

Director's Report – FY18

Highlights:

- Opened Digital Media Lab
- Protecting Privacy & Confidentiality
- Full year of Bookmobile service
- Programming sets records
- Director announces retirement/search begins

It was another busy year at ICPL. Record numbers of people attended library programs, the bookmobile is now a common sight around Iowa City, and the building and web site have some new looks. Less visible achievements include revamping and improving our privacy and confidentiality policies and procedures, conducting a user survey, and keeping collections current. We are now three years into our strategic plan and staff continue to connect people with information and offer opportunities for enjoyment and personal growth; engage people in discovery, learning and community; and enrich the quality of life in Iowa City through diversity, imagination, and creativity.

Digital Media Lab

We opened the new Digital Media Lab (DML) in March following several months of construction. The space on the second floor formerly housing a computer lab/classroom with large unmovable workstations, one person per space, facing forward, was expanded and redesigned to feature primarily laptops and movable tables and chairs that can be reconfigured as needed to accommodate groups small and large, as well as individuals. The space is still used to host Drop in Tech Help, classes, and ongoing programs such as VITA and Minecraft, but the resources are now available to registered DML users most hours we are open. The project was funded with City and Foundation funds and a \$45,000 grant from the Roy J. Carver Charitable Trust.

We had 100 registered users utilizing the DML's large and hand-held scanners, large format color printers, Adobe Create Cloud Suite Software, a VHS converter, editing bays and Reason Music software to create their own digital media projects by the end of the year. We are committed to regularly seeking feedback from lab users and trying to acquire and make available the tools they need.

Privacy and Confidentiality

We believe that confidentiality of Library Records is central to intellectual freedom and directly related to the ability of citizens to use library materials and pursue information without fear of intimidation, and that privacy is essential to the exercise of free speech, free thought, and free association. Daily there are stories in the news about breaches of personal information which heighten these concerns. A review of the Confidentiality and Privacy board policy in FY17 resulted in several significant changes leading to a full review of current library practices related to user privacy and confidentiality and a FY18 goal to raise awareness of patron's privacy and confidentiality. We questioned every piece of information we ask for, how long we keep it, and why. The document detailing all of this information was updated, edited for understanding, and made accessible on the website. In addition, the website now includes the privacy policies of all third party partners who require personally identifiable information.

We routinely share reminders about privacy and confidentiality when Library Records are renewed and separately inform teens when they turn sixteen and again when they turn eighteen of their privacy options related to Library Accounts.

Customer Experience

In addition to clarifying our privacy and confidentiality practices, the website saw several significant changes this year. A new “staff picks” page was introduced in early March, replacing the former blog model. The new site is visually appealing, displaying the book covers of titles and allows staff to recommend individual titles, and to create lists of items around a common theme. Minor upgrades were also made to the mobile application.

Physical items are easier to checkout and hold (reserved items) pickup now available on the bookmobile. And, for a small fee, a patron may use the local delivery service CHOMP, to have their holds picked up at the Library and delivered to their home. A record number of holds, 193,606, indicates library users know what title they want and are asking for it specifically.

A user survey was conducted in March to gather data for updating the strategic plan which began in FY16. One important question was whether or not people wanted Saturday hours to change from 10-6 to 9-5; the answer was no. Other responses showed the top reasons people visit the library: to borrow materials, bring children, use a library computer, printer, scanner, wi-fi network, or use materials in the library. 67% of the respondents used the Library’s website in the last month, and 53% downloaded ebooks, audio books, magazines or music. We were happy more than 96% were very likely to recommend ICPL to a friend! Collections, interactions with staff, and the website all received very high rates of satisfaction.

In addition to the work in Media Lab, a back area of the Children’s Room was refurbished as a welcoming space for tweens (grades 4-6) with some new furniture, bright wallpaper, and display and storage space. This project received a head start with new carpet when sewage flooded the back area in June, 2017, but this was planned and is working well with many tween activities now taking place in the new space. When a large part of the Hazel Westgate Collection of Children’s Book Art was moved for the project it was decided some pieces needed restoration and/or reframing with archival mats. That project will be completed and featured on the Gallery Walk in October.

Keeping up with replacing and refurbishing the building and furnishings will continue to grow more costly and time-consuming. Almost all upholstered furniture from the 2004 building has now been recovered at least once, and we are beginning to recover furnishings purchased during the 2013 remodeling. Some carpet has been replaced, but an acre of carpet remains and is looking more and more worn as are many of the wooden carrels and tables.

Bookmobile

In its first full year, the new bookmobile service has been well received. More than 15,000 people visited the bookmobile and checked out 25,885 items. There are three schedule periods, roughly following the school year (September-December, January-May, and June-August) with about a one-week break between for vehicle maintenance. The routes and stops change with each period, most dramatically in the summer when after-school stops and daycare visits are replaced by locations where children will be. Summer is the only period we operate regularly on Friday, and offer a Stories in the

Park stop at Mercer, Willow Creek, and Wetherby parks on Monday, Wednesday, Friday, as well as attend the Parks & Recreation's Party in the Park events on Thursday evenings. The busiest stop was the University of Iowa Community Credit Union-Mormon Trek stop, followed closely by Lemme Elementary. Another busy stop is Breckenridge Estates in rural Johnson County, where the mission of the bookmobile is illustrated at each visit. Children in this rural area are not served by public transportation and had little access to library materials until the bookmobile rolled into their neighborhood. They now are active borrowers and participate in the Summer Reading Program.

The bookmobile also brings reserved materials to people who find it hard to get downtown to pick up items, a service that is growing in popularity. Regular stops at retirement residences and locations such as grocery stores provide convenient access for adults.

Programming

Although circulation is steady or declining in many areas, adult and children's programming saw record attendance in FY18. Children's program attendance was up more than 21%, and adult program attendance was up 8.6%. We offer something for children of all ages – literature-based traditional storytimes, programs for babies, STEAM themed programs, craft activities, and a wonderful variety of live performers. We utilized programming and displays to further the City's goal of advancing social justice and racial equity. Initiatives included planning bookmobile and daycare visits to areas with diverse populations, and delivering storytimes sharing Black History, gender equity, and LGBTQ population themes. We continued the Autism Friendly early openings on scheduled Saturday mornings. Our ambitious children's programming calendar may not be sustainable with the staffing resources we have, but it has been well received.

Several of the most popular adult programs focused on local history and genealogical resources. We were part of the first ever Archives Crawl, along with the University of Iowa Museum of Natural History, the State Historical Society of Iowa, and the UI Main Library in February. A variety of programs taught people how to use our local history and genealogical resources, and shared the Local History Project. Offering programming in the new Digital Media Lab was an opportunity for people to learn about those resources.

Collections

Although physical items far out-circulate electronic downloads (1,132,916 vs 141,500 for a grand total of 1,274,425), e-downloads grew by more than 15% at a time when fewer physical items are being checked out. Part of that growth was fueled at the end of year by the addition of the Kanopy streaming video service. Kanopy opens access to more than 30,000 independent, classic, international, foreign and documentary films. Rather than purchase each title, the Library pays per use. Cardholders are limited to eight downloads per month. It is a new pricing model for services offered to libraries and we will carefully monitor use and costs.

An initiative to digitize local newspapers was realized toward the end of the year when Advantage Companies in Cedar Rapids was hired to digitize their Iowa City newspaper holdings currently out of copyright, creating a digital archive from 1849-1923. The new archive is now available to researchers everywhere – no login ID or subscription is required. Easily searched by key word, the new resource offers a treasure trove of primary resource materials that is both fun and informative to explore.

Although our collections are one of the most visible and most used services we offer, there is little understanding outside of library staff as to what it takes to have the new titles people want in the right

formats and number of copies while maintaining a backlist of popular things people still want. The physical collection is in constant movement – in and out of the building (and the bookmobile!) until worn or out of date, then discarded as new things replace it. We receive many compliments on our collection and they are earned by the rigorous behind-the-scenes work of many staff members.

Director retires

In December, I gave notice to the Library Board of my plans to retire at the end of calendar year 2018. A Board search committee was appointed, and, with assistance from City personnel and legal staff, a consultant was hired to help with the process. I began working here in 1975, while in Library School, and became director in 1994. I have seen amazing growth and changes, but the core beliefs of supporting intellectual freedom and literacy, and providing a space for all have not changed. I am honored to have spent a career in one of the best libraries in the country. Although some question the need of the public library in today's environment, I believe the institution is more important than it has ever been, providing a free, nonjudgmental, nonpolitical, place for learning and building community. Growing up as a child in a low-income household, I know what the library meant to me and every day I see children here who I know it means the same to. I have worked hard to help make sure this Library meets the high expectations of our community. I have confidence with the continued community support and efforts of the staff, the Library Board of Trustees and the Friends Foundation Board, that will continue.

Susan Craig,
Library Director