

Annual Report July 1, 2019 - June 30, 2020

The Mission Remains, the Method May Change

Topsham Public Library Staff

Susan M. Preece,
Director

Cyndi Burne,
Assistant Director
and Teen Services

Emma J. Gibbon,
Adult Services
Librarian

Mariah Sewall,
Children's Librarian

Tami Santos,
Bookkeeper

Dale Morgan,
Tech Support

**Monique Marchilli-
Barker,**
Gallery Coordinator/
Library Aide


Annette Uschmann,
Custodian

Library Aides:
Lindsey Andelman
Jennifer Balser
Nicole Jakubowski
Julie McDuff
Linda Meadows


Topsham Public Library Hours

Monday
9 a.m. – 5 p.m.
Tuesday – Thursday,
9 a.m. – 8 p.m.
Friday,
9 a.m. – 5 p.m.
Saturday,
9 a.m. – 4 p.m.


Topsham Public Library
25 Foreside Road
Topsham, ME 04086
(207) 725-1727
topshamlibrary.org



Facebook.com/
topshampubliclibrary



@topshamlibrary



instagram.com/
topshampubliclibrary

Making It Happen

The mission remains, but the methods may change. That is certainly a lesson we all have learned this year. On March 16, we were all in the library, hosting programs, sharing materials, and providing a myriad of services, and on March 17, we were all at home, the library closed, wondering how we could remain the community center for all, when we couldn't even get in the building.

But the staff of the Topsham Public Library is a determined lot, and we knew we had to find a way. Right away we realized that we needed to keep in touch with each other and with our patrons. Enter the world of Zoom. Instead of running to each other's offices, we met as a staff weekly via Zoom to hatch a plan. Eventually we organized Zoom meetings with patrons just to compare COVID notes, talk about books, movies, music, anything to connect with each other and keep the anxiety at bay.

At the same time, in conjunction with the state library system, we reallocated our materials budget to increase the number of eBooks and audiobooks in our collection, so patrons could still access free materials while isolating at home. Across the state, over \$70,000 was added to the shared collections to bolster the increasing demand for items.

Emma, Cyndi, and Mariah researched and researched, finding factual, practical information on COVID-19, and how to deal with it. They created the Stay at Home MEGA list of online resources for adults, teens, and children which included activities, craft projects, educational resources, online courses, virtual experiences, and even more eBooks. Mariah created

video storytimes for 'her kids'. Dale created written instructions on how to access library services from computers, phones, and tablets. He offered IT help by email for those learning to use new devices.

The Friends of Topsham Public Library's annual Joy of the Lens photo exhibit was unable to go forward, in person, so Monique worked on a way to present it as a virtual art show in a virtual gallery, which highlighted each piece individually. She has continued to bring us new online exhibits every month, including one from M.S.A.D. No. 75 of amazing student art work!

Jen and Linda and Julie kept us up to date on the latest library happenings through the blog, the newsletters, and Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter. We asked the community to share their thoughts and photos which were posted to the website. We published our page in The Cryer for those without internet access and acknowledged the patronage of the many local businesses who support us.

Behind the scenes we were all training, taking online courses and brainstorming how to help us serve you better during the crisis and when we opened again. And we planned. We listened carefully to the CDC and state government leadership. We figured out how we would keep everyone safe so we could open again as soon as possible. We began to prepare. Finally, we could come back to the building, in our masks, and our newly distanced work spaces, with newly learned safety training.

We launched a flexible plan, beginning by opening the book

drops for limited times and quarantining materials until they were safe to handle. Next, we offered parking lot pick up, taking orders for materials and delivering to cars. We were thrilled to be able to provide services again and to see our library family, if only from a distance.

Then we measured and remeasured and put tape all over the floor. We made a million reminder signs, set some safety rules, and opened the doors. We began hosting outside programs and more Zoom activities. We began a summer reading program for all ages, just like always, and yet different.

At the heart of it all was our desire to continue the mission to be a community center for all, in every circumstance. The COVID challenge remains and so does our determination. We will continue the mission, changing our methods to meet this crisis, and any other that may arise. It's what we do.



Our patrons, like Diane, missed us.



Mission Statement

Topsham Public Library's mission is to connect resources, programs, and services to the community and to stimulate personal growth and enrichment.

From the Board President

by Diane Hender,
President, TPL Board of Trustees

The fiscal year covered by this Annual Report, which began July 1, 2019, and ended June 30, 2020, was one of optimism and great promise. Spearheaded by President Larry Fitch, and with the guidance of professional consultants, the Board of Trustees developed a new long-range plan for 2020 through 2025.

The purpose of this endeavor was to ensure the continued stability of the Topsham Public Library and its ability to grow and evolve to meet the needs expressed by our community. The plan focuses on three specific areas— community; financial security; and technology, and includes specific objectives and actions addressing each area, as well as assigning responsibility to the appropriate Board committee. (The LRP document is available for your reading pleasure on the TPL website.)

The plan was formally approved in January of this year and the committees began the real work in February. Then came March, and the shutdown which initiated a significant change of plan. Initially, our director and staff were forced to work from their homes while trying to provide at least some of the services we all have come to expect. An essential resource was access to a wide range of eBooks through cloudLibrary. Obviously, all live programming was cancelled, but our website offered links to interesting, educational and recreational sites researched by Emma. The annual Joy of the Lens exhibit was transformed into a virtual experience by Monique. Cyndi scoured the internet to develop Stuck at Home, a realistic alternative for the familiar Things to Do for teens and for the youngest patrons, Miss Mariah was digitally available for story time.

Topsham Public Library Board of Trustees, FY20 Members:

Diane Hender, President
Hahna Patterson, Vice-President
Irene Martin, Treasurer
Anne Macri, Secretary
Jim Demosthenes
Anne Eustis
Larry Fitch
Kelley Glidden
Helen Kincaid
Deborah O’Neil
Joe Trafton
Patricia Vaughn
Owen Yabsira, Student Member

Joining 2021
Barbara Swiderski

In addition, Linda and Julie collaborated with other staff members in updating social media and writing blog posts while all also enhanced their own skills through online courses including the mandatory OSHA safety training. Next came curbside service and, eventually, access to the building for a limited number of patrons for a limited amount of time. Both curbside service and gradually decreasing restrictions are expected to continue for some time.

Throughout, we have carefully followed the American Library Association guidelines, as well as State and local directives, for safety. Our physical facility has proved adaptable to the required modifications, and the gradual reopening allowed opportunity to assess each phase for safety before moving on.

Monthly trustee meetings provided the opportunity for us to Zoom, participate by telephone, or attend in person, suitably masked and socially distanced, once the building was opened to TPL personnel. Unfortunately, we were not able to host the annual Whitten Society meeting, this year honoring Jennifer Ecker, a dedicated volunteer and former trustee. We also were not able to appropriately acknowledge the two retiring staff members, Lynne Morgan and Helen Tomer, or the three retiring trustees, Jim Demosthenes, Anne Eustis, and Larry Fitch, each of whom has contributed much to our team. Anne, especially, will be missed. She has served on the Board of Trustees in one capacity or another for 15 years, and also has been an active member of the Friends of the Topsham Public Library.

All in all, despite the additional new challenges most not-for-profit organizations are facing, FY20 was not a bad year for TPL. We have been able to retain our staff, fulfill our commitment of service to the people of Topsham, and once again open our doors for all—just not all at once. Thank you for your understanding, patience and continuing support. May FY21 be a better year.

During this time of pandemic, OUR MISSION remains unchanged. However, our methods and procedures have changed so that we may continue to serve you in the safest way possible.

Diane Hender



The Joy of the Lens went virtual this year.



Duquette and Dancer performed in Music in March before COVID.

Long Range Plan Points the Way

One of the most important tasks that the library’s Board of Trustees has accomplished this year is the Long Range Plan. This plan provides the road map for the way forward. While this plan was finished prior to the pandemic, we realized that it still provides the “where” as in “Where are we going?” It also lays out some of the “how’s” as in “How will we get there?”

I guess you could say this is the beauty of a good plan. It is flexible about the how’s but points clearly to the where’s. There are four focus areas to our plan. They are:

- **Community Engagement and Relationships:** to increase the visibility of the Topsham Public Library in the community and foster participation by strengthening connections between the community and the library.
- **Finance and Development:** to increase the donor base, establish long-term investment revenue and assess the financial support for long-term needs of the Topsham Public Library.
- **Technology:** to keep up with changing technology and user expectations of the Topsham community.

- **Facilities:** to maintain and provide patrons and staff with an adequate and welcoming space to meet their needs and the needs of the community.

These areas will be addressed through the lens of our mission, vision, and values which are:

- **Mission:**
The Topsham Public Library connects resources, programs, and services to the community to stimulate personal growth and enrichment.
- **Vision:**
The Topsham Public Library is the access point for traditional and innovative resources to meet the informational, social, and cultural needs of an evolving community.
- **Values:**
Access, Confidentiality, Diversity, Professionalism, Education & Lifelong Learning, Democracy, Intellectual Freedom, Public Good, Preservation, and Service.

For more information about the Long Range Plan, please visit our website topshamlibrary.org or call Susan M. Preece, Director.

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New cards issued

Friends of the Topsham Public Library

By Erin Scott, President, Friends of the Topsham Public Library

Hello Friends!
As different as this year has been for all of us one thing remains the same. Every time I walk in the doors of the Topsham Public Library I am greeted with a smile and an enthusiastic hello. The library remains a familiar place in uncertain times. Things may not look exactly the same but I know that the library can remain a bright spot in my day.

I am excited to once again be writing to you as President of The Friends of The Topsham Public Library! If you are unaware of our organization, we are a group of library patrons who work together to raise money for the library. The Friends of the Library was formed by a group of people in 1998 who saw a need and decided to fill it. That’s what the Friends do. When there is a need we step up and do whatever we can to provide for the library. The funds that The Friends raise each year provide virtually all the programs that the library offers. From children’s storytimes, book groups, and summer reading programs, to the Joy of Art, Joy of the Lens, and Joy of the Pen exhibits, as well as the Music in March series. While some of the programming had to change format this year, the library still brought forth as many of them as they were able to do. Did you see the virtual Joy of the Lens or the student art exhibit? They were amazing and are still available to view on the library website!

The library depends on The Friends and we love to support our library! Typically, our large yearly fundraiser is our book sale in the fall. Unfortunately, this year we will be unable to hold this event. We are all very sad that we cannot make it work this time but we are still focused on our mission: to support programming for all! With our big fundraiser off the table your membership is more important than ever! Please consider renewing your membership to help us continue to help the library! Besides providing a much needed donation, being a member will mean you will have access to quarterly newsletters with updates about things that are going on at the library.

Volunteers Make a Difference

You don’t know what you’ve got ‘til it’s gone. Remember that oldie but goodie? It isn’t exactly true. We have always appreciated those patrons who took time from their own lives to help the library. But now that we are back from our COVID 19 closure, we are really aware of all the hours our volunteers put in to help keep the library running smoothly.

In FY20, numerous helpers busily worked to serve our community center for all. Whether shelving books or reading shelves, making copies or labels, straightening magazines, pulling or unpacking interlibrary loans, helping with genealogy or running a book club, they extended the capabilities of the library to meet the needs of our patrons, and they were still answering that call right up until we closed down in response to the virus.

We are very grateful for their commitment to our mission and their willingness to travel with us until it was no longer possible. To all

The Friends have also opened a CLYNK account so be sure to pick up a green bag at the circulation desk!

The Topsham Public Library is a wonderful place with amazing staff and volunteers. Please consider joining us in helping provide the best programming we can to the patrons of Topsham and surrounding towns!



The Joy of Art is one of the Friends signature programs.

Thanks to the Business Sponsors of the Friends of Topsham Public Library

Level II (\$125)

Androscoggin Animal Hospital
The Birth Center at Northern Sun
Black Lantern Bed & Breakfast
Brunswick Business Center
The Highlands
Just Write Books LLC
Keith Spiro Media
Mainely Organized
Northern Sun Family Health Care
Seaview Accounting & Consulting, Inc.
Smith & Associates, CPA
Topsham Garden Club

Level I (\$75)

Midcoast Senior College
Norway Savings Bank
Rebecca Monks Reiki

The Friends of the Library was formed by a group of people in 1998 who saw a need and decided to fill it. That’s what the Friends do. When there is a need we step up and do whatever we can to provide for the library.

Erin Scott

Friends Signature Programs

The Friends host several signature programs and events:

- Book Sale
- Joy of Series
- Music in March
- Museum Passes
- Books on Wheels
- Big Truck Day
- Annual Fishing Rally
- Summer reading for children, teens, and adults

Join the Friends of Topsham Public Library:
Annual membership runs July 1 through June 30 the following year.

- Join online: friendstopshamlibrary.org
- Membership levels:
 - ❖ Individual = \$15
 - ❖ Senior (60+) = \$12
 - ❖ Family = \$25



Barbara shelves books, one of the most time consuming volunteer jobs.

72 Volunteers gave their time in FY20
Providing 49 hours of service per week,
Totaling \$69,251 in monetary value.

Show Me the Money!

By Susan Preece, Director,
Topsham Public Library

Every year our finances are audited. This guarantees that you know what we are doing with the sources of income that you provide. As you know by now, we have an agreement with the Town of Topsham that 85% of our budget will come from taxation through the Town Meeting budget process.

That leaves 15% for us to fundraise. The Friends of Topsham Public Library provide all the resources for library programming. The Joy of the Pen, the Joy of Art, and the Joy of the Lens, Summer Reading prizes, Music in March concerts, and much more are paid for by the Friends membership and Book Sale dollars.

The Board of Trustees send out an Annual

Appeal letter, usually in November to encourage additional support for library materials. The Business Support Program made up of local businesses provide for our technology needs, membership in the Minerva Consortium and van delivery for interlibrary loans. The Whitten Society, a dedicated group of donors, provide \$120 or more annually.

Whenever possible, we try to find grants or other resources to help defray the cost of library service. This year, the ALA-Google Libraries Build Business grant will allow us to provide additional services for small business owners, entrepreneurs, and job seekers.

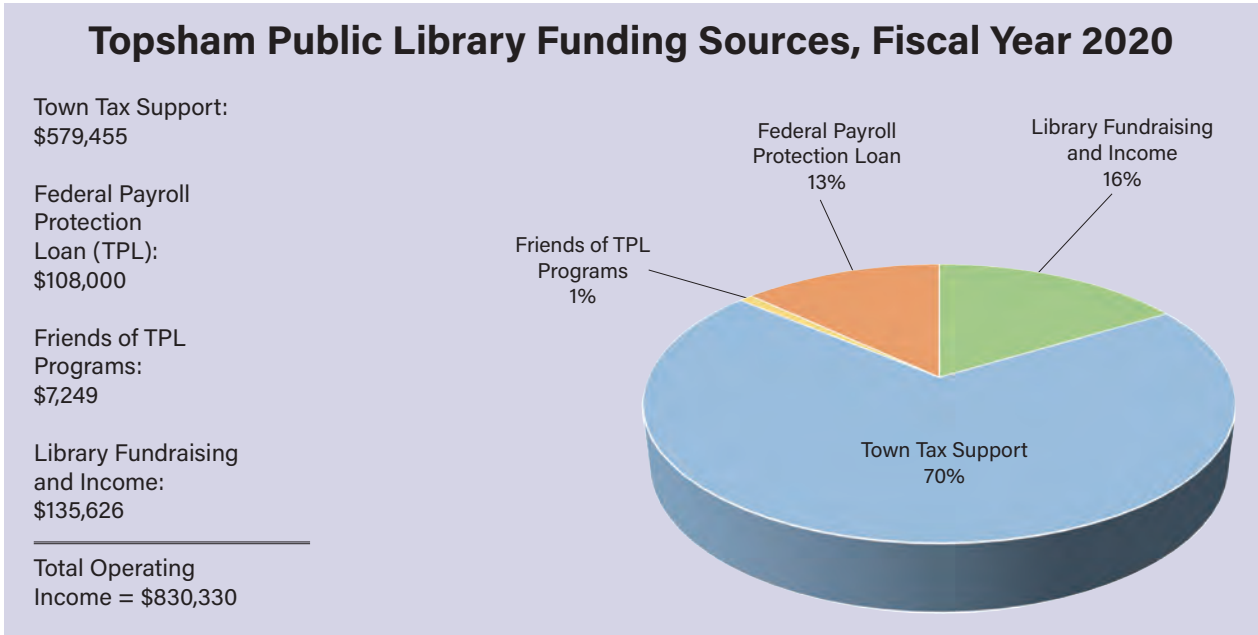
This spring, we were fortunate to be one of the nonprofit organizations to receive a loan from the Small Business Association under the PPP program. This \$108,000 forgivable loan allowed us to keep our employees paid and doors open as much as we were safely able to.

We have also provided \$20,000 to open the library on Mondays through the generous Janice Solomon bequest. We knew that this would be something she would want to support.

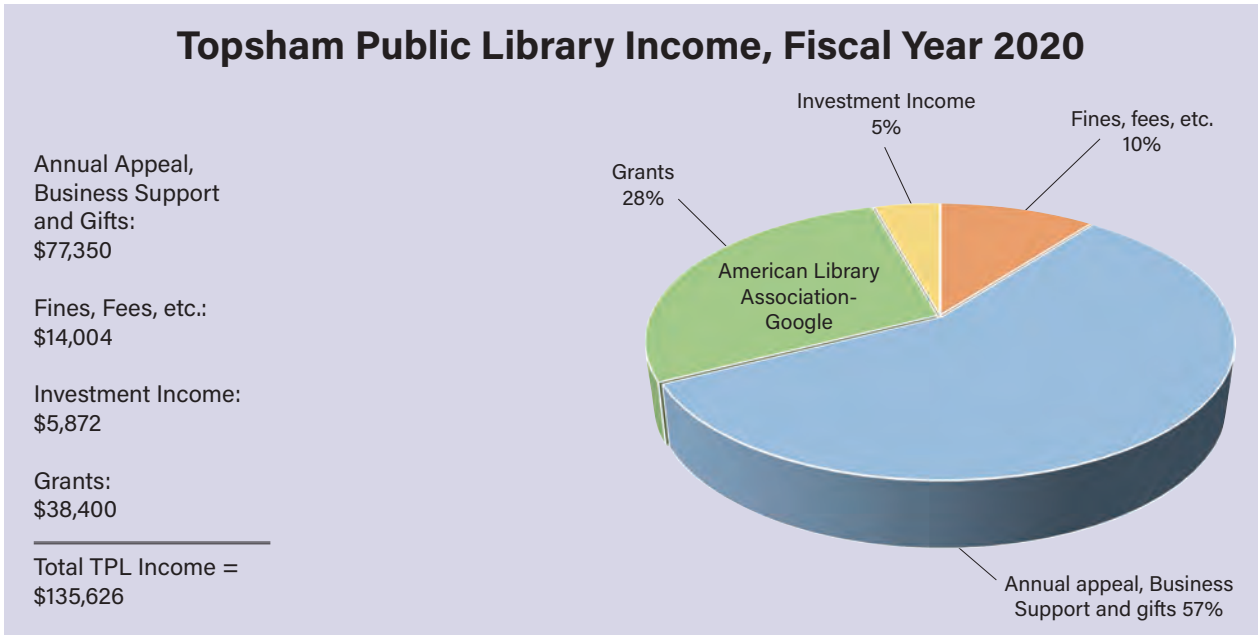
All of these sources of income make up the financial backbone of the library, which is overseen by the library’s own Finance Committee and the library Board of Trustees.

In addition, we report at least twice annually to the Board of Selectmen and the Town Finance Committee. In the charts shown here, you will find a representation of all the pieces of our pie.

While sometimes a little complicated, we think that this information is essential for your understanding of how our library works. We are happy to answer any questions that you might have about our budget, finances, and investments. We all want to keep the library as financially healthy as it is physically healthy.



\$1 = \$22.17
Each tax dollar given to the library creates \$22.17 of value to the community based on the Maine State Library Use Value Calculation

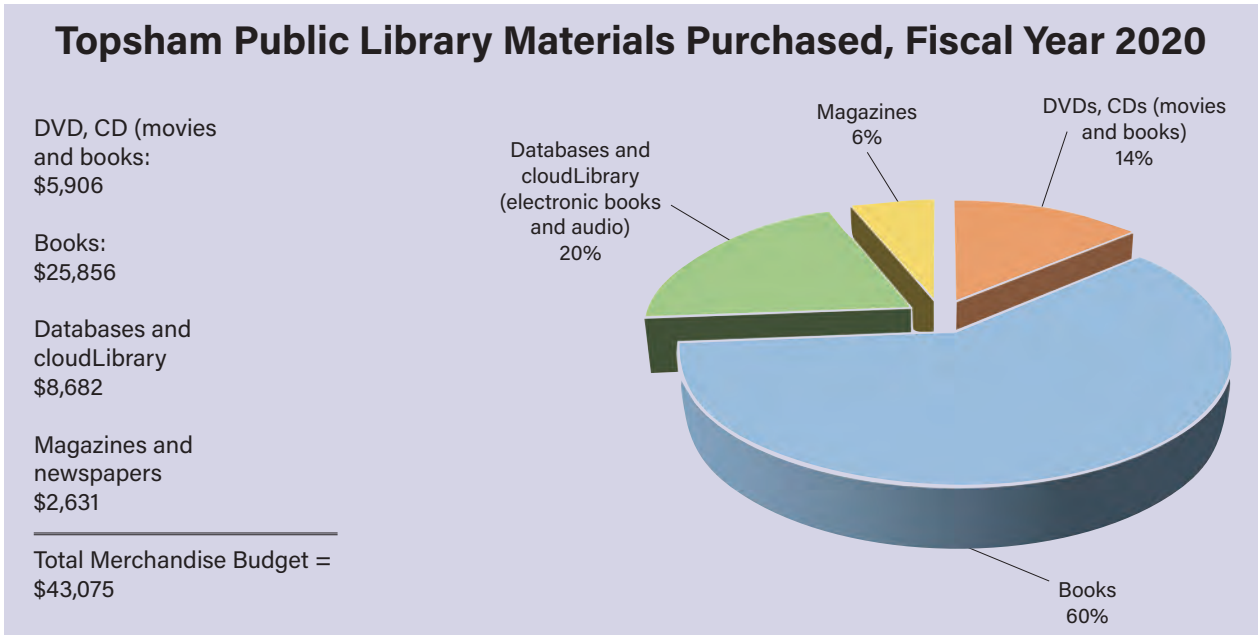


42,726 Patron visits in FY20

Number of Wi-Fi users in FY20 **8,670**

146 Reference questions asked per week

85,819
The NUMBER of books, audio, movies, and online materials checked out in FY20



The number of cloudLibrary items checked out (eBooks and eAudiobooks) rose 120% between June 2019 (372) and June 2020 (818)



Recently, Topsham Public Library was awarded a Libraries Build Business grant, an initiative of the American Library Association funded by Google, to build capacity and expand our programming to small businesses and entrepreneurs.

Grants are one of the tools available to organizations like ours to help support our services. Grants are usually sponsored by other charitable groups and individuals and sometimes by governments or businesses. There is an application process and deadlines to meet. At one time, grants were very broad in what an applicant could do with the money they received; however, grants have become more focused and competitive. Organizations who receive funds must use them in accordance with

the guidelines of the grant and provide documentation and reports to the grantor.

Through the Libraries Build Business grant, we received \$38,200, which will be used to support our ongoing outreach to small businesses, entrepreneurs, and job-seekers. Some of the funds will be used to purchase new computers and cover space costs. Connecting people is what libraries do. Library staff will receive training to connect individuals with the best organizations that fit their needs. With the help of our established community partners, Southern Midcoast Maine Chamber, Topsham Development, Inc., New Ventures Maine, and Maine Career Center, our goal is to help create a blueprint for our library and, hopefully, others across the country, to provide resources and tools to support our community's economic vitality.

Not only does this grant help us here in Topsham, but the 13 libraries that received this award are also working together to create a playbook for any library in the nation that would like to build business. If you are interested in more information or want to stay up on the developments, check our webpage: topshamlibrary.org/libraries-build-business.



Susan, Dale, and Lindsey set up the new Employment Center thanks to Google.



The library provides space for small businesses to meet and network.

Business Supporters – Partners in the Community

To all the local businesses that support our mission, THANK YOU!

Visionary Champions – \$5,000+



Mission Champions – \$3,000-\$4,999



Community Champions – \$1,000-2,999





Business Champions – \$500-\$999

Bath Savings Institution
Southern Midcoast Maine Chamber
Sweetfern Garden Design

Adult Services in the Time of COVID

By Emma J. Gibbon, Adult Services Librarian

What does a library do when a pandemic sweeps the world and the way that we have always done things becomes the way in which we cannot do things? The library regroups, it considers and reflects, it drills down on its mission and finds new ways to do things, but more than anything, it does what it always does—responds to the needs and wishes of its patrons and community. When those needs and wishes change, the library changes the way it does things in response. The mission doesn’t change but the methods do.

What has that looked like in adult services at the Topsham Public Library? The first was the quick immediate response when no one (not even us) could go back into the library. Our priorities were to find the best way to communicate with all of you, provide you with the information you needed, and make sure you had something to read! So, we turned to our regular channels: The Cryer, our email list, the website, and social media. We created the Stay-at-Home Mega List on the website that featured information on the pandemic and ways to keep you entertained, educated, and just plain old occupied! We scoured the web for interesting articles, virtual tours, courses, classes, books, livestreams, and much, much more, and we bought more titles for you to read in the cloudLibrary.

In quarantine, we sent messages back and forth, shared photos, and talked about what you missed the most about the library and the services we provide. Parking lot pick up made it very clear—you missed books, you wanted physical books that you could pick up and read. That has been our priority, getting the books to you, first through parking lot pick up, then through limited opening, and now with the interlibrary loan system up and working again. Having to quarantine items has slowed down the process and many of you have had to contend with our self-checkout scanners but it is satisfying to be able to get those books to you again.

So, what’s in the future? Again, we will reflect and respond to the needs and wishes of you, our patrons and community. We’re seeing that your reading habits have changed during this time of uncertainty and anxiety. We’ll still make sure your favorites are in stock, but we’re mindful, as always, of providing the materials you want and need. We’ve taken our first tentative steps in programming, both outside and online, and will continue to monitor the situation in a world where people miss human contact but are completely “Zoomed” out at the same time. We’ll keep evolving, stay flexible, and get ready for what the future brings.

Saying Goodbye...and Thank You

Two of our key staff members retired on June 30. Helen Tomer worked at the Topsham Public Library for 24 years! She worked in all iterations of the library from “the little house” on Pleasant St. to the interim location at the Navy Annex and finally, landing with us at 25 Foreside Road. Helen is a cataloger whose exacting work has enabled access to information across the state. Cataloging is an art and a science. It has been described as nailing jelly to a tree. Nobody understands the nuances better than Helen.

She has worked in all areas of the library from the check-out desk, training volunteers, keeping track of statistics and providing great book and movie suggestions for the collection and for individuals looking for something new. Helen is also a horror fiction lover. Who knew that our sweet little Jersey girl had this hidden obsession? In Helen’s honor, the library’s horror collection will now be designated the Helen Tomer Horror Collection.

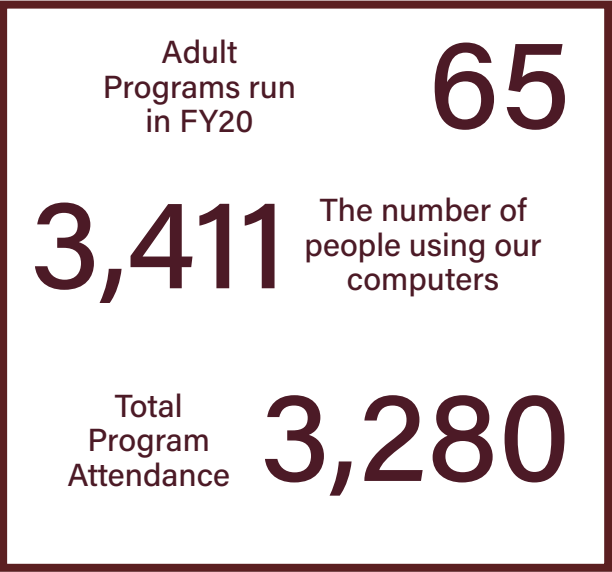
Lynne Morgan, who has been with us for 17 years has also retired. Lynne began working for us as a volunteer. She has most recently been our Circulation Supervisor, leading our amazing public services staff. Like Helen, she has worked in many areas of the library from the check-out desk to being a part of the Library Sleepovers, assisting with the Family Place programs with Mariah, to acting as the Volunteer Coordinator and cataloging children’s books and so much more.

Lynne’s calming and caring presence has been felt by patrons and staff alike.

41 years combined service to our patrons!



Helen Tomer



Maine InfoNet added more than 3,000 items in April and May to cloudLibrary.

TPL ordered 81 additional items between March 17 and June 30.

Her “can do” attitude has helped us weather many a storm, large and small! We are happy that Lynne is still willing to work as a substitute Library Aide when needed so we can pretend that she is not “really” retired!

We are grateful for your service, Helen and Lynne, and all you have done to make the library a real community center.

Our best wishes and fond memories go with you!



Lynne Morgan