

Director's Report  
November 2022

This past year has been filled with challenges.

At the beginning of the year we faced our first challenges to library materials in over a decade. Two books and one DVD were challenged. All three titles remain in the collection. These challenges generated national news, but they also highlighted issues within our community with regard to what the community expects from the library.

From those who believe the library has a special responsibility to protect children, there has been a lot of talk about access to age-appropriate content. These concerns are valid. The library responded to these concerns by moving some items away from the children's collection. We moved 1,100 or so items into the adult collection. This represents .2 percent of our books. A similar, albeit smaller, moving of books occurred under the previous director in 2018.

From those who believe the library has a responsibility to represent all views, we heard that we were censoring the collection. Also, valid concerns. Materials were moved, not removed. The library removed exactly zero items from the collection for reasons of content or because of public complaints about subject matter. All materials remain on easy-to-find open shelves available to all. These materials were moved as a compromise, an attempt to take everyone's views into consideration.

One incorrect and unsubstantiated theme that keeps coming up in these meetings and that needs to be addressed is the idea that the library has pornography in its collection and that it employs staff who are trying to groom children. The library staff does not endeavor to purchase or maintain pornographic materials in the library's collection. To my knowledge, our collection does not contain any materials that are pornographic. However, if any library patron believes that an item in our collection is pornographic, they may request that such an item be reconsidered through our reconsideration process. Additionally, all library employees are classified as civil service and undergo rigorous hiring and review processes. If anyone experiences conduct from a librarian that they believe to be inappropriate, I would ask that they report this conduct to library administration so that we may investigate.

Another clarification I feel I need to make has to do with the American Library Association. Not everyone who works in the library is a member of the ALA. The ALA does not dictate to our library. It is a professional association. While it represents and espouses certain values regarding the free access to information, specifically in books, it does not have any legislative or administrative authority over this library.

That's the ugly bits of the year in a nutshell.

For the first time in three years, the library celebrated Summer Reading with a proper kickoff event. It was amazing. Lafayette Library patrons read over 2 million words last summer.

Faced with a projected \$600,000 deficit which would have to be made up by dipping into our fund balance, the library took a hard look at its staffing and services. Without laying off or furloughing staff, the library trimmed its workforce by another eight positions last year. We made the difficult decision to close on Sundays. We pulled together and we pinched pennies. We reorganized some departments. We modified positions. And now we will probably be moving \$400,000 into our fund balance when all is said and done.

After years of calls to build a library on the other side of the Evangeline Thruway, we put all options onto the table and moved forward with the project.

Additionally, the library has begun major upgrades to the South and North Regional libraries and is replacing the roof on the Main library.

Program Attendance: 54,718 across 3449 programs

Circulation: 1,838,862

Visitors: 755,110

Computer Sessions: 175,133 session, 81740 Users, 211,378 Wifi sessions

Reference Questions: 132,482