Significant accomplishments and unique advances in 2020

The Library’s Strategic Framework guides service through Learning, Enjoyment, and Community initiatives. Following are some of the significant accomplishments and unique advances in 2020.

LEARNING

The Library supports growth and curiosity, so children enter kindergarten ready to learn and people of all ages can navigate the real world and meet their goals.

Move to Learn

- With singing, dancing, jumping, and stretching, Move to Learn supports mathematical concepts, creating a strong math foundation. Along with the earlier initiatives, Paint to Learn and Cook to Learn, Move to Learn supports math skill development for children ages 0-5 and their caregivers. This is a collaborative project with Pierce County’s early learning initiative, Project Child Success, and is funded by a grant from The Boeing Company.

Microsoft certification moved to virtual testing

- Re-launched the program and testing went virtual, allowing people to get certified from home or elsewhere online, outside of the library buildings.

Expanded STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Art and Math) activities

- Activated technology for elementary students with coding backpacks available with the Library’s Science to Go service. Additionally, preschool children learned with math as part of story time.

- Proven to build critical problem solving and adaptability skills, STEAM also helps develop resilience and confidence.
Reinvented Summer Reading – Dig Deeper: Read, Investigate, Discover!

- Reimagined 2020’s Summer Reading program and hosted online events for families to watch from home. Readers used electronic tracking tools to earn badges and picked up grab-and-go activity packs curbside at libraries. A total of 4,034 children, teens, and adults who signed up for the program read a total of 31,422 hours.

- Took Summer Reading on the road to children in low-income neighborhoods with limited access to books and reading during the summer.

Pierce County READS went virtual

- Pierce County READS, the Library’s community one-book program, where people read copies of the same book at the same time and come together as a community, went virtual. The 2020 book selection was “Girl Waits with Gun,” by bestselling author Amy Stewart. In August, the Library hosted a virtual author talk with Stewart.
COMMUNITY
The Pierce County Library connects and strengthens communities, so people are engaged in thriving communities and are optimistic about their future.

Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Strategy
► Began developing the Library’s Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion change framework.
► Throughout June and July, staff shared their ideas of how the Library might improve to be a more equitable, diverse, and inclusive organization.

Serving Asset Limited Families/Individuals: Studied Services to Support
► Studied services to help support individuals and families who are Asset Limited, Income Constrained, and Employed (ALICE). These community members are often employed, however living paycheck to paycheck. United Way of the Pacific Northwest’s 2020 report showed 12% (36,274 households) lived in poverty and 22% (66,503 households) were ALICE. These numbers include Tacoma and Pierce County.

Card Design Contest
► Nearly 300 students living or attending school in Pierce County submitted designs in the Library’s Card Design contest. Professional artists reviewed entries and selected six finalists for two age groups: elementary and middle/high school. Via a public vote, residents selected designs by Logan Wilcox, from Puyallup, and Eliana Parks, from Gig Harbor. Their card designs are now available to choose as new library cards.

Census
► Collaborated with Tacoma and Puyallup Public Libraries and the Pierce County Auditor to support countywide efforts to get people counted in the 2020 Census. To help achieve accurate counts, the Library performed the following efforts:
  – Partnered with Census to offer meeting rooms for counts and job recruitment.
  – Invested in mobile display boards to promote the Census with a $25,883 grant from the state of Washington. Also received a $75,000 grant from the Greater Tacoma Community Foundation for the Library to provide direct mailings about the Census.
  – Promoted the Census via radio ads, social media, mailings, and website.

Teen Volunteer League
► In fall of 2020, teens earned volunteer service hours virtually. They worked on resumes, learned job skills, and built leadership skills. This year’s Teen Volunteer League project was to develop a website for other teens to submit artwork, poetry, videos, and playlists.
CORE SERVICES

The Library System continually strengthens its core services to operate effectively and carefully use tax payer’s investment. Here are some of its 2020 improvements.

Technology

- **Wi-Fi** - Offered Wi-Fi in library parking lots to bridge the digital divide for students learning from home and adults working from home.
- **Website** - Re-building an engaging, modern website to result in high-quality experiences.
- **Cybersecurity Awareness** - 100% staff trained and public awareness achieved.

Materials

- Added more e-books and audiobooks in response to the significant demand while library buildings were closed, resulting in a 29% increase in online checkouts. Reached a record-breaking 1.9 million digital book checkouts in 2020. The Pierce County Library was one of 102 public library systems worldwide that surpassed one million checkouts.
- Decreased wait time to get e-books and other materials. Previously, it took weeks to get new e-books, movies, and other materials online and to customers. Now there’s a process to get items to people in days.
- Created grab bags for curbside pickup. Staff filled the bags with books or movies based upon an individual’s reading or viewing interests.

Spaces

- **Sumner New Library, in New Location**
  - Continued planning toward a new library, in a new location in Sumner.
  - Started a capital fundraising campaign to fund the new building.

Technology and Space Improvements/Building Upgrades for Parkland/Spanaway Library

- Installed new carpet and furniture in the 16,000 square foot building.
  - Created a larger area for teenagers to have a place to themselves – separate from the children’s area and places where adults read and study.

Partnerships

- **Voter Point of Assistance for 2020 election support**
  - Supported voters on Election Day with the following services:
    - Registering to vote.
    - Updating voter registration.
    - Getting a ballot and voting.
    - Replacing lost, damaged, or miss-marked ballots.

Business Processes

- **Finance and Human Resources System Replacement**
  - Updated financial management software to a more current and efficient system. In 2021, the Library is updating its human resources software with the same system.
In preparing the 2020 annual report, the Library System is midway through 2021 and the pandemic continues. In response, the Library System continues to pivot and change to meet challenges and is committed to providing library services safely. By the end of July 2021, all 18 of the Library’s full-service buildings reopened.

Following is an overview of some of the services the Library is offering in 2021.

Learning...encouraging lifelong learning:
Job + Business Center: With the economic downturn from COVID-19, people need free, high quality, credible resources to find and get jobs or start their own businesses. Job + Business Center services help people develop technology skills, improve marketability to get a job, and offer resources to start or grow a small business.

Enjoyment...inspiring the love of reading:
75th Anniversary: The Pierce County Library System thanked communities for the honor of serving them for 75 years! In honor of the diamond anniversary, the Library hosted 20 StoryWalks in communities throughout the county, featuring “The Big Umbrella” by Amy June Bates and Juniper Bates.

Community...engaging with residents:
Focusing on partnerships, exploring, and continuing the Library’s commitment and dedication to the community using a pop-up Library format. Taking the Library on the road will allow the Library System to show up where and when people need it most.
Your investment in the Pierce County Library

- The Library’s Board of Trustees approved a plan for a multi-year funding cycle to ensure stable, sustainable funding to deliver library services for at least 10 years. With funding from a restored levy approved by voters in 2018, revenues exceed what the Library needs for operational expenses for the first few years of a multi-year funding cycle and allows the Library to sustain operations for multiple years. In 2020, the Library invested in services to support residents’ growth and curiosity, offer excellent reading choices, and work to connect and strengthen growing and changing communities.

- The Board did not charge fines on overdue books and materials, to avoid further financial burdens from the pandemic and economic crisis.

Total 2020 revenues: $38,914,375
Total 2020 expenditures: $38,213,274

Overview of the Pierce County Library System

- Established in 1946.
- Includes unincorporated Pierce County and 15 annexed cities and towns.
- Serves approximately 620,000 people through 20 locations and with mobile and online services.
- Operates as an independent taxing district and reports to a volunteer Board of Trustees.
FAST Facts 2020

1,774,347 Visits
594,400 to 20 libraries,
81,454 curbside and 1,098,493 to website

3,487,137 books/materials checked out
1,611,241 from shelves
1,875,896 from online e-books and audiobooks

1,056,327 Uses of online databases/e-sources

22,841 event and class attendance

353,583 cardholders
The Pierce County Library Foundation’s second annual Trivia BEE: Home Edition was a successful online fundraiser. More than 80 participants played, raising more than $20,000 to support critical library services and programs.

Unfortunately due to the pandemic, for much of 2020 Friends of the Library assistance was not part of the Library’s offerings. Overall, the 17 Friends organizations contributed more than $18,000 to support countywide services.
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