Defining a New Era for Our Library & Our Community

By Library Director Derek Wolfgram

The COVID-19 pandemic could transform public library operations as much as any development since the creation of the internet, especially for an institution like the Redwood City Public Library (RCPL) with so many large, in-person events. However, given the mission and the strategic service priorities of our Library, our post-pandemic reality is unlikely to significantly disrupt what we do for our residents, even if it dramatically changes how we go about serving our community.

The mission of the Redwood City Public Library is to cultivate community by welcoming all people to experience the shared joys of literacy and learning. The Library’s service priorities, based on aspirations we heard directly from our community, are equity, inclusion, safety, awareness, and education. Over the last couple of years, our RCPL CARES racial equity initiative has begun to reshape programming, policies, and budget allocations to prioritize equity in everything we do, right down to the selection of books our community expects to find and enjoy. The pandemic has not interfered with this focus – in fact, it has heightened our commitment.

So, what will look different about library services when we reopen on May 24? We have implemented numerous physical improvements to reduce the spread of COVID-19 at all three library buildings:

- Plastic shields and physical distancing markers
- Enhanced ventilation systems with hospital-quality filters and ultraviolet light disinfection
- Personal protective equipment
- Hand sanitizer dispensers everywhere

At the Downtown Library, curbside services will continue for customers who do not yet feel comfortable entering the facility.

In the near term, computers will have significant space between them, public seating will be limited, and high-touch areas like the Baby Bay at the Downtown Library, the Interpretive Center at Redwood Shores, and other touch-driven interactive activities will have limited access. When the Downtown Library Maker-space is complete, the designated space is already designed to be open, modular, and flexible, which will keep people at safe distances.

Community gatherings will be some of the last elements of library service to return. Our community meeting rooms will remain closed for the foreseeable future, and large events will remain in an online environment for the time being. Offering programs online has actually helped us reach more people with disabilities, transportation issues, or child care challenges. Moving forward, we are likely to offer a hybrid model of in-person and online programming to equitably meet the various needs of our diverse community.

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SAVE THE DATE

Celebrate World Bee Day at RCLF’s Virtual Fundraiser on May 20, 2021!

Pre-event “buzz” begins at 5:00 pm featuring Mixologist Greg St. Claire, owner of Town & Milagros.

Event begins at 5:30 pm with a virtual tour of the library’s rooftop beehives and a live Q&A with Beekeeper Kendal Sager.

Join MC Dani Gasparini and Library Director Derek Wolfgram for an un-bee-lievable good time!

For tickets and sponsorship info, go to: https://paybee.io/@rclf
Plans are already underway for developing a large park adjacent to the Downtown Library and the Pirate Ship imaginative play area next to the Redwood Shores Library. Both of these projects will provide useful and engaging outdoor spaces for programs and events.

We will continue our partnerships with Redwood City’s two school districts to ensure that evolving needs are met as students return to classrooms. Connectivity through circulating hotspots and devices, learning loss from many months of at-home online learning, and mental health and socialization challenges will all be critical in our support of students, caregivers, and educators. We also hope to safely reinstate programs designed specifically for vulnerable populations, such as Social Service Office Hours, legal assistance programs, and others.

One unresolved challenge for the Library is to develop new channels for community engagement to ensure that our community’s voices are heard in the development of new library services, especially for vulnerable populations. Much of the magic of events like the Human Library and Library Takeover programs resulted from natural energy and enhanced communication when groups of people share a physical space. As long as people eschew gathering in significant numbers, we will need to explore new creative ways of gathering information and feedback.

Throughout the history of the RCPL, change has been a constant, and while the COVID-19 pandemic may not have been anticipated, the Redwood City Public Library is well-positioned to continue serving our community in innovative and creative ways.

~ Derek Wolfgram

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**2020 IMPACT**

- 58,000 library card holders served
- 576,353 items loaned by the library
- 19,000 online storytime views
- 13,953 curbside appointments
- 118,000 patron visits to library website
- 20,197 patrons attended online library programs
- 8,500 bags of groceries delivered to needy
- 6,150 businesses received covid support from library
- 1,400 times wifi hot spots were loaned out
RCLF Board Member Profile: Nancy Radcliffe

Nancy Radcliffe, the current Vice-President of the Redwood City Library Foundation (RCLF) Board, is a 3rd generation native Californian, who grew up on the Peninsula. She studied art at the University of Nevada then transferred to Stephens College in Columbia, Missouri, where she earned a bachelor's degree in Business and Retail. Throughout her career, Nancy worked in retail and property management in the Redwood City area.

In addition to serving on the RCLF board for eight years, holding the office of President and Vice-President, she volunteers for many other local organizations. She has served on the Redwood City Planning Commission since 2001 and was a member of the Redwood City Chamber of Commerce for 10 years. As a member of PACT (Partnership Academy for Community Teamwork) in 2000, Nancy was the first volunteer for City Trees, where she still volunteers. City Trees plants and maintains Redwood City trees and has planted over 3,500 street trees. She is also an active member of the Redwood City Woman’s Club.

Nancy’s other activities include rowing, hiking, recreational cooking, travelling (pre-COVID), and painting (water color). During the pandemic isolation, she has been working puzzles and reading.

Nancy has been selected Outstanding Individual of 2021 by The Sequoia Awards! This organization presents scholarships to Redwood City area high school seniors who demonstrate community volunteerism, and also recognizes residents like Nancy for their uncompensated community service. The Foundation is fortunate to have Nancy as a board member and officer!

Resiliency Fund Doubles Goal

The Redwood City community is generous and cares deeply about our libraries. We are happy to report that RCLF’s fall appeal campaign was very successful. We raised over $40,000 to support library initiatives like Makerspace in the Library, Career Online High School, and Bridging the Digital Divide—doubling our goal of $20,000!

Some RCLF donation facts from the past year:
- 23 new donors joined the RCLF family
- 26% of donors increased their gift from last year
- 27% gave at the same level
- 26% of donors hadn’t given for a few years & returned!
- 13 donated via the RCLF Facebook page
- Almost $3,000 was contributed on Giving Tuesday
- 61% of donations were made by check & 39% were online

The pandemic gave us an opportunity to expand our digital communications and we realized that we need to capture more of your email addresses to ensure everyone stays informed. If applicable, please send your name and email address to rclf-officemanager@redwoodcity.org so we can keep you up to date. This will be especially important because we have a virtual event planned for May 20th!

Thank you DONORS
we couldn’t do it without you!

TO SEE A FULL LIST OF 2020 DONORS VISIT:
www.rclfdn.org/donor-list

Nancy joined the RCLF Board because she believes that reading is essential to success, and that we need to do all we can as a community to support literacy for all.

Together we are strong
Makerspace is Coming Soon

The Makerspace in the Downtown Library is closer than ever to becoming a reality! The RCLF has raised over $300,000 to complete the first phase of fundraising. Adding this to the City of Redwood City’s $165,000 pledge allows us to move on to the next phase: going to bid. Our architect is actively working with the City’s Community Development Department on final construction drawings and permits. Once bids are finalized, we plan to begin construction this summer and open the new Makerspace this fall!

Makerspaces and maker programs transform libraries from institutions that collect resources to ones that enable individuals and groups to create resources. Through the power of collaboration and making, children and youth will learn about STEM disciplines, enhance literacy, and ‘learn to learn.’ Adults can consider career choices, create new products, find new hobbies, and much more.

We couldn’t be more excited that our Makerspace is finally becoming a reality, and we will continue to raise funds for its development. We are sincerely grateful to the Saga Foundation for getting us to our phase one fundraising goal!

many thanks

COHS Graduates Four in 2021

RCLF partners with the Redwood City Public Library, Project READ, and the California State Library to offer adults the opportunity to earn an accredited high school diploma and career certificate online through Career Online High School. The program provides a limited number of scholarships to qualified adult learners who are looking to expand their career opportunities, prepare for workforce entry, and continue their education.

In February, the library recognized four new graduates, making a total of 10 individuals to date who have received their accredited high school diplomas and career certificates from the Redwood City Public Library. Kamilia, one of the new graduates, had not been in school for 39 years but wanted to get her high school diploma so she could get a good job and have a prosperous future. She successfully completed her COHS courses and has started classes at College of San Mateo. As soon as Kamilia earned her COHS diploma, she immediately began working with a Project READ tutor to support her educational goals at CSM.

RCLF is grateful to the Atkinson Foundation and to RCLF donors who enable us to support this program for Kamilia and others. If you know an adult who would like to earn their diploma for free, please go here for more information.

Current RCLF Initiatives

Your gifts promote literacy and building community for all ages through the following programs:

Bridging the Digital Divide
Funds digital literacy projects, including computers, data and annual software licenses, and hotspot devices.

Makerspace
Help us fund a space in the Downtown Library for patrons to “make things” using computers, printers, audio/video, and traditional arts and crafts supplies.

Interpretive Center Upgrades - Redwood Shores Library
Funds updates & improvements to the decade-old educational center, which allows children to learn about the SF Bay and its wetlands through interactive displays and games.

Career Online High School in the Library
Allows adult learners to earn a high school diploma and career certificate in Redwood City’s Downtown Library.