



2020

Annual  
Report



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Founded in 1893, Montclair Public Library serves the citizens of Montclair, New Jersey through two facilities: the Main Library and the Bellevue Avenue Branch. The mission of Montclair Public Library is to change lives every day, through words, ideas, and community building. Our vision is to provide unlimited opportunities for lifelong learning, discovery, and community engagement.

*Board members as of December 31, 2020*

### Montclair Public Library Foundation Board of Directors

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The Montclair Public Library Foundation is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization that develops philanthropic support for the Montclair Public Library. Established in 2002, the MPL Foundation strives to increase funding for Library programs, collection enhancement, staff development, special projects, and other critical needs that exceed municipal funding. Through the development of new financial resources, the MPL Foundation seeks to ensure that the Library meets the needs of its diverse community and maintains its stature as one of the foremost libraries in the State of New Jersey.

# Library, Interrupted\*

When 2020 tolled, no one knew what sort of year it would be. We certainly did not plan to have our physical buildings closed to the public for most of the year, or to have friends, family, and colleagues fall seriously ill, and in some cases pass away. Usually our annual report touts the growth and improvements made to our services and programs. Instead, this year's report highlights how we adjusted and continued to provide services and meet the needs of our community throughout the pandemic.



When the building closed Friday, March 13, 2020 due to COVID, staff pivoted our programs to be virtual. They investigated platforms to use, modified schedules, worked with performers, and when all was said and done, provided 435 virtual program sessions in 2020.

When we brought staff back into the building we provided only curbside pickup for four months, while juggling virtual programs, emails, and phone calls offering reference assistance and helping our users remotely, with the same professionalism and effort as always. Later, when we were able to have patrons in the building to use the first floor only, staff were creative and curated mini-collections of youth materials and non-fiction to satiate the needs of users seeking those materials.

Overall, during the pandemic we issued 962 library cards, allowing users virtual access to our digital and online materials and services. They did so in record numbers: using them 17% more than the previous year.

Unfortunately, the pandemic resulted in a \$500,000 funding cut to the Library, forcing us to furlough and lay off our part-time hourly staff members, and reduce our hours of service. Despite having less funding than we expected, we still provided excellent customer service to our users remotely, virtually, and in person.

I am very proud of our staff—they were creative, resilient, and dedicated during this past year. We appreciate the patience of our patrons as we adjusted and brought back services when it was safe to do so. We are grateful to our donors who generously provided funding that allowed us to expand our e-content, add more WiFi hotspots, and underwrite the internet platforms necessary to transition to online programs.

We hope this report of our activities during 2020 shows the dedication of Library staff and trustees, and our commitment to the Montclair community.

Peter D. Coyl, MLIS  
Director | Montclair Public Library

\* with apologies to Susanna Kaysen

# 2020 by the Numbers

- 228,437** items checked out with over 40,000 via our curbside pickup service
- 107,715** visits made to the Library's website
- 89,206** electronic items borrowed, from eBooks to streaming movies
- 11,645** retrievals of electronic information from research and other databases
- 9,466** total attendance at all programs
- 8,246** views of program recordings
- 8,123** active library card users, more than doubling the number from 2019
- 962** library card numbers issued via email during the temporary closure
- 435** program sessions offered virtually
- 127** years of dedicated service to the people of Montclair



# Adult School

The Adult School offered approximately 391 classes that generated 3,151 registrations. It opened the year with a winter session that featured two highly-attended free events: **“Willie Cole in Conversation: Art and Life Inspired by Newark”** (167 registrants) on Feb. 24 and **“Scottish Traditions - Montclair Orchestra”** (162 registrants).

The Adult School offered courses on virtual platforms in the spring, summer, and fall. Highlights included **“Introduction to Northern Italian Cooking - Gnocchi”** (59 online registrants), **“30 Second Universe: Cosmic Conversations”** (96 online registrants), **“Birth of the Essex County Park System”** (80 online registrants), and **“Birth of Montclair’s Essex County Parks”** (51 online registrants). It continued offering classes made possible through partnerships with the Montclair Orchestra, Montclair Culinary Academy, the Louis Armstrong Museum, and the Montclair Business Improvement District, which provided a **year-end grant to program training courses for area businesses and workers.**

# Adult Services

Adult Services continued offering **virtual reference assistance** through email and instant chat. Book-a-Librarian appointments and Edgemont tech help resumed virtually as well. The Library added a “Your Personal Curator” service, which provides personalized book recommendations. The **Instagram Live UnBook Club** was created, with 264 live viewers and 2,527 total views. The Summer Reading program for adults had 120 registrants, topping the total number of participants from 2017 and 2018. In October, Adult Services partnered with the Financial Planning Association of NJ to bring a two-part series to those interested in their financial literacy. The Library also offered its **“Learn English” classes** virtually.

In July, the **WiFi hotspot lending program** resumed. WiFi hotspots provide free internet connections to those without it, and are ideal for remote work and learning, video calls, and job hunting. Starting in November, patrons could also borrow **Chromebook laptops** for at-home use. Together, hotspot and Chromebook lending provides computer and online access to anyone with an MPL card.

# Bellevue Avenue Branch

Branch staff conducted outreach, in-person and virtually, to **266 preschool and elementary school students** in Montclair. Dozens of in-person programs at the Branch, both prior to the pandemic and outdoors in the fall, served **762 attendees of all ages**. Branch staff quickly pivoted to **livestreamed storytimes** with “Facebook Fables,” which ran from March to August and featured children’s tales and nursery rhymes.

## Borrower Services

Staff continued to help patrons remotely during the pandemic shutdown: processing **online sign-ups for library cards**, informing new patrons of their card numbers so they could start accessing digital resources right away, creating video tutorials and walking patrons through digital resources, responding to queries, and updating patrons’ records. Through the **Home Assisted Services (H.A.S.)** program—which delivers library materials to Montclair residents who cannot easily leave their home due to age, mobility issues, or other reasons—Library staff brought books and WiFi hotspots right to patrons’ doorsteps. The Main Library installed a state-of-the-art **Automated Materials Handler**, which accepts returns 24/7 and immediately updates the patron’s account.

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# Youth & Teen Services

The Youth & Teen Services Department conducted 90 children's and 44 teen programs with an attendance of 1,764 patrons. Staff pivoted towards virtual programming, which included **Lunchtime Livestream Storytimes**, **Skype a Scientist programs**, **Teen Game Days via Discord**, **Virtual Reading Buddies**, and more. In an effort to connect with elementary school-aged homeschoolers, staff created a virtual book club: Participating children helped select a different genre each month, while a librarian created a list of possible titles to read. The department continued its annual Kwanzaa celebration with the virtual program **"Harambee! Songs and Stories for Kwanzaa,"** presented by storyteller April Armstrong. The department also hosted a lively author discussion featuring **award-winning author Kwame Alexander** and **award-winning MacArthur Fellow Jacqueline Woodson**. The discussion was moderated by local author Ylonda Gault.



The Library is particularly grateful for the financial support of the Montclair Public Library Foundation during a challenging year. They raise funds for additional Library programs and services and have underwritten many of the critical new activities added since the start of the pandemic. Foundation funding supports:

- WiFi hotspots
- Laptop checkouts
- Museum passes
- Open Book / Open Mind
- The Adult School
- The Little Read
- Expansion of digital resources, including increased access to hoopla and Kanopy, and new access to Creativebug, Lynda.com (now LinkedIn Learning), Medici.tv, and America's News
- Staff professional development
- Outreach and publicity efforts

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MONTCLAIRPUBLICLIBRARY

**OPEN BOOK OPEN MIND**

**O N L I N E**



Open Book / Open Mind is MPL's live conversation series featuring top authors discussing their new books and the important events of our time. The series transitioned to a webcast format in April and remained virtual through 2020. Featured authors included:

Taffy Brodesser Akner in conversation with Jake Silverstein

Andrew Marantz in conversation with DT Max

Imani Perry in conversation with Emily Raboteau

Charlotte Alter in conversation with Julian Lucas

Gail Collins in conversation with Dale Russakoff

Ada Calhoun in conversation with Maureen Connolly

Jesse Wegman in conversation with Jim Johnson

Christina Baker Kline in conversation with

J. Courtney Sullivan

Michael Schmidt in conversation with Jay Schreiber

Jonathan Alter in conversation with Jim Axelrod

Peter Baker and Susan Glasser in conversation with

Jonathan Alter

Alice Hoffman in conversation with Elisabeth Egan

Special thanks to series founders Jennifer Dorr and David Jones and to the rest of the Advisory Board:

Jonathan Alter	DT Max	Rachel Swarns
Neal Caruth	Juan Milà	Kate Tuttle
Ivan Held	Margot Sage-El	Susan Weinberg
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We are grateful for the generous sponsors of Open Book / Open Mind:

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The 2020 edition of The Little Read, an annual read-aloud event that brings together neighbors and families in a celebration of literacy and community, streamed live on Facebook during the evening of December 18. A series of guest readers shared seasonal stories celebrating winter, Hanukkah, Christmas, and Kwanzaa. This event was generously supported by the Montclair Public Library Foundation. Thank you to all the Little Read volunteers:

Tanya Bitar	Rocio Magana	Marissa May
Rosemarie Boyle	Maria Martire	Jill McLaughlin
Adrian DeVore	Leslie Masuzzo	Regina Polzella
Lauren Kline		







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Thank you to all of our 2020 donors! Your generosity makes it possible to offer valuable programs and resources to everyone in our community.

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