

# Library Report



Compiled by  
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## Coronavirus (COVID-19)

# Staff gets creative to provide services

All 10 branches and headquarters of Western Counties Regional Library closed to the public on March 16 to help prevent the spread of COVID-19, but that hasn't stopped the staff from working hard to provide library services.

"Our regional library has been working with the other library systems and the Nova Scotia Provincial Library to develop best practices to follow during the pandemic," says library director Erin Comeau.

"All staff pulled together in a very short period of time to add materials to our digital collections and increase online services," Comeau says "Branch employees continue to connect with their local patrons and have done an excellent job creating online programming that encourages participation and connection."

Systems administrator Ryan McKenzie has been busy dealing with the increased demand for technological support both at library Headquarters and from the branch staff. While setting up a program for Yarmouth library clerk Carol Wing using the computer program Zoom, he was surprised by the international scope of interested participants.

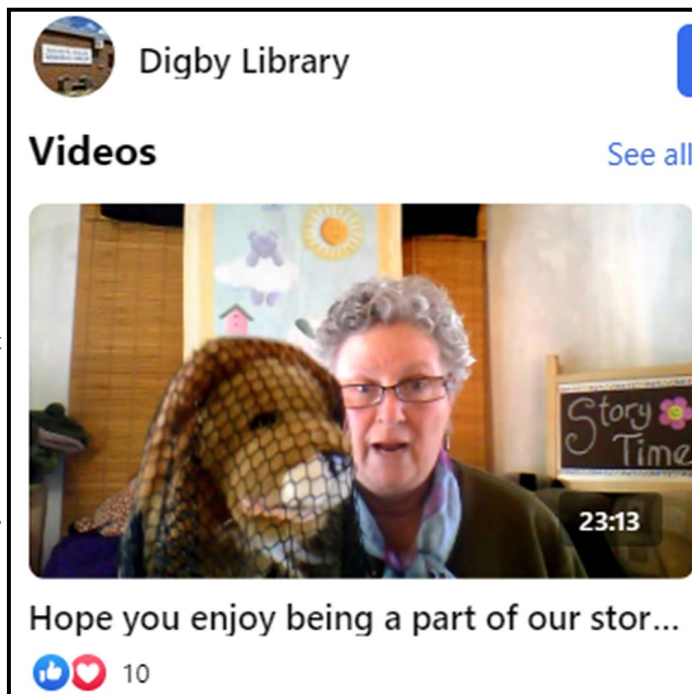
"We had participants from England, Boston, New York, Vancouver and all across the Nova Scotia, something our typical presentations would have not had," he said.

### BOOK CLUBS GO ZOOM

Westport library clerk Jacqueline Journey experienced the same thing with her Zoom meeting of The Novel Bunch Book Group.

"The book group patrons were from Brier and Long island, and some joined us from Quebec and other parts of Nova Scotia as many summer residents participate in the monthly book group while in Westport," Journey says.

For Wing, McKenzie's assistance was critical in this new world of library programming.



**Digby library clerk Joanna Jarvis does a weekly story time live on Facebook.**

She says she thought her Wednesday Mid-Week Break program would transition easily from a physical program to a virtual one.

"After hosting Mid-Week Break in the branch for almost five years, I have a comfortable routine that was essentially useless in this new format," she explains. "A Zoom meeting is something new and intimidating and without all of the help from Ryan McKenzie nothing would have materialized."

She also praises her guest speakers who are eager to be part of the program and seem to truly enjoy the interaction.

Staff have been using the programming to highlight available publications in the library's digital collections related to the programs.

"One of the participants made the comment that if they were interested in canal boats,"

McKenzie says. There were several magazines dedicated to the topic in the library's digital newspaper and magazine service PressReader which he shared with the participants.

For Journey, she let members of her book group know about services such as hoopla that allows patrons to watch movies. She also provided information on other programs that some were eager to join.

Shifting programming online has provided its challenges for staff.

"Adapting programming to a new online format has been challenging, at times, but feedback from the patrons indicate that

they are appreciative of our efforts and will give us the time to 'get it right,'" says Lockeport library clerk Danielle MacAuley-Williams.

Despite the challenges, Clare library clerk Darlene Gaudet says she has learned a lot about using social media to provide programming and assistance for library users.

*'Adapting programming to a new online format has been challenging.'*

— Lockeport library clerk  
Danielle MacAuley-Williams

# Brittain was a big believer in libraries

A big believer in libraries, Jean Brittain, Western Counties Regional Library (WCRL) board member for the Town of Digby, died on April 11, 2020.

"I was very saddened to hear of the passing of Jean Brittain," said library board chair and Warden of the Municipality of the District of Digby Jimmy MacAlpine. "Jean was an advocate for library services and a very engaged member of the WCRL Board of Directors."

"I, personally, will miss Jean," MacAlpine said. "She was a great person, very devoted to the library and her community, and I was honoured to have been able to serve with her on the board and working to ensure the needs of our residents were met."

Brittain joined the board in the fall of 2008.

"It was one of the things I was interested in," she said at the time.

First elected to Digby town council in 1996, she served on council for nine-and-a-half years before joining the library board and brought with her experience as a teacher and



Library board member Jean Brittain died on April 11, 2020 (contributed photo).

businessperson.

She jumped at the chance to be on the library board and was struck by how much libraries were changing with the times. She wanted to improve public awareness of what the library offers, especially in the area of technology and related services.

The level of commitment of library staff made a deep impression on her.

"I see that as very positive," she said, adding, "That level of commitment from staff is a very hard thing to find. They need to be given credit for that."

Brittain had battled cancer for years, and she was selected to be the ambassador for the Canadian Cancer Society's Digby Relay for Life in 2017. She had talked about receiving her stage 3 ovarian cancer diagnosis. "I never asked 'why me,' but just dealt with it," she had said.

Cremation has taken place under the care of Jayne's Funeral Home, Digby. A memorial service will be held at a later date.

## Patrons, staff seek connections in a time of social distancing

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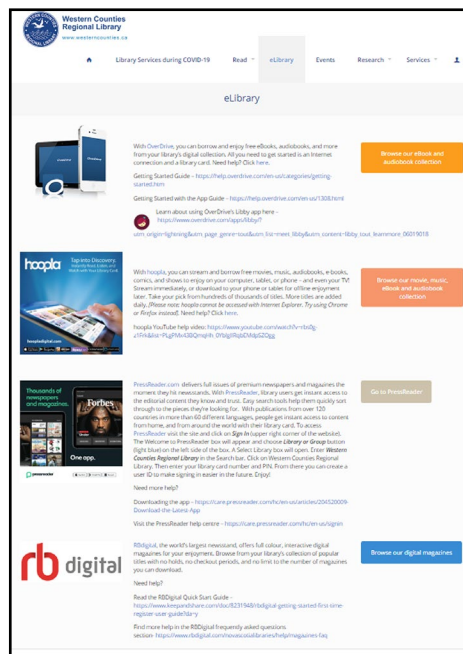
She and Weymouth library clerk Marguerite Thibault created online exhibits of art displays in their branches that were put up just before the branches had to close. They post a photo of one work from the exhibit each day on Facebook.

"It is kind of fun posting them and checking the comments," says Thibault.

Digby library clerk Joanna Jarvis was the first to do a live story time on Facebook. She has been pleased with the reception.

"It is being received really well, by all ages," she says. "I even have friends from the U.S. watching. The adults are all enjoying it, too, and have said something about 'the inner child in all of us.'"

Staff members have been learning to manage video technology on various platforms, the ins-and-outs of the library's new and older digital offerings, taking webinars on a variety of the library's digital services and platforms.



The library has added PressReader and hoopla to its digital services.

in the parking lot and someone standing outside the front doors. They are accessing the Wi-Fi."

Most branch staff have turned to their library Facebook pages to engage library users and create activities and questions to interact with people.

A team has been set up to monitor e-mails, answer queries, register new users and issue library cards to get people quick access to the library's digital services. An interesting side-effect of going digital has been the inquiries from outside the region to access programs and obtain library cards.

A common observation by staff has been that patrons are looking for connection with the familiar faces at their branch libraries, by phone or online, during this time of isolation and social distancing. The feeling is mutual.

"Working from home is so different than working at the library, there are no people, only email addresses," says Shelburne library clerk Debbie Perry.

"Work has become very different. Everything is based online now; and I deeply miss my interactions with the patrons," adds Pubnico library clerk Mahala Sears.

Library board chair Jimmy MacAlpine is grateful to staff for its efforts to provide services during the COVID-19 pandemic.

"It has been very challenging for everyone to cope with the social distancing and for having to stay home," he says, adding, "Stay safe and hopefully we will see you in the branches in the near future."

Comeau hopes library users continue to be patient and knows that better days are ahead.

"We are working tirelessly to make sure that we have the proper measures in place to be able to re-open library services in a manner that is both safe for library employees and library users," says Comeau. "Along with everyone else, we would like nothing more than to be able to resume services and are hopeful that we'll be able to do so in the not-too-distant future."

### WORKING FROM HOME, REACHING OUT

Digby clerk Cindy Hazel has been working from her home, taking questions from patrons and volunteering to assist with a seniors help line.

"I had a patron contact me about accessing the online collection," Hazel says. "This patron gets audiobooks from the library faithfully, but had never used our online library."

Because the patron was sight-impaired, Hazel worked with the library's automation trainer Shannon Raynard to create a large print help sheet for the patron and e-mailed it to her.

"It's a whole new perspective to work and challenging coming up with ideas that will work," adds Jarvis.

Staff go into each branch every week to complete a weekly checklist of items.

"People are still returning books," Yarmouth library clerk Yvette Frost says of her visits. "Every time I go there are cars