Vibrant Virtual Services
from Rachel Cook, ACLD

Summer is the busiest season for library programmers. They spend a typical spring confirming guest presenters, planning their own programs, and preparing to register thousands of children for the Alachua County Library District’s largest annual program – Summer at the Library.

As summer approached this year, the Youth Services team quickly reimagined this huge undertaking, including updating the name to Summer with the Library. All programming for this year’s summer reading extravaganza went online – including virtual events for all ages. This digital programming makeover has extended to all areas of programming as branches remain closed to the public due to COVID-19. Library staff members are getting comfortable in front of the camera to reach patrons online.

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Letter from the Director

This year has thrown many challenges at our community, but our staff members have adapted to the changing circumstances and needs of their patrons. I am proud of how our employees continue to demonstrate flexibility and compassion each day. I have often said we have the best team in the state of Florida, and I firmly believe it.

As stay-at-home orders lifted and restrictions eased, we began to offer curbside services at all branches on May 13th. Patrons can now check out books, movies, and CDs; sign up for a library card; or renew a library card on Monday through Saturday from 9:30 AM to 5 PM at all our branches. They can browse the catalog and reserve items at aclib.us/catalog 24/7. Our book drops are also open for returns at any time.

Keeping our staff members and customers safe is paramount. Employees wear personal protection equipment (PPE) as they interact with patrons and do not accept returns in person. Returned items are isolated for 72 hours before returning to circulation. We have also invested in large quantities of hand sanitizer, cleaning supplies, and sneeze guards.

I am constantly consulting local health officials, monitoring CDC recommendations, and talking with my Florida library peers. We will move forward cautiously and continue to take measures to protect our community’s health. Our team members are carefully planning for the next phase in our reopening - computer access by appointment. I appreciate the support of our Governing Board, Board of Trustees, and employees as we build new processes and revise current practices to build our “new normal.” Please continue to check aclib.us/CurrentServices for the latest updates on our services, hours, and safety practices.

Our team members have risen to the occasion this summer. They are creating video programs, transitioning Summer with the Library 100% online, shifting the Battle of the Books to a virtual event, and answering hundreds of questions by phone, email, and chat every month. They are fine-tuning our curbside services, making small adjustments to best serve the patrons at each location.

I hope you continue to stay engaged with your Library District as the summer progresses. I also invite each of you to register for our Summer with the Library programs at aclib.beanstack.org and share this excellent program with your family, friends, and neighbors. Our annual summer program is open to all ages and participants are eligible to win a new Samsung Galaxy tablet, courtesy of our sponsor PDQ Restaurant. Anyone who registers earns one badge; anyone who participates to earn at least one more badge will be entered into a raffle to win a tablet. The more badges you earn by Aug. 2nd, the better your chances of winning. Three winners will be selected - one child, one teen, and one adult – and will be announced by September 1st on Facebook and our website.

In July, we look forward to sharing our first Virtual Volunteer Appreciation Program on Facebook and our YouTube channel. I hope you will tune in and know that your support is critical to making our libraries excellent. Thank you for all you do, and stay safe!
The Foundation

The Alachua County Library District Foundation

providing long-term support to the Alachua County Library District through major gifts and bequests since 1989

Building for the Future

The COVID-19 pandemic has upended our daily lives and routines. At present, those who frequent our excellent library system are unable to access the HQ and branch buildings and instead can only check out books through delivery to their car or use online library services. The Library District, however, will - when conditions warrant - resume a full schedule of activities and services. The Foundation will be there to continue enhancing the ACLD’s ability to serve our community. In recent years, the Foundation has made significant contributions to the remodeling, renovation, and construction of branch libraries, and it anticipates continuing to raise the necessary funds to provide such support in the coming years.
Message from the President

Here’s the latest news from Friends of the Library: we are still closed and not taking donations. Any change will depend on local COVID-19 news.

With professional inspections of the property concluded, we will soon complete the purchase of the Junior League area housed with the FOL Bookhouse at 430 North Main Street. It will be nice to have the extra space for donations and our sales.

With the Spring sale cancellation and the uncertainty of our October sale, plus our building purchase, we are short of income. Consequently, there are plans to solicit donations for a special fund to help replace this shortfall. The Book Sale Committee is working on various concepts for mini-sales, including aiming at specific audiences, like young adults and children. Thus, our noble table coordinators hope soon to return to price their items. Finally, hats off to the ACLD staff members, who have all library branches supplying curb service to their customers. Well done, indeed.

The Better to Serve the Community

With the pending purchase of the former Junior League Thrift Shop adjacent to the FOL Bookhouse, Friends of the Library will own the entire warehouse at 430 N. Main Street. FOL looks forward to serving the community better, with expanded display areas, increased storage space for donated items, and an improved sales area. More information about this purchase will be in future newsletters and in mailings to FOL members.

In a few months, Friends of the Library will begin a fundraising campaign to support the acquisition of this additional space. We will use financial gifts from FOL members and from the community to reduce the building’s mortgage. As you review your plans for charitable giving in 2020 and 2021, please consider making a donation to FOL's building fund. Whether directly by check, through an RMD contribution from your IRA, or other bequest, your contribution – no matter the size – will make a difference.

Donations may be mailed at any time to Friends of the Library, Attention: Building Fund, 430 N. Main Street, Gainesville, FL 32606.
Getting to Know You

Spotlight on Library Staff
Janelle Lyons
Position: Library Assistant, Library Partnership Branch

Background: Janelle has worked for the Alachua County Library District since July, 2019. She started as a library page at the Millhopper Branch, and is currently a library assistant at the Library Partnership Branch. Janelle was a patron of the Orange County Library System growing up and primarily visited the North Orange Branch in her hometown of Apopka, Florida.

Janelle discovered her love of the French language in high school. She was led to pursue a Bachelor of Arts in French and Francophone Studies at the University of Florida. She furthered her knowledge of French by studying in Grenoble, France, during the spring semester of her junior year. After graduating, she spent seven months teaching English to high school students in Pau, France.

Returning to Florida, Janelle served with AmeriCorps VISTA in the Orange County Public Schools' McKinney-Vento Program, providing support to K-12 students experiencing homelessness. She decided to pursue her interests in international education and migration as a graduate student at the George Washington University’s Elliott School of International Affairs. After receiving her Master of Arts in international affairs, she returned to Gainesville and worked as an international student advisor at UF until June 2019.

Working for the Alachua County Library District, Janelle has developed a heightened appreciation of the extent to which libraries keep their communities entertained, engaged, and informed. She is considering pursuing a Master of Library and Information Science in the future and ultimately hopes to have a position where she can use French and her background in international affairs. In her free time, she enjoys reading, cycling, traveling, trying to get back to playing the piano and oboe as she did during childhood, and keeping up with her French language skills.

Spotlight on FOL Volunteer
Oebm Bendrah
Position: Table Coordinator for Religion, Corresponding Secretary

Background: The youngest of five children and the only boy, Oebm Bendrah hails from the idyllic small town of Sykesville, Maryland. The family later moved to Baltimore. After high school and a short stint in the Air Force, he worked at various clerical jobs and explored life through his faith, reading, movies, music, friends, nature, and a motorcycle.

Thoughtful and impetuous, Oebm “found his tribe” among the later 60’s counter culture. Spending a night with many others on the steps of the Pentagon, and the chaotic streets of DC the next day, was a pivotal moment in forming his views. His “back to the land” years were spent living rustically in Pennsylvania and on a farm in Amish country south of Buffalo, NY.

Oebm lived for ten years in the community of followers and in various United States ashrams of then Guru Maharaji, attending festivals in the US and Europe. While living with pottery artists in Micanopy, he met and married Amira. They lived in Miami, in Durham, NC, and then built a home on ten wooded acres west of Gainesville.

After fifteen years as an interior plant specialist, Oebm retired. Since then he has enjoyed numerous mountain camping trips to North Carolina, family visits, gardening, beach days, yoga, trail walks, time with friends, art, increased reading, and meditation. Oebm began volunteering at Friends of the Library as a sorter. He has been humor table coordinator and is currently non-Christian religion table coordinator. For the last five years, he has served FOL as corresponding secretary. Oebm comments that he loves being a small part of “this great community of dedicated volunteers. This has been a real adventure.”
views and users have spent 140 hours watching videos. The channel gained 264 subscribers, which allowed the library to create a custom URL – youtube.com/alachualibrary. Video programs have also taken off on Facebook, where users watched more than 18,400 minutes of videos from the Library District in March through June 22.

While the Library District does not have a date set to resume in-person programming, the popularity of virtual programming proves patrons can still participate, connect, and discover with their library.

Ebook Usage Keeps Climbing

Ebook checkouts continued to surge this spring. By the end of May, the Library District clocked a 32 percent spike in ebook checkouts for the fiscal year, a total of 506,167 since October. The library has invested in digital materials to meet the demand, amassing more than 82,400 titles on OverDrive alone.

The Library District also increased access to ebooks by allowing Alachua County residents to sign up for OverDrive with just a phone number starting in mid-March. Since then, 3,022 patrons have registered for OverDrive access.

And the Winner is ...
Friends of the Library, Gainesville, FL

Competing with other state publications in the category of Friends, Foundations and Boards, the 2020 newsletter award presented by the Florida Library Association (FLA) went to our own Friends of the Library’s quarterly production, The Library and Its Friends. FOL was notified of its selection by FLA President Eric Head.

FLA states that this award is given for a newsletter produced by Friends, demonstrating a high quality of writing as well as promoting libraries, library programs, and the Friends. Criteria include purpose and intended audience, method of creation and personnel involved, effective promotion of Friends and library, appearance (layout, graphic design, formatting), appeal of content & quality of writing content.

We are pleased and flattered to be selected and pledge to continue producing the quality publication you have come to expect from The Library and Its Friends.
FOL Book Sale Update –
The Path Forward

Friends of the Library has held book sales annually for the last 66 years. In rain, wind, and bright sun, in borrowed rooms or empty store fronts, and – for thirty years – at the Bookhouse on North Main Street in Gainesville, Florida, FOL has welcomed the local community and book lovers from around the country.

But not this spring.

Just weeks before the April, 2020, sale – with preparations almost complete and shelves full of books, records, art, and games – a worldwide pandemic closed the doors.

It was with sincere regret that Friends of the Library postponed the Spring book sale. FOL appreciates the community’s understanding and patience. Our first concern is always the health of our volunteers and shoppers. Friends of the Library officers and committee chairs continue to monitor area and state guidelines and look for ways to make the Bookhouse available to shoppers. Notifications will be sent to traditional and social media when it is safe to open the Bookhouse. Please continue to monitor these sites for new dates, times, and re-opening guidelines. We look forward to being able once again to accept donations of books and other materials and to hold our next book sale.

No Donation Too Small or Too Large.

Early in the year, a large donation arrived at the Bookhouse on a trailer. All items were sorted and now await the time when shoppers can again search the Bookhouse for that perfect item. Thank you to all our donors and shoppers. We look forward to seeing you again.
Invite your friends to join FRIENDS!

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

New [ ] Renewal [ ] - FOL member since ________

Name: __________________________ (as you wish your membership name to appear)

Address: ________________________________________________________________

City: __________________ State: ___ Zip: ___________

Telephone: Home ____________ Work _____________

E-Mail Address ______________________________

Make checks payable to FOL

Mail to: Friends of the Library, Attn: Membership
430-B N Main Street, Gainesville, FL 32601