

Directors Report – April 16th, 2019

Follow up items

- FY20 Budget reviews now complete
- New topics to be added to future Trustees Agendas - Key Topics / Topics for next meeting

Building and Grounds

- Quiet study room funding
- New Air Compressor to be installed once the heat is turned off for the season
- Air Conditioner for mezzanine to be replaced, working on timeline now
- Review of spreadsheet

Monthly Successes

- Armenian materials display
- Presentation to teachers assembly highlighting digital resources
- Library met with over 120 new patrons at the Chenery Multicultural Fair
- Saturday music with Joshua Peckins
- Author Talk: Lest We Forget

General Update

- Library Director to represent MLN Executive Board at Directors Link 2 day forum in Phoenix
- Meet and greet request denied
- Library Director begins fifth year on 5/4/19
- Building Committee closing in on a date for Open Public Forum #5

Incidents

- None.

Current Fiscal Year Data Comparison



Key Performance Indicators

Last Year

	Current month	Month comparison	Feb 2019	Jan 2019	Dec 2018	Nov 2018	Oct 2018	Sep 2018	Aug 2018	Jul 2018	Jun 2018	May 2018	Apr 2018
Circulation - Total	50,309	50,524	44,136	47,681	42,932	35,075	45,017	41,314	48,937	46,597	46,686	44,909	46,207
Circulation - Adult (books/magazines)	10,734	10,531	9,430	10,620	9,713	9,079	9,771	9,078	10,944	10,567	10,393	9,840	9,261
Circulation - YA print (books/magazines)	1,729	1,819	1,442	1,515	1,504	1,408	1,547	1,641	2,744	2,566	2,359	1,667	1,743
Circulation - Children's print (books/magazines)	21,921	21,292	18,344	18,949	15,778	11,030	19,752	17,220	19,350	18,669	18,816	18,904	20,318
Circulation - Adult Audio Visual	6,486	9,597	7,621	8,817	8,803	7,436	7,061	6,951	8,287	7,571	8,096	7,974	8,238
Circulation - YA Audio Visual	48	53	44	47	68	43	35	41	73	57	60	59	54
Circulation - Children's Audio Visual	2,049	2,607	1,861	2,061	1,886	1,048	2,106	1,758	2,375	2,189	2,333	2,278	2,327
Circulation - downloads & streams (eBooks/eAudiobooks)	5,394	4,304	5,081	5,335	4,887	4,776	4,370	4,298	4,962	4,690	4,315	3,906	3,930
Reference Questions	2,022	3,313	2,056	2,218	2,109	2,955	2,980	2,616	3,733	3,486	3,131	3,296	3,048
Programs Offered (total)	81	79	61	77	55	60	71	51	51	53	45	80	72
Adult Programs	28	28	21	21	20	25	27	18	20	19	20	22	27
YA Programs	9	12	11	13	7	8	10	7	10	11	12	12	9
Children's Programs	44	39	29	43	28	27	34	26	21	23	13	46	36
Programs Attendance (total)	1,852	2,276	1,507	1,740	1,242	1,075	1,706	1,212	1,116	1,490	900	1,689	1,735
Adult Programs Attendance	359	546	273	198	158	285	492	156	260	102	149	207	270
YA Programs Attendance	69	103	121	108	55	52	92	58	71	149	234	105	75
Children's Programs Attendance	1,424	1,627	1,113	1,434	1,029	738	1,122	998	785	1,239	517	1,377	1,390
Meeting Room Use	100	103	75	97	72	69	80	63	57	60	61	96	90
Museum Pass Use	197	229	203	205	188	177	154	179	274	263	243	201	256
Use of Library Computers	1,827	2,066	1,241	1,536	1,454	1,359	1,607	1,346	1,543	1,278	1,486	1,547	1,918
Active Volunteers	5	11	6	4	5	13	13	13	13	5	8	12	12
Volunteer hours worked	45.00	155.25	46.50	44.50	21.25	154.00	182.50	146.00	112.00	101.00	121.00	158.50	160.00



Current Fiscal Year Data Comparison

Key Performance Indicators

	FY18	FY17	FY16	FY15	FY14
	Total Annual	Total Annual	Total Annual	Total Annual	Total Annual
Circulation - Total	548,782	562,579	557,469	536,824	555,696
Circulation - Adult (books/magazines)	118,589	121,002	124,061	120,027	128,476
Circulation - YA print (books/magazines)	23,095	23,424	21,516	20,486	22,456
Circulation - Children's print (books/magazines)	225,480	233,689	226,867	219,182	220,719
Circulation - Adult Audio Visual	102,538	108,748	110,921	106,847	119,738
Circulation - YA Audio Visual	733	870	894	1,029	1,229
Circulation - Children's Audio Visual	28,360	33,572	36,809	43,901	48,062
Circulation - downloads (eBooks/eAudiobooks)	46,351	38,552	34,639	24,441	15,491
Reference Questions	39,004	36,646	37,526	34,883	37,988
Programs Offered (total)	681	645	566	495	443
Adult Programs	246	156	139	101	53
YA Programs	107	117	91	55	75
Children's Programs	328	372	336	339	315
Programs Attendance (total)	17,700	19,186	16,620	14,012	14,327
Adult Programs Attendance	3,721	3,061	2,517	940	1,278
YA Programs Attendance	1,181	1,900	1,213	799	1,276
Children's Programs Attendance	12,798	14,225	12,890	12,273	11,773
Meeting Room Use	878	855	781	695	675
Museum Pass Use	2,477	2,525	2,592	2,473	2,567
Use of Library Computers	20,473	21,116	22,343	21,019	24,399
Active Volunteers	145	500	244		
Volunteer hours worked	1503.75	2,580.00	1,265.30		

Patron Traffic

Month: March 2019

Main Entrance		Childrens Room		Assembly Room		Daily Total	
1	497	574	251	1,322			
2	556	709	234	1,499			
3	476	604	227	1,307			
4							
5	620	865	213	1,698			
6	539	660	258	1,457			
7	642	872	340	1,854			
8	533	639	263	1,435			
9							
10							
11							
12							
13							
14							
15	3,585	4,809	1,704	10,098			
16	511	656	179	1,346			
17	657	767	193	1,617			
18	335	1,061	262	1,658			
19	617	682	237	1,536			
20	631	693	239	1,563			
21	634	797	420	1,851			
22	650	589	221	1,460			
23	464	500	232	1,196			
24	691	758	168	1,617			
25	352	371	157	880			
26	619	761	341	1,721			
27	566	766	214	1,546			
28	670	909	229	1,808			
29	578	573	239	1,390			
30	418	596	184	1,198			
31	769	916	300	1,985			

open @ 10:30am

Monthly total

45,042

	ORIG./ADJ. APPROPRNTS.	TRANSFER	ADJUSTED BUDGET	- SPENT APRIL	SPENT JULY - APRIL	BALANCE	PROJECTED 10 MONTHS	% EXP
	LIBRARY PUBLIC SERVICE							
16121								
511000	WAGES, FULL TIME	743,142.00	743,142.00	44,983.41	597,369.87	145,772.13	619,285.00	80.4%
511100	WAGES, PART TIME	227,497.00	227,497.00	11,574.54	159,209.38	68,287.62	189,580.83	70.0%
513000	OVERTIME	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	#DIV/0!
514105	EYEGLASS REIMBURSEMENT	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	#DIV/0!
514800	LONGEVITY	6,939.00	6,939.00	0.00	4,548.21	2,390.79	5,782.50	65.5%
517000	HEALTH INSURANCE	111,090.00	111,090.00	0.00	111,090.00	0.00	92,575.00	100.0%
517200	WORKER'S COMPENSATION	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	#DIV/0!
517800	MEDICARE	14,055.00	14,055.00	0.00	14,055.00	0.00	11,712.50	100.0%
517900	LIFE INSURANCE	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	#DIV/0!
16122								
530000	PROFESSIONAL SERVICES	1,976.00	1,976.00	335.00	1,205.64	770.36	1,646.67	61.0%
534100	TELEPHONE	9,053.00	9,053.00	340.29	3,780.88	5,272.12	7,544.17	41.8%
552900	BOOKS/PER/FILM/CD/REC	344,758.00	344,758.00	17,066.97	244,589.37	100,168.63	287,298.33	70.9%
573000	DUES	1,020.00	1,020.00	0.00	145.00	875.00	850.00	14.2%
	TOTAL LIBRARY PUBLIC SERV	1,459,530.00	0.00	74,300.21	1,135,993.35	323,536.65	1,216,275.00	77.8%
	LIBRARY TECHNICAL SERVICES							
16131								
511000	SALARIES, FULL TIME	171,919.00	171,919.00	9,942.73	135,579.12	36,339.88	143,265.83	78.9%
511100	SALARIES, PART TIME	12,520.00	12,520.00	720.24	9,583.15	2,936.85	10,433.33	76.5%
514800	LONGEVITY	2,725.00	2,725.00	0.00	2,212.50	512.50	2,270.83	81.2%
517000	HEALTH INSURANCE	36,390.00	36,390.00	0.00	36,390.00	0.00	30,325.00	100.0%
517200	WORKER'S COMPENSATION	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	#DIV/0!
517800	MEDICARE	2,616.00	2,616.00	0.00	2,616.00	0.00	2,180.00	100.0%
16132								
530600	COMPUTER SERVICE	74,021.00	74,021.00	1,438.80	69,546.68	4,474.32	61,684.17	94.0%
542200	PROCESSING SUPPLIES	12,740.00	12,740.00	696.67	10,791.56	1,948.44	10,616.67	84.7%
573000	DUES	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	#DIV/0!
	TOTAL LIBRARY TECHNICAL S	312,931.00	0.00	12,798.44	266,719.01	46,211.99	260,775.83	85.2%
	LIBRARY CAPITAL							
16133								
587100	CAPITAL COMPUTER	12,500.00	12,500.00	0.00	1,758.50	10,741.50	10,416.67	14.1%
	TOTAL LIBRARY DEPARTMENT	2,304,483.00	0.00	103,467.10	1,745,711.25	558,771.75	1,920,402.50	75.75%

3/21/19

January

- Budget Review Begins with Town Admin Team
- Annual Report writing continues

February

- Budget Review Continues with additional committees
- Preparation for Town Meeting

March

- Budget Review Continues with additional committees
- Preparation for Town Meeting (check due dates for warrant articles / updates)
- ITAC Rep Check In

April

- Annual Election (Two Trustees each year)
- Annual Trustees meeting – Vote new officers
- Friends Annual meeting

May

- Selectmen Liaison Check In
- Annual Town Meeting (Warrants)
 - Update from Library if needed

June

- Annual Town Meeting (Financials)
- ITAC Rep Check In

July

- Minuteman Contract – Sign and Submit

August

- Community Preservation
- Meet Belmont
- ARIS Report due to MBLC

September

- ARIS Report due to MBLC
- Budget Considerations begin
- ITAC Rep Check In

October

- Trust Fund Review
- Holiday hours review for upcoming year

3/21/19

- Friends annual book sale review
- Financial Report due to MBLC
- Capital Budget Due (new as of 2019)

November

- Special Town meeting
- Holiday hours review for upcoming year
- Budget Narrative work in progress
- Friends annual book sale review

December

- Budget Narrative work in progress
- Annual Report writing begins
- ITAC Rep Check In

4/16/19

Proposed dates for Trustees Meetings in 2019

All Thursdays at 7:00pm

June 27th

July 25th

August 22nd

September 26th

October 24th

November 21st

December 19th

4/16/2019

Inventory of Belmont Public Library Policies

Winter 2019

- Ads and Informational Material in the Library – **Approved May 2008***
- Behavior Policy for Patrons – **Amended April 2017**
- Children's Room Technology Policy – **Revised December 2015**
- Circulation Policy – **Amended February 2017**
- Collection Policy for Tangible Gifts – **Amended August 2018**
- Confidentiality of Library Records – **Approved December 2008**
- Criminal Offender Record Information CORI Policy – **Approved June 2009****
- Exhibit and Display Policy – **Date of creation unknown***
- Food and Drink Policy – **Date of creation unknown***
- Homebound Delivery Policy – **Approved August of 2015**
- Internet/Computer Acceptable Use Policy – **Date of creation unknown***
- Materials Selection Policy – **Approved October 2012***
- Meeting Room Policy – **Date of creation unknown**
- Museum Pass Policy – **Amended 2015**
- Special Collections Access Policy – **Adopted January 2018**
- Unattended Children Policy – **Adopted March 2017**

Next to review:



Town of Belmont Town Policy #3 CORI Policy

Effective:

This policy applies to all municipal employees of the Town of Belmont. For those employees covered by collective bargaining agreements, the provisions of the CBA, which are subject to negotiation, prevail over the language in this policy (i.e. discipline). Any changes made to this policy that apply to the sections subject to collective bargaining will be sent to the appropriate union prior to implementation.

1.0 Overview

This policy is applicable to the criminal history screening of prospective and current employees, subcontractors, volunteers and interns.

Where Criminal Offender Record Information (CORI) and other criminal history checks may be part of a general background check for employment or volunteer work, the Town of Belmont will follow the practices and procedures below.

2.0 Conducting CORI Screening

The Town will conduct CORI checks only as authorized by the Department of Criminal Justice Information Services (DCJIS) and MGL c.6 § 172 and only after a Town of Belmont CORI Acknowledgement Form has been completed.

If a new CORI check is to be made on a subject within a year of his/her signing of the CORI Acknowledgement Form, the subject shall have seventy-two (72) hours of notice that a new CORI check will be conducted.

3.0 Access to CORI

All CORI obtained from the DCJIS is confidential and access to the information must be limited to those individuals who have a "need to know." This may include, but not be limited to, hiring managers, staff submitting the CORI requests and staff charged with processing job applications. The Town of Belmont must maintain and keep a current list of each individual authorized to have access to or view CORI. This list must be updated every six (6) months and is subject to inspection upon request by the DCJIS at any time.



4.0 CORI Training

Informed reviews of criminal records requires training. Accordingly, all personnel authorized to review or access CORI at the Town of Belmont will thoroughly review the educational and relevant training materials regarding CORI laws and regulations made available by the DCJIS.

MGL c. 6, §171A requires the Town of Belmont to maintain a CORI Policy; therefore, all personnel authorized to conduct criminal history background checks and/or to review CORI information will thoroughly review the educational and relevant training materials regarding CORI laws and regulations made available by the DCJIS.

5.0 Use of Criminal History in Background Screening

CORI used for employment purposes shall only be accessed for applicants who are otherwise qualified for the position for which they have applied.

Unless otherwise provided by law, a criminal record will not automatically disqualify an applicant. Rather, determinations of suitability based on background checks will be made consistent with this policy and any applicable law or regulations.

6.0 Verifying a Subject's Identity

If a criminal record is received from the DCJIS, the information is to be closely compared with the information on the CORI Acknowledgement Form and any other identifying information provided by the applicant to ensure the record belongs to the applicant.

If the information in the CORI record provided does not exactly match the identification information provided by the applicant, a determination will be made by an individual authorized to make such determinations based on a comparison of the CORI record and documents provided by the applicant.

7.0 Inquiring About Criminal History

In connection with any decision regarding employment, volunteer opportunities and internships, the Town of Belmont shall provide the individual with a copy of the criminal history record, whether obtained from the DCJIS or from any other source, prior to questioning the subject about his or her criminal history. The source(s) of the criminal history record is also to be disclosed to the individual subjected to the check.

8.0 Determining Suitability

If a determination is made, based on the information as provided in section 6.0 of this policy, that the criminal record belongs to the subject, and the subject does not dispute the record's accuracy, then the Town of Belmont will make a determination of suitability for the position. Unless otherwise provided by law, factors considered in determining suitability may include, by not be limited to, the following:



- a. Relevance of the record to the position sought;
- b. The nature of the work to be performed;
- c. Time since the conviction;
- d. Age of the candidate at the time of the offense;
- e. The number of offenses;
- f. Whether the applicant has pending charges;
- g. Any relevant evidence of rehabilitation or lack thereof; and
- h. Any other relevant information, including information submitted by the candidate or requested by the organization.

The Town of Belmont will notify the applicant of the decision and the basis for it.

9.0 Adverse Decisions Based on CORI

If an authorized official is inclined to make an adverse decision based on the results of a criminal history background check, the Town of Belmont will notify the applicant immediately. The Town shall provide the individual with a copy of the organization's CORI policy and a copy of the criminal history. The source(s) of the criminal history will also be revealed. The individual will then be provided with an opportunity to dispute the accuracy of the CORI record. The Town of Belmont shall also provide the individual a copy of DCJIS' *Information Concerning the Process for Correcting a Criminal Record*.

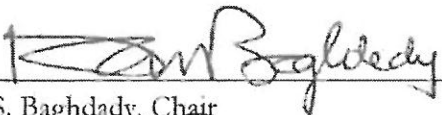
10.0 Secondary Dissemination Logs

All CORI obtained from the DCJIS is confidential and can only be disseminated as authorized by law and regulation. A central secondary dissemination log shall be used to record any dissemination of CORI outside this organization, including dissemination at the request of the subject.

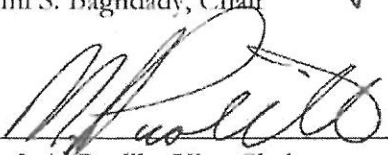


Town of Belmont
Town Policy #3
CORI Policy

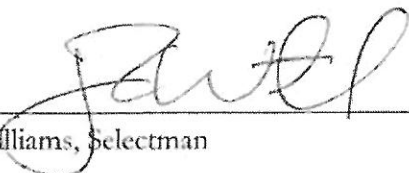
Approved by the Board of Selectmen on October 5, 2015.



Sami S. Baghdady, Chair



Mark A. Paolilo, Vice-Chair



Jim Williams, Selectman

Friends of the Belmont Public Library

Candidates for Officers:

Co-Presidents:

- *Marie Mabardi*
- *Elaine Westermarck*

Treasurer: Susan Black

Asst. Treasurer: Hannah Fischer

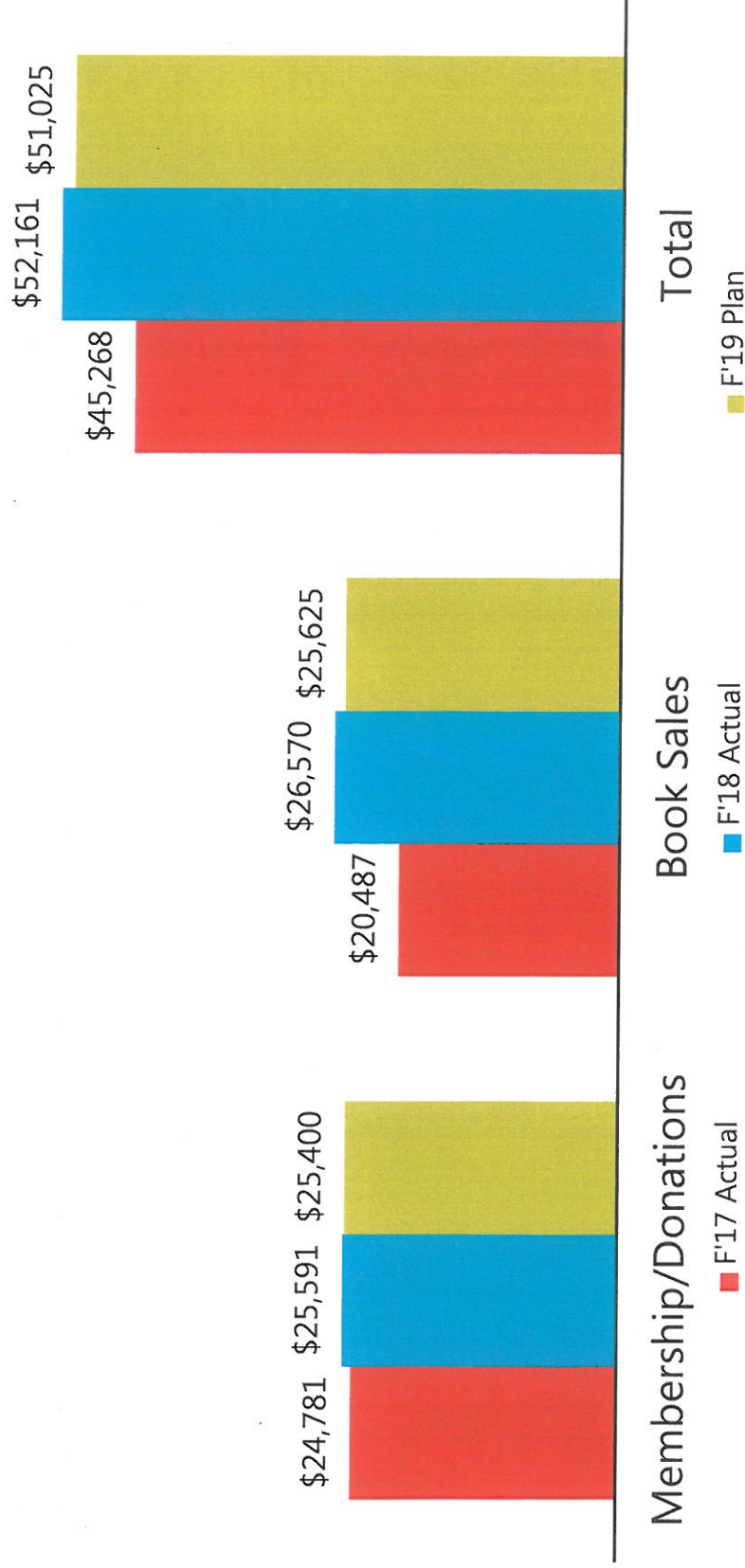
Secretary: Sally Martin

Candidates for Directors at Large:

- *Laura Caputo*
- *Diane Coulopoulos*
- *Nancy Dignan*
- *Josephine Fang*
- *Benita Gold*
- *Gail Gorman*
- *Louise Halstead*
- *Gretchen McClain*
- *Margery Miller*
- *Suzanne Morris*
- *Robin Ratcliff*
- *Marsha Semuels*

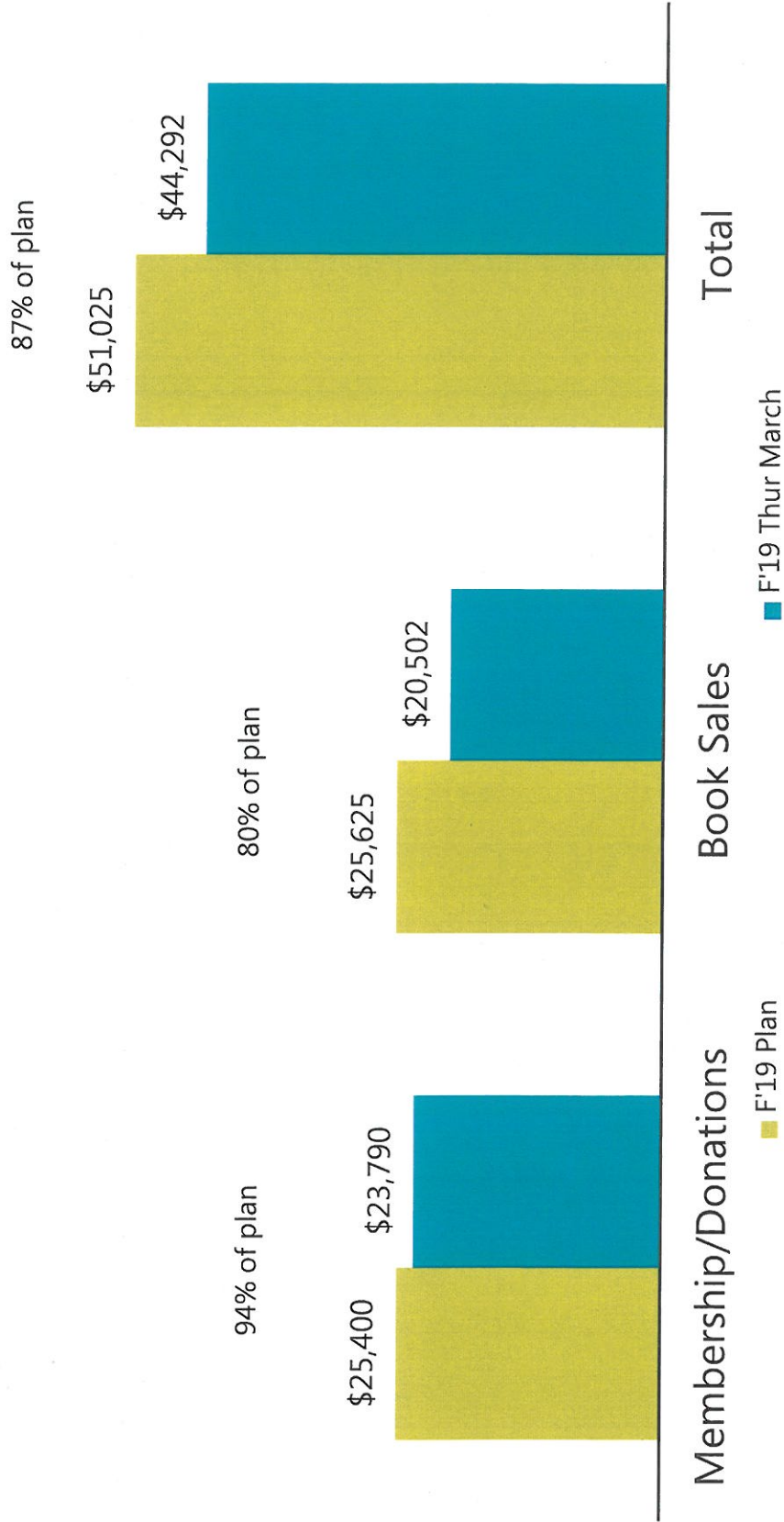
Friends of the Belmont Public Library

Over \$50,000 per year
raised (after subtracting
direct fundraising expenses)
to fund Library programs &
services



Friends of the Belmont Public Library

Thru March, we are on track
to meet our F'19
fundraising goals



Friends of the Belmont Public Library

Membership Details

- Members ahead of last year at this time
- Dollars on track versus last year at this time
- Decline in avg \$/gift was expected and built into plan (tax law changes)

	F'19 Thru March	F'18 Thru March	F'18 Total
New	34	23	26
Renewed	261	247	263
Lapsed/Rejoined	17	25	31
Anon and In Honor Of	2	5	5
Total Donors	314	300	325
Total Dollars	\$25,302	\$25,693	\$28,314
Avg \$ per Gift	\$81	\$86	\$87
Renewal Rate	82%	77%	80%

Friends of the Belmont Public Library

F'19 Spring Mailing

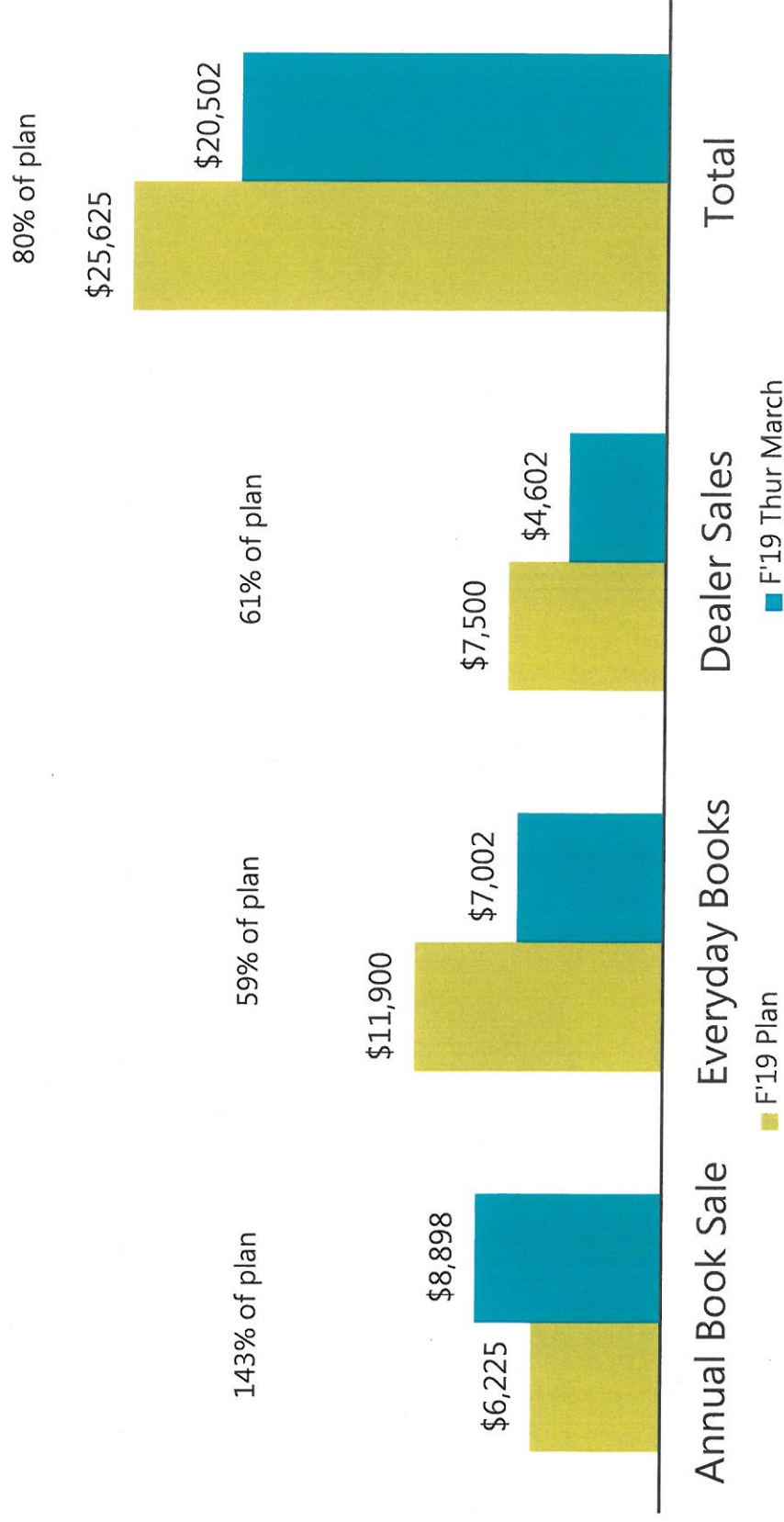
- Remailed in early March to anyone who did not respond to fall mailing.
- Do not have response rates from past years. Will track in future.

Message	Letters Mailed	# of Responses	Total Dollars
We have not heard from you yet this year (Gave in F'18 in fall or winter)	62	18	\$1455
Renewal upcoming (Gave in F'18 spring or summer)	25	10	\$705
Rejoin (Gave in F'17 but not F'18)	24	2	\$200

Friends of the Belmont Public Library

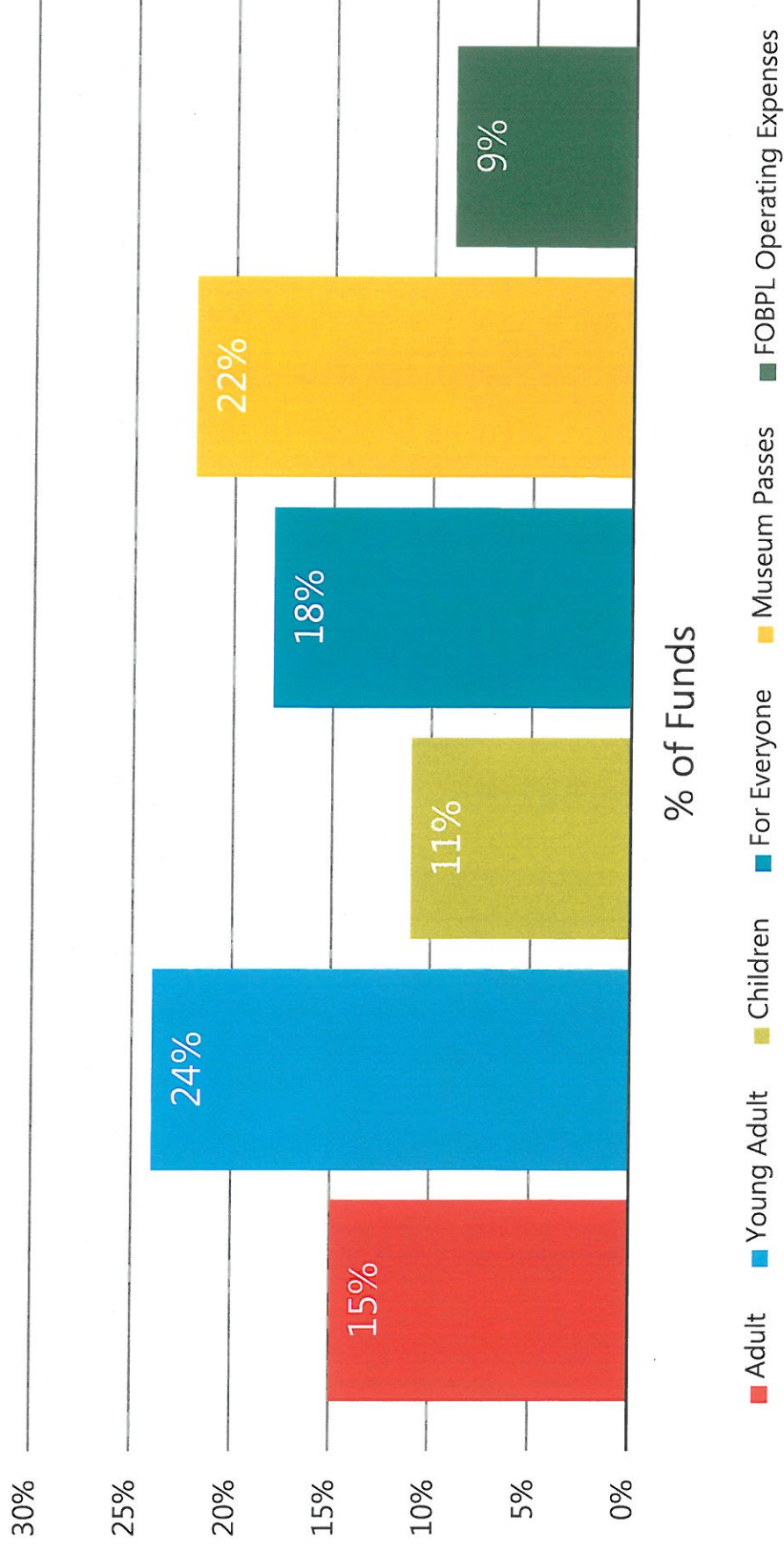
Net Dollars from Books

- Annual sale beat plan
- Everyday and dealer sales looking good with 60% of year behind us



Friends of the Belmont Public Library

>90% of funds go
directly to library
programs



In Praise of Public Libraries

Sue Halpern

April 18, 2019 Issue

Palaces for the People: How Social Infrastructure Can Help Fight Inequality, Polarization, and the Decline of Civic Life

by Eric Klinenberg
Crown, 277 pp., \$28.00

The Library Book

by Susan Orlean
Simon and Schuster, 319 pp., \$28.00

Ex Libris

a film directed by Frederick Wiseman

Haizhan Zheng/Getty Images

Bates Hall, the reading room at the Boston Public Library, 2017

Years ago, I lived in a remote mountain town that had never had a public library. The town was one of the largest in New York State by area but small in population, with a couple thousand residents spread out over about two hundred square miles. By the time my husband and I moved there, the town had lost most of its economic base—in the nineteenth century it had supported a number of tanneries and



mills—and our neighbors were mainly employed seasonally, if at all. When the regional library system's bookmobile was taken out of service, the town had no easy access to books. The town board proposed a small tax increase to fund a library, something on the order of ten dollars per household. It was soundly defeated. The dominant sentiments seemed to be “leave well enough alone” and “who needs books?” Then there was the man who declared that “libraries are communist.”

By then, through the machinations of the town board, which scrounged up \$15,000 from its annual budget and deputized me and two retired teachers to—somehow—turn that money into a lending library, we had around three thousand books on loan from the regional library consortium tucked into a room at the back of town hall. We'd been advised by librarians at the consortium that five hundred library cards would take us through the first year. They took us through the first three weeks. Our librarian, whose previous job was running a used bookstore, turned out to be a master of handselling, even to the rough-and-tumble loggers and guys on the road crew who brought their kids in for story time and left with novels he'd pulled for them, and then came back, alone, for more.

Books were being checked out by the bagful; there were lines at the circulation desk. Children especially, but sometimes adults, couldn't believe it was all free.

By year's end we had signed up about 1,500 patrons, and there was a book club, a preschool story hour, movie night, and a play-reading group. High school students, many of whom did not have Internet access at home, came in the afternoon to do their homework. People pressed books into the hands of strangers who did not stay strangers for long. And it occurred to me one Saturday, as I watched quilters sitting at our one table trade patterns and children clear the shelves of *The Magic School Bus* series, racing to check them out, that the man who had said that libraries were communist had been right. A public library is predicated on an ethos of sharing and egalitarianism. It is nonjudgmental. It stands in stark opposition to the materialism and individualism that otherwise define our culture. It is defiantly, proudly, communal. Even our little book-lined room, with its mismatched furniture and worn carpet, was, as the sociologist Eric Klinenberg reminds us libraries were once called, a palace for the people.

Klinenberg is interested in the ways that common spaces can repair our fractious and polarized civic life. And though he argues in his new book, *Palaces for the People*, that playgrounds, sporting clubs, diners, parks, farmer's markets, and churches—anything, really, that puts people in close contact with one another—have the capacity to strengthen what Tocqueville called the cross-cutting ties that bind us to those who in many ways are different from us, he suggests that libraries may be the most effective. “Libraries are the kinds of places where ordinary people with different backgrounds, passions, and interests can take part in a living democratic culture,” he writes. Yet as Susan Orlean observes in her loving encomium to libraries everywhere, aptly titled *The Library Book*, “The publicness of the public library is an increasingly rare commodity. It becomes harder all the time to think of places that welcome everyone and don't charge any money for that warm embrace.”

As Klinenberg points out:

“Infrastructure” is not a term conventionally used to describe the underpinnings of social life...[but] if states and societies do not recognize social infrastructure and how it works, they will fail to see a powerful way to promote civic engagement and social interaction, both within communities and across group lines.

To glimpse what he means, one need only dip into Frederick Wiseman's epic and inspirational three-hour-and-seventeen-minute documentary *Ex Libris*, a picaresque tour of the grandest people's palace of all: the New York Public Library system, a collection of ninety-two branches with seventeen million annual patrons (and millions more online). Wiseman trains his lens on the quotidian (people lining up to get into the main branch or poring over books), the obscure (a voice actor recording a book for the blind), and the singular (Khalil Muhammad discussing the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture), and without saying so explicitly (the film is unnarrated), he shows the NYPL to

be an exemplar of what a library is and what it can do. Here we see librarians helping students with math homework, hosting job fairs, running literacy and citizenship classes, teaching braille, and sponsoring lectures. We see people using computers, Wi-Fi hotspots, and, of course, books. They are white, black, brown, Asian, young, homeless, not-so-young, deaf, hearing, blind; they are everyone, which is the point. If you want to understand why the Trump administration eliminated federal funding for libraries in its 2018, 2019, and 2020 proposed budgets, it's on display in this film: public libraries dismantle the walls between us.

This is by design. A statement issued by the Public Library Association in 1982 called "The Public Library: Democracy's Resource" said:

The public library is unique among our American institutions. Only the public library provides an open and nonjudgmental environment in which individuals and their interests are brought together with the universe of ideas and information.... The uses made of the ideas and information are as varied as the individuals who seek them. Public libraries freely offer access to their collections and services to all members of the community without regard to race, citizenship, age, education level, economic status, or any other qualification or condition.

Free access to ideas and information, a prerequisite to the existence of a responsible citizenship, is as fundamental to America as are the principles of freedom, equality and individual rights.

The public loves the public library. Klinenberg cites a Pew Research Center study from 2016 that showed that more than 90 percent of Americans consider the library "very" or "somewhat" important to their community. Pew researchers also found that about half of all Americans sixteen and older had used the library in the past year. Even so, libraries are often convenient targets for budget cuts. After the financial crisis, in the years 2008–2013, for example, New York City eliminated \$68 million from the operating budget of the New York Public Library, which resulted in a dramatic drop in staff hours and in its acquisition budget. (A fair amount of *Ex Libris* is given over to poignant behind-the-scenes discussions about budgets.) But it wasn't just the New York Public Library that was suffering. A study by the American Library Association around the same time found that twenty-one states reported cuts in library funding.

This had happened before, and is happening today: libraries, which are supported by local, state, and federal monies, as well as by private donations, are chronically underfunded and subject to the whims of politicians and philanthropists. In a 1972 letter published in these pages, a group of scholars and writers including Hannah Arendt, William Buckley, Ralph Ellison, and Betty Friedan, among many others, decried budget cuts that were curtailing services at the main branch of the New York Public Library:

At one time the Library's doors were open to the public thirteen hours a day, on 365 days of the year; then the working man, the untrained, unmatriculated scholar could use freely

and anonymously, at no cost to himself, the riches of the reference collections. A year ago, however, the Library's financial crisis forced early closing of the reference division at 6 PM, and complete closing on weekends and holidays.

The signatories were asking for readers to contribute to the library's research and reference collections. The letter ran under the headline "Crisis in the NY Public Library." (The main branch is now open on Sundays for four hours; most of the smaller branch libraries are closed that day.)

In 2008 the private-equity billionaire Stephen Schwarzman donated \$100 million to the cash-strapped NYPL. The library's flagship Beaux-Arts building on Fifth Avenue and 42nd Street, which opened in 1911 and took sixteen years to complete at a cost of \$9 million (plus \$20 million for the land on which it sits), now bears his name. One hundred million dollars is a lot of money, but it pales in comparison to the philanthropy of Andrew Carnegie, the patron saint of libraries (and rabid industrialist), whose \$55 million largesse—the equivalent of \$1.6 billion today—funded 2,509 libraries worldwide, 1,679 of them public libraries in the United States, between 1886 and 1919. Sixty-seven of them were in New York City, sixteen of which are still in use.

Carnegie's devotion to libraries was long-standing. His father helped found the Tradesmen's Subscription Library in Dunfermline, Scotland, where he was a weaver and a member of the failed Chartist Movement. When industrialization cost him his job, the family emigrated to the Pittsburgh area, and at thirteen, after only five years of formal schooling, Carnegie was sent out to work, first as a bobbin boy in a cotton factory and later as a messenger for a telegraph company. Working boys were allowed to borrow one book a week from the private library of Colonel James Anderson, a successful local iron manufacturer and veteran of the War of 1812. Carnegie wrote in his autobiography:

It was from my own early experience that I decided there was no use to which money could be applied so productive of good to boys and girls who have good within them and ability and ambition to develop it, as the founding of a public library in a community which is willing to support it as a municipal institution. I am sure that the future of those libraries I have been privileged to found will prove the correctness of this opinion. Carnegie's first American library, in Braddock, Pennsylvania, was built about a hundred years after the founding of the first public library in what would become the United States. In 1790, the residents of Franklin, Massachusetts, chose to allow a collection of books donated to the town by its namesake, Benjamin Franklin, to be circulated among its residents without charge. In so doing, they chose not to follow Franklin's lead: in 1731 he had founded a subscription library in Philadelphia. Massachusetts was also the site of the first major public library system, Boston's, founded in 1854. Carnegie's Braddock library was different from these: in addition to books, it had a 964-seat, velvet-curtained theater, a basketball court, and a swimming pool. Its mission was to exercise both mind and body. These days, the Braddock library, an imposing, turreted building up the hill from Carnegie's shuttered steel mill, has fallen into disrepair, and a group is attempting to

raise \$10 million for renovations—not from a person of great wealth, but one billion pennies donated by the public. (They’ve raised \$40,000 so far.)

Carnegie libraries stretch from one end of the country to the other, the 106 in New York State eclipsed by 142 in California. Six of these were in Los Angeles, a city of just over one hundred thousand at the turn of the twentieth century when Carnegie made his grants; three are still in use. No Carnegie money was used to build what would become the city’s Central Library. Founded in 1872 as a small fee-based organization whose five-dollar annual subscription was out of reach for most citizens, by 1933 it was circulating more books than any other library in the country.

Orlean nimbly documents this phenomenal growth, moving backward from the fire that roared through Central Library in 1986, while roving through the library as it is today, “an intricate machine, a contraption of whirring gears.” In so doing, she achieves on paper what Wiseman does on film: by acquainting the reader with the library’s actual infrastructure—the shipping department that sends 32,000 books around the city every weekday; the photography and map collections; the reference librarians on call to answer questions about, say, Pussy Riot, obituary etiquette, and the life span of parrots; the staff members who teach coding to children and connect homeless patrons with much-needed services—she reveals why it is such a valuable community resource and a perfect example of what Klinenberg is talking about when he extols the benefits of social infrastructure.

When the Los Angeles Central Library caught fire, it burned at 2,000 degrees Fahrenheit for seven hours. Four hundred thousand books were destroyed, among them the library’s entire collection of American and British plays, all the books about the Bible and church history, 45,000 works of literature, 18,000 social science books, 12,000 cookbooks, every bird book, 5.5 million patent listings dating back to 1799, and more, none of it covered by insurance. Orlean pursues in a desultory way the mystery of who—if anyone—started the fire, and why. Book burning, in her view, is a kind of genocide, a way to wipe out the collective memory of a people: Mao (a librarian himself), the Nazis, book-burning festival-goers during the Spanish Inquisition, and, just last year, a religious zealot who burned a number of LGBTQ children’s books he’d checked out from an Iowa public library—all engaged in “libricide” to incinerate ideas and erase whole swaths of history. If the Central Library fire was deliberate, to what end?

Like others who have investigated the fire, Orlean sets her sights on a mostly out-of-work actor and ne’er-do-well named Harry Peak, who may or may not have been in the building the morning of the fire, bumped into an older patron rushing out, been the young man shooed out of the staff room where he’d helped himself to a cup of coffee, been the same young man who was told to leave one of the library’s restricted areas, or been the blond young man in the picture drawn by a sketch artist after hearing descriptions of the person who had done these things. Arson turns out to be difficult to determine, especially

in an aging building known to have faulty wiring, and Peak, who died in 1993, turned out to be a distinctively unreliable narrator. More than once he claimed to have been in the library that morning, yet at other times said he'd been nowhere near it. His alibis twist and turn and twist again, which was little surprise to those who knew him (his sister called him "the biggest bullshitter in the world") but flummoxed law enforcement, who spectacularly failed to pin the crime on him, arresting him but eventually releasing him for lack of evidence.



Library of Congress

A bookmobile at the Rockville Fair in Maryland, 1928

Despite her best efforts, Orlean, too, is unable to solve the case. "The Central Library fire confounded me," she writes. "As hard as I tried, I couldn't completely convince myself that Harry started the fire." For readers entertained by Peak's peregrinations, this is of little consequence. His

story is a sidebar to a bigger and more enchanting mystery: how a library rose out of almost nothing to become, as its name suggests, central to the residents of the second-largest city in the country, lending more than 900,000 books a year, answering six million reference questions, and welcoming 700,000 patrons. This nut Orlean easily and delightfully cracks.

The growth of Central Library mirrored the growth of Los Angeles. In 1873, when the subscription library opened, California had been a state for less than twenty-five years and Los Angeles had a population of fewer than 11,000 people. By 1904, the population had grown tenfold, and the library was circulating nearly 800,000 books a year. Fewer than twenty years later, when the number of residents was over half a million, one thousand books were being checked out each hour, about three million annually. Indeed, plotted on a graph, population growth and library circulation figures would appear coterminous. If this seems obvious, it's only because we have come to assume the importance of libraries and their services to all members of the community.

What makes Central Library unique, and its story so entertaining, are the people who shepherded it through its metamorphosis. Many were women, well before librarianship became a female domain. Orlean introduces readers to Mary Foy, who in 1880, at eighteen years of age, took over Central Library's forerunner, the subscription library that at the time didn't allow women to borrow books and relegated them to a separate "Ladies' room." Two female librarians succeeded her, and then a third: a newspaper reporter from Ohio named Tessa Kelso, a short-haired, cigarette-smoking woman who was described at the time as "unconventional."

Kelso had the foresight to anticipate the library as we now know it, imagining it to be a repository not only of books but of sporting equipment and board games and “the whole paraphernalia of healthy, wholesome amusement that is...out of the reach of the average boy and girl.” Before she could see that vision through, Kelso was pushed out of her job for adding to the collection *Le Cadet*, a novel by the French author Jean Richepin, which was considered risqué by some of the city’s arbiters of morality. She sued one of them, a Methodist minister named J.W. Campbell, for slander, and though she won (the church settled) she still lost her job.

Then there was Mary Jones, who was summarily dismissed in 1905 when the library board suddenly decided it would rather have a man running the library. Jones fought the decision, rallying a thousand women to petition the mayor and library board on her behalf, and, when that got no response, to take to the streets. She eventually gave up, moved east, and became head librarian at Bryn Mawr.

Orlean has the most fun recounting the misadventures and peccadillos of Jones’s successor, a bon vivant named Charles Lummis. Lummis was a writer whose first book, *Birch Bark Poems*, was published on birch bark he’d peeled and stitched together himself, and who gained national fame when he chronicled his walk from the east coast, where he’d dropped out of Harvard, to California, where he was to take up a position at the *Los Angeles Times*. His penchant for disappearing for weeks at a time to go tramping or to preside over orgiastic bacchanals eventually cost him his job at the newspaper and did not abate when he took over the library. Still, Orlean credits him with making the library “the institution it is today...[pushing] for it to become a serious research center for scholars” and establishing its photography collection, as well as collections of Spanish and Californian history. “His ambition was to make the library completely accessible—a workshop for scholars including every painter’s apprentice or working boy or streetcar man who wishes to learn, just as much as it includes the Greek professors or the art dilettante,” Orlean writes, quoting Lummis. “His attitude of inclusiveness was unusual for the time. He campaigned to bring in patrons who hadn’t considered using the library before.” This is the essence and the calling of the public library today.

Last July an economics professor at Long Island University published an article in *Forbes* arguing that public libraries should be closed because they had outlived their usefulness now that Netflix streams movies, Starbucks offers free Wi-Fi, and, most conveniently, electronic books are instantly available from Amazon. Closing libraries in favor of Amazon would be a win-win, he said, because taxes would go down while Amazon’s share price would go up. The professor was especially enamored of the company’s cashierless storefronts, which, in his estimation, “basically combines a library with a Starbucks.” The “library” being referred to, it should be noted, is a commercial enterprise that sells books.

The reaction to the article, once readers realized that it wasn't satire, was outrage and ridicule, and *Forbes* removed it from its website about seventy-two hours after it was posted. But the funny thing was that, inadvertently, the writer had made a strong case for the value and continued existence of the public library:

There was a time local libraries offered the local community lots of services in exchange for their tax money. They would bring books, magazines, and journals to the masses through a borrowing system.... They also provided residents with a comfortable place they could enjoy their books. They provided people with a place they could do their research in peace with the help of friendly librarians....

Libraries slowly began to service the local community more. Libraries introduced video rentals and free internet access. The modern local library still provides these services, but they aren't for free. [Rather they are] financed by taxpayers in [the] form of a "library tax."

Libraries, of course, were never "free" any more than public schools or public roads or public health nurses are free. One might expect a professor of economics to know this. Or for him to do the math: the per capita "library tax" for the Los Angeles County library system, for example, is only \$32.77—or about nine medium-sized Starbucks lattes. There are nine Amazon Go stores in the United States and 16,568 public libraries, many in places where Amazon or Starbucks will never venture, like the branches in the far reaches of the Bronx and Los Angeles where Wiseman and Orlean take us, or the rural outpost where the library I helped found is located.

That library now has about 40,000 items on its shelves, including games and puzzles and sporting equipment, just as Tessa Kelso envisioned well over a century ago. Though small and lacking some of the amenities of a better-resourced community, it is a worthy successor to the libraries Carnegie funded. Those, it should be noted, were not "free" either: before he would make a grant, Carnegie required each town to commit to covering 10 percent of a library's annual cost as well as supplying its building site. Grantees also had to agree to provide library services at no cost to patrons.

Perhaps the most definitive rebuke to the idea of trading libraries for Amazon and coffee shops comes from a former Starbucks employee whom Klinenberg met at a branch of the New York Public Library, where he is now an "information specialist": "At Starbucks, and at most businesses, really, the assumption is that you, the customer, are better for having this thing that you purchase. Right?" he said. "At the library, the assumption is you *are* better. You have it in you already.... The library assumes the best out of people." What we learn from *The Library Book*, *Ex Libris*, and *Palaces for the People* is that we are all better off, too, when people assume the best out of libraries.

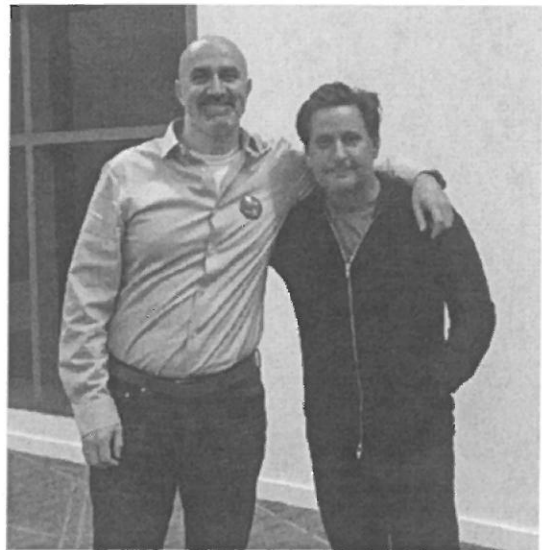
Emilio Estevez, Back in the Library with *The Public* | ALA Midwinter 2019

by Lisa Peet

Mar 03, 2019 | Filed in News

Members of the library community are not the only ones who have excitedly awaited the release of Emilio Estevez's newest film, *The Public*. But they were among its first audiences, at screenings held during the 2018 American Library Association (ALA) Annual Conference in New Orleans. Before the Midwinter screening, Estevez and Ryan Dowd, author of *The Librarian's Guide to Homelessness*, sat down with *LJ* to talk about *The Public* and the story of its 12-year journey.

Members of the library community are not the only ones who have excitedly awaited the release of Emilio Estevez's newest film, *The Public*. But they were among its first audiences, at screenings held during the 2018 American Library Association (ALA) Annual Conference in New Orleans. The film, shot in the Public Library of Cincinnati and Hamilton County (PLCHC), OH, tells the story of a group of patrons who turn the library into an impromptu shelter during a bitterly cold night, initiating a standoff with library officials, law enforcement, and the media—and forcing library staff to confront their own ideals of inclusion and access and, ultimately, stand up for what they feel is right. Estevez, who wrote, produced, and directed the film, plays one of the librarians on duty that night, heading a strong ensemble cast that features Jena Malone, Christian Slater, Alec Baldwin, Taylor Schilling, Gabrielle Union, Michael Kenneth Williams, Jeffrey Wright, Ki Hong Lee, Richard T. Jones, and Jacob Vargas.



Ryan Dowd, L., and Emilio Estevez at ALA Midwinter

Photo by Lisa Peet

The Public held its first screening at the Santa Barbara Film Festival in January 2018, and officially premiered at the Toronto International Film Festival in September 2018; the film has also screened at the Hamptons International Film Festival, NY, and in Palm Springs, FL, and Cincinnati. Estevez tweaked the film in response to librarian feedback at the 2018 Annual Meeting, among other factors, and the final version of the film was screened twice more for a library audience at the ALA Midwinter meeting in Seattle to a packed auditorium, standing ovations, and thoughtful questions. A screening is scheduled for April 1 at the New York Public Library ahead of its theatrical release.

Before the Midwinter screening, Estevez and Ryan Dowd, author of *The Librarian's Guide to Homelessness* (ALA), sat down with *LJ* to talk about *The Public* and the story of its 12-year journey.

BACK TO THE LIBRARY

Estevez was no stranger to libraries when he first encountered the article that would inspire *The Public*. He had spent plenty of time in them as a child, and had recently put in a long stretch at the Los Angeles Public Library (LAPL) doing research for his previous film. "The history that I was trying to access was not available online—it was all on microfiche," he told *LJ*, recalling, "it was a dollar a page, and if you didn't get the entire page you'd get home, you'd go through your research, there'd be a great story, and it'd be [incomplete]. So you'd go back. This was over months, compiling as much information as I could for my film *Bobby*, which was about the day Bobby Kennedy was shot."

After that film wrapped, Estevez was looking for a new picture "that would be similar in tone, that would be an ensemble piece, that would be at a single location."

On April 1, 2007, he picked up the *Los Angeles Times* and read an article by Chip Ward, who had recently left his position as assistant director of the Salt Lake City Public Library, titled "Written Off: A Librarian's Days Among the Chronically Homeless." (The piece also appeared online on Tomdispatch.com as "What They Didn't Teach Us in Library School.")

"The essay was about how libraries have become de facto homeless shelters, and how librarians have become social workers and first responders," Estevez explained. "I was so moved by the piece. But I also knew what he was talking about, too." Doing research for *Bobby* at LAPL, he said, "I saw this community of people who were using the library as a shelter.... These [city] homeless shelters, they kick people out at 6 a.m." When the library doors opened at nine, he said, "Boom, they're in, until six, seven, eight [o'clock], depending on the day." Right away, Estevez told *LJ*, "I said, 'This is my next film.'"

A few days later, Estevez was back at LAPL digging into the story. "What if," he wondered, "these people decided not to leave?"

LEAVING L.A.

The first draft of *The Public* took about a year to write, said Estevez. "It was 155 pages, it was overwritten, it was overwrought, and it was super dark, because we were in the middle of the [George W.] Bush regime."

He initially envisioned the story set in Los Angeles, and began putting together a cast and crew and raising startup money. "Then the financial crisis of 2008 pretty much sunk it," he said. "But I'm glad that it did, in retrospect, because I think that the film's more relevant now than it would have been had we made it then." The delay also gave him a chance to fine-tune the script.

Estevez's idea of filming at LAPL met with some resistance as well. When he met with then-director Fontayne Holmes, she told him bluntly, "It's not going to happen."

"I said, 'Well, why?'" Estevez recalled. "And she said, 'We had a film company in here before. They set up the lights, and the lights got hot. The heat turned on the sprinklers and the sprinklers went on, and they ruined books.' I said, 'Oh, what a bunch of clowns! What a bunch of unprofessionals! Who was it?' And she said, 'It was a show called *The West Wing*.'"

There wasn't much Estevez could say after that, he felt. And although he had more encouraging conversations with current city librarian John Szabo, who replaced Holmes after her retirement in 2008, ultimately Estevez decided to move the film to Cincinnati.

Why Cincinnati? In addition to the strong tax rebate incentive offered by the state of Ohio—no small consideration as he continued to assemble funding, said Estevez—the city of Cincinnati suggested he look at the library. Estevez's mother is from Cincinnati and his father is from Dayton, he noted, "so I have Ohio roots. Going back was not a heavy lift for me."

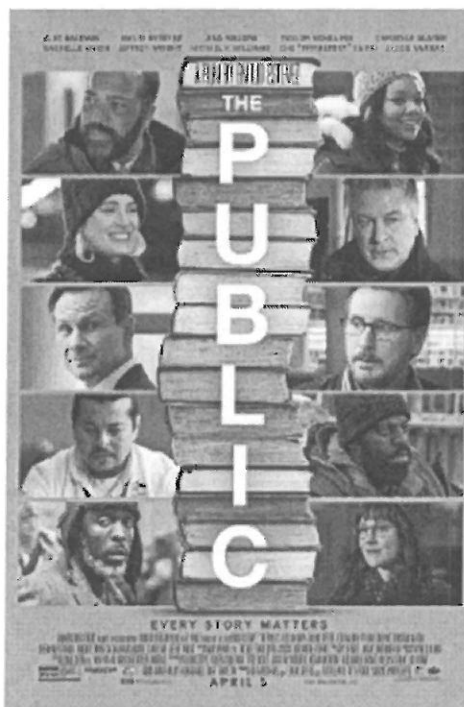
The harsher weather in Ohio made sense for the story line as well, Estevez added. "It does get cold in L.A.—it got down to 30, I think, once or twice in downtown—but it was certainly not life-threatening like it is in the Midwest, like we're seeing now."

With the support of the Cincinnati Film Commission, Estevez met with then-PLCHC director Kimber Fender. "She sat there and she said, A movie? A whole movie? Well, how long?" said Estevez. He invited Fender to read the script, but noted, "It's cost prohibitive for us to try to recreate [the library] and build this—the movie's not going to get made if we don't shoot it here." He assured her that the crew would respect the space while filming at night, when most of the action takes place, and would defer to the library's work and patrons' privacy when they had to shoot during open hours.

"I wanted to make it clear to Kim that our intention was to say, 'This is a privileged issue here, and we're grateful. How can we work with you? And promise I won't screw it up. I promise that librarians will see this film and will be happy.'"

A number of PLCHC staff members had cameos as librarians, security officers, and homeless patrons, and Estevez made a point of hiring local Cincinnati actors as well. As far as the main cast, some of the biggest box-office draws, he said, were cold calls. "People just read it and said, 'I'm in.' Alec [Baldwin] was the first, and once Alec was in it was a lot easier to attract the others. Jeffrey was next." *The Public* began production in January 2017, and was filmed in 22 days.

SERIOUS THEMES, LAUGHING LIBRARIANS



The film's themes—mental health, homelessness, the opioid crisis, and global warming—often made it a tough sell when approaching partners, Estevez said. "You roll all that out and you just watch their eyes glaze over."

But when people watch *The Public*, he said, "It's engaging, and it's entertaining. That was the real sleight of hand with this film." One of his inspirations, he added, was an early film in which he costarred—John Hughes's 1985 *The Breakfast Club*, which was set in a school library. "It was the courage of John Hughes to say to the studio, 'I want to shoot a movie about five kids inside a library for detention.' You can imagine, he was probably met with the same reaction."

An initial distributor fell through in May 2017, but Estevez took *The Public* to ALA Annual in New Orleans anyway. "We showed up without a real action plan, so the librarians and library staff there are saying, 'Hey, when's the movie coming out?' and I'm just sweating," he told *LJ*. "I had no idea when it was coming out or who was going to buy it." Representatives from Universal Pictures loved the film at the Toronto International Film Festival, however, and signed on—much to the relief of Estevez, who described himself as "a one-man

band for the last 12 years, getting this thing up and running."

He has also been delighted at the response he has gotten from the library world. In New Orleans, Estevez said, "I stood through all three screenings at the back of the theater, sweating, terrified. Because I thought, if we don't get it right here, social media being what it is, [it'll be]: 'This movie sucks.' 'They didn't get it right.' 'Stereotypical depiction of librarians once again—thanks, Hollywood.' That's the nightmares that keep you up in the middle of the night."

He had also promised to take any and all questions from the audience. "I threw myself into the fire, and I was ready for anything—no question was pre-vetted."

But as Dowd, who was with him, recalled, the first question from the library audience was, "How did you get our world so right?"

Their laughter at library in-jokes cheered Estevez and Dowd as well. "I think that they were surprised," added Estevez, "and their fears were allayed."

Even in front of non-library crowds, as in Toronto and Palm Springs, *The Public's* reception was warm. When he asked the crowd how many people had a library card, recalled Estevez, he was impressed at the show of hands. (Estevez also held special screenings at the Toronto and Palm Springs public libraries.)

Despite the overwhelmingly positive response, Estevez felt the film still needed tweaking. Length was one consideration, he told *LJ*. "I wanted to get the movie under two hours," he said, citing the "tinder dating" of movies: "You sort of go through [the listings] and it's like, '1:59, yeah, I'd date that tonight.' As opposed to 2:15, eh. 2:05, nah." He also wanted to get a PG-13 rating, rather than the R it was given at the time of the screenings, a matter of "removing some F-bombs," Estevez said. "To cut those out doesn't materially affect the film, but it will ultimately affect the box office and the accessibility of it."

In addition to the warmly received screenings in Seattle, the film will go on to the Cinequest festival in San José, CA, and the Virginia Film Festival in Charlottesville before premiering at NYPL on April 1, exactly twelve years since Estevez first read Ward's article.

What has impressed him about libraries during more than a decade spent immersed in their world?

"The sacred space between the patron and the desk reference librarian," Estevez replied immediately, "that is as sacred as the relationship between doctor-patient and lawyer-client. I didn't understand that until I started doing the research."

That relationship, he told *LJ*, was the key to his character, Stuart. "There's politics in everything, in any profession," he said—even, he discovered, libraries. "At the center of [the film] you have a somewhat idealistic character who gets dragged into it unwittingly." *The Public* is a "David and Goliath type of story," he explained, and the head librarian finds himself "sitting on the wrong side of history, as it proves during the course of the film."

What he hopes people will take away from the film, in addition to an appreciation for the underdog, is the sense of curiosity that libraries embody.

The library, he added, is not only a safe place for all—"It's a place where imagination and curiosity live. And I think that we need to reconnect to that."

Nearly 35 years after *The Breakfast Club*, Estevez told *LJ*, "I'm back in the library—with a different club."