

## Presentation to Council

The staff of the Fort Frances Public Library Technology Centre is determined to ensure that the library remains a dynamic community institution even during a global pandemic. After the library closed to the public, the staff began working from home and engaged in a wide variety of activities that will put us in a good position to pick up where we left off when we once again open our doors to the public.

In the meantime, the staff has engaged in many activities which will help us attain this goal.

An inventory of the entire collection was completed by Duane Hicks who joined our staff just days before the closure. On the days that Duane was not in the library working on the inventory, he was part of our new social media team. Social media postings to advertise our virtual collection and online resources was the entire focus of the early part of the COVID-19 shutdown. Due to the efforts of the entire social media team, we gained 157 new Facebook followers, resurrected our Instagram and boosted our followers of both Instagram and Twitter.

Our Children's Services Clerk, Samantha Manty, moved Story Time online to Facebook. Always one of our most popular programs, our online version reached new heights with an amazing 4,700 views for the dragon-themed storytime. Of the 10 weekly Story Time segments Sam posted online, the lowest number of views was a respectable 554. Before the segments could be filmed, permission to recreate each author's work had to be sought--a difficult task which involved tracking down publishers and/or authors to get permission and then waiting for a positive response. Plans for 20 future Story Times are now complete and it gave Sam some time to research what other libraries are doing both during and post COVID. Due to the lack of permissions from authors and publishers, Story Time has had to move to a closed Facebook group. Sam, Duane and I also worked with Borderland Pride to bring three Drag Story Time segments to our online audience.

Sam met virtually with the Baby Time moms on a regular basis. This is an important community program the library hosts which gives new mothers the opportunity to meet for mutual support and swap ideas. Having the library act as a catalyst for such programs is even more important when the public is mandated to stay home and interact with immediate family only.

Since we did not know how long the shutdown would last, both Sam and I moved ahead with our plans for summer programming. Sam planned eight weeks of daily summer programming for kids aged 0-12 and programs for teens up to age 16. The annual Teddy Bear Picnic was planned as well, which meant remaining in contact with our partners and, unfortunately, weeks later having to cancel. When the deadline for the lockdown kept getting pushed back, I was asked to re-imagine how our summer programs would work if the province decided that nobody would be allowed in the library for the rest of the summer.

Nick Donaldson, who has taken over from Nadine Cousineau as the Adult Services Clerk, was also part of the social media team. Nick is working on his Library Technician Diploma at Conestoga College so he finished off the semester he was enrolled in and spent time getting up to speed with his new duties now that Nadine is on mat leave. There was much to learn and transition didn't quite happen as planned due to COVID. The Adult Services Clerk is responsible for keeping track of our relationship with our vendors and the library pools we participate in (for large print and book club sets), and must be knowledgeable about our collection and ordering procedures of the vendors in order to fulfill our collection development goals. I have asked him to become our in-house expert on CELA (Centre for Equitable Library Access) as well.

As the newest members of the library team, both Duane and Nick spent time learning as much as they could about the library through study of our policies, procedures, online resources, and collections. Learn HQ is an online learning resource sustained by Southern Ontario Library Service (SOLS), Ontario Library Service North (OLS-N), and the Ontario Library Association (OLA), was accessed by all members of staff for training as well as access to HR Downloads through the Town of Fort Frances. Everyone who needed it obtained an AODA certificate, which puts us in good stead for the library's AODA audit in January. I sent the entire staff multiple links to resources related to COVID-19 and library programming, and had staff investigate the viability of replacing the online databases with an online learning system through LinkedIn. Staff members were issued temporary access to evaluate the courses such as EXCEL, various programming languages, and photography to name just a few of the hundreds of online courses, to decide if it is a resource the library should offer our patrons.

All the staff took turns replying to patron inquiries through the Gmail account, on Facebook, or over the phone. I talked many patrons through downloading our eBook and audiobook-borrowing app, Libby, on a variety of phones and tablets. Our online stats for eBooks from March to June increased an average of 80 percent.

Carolyn Stang came to the library once a week to keep the library accounts in order and to see that the bills were paid. Carolyn also took advantage of the fact that people were home due to the lockdown and was able to track down many overdue materials from before the closure. Like everyone else, Carolyn participated in some long overdue training on the aforementioned resources and also went to Walmart to purchase hard-to-find COVID-19 PPE supplies and cleaning materials. Likely due to COVID 19, we were receiving duplicates of magazines and Carolyn was able to get through to the subscription agencies and get it sorted out as well as the annual tally of Friends of the Library expenses needed for their tax return.

As our IT Coordinator, Jeremy Gruttner was able to access all the library systems from home and was therefore able to support all staff who needed to connect to email accounts and other library software by re-imaging and setup of a VPN on library PCs for staff to take home. As well as the training that all the staff engaged in, Jeremy replaced the library firewall, installed and migrated a new inventory system and researched, purchased, and migrated all library systems to a new server. This involved attending more online presentations and the production of proposals and reports. Jeremy was available for more complex IT support for patrons as well. Our technology plan was updated by Jeremy and we have the fun of a new video game system to look forward to in the library when we re-open.

We have three summer students, hired through grants applied for in January, who are also participating in our constant outreach to the community through our YouTube channel. The library's YouTube channel has been revived and they have plans for many more videos to come.

I've also added another path to access the community. We will be launching an e-newsletter in the coming weeks through Mail Chimp. Even though this is being done electronically, we are ensuring we reach out to every segment of the community and have started promoting the e-newsletter both online via social media and via posters and quarter-page flyers inserted into loaned out books. Visit our website to subscribe.

I'm moving towards opening very cautiously. This has been a very stressful time on everyone and in the coming days I'll be meeting with library staff to decide when and how we open the doors again.

Curbside delivery began on May 11 and since that time we have heard many times over, how much the community has missed having a library as a place to meet. Our Fireside Knitters are now meeting in the Shaw room every second week and I'm relieved to see patrons in the library once again--even at a distance of six feet.