

Library Report

Season's



Greetings!

Compiled by
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profileLydia
Hunsberger

Originally from the Kitchener-Waterloo region in Ontario, Lydia Hunsberger, Western Counties Regional Library's new Manager of Collections and Digital Services, ventured to Nova Scotia and completed a fine arts degree at NASCAD University in Halifax. She went on to pursue an interest in curation and collection development.

"After completing an internship with the Nova Scotia Public Archives, I started thinking more about archival and library collections, leading me to Dalhousie's MLIS (Master of Library and Information Science) program," Hunsberger says.

The regional library position provided her with the opportunity to pursue her passion for collection development in service of the community.

"I was researching community-led programming and working with a community-led archive, and collections management is really about making sure community needs are met so it feels like a perfect fit."

Despite arriving in the middle of the COVID-19 pandemic, Hunsberger has enjoyed her experience so far.

"I love meeting new people and getting to know each branch," she says. "COVID has made this a bit harder, but I really like talking to all of the clerks to find out what people are interested in and thinking about how I can make sure we are getting materials people want."

She says people have been friendly and helpful as she settles into the community. This has helped her focus on her work.

"I want to work more on developing and promoting our digital collection," she says. "Some folks might be avoiding public spaces due to COVID, but they can still access lots of eBooks and audiobooks through OverDrive and Hoopla. Hoopla also has a great selection of movies and TV shows."

While the pandemic has been difficult for everyone, she believes it has also pushed libraries and their staff to be more creative.

"We're needing to rethink how we're engaging and supporting our patrons, and the community as a whole, in a time of immense stress and economic uncertainty," she says. "We're starting to see more people back in the branches, and the take-and-make kits get people coming in and have been successful, but outreach is a huge challenge."



The Hatt family has been enjoying the Clare library's grab-and-go activities during the COVID-19 pandemic.

A Chat with the Hatts

Staff at Western Counties Regional Library continues to find creative ways to provide services for the public during the COVID-19 pandemic. The grab-and-go activity kits have proven popular and have kept people engaged with their library.

To get an idea of how one family is benefitting from the program, Public Relations Manager Ian White touched base with Megan Hatt whose family members are regular users of Senator Ambroise H. Comeau Memorial Library in Meteghan.

Q: How important is the library and its programming to you and your family?

A: My family and I enjoy the library very much. It is so important to have this available in our community to be easily accessible to families and children and all who use it. We use the library services bi-weekly if not weekly to come pick out books, DVDs or pick up what we have ordered online. We home-school, so this resource is very important to us.

Q: Has it changed during the COVID-19 pandemic?

A: We have not visited the library in person as often, but we have not stopped accessing the things we enjoy and have started getting audiobooks as well.

Q: Are you and the family enjoying the grab-and-go program? Why or why not?

A: We have enjoyed doing the crafts and the kids always look forward to getting the next one. My four-year-old son has his (completed grab-and-go activities) lined up on a shelf in his room. The last one was a beaver craft, and it fit right into our school curriculum as we were studying about the fur trade during pioneer times in the 1800s. It was neat to have it tie into our study and now they are on the wall in our school room!

Q: How do you find out about the library's programs and services?

A: We were active library members in New Brunswick, going weekly to the kids story time. One of my six-year-old's main concern when we moved was to find a new library because it was part of our weekly routine. When we moved here last fall, one of the first places we went was to check out what programs were available for kids at our local library. We were pleased to meet such friendly staff and use the nice kids corner. Hopefully we can see more kids programs develop.

Statistics show a shift to digital content, services

As the second wave of the COVID-19 pandemic hits, Western Counties Regional Library has seen more library users shift to digital content.

"When I look at the statistics gathered regarding website use by the public, there is a marked growth in people accessing our eLibrary," says Ian White, Public Relations Manager for the library.

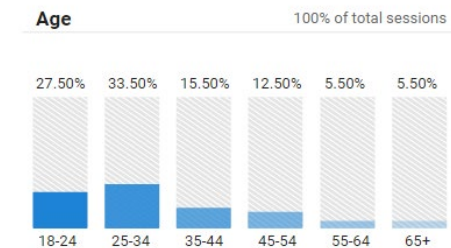
"If we look at the last week of November in 2020 as compared to 2019, there are more new users visiting our website, but around the same number of users overall between the two years," he says.

The percentage of new users versus returning visitors has hovered around the 60 per cent mark compared to 40 per cent since April.

The pages visited by website visitors has risen and shifted from late November 2019 to 2020.

"We had over 800 more page views of our main web page in the last week of November than in the same period in 2019," says White. "Searches for our branch information and location more than doubled, and there were almost five times as many views of our eLibrary over the same period."

White says more and more people are visiting the site using mobile technology such as phones or tablets, but desktop and



laptop computers are still the most used to visit the site.

"Mobile visits to our website has grown over 18 per cent compared to 2019, especially among new visitors."

Most visitors don't linger on the pages, using them to gain access to either the library's catalogue to browse and borrow material or the library's digital offerings.

"The majority of website visitors spend about 10 seconds on the page, just enough time to access one of our services," White explains.

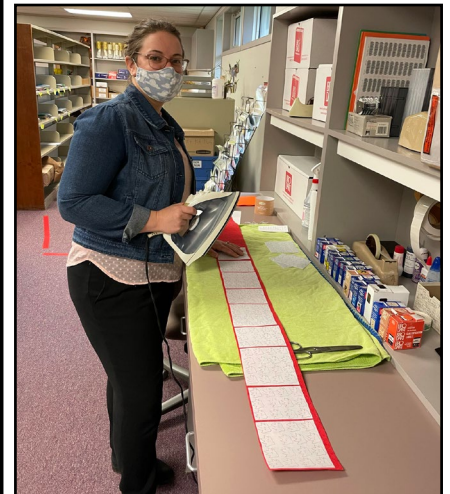
More people are getting their library card online, White says. When comparing the period of April 1 to Dec. 1, 2020 to the same period in 2019, it is very evident that people are going online to do so.

From April 1 to Dec. 1, 2020, 1,014 people went to the online form compared to 80 for the same period in 2019.

"That statistic opened my eyes to how

this pandemic has affected people's behaviour," White says. "But, it makes sense, and I believe it shows that people are still making use of their library despite the challenges presented by the pandemic."

Preparing for the New Year



Training and Development Manager Shannon Raynard prepares Roll-A-Dragon grab-and-go kits for the branches to use in early January. The library is moving to a unified grab-and-go kits for all the branches in the New Year.

AROUND THE BRANCHES

Barrington

The Municipality of Barrington has completed work on the new roof for the branch.

Clare

Staff has made sure the branch is in the Christmas spirit, highlighting its Christmas collection.



Digby

Library users continue to return and enjoy the new-look branch.

Parents are telling branch staff how much their children enjoy the branch's grab-and-go kits.

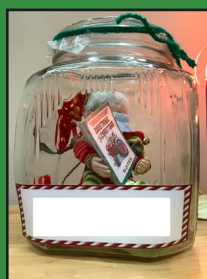


Digby library's Christmas bulletin board.

Shelburne

Robert the Elf is back at the branch in Shelburne. He is following all the rules and regulations to stay safe. Patrons can drop in and see what he's reading.

The branch's Facebook story times have become very successful and they will continue twice a month throughout the winter.



Robert the Elf.

Westport



Westport library has created a grab-and-go that includes everything one needs to write a letter to Santa.

Weymouth

The walls of the program room were repaired following a leak. The room is ready for in-person programming once such activities are allowed again.

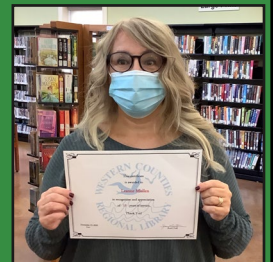
Yarmouth

Yarmouth staff has worked hard to put together its annual Dumping Day Book Sale,



Left, some of the seasonal books available at the Yarmouth library book sale.

running from Nov. 23 to Dec. 30 in the library's program room. The sale offers a large selection of mystery, romance, inspirational, western, do-it-yourself, paperback, DIY, biographies, armchair travel, DVDs and magazines for all ages.



Weymouth library clerk Leanne Mullen received her 15-year work anniversary certificate.