

Director's Report

Prepared by Donita Ward: December 29, 2023

Attachments: posted to meeting page of website for review

- Statistics and Digital Statistics
- Balance Sheet
- Profit and Loss Report
- Minutes from October meeting

Budget Adjustment Requests and Financial Items for Approval:

None at this time

Finance & Administration

Sales Tax income is strong. We brought in just over \$2M last year, which indicates our 2024 estimated income will not be a budgeting problem. Extra funds have been set aside for renovation projects.

The annual election was complete and costs came in as expected, though we won't have a final billing until early spring as the county has to do that work. Results are available on the website, including our canvass meeting reports. Abbie, Jane and I met on November 16th to canvass and accept the county's election results.

There are no interesting updates for legislation or the Special Purpose District Coalition. The next meeting of the Library Districts Discussion Group will be on January 26th at the Lake Travis Community Library in Lakeway.

We were able to close the books and most purchase orders at calendar year end, which minimizes the journal entries to perform for the annual Audit. We have a checklist from the auditor and will collect the necessary reports and information over the next two months. The state library's required annual report portal should open later in January for us to start gathering that data as well. Other reports coming soon include the comptroller's debt transparency report.

Operations

Circulation in 2023 was 188821 items, up from 172392 last year. Of that amount, digital circulation was 30443 (just over 16%) and physical circulation was the remaining 158379. Digital borrowing has been steadily increasing over the last quarter of 2023, especially Mango and Libby. Hoopla use peaked in November. Weeding continues and 2024 will have a big purge of the youth collection.

Average monthly door count in 2023 was 5859, up from 4942 in 2022 and 1662 in 2021. To compare, we peaked at 9190 in 2017 and were at 8688 in 2018. I don't think physical visits to the building will hit those crazy high numbers again, as recent years have shown a change in patterns for people and they just don't go out as much as

they used to. Use of our desktop computers is averaging 413 per month, up from 342 per month in 2022 but nowhere near our 1217 per month from 2019. Wireless users, however, are at 441 per month in 2023 and peaked at 185 per month pre-pandemic, so those users who come in to work on a computer are still using our WiFi, but primarily bringing their own devices to work from.

Inventory from October was rather straightforward as we scanned the adult nonfiction collections, including cookbooks, biographies, magazines, and reference items. We were able to locate all but 44 of the 9114 items, which is a loss rate of just less than half of a percent. The inventory scheduled for January 25th is our trickiest of the year when we scan all the media.

We are making two big program changes in reflection of patron usage and cost per experience. We are discontinuing the scheduled Open LAB hours in favor of additional guided classes and on-demand equipment usage. We are also switching from a monthly determined computer class to one-on-one workshops.

Our Open Craft Area hours are costing over \$40 per person per visit to keep the building staffed separately. We are switching that to an appointment system using the Quiet Reading Room. That means that people will have access more than the current 6 hours per week, but we don't need to put an expensive manager over in the second building to essentially babysit an often empty room. It also enables us to duplicate the popular Wednesday night DIY programs on Sundays. Those Wednesday evening programs are often sold out with people unable to attend due to space and supply constraints. Offering a repeat on Sunday afternoons will also open them to the adults who do not enjoy late evening activities.

We are discontinuing the scheduled monthly computer classes, as those have had attendance averages of less than 1 per month. We are putting together a brochure of one-on-one workshop topics for people who need help. This will allow folks to schedule a time that works for them for the topic they specifically want. I hope that by making these services available as needed, we will remove barriers for patrons while minimizing our lost costs for staffing unused services. I've already spoken to patrons who are very excited to get personalized training as needed instead of waiting for the monthly classes to be offered.

Internal Affairs

All annual reviews, goal setting, raises, and bonuses were done in November. Each employee has 2024 goals to work towards. The new pay rates and withholding information (increased cost of insurance, specifically) have been entered into the payroll system for processing.

I attended two local conferences at the end of 2023. Library Journal had a Director Summit in Houston. The summit itself was on a heavy WBCL day with little of direct interest, so I could not participate, but there was a preconference on safety that I attended and it had some tools and processes that can be put into play here, especially

as we move towards updating the facility. I helped plan and deliver the TxLA District 3 conference at APL downtown in November as well, which was useful primarily for networking and poking around the APL building to see what works and what the staff/patrons avoid using.

The Library Districts Discussion Group is a semi-annual meeting of all the library districts in Texas to discuss issues specific to library districts as opposed to other special purpose districts (like a MUD) or other libraries (city, college, etc). We meet in person in January and remotely in August. The January meeting will be at the Lake Travis Community Library on Friday, January 26. We'll discuss any legislative updates that pertain to SPDs and what it means to be a library district. There are several (7?) new directors in Library Districts since 2020, so going over the basics is important to keep us all compliant.

On the topic of compliance, I will be attending the Texas Workforce Commission's one-day-intensive workshop on employment practices and legal issues in the state. That meeting is in Mesquite on February 2nd.

There are several other valuable conferences in 2024 that I am considering, time and budget allowing. The Public Library Association (a branch of the American Library Association) conference is in April in Ohio. The Texas Library Association will meet in San Antonio in April. The full ALA conference will be in July in California, but I don't know that it would be as valuable. The Association of Small and Rural Libraries, which always has relevant information, will meet in September in Massachusetts.

The Association of Bookmobile and Outreach Services generally meets in October, but has not announced for 2024. I've not attended this one in the past as we don't really need a bookmobile, but it might be worthwhile as subdivisions are popping up in district so quickly. A travelling presence could be valuable going forward, if not for material circulation, perhaps for programming or LAB.

Benefits enrollments were completed during our Open Enrollment window in November. All employees gave me the information necessary to enroll or deny coverage and the annual identification cards were sent before year end.

James Iserhardt left library employment the week before Thanksgiving. Scheduling interviews and such was difficult with holidays, but we found an amazing new employee to work weekends. Please welcome Marissa Salazar to the team when you are next here on a Saturday or Sunday. This fluent Spanish speaker comes to us from a museum background and lives right here in the neighborhood.

Volunteer hours fell in the last quarter as people have busier schedules (holidays) and days just feel shorter when it gets dark. The winter volunteer appreciation party was hosted by Johnny Beans with 15 people enjoying their specialty warm drinks and activities. Overall, the number of volunteer hours in 2023 were lower than 2022, but higher than 2021 or 2020.

Technology

Computers are working reasonably well. We have decided that, as patron machines die, we will simply remove alternate desktops and leave spaces. Use of patron desktops is far less than would justify the number we currently have on the floor. Since making that decision, none of them have seriously malfunctioned.

We got a quote for a new CBA machine to take money and credit cards at our document station. The machine would be ~\$6K. In theory, it would allow people to pay library fines as well as printing costs. Unfortunately, when I went to poke at machines in situ at some other libraries, I did not hear good things. The amount we collect for document services and fines would take absolute ages to recoup if the machine worked seamlessly, which is not likely based on what I saw. We will continue to look for a good solution.

Facilities

Building maintenance and repairs are on target. Power washing was finally completed last month, which brought us to the last tick-box on our annual building maintenance checklist. We are currently in a maintenance pattern waiting to determine renovation plans before making big changes. No plans would have affected the yards, though, so we added two new front yard toys for the preschool set. There is a rain wheel and a telescope. They are loved.

We ordered more bulbs and ballasts for the lighting over adult fiction and YA. Those fixtures are outdated and will be replaced when we do renovations, but enough lamps were burned out that it is affecting overall function of the areas. The electrician will install those ballasts and bulbs during the January inventory.

Programs & Outreach

Children's program attendance went down in October, up in November and back down again in December. Through the waves, we are still averaging good numbers, with crazy high attendance for our youngest programs and trending downward as the kids get older. This is normal. Polar Express was our big program and that had over 100 people in attendance. Next year, we plan to split the holiday programming over two events.

Young Rembrandts has had declining success through the last few months, so we are replacing it with kids' yoga in the time slot. We are switching back from the kids' afterschool crafting to writing club, which had steady participation earlier in the fall. Rotating the elementary age programming seems to keep the kids interested. STEAM Lab had decreasing attendance last quarter, possibly as the offerings were getting stale. We purchased some new games and equipment (such as a laser maze and additional snap circuits) to revitalize the group.

Teens had higher attendance at MarioKart than After Dark, which was a surprise. We hope to continue the gaming programs for that age. Teens also had a good turnout for Pumpkin Painting last quarter and the TLC group is maintaining decent membership.

First Friday programs remain popular, with 38 people at Birds of Prey, 44 people at Candle Making and 46 at the Acapella Winter Concert. January's program will be a family Shrinky Dink craft.

Adults love casual crafting at the library. Door signs, paint & pour, and programs like Bad Art night have wonderful attendance, usually 35+. Passive programming like Travelling Tea and Spice of the Month Club keep a full roster. Meditation and yoga have smaller attendance, generally between 12 and 20, but are still strong programs.

Very Brief and unofficial notes about renovation

We are now being told that none of the exterior walls can be removed at all. Not only are they load bearing, but the construction drawing show that any changes could bring down the entire building. That means we can enclose the sidewalks, but we cannot use that space to make our current facilities larger. Since this is different than we were originally quoted, the committee has determined that we need a separate outside expert opinion. I am looking for a disinterested structural engineer to give another report.

It's important to remember that we already got community input and we know the neighborhood's priorities on this project. The five options that received the most votes are a quiet reading room, study booths or pods, a themed children's area, reading niches, and a gaming/coding space for teens.

If this is the case, there are three options. These costs are very broad estimates, not firm bids or quotes.

- 1- \$5.7 million dollars to enclose some of the sidewalks as storage and refurbish the existing floorplan inside with new furniture and technology.
- 2- \$20 million to knock down the exterior walls and capture the space. A loan of that magnitude would have a payment over \$126K per month, which would be more than half of our income and would prevent programming and materials acquisition.
- 3- \$2.5+ million to do the original small plan which involves:
 - a. Moving the wall of the children's area out to expand that space
 - b. Enclose a YA space with glass to allow for programming, coding space, and collaborative areas for teens
 - c. Turning the director's office into 2 separate study rooms (move director to the room behind)
 - d. Take out the unused kitchen in the meeting building and expand the large room to accommodate more people
 - e. Enclose the breezeway as a lobby and put in café seating.
 - f. Update all the lighting and furnishings throughout to include lower shelving on casters, a themed youth area, reading niches, and study booths.

** possibly add a quiet reading room along the back sidewalk

** possibly add a teen study room next to that