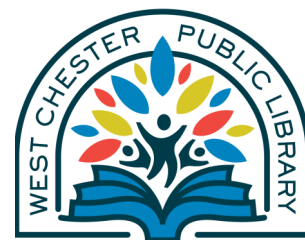




WEST CHESTER PUBLIC LIBRARY
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Annual Report—2020

2020 : Connecting in a Virtual World

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Special points of interest:

- WCPL Children's staff had virtual story times up and running by March 17, 2020, only 4 days after the pandemic shutdown started.
- The Holiday Home Tour was reimagined as the popular and very successful Holiday Door Tour.
- WCPL offered 266 programs in 2020, 210 of which were virtual, and of those, 150 were for children.

History repeated itself this year for the West Chester Public Library. In February 101 years ago, the library closed for a month. A pandemic was raging, and closing public places was one measure used to combat it. The same situation presented itself in 2020, only this time the library, along with the rest world, was closed for three months. Like everyone else, we were taken by surprise by the pandemic, which forced us to turn quickly to non-traditional ways of offering library services.

Thanks to developments in digital media and platforms, we had tools such as Zoom and Kahoot! on hand, which allowed us to serve the community despite the closure of the library building. With a few changes to communications, scheduling, and dissemination, staff demonstrated creativity in using these tools to keep library services going: story times, children's and teen programs, the weekly English Language Learner's (ELL) Conversation times, the book discussion group, and most important of all, access to ebooks. Using those existing and new tools, along with Facebook Live and Instagram stories feeds, staff was able to present a variety of programs. In addition to weekly story times, we offered STEM/STEAM programs, book-themed posts and challenges for teens, a ballroom dance class, readings by local authors, and a bi-weekly trivia night.

Keeping up with the soaring demand for ebooks and e-audiobooks was our biggest challenge, one we shared with all the libraries in the Chester County Library System. By May, demand for e-materials

had grown by some 50-60% over January-February 2020. Readers were looking for best sellers, children's books, DIY and how-to books, science fiction and fantasy, and just about anything that was available to borrow. We spent the bulk of our \$16,000 2020 e-materials budget by June.

Finally, in late June the state authorized libraries to re-open. We had our re-opening plan in place, along with plexiglass shields, hand sanitizer, masks, gloves, and disinfectant sprays and wipes. Staff learned how to manage contactless-holds scheduling and fulfillment, managed capacity counts on in-person browsing days, and kept virtual programs going. We started with limited hours and expanded to six days per week by October. With COVID infection rates on the rise in late November, we closed again to in-person visits, offering only contactless services, along with the very popular Book Bundles for children. Parents could request a Book Bundle for their child, supplying the child's age and reading interests to help guide staff in selecting a dozen

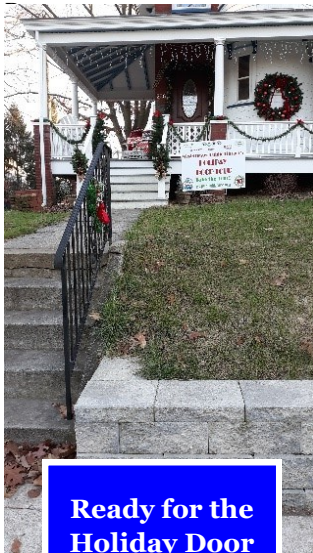
or so books for the family to pick up.

We are grateful that the library's funders and donors continued to support the library throughout the year. Donors generously gave \$72,000 to our 2020 Annual Appeal in support of WCPL's programs, services, and materials purchases. The Holiday Door Tour, our re-worked-for-the-pandemic home tour, raised more than 340 donations from people who walked (or drove) around West Chester to see the wonderful holiday displays that participating homeowners created for the tour.

In this year of financial uncertainty, the six municipalities that support the library made their full allocations, as did the county and the state. Donations and municipal and government funds, along with a fully forgiven \$77,955 Payroll Protection Program loan and fiscal vigilance, allowed the library to provide the services, materials, and programs our community needed and wanted throughout a challenging year.



Life in a Virtual World: Children's Programs



**Ready for the
Holiday Door
Tour**

"Thank you! Looking forward to seeing the beautiful doors."

"So excited to walk the borough and check out the doors! Great idea!!"

"Looking forward to the tour! Good idea for this year."

"Thank you for creating some holiday magic with this tour."

The library closed in March owing to the COVID-19 pandemic, and all in-house programs and scheduled events were canceled. Youth Services Librarian Clara Kelly and staff worked quickly and hard to reach out to families and children virtually. They sent e-newsletters promoting Libby and our online databases for children; they created youth services social media platforms for the library on Facebook (West Chester Public Library Youth Services) and Instagram (@wcpl_youth); Story Time Coordinator Treena Marvel started hosting story times on Facebook Live; and Early Literacy Specialist Meg Diskin uploaded STEAM-themed videos to the library's YouTube channel. All the while, youth services staff worked together to plan the library's Summer Reading program, which needed to be adapted to a virtual platform.

Our staff utilized many different platforms for summer programs. On Mondays, Meg Diskin continued to upload her STEAM videos to YouTube and Enya Lucas created some Lego™ Challenge videos. Crafty Tuesdays became "Take and Make Crafts," for which staff

assembled simple craft kits for families to pick up. Treena Marvel continued to host Facebook Live story times on Wednesday mornings. Clara Kelly hosted Kid's Trivia on Wednesday nights using Zoom and Kahoot!. Staff uploaded their "Tinker Day" videos to YouTube, which were then promoted on the library's social media accounts.

Because families loved the Take and Make Crafts that staff put together as part of our summer program, we continued to offer them once a month throughout the fall and winter. Clara hosted a monthly Family Trivia Night in the fall and also a Spooky Read Aloud/Book Club in October, during which a small but loyal group of families listened to and discussed the book *Small Spaces* by Katherine Arden via Zoom. Live programs on Zoom were beneficial for both children and our staff, who had been missing face-to-face interaction.

Pam Anderson, Penn Wood Elementary School librarian, contacted Clara Kelly to coordinate a virtual field trip to WCPL for grades K-5. Clara took students on a tour of the Children's Department, talked to them about getting a library

card, explained all the "cool and free things" you can get with your card (museum passes, cake pans, etc.), and emphasized our online resources, such as Libby (ebooks) and Power Library for Kids. She also read a story to the younger grades and "book talked" some new juvenile fiction books for 4th and 5th graders.

In December, when the library closed to the public again, Children's Department staff started a Book Bundle service for families based on a similar service offered by other CCLS libraries. Staff put together a selection of 10 to 12 books based on a child's reading interests as shared by their parents through an online request form. The bundles were an immediate hit—staff completed 81 requests in December.



**Meeting Miss
Treena IRL**

Teen/Tween Programs

The year started out as usual, with well-attended Teen/Tween Tuesdays in January and February, following the familiar pattern of movies, tinker days, crafts, and game days. Teen Program Coordinator Shannon Montgomery leaned into a winter theme with movie viewings like *Abominable* and *Frozen*. Game days continued to be popular, with classics such as Scrabble and Clue.

When the library closed in March, Shannon turned to virtual programming. The teen Instagram already had a strong foundation to build on, so she started creating short games via Instagram Stories for the teens to participate in over the course of 24 hours per game. These drew a lot of in-

terest, especially games involving pairing Young Adult (YA) books with pop culture items like music or emojis. Some teens reached out through messages and decided to read some of the showcased books. Shannon created Kahoot! trivia challenges for Star Wars Day and Pride month. She also shared helpful guides and resources on important topics such as white privilege, racism, sorting fact from fiction, and trustworthy sources. The major summer program was a virtual escape room, created with the assistance of the Youth Services Librarian and Assistant Director to appeal to all age groups. It was Fairy-Tale themed with math puzzles, word riddles, and encrypted messages with a cohesive storyline of escaping an evil witch.

In October, teens were challenged to submit their scariest one-sentence story, and in November and December the library offered a photo challenge for teens to send pictures on a specific theme. These were all added to Instagram to bring more direct content from the teens and showcase the little joys in our lives during these difficult times.

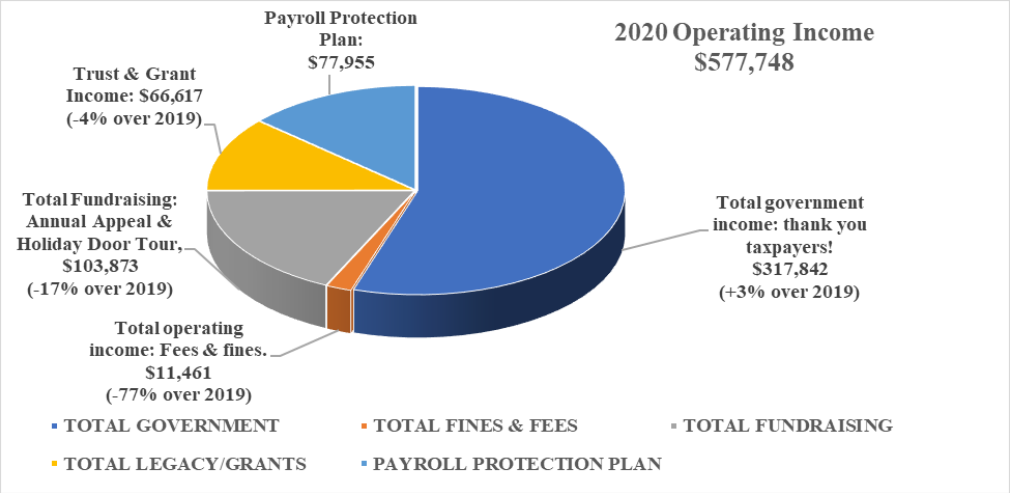
Teen Advisory Board (TAB) met in person in January and February. Due to pandemic restrictions, TAB then took a break for a few months while members adjusted to their remote-learning schedules. They started meeting again virtually in June. Many TAB members missed the library but still felt connected through virtual programs and contactless pickups.



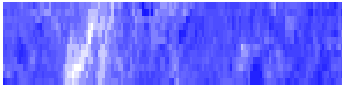
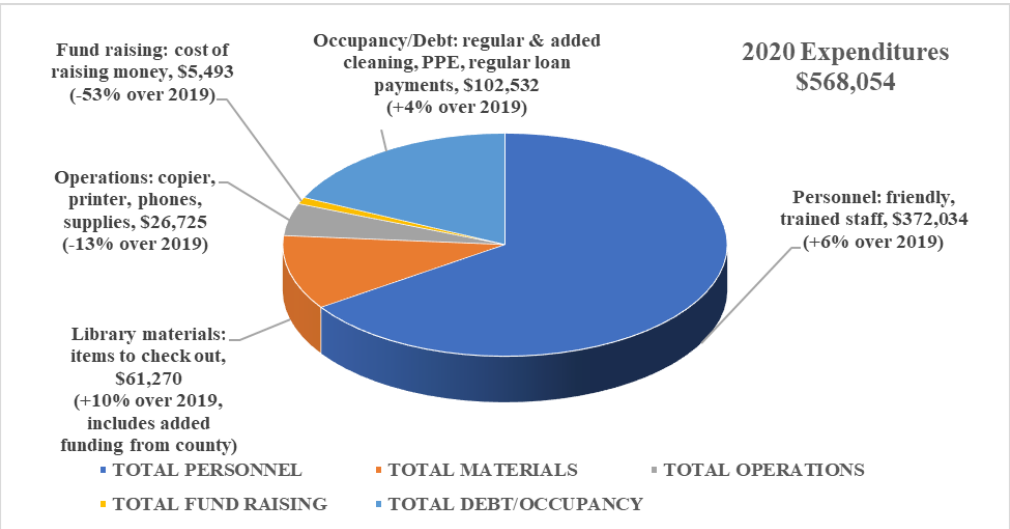
**All decked
out for the
Door Tour.**

Financials

The financial stability of the library in 2020 is a testament to the hard work of both the staff and the volunteers in keeping expenses reasonable and to the diligence of volunteers, staff, and board members who raised funds for the library.



Mayor Dianne Herrin inaugurated WCPL's StoryWalk™ "Cat's Colors" in September. The project featured pages from a picture book in WC businesses. The WC BID sponsored the project.



"And book bundles?!?!? A hit! I have several students in my class getting them and Cat has never read so much! She's LOVING Avi's Poppy series. Kudos to the youth librarians!"

"I wanted to say thank you for the book bundles. My kids have gotten several of them and have loved just about everything in them. They've exposed the kids to new and different kinds of books & kept them reading during covid. We're a family of readers and not having access to a library was detrimental to my wallet. Thank you [to] all of the library staff for your hard work and efforts."

"Your service to our community is much appreciated. During my breaks, I read and without a doubt, it is what helps me get to sleep every night. YOU ROCK!"

End-of-Year 2020 balances in special funds

Note that the funds listed below are classified for specific projects and programs.

\$111,968	Board Directed – These funds may be expended to cover special projects as voted on by the Board. A portion of this fund is set aside for author events.
\$10,301	West Chester CARES Innovation & Resiliency Fund (CCCF) to provide for additional cleaning for library through June 2021.
\$14,734	Capital Projects – These funds are earmarked for special capital projects.
\$10,064	PA Educational Improvement Tax Credit (EITC) funds to be expended for Summer Reading Challenge programs and materials for children K-3. (Report filed with PA Department of Community & Economic Development.)
\$15,906	Early Literacy Outreach funds for story time program at West Chester area pre-schools and daycare centers serving at-risk and under-served families.
\$1,231	Grant to provide materials for outreach initiative with Melton Center.

Thank you for your generous and unstinting support

\$5,000 and Above

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From a donor:

"I'm a bit hesitant to call this a 'gift', when to me, it's really a reimbursement for the library's support during a tough time. A few years ago I was in between jobs ... I spent the better part of six months looking for work. Almost every morning, I'd drive to either the Exton or West Chester library to use the internet to apply for jobs, respond to interviews, and ultimately get back on my feet ... Now that I'm in a position to pay a little back, I just wanted to chip in to help for the services I used."

e-Materials use April through July:

2019—10,439 check-outs

2020—12,692 check-outs

That's a 21.5% increase.

To help meet the demand for e-materials during the pandemic lockdown WCPL allocated \$16,000 in book-buying funds to purchase e-books and audiobooks.

[People] thought the Library was a dangerous place because of all the magical books, which was true enough, but what made it really one of the most dangerous places there could ever be was the simple fact that it was a library. – Terry Pratchett



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Examples of what your gift could provide:

\$25 — one print book

\$50 — one e-book

\$75 — one audiobook

\$100 — materials for four Tinker Days

\$500 — four STEM/coding classes for children

\$1,000 — materials and staff time for 5-week story time session for ages 0-5 years (virtual or in-person)



West Chester Public Library

415 North Church Street
West Chester, PA 19380

610-696-1721
610-696-7985, Children's Department

wcpl@ccls.org
www.wcpublib.org



Find us on :



Printed for WCPL by Chester County
Library System.

West Chester Public Library provides all community members equal access to information, ideas, and knowledge through books, programs, and other resources to support lifelong learning.

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Clara Kelly, Youth Services Librarian
Clare Quinn, Development Manager
Kelsey Bastien
Amy Billingsley
Joan Cates
Sydney Davies
Meg Diskin, Early Literacy Outreach
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Treena Marvel, Early Literacy Prog. Coord.
Wendy McSwain, Event Consultant
Elizabeth Metzker, ILL Assistant
Shannon Montgomery, Teen Prog. Coord.
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Selected statistics - 2020

Programs and Attendance	
Total number of programs	266
Virtual programs	210
Total attendance at programs	3,897
In-person visits	42,075
Contactless holds pick-ups	1,505
Borrowing	
Adult & teen books, DVDs, magazines	31,157
Children's books, DVDs, magazine	45,322
Downloadable ebooks and audiobooks	33,505
Grand Total	109,984