



**BETHLEHEM AREA
PUBLIC LIBRARY**

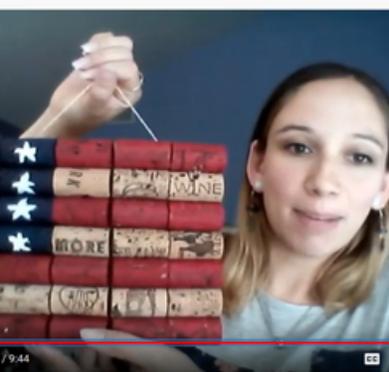
2020

ANNUAL REPORT

STAY SAFE STAY STRONG KEEP READING

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A Note From the Director

2020 started with such optimism! We were so excited to make use of our brand-new meeting space, the newly refurbished Cohen Room. We had a year's worth of exciting activities planned! The year got off to a great start, with a visit from best-selling author Liz Moore and then a book event on *Tuskegee in Philadelphia: Rising to the Challenge*, which includes a chapter by our very own Reference Librarian Matthew Rothfuss.

And then March came. Like the rest of the world, we were shocked by the rapid spread of the coronavirus, and saddened to cancel so many library events. Nothing like this had ever happened before; all library locations were suddenly shuttered by state order. But we're a resourceful bunch. I was so impressed with how quickly library staff adapted. Storytimes went online, film club discussions went virtual, and we all got really good at Zoom. We learned about doorside, curbside, and "grab and go" service. We figured out how to offer more online access to e-books, newspapers, and databases for all our patrons who, like most of the country, were learning about this new thing called "lockdown." The Cohen Room became a "material quarantine handling zone," a phrase I never thought I'd have to say as a library director!

As summer came, we were thrilled by the positive response to the first-ever outdoor/online version of our popular summer reading program. It was great to see kids picking up books again! Another highlight in this difficult year was the launch of the inspiring Black Bethlehem Project -- an exciting oral history collection spearheaded by Head of Adult Services Rayah Levy and funded by the Lehigh Valley Engaged Humanities Consortium. Rayah put it best when she said, "I am so thankful a vision has become a reality, and that Bethlehem's Black community placed their trust and confidence in me to have their voices and stories heard."

As we turn the page on a new year, I would like to thank all the library staff in every single department who worked so hard to continue offering meaningful library service while just about everything got turned upside down. And of course a big thank you to YOU as well, our library patrons who never stopped connecting, learning, exploring, and making it all worthwhile. We look forward to a time when our buildings are again bustling with life. Whether it's in-person or on Zoom* we hope to see you soon.

**Hopefully not on Zoom. No more Zooms!*



Stay safe, stay strong, keep reading,

Josh Berk
Executive Director

Board of Directors

Thank you to the dedicated individuals who served on the Library Board in 2020. These trustees are appointed by the governing bodies of each of our supporting municipalities. Trustees do not receive compensation for the service they provide on behalf of the Library and their communities.

City of Bethlehem

Anne Felker
Jane Gill
Joyce Hinnefeld
Olga Negrón
Emil Signes
Sharon Yoshida
Julie Zumas

Bethlehem Township

Randi Blauth
Dale Sourbeck

Fountain Hill

Annamarie Jordan

Hanover Township

Jay Finnigan

Programs & Partnership Highlights

Storytime (and more) Goes Virtual

When all in-person programming was halted in March of 2020, we realized we had to get creative. So get creative we did! It was not feasible to have lots of people gathered in a room, meaning that beloved library events like storytimes, book clubs, classes, and lectures, would all have to be cancelled. Or moved online!

Many publishers granted libraries the license to use their books on YouTube during the pandemic, allowing kids to continue to hear stories. Who would read these stories? Librarians of course! Our library staff got comfortable being on camera, recording dozens of stories for our patrons to enjoy from home. We began adding fun elements like pajama storytimes, storytimes where you bring a stuffed animal, storytimes for every holiday, and more. We played characters and sang songs and wore funny hats. Other staff brought additional talents to these videos. We hosted art lessons, cooking lessons, a yoga class, mindfulness sessions, and more on both YouTube and Facebook.

There were chess lessons, a virtual music festival (11Fest), and presentations from some fabulous authors. Many meaningful discussions and lectures were held online through the “Courageous Conversations” series. Ibram X. Kendi's book *Stamped from the Beginning: The Definitive History of Racist Ideas* was an effective jumping-off point for discussions on serious topics. This series aimed to go beyond typical book discussions and challenge attendees to think deeply and look for solutions to the challenges of our time.

We missed seeing everyone in person, but these online projects gave our staff a chance to stay connected with our patrons, and for our patrons to stay connected with us.



Programs & Partnership Highlights



"Black Bethlehem" Goes Live

In July of 2020, we were thrilled to share with our community the Black Bethlehem Project, a first-of-its kind historical study of the Black experience in Bethlehem, PA. This project was funded through the Lehigh Valley Engaged Humanities Consortium and spearheaded by BAPL's Rayah Levy.

Rayah remarked, "To see it come to life after a year of planning, remaining steadfast, and now coming to fruition during a tumultuous time of racial divide and continued systemic racism, in which one must now protest that 'Black Lives Matter,' gives such a sense of accomplishment."



The collection focuses on the Black experience in Bethlehem from the mid-twentieth century up to the present. The stories are first-person oral histories, told by those who lived it. Visitors to the Black Bethlehem site on bapl.org can read the interviews or listen to the recordings of these fascinating individuals. A collection of photographs and other historical documents will be added to the project as it continues to grow. Find it at bapl.org under "Digital Collections."





Department Highlights

South Side Branch

Though the pandemic made life much more difficult, the show had to go on. For the South Side branch of BAPL, events were planned and reworked to suit social distancing guidelines. South Side Department Head Brenda Grow and other staff members had to adapt, and quickly.

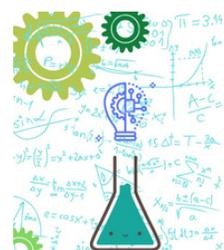
“The staff learned new skills,” said Grow, “like picking out topics which might interest the public during a pandemic and filming a demonstration. One staff member in particular learned video editing and how to work new sophisticated video editing software.”

While such individual advancements were handy, Grow cites teamwork as the department’s most important player, especially when library staff were required to work from home during the pandemic’s earliest stages and later when the South Side branch developed curbside pick-up for patrons.

“Many discussions were held over Zoom to figure out what kinds of programs to offer,” said Grow. Zoom, along with Facebook and YouTube, eventually became tools to continue to reach out to patrons in spite of the pandemic. Using Zoom, the South Side branch held a series of anti-racism programs on important topics. Due to the event’s online accessibility, it managed to reach a wide audience, and 78 adults participated in in-depth discussions about race and equity in today’s climate.

Other events that were met with praise from patrons were the Do-It-Yourself Craft programs, which allowed participants to pick up craft kits and assemble them by following along with virtual demonstrations. Two noteworthy examples were the American Flag Decor demonstration and the Fairy Tale Lantern, which received hundreds of views. Outside of crafts, more virtual demonstrations were done on a variety of other topics selected by the South Side staff, such as baking and drumming.

For children, the library offered several COVID-safe events. Storytime To Go, which was especially popular during the summer months, let young readers follow along with a virtual story and assemble a kit that went with it. A South Side Youth Services technician wrote and presented a puppet show for kids to enjoy, and both the Summer Reading Program and Summer Food Program were huge successes with 102 summer activity kits handed out to families and 142 federally-funded meals distributed to children.



STEM SATURDAY

Bouncy Egg



This program is sponsored by **Friends of the Library**
of the Bethlehem Historic District Association

Dialogues on Racial Justice

Taught by
Linda Wiggins-Chavis



An Introductory Workshop Series on
Issues of Systemic Racism
in the United States

2nd & 4th Tuesdays in July & August
6:30 pm via Zoom @ virtual

Register at
bapl.org/events/categories/virtual-events
to receive Zoom link and password

**BETHLEHEM AREA
PUBLIC LIBRARY**
Learning Starts Here

Department Highlights

Youth Services, Main Library



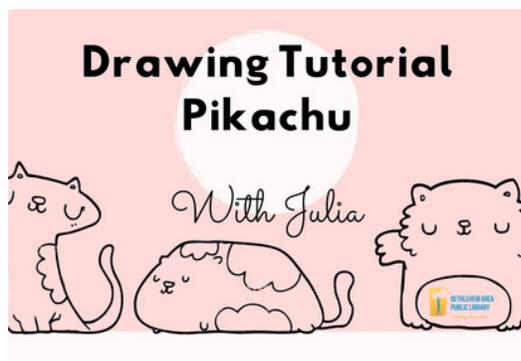
After a three-month shutdown in early 2020 and hours of planning from home, BAPL's Youth Services department was still able to provide many excellent activities, including its annual Summer Reading Program. This year's theme was "Imagine Your Story." The team took a combined low-tech/high-tech approach to reach and accommodate as many families as possible.

To register young readers, staff set up porch-side and curb-side stations where they offered take-home activity logs. Kids could track how much time they spent reading over the summer and complete other fun learning activities as well. Library staff stayed at these outdoor spots all day every day (weather permitting) to check kids' reading progress, provide prizes, hand out activities, and keep outdoor carts of books stocked for all ages to browse and check out.

Additionally, limitations on in-person Youth Services led to the launch of the department's first interactive online platform -- Wandoo Reader -- which was funded by the Friends of the Library and made available through a link on the website. The program allowed kids to complete reading and learning activities online and from home, and then collect prizes at the library locations. Staff at the Main Library and the South Side Branch also created bitmoji classrooms for the website. The Main Library's "Spike's Campground" page features our lovable bearded dragon and changes each month to feature new topics and fun learning options.



Online events included live performances and storytimes, virtual cooking tutorials, and Zoom tutoring sessions (in partnership with Moravian College). Library staff created each of these events from home and, later, in-house for the benefit of children, teens, and families. BAPL's Head of Youth Services Edana Hoy was especially impressed with her department's determination in the face of the massive challenge that was adapting to the COVID-19 pandemic. "The importance of this effort—and the speed of its development—is difficult to overstate. Some staff had never recorded virtual programs before, while others had more experience. All staff now are capable of virtual programming, and the department's offerings now and post-pandemic will be more robust as a result."



Department Highlights

Adult Services, Main Library

The Adult Services Department at BAPL held several exciting in-person programs before March came around and turned the event calendar into a mosaic of the word “cancelled.” There were chess lessons, book signings, book clubs, and more. One notable pre-pandemic event highlighted the stories of the Black Philadelphians who were part of the Tuskegee Airmen in World War II. Fighter pilots, bombers, and a nurse all shared tales of battle against both enemies abroad and the racism and sexism they faced at home, making the event a unique and eye-opening experience for participants.

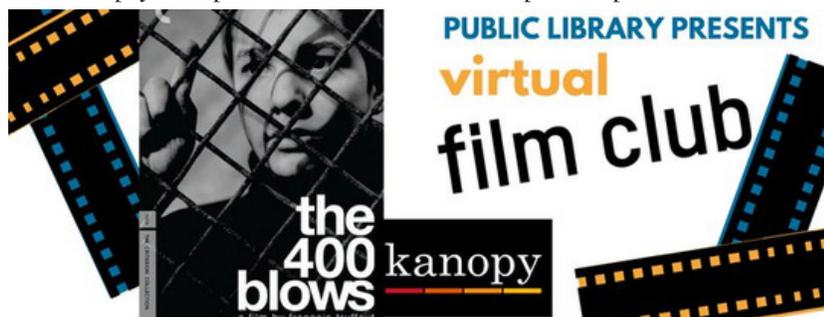
After the beginning of lockdown, virtual events such as Qigong training and film screenings were slowly joined with more and more online programs. Virtual Gentle Yoga and Mindfulness Meditation both became popular with the community, as they helped participants manage their stress during uncertain times.

The Black Bethlehem Project carried on with its work in bringing out an overlooked part of history with Voices from the African Diaspora, led by Adult Services department head Rayah Levy. According to her, the “oral history project” that focused on Black citizens of Bethlehem was “special because it brought a community together that was interested in hearing stories and seeing images of past, present, and hope for the future.”

Courageous Conversations was a program that was created to combat the struggles of isolation through reading and discussion. By exploring books such as *The Old Man and the Sea* and *Ikiga: The Japanese Secret to a Long and Happy Life*, participants engaged in deep questions relevant to the pandemic (or any time) like: Are we truly living, or simply waiting?

Meanwhile, the Summer 2020 Writing Challenge invited community members to write prose or poems about their own time in isolation. They submitted writing about their experiences, fears, and a few silver linings.

The year in lockdown was by no means easy for staff, who needed to make quick and creative decisions to adapt their plans to the challenge of the pandemic. “2020 has taught and forced us to become more relevant to the community,” said Levy. “All that we learned made us realize that the virtual and physical space can work to make the impossible possible.”



Department Highlights

Bookmobile



How does a small, cramped library on wheels adapt to a global pandemic? That was a question Mike Henninger, the man behind the Bookmobile, had to answer on short notice when social distancing hampered all of his plans for 2020.

“I suppose the manner in which I dispensed materials at the Bookmobile stops was something of a special event in and of itself,” said Henninger, “given all the preparation that went into making the ‘touchless borrowing’ method work smoothly.”

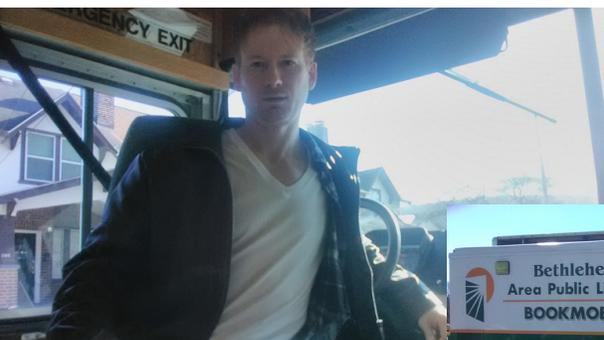
Using folding tables wherever possible, Henninger set up spots all throughout the community to collect returns, offer pre-reserved items, and occasionally bring collections out of the Bookmobile upon request. It required quite a bit of preparation to make the system work smoothly, but a familiarity with patrons and ample usage of his contact list helped to produce a positive experience. In fact, Henninger’s new method of distribution opened new doors for the Bookmobile.

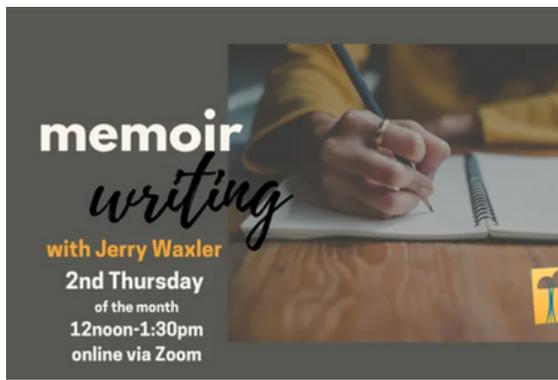
“I was oftentimes able to check items out an hour or two in advance of the patrons coming out to get them,” said Henninger. “This both minimized any possible confusion from a patron account standpoint, and made the borrowing experience arguably more convenient (and safer) than it has ever been.”

That being said, Henninger was certain not to take away the personal appeal of the Bookmobile. He made a few special deliveries to a local patron in his neighborhood who couldn’t make it out to the scheduled stops. “It’s always good to be a little flexible when you can and the situation calls for it,” he said.

The Bookmobile brought a bit of joy to the community during a difficult time. “I received a lot of nice comments and even a few donations,” said Henninger. “The patrons definitely didn’t take things for granted and were very happy, especially back in the summer when so many things were still closed.”

According to Henninger, the Bookmobile’s tenacious dedication to its community helped make light out of a dark time for many. “I think it was very comforting to people,” he said.





Department Highlights

Outreach

A notably disheartening aspect of the COVID-19 pandemic was the closure of schools and the cancellation of community events, especially in the summer. Outreach Librarian and head of BAPL's Coolidge branch Regina Kochmaruk found many of her plans for 2020 grinding to a sudden halt.

When Jodi Evans, Bethlehem's Recreation Director asked Kochmaruk if the library would partner with the City for a new summer program, she eagerly accepted. BAPL then became one of several community partners supporting a new summer program within the City's Recreation Bureau. Though it was hastily assembled, the event ran smoothly. Members of the Health and Recreation departments scheduled family events throughout the City's parks, with the library attending as one of the weekly community guests.

"I talked to parents about the library and our services," said Kochmaruk, "and shared a few stories and activities. It was very successful and both organizations look forward to partnering again."

Like other departments of BAPL, the Outreach staff had to deal with the complications posed by social distancing regulations. Kochmaruk learned the ins and outs of virtual technology, creatively restructured programs, and provided take-home activities for guests.

"We simply learned to adjust," said Kochmaruk.

Imagine Your Way Around Town

Over the summer, Regina reached out to small business owners around Bethlehem to create a new video series called *Imagine Your Way Around Town*. With on-site visits and fun interviews, she collected stories about what these business owners do and how they ended up on their professional path. Regina enjoyed supporting the small business community and introducing an eclectic mix of careers to students as they consider their educational paths. Businesses included The Puppy Palace, The California Drum Shop, The Fade & Shave Barbershop, The Chocolate Lab, and more. They can be viewed at youtube.com/BethlehemAreaPublicLibrary.



BAPL by the Numbers

Major Donors

BAPL wouldn't be BAPL without the support of our generous donors. The following individuals, foundations, companies, and community partners made a significant financial contribution to the library in 2020.

Northampton County (Grow NORCO grant)
Friends of the Library
Laros Foundation
IronPigs Charities Community Grant
Lehigh Valley Engaged Humanities Consortium
Estate of John Kerwin Simms, Sr.

Thank you!



BAPL by the Numbers

Financials

BAPL is subjected to a yearly audit by Maher Duessel.
The data published below is presented prior to audit and subject to change.

Revenue

City of Bethlehem	\$1,416,275	
State of Pennsylvania	\$460,865	
Bethlehem Township	\$448,216	total revenue
Hanover Township	\$205,239	\$2,797,004
Interest	\$103,790	
Fountain Hill	\$87,301	
Overdue Fees	\$18,679	total expenses
Book Sales	\$17,554	\$2,873,764
Annual Appeal	\$16,341	
Buy-a-book Fundraiser	\$15,512	
Copy Services	\$4,099	
Miscellaneous	\$2,123	
Meeting Room Rental	\$1,047	
Rental Books	\$393	

Expenses

Salary and Wages	\$1,789,561	Library Supplies	\$5,681
Benefits	\$264,427	Telephone	\$5,265
Library Books and Materials	\$226,134	Bookmobile	\$4,179
Pension Obligation	\$165,444	Transportation/Meetings	\$896
Utilities	\$107,627	Event Expenses	\$237
Information Technology	\$62,654		
Insurance	\$40,026		
Computer Network	\$39,233		
Equipment Repair/Maintenance	\$32,606		
Office Supplies	\$14,404		
Building Supplies	\$11,217		
Legal	\$10,814		

BAPL by the Numbers

Programs & Events

Total events and attendance

Total events for kids (online and in-person) = **321**
Attendance at these programs = **8,404**

Total events for adults (online and in-person) = **216**
Attendance at these programs = **3,332**

Event Highlights:

Studio 11 Livestream
Free Comic Book Day
Courageous Conversations
Blank Slate Writing Group
Meet Santa on the Stoop (South Side)
Dialogues on Racial Justice
Librarians Read Mean Book Reviews

Paper Crane Folding



BAPL by the Numbers

Usage and Statistics

	Active Cardholders	New Cardholders
City of Bethlehem	41,766	2,292
Bethlehem Township	9,742	661
Fountain Hill	2,364	143
Hanover Township	5,324	342

- Visitors to the Main Library: **51,875**
- Visitors to the South Side Branch: **8,342**
- Main Library check-outs: **174,534**
- South Side Branch check-outs: **11,263**
- Bookmobile check-outs: **3,560**
- Coolidge check-outs: **6,347**
- e-book downloads: **36,958**
- Internet hotspots borrowed: **464**
- Kanopy films streamed: **14,291**
- Articles accessed through library databases: **41,352**
- Sessions on public computers (includes wifi and library PCs): **19,143**

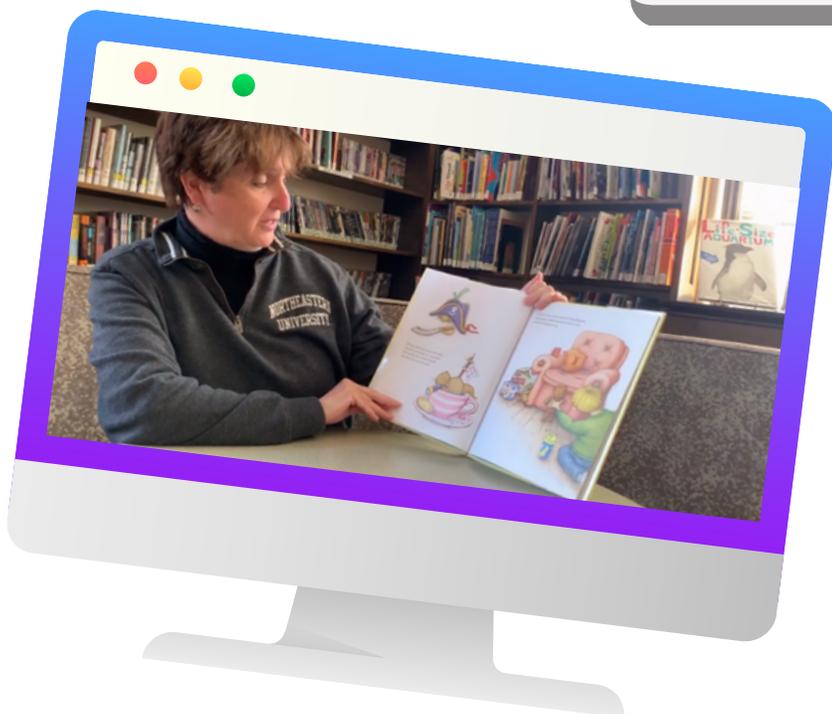
Total Items Borrowed: 246,559

Our Collection

Books	155,617
DVDs	19,130
Audiobooks	7,200
Media	10,538

(records+microfilm+CDs)

BAPL LIVED IN
YOUR
COMPUTER IN
2020...



... BUT WE
HOPE TO SEE
YOU OUTSIDE
THE SCREEN
IN 2021!