



Obviously a big part of the activity of the last month has been related to coronavirus/COVID-19. Please see my report dedicated to this topic in the discussion agenda, and of course our coronavirus informational page: [www.BranchDistrictLibrary.org/coronavirus](http://www.BranchDistrictLibrary.org/coronavirus).

The new event guides have been a big hit, and they look amazing. Many thanks to all the staff who participate in getting this ready, and to Kimberly for coordinating all of it. It is unfortunate that we are canceling programs right now, but we have a solid framework in place for continuing this high quality as things get back to normal. We will try to reschedule as many programs as possible.

Many staff have attended training in the last month: the Public Library Association conference, a youth services conference at Woodlands, millage campaign training, and more. This will be it for a while as most conferences and trainings are being canceled, and BDL won't be sending staff even if the events are not canceled.

In IT land at BDL, the coronavirus outbreak in China slowed down delivery of the equipment we ordered in January. I'm expecting the desktop computers to finally be delivered Monday. We also had a hardware failure on the network router at the Coldwater Branch. A temporary spare was quickly activated and is doing ok until I can get the replacement installed, hopefully by the end of next week.

Submitted by John Rucker



- Attended Coffee with a Cop at Blue Hat Coffee where representatives from the Coldwater Police department were available for conversation. It was a great opportunity to talk to our “neighbors” and chat about how things were going.
- Worked the circulation desk at our Quincy and Coldwater Branches. I really enjoyed seeing the children attend story time at the Quincy Branch and how excited they were to get new books to take home and listen to a story. At the Coldwater Branch I worked the Friday night close shift and was very happy to see the building being used for studying, computers, picking up books or movies, and other activities during the new for 2020, extended hours until 7pm on Friday.
- Participated in the county wide “United We Read” event coordinated by the Branch County United Way. This event is held annually during March is Reading Month. There were a total of 163 readers who read to every pre-school through 5th grade classroom in the county. I was lucky to read to a great group of 4 year olds at Lincoln Elementary School in Coldwater.
- Our Sherwood clerk, Maria Piper, suggested that the BDL maintain emergency contact forms for all employees so we would be able to contact someone on their behalf, if needed. It is embarrassing to admit that we didn’t have this form already in place but taking her great suggestion, we now have a form that all staff are completing. Supervisors will have a copy and a second copy will be saved in the employee’s files.
- We have added a third notary on staff, Ben Lyon who is a Coldwater clerk that primarily works in the evening. This will compliment our other Coldwater clerk who works during traditional business hours. Notary services are provide for free to the public and continue to be a popular service we provide. We are waiting for confirmation from the state for another notary at our Sherwood Branch.
- Attend a workshop from the Library of Michigan titled, *Millage Campaigns: the Nuts and Bolts*. It focused on marketing strategies, legal issues surrounding the millage, and how to win a millage campaign. A panel of library directors were on hand who had recently gone through campaigns, some successful and some not, to provide practical advice. This was important since the BDL will be looking again at a campaign in 2021. The best advice was to start now in terms of talking about the library to everyone and focusing on the library’s success before the campaigning has to start.

Now on to the 2020 Public Library Association (PLA) conference that was held in Nashville, February 26-29! For this conference, the focus was on meeting vendors, attending workshops pertaining to decreasing barriers to library use and increasing circulation, and getting as many as free books as possible!



- Vendor visits included Tech Logic and Envisionware to learn about RFID, Local Hop and Communico who offer cloud based library services including event calendar management, and Beanstack who is an online reading tracking

program. All of these visits were great and I came back to an overwhelming inbox of sales people to talk to!

- Workshops attended were:
  - *Decreasing Barriers to Library Use*: This session looked at common barriers including unnecessary or restrictive policies, difficulties of accessing library facilities, lack of service awareness, and insufficient literacies. It provided ways to combat the impact of these barriers by reviewing and updating library policies and operational practices and by responding to customer needs.
  - *Database Promotion from the Inside Out*: This session provided tips and tricks for evaluating and using any database, focusing on database promotion both internally with employees and externally to patrons. It was based on staff lead training to use a 4 question system to evaluate any database. With 93 databases on mel.org, we can't expect staff to know every single one but by using the staff lead training model, we can incorporate database conversations into our monthly staff meetings. Staff don't have to be experts but the more they understand what databases can offer, the better they can inform the public.
  - *Self-care and Increasing Productivity while Avoiding Burnout*: I will have to admit I was burned out by the time we got to this workshop after running around the conference center all day! However, I left with some basic tips that help to overcome stressors at the library.
  - *A Moonshot Initiative to Boost Circulation*: This session was from the Calgary (Alberta) Public Library. They presented ways to increase circulation of their physical and digital items by analyzing data to create opportunities for growth, setting system wide goals to that empower staff, and creating displays and other creative ways for patrons to access the collection.
  - *Staff Inclusion in Decision-Making, from Big Ideas to Cat Chats*: This session focused on inclusion of staff in the organization as a critical part to retaining them. It introduced the concept of critical mission teams, including staff from all areas of the library, whose priority it was to move the strategic plan forward.
  - *Enhancing the Patron Experience through Visual Merchandising*: This session was one of the first things I picked out as a must to attend PLA 2020 and it didn't disappoint. First they reviewed trends with visual merchandising principles as they relate to public libraries and how we can use retail approaches to tap into consumer psychology. Consumers are moving away from goods and are wanting more experiences (think library programs). At BDL we have seen a good return on investment with attendance at programs but are still experiencing a decline in circulation. They presented retail theories on displays and product placement that could help increase circulation. I left with training plans for staff to improve or enhance customer-focused displays and the appearance of the collections around the district.

Submitted by Kimberly Feltner



- I attended PLA with Assistant Director Kimberly, from February 26-February 29. It was an eye-opening, encouraging, and motivating time. I attended several sessions and have given a very brief synopsis of some of them. I also met with several vendors, and am really excited about the future of the BDL. In addition to sessions, professional development, and vendor exhibits, we were able to score over 120 books for BDL giveaways!
  - Session: **Build Community with an Inclusive Early Literacy Program:** This session encouraged “Family Play Dates” featuring early literacy education and take-home kits for parents with children ages 0 to 24 months. *Mighty Beginnings* encourages first-time parents, regardless of financial means, to build a supportive community and learn about age-appropriate early literacy tools in a trusted space.
  - Session: **Working Through Transitions and Institutional Change:** This session was sobering for multiple reasons, and one of the largest take-aways for me was that transparency is the key to working through hard times in your organization.
  - Session: **Self-Care and Increasing Productivity While Avoiding Burnout:** This session is becoming more and more of a hot-button topic in a world of increasing knowledge of compassion fatigue. Increasing demands from our public for various library services can create an environment for burnout as a result of heavy workloads. While some stressors are unavoidable, prolonged exposure to stress can cause detachment, pessimism, and a loss of enjoyment in the public library profession.
  - Session: **Setting Healthy Boundaries:** Boundaries are a key part of interacting with people in the library, but the skill of boundary-setting doesn't always come naturally. Communicating boundaries helps public library employees address unwanted advances, explain service levels, and inclusively convey library use policies.
  - Session: **Developing Interactive Activities to Boost Team Building:** Creating innovative, engaging, and low budget staff trainings that strengthen your team, interdepartmental cooperation, and technological competencies can be tough. Group activities such as video production, social media marketing, technology scavenger hunts, and games can familiarize staff with new products and services and create more enthusiasm when promoting them to the public.
- On March 3rd, Kimberly and I attended a Millage Training workshop at the Library of Michigan in Lansing. It was a day of lots of good information, legalese, networking with other libraries, and most importantly, the do's and don's of an effective “YES! Committee”. One of the first presenters spoke about the ten year study done by OCLC and how we can take that study and use the information to increase community support for our 2022 millage.
- On March 5th, Youth Services 101 training was put on by the Woodlands Children and Teen Services Committee and held at the Albion District Library. It featured grant funding, how to get

involved with other professional library committees, storytimes, Summer Reading, teens, early literacy, working together harmoniously, and collection development. It was a great day, with great information and I'm confident that our team of 7 that attended is able to implement something that they learned.