MONMOUTH COUNTY BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
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Director
Susan M. Kiley
Deputy Director
Lillian G. Burry
Nick DiRocco
Ross F. Licitra

MONMOUTH COUNTY LIBRARY COMMISSIONERS
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Vice-Chairperson
Mary Ann Musich
Secretary/Treasurer
Brian Boms
Marcy McMullen
Frank A. Wells
Lillian G. Burry
County Commissioner, Library Liaison

MONMOUTH COUNTY LIBRARY MANAGEMENT TEAM
Judith G. Tolchin
County Library Director
Heidi Amici
Assistant Director
Kim Avagliano
Supervising Librarian - Eastern Branch
Pat Findra
Children's Coordinator
Kate Hardy
Senior Management Assistant
Robyn Miller
Supervising Librarian - Headquarters
Laura Migliore
Programming Coordinator
Rachael Yost Scalise
Branch Services Librarian
The strength of the Monmouth County Library is the participation of the 40 member municipalities that fund and support the system including:

Allenhurst, Allentown, Atlantic Highlands, Brielle Borough, Colts Neck Township, Deal, Eatontown Borough, Englishtown Borough, Fair Haven, Farmingdale, Freehold Township, Hazlet Township, Highlands Borough, Holmdel Township, Howell Township, Interlaken, Keansburg Borough, Lake Como, Little Silver, Loch Arbour, Manalapan Township, Manasquan Borough, Marlboro Township, Millstone Township, Monmouth Beach, Neptune City, Ocean Township, Oceanport, Roosevelt, Rumson, Sea Bright, Sea Girt, Shrewsbury Borough, Shrewsbury Township, Spring Lake Heights, Tinton Falls Borough, Union Beach Borough, Upper Freehold Township, Wall Township, and West Long Branch.
I will always look back on 2020 with immense appreciation and respect for the Monmouth County Library Commission, the County Library Director Judith Tolchin, County Commissioner and Library Liaison Lillian G. Burry, and every employee. Each played a vital role in having this library and all its branches and members move forward with a spirit of enthusiasm, energy, and creativity in the wake of an unprecedented event and its ramifications, COVID-19.

Assuming the office as Chairperson of the Library Commission following long-time leader Renee Swartz was daunting on its own. Only three months after becoming Chair, we faced the mandated closure of all libraries, with little advance notice. This action forced our director and staff to immediately design alternatives that would meet the needs of Monmouth County residents, themselves uncertain and requiring alternative ways to meet educational, cultural, and recreational pursuits.

It was difficult to transition from so many walk-in patrons to patrons dependent on door-side deliveries, telephones, and computers. This meant a redesign of everyday events and activities, transfer of employees to different locations to meet different needs, and an even more increased knowledge and use of technical communications. It meant initiating remote service, providing instructions to patrons for new services and programs unfamiliar to them. Thankfully, the Monmouth County Library remains at the front of the line in introducing 21st century technology, and our staff accomplished all of this and re-educated the public on accessing all it has to offer through a variety of means.

At the same time, staff was also working with the renovations ongoing in the Headquarters Library, and dealing with the daily situation brought on by COVID-19. They continued to redesign programs and activities to meet patrons’ needs and also planned for the time when the libraries would be able to re-open their doors.

The result of all this energy, creativity, and yes, enthusiasm of the staff continues to result in greater membership in the library as patrons have learned a new appreciation for the role of our library system.

The year 2020 certainly brought home vividly and crisply the important role the Monmouth County Library plays in the everyday life of our citizens and an even greater respect, admiration and gratitude for the professionalism of a staff that has proven it can meet any challenge, and achieve beyond any expectations.

The challenges of 2020 seemed daunting and insurmountable with the COVID-19 pandemic devastating our communities and our libraries. The State of New Jersey Executive Order issued by the Governor’s office mandated an emergency closure in March through June 2020 with little notice to prepare. Even more challenging was the task of planning for the safe reopening of thirteen branches in July 2020 with new protocols and procedures, and providing support and essential services to thirteen member libraries.

Within two days of the March 14, 2020 closure, the library initiated a remote service model offering phone, online chat, and email assistance staffed by librarians who answered reference questions, and offered instruction on eBooks, downloadable audiobooks, streaming video collections, and online research resources.

During the 103 day system-wide facility closure, the library provided opportunities for patrons to apply for library cards via email, a service that was greatly used, increasing the number of registrations. In June, staff returned to library buildings and offered door-side service to deliver materials to patrons. Library staff continued to facilitate workflow modifications to create safe spaces and restart in-library services which resumed in July.
Serving as the Library Liaison from the Monmouth County Board of County Commissioners, I have always taken great pride in the very efficient, very enthusiastic, and very hard working staff that keeps the Monmouth County Library system with its 13 branches and 14 member libraries the best in New Jersey. I cannot express my gratitude enough for all they do.

This year, their work and dedication has been even more extraordinary; that same dedication has also been exhibited by the Friends of the Library, the Master Gardeners, and all the volunteers who recognize the high standards set by County Library Director Judith Tolchin and rose to meet them with pride and aplomb.

No one knew what the COVID-19 virus would do to our nation, what sacrifices it would require from each of us, and what additional work and creative thinking it would require of employees to meet this never before seen pandemic. Our Library staff took hard work and thinking outside the box to new levels, creating an astonishing variety of programs for patrons to enjoy at home. These programs not only introduced many, both old and young, to the expanse that virtual recreational, cultural, and educational programs could offer, but, because of the staff’s flexible design and presentation of such a broad diversity, library patrons continue to clamor for more, and new patrons continue to join. It is close to miraculous that the staff could accomplish everything they have, especially with the emergency closures established by the Governor and the need to offer alternatives while at the same time planning for the reopening and new way of life in 2021. Rising to the demands of a pandemic, the Monmouth County Library staff did indeed make the library the center of the community, and truly a library that never sleeps.

In the midst of the pandemic, work continued to beautify the outdoor setting at Eastern Branch Library in preparation for the ceremony dedicating the incredible sculpture designed and sculpted by Franco Minervini, *Endless Possibilities Through Reading.* My thanks and appreciation a hundredfold are extended to Commission Chair Nancy Grbelja and the Monmouth County Library Commission who have contributed so much to the residents of Monmouth County through their leadership and support of the Monmouth County Library staff and volunteers.

The Monmouth County Library initiated online virtual children’s, teen, and adult programs with a broad spectrum of offerings comprising educational, literary, and entertainment opportunities. Take ‘n Make crafts for children were provided to families to encourage artistic creativity reinforced by literature.

We remain relevant today as the 24/7 Library that never sleeps and offers online accessibility to vast collections of information, educational classes, financial research resources, newspaper access, and millions of articles for research purposes supporting the people working and studying from home.

I am proud of our accomplishments and graciously acknowledge the dedicated Library Commission, the Monmouth County Board of County Commissioners, the dedicated staff of the Monmouth County Library, support from other County Departments, and Library Friends groups in our tremendous success providing an opportunity for the library to remain an essential resource to the community we serve. The year 2020 has proven that we are truly stronger together.

“What in the world would we do without our libraries?”

*Katharine Hepburn*
Improving Facilities for the Future

The Monmouth County Library Headquarters’ Renovation was among the 38 projects approved in 2020 for grant funding in the first round of applications for the New Jersey Public Library Construction Bond Act (LCBA) which provides $125,000,000 to finance capital projects at public libraries. An award to the Monmouth County Library in the amount of $1,950,000 with local matching funds in an equal amount raised by the library for a total project cost of $3,900,000 will be used to modernize, renovate and improve accessibility at the Headquarters Library. The matching funds were made possible through a capital improvement bond ordinance requested by the Monmouth County Library Commission and approved by the Monmouth County Board of County Commissioners with additional funds appropriated from the library’s operating budget.

The architectural plan was designed to upgrade the power, lighting, and technology infrastructure, enhancing the Headquarters Library which was first built in 1986 and expanded in 2000. New furnishings will be equipped with charging ports, and electrical power options will be incorporated into the flooring. A special teen reading room, modernization of the meeting areas, barrier-free ADA accessible counters and tables, and improvements to the building restrooms will ensure accessibility and ADA compliance.

CARES Act funding from the Federal Government in the amount of $377,000 allocated by the Monmouth County Board of County Commissioners and supported by County Administration was used to purchase self-service kiosks for eight branch locations and self-service tablet stations for twenty branch and member library locations. Installation for these technology enhancements is scheduled in 2021.

Work began in earnest on the *Endless Possibilities Through Reading* sculpture located at the Eastern Branch Library, made possible from the generous bequest of Charles Raffetto and created by artist and sculptor Franco Minervini. The sculpture will be adorned by a Reading Garden in a project authorized by the Library Commission. The sculpture dedication is scheduled in 2021.
The Monmouth County Board of County Commissioners recognized the Monmouth County Library in April with a Proclamation during National Library Week for providing excellent service in challenging times.

The **Library initiated Live Chat** enhancing digital communication for patrons and librarians through website access—a service that provided answers to thousands of questions, effectively keeping the library open even while locations were closed. Funding for the chat platform is provided by the Friends of Monmouth County Library.

As New Jersey’s shutdown stretched from weeks to months, library staff met challenges posed by the pandemic by creating online programming to take the place of in-person visits through live and recorded events. **Virtual programming**, a new experience for the library, became tremendously popular, bringing library programs into the homes of our patrons offering education, entertainment, and community engagement.

With most citizens “staying-at-home” in response to New Jersey Governor Murphy’s executive orders, acquisitions staff quickly shifted library spending from print to digital collections.

The Monmouth County Library deployed 80 laptops and 12 cell phones to staff members to serve patrons remotely while our library buildings remained closed. During the 103 day closure and continuing throughout 2020, the Monmouth County Library issued library cards virtually and extended privileges to patrons that offered access to extensive online eBook, eAudiobook, streaming movies, and online classes and research resources.

**Door-side pick-up was available to our patrons as a service that allowed for safe retrieval of books, DVDs, CDs, and other library materials.**

The Monmouth County Library participated in the New Jersey State Library JerseyConnect EVPL (Ethernet Virtual Private Line) services to enhance Internet access and bandwidth capabilities at the Headquarters and Eastern Branch Libraries with significant cost savings in excess of $20,000 annually.

www.MonmouthCountyLib.org

Monmouth County Library Annual Report 2020
The year 2020 was filled with challenges that presented opportunities at every turn. Programming began with in-person events which ran as scheduled through mid-March. These included Friday afternoon and weekend concerts. Bob Burger and Friends, the Colts Neck Community Band, jazz concerts, Cameo Club Variety Show, and Sandy Sasso were all well-attended headliners. Programs on relevant subjects such as health and well-being, technology, business, literature and writing, history, art, games, and timely topics also proved popular.

Events for the balance of the year were transformed into virtual programs due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the elimination of in-person gatherings. The library used both Cisco Webex, the platform supported by Monmouth County, and Zoom, the platform provided by the New Jersey State Library, to reach patrons remotely. This virtual model provided system-wide program sharing to both branch and member libraries, creating a dynamic online presence for all.

Librarian-led and author-hosted book groups continued to delight avid readers through online discussions during the closure which continued for the rest of the year. The Programming Department developed a bimonthly virtual film discussion group facilitated by library staff, and featured movies found in the Access Video on Demand database in the Go Digital! 24/7 Library, accessible through the website.

The Programming Department offered 360 virtual events in 2020. The Library’s inaugural virtual concert was presented in September by Tim McLoone, who performed from his home, sharing his time and talents as a community volunteer. Howell High School’s One Voice premiere was tremendously successful with 650 attendees. The most popular non-musical event was Write Hard (or Go Home) presented by Rutgers Creative Writing Professor Alex Dawson.

Programming initiated and developed new community partnerships which continue to evolve and expand, to serve the public on a county-wide scale, including: Rutgers Master Gardeners, Literacy NJ Monmouth for ESL and Citizenship Classes, Monmouth County Historical Association, 180 Turning Lives Around, Rutgers Cooperative Extension, U.S. Census, League of Women Voters, and Monmouth Arts Council. The geographic reach of programs extended well beyond the county limits.
as people across the country and the globe joined together to enjoy library offerings.

Events were promoted on the library’s website, across several social media platforms, and with printed materials including flyers, a monthly calendar, a monthly postcard, an electronic newsletter, and press releases. Registrations for the electronic newsletter grew substantially in number along with increased website use due to the pandemic. As of December 2020, the bimonthly electronic newsletter reached over 7,900 subscribers. The Programming Department posted over 1,000 notices on the library’s website and online calendar advising patrons of changes including hours, dates, openings, closings, and doorside services. Constant communications kept the public aware as library services were expanded and reinstated. YouTube subscribers increased substantially and program videos were viewed over 20,000 times. Pinterest developed an increased number of followers and boards. The Library added over 3,000 Facebook followers, ending the year with 8,625 users. Twitter and Instagram posts and views have grown tremendously during a most unprecedented year.
For the first ten weeks of 2020, youth services proceeded as usual, and then the library encountered the COVID-19 pandemic, resulting in a change in operations due to the closure. Eventually, services provided a “new normal” and staff members continued the process of discovering new ways of conducting library business while adjusting to evolving protocols.

During the closure, Children’s Department staff supported remote reference services from home and initiated remote virtual storytime sessions through streaming and prerecorded presentations to branch and member patrons, after verifying the required publisher permissions. While in libraries, Children’s staff continued with storytime production, provided takeaway crafts to branches and members, participated in circulation functions, helped with door-side services, shelved materials, conducted reference service, ordered new titles, attended staff meetings, and developed methods to reach the library’s young patrons. A STEM/STEAM series generated by Children’s staff, as well as daily Bedtime Stories, were posted on the library’s website. Some programs featured book readings by authors and celebrities.

The Children’s Department also provided a weekly activities listing from April through August to give kids and parents online suggestions for spending “lockdown time” at home in the areas of crafts, games, riddles, STEAM projects, and worldwide explorations. These were posted on a slide on the Kids’ Page of the library’s website and shared with member libraries. In addition, librarians prepared and posted a document: “Understanding COVID-19: Resources Made for
Children,” a listing of online books and eBooks, educational videos, and various creative activities to help parents explain the coronavirus to kids, which was also shared with member libraries. Starting in September, the Children’s Department initiated Take ‘n Make craft projects, available door side or in-person at branch libraries. Several member locations were also supplied with takeaway craft projects. All were quite popular!

Special events programming took on a new look as performers adapted their content to a virtual format: either live on YouTube or another platform, or recorded and shared for a predetermined length of time. Shows “premiered” on a Kids’ Page slide and were available for on-demand viewing by busy families at their convenience. Programs presented included magic, music, drama, wildlife, science, mime, storytelling, and juggling to families in branch and member communities alike. Unfortunately, NJ Makers Day was cancelled a week before its debut due to the pandemic with the hope to continue it virtually in 2021.

Imagine Your Story, 2020’s statewide Summer Reading Challenge, was truly a challenge as kids and parents were tired of looking at screens, cooped up indoors. Though statistics were generally lower, similar to nationwide trends, the library’s online model, established in past years, offered an overall successful summer event.

In reviewing the year, some of the new initiatives will be carried forward as part of the library’s regular offerings, especially virtual storytimes and special performers. These enable patrons to bring the library into their homes whenever convenient for them.
The year 2020, an unprecedented year, allowed Teen Services staff to experiment with unique programs and opportunities in the online world. These programs included the Teen Virtual Book Club, with a guest appearance by Ava Morgyn, author of *Resurrection Girls*, and the Teen Virtual Book Review crew, a bi-monthly program where teens talk about the books they’re reading. The library also hosted the Emerging Writers Workshop, presented by Kean University Creative Writing Professor Abigail Maguire, as well as the *Write Your Novel* workshop to commemorate National Novel Writing Month. Coding classes continued virtually with *Virtual Intro to JavaScript Parts 1 and 2* drawing more than 30 students and several volunteers.

The Teen Advisory Board (TAB) changed its method of gathering in 2020, meeting virtually once a month to work on projects for the future. A plethora of volunteer opportunities were created in 2020, including *A Day in the Life of a Quaranteen*, in which teens submitted journal entries, poems, or music lyrics describing their life during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Teens also submitted book reviews as part of the Teen Book Review Society (TBR). The TBR Society had 64 participants and 302 book review entries. Because of the immense success of this program, the library transferred some of the TBR gallery of reviewed books to a website with the help of teen volunteers.

In 2020, Monmouth County teens volunteered a total of 360 hours to benefit the library and our community!
Some Virtual Offerings for Teens

**Teen’s Virtual Book Review Crew**

- Science-Fiction
- Fantasy
- Horror
- Science

Click on the book cover to view or book review.

**Teen’s Virtual Book Club**

Wednesday
September 16, 2020 at 6:00 pm

*Resurrection Girls*
by Ava Morgyn

Olivia Foster hasn’t felt alive since her little brother died three years ago. Each member of the Foster family is dealing with the grief in their own way, and the Foster residence has become a quiet shell of a home. But when the strange new neighbors move in, Olivia’s new friendship helps her fog begin to lift. Blending elements of the paranormal and magic, this novel discusses loss, love, and ultimately hope.

Discussions will be moderated by Trish Shreno. Books will be available on Ebooks Books.

Use the following link to bring you to the login page: [https://bit.ly/3cOdybk](https://bit.ly/3cOdybk)

Sessions will be conducted on Webex. Internet access required to attend.

Register by using the following link to receive emailed information on how to join the discussion: [https://bit.ly/MonLibLibraryTeenEvent](https://bit.ly/MonLibLibraryTeenEvent)

ANY QUESTIONS? SEND A MESSAGE TO: mcteen@monmouthcountylib.org

**Write Your Novel: Teen Workshop**

Wednesday, November 2 and Wednesday, November 16

at 1:30 pm

Workshopped by
Jessica Lidz, Erial Beach
and Rebecca Gekker, Library Lib

**Virtual Intro to JavaScript**

Monday, October 19 and October 23

at 4:15 pm

**Teen Art Show Spotlight**

Monday, November 9

A Day in the Life of a Quaranteen

Teen Writing Project for Community Service Hours

Grades 7 - 12

November 2020 through August 2021
2020 By the Numbers

FINANCIALS

2020 Library Budget

- Salaries: $6,385,000
- Fringe Benefits: $3,212,500
- Indirect Costs: $4,000,000
- Library Materials: $3,000,000
- All Other: $887,500
- Total: $17,485,000

2020 Library Revenue

- Dedicated Tax: $15,850,000
- Added & Omitted Taxes: $97,635
- Fund Balance: $1,272,365
- Fine & Photocopy: $195,000
- State Aid: $70,000
- Total: $17,485,000

STATISTICS

- Live Chat Sessions: 3,578
- Email Service: 4,393
- Phone Service During Closure: 2,749
- Website Sessions: 1,960,848
- Total Circulation: 584,675
- Webpage Views: 847,565
- In-library Circulation and Renewals: 1,402,867
- Electronic Circulation: 557,981

18,424 Door-side Service Pickups
## MONMOUTH COUNTY LIBRARY COLLECTION

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**MONMOUTH COUNTY LIBRARY**

The 24/7 Library in the Palm of Your Hand

Go Digital! 24/7

- **ON**: OverDrive eBooks / Audiobooks
- **Flipster**: Flipster Digital Magazines
- **kanopy**: kanopy Streaming Films
- **ACCESS VIDEO**: Access Video Films on Demand
- **medici.tv**: medici.tv Classical Musical Videos
- **EBSCO eBooks**: eVids eBooks

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[www.MonmouthCountyLib.org](http://www.MonmouthCountyLib.org)  
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MONMOUTH COUNTY LIBRARY HEADQUARTERS
125 Symmes Drive
Manalapan, NJ 07726-3249
732-431-7220

MONMOUTH COUNTY LIBRARY—EASTERN BRANCH
1001 Route 35
Shrewsbury, NJ 07702-4398
1-866-941-8188

ALLENTOWN BRANCH LIBRARY
16 S. Main Street
Allentown, NJ 08501-1610
609-259-7565

ATLANTIC HIGHLANDS BRANCH LIBRARY
100 First Avenue
Atlantic Highlands, NJ 07716-2914
732-291-1956

COLTS NECK BRANCH LIBRARY
1 Winthrop Drive
Colts Neck, NJ 07722-2225
732-431-5656

HAZLET TOWNSHIP BRANCH LIBRARY
251 Middle Road
Hazlet, NJ 07730-1942
732-264-7164

HOLMDEL BRANCH LIBRARY
101 Crawfords Corner Road
Suite 2110, Bell Works Complex
Holmdel, NJ 07733-1908
732-946-4118

HOWELL BRANCH LIBRARY
318 Old Tavern Road
Howell, NJ 07731-8812
732-938-2300

MARLBORO BRANCH LIBRARY
1 Library Court
Marlboro, NJ 07746-1184
732-536-9406

OCEAN TOWNSHIP BRANCH LIBRARY
701 Deal Road
Ocean, NJ 07712-3507
732-531-5092

OCEANPORT BRANCH LIBRARY
8 Iroquois Avenue
Oceanport, NJ 07757-1530
732-229-2626

WALL TOWNSHIP BRANCH LIBRARY
2700 Allaire Road
Wall, NJ 07719-9570
732-449-8877

WEST LONG BRANCH LIBRARY
95 Poplar Avenue
West Long Branch, NJ 07764-1653
732-222-5993

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