



We've been back open for a month now, and it has been great to see so many "smiling eyes" from patrons back in the buildings. It's been good to hear children's voices again, too. Some patrons still ask for curbside pickup, and we are happy to continue to offer this service.

Staff meetings are still being conducted via Zoom. Recently we have had a couple of amazing staff service milestones reached: Linda Dull has been here 20 years, and Traci Counterman and Curtis Odom have reached 10 years. Congrats all!

Our audit is completed, as you'll see in the agenda for this month's meeting. No surprises here. Due to the pandemic's effect on operations and programming, we ended under budget by more than \$300,000. Since some of the planned spending that didn't happen was to be covered from transfers from other funds, we ended up adding to the unassigned fund balance by about \$180,000. I am proposing that we use some of this unexpected funding to hold another amnesty for our patrons, details in the discussion section.

Virtual training for staff continues apace from a many sources. Numerous BDL staff attended virtual sessions of the ALA Midwinter conference on a wide variety of topics. I attended the ALA webinar titled "[Lessons in Diversity, Equity and Inclusion from Public Libraries: Managing Change from Where You Are](#)". Kimberly and I also attended a Library of Michigan session on changes to the Michigan Library Privacy Act. More on that in the discussion agenda.

At a Library of Michigan Directors meeting we discussed, among other things, [The latest MDHHS order of 1/22](#), which goes into effect on 2/1. The order does affect libraries, though it won't require any changes to anything we're doing. Indoor gatherings may have no more than 10 people together from no more than 2 households. This continues to keep us from doing in-person meetings still, along with in-person programming. Individuals coming and going in our libraries do not constitute a "gathering", so just the 30% occupancy limit applies here. [Library of Michigan analysis available here](#). This order will require that our March BDL Board meeting be conducted virtually. The Michigan Library Association is lobbying for library workers to be moved up the timeline for vaccination. [You can read their letter to MDHHS here](#).

In other meeting news, I spoke briefly at the County Commissioners and the County COVID meetings this past month with updates about the library. I also attended the DDA monthly meeting, and a meeting with CBPU about the computerized HVAC controls for the Coldwater Branch. The City of Coldwater is replacing the shared computer system that 9 years after original installation is now out of date. The City is covering the initial cost of installing the new system, but we will have an additional annual cost to cover our share of the maintenance support contract.

Bronson Branch repairs continue, though unexpected materials delays due to an act of God are putting a hold on completing the flooring repairs. We have a plan to partially reopen the library without waiting for the flooring completion. More on that in Lynnell's Bronson report.

Keeley and I have been working on the exterior painting Request for Proposals for the Coldwater Branch. We also met with someone from the City of Coldwater about this project and should be publishing the RFP soon. The painting would likely commence late summer.

We had another FOIA request from the same Florida-based data broker, identical to our request from July of last year. They were asking for business contact information for all BDL staff. This is not protected information, so we complied with this request.

Several new services are starting up now or very soon that library staff have been trained on or have given a test drive:

- [Creativebug](#) is now active. If you are into arts and crafts, check it out!
- [Tutor.com](#) is live. In addition to the eponymous tutoring with a real live human being that you can actually talk to, there is job interview and resume support, and test prep for a variety of high school, college, military and civil service tests.
- Localhop: we are signed up with this Michigan-based company's calendar service for libraries. We are currently transitioning our events to this new platform and should have it live by March 1. We will also be leveraging this platform to create a county-wide community calendar that other local organizations can post events to.
- WiFi2Go wireless hotspots! We have 2 dozen hotspots basically ready to go. We have a half dozen or so out in the community right now being tested and plan to start circulating them by the beginning of March. One holdup to getting this going sooner has been the federally-required content filtering component. Thankfully, after much research and experimentation, the BDL IT department came up with a solution that will not only work for these hotspots but allow us to save about \$1,000 a year going forward since we can use this service to filter all our libraries, too, and drop our commercial vendor.



Library1 Cards finally got released to Coldwater High School students, and within a day of distribution we had our first student come in to use one! Congrats to Jessica Tefft for all her hard work on this project. Next up...Pansophia!

Submitted by John Rucker



- BDL welcomed back patrons inside the library starting on January 18. We are still offering Curbside services for those who are interested. We had 616 curbside visits across the district during the first half of January, while we were closed to the public.
- The BDL seed libraries are opening up early for 2021. Patrons can check out up to 10 packages of seeds at the Coldwater branch's Seed Saver Exchange and Union Twp.'s Roots and Shoots. Seed demand is high with several main supplies indicating shortages in seeds. Knowing this, we decided to open up earlier than normal. The seed libraries run until the growing season ends and donations of seeds are always accepted. The Marketing department worked up a full marketing campaign to advertise this service. We will run several reminders throughout the growing season to encourage use.
- I attended multiple webinars in the last month. Several were for our current library services such as tutor.com and Libby. I joined a sales pitch for a marketing automation service called Patron Point. It is a great service that would provide huge marketing benefits to our patrons. It does all the things that our current marketing department would love to do but just don't have the time. However, even as with a group discount through The Library Network cooperative, it is a very costly service.
- I also attended the Library Privacy Act Amendments webinar provided by the Library of Michigan. This will be shared with our staff in March.
- Jessica Tefft, Linda Dull, and I met with Ashley Ford. She is the Parent Liaison for Branch County Great Start Collaborative. The group has several literacy initiatives and will be partnering with the library to help spread the word.
- Our new technical service clerk, Toni Nickerson, has completed her ninety days. She has fit in well to the position and at the library.
- Library staff had the option to sign up for an employee discounted Lifecare Ambulance Membership. There were ten BDL staff members that signed up. This provides extra financial coverage in case of an emergency where an ambulance is needed.

Submitted,

Kimberly Feltner



- It's so good to be back! I returned from maternity leave on January 18th. Since my return, there's been a 2021 Summer Reading Program planning meeting (Feb 1), One Book One County (OBOC) has launched, Beanstack (online reading challenge tracker) has been set in motion, and Library1 Cards have been distributed to Coldwater High School Students!
- Branch managers, the Management team, Kid's Place Coordinator, and the Teen Services Coordinator met on February 1 to determine all the specifics for the 2021 Summer Reading Program.
- One Book One County 2021 is here! *The Book Woman of Troublesome Creek* is the 2021 book for the community read event. We will be having two online discussions concerning the book on Monday, March 22 at 6PM and on Saturday, March 27 at 10AM. The wonderful Jeanne Berg will be hosting these discussions.
- Beanstack is an online reading challenge platform that BDL is going to be using for different reading challenges over the year, including the 2021 Summer Reading Program. As a library, we can customize summer reading, 1000 Books before Kindergarten, and any other reading challenge we wish to offer our patrons. It's incredibly user friendly, has beautiful aesthetics and is so much fun!
- Library1 Cards: Coldwater High School sent opt-out letters to parents in the beginning of January, with a request to have them returned by the middle of the month. Over the past two weeks, over 800 Library1 Cards have been issued to all 9th-12th graders at Coldwater High School. We are beyond thrilled to say that students have already started to come in to use their Library1 Card.