

North Branch Annual Narrative Summary July 2019-June 2020

“Pivot, shift, and focus. In life, in work, and when faced with a health crisis, assess the situation, pivot if needed, shift your immediate priorities, but remain focused on your mission and vision.” -Sylvestra Ramirez in APTA Magazine

Summer 2019 to summer 2020. Our world, but worlds apart.

Most fiscal years begin with focusing on providing materials, information and programming to our patrons. We cover the seven basic literacies in all areas and develop a library that draws more and more patrons to know and connect with the library as a mechanism to enrich their lives in physical and virtual ways. That is how FY 2019-20 started. It changed radically when the libraries closed due to COVID concerns on March 16th, 2020, but also stayed the same. While these are extraordinary times, libraries are timeless. We remain focused on drawing more patrons to connect with the library for rewarding experiences.

North staff is amazing and engaged. How we react to challenges determines the outcome. Everyone stepped up. We like to learn new things and find new ways to help patrons navigating new realities. Before COVID that was most often in a live setting, now it happens virtually. Some learning is the result of using our own library databases to increase skills in PowerPoint and Google Docs, or to learn a new language or something that can enhance our online programming. Much more involves sharing and collaboration with library and health organizations and partnerships around the state, country and world.

North programs drew crowds while crowds were a thing and continued to engage patrons in the virtual sphere. Bina’s Zoom story times were attended by children in other states. Our financial programs continued, as well as book discussion groups and more. Bina Williams and now Monika Anton used our FaceBook page to connect patrons with the vast opportunities available to them. The COVID crisis brought into specific relief the need for tech equity for our patrons. We need to eliminate the digital divide and aim for universal high-speed internet access. Our patrons deserve services and opportunities to thrive in the online environment, not just survive.

In June staff was allowed to return to the buildings, split into two groups alternating working inhouse with continuing to work from home. The pandemic has forced upon us a variety of personal and professional challenges we never envisioned. By the end of June, we were again greeting our patrons in person at Quick Pick Up appointments, putting materials safely back in the hands of a very grateful public. The long road of adaptation to new restrictions and physical limitations resulting from the health crisis began.

We look forward to continuing online collaboration with patrons, colleagues, and partners. As the state and city situation improves, we will carefully orchestrate safe ways for our public to access our buildings and services.

“What lies behind us, and what lies before us are tiny matters, compared to what lies within us.” -Ralph Waldo Emerson

Paula Keegan