

2020

YEAR IN REVIEW Unalaska Public Library

Mission: Unalaska Public Library educates, enriches, and inspires community members by connecting them to the world and each other.



37 weeks open

9 weeks closed for COVID-19 prevention
6 weeks curbside checkout only



43,634

Items
checked
out



115

New library
cards

70% COVID-19 Survey Respondents
impacted by library changes and closures

Source: City of Unalaska COVID-19 Response Survey

EBOOK AND AUDIOBOOK CHECKOUTS



2,016



26,489

Wireless
sessions



1,523

Items
checked out
curbside

COMMENTS FROM LIBRARY PATRONS

"Almost more than anything from life in Unalaska before the pandemic, I miss the library. I was so grateful and impressed that you and your staff managed to keep the doors open as much as you did for the community."

"I am so grateful the Library's resources are still available to keep us entertained and sane during these strange times."

"My family loves the library. There is no institution in Unalaska that is more important to us. We have really become aware of how much the library means to us this year when the library has been closed due to the pandemic."

"Thank you for putting in the time to select such excellent books and movies for me in my quarantine. It was so fun to open the package...I'm grateful to have an amazing public library in Unalaska and you guys are the reason it's so great!"

"I moved to Unalaska about a year ago and, at the time, I didn't have a job, car, or wi-fi. The public library was a huge resource (not to mention refuge) as I looked for work, communicated with family, and looked for entertainment to fill my spare time."

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MEMORANDUM TO COUNCIL

To: Mayor and City Council Members
From: M. Lynn Crane, Chair, Unalaska Public Library Advisory Committee
Date: February 9, 2021
Re: Library Advisory Committee Annual Report to the Mayor and Council, 2020

This year, the Unalaska Public Library continued to provide valuable services and resources to the community, and I am pleased to submit this report on Unalaska Public Library and Library Advisory Committee activities to the Mayor and Council. It covers the calendar year from January – December of 2020.

Library services and usage were very different in 2020 as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. For the majority of 2020, the library was open with limited services and safety measures in place or was closed to the public. This was a challenging year for our community and for an institution with community service and social connection as its core values.

In the Unalaska COVID-19 Response Survey conducted by the city, **70% of respondents** reported that they were impacted by the library's changes and closures. Among all city services, this is second only to the DMV in terms of community impact. While this statistic is alarming in the short term because of the detriment caused by the necessary closures and safety measures, it speaks to the importance of the library in this community.

Nonetheless, the library staff worked hard to accomplish the library's mission within safety guidelines. This is a summary of special library services for 2020:

- ❖ Library staff worked hard to promote and improve access to **Digital Services** this year, especially when the building was closed. The library purchased extra copies of eBooks and audiobooks, and we worked with local media to make sure our patrons knew how to access these services from home, work, the library parking lot, or anywhere with an internet connection. In 2020, **Unalaska patrons borrowed 2,016 eBooks and audiobooks**, almost double the number from 2019.
- ❖ When the library was closed to the public in April, May, and December, staff transitioned to **Curbside Checkout** in order to safely give our community access to the library collection. The ever-flexible Library Assistants accepted requests by email, phone, or

through the online library catalog and filled them for patrons to pick up in the library entryway. **We filled 211 requests and checked out 1,523 items** via curbside checkout in 2020. In the Unalaska COVID-19 Response Survey conducted by the city, **79% of respondents indicated that they had either heard of or used** the library's curbside service.

- ❖ **Wireless Internet** was available throughout the year outside the building. We boosted the signal for wider coverage, and we provided extra outdoor seating for patrons using this service. Patrons braved our Unalaska weather in all seasons to access this resource. In 2020, **the library hosted 26,489 wireless internet sessions**, an average of more than 70 per day.
- ❖ The current public health environment, combined with the relatively cramped library meeting space, has made in-person library programming impossible for much of 2020. Given the circumstances, library staff created several opportunities for **Virtual Programming** in order to maintain our literacy, art, and social programs. The City Librarian performed recorded **story times** on Channel 8. The **Unalaska Book Club** met virtually, and the library hosted **author visits** for UCSD students and for community members via Zoom. Library Assistants prepared **take-home art kits** to keep patrons entertained and enriched during “hunker down” periods.
- ❖ Library staff offered **Creative Solutions** to 2020 problems repeatedly throughout the year. With the help of Public Works, the library loaned its aging book drop to the school to use as a **homework drop-off**. Library Assistants selected “**care packages**” of **library materials** for patrons who missed browsing the collection and getting recommendations from staff. Staff added **sewing machines, art kits, and cloth mask-making kits** to the circulating collection.

Expansion and Renovation of the Library Facility

The Committee thanks the Mayor and Council for recognizing the need for an expanded and renovated library facility. The expansion and renovation had completed the design phase and was on the brink of construction when it was indefinitely postponed due to the COVID-19 pandemic in April 2020.

While the project has been delayed, the need remains and will likely become more pronounced if the library sees a boom in usage once pandemic safety restrictions are lifted. The city initiated the project because the community has expressed a need for improvements in the areas of children's and teen space, meeting and study space, community event and learning space, and more room for seating and library materials.

The Advisory Committee has played an active part in the public input process for the Library Building Improvement Project, meeting multiple times with the project architects and providing input on topics like furniture and finishes, public art, and self-checkout, as well as giving general input on the direction and scale of the project. The Advisory Committee also appointed an Art Committee to solicit, evaluate, and select art installations for the project. The Committee continues to believe in the need for this project and to advocate for its restoration at the appropriate time.

Committee Work

In 2020, the Committee met eight times. The Committee received information and gave advice to the City Librarian and the Director of Parks, Culture, and Recreation on the following discussion topics in 2020:

- Library Building Improvement Project
- Rasmuson Foundation Fundraising Committee
- Library Business Plan
- Library Services during COVID-19 Epidemic
- Reopening Plan
- Summer Reading Program
- Banned Books Week
- Capital Projects for CMMP Consideration
- Artwork for Children's Room

Library Advisory Committee Members

	Term Expires:
M. Lynn Crane, Chair	02/2021
Cyri Thompson, Vice Chair	02/2022
Robert Cummings	02/2021
Debbie Hanson-Zueger	02/2023
Virginia Hatfield	02/2022
Cat Hazen	02/2021
Lucy Ortiz	02/2022

In summary, members of the Public Library Advisory Committee report that the library has had an unusual year full of opportunities for creativity in public service, and that the Unalaska community continues to use and value the library's resources, services, and programs. We look forward to discussing this report and answering any questions from Council members or City Administration on February 9, 2021.