



2022 Library Visit Interview Form

Library Name: Lester Public Library of Rome

Certification Grade: 2

Date of visit: 9/21/2022

Library staff present at the visit: Renee Daley

SCLS staff present: Heidi Oliverson

Amount of time spent at visit: 2.5 hours

[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?

Renee was out in August for surgery and is now back full time. She is very lucky, has a very good staff that are efficient and really enjoy working with all patrons. They are occasionally struggling to fill all hours as some staff have family and medical issues that they have to manage. One staff member may have to completely stop working but they are hoping that they can find a way to keep her position open for her (talked about a medical leave of absence as a possibility). Rachel is back and doing a wonderful job. They had a very efficient, competent high school student start last year that was able to work more summer hours but can only work a couple of hours a day during the fall semester. Renee is working with the high school to see if they can coordinate a work-study position for him for the spring semester. If he is interested, after graduation next year, she hopes to hire him as a library assistant.

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

Talking with Deb Haeffner about the need for better personal desks for staff. The current desks/layout for them, behind the circulation desk, is inefficient as the desks are connected can't be moved around.

Creating a break room/workroom. Staff needs a space apart from other staff and patrons where they can shut a door and eat lunch

Working with their local gardeners to enhance the outside area: marking trees and mowing brush to create more access. They would like to create “real” walking paths that are ADA accessible. Right now, only the back patio is truly wheelchair accessible. They would also like to create seating in back area(s) for outdoor programs. Then they could hold evening programs with fires and space for larger numbers of people. They are working on expanding the gardening areas (free produce for any takers) and hoping to provide spaces for families to create their own fairy gardens that the adults and children could work on. They are also planning a project where patrons paint and place/hide rocks throughout their outdoor spaces.

Was part of the project trying to raise interest (and money) for a bookmobile for Adams County residents with Erin Foley at the Adams County Library. Potential stops could be places like Big Flats, Monroe, Cottonville, and Easton; any little town or village that has no library and perhaps no way to get access to the two libraries in the County. Local representatives and politicians are not supportive at all.

While weeding materials in their collection (prior to their upcoming Book Sale), they came up with an idea for some of the books that are still relevant but have not circulated recently. They are going to try to bundle some books (still in collection that haven't circulated recently) with some of the kits to see if they can increase interest in the books that are relevant to the kits.

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

Still offering curbside, although patrons rarely request it. Most patrons want to come in to the library to browse, visit with staff and use the other services. Many moms come in with children so their children's area is heavily used. They are still providing the "Craft kits to go" for both children and adults, as they are still very popular. Outdoor programs for kids are very popular and after the programs staff provide bags with scavenger hunt items, related to the programs that the children can search for in the gardens and woods out back. They also like to provide snacks or small toys that the children can take home in their bags.

4. How can SCLS help?

We had a long conversation about some of the difficulties she is having in with the current town administrator establishing and enforcing the boundaries in responsibilities (apparently the library is not the only department encountering issues with this). She would also be interested in finding ways to encourage her trustees to be more secure in their roles on the Library Board. She did offer the recent training to them but they declined. Many of her Board members and Friends Group volunteers go elsewhere during the cold months so this can be a contributing factor in some of these problems. I recommended that she talk to Jean Anderson about ways to help strengthen her Library Board of Trustees also to ask about the situation with the town administrator. Would anyone at DPI be able to talk with her about the situation and provide some information and/or assistance?

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

The library has a budget amount leftover from not filling a position that Renee intends to put aside for capital outlay. When this building was expanded, the construction project used old windows and doors in the new section. Those windows and doors are not energy efficient and need replacement. That "extra money" is one of the points of contention between the town administrator and Renee.

Need help with revitalizing the Friends Group. They are all older people and tend to only meet in the mornings when other people have to work. They have, in the past, helped the local Camelot Frolics fundraiser for local skiing team, by setting up a grill and selling food and drinks. But they are not willing to entertain other ways of fundraising and Renee has some age-related health and safety issues. The same 8 people of the Friends that are active don't seem interested in finding ways or providing activities to advertise their presence or solicit new members.

We talked about some ways this might be done; encourage existing members of both groups to find people and “mentor” them in the group, perhaps get a high-school group involved as some kind of on-going project, or even a “Moms” group that could meet outside of the set times that each of these groups meet. If anyone has any suggestions or ideas about increasing and diversifying either the Library Board or the Friends group, Renee would be interested in hearing them.

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

Renee is proud of her staff and the services that the library provides for their community. She feels that they provide a very good, safe and empathetic place in the community and really enjoys knowing most of her patrons as people and not just patrons. However, I could hear that she is frustrated with some of the political issues and some attitudes that indicate that the library and library staff are not valued as much by certain local representatives as much as the users of the library do. She has been advocating for raises for her staff and I think she feels like she keeps hitting a brick wall.

FYI – ROM feels very fortunate to have such knowledgeable and helpful staff at SCLS. This was a comfort to her when she was out on medical leave – to know her staff had backup in case of emergency.