about coding with the use of robots and received drawing instruction from a local art teacher. Larger monthly STEAM programs featured art instruction in addition to an activity exploring different scientific concepts. For example, the January 2020 STEAM activity was a "Cloud in a Cup" activity where the children modeled weather while exploring density and color theory.

Twice monthly, the Library held a "Creativity Corner" program for children which invited children and their caregivers to create art in an open-ended, process-oriented manner.

Dig into Technology

STEM CATAPULT

Today is a Great Day to Learn Something New!



SUPPLIES

An empty tissue box
3 pencils - unsharpened is best
Rubber bands
Hole punch
A plastic cap
1 pipe cleaner
Scissors
Hot glue gun

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Cut the tissue box opening larger.
2. Use a rubber band to attach two pencils so that they make a cross. Then use a hole punch to make holes on either side of the box. Insert the pencils.
3. Attach a rubber band to the end of the pencil like you would attach a luggage tag.
4. Make a little hole in the front near the bottom of the box and pull the rubber band through.

INSTRUCTIONS (CONTD)

5. Stick the pipe cleaner through the rubber band loop and then tape it to secure it to the box. Otherwise, the tension on the rubber band will pull it back through!
6. Use hot glue to attach a plastic cap to the pencil.
7. Pull the pencil back. Put an object in the cap and let go to launch your catapult!
8. Add another pencil to stop the shooting arm at a better angle. Try attaching it to the other pencil with duct tape.

YEAR IN REVIEW

JULY

The Library held its first-ever community talent show. The show was open to community members of all ages, which resulted in a great assortment of acts with participants ranging from young children to seniors and even one dog. More than 60 people attended, providing an opportunity to highlight the talented the Simi Valley Community.

AUGUST

The Friends of the Library's Blow Out Book Sale is held three to four times per year. Each of these special sales gives the Friends the opportunity to move excess inventory of donated items and gives customers a chance to buy books at \$3 per bag or \$5 per box. Dedicated volunteers from the Friends group prepared thousands of items for the sale, worked as cashiers, and cleaned after the sale.

SEPTEMBER

Suicide Awareness and Prevention week activities included two rock painting activities at the Library, presented in partnership with the Simi Youth Council. More than 300 people of all ages joined in to offer support for friends, families, and strangers, and to generate awareness about the topic of suicide.



OCTOBER

Library staff hosted a table at the Rancho Simi Recreation and Park District's Heritage Halloween event at Strathearn Historical Park and reached 300 people. Meanwhile at the Library, 50 people attended a "Drive-In" movie event. Children were given large cardboard boxes and the materials to decorate them as cars. They sat in their cars while watching a Halloween-themed movie to simulate the drive-in movie experience.

NOVEMBER

An evening of Native American songs, stories, and dance was provided by Redbird's Vision, a local group. The evening provided 46 attendees the opportunity to learn about an underrepresented group that is part of the community and to take part in a traditional dance.



Musician and musical history expert Bob Lipson gave his "Golden Age of American Classics" concert with humorous and informative commentary to a group of 20 adults in November.

DECEMBER

During the Library's annual Winter Wonderland event children created winter- and holiday-themed crafts and wrapped new books, provided by the Friends of the Library, as gifts for children in the community. These books were then donated to James Storehouse, a local organization serving foster youth.



JANUARY

"After Christmas Comedy" provided fun for residents during the first weeks after the holidays. Local comedians joined together to bring lots of laughs to a packed Community Room at the Library.

FEBRUARY

The annual Family Book Festival was attended by more than 300 people. This program is sponsored and primarily planned by the Friends of the Library. It featured fantastic presenters who volunteered their time to enrich the program, including author Sue Ganz-Schmitt and local art teacher, illustrator, and author Michael Voogd. Attendees participated in art and craft activities, met costumed characters, and attend talks by the featured guests.

In partnership with Simi Educators Association and Simi Valley Unified School District, the annual Read Across America event was attended by more than 300 people. Partners, volunteers, and Library staff worked together to provide a celebration of Dr. Seuss' legacy and positive impact on literacy. Performances were presented by students from Simi Valley schools. Readers throughout the 3-hour festival included local and state representatives and other community leaders.

MARCH, APRIL, MAY

Beginning in March, the Library posted weekly videos for children on Facebook. Storytime videos featuring a library staff member reading a picture book were posted once weekly, and a chapter-by-chapter reading of *Sideways Stories from Wayside School* by Louis Sachar was also posted once weekly. Collectively, these programs were viewed more than 1,000 views per month with positive comments and engagements from patrons. Movie Mondays, featuring selected titles available on Hoopla, and virtual escape room experiences were prepared for adults and teens. One featured event was with life coach, Mirella Acebo, who provided an interactive, livestreamed event titled, “Fortifying Your Mental Health During the Corona Crisis (and Any Crisis)”. Workshop attendees learned specific life coaching strategies for managing thoughts, feelings, and general mental health.

National Library Week (NLW) is always celebrated in April. In response to the widespread closures of public libraries, this year’s theme was changed from “Find Your Place at the Library” to “Find the Library at Your Place”. The idea was to let people know that the Library is still there, still active, and still available for them. Simi Valley Public Library staff created several social media posts through the week to connect with local patrons.



JUNE



The Summer Reading program kicked off with a livestreamed event featuring Christopher T. Magician, a family-friendly comedic magician who did tricks based on popular children’s books. Summer reading, a staple of programming for the Library, was shifted to an online version in which readers of all ages earn badges for reading books, listening to audiobooks, attending virtual programs, and participating in activities provided on the summer website. High-point badges were also redeemable for prizes, which – for summer 2020 – were more books!

The Library also began giving out grab-and-go craft kits for children in June, which include all the supplies needed to make a craft at home. Approximately 100 of these kits were given out in June, with patrons giving positive feedback and returning for more.

CONTRIBUTORS

Simi Valley Public Library Board of Trustees

The Board of Trustees provides oversight to staff responsible for Library operations. The Board is committed to supporting Library services, planning for the Library's future and ensuring the Library's fiscal health.

Keith L. Mashburn | President

Ruth Luevanos | Trustee

Mike Judge | President Pro Tem

Elaine Litster | Trustee

Dee Dee Cavanaugh | Trustee

Simi Valley Friends of the Library

Simi Valley Friends of the Library Board Members and volunteers received and sorted donations, shelved items, and served as cashiers in the Friends of the Library Bookstore on a daily basis until the closure of the Library.

Lisa Trent | President

Teresa DeGagne

Caroline Hucker

Claudia Allen

Beryl Fisher

Roshni Khiantani

Diane Annis

Fran Harders

Cathy Meininger

Sonja Bennett

Julia Hammon

Susan Miller

Helena Clynick

Gloria Hasson

Staff

The Library is staffed by a team comprising four MLIS-degreed Librarians, Circulation Supervisor, Marketing and Volunteer Coordinator, IT Specialist, Adult Library Assistant, Children's Library Assistant, Administrative Assistant, and ten highly-skilled Library Associates. Staff training in August was focused on leadership development for all positions, the responsibility of all staff members for promoting circulation, and COVID-19 safety training.

Community Partners

Partnerships with community groups were strengthened by the quarantine. Being unable to meet in a physical space highlighted participating groups' commitment to finding solutions to helping the community. All partners that were scheduled for meetings or presentations worked with staff to find a way to provide virtual services. Examples of this include virtual mentoring and workshops by SCORE and virtual informational games and call-in services by Regal Medical Group. As mentioned, Mirella Acebo, a life-coach and new partner, volunteered not only to do her scheduled workshop virtually but to be our very first Facebook Live workshop. Hundreds of people from the community viewed this mental health workshop later and shared with others.

One of the partnerships that most clearly demonstrated the value of continuing services virtually was the Literazzi book club. Members were extremely hesitant to meet virtually because they felt the technology was a

barrier to many in their group. However, as Library staff continued to provide virtual meeting space and assisted members with the technology, members have become comfortable and happy with this service. The Library has always been a place of community and is now finding new ways to achieve this sense of community together with partners.

The following organizations were active partners with the Library during the 2019-2020 fiscal year:

American Suicide Prevention Foundation	Literazzi	Simi Valley Chamber of Commerce
Boys & Girls Club of Simi Valley	Los Robles Hospital	Simi Valley Community Chamber Orchestra
Busy Hands Garden Club	Monte Vista School	Simi Valley Friends of the Library
California State University, Channel Islands	Macaroni Kid	Simi Valley Police Department
City of Simi Valley Public Works	Mirella Acebo, Life Coach	Simi Valley Task Force on Homelessness
City of Simi Valley Youth Employment Services	Museum of Ventura County	Simi Valley Unified School District
Community Coalition United	National College Planning Solutions	Strathearn Historical Society
First 5 of Simi Valley/ Moorpark	Rancho Simi Recreation and Park District	Scoil Rince Daryl Rose Dance School
Foodshare	READ Ventura County Library Adult Literacy	Ventura County SCORE
Foster VC Kids	Regal Medical Group	Ventura County United Way
Artist, Esther Maron	Rose Family Mortuary	Word Financial Group
Imagymnation	Safe Kids Ventura County	
	Simi Educators Association	
	Simi Institute for Careers and Education	

Library Volunteers

Teen and adult volunteers helped keep the Library neat and clean, assisted with events and programs, provided homework assistance, shelved hold items and DVDs and helped customers with questions about Library computers and printers. The Busy Hands Garden Club tended to the Rose Garden each week, as they have done for many years. Prior to the closure in March, approximately 1,100 hours of volunteer service made the Library a more welcoming and useful space for the community. A significant accomplishment in the volunteer program was transitioning away from the paper time sheets to using a digital platform. This mainstreamed the process of tracking volunteer hours and saved countless hours of staff time, allowing staff to pull batched reports instead of tallying hours by hand every month. Volunteers commented on the ease of use, resulting in a good outcome for everyone.