



CITY OF NEWPORT BEACH BOARD OF LIBRARY TRUSTEES STAFF REPORT

October 21, 2024
Agenda Item No. 6

TO: BOARD OF LIBRARY TRUSTEES

FROM: Library Services Department
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PREPARED BY: Alex Johnkins, Mariners Branch Librarian

TITLE: Mariners Branch Update

DISCUSSION:

The Donna and John Crean Mariners Branch of the Newport Beach Public Library opened in April 2006. The 15,305-square-foot branch shares a small section of its footprint with an elementary school. A joint-use agreement allows the Mariners Elementary School to access part of the library during the school year. While school is in session, half of the children's section of the Library is closed to the public by a sliding wall to provide the students a safe and uninterrupted environment. Library staff is always available to retrieve items for the public while school is in session. Mariners Branch is open for the same 71- hours-per-week schedule as the Central Library.

Personnel

In addition to Branch Librarian Alex Johnkins, the Mariners Branch (Mariners) is supported by full-time Children's Librarian Christine Chapel and Reference Librarian Leah Duffy. The Reference department also includes full-time Library Assistant Janice Nikula, and part-time Library Assistants Tom Rusconi and Brooke Pauley.

The Circulation staff is led by Senior Library Clerk Liz McKibbin and full-time Library Clerk Piers Brown. The Branch part-time Library Clerks are Rick Costa, Shelley Pricer, Nicole Osterman, Mikaela Malsy, and Sully Jacome. Library Pages Noel Chalmers, Matt Wirta, and Devon Burton also support the Circulation department.

Facility Maintenance

In May, Mariners closed for major repairs of corroded and leaking fire sprinklers in the high ceiling. Originally planning for a four-day closure, the work was completed in only three. During the closure, Mariners offered curbside delivery as well as telephone and email reference services. Staff took advantage of the closure to do a deep clean of areas not readily accessible with patrons in the Library. The parking lot was also resurfaced in the early hours of the morning before operations. Inspections by the Newport Beach Fire Department resumed in 2024. The inspection resulted in replacement of some water valves, new labels on gauges and pipes, and updates to some exterior pipes supplying the building

Public Service

Circulation and Reference Services

The City of Newport Beach service population for Mariners is 27,819. That does not include the many visitors from Costa Mesa (just across the street) and other nearby cities. Between July 2023 and June 2024, Mariners was responsible for 24,207 reference questions and 253,877 circulations of physical materials. Reference questions increased a little over 9% year over year, while circulations increased 12.4% at the Branch.

Program Attendance

Storytimes, held every Tuesday and Thursday, are the most consistently well-attended programs at Mariners. They are so popular that the crowd regularly spills out of the storytime room and into the children's area. Despite a full children's area, storytime attendance dropped from 6,032 last year to 5,756 this year. This is likely due to the end of outdoor storytimes that allowed for larger crowds. Weekly LEGO Block Party events, seasonal children's crafts, and teen/adult programs (such as the poetry and bookmaking take-home projects) were all hits. This year, Mariners staff dedicated a section of the wall just inside the children's section to continuous interactive seasonal decorations. Children enjoy coloring leaves (for fall), snowflakes (for winter), flowers (for spring), etc. and seeing their work posted to the wall. 655 children had art posted to the wall this year.

Summer Reading Program

The Summer Reading Program (SRP) continued to grow in popularity at Mariners this year. Participants earned a free book when signing up for the program and there was strong participation throughout. With well over 350 readers registering, participation was up over 17% since last year. A fresh slate of craft programs and SRP performers boosted attendees to over 400, a 33% increase over the previous year.

Seed Library

In April 2024, the Mariners held a planting event to celebrate the launch of the new Seed Library housed at the branch. Patrons can "check out" up to five small packets of seeds per month to take home and plant. They are welcome to bring seeds back to contribute to the collection but are not required to do so. The seeds offered are selected by staff to meet a set of criteria beneficial to the community. This includes prioritizing California native plants, heirloom varieties, plants that grow well in the surrounding climate, ethical sourcing, and making sure that they can be planted in the season they are offered. Over 850 seed packets were checked out by Mariners patrons in the first six months of the program.

Outreach

Mariners staff reached hundreds of children, parents, and teachers with announcements about SRP at visits to two local elementary schools. In October 2023, Mariners reference staff represented Newport Beach Public Library (NBPL) at the City of Newport Beach Recreation Department's *Trunk-or-Treat* event at Mariners Park. Staff engaged with 850 attendees, providing information about library services, NBPL bookmarks, candy, and other treats. Mariners Children's Librarian Christine Chapel represented NBPL at the first CLA Youth Services Interest Group Summit.

Mariners' Elementary School

Jackie Casella is employed by the Newport-Mesa Unified School District and has been the Library Media Tech for Mariners Elementary School for several years. She operates the school-side of the Library while school is in session. She manages class visits, conducts storytimes for the students, and provides circulation services to the school. In May 2024, Mariners Elementary School hosted its second annual Comicon event in the joint-use area of the children's section of Mariners. The event encouraged students to express themselves through art. Hundreds of students participated, and it received a very positive writeup in the local Daily Pilot section of the Los Angeles Times (<https://www.latimes.com/socal/daily-pilot/news/story/2024-05-23/mariners-elementary-hosts-comicon-to-help-kids-find-their-people>).

Collection Maintenance

The Mariners collection consists of 60,277 items. The librarians on staff routinely work to maintain, withdraw, and add to the collection. CollectionHQ, an analytics and statistical tool, helps identify under-used, worn-out, and out-of-date materials. Mariners staff creates themed displays throughout the Library to highlight materials for circulation, library services, and online resources. This year saw some collections shifted around to better serve patrons. Teen Nonfiction and Biographies were moved to the Teen Corner to join the Fiction and Graphic Novel sections there. The end of the publication of several magazines allowed for an expansion of the incredibly popular DVD, Blu-ray, and Videogame collections. At the direction of the Board of Library Trustees, two children's books were relocated to either the teen or adult section, and one children's book was removed from the Mariners collection and relocated to the children's section at Central.

Comments

Nearly all measurable metrics increased positively this year, from materials circulation and reference services to foot traffic and overall program attendance. The launch of the Seed Library has brought new people into the Library that had never previously registered for a library card. It has been a peaceful and productive year in the branch for both patrons and staff.

Branch Librarian Alex Johnkins looks forward to next year with anticipation for increased patron usage, the continued expansion of library services, and the satisfaction of our diverse community's information needs.

NOTICING:

This agenda item has been noticed according to the Brown Act (72 hours in advance of the meeting at which the Board of Library Trustees considers the item).