



2022 Library Visit Interview Form

Library Name: Fitchburg Public Library

Certification Grade: 1

Date of visit: 9/9/22

Library staff present at the visit: Wendy Rawson, Director

SCLS staff present: Tim Drexler

Amount of time spent at visit: 1 hour (in person)

[Please limit this section to the answers to the specific questions, and include as much detail as possible. Report other information or observations in the “other information” section below.]

1. How are you and your staff doing?

- Wendy reported that staff was doing well as the library has returned to in-person services. There have been a few COVID infections among staff, but, so far, illness has not led to any significant service disruptions or need for library closures. In general, library staff has taken a cautious approach in their response: most employees are still masking, and Plexiglas shields remain installed at the service desks. Wendy appreciates how everyone has been working in the same direction with regard to their pandemic response.
- Despite this generally positive news, Wendy noted that the staff did encounter some pandemic-related difficulties over the past year. Enforcing mask mandates, for instance, could occasionally lead to poor interactions with patrons. There was also a recurring issue with disruptive behavior and a lack of parental supervision in the children's area, which, one could speculate, might be a product of general stress and a lack of social conditioning caused by the pandemic. Whatever the actual root cause, the impact of this particular issue has diminished as the situation has calmed down.
- Wendy also mentioned the return to in-person programming and how that has helped with morale, particularly among youth services staff. Storytimes, for example, have resumed, and the library staged several outdoor events related to the summer library program. She did say that attendance numbers were less predictable than in the past: they had around 700 participants for their outdoor petting zoo, while only 32 attendees were at a drawing circle program. Nonetheless, Wendy is hopeful that story times and other events will help draw patrons to the library and possibly counteract pandemic-related decreases in circulation.

2. What are the next projects (big or small) on your library's to-do list?

- One project Wendy is planning for is possibly creating a new tween area within the

children's section on the library's first floor. The idea for this project was sparked by the behavior issues previously noted, but the response could potentially create a positive outcome from a negative situation.

- The library is also planning to upgrade to a new Envisionware sorter sometime in 2023, with installation (hopefully, depending on supply chain hiccups) completed by September. As part of their research for this project, library staff made a field trip to view sorters at libraries in Lake Villa and Crystal Lake, both in Illinois.
- Also on deck for 2023, Wendy may look at updating the library's strategic plan and incorporating the response to upcoming challenges. For instance, the City of Fitchburg is currently conducting a citywide salary study, which will likely result in a pay increase for library staff members. While Wendy is happy about the potential salary boost for her staff, she is also concerned about the impact on the library budget.
- Another major issue will involve meeting Dane County's library service standards in light of Fitchburg's population growth. In addition to the typical increases associated with a growing community, parts of the Town of Madison will be added to the library's service population when the Town dissolves later in 2022. Wendy is currently involved in discussions with Tracy Herold and other Dane County libraries to review the standards and possibly adjust them to reflect changes brought about by the pandemic.
- Annexing sections of the Town of Madison will also require adjustments to library services to meet the unique challenges of new populations. The Southdale neighborhood, for example, is a high-need area consisting mainly of apartment buildings. Wendy described how the library's new Outreach Librarian has already had an enthusiastic response from area children whenever she visits. The library has also started meeting with neighborhood groups to develop a sense of the issues that most concern residents, library-related or otherwise (such as potential cutbacks in bus service).

3. Are there service changes or new services from the last two years that you plan on continuing?

- One change both Wendy and the library staff have embraced is an adjustment to library hours, with the library now closing at 8 PM instead of 9 PM. The library made this change in response to low activity levels typically encountered at the end of the day, which has become even more noticeable after pandemic shutdowns. Library staff has also acquired more flexibility in scheduling lunches and breaks, improving overall staff availability.
- The library continues to provide curbside service, though at a lower level than during the height of the pandemic. Staff members place the requested items in book barns in the library's lower level parking garage for convenient pick-up by the patrons still using the service. The overall impact on staff time is negligible, so Wendy anticipates continuing this service indefinitely.
- Wendy noted the ongoing popularity of the library's take & make craft bags, a service developed by programming staff in response to the pandemic. The bags provide an alternative to in-person events that typically require more planning and coordination.

- Also, regarding library programming, Wendy mentioned that the library might not resume hosting an annual Halloween party after canceling the event for the past two years. Likewise, she thinks that the amount of online programming will continue to decrease and that, eventually, the library may discontinue the service.

4. How can SCLS help?

- Wendy indicated that she doesn't currently have anything specific she needs from SCLS, and overall she is happy with the services SCLS provides. Within her response, she highlighted the Delivery service and how she appreciates their work, which she thinks sometimes is underrated.
- Wendy also discussed some of her concerns with the local holds pilot project related to the motivating philosophy and the details of its implementation. Although Fitchburg is a pilot library, Wendy explained that the decision to participate in the project did not feel entirely voluntary.
- In contrast, Wendy looks forward to implementing the multipart DVD cataloging changes. She thinks patrons will be happier to get sets of DVDs of TV series without the extra effort typically required to receive the discs in viewing order.

5. Is there anything else you'd like to share or discuss?

- No additional items.

Other information gathered at the visit (interesting tidbits, general impressions of the library, or alternative topics):