



2022 Annual Report

(Belmont Public Library):

Department Head: (Peter J. Struzziero):

Assistant Director: (Position Requested for FY24):

Purpose and Duties:

The Belmont Public Library is guided by the past and focused on the future. Its mission is to enrich the lives of the community by empowering its citizens' personal, educational, and professional growth. The Library is dedicated to advancing literacy and fostering life-long learning.

The Belmont Public Library aims to provide a center for information and discovery through innovative programming, robust collections, and responsive services. The Library is a place for Belmont to learn, share, and create.

Our Core Values

Knowledgeable staff and great service

Intellectual freedom and access to knowledge for all

Current and historical digital collections

Technology and information literacy training

Spaces for study, collaboration, and innovation

A place where Belmont comes to explore, learn, and discover

Founded on the Five I's

Information & Exploring

Knowledge, Resources, and Access: All Formats for All Ages

Instruction, Learning & Enriching

Guiding Life-Long Learners Through Literacy & Technology

Interaction & Community Building

Partnering with the Community: A Library Without Walls

Innovation, Creating & Dreaming

Today's Librarians & Tomorrow's Technology: Educating & Empowering

Inspiration & Discovering at Our Library

Be Inspired at Your Belmont Public Library, The Doorway to Opportunity

Summary of Activities and Accomplishments:

Library Administration

- The Belmont Public Library continues to be a top circulating public library in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, even when compared to communities that are much larger than Belmont. FY2022 showed the highest patron usage in our Library history, with 676,640 in total collection use. This was a 43% increase from FY2021, bringing the library back from the lower COVID numbers. The devotion of our patrons to the library and the hard work of our staff to keep making our services even better are an important part of why that number is so high.

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- In FY2022 we enjoyed the highest digital circulation in Library History as well with 161,944 uses of electronic content. This is a 250% increase in just the last five years. While physical item circulation continues to be our #1 function, digital library use grows each day.
- We completed One Book One Belmont Programs in back-to back years for the first time in library history. While FY2022 focused on wellness and Antiracism, FY2023 celebrated all things Library with NYT best seller Susan Orlean. These events kicked off a year-long 50th anniversary celebration of the Friends of the Library, and their longtime support of library programming.
- After a reworking of salary lines in FY22 the Library saw the return of summer Sunday hours in the summer of 2022. The Library will now be a 7 day a week operation all year long.
- Our Library Director was nominated and appointed to be the Vice President of the Minuteman Library Network. This carries a three-year commitment with successive terms as President and Past President. This is the first time Belmont has had a leadership role on the Minuteman Executive Board.
- We worked in support of the Library Building Committee and Board of Library Trustees to see the Select Board place a new Library on the town wide ballot. This has been a library goal for 23 years, and was the first vote taken in over 60 years.
- The Belmont Library Foundation and Board of Trustees raised over \$5 million for a new library, which is the most money ever raised for any reason in Belmont's history.
- We saw overwhelming support from both Town Meeting and voters as a brand new library was approved for construction. The anticipated opening will be in the summer/fall of 2025. This is a true achievement for our town and generations to come as the building is expected to last 100 years.

Circulation

- The Circulation Department processed over 80,000 holds in 2022. These are items requested by Belmont patrons from other libraries in our Minuteman Library Network. We send out tens of thousands in addition to those we request, but overall Belmont is a net borrower, as opposed to lender. We benefit greatly from this robust network.
- Nearly 1,500 new patrons joined the library family by creating new library cards.
- We had a total patron count of almost 17,000 this year. 60-65% of our residents have Library cards.
- Circulation staff members answered 7,168 questions from our patrons.
- This year we started work on a project to add RFID tags to all of our Library materials. With support and supervision from the Technical Services Department, Circulation staff members began adding tags to Library materials new and old. This process will help ensure faster and more accurate checkouts and item locating in the future.
- Lisa Cassidy, the Longtime Head of Circulation stepped down from her role as Department Head to explore new opportunities within the Library. With over 30 years of service to the library (15 as a Department Head) she is our most tenured library staff member and we are grateful for her years of support and leadership.
- After a thorough internal search one candidate emerged from the ranks as the best choice for this opportunity. For 15 years Gráinne Griffin has climbed the ranks of the department to become the



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longstanding assistant supervisor, and the right person to lead the department forward. We are very pleased to have retained former Circulation Department Head Lisa Cassidy as a part of our team, now moving forward under Gráinne's leadership.

Jane Gray Dustan Children's Room

It was a year of rebuilding for the Jane Gray Dustan Children's Room. It was our first year since 2020 of being fully open to the public without disruption of service which meant we were able to resume in person storytimes and performances again much to the happiness of the public and the staff. Children's program attendance totaled an estimated 5,217 attendees from in person, virtual, and outdoor programming as well as outreach programs. We continue to look for all the ways we can keep our beloved programs on the calendar while still adding new ones and prioritizing the health and safety of library users. With the support of our patrons and our colleagues at the library we are excited to look ahead and continue our work supporting Belmont families.

Programs for All Ages

After months of outdoor storytimes and programs held virtually over Zoom, we were at long last able to hold storytimes inside the library. Being able to welcome families back indoors for stories and songs and activities was a huge missing piece of our services. Its return has been incredibly fulfilling for patrons and for staff alike. Staff still provided virtual options and outdoor options throughout the year in order to work with the comfort level of every family, but giving families the opportunity to attend in person storytime is a resumption of services that we have all been anxiously awaiting. By December we had returned to nearly all programs being indoors.

School aged kids had many choices for activities that suited their interests. Our Take and Make Programs continued to provide creative challenges to kids and their families. Throughout the year they made many fun crafts including 3D pumpkins, and origami tulips. We also launched our first ever Tween Write Night with writing related activities and projects for kids ages 11 and up.

Karen Land, a former Iditarod athlete, was our first non storytime in person program. In March, she visited with her dogs and discussed her experiences as an athlete as well as history of the Iditarod. Matt Heaton's monthly concerts could finally move off Zoom, and into the Assembly Room, and Belmont resident Rubi Lichauco was able to bring back her Music and Movement program for a whole new group of little ones. Fans who love all things from a galaxy far, far away could gather in person once again with Library Director and Star Wars expert Peter Struzziero for our first in person Star Wars Symposium in several years.

Children's Room staff are working to strengthen our mission to ensure that our programming is reflective of the many cultures and parts of the world that are important and relevant to the families who use our library. Take and Make crafts featured a demonstration for Lunar New Year. We hosted a book discussion of *All Different Now* by Angela Johnson to commemorate Juneteenth as well as a storytime for Indigenous People's Day. With help from a dedicated teen volunteer, we were able to offer virtual storytimes in Mandarin and English for the first time in many years.

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October was all about One Book One Belmont, and our programs included Virtual Pajama Storytime, Build Your Own Fairy Houses, and a Make Your Own Board Game take and make/craft demonstration. This was the biggest variety of ages and activities that we have ever had for One Book One Belmont and we were excited to have nearly sixty participants of all ages, including twenty for our first in person Family Book Club in over two years. Adults and kids alike had the chance to enjoy pizza while doing activities and discussing *Escape from Mr. Lemoncello's Library*.

Staffing

With the support of Library Administration and the Town of Belmont, the Children's Room was at long last able to add a third full time librarian position. Rosanna Clarke, who had been part time for several years, and an essential part of our team, was promoted to this new position just in time for the start of our busy summer season. We were also able to welcome Jamie Lamy, Nancy Preston, and Maya Escobar to our part time librarian team. These additions to our team will help us continue to expand our programming while continuing to offer the best customer service within the Children's Room to our patrons.

Summer Reading

Summer Reading 2022 was fully in person with no virtual component for the first time since 2019. Participants logged the time they spent reading and traded it for surprise bundles of beads to add to a necklace. Kids enjoyed building necklaces made of all kinds of beads including sparkling, ocean animals, hearts and stars, and many others as well as a variety of fun tags. 452 readers from ages 4 to 12 participated this summer.

Along with the return of a non-virtual summer reading program, in person summer programming was back too. The start of Summer Reading kicked off with an outdoor party planned with the Recreation Department at the Underwood Pool with 150 attendees. Families could finally enjoy concerts, magic shows, science programs, crafts and more in person here at the library. 1,450 participants came to our in person and off-site summer programs.

Outreach and Bringing the Community Together

The Children's Room continued to partner with the local residents, organizations, and town agencies. Belmont Recreation and the Library teamed up to do outdoor storytimes next to the Underwood Pool to help families using the pool have easier access to programs. Belmont Fire Chief David DeStefano read stories outside and answered kids' questions, and arranged for two Touch a Truck visits so kids could see what a fire truck was like. The Library was happily able to return to in person storytimes at the Belmont Farmers' Market. Children's Staff conducted regular visits to the Recreation Department's Summer Program to read to campers from ages 4 to 11 and read stories related to their themes at camp. During the fall of 2022, the library continued its Access for Every Student Outreach program to insure that all fifth and sixth graders at Chenery Middle School had the chance to create a library card of their own.

The Children's Room and the Belmont Wellness Coalition teamed again to provide a program to help families support the mental health needs of their children ages 8 to 14 and find reliable assistance and strategies. In



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partnership with the Henry Frost School, author/illustrator Cathryn Falwell visited and taught preschoolers about how she creates her books.

Visits to preschools and daycares were also able to resume in the fall. Librarians started their regular visits to the Wonder School, Waverly Square Daycare, and Payson Park Preschool to visit classrooms full of kids of all ages and bring stories to children who may not otherwise get to experience library storytimes.

Working Together Again with the Belmont Public Schools

The COVID-19 pandemic took away two years' worth of visits and collaboration with the Belmont Public Schools. This year we worked hard to restart the valuable connections that we began. Librarians visited Burbank Elementary to introduce summer reading to the four second grade classes and share stories and games. Then for the fall, a new group of second graders were able to have their first field trip in two years right here at the library.

Belmont Public School Staff and library staff collaborated to bring a morning of crafts, stories, and learning to the English Language Learning community and beyond for an International Celebration of Spring. Families new to the country and to Belmont came together to form friendships and find community resources while their children had fun creating and learning.

Reference

The Library's community partnerships continue to thrive and expand in 2022. Just consider some of the following collaborations:

The Library partnered with the Council on Aging for a variety of engaging programs, including a four week class series on Chinese Brush Painting. This intensive course, taught by graphic designer and art director Vartus Varadian, led participants through the basics of Chinese brush painting.

The collaboration with the Council on Aging continued in February, when we were able to jointly hold a cold process soap making workshop, which was well attended and stirred community and togetherness during the cold winter months.

The Library, in collaboration with Belmont Human Rights Commission, Belmont Against Racism, the Town of Belmont, and several neighboring libraries, was honored to host a talk with Sybrina Fulton - activist, public speaker, and mother of Trayvon Martin. She led a conversation around the important, varied, and difficult topics of race, justice, and equity. Over 150 people attended on the night and the YouTube recording has been viewed over 270 times.

Belmont LGBTQ+ Alliance, Belmont Human Rights Commission, LexPride, Network for Social Justice, and the Library partnered to host a panel of trans speakers in honor of Trans Day of Visibility (March 31). Our panelists generously shared their stories and thoughts with attendees, proving what should go without saying - that trans people are just as ordinary and extraordinary as everyone else! It was a warm, fun, and engaging evening all around.

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The winter of 2022 saw the return of the Winter Reading program! A way to engage patrons with the library during the snowy months (January-March), the library offered activity ideas for all ages, with chances to earn gift cards to local businesses as a way to support them during this challenging economic time. 60 individuals participated, completing over 220 activities.

We also continued and strengthened our partnership with the Belmont Farmer's Market. The library was yet again invited to table at the market on the first Thursday of each month, in addition to the weekly storytimes the children's librarians provided. We brought books for children and adults about food, farming, and community that patrons could check out right at the market. Residents could also sign up for a library card while shopping, and we offered a craft relating to the storytime.

We helped increase the variety of the town's home chefs' repertoires with virtual visits from area favorite restaurant Mei Mei for dumpling making instruction sessions. In a program so popular we had to offer a second session, attendees learned how to create a variety of different dumpling shapes, as well as tips and tricks for fillings, pairings, and freezing and storing. Another savory collaboration between the library and Belmont Farmers Market!

Reference librarians partnered with the Belmont Human Rights Commission and Belmont LGBTQ Alliance on a Pride Parade to celebrate Pride Month in June, providing a list of recommended books as well as a display that patrons could check out at the parade's end gathering point.

In partnership with Belmont Against Racism, Beech Street Center, and neighboring libraries, Belmont hosted the incredibly knowledgeable and engaging Dr. Kellie Carter Jackson, an award winning author, Wellesley professor, and Historian-in-Residence for the Museum of African American History in Boston. Dr. Carter Jackson presented on the history of Juneteenth, which is unknown to many non-African-American people. The audience was particularly involved, asking questions and thanking Dr. Carter Jackson for offering her insights. Over 100 people attended on the night and there have been many additional views on the library's YouTube page.

Thanks to the continuing generosity of Belmont residents with their book donations, the library is able to offer much needed reading material for incarcerated populations through partnership with the Prison Book Program in Quincy, MA. To date, nearly 150 boxes of books have been donated to help fulfill inmate requests.

A new book display for Disability Pride Month turned out to be one of the most popular of the year. Multiple books were checked out each day, highlighting the interest and attention of the disabled community and their supporters in library resources.

During the summer of 2022, we expanded our outreach locations to Wellington Camp pickup, Payson Park Music Festival, and Town Field movie nights weekly, as well as tabling at the Farmer's Market monthly. By adding camp pickup we were able to sign up an additional 20 kids for summer reading, and at Payson Park we were able to promote our new vinyl record collection and circulating record player.



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The summer of 2022 also brought the return of the Knitting Club to the library. This group, a mainstay of pre-COVID library life, has seen significant interest from both Belmont residents and those from surrounding communities.

The summer reading program conducted a total of 65 programs with over 450 participants signed up and 1450 attendees at summer reading programs. We were overwhelmed by the response!

2022 also brought about the return of the Music on Saturdays programming. Generously funded by the Friends of the Belmont Public Library, the library hosted three in-person concerts throughout the course of the year, ranging from Great American Songbook classics to 500 years of guitar music. These concerts, brought in an average of 30 attendees

Collaborating with Belmont Against Racism, UUtheVote, Belmont League of Women Voters and the Belmont League of Women Voters, the library hosted a screening of the documentary *Suppressed and Sabotaged: The Fight to Vote*. After the viewing, our enthusiastic attendees heard from Jacob Love of Lawyers for Civil Rights and Beth Huang of Massachusetts Voter Table about local concerns and ways to get involved in protecting voting rights nationwide. Several people reached out after the fact to express their gratitude for this type of programming and the local speakers in particular.

The library's monthly adult craftalong program continues to be a reliable hit with patrons, and in the fall of 2022 moved back to in person meetings! Participants of all skill levels register for the event and then join us at the library for a fun, relaxing, and social gathering to complete the craft.

This year the library became another friendly face at Back to School Nights across k-12 schools in Belmont. While being introduced to new teachers, classrooms, and programs, families who attended Back to School Nights also had the opportunity to get information about library programs and services for all ages.

September was a big month for virtual author talks! We hosted Josh Prager, speaking on his narrative nonfiction investigation into the family at the heart of *Roe v. Wade*; David Kruh on the storied construction of Route 128, aka the "road we love to hate"; Morgan Talty, whose NYT Best Book of the Summer features interconnected stories set in a Penobscot community in Maine; and Daniel Nieh, a trailblazer in the emerging global noir genre.

2022 was a hallmark year, as we celebrated the Belmont Community Read One Book, One Belmont for the first time in back to back years (2021 & 2022.) Inspired by the NY Times best-selling book *The Library Book* by Susan Orlean, staff worked hard to plan and offer over 20 programs throughout the month of October with over 690 attendees in all. Indeed, Susan Orlean's keynote address was attended (both virtually and in person) by over 150 attendees.

The Amatuer Telescope Makers of Boston joined us on the fields at Winn Brook School in November, treating over 75 adults and kids to a telescope's eye view of the stars. Jupiter and Venus were particularly prominent, and ATMOB's president set up a screen overlapping real-time images so that even more detailed and impressive sights could be experienced - from a red dwarf to apple core nebulae. Multiple attendees expressed an interest in having a similar event in the spring.

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One-time Belmont resident Frederick Law Olmsted took center stage in a virtual presentation from Cornell Cooperative's Community Horticulturist Roxanne Zimmer, PhD. 2022 marks the 200th anniversary of his birth and attendees were invited to explore the way his ideals of nature as a remedy for the stress of urban life resound today. Patrons were also encouraged to experience some of Olmsted's work first hand by taking advantage of the Trustees of the Reservations museum pass to visit many of the places Olmsted designed.

Our newest book club Pages & Pints, meeting off-site at Trinktisch and aimed at folks in their 20's and 30's (and the young at heart!) has continued to grow in its three month lifespan. Among this difficult to reach demographic great discussions have been had, along with a lot of enthusiastic suggestions for future titles, all while supporting a local small business.

With community partner Belmont Against Racism and 11 other libraries, Belmont hosted Claudia Fox Tree for an indigenous ally program called Settler-Colonist Ties to Thanksgiving & Columbus: Taking Back Narrative. The program was another great virtual collaboration, with over 300 registrants and 177 attendees in total.

This December the library went electric with two programs featuring collaborations with Belmont Light. First up was an evening keeping folks informed about the 2023 rate increases - always an unwelcome thing, yet one that was explained to be much less significant in Belmont than in neighboring towns. Attendees heard the reasons behind the increase, tips for how to mitigate their own expenses, and had time to ask follow-up questions. Next was So You Want to Buy an Electric Car? with Chaya Milchtein of Mechanic Shop Femme, who went over the ins and outs of the current state of electric vehicles. Belmont Light was again on hand to answer town-specific questions regarding rebates and programs that patrons can take advantage of if/when they decide to go electric. This event had high interest and high attendance to match.

Throughout the year, the Reference Department provides so many regular services and programs. These are just a few of those offerings:

The Library continued to offer two different weekly conversation groups for adult English language learners from countries around the globe, with weekly sessions for multiple skill levels held throughout the year.

Taught by local programming expert Charles Ray Smith, the Reference Department continued to offer the 7 week class series on Programming with Python. This class, offered twice seasonally in 2022, brings a focus on adult lifelong learning.

Over Zoom and throughout the course of the year, Tai Chi instructor Aisling O'Shea guided students through this beautiful and low impact form of martial art and meditation. She provided an overview of the basic concepts of Tai Chi and Qi Gong, and introduced patrons to the Tai Chi Long Form, open for all physical abilities since it can be adapted for standing, walking, or sitting. In between classes, students can continue to practice the Tai Chi movements by following along with recordings and tutorial videos on the library's YouTube channel.

The Library's Virtual Trivia Night was a continued success in 2022. Participants are asked about a wide range of topics and the questions grow more challenging as the game goes on. The questions are geared towards adults in difficulty level but are tame enough that the game is still accessible for families to play together. This monthly



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event has had consistently high attendance since it was first offered in July 2020, with over 243 participants in calendar year 2022 alone. The Library also held two one-off trivia events with an R-Rated Trivia Night and a One Book, One Belmont Trivia Night in October 2022. The OBOB trivia focused on libraries and literature and the R-Rated trivia featured questions that are not as family friendly as those found in the monthly game.

The Page of Enlightenment Book Club had a successful first full calendar year. The club reads a historical narrative each month and meets to discuss it. The club has a small but dedicated and enthusiastic group of regular participants.

The Belmont Public Library Cookbook Club had another great year. Working from a different cookbook each month, participants selected a dish to make and brought it to showcase over Zoom, where they discussed what they liked and disliked about the book. In October 2022 the club returned to its in-person potluck format for the first time since before the pandemic, where participants still work from the same cookbook but instead share a meal consisting of the selected dishes. The club has had consistently strong attendance numbers since it started in February 2019 and showcases one of the Library's most diverse print collections.

Young Adult

This year Young Adult services focused on creating programs that met teens where they were at, increasing our presence in the community, and creating space for teens to be themselves and feel supported by the library.

For 2022, the Library offered 426 programs for teens with 2,915 total attendees. Major highlights included the virtual D&D Super Dungeon, our first in-person Teen Career Fair, regular school visits, and the implementation of seasonal Study Spaces for teens. Our virtual summer reading challenge for 2022 had a total of 47 online participants, with 70 in-person summer journals taken for our weekly Journal Station. Our staple programs, such as Study Buddies and YA Book Clubs, remained consistent throughout the year. Innovative programs, such as Boba and Board Games, Play-by-Post D&D, and College Essay Help appointments, were integral in giving teens an outlet for creative, social, and academic growth.

We had 67 active volunteers under the supervision of the YA Services Librarian this year. The majority of volunteer efforts was spent on the Study Buddies / Mentor Match program, but many also accrued time in Teen Advisory Board, D&D Super Dungeon development, and special community volunteer events.

Our Study Buddies for grades K-5 and Mentor Match for grades 6-10 ran for the full year under the guidance of the YA Services Librarian. Special training by the Belmont Wellness Coalition gave our volunteer mentors access to mental health support resources on top of their monthly check-ins. Some of our matched mentors and mentees are starting their second year of working together.

The creation of a Tween section in the YA Room has flourished in a partnership between the Children's Department and the Young Adult Services Department. As an "in between" space, it has allowed 6th and 7th grade students to grow outside the range of genres available in the Children's Room and has been well-received by parents who are seeking easy ways to get their tweens back into reading after the decline of reading interest after COVID.

Partnerships with the school became an essential component to their curriculum as teachers began implementing the use of SORA in their classrooms and requested materials for their students' Capstone projects. The librarian

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offered special services for both the BHS and CMS English departments, including departmental library cards for teacher use.

On Trans-Affirmation Makeovers for Pride Prom:

"If this wasn't happening, I wouldn't be going to Prom."

On the National D&D Super Dungeon:

"I loved being a part of Super Dungeon. Being able to participate as a player, watching the story unfold, actively building on a character that I love, it was all an amazing experience and I'm so glad that this was my first experience with playing D&D."

"It was a way for me to interact with people who are like me. I have online school and in general my friends don't like fantasy and stuff so it was fun to have a safe space to play."

On our Coloring Station Program with the BHS PTSO:

"This is the best day of the month."

Technology & Technical Services

It was a progressively busy year for the Technology and Technical Services department. As patrons returned to the library, there was an increased need for public access to technology, from printing, internet access to one on one technology assistance appointments. In addition, the number of materials ordered and processed returned to pre-pandemic levels, all of which was handled with remarkable efficiency, in spite of the challenges of onboarding a new Technology Librarian and being short a part time position.

- A major focus of the Technology Department in the second half of the year was to address the Library server, including the need for replacement and a related issue of finding more reliable ongoing IT server support. The Library server is the backbone of the Library's IT hardware. It encompasses a number of critical functions from staff file storage, network print mapping, patron time management to DHCP (internal IP assignment). The warranty on the server had been extended for one year to October 2022 to buy more time to make a considered decision about maintaining a physical server versus transitioning services to the cloud. After analysis and outside consultation, it was determined that the Library is best served by continuing to utilize an in-house server.
- Ahead of the process of server migration, it was decided to re-evaluate our current server support vendor and compare with competitors to ensure that the Library was getting the most comprehensive service for the best price. The evaluation process was two-fold. There was a need for an outside consultant to perform the technical aspects of migrating to a new server, as well as to secondarily identify a vendor to provide ongoing server support after the migration. After testing several vendors, the decision was made to contract with M&H Consulting, a local company from Sherborn. The server migration took place from October to November, and M & H are under contract for regular quarterly maintenance. In addition there is a team of technicians available for immediate assistance as needed. Included in their services is the implementation of Pulseway, a remote monitoring and management



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system that will alert both library technology staff and M & H technicians when various parameters are met or exceeded - a significant improvement over the previous lack of awareness which unfortunately had resulted in a breakdown of major server systems in June 2022.

- Over the fall, the Technology and Technical Services department collaborated with the Children's department to establish a new Children's Library of Things collection, with the goal to begin circulating in early 2023. Planning for the collection started with researching appropriate items, both from existing Library of Things at other libraries and consultation with Belmont Library staff and patrons. New Technology Librarian, Jack Clark then designed branding to complement the existing Library of Things collection, while adding in the specific colors, logos and fonts already in use for in the Children's Room. A particularly sweet touch is the inclusion of Children's Library of Things items in the background images, a small but telling example of the attention paid to this part of the process. An added challenge was to figure out how to proactively package these items for the anticipated heavy usage, both in terms of circulation and the child-proofing required not only for safety, but to make them as indestructible as possible.
- The collection falls into two categories – “Science” things and “Play” things. The “Science” category includes a microscope, binoculars, and coding toys. The “Play” category has a toy railroad set, Rubiks cubes, play food / kitchen equipment, and magnetic building tiles. As the collection begins to circulate, success will be evaluated through a combination of circulation statistics, durability and patron feedback. This is just the beginning. Expansion opportunities are highly anticipated; not only to get additional copies of popular items but to supplement with new items and categories.
- Not to be out shadowed, the existing Library of Things continues to be well used. By far, one of the most popular items are Rokus with Library provided paid streaming services. In addition to Netflix, HBO Max and Disney+, the Library now offers Apple TV+. These were well received by the public and flew off the shelves as did the rest of the Roku fleet. One challenge that became apparent at the end of the year involved how to pay for these services, since invoicing is not an option. The practice had been to use a combination of reimbursement for personal credit card use and / or Amazon prepaid Visa cards. Both of these methods are unavailable at the close of the year, but the hope is that a library credit card could be used to authorize these payments in the future.
- The Library continued to expand in-house technology to the public, doubling the number of public workstations, re-introducing circulating laptops, and installing public computers back in the Children's Department. Over the course of the year, over 7,000 computer sessions were logged for 228,097 minutes, or just over 3,800 hours.

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- This year saw the return of One on One technology appointments. This had been one of the services that was not possible to provide in previous years with limited technology staff. Appointments are now easily visible and bookable through the library events calendar, a change much noticed by patrons as appointments are becoming fully booked on a regular basis. The majority of appointments focused on library digital resources, such as Hoopla & Overdrive, as well as more general computer assistance.
- As mentioned earlier, this department serves two key roles, the second of which, Technical Services, was the driving force behind the long identified goal of implementing RFID library-wide. Radio-frequency identification (RFID) uses tags attached to items to identify and track inventory. The advantage is that a stack of books can be placed on an RFID pad, and then checked or out in a group instead of scanning individual barcodes. Much of the fall was spent on learning the details of how to use the system, both hardware & software, and then building a plan that could be most easily incorporated into existing departmental workflows. It was a complicated and involved process, requiring creative in-house solutions to avoid exorbitant additional vendor costs. To give one brief example, vendor Bibliotheca offered tag dispensers for \$250 ea. Given the need for one of these at each of the eight tagging stations, this would have added \$2,000 in unanticipated expenses. After trial and error, a serviceable alternative was found costing \$30 each for a total cost of \$240, a fraction of the vendor-quoted price.
- This will be a long process, as it involves tagging all new and existing Library items. If it gets a barcode, it will also get a RFID tagged mapped to that barcode. To date, Tech Services staff have incorporated this additional procedure into their workflow, without any noticeable disruption in service. The next steps involve tagging the existing collection, all 150,000 items. Plans are in place to train Adult and Children's staff to tag items as they are returned in addition to tagging "in the stacks". As time has allowed, Tech Services staff have also taken on tagging collections that are a bit more time consuming to tag, including vinyl, playaways and books on cd. The eventual end results are well worth the effort though, as RFID will facilitate circulation workflow, weeding, inventory control and be an essential function of the anticipated automated server in the new library building.
- One of the areas that sometimes come up for review is the possibility of utilizing the preprocesses services of Ingram, the main library wholesale book vendor. This would mean that books would arrive in the library with the protective mylar jackets already applied. This is the case with some juvenile materials, but has not been utilized for any Adult or Young Adult materials. Over the course of the year, informed by vendor meetings at the Public Library Association conference in March, this idea was looked into more thoroughly. The final decision was not to add any additional preprocessing services at this point mainly because it would add an additional \$1 per book cost which would then have to be reflected in the overall materials budget. It's interesting that recent experiences at other libraries reinforce this choice. One of the hottest titles of the fall was Spare by Prince Harry. Libraries that used Ingram preprocessing (Cambridge Public Library, specifically) saw delays of several weeks after publication date before the books arrived in their libraries. Belmont received all copies ordered on the



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publication date, processed them in-house and made them readily available to patrons. The issue has to do with staffing shortages on the preprocessing line at Ingram. This was thought to be a pandemic issue, but seems to be ongoing.

- Technical Services saw a return to pre-pandemic levels in the number of items coming into the Library. To give an idea of the scope, on a monthly basis, over 1000 books are added to the Library collection along with an additional 250 periodical items. Regular print titles require departmental sorting, creating records in Sierra (the library ILS), cataloging, labeling and finally covering each book in protective mylar, a time consuming process. Periodicals consist of magazines, along with daily and weekly newspapers, all of which require different processing than regular materials. For example, newspapers are tracked internally instead of adding to the library ILS (which is the usual practice) and in order to keep the shelves tidy, periodicals are weeded on a rotating plan allowing for the differences in daily/weekly/monthly publishing schedules.
- In collaboration with Children's staff, Technical Services facilitated the expansion of the juvenile World Languages collection, specifically with more Armenian language selections. Cataloging these is a bit of a tricky business. With non-Roman language, it's always difficult to identify the key parts needed to fully process these items. Unfortunately Minuteman Library Network does not provide support at this time for Armenian. With a truly dedicated effort, Technical Services staff was able to use OCLC to catalog and process these items, including creating original cataloging for 100 titles.
- In that same vein, Technical Services staff expanded several newer collections, and reconfigured existing ones. The popular puzzle collection was doubled, as was the retro Vinyl collection, and the juvenile Wonderbooks collection - an interactive combination of print picture books with ready to play audiobooks. These combination picture/audio books have proven to be a great success. The initial 40 Wonderbooks circulated over 300 times, prompting the purchase of an additional 30, bringing the collection up to a total of just over 70.
- During the daily work, Technical Services staff was able to also identify and implement areas of improvement, both in terms of work flow and presentation. New labeling was created to give a non-text based, more attractive way to distinguish library items. Sounds complicated, but in simple terms, we replaced the harsh all caps "BELMONT PUBLIC LIBRARY" stamp with in-house produced logo labels reflective of the three departments - Children's, Teen Services and Adult. It's a simple change that is both more attractive, friendly to non-English speakers and is indicative of the thoughtfulness that this department puts into their work.
- **Overdrive** - For the first time, Overdrive, the shared digital catalog for all Minuteman libraries, offered Partner Analysis Reviews to gauge the performance of individual libraries versus the network as a whole.

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Some of the results were expected and gratifying. While the average wait time at the network level hovers just under 50 days, the average wait time for Belmont patrons in a typical month was 36.1 days - two weeks shorter than the network. Similarly at the network level, the goal is to achieve a 10:1 ratio, meaning that there are 10 holds per copy. Through purchasing additional copies of popular titles through the Advantage program Belmont is able to reduce that ratio to 3:1, and in most cases 2:1. One statistic in particular stood out. Belmont saw a 16% year-over-year growth in the number of checkouts, while the network saw half that rate increase at 8%. In terms of sheer numbers, this equates to 2.7 million consortium checkouts, which included 100,600 Belmont checkouts

Friends of the Belmont Public Library

The Friends of the Belmont Public Library turned 50 in September, 2022. Preparation for and the initial celebration of this milestone was a primary focus during 2022. We updated the Friends logo to mark the anniversary and emphasize the broad range of programs supported by our organization; an owl, symbolizing wisdom, is the dominant image. (Thank you to our board member and graphic designer, Robin Ratcliff for this work.) The Friends leadership remained the same this year as last, with Stephanie Cahoon and Kristen Carte-Smith serving the second of their two-year term as co-presidents and Cyndi Reitmeyer and Anne Lougee continuing for a second year as co-treasurers. Pamela Delalla continued as secretary for a third year. Our 20 member board meets monthly.

The Friends 50th Anniversary Appreciation Tea was held on October 6 at the Belmont Woman's Club. We welcomed 36 guests, among them past Friends presidents, trustees, library staff, board members and elected officials. Our honored guest was Josephine Fang, who turned 100 in 2022 and was a long-time board member and inspiration to the Library community. The event allowed many to renew friendships while reflecting on the numerous accomplishments of the Friends including having raised the money necessary to join the Minuteman Network. The event also represented an important collaboration with the Belmont Woman's Club and an opportunity to showcase this valuable town resource.

Additional celebration events will continue in 2023. We plan to host mini golf in the Library in March, a STEM event, and Books in Bloom in April, to be organized in collaboration with the Belmont Garden Club. The goal of all events is *friendraising*, increasing awareness of the important mission of the Friends in supporting and expanding the Library community.

In fiscal year 2021-2022, the Friends raised \$82,000 through a successful direct-mailing membership campaign in November and two in-person book sales. The membership campaign again included current town meeting members. The high dollar amount reflects several generous one-time donations. Again this year, we were able to offer a match during our Giving Tuesday initiative of \$5000. The October book sale included the return of the preview night for Friends members, and the sale of our new book bag. To date this year, we have raised \$46,900, a figure similar to the 2019/2020 fundraising level.

The Friends provided the primary funding for the month-long One Book, One Belmont event in October, which focused on the value of Libraries. The culminating event was keynote speaker Susan Orlean, co-hosted by the Newton Free Library. Orleans discussed her book, *The Library Book*, via Zoom to an audience of 350 viewers.



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To increase book revenue, the Friends opened another location of the Everyday Book sale in the Children's Room, called the Book Store. This initiative allows us to reach readers who do not visit the main level of the Library. All books in this area are \$1. This is also the home of our stuffed owl who was named Woodsy during a contest in November.

The Friends also initiated a scholarship at Belmont High School. The \$500 award was given to a graduating senior who will be majoring in English Literature, Library Science or another Humanities subject.

We produced four quarterly newsletters and contributed a monthly column in the Library newsletter.

Board Secretary Pamela Delalla and Trustee Chair Elaine Alligood created a thorough and inspiring PowerPoint presentation exploring the Friends' 50-years of support to the Library. They found old photographs and records that helped to document the progression of the physical facility as well as the expanding role of the Friends. Their presentation ran as a continuous loop during the Appreciation Tea and can be found on the Library website.

The backdrop for the year was the ultimately successful campaign for a new Library. While the Friends organization was not officially involved, many board members served on the YES campaign and worked for the Foundation. Many Friends members posted YES lawn signs at their homes. At our June board meeting MIT librarian and Belmont resident Jen Greenleaf spoke about libraries as an essential component of a thriving community, especially as the need for the latest technologies expands. We are thrilled with the successful vote and look forward to ongoing conversations about space for the Friends in the new facility.

In the future, we hope to provide more support for STEM and STEAM programming. We are exploring grant opportunities to fund these initiatives.

Belmont Library Foundation

The Belmont Library Foundation successfully completed its formal capital campaign to raise funds for the new library. The \$5+ million accumulated for the building project included donations from over 800 residents, grants from local businesses and foundations and funds from additional sources including bequests made to the Trustees. The campaign was a key element in the strategy to win voter support and get the project through the political approval process. Happily, it had the desired effect, and, along with the BLF's strong community education outreach and separate, well-run political campaign, took the effort over the finish line. Twenty years after the BLF was founded for the express purpose of building a new library for Belmont, the town has approved the construction of a new home for our library.

State Requirements

As always, we want to share the requirements that must be met annually to be certified by the State.

The Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners outlines several criteria for operation and certification. If a library does not meet these requirements, then they face losing certification.

To be a certified by the Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners, the library must:

1. Meet the Municipal Appropriation Requirement

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2. Meet the minimum standards of free public library service
3. Remain open a minimum number of hours per week
4. Allow non-resident borrowing
5. Expend a percentage (based on population) of the municipal appropriation on materials
6. Have a Director with a Master's Degree in Library Science

By meeting these State requirements, the Town of Belmont receives the following benefits:

1. The Library is allowed continued membership to the Minuteman Library Network which in turn allows interlibrary loans, reciprocal borrowing privileges, and free use of other libraries for Belmont patrons.
2. The Library is allowed access to grants and ensures yearly state funding. Belmont Library usually receives in the range of \$35,000 - \$40,000 per year.

Final Thank you.

I want to stop and reflect on all the great things we have and give thanks. To start, thank you to our wonderful staff. You are far more than the people who work in the building; you are the Library. It is you who greet our patrons, choose and prepare our materials, answer questions, put on great programs and events, and offer access to the collection. It is you who work day in and day out with the patrons across the desks, on the phones, online, and every other way. It is you who've made the library such a destination.

Thank you to the Friends of the Library, who help to celebrate this place in many ways—most recently through October's One Book One Belmont month long display of library love and programming. We are celebrating now the Friends and their 50th anniversary year. Check the website for exciting events coming up.

Thank you to the Belmont Library Foundation, who helped to raise over 5 million dollars in cash and pledges to support the hope of a new library building. This effort is not only incredible, it is also historic. The generosity and support of the Library Foundation and all the donors is overwhelming.

The Building Committee was formed over five years ago and they have been working hard ever since. The citizens of Belmont made the right decision for our community with regards to a new library. The LBC have all worked so hard to show their love and support of our library. We'll never forget it. Thank you, Library Building Committee for the work you are doing now to finalize the plans for the future.

Patrice Garvin and her team have been incredible to work with. They are always there to make the Library feel like an integral part of the Belmont team. We are grateful to our Town Administrator, her staff, and the Select Board for their support.

The Board of Library Trustees have guided the library to its greatest successes over the last 10 years: record breaking statistics, refreshed spaces, new services, and new budget opportunities, all of which have made our library one of the best in the Commonwealth. Their oversight, guidance and support has been tremendous. Thank you, Library Trustees. Last, but certainly not least, we want to thank all of you. You have made the library such a wonderful place to work. In June we completed our fiscal year with the highest collection use in library history.



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Patrons checked out over 676,000 books, movies, records, games, magazines, graphic novels, and eResources this year. Truly remarkable. Thank you, library patrons. As we prepare to build the new library, we have a lot to be thankful for. If you are reading this, you are part of this team, and we thank you so much for believing in the Library.

Peter J. Struzziero
Library Director
Belmont Public Library