



The James Blackstone Memorial Library 2019—2020

The new entry was open to the public in September 2019. The project received a 2020 CT Preservation award which recognized the design of the new entry as “respecting and enhancing the historic architecture, creating a dignified entry while leaving the architect’s original design intact”

By December, the project was essentially complete with the children’s department moving out of the auditorium and into their new space. Unfortunately, extensive damage to the auditorium dome roof was discovered before the final phase could be completed. The library was able to secure a grant for \$100,000 from SHPO toward the work and the Town of Branford contributed an additional \$400,000 to ensure the repairs would be completed. That work is expected to be complete in FY 2021.

The library was pleased to participate in the celebration of Branford’s 350th birthday by providing material for Factual Fridays on Instagram.

The Board of Trustees’ Development Committee hosted its first *Snuggle In and Read* virtual fundraiser in October 2019, raising \$4,800 toward the library’s operating budget. By December, the annual appeal had exceeded its goal for the year. The minigolf fundraiser planned for Spring 2020 had to be cancelled due to the COVID-19 pandemic, however, overall development efforts were successful enough that the Board of Trustees voted to cancel the spring appeal, encouraging donations to other Branford organizations instead.

When the library closed its doors to the public on March 13 due to the COVID-19 pandemic, staff immediately rallied to reimagine library services. By the end of the month, new virtual programs were launched, monthly limits on digital materials were increased, wifi was extended for access in the library plaza, and staff continued to help our patrons by phone, email and zoom. By May 20, we had launched a new contactless pickup service and

by July the building was open again for computer access.

The Friends of Blackstone Library held their annual book sale in September 2019 with gross receipts of almost \$65,000. These funds were crucial in supporting a variety of library programs – including access to electronic books, audio, music and streaming video through HOOPLA and Kanopy – essential resources whose use increased threefold in April and May. The Friends’ book sale planned for Fall 2020 was cancelled due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

This year has been a mix of highs and lows. We are excited to have the renovation essentially complete and appreciate that the Town supports the auditorium roof repairs. Though access to the building is limited, virtual program attendance has grown to where it was prior to the pandemic. And while circulation of physical materials is down, use of electronic materials has grown to account for 15% of our total circulation.

The year 2021 will mark the Blackstone Library’s 125th anniversary – and hopefully an effective vaccine for COVID-19.

2019-2020 Statistics*

Registered Cardholders	9,971
Material Circulated (Physical/Online)	208,195
Reference Questions	63,152
Children’s & Teen Program Attendance	4,224
Adult Program Attendance	1,935
Meeting Room Attendance	2,604

**Reflects 3.5 months of library closure for COVID-19*

Library Materials

Books, CDs, Audiobooks, DVDs	62,278
Newspapers/Periodical Subscriptions*	311
Electronic/Digital collection**	31,037
Total Collection	93,626

Karen Jensen
Library Director

**Includes 240 RB Digital magazine titles*

***Does not include access to over 500,000 HOOPLA titles*

**James Blackstone Memorial Library
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