

Blue Hill Library Notes

Summer 2022

EXCITING CHANGES HAVE COME TO YOUR LIBRARY! ~ Molly Munn, Board Member

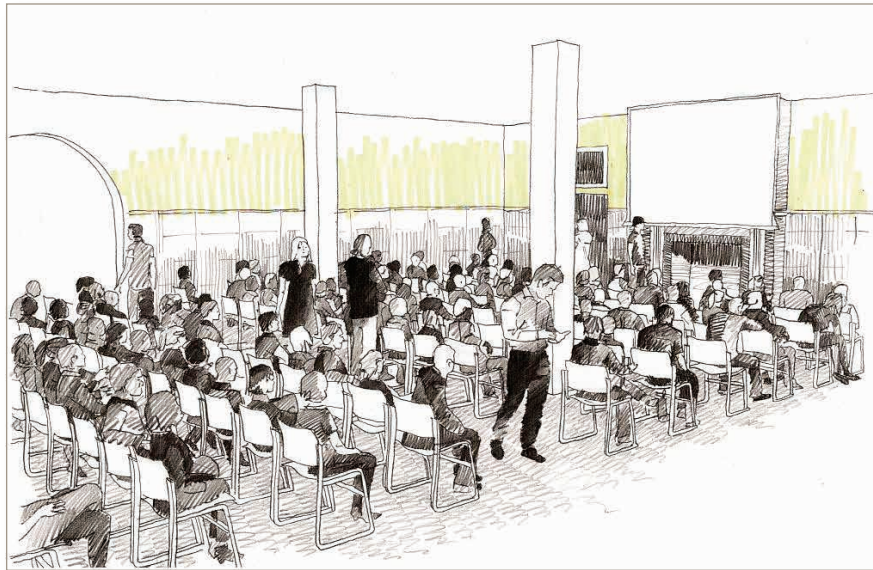
You've probably noticed some changes around the library recently and wondered, what's all this then? Well, we're growing. Sort of. Although the library's footprint is not increasing, its versatility and capacity is. Conceived many years ago, the current capital improvement project will bring many important upgrades to our beloved library.

The original brick building was completed in 1940, thanks to the tireless work of Adelaide Pearson and Anne Hinckley. Sixty years later, in 2000, three wings were added, and the library doubled its usable space; then in 2009, the basement space was repurposed into a meeting-and-archive room, named for the inimitable Elvira Bass. Now our library is undergoing yet another transformation.

The Main Reading Room, basement, and outdoor access points have been reimagined. The

concept for this bold transformation was affirmed after a 2015 community survey conducted by the library indicated the need for increased gathering capacity, specifically relating to community events sponsored by the library. Library Director Rich Boulet had been trying to figure out how to accomplish this for many years, since well before the 2015 survey. In

2010, reflecting on the transition to digital formats, he advocated for a larger venue in a report to the membership: "The library as a venue, and as a forum of free and open exchange of information, I believe will continue to have a market in the community." A number of options were examined, including, at one point, enlarging the Howard Room. After years of fundraising and planning, the dream of a large venue for the community has become a reality. The name of the improved Main



Artist's rendering of a future event in the Adelaide Pearson Room

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FROM THE DIRECTOR ~ Rich Boulet

This has been a really exciting time at the library. As I write this, finishing touches are being put on a major renovation. Last year we capped off a successful endowment campaign while community support for the library seems to grow and grow. The after-school teens and tweens crowd have not only returned to the stacks, but are really connecting with Teen Services Librarian Kendall Chapman, who has a particular talent with them. Our weekly outdoor playgroups for toddlers has been attracting upwards of 50 participants, sometimes from as far away as Bangor. The Friends of the Library are also thriving with their always-open book store. We have learned many new ways to adapt our programs and services

during this strange time and I am really proud of our team.

Last summer we took an important strategic step when we purchased 13 Parker Point Road, the property immediately adjacent to the library. While we do not yet have specific plans, the acquisition gives us many options for the future, whether for additional grounds, an in-town park, more parking, an eventual expansion of the building, or all four. For the near term



the property will remain untouched and serve as year-round housing, possibly for staff should the need arise.

One of the many results of the endowment campaign is the Robert and Linda Slaven Lecture Series, which is an amazing opportunity that has required some creativity and flexibility, given the nature of gathering during these times. This year we have focused the series on agriculture; last year we dove deep into “the world beyond us,”

essentially the stars and oceans; and the year prior, in the wake of the murder of so many innocent people of color, including George Floyd, we hosted an extended community discussion on race. I welcome your theme suggestions for 2023.

It really has been gratifying to work at the library these last several years, with so many plans, hopes and dreams coming to fruition. I often like to say that each of us—board, staff and Friends—are brief stewards of this institution. I think the people with whom I have been lucky to work with these last two decades can be proud of what we have accomplished together and I look forward to many more years of continued work. ☺

RECENT BEQUESTS

The library has been fortunate to be included in numerous estate plans recently, and we are honored to share in these legacies.

Elizabeth “Betsey” Harries, who had a many-decades-long association with BHPL, remembered BHPL prior to her passing in September, 2021. We will miss seeing Betsey at the library, her no-nonsense approach to life, and her pride in being one of our longest continuous library patrons.

Mary Grace Baker and James Baker both passed at the end of 2020 and spring of 2021, respectively. She, a retired elementary school teacher and he, a pioneering software developer in Cambridge, MA, the Bakers both held a

special fondness for the library, including it in their estate plans.

Elizabeth “Liza” Hall passed away in September, 2021. She and her parents Harold G. Hall and Lynda Foltz Hall, who predeceased her, were fond of the library, leaving a legacy to benefit all.

Margery G. Watson passed away in October 2020. A graduate of Radcliffe College, Margery is remembered as a book lover with discerning taste who spoke with a hint of a southern accent. A big fan of EB White’s, she lived near his famed farm in Brooklin and later at Parker Ridge.

These bequests join others in the library’s

endowment where they provide perpetual support for the library’s mission. Our library would not be possible without these generous gifts that follow the example left by Adelaide Pearson, whose financial support and vision made the Blue Hill Public Library what it is today. Significant bequests are honored with membership in the Adelaide Pearson Society, which can be viewed in the library’s Prior Family Foundation Foyer.

If you would like some information about including the library in your estate plans, please speak with your lawyer or reach out to us for assistance anytime. We would be honored to share in your legacy. ☺

YOUTH PROGRAMS GO OUTSIDE ~ Claire Malina

The pandemic has encouraged us to find creative ways of connecting with one another. It has been a pleasure, and sometimes a challenge (due to weather) for me to move my programs for preschool age children and their families outside. After over a year of doing Video Storytime because of the pandemic, at the beginning of July 2021 I began to host weekly Storytimes and



Ruth Slaven Teen Services & Outreach Librarian, Kendall Chapman (L), and Youth Services Librarian Claire Malina (R)

A FUN AND WELCOMING PLACE FOR TEENS

~ Kendall Chapman

Though my work as Teen Services Librarian had a bit of a rocky start due to the pandemic, I can finally say that I feel like I’m making a difference in the lives of the teens in the community. From last year (sharing an impassioned plea for teens to come back to the library) to the present, my interactions with the kids and teens in

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NEWS FROM THE FRIENDS

~ Malcolm Purvis,

President of the Friends of the Library Board

I am very pleased to report that the Friends of the Blue Hill Public Library are having another excellent year. In 2021, we raised \$31,000 to support many library programs, and we are on track to do the same this year.

The Friends income comes from cash donations, special merchandising, like book bags, and most importantly from the sale of quality used books donated by members of our peninsula community, offering them online and in person at the library. However, because of Covid-19 guidelines and requirements, we have had to rethink our book sale business model. With monthly Book Nook sales no longer possible inside, we held less frequent sales outside.

This year, however, we have been able to reopen the Book Nook daily, one household at a time, offering easy access during regular library hours. In addition, the inauguration of the outside Fair Weather Books kiosk last year and the ongoing paperback sales upstairs have offered more convenient hours of browsing and purchasing. These changes have been extremely popular, and these innovations resulted in our Friends income actually exceeding the pre-Covid income of 2019!

In 2021, the Friends funded many requests from library staff for programs and materials, such as the purchase of periodicals, DVDs, and audio books. In addition, we donated funds for Youth and Adult programs, including the wildly popular Frogtown Mount Puppets, and for new library

equipment. For the holidays, the Friends gave both money and new children's books to local charities, as well as purchasing gifts for our excellent, hardworking, and deeply appreciated library staff.

The Friends support the library in many other ways, too. We assist with major fundraising events, such as the Annual Plant Sale and Paint the Peninsula, and our volunteers have continued the watering duties of the splendid American elm trees planted in 2021 in front of the library. We continue to support the endowment campaign and were also able to contribute to the extensive inside renovations.

I am full of admiration for the way the Friends have creatively turned the challenges of the pandemic into ever-increased support for our great library, and we hope you will join us in this very satisfying endeavor. For information on how to help, please contact FOLvolunteers@bhpl.net, or inquire at the circulation desk. We look forward to having another successful year, and we thank you all very much for your continuing support. ☺



Frogtown Puppet Show

NOTES FROM THE BOARD PRESIDENT

~ John Diamond

I've been fortunate to live and work in communities with outstanding libraries, including Bangor Public Library, UMaine's Fogler Library, and public and university libraries in Fayetteville, Arkansas, and Madison, Wisconsin. However, my favorite is Blue Hill Public Library, primarily for its outsized role as a vibrant cultural and social hub and invaluable resource center for our region.



Generations of patrons, donors, volunteers, and staff have made BHPL what it is today. Going out on a limb, I'm taking the liberty of acknowledging a few who have been particularly influential over the past twelve months.

Rich Boulet—In January Rich marked his 20th anniversary as BHPL's director. During those two decades he led the library through dramatic expansion in the nature, diversity, and accessibility of the library's collections and programming. As many BHPL members and friends will remember, Rich was honored as the Maine Library Association's 2017 Outstanding Librarian. He continues to be an innovative and influential leader locally and statewide.

The BHPL staff—Each member worked diligently to maintain uninterrupted patron services and general operations despite the pandemic and major renovations to the library itself. It has not been easy but each person handled the challenges with poise and professionalism. Thank you, Kayleigh Thomas, Leda Beth Gray, Susan Brookman, Sheri Sweet, Claire Malina, Kendall Chapman, Halle Lyon, Dale Quimby, Merrill Slaven Brache, Leslie Walton, Noel Da, and Millie Fleming.

BHPL Board Members, past and presents—Kathryn Dillon and Will Taylor masterfully led the fundraising efforts for the library's endowment campaign. They also worked with former Board President Molly Munn, Development Committee Chair Jill Knowles, and other board members and volunteers to raise funds to renovate the library's Main Room, now known as the Adelaide Pearson Room. The renovations provide much-needed space and technology to support a wide variety of presentations and cultural events. Many thanks to all donors who supported these initiatives.

Thanks to the Friends of the Library, whose efforts to support the library through the pandemic have been creative and successful, and to Maria Matthews, who recently completed her tenure on the BHPL

Board after seven years of service, and has been key to the success of our Paint the Peninsula fundraiser for several years. Maria's successor on the Board, Katherine Messenger, was elected on May 3, 2022, at the library's annual meeting.

As I noted earlier, I wish I could properly recognize all who made possible the library's operational success over the past 12 months. To loosely paraphrase scholar R. David Lankes, you help sustain a great library—and in the process you sustain a great community. Let's keep up the good work. ☺

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*Our goal is to properly acknowledge every single gift to the library. See something that is incorrect or missing?
Please let us know so we can make it right!*

...Exciting Changes Have Come to Your Library continued from page 1

Reading Room is the Adelaide Pearson Room, a fitting honor for our founder and original benefactor.

The Adelaide Pearson Room is the site of the most spectacular renovation. The furnishings, the bookcases, center kiosk, and reference desk are now on retractable wheels. This enables reconfiguration of the space into an auditorium, to allow large groups to gather for lectures, concerts, and other programming without crowding and blocked sight lines. Most of the time the Main Room's familiar aesthetic and historic character will look and feel the same as always, but when all units are separated and rolled out of the way, the Adelaide Pearson Room will have enough space for 186 chairs. This innovative design will provide easy conversion to a variety of configurations. A

new audio-visual installation with surround sound, a hearing loop (for use by people with hearing aids), and a digital projector and screen, allow for more technically sophisticated presentations.

Improvements to the lower level are also part of the renovation and will expand the capacity of the Adelaide Pearson Room. The library archive and the Bass Meeting Room will switch places, with the archive increasing slightly in size. Additionally, there will be a new ADA-compliant restroom, conveniently located near the elevator and stairs. The recently improved Friends of the Library Book Nook gained a new ceiling and much better lighting.

The outdoor upgrades are the final flourish. New stone stairs will complement the historic

building, and will have a new center handrail to improve accessibility, as well as railings on either side. Already completed are the repaved parking lot on the Parker Point Road entrance and the wheelchair-friendly access to the Tenney Hill entrance which is made more prominent by the addition of two granite benches, one dedicated to the memory of Joy Hoffman and the other given by the Thors Family. These changes make the library safer in inclement weather and easier to access for all members of our community.

These renovations will improve and preserve the library as a community living room and further enable free access to information for all. I can't help but think of Heraclitus's famous statement: "No man ever steps in the same

river twice, for it's not the same river and he's not the same man." Our library is a living entity, different every time we visit, with new books, new programming, and now fresh features and exciting enhancements; and we are different with each visit, newly informed and seeking out new pleasures from all our library has to offer. It is the same library, different every time.

The library family is deeply grateful to Stahnke + Kitagawa Architects, Hewes and Company, the Anahata Foundation, and to former board members Kathryn Dillon and Will Taylor for their hard work and dedication guiding this project from concept to reality. And a heartfelt thanks to all of you for supporting our library! ☺

THANK YOU MILLIE!

We were reminiscing recently, when our shelve, Millie Fleming, graduated from high school. Millie literally grew up at the library, came to a lot of programs, and helped her mother Nina Fleming sort books for the Friends of the Library book sales. According to Rich Boulet, "It has been such a pleasure to watch her go from taking her very first steps ever in the Larchwood

Room, to becoming the kind and conscientious young person that she is. All of us who work at the library could not be more proud of who she has become." Here is Millie participating in the library's Reader Dog Program as a youngster, and a recent photo of her. ☺



...Youth Programs Go Outside continued from page 2

Playgroups outside on the library lawn and in the local Blue Hill town park. It was an immense relief for me to connect with families again and support them in this way, and important for them to connect with each other. Without the availability of COVID-19 vaccines for children under five, many still didn't feel comfortable meeting indoors.

As the summer faded, families began asking me how long Playgroup would run, and I offered that we could keep meeting as long as folks continued to show up. Families kept showing up each week, with more and more layers on. I brought hot tea and, when the snow started to cover the ground, sleds. We gathered every Wednesday morning outside to connect and play throughout the entire winter with record numbers of participants!

It was harder to continue with Outdoor Storytime as the temperatures dropped. I decided to do a few outdoor "Walking Storytimes" to help keep the kids warm, reading a few pages at a time, then taking breaks to move around the library. We were able to keep reading stories together outside until the end of December, and then we went back to weekly Video Storytimes.

In the fall, I decided to start an ongoing program for preschool children called 1,000 Books before Kindergarten, part of a nationwide initiative to

encourage caregivers to read to young children. Kids and their caregivers would get a reading log and keep track of how many books they read and for each 100 books, they could get a small prize. I started the program at the end of October 2021 and now have 50 children signed up, with two already having completed reading 1,000 books! This has been so gratifying.

So that everyone could feel comfortable participating, I decided to hold two of our popular annual programs outdoors last summer. We partnered with Holbrook Island Sanctuary to host two sessions of their wonderful birdhouse building program which is always a hit, and hosted Frogtown Mountain Puppeteers on the library lawn with about 175 people in attendance. It was a delight to hear the laughter of children ringing across the library lawn on a beautiful summer evening.

Last winter, I created a hiking challenge in partnership with Blue Hill Heritage Trust. Informational signs featuring winter ecology of plants and animals that we posted at eight



Youth Service Librarian Claire Malina gives out tastes of maple syrup at a popular workshop last March on tapping maple trees.

designated trails, each with a mystery letter that participants collected in order to spell out a mystery word. It was very well received, with 150 participants signed up, and many requested more hiking challenges in the future! We are planning on hiking challenges for each of the four seasons starting in 2023!

So, in spite of the many challenges of life in 2020-2022, we've been adapting and thriving, and some of our adaptations have turned out so well that we may continue to use them in the future. ☺

...A Fun and Welcoming Place continued from page 2



Teen Anime Club had a blast making rice balls a few months ago with Teen Services Librarian Kendall Chapman

our community has changed drastically. Now I am actually able to interact with them and host in-person programs indoors. This year I

the amazing young people in the area. It's also shown me that these kids are hungry for more—more interaction, more new things to experience,

started two weekly programs that have been much more successful than I could have imagined. Magic the Gathering Club and Teen Anime Club have become staples in my week and for many of the teens I work with (though we are taking a summer break). At each of these programs I find myself surrounded by large groups of enthusiastic teens and tweens who are passionate about the game, show, or activity we are working on, and it has allowed me to build some truly heartwarming relationships with some of

and more enthusiasm to share with the people around them. It's wonderful to see.

Among other programs, like traditional Japanese painting, craft sessions, and more, I also hosted a six-week cooking program that was absolutely delightful! A group of ten teens learned the basics of cooking and at the end produced their own meals to share with the group. I was so happy to see all that they accomplished in that time and how thrilled they were to learn something that can benefit their futures. It was also really nice getting to eat their delicious creations!

Through all of this my biggest goal has been to make sure that these kids and teens know that the library is a welcoming space for them, and they helped show me I've achieved that by absolutely covering my bulletin board in positive messages. It was one of the best things I've ever seen and gives me the spark to continue to bring to them programs and activities that make them feel at home in the library. ☺