

Homer Public Library

2023 Annual Report



On January 20, chilly patrons waited forlornly for Storytime to begin

- Jan.-Mar.: The Art in the Library program displays acrylic and graphite paintings by Counsel Langley.
- Jan. 1: The balance in the Library Endowment Fund stands at \$42,460.95.
- Jan. 13: Showing of *King Lear*.
- Jan. 17: The Library Advisory Board responds to the petition to remove titles from the children's and young adult collections.

The year opened with ongoing debate about a petition to remove all the LGBT materials from the children's and young adult areas in the library. On Jan. 17, following hours of public testimony and hundreds of written comments, the Library Advisory Board (LAB) voted to leave all 55 titles in their existing locations. The controversy regarding library materials continues, however: on Nov. 16, the state Attorney General issued an open letter to all public and school libraries in Alaska, advising them of the laws concerning distribution of sexually-explicit materials.

From February through August, staff worked with the Friends of the Library, the Library Advisory Board and the City Council to completely overhaul and modernize all the library's policies. In the last six months of the year, City staff and Council worked on reorganizing the City's administrative structure. Effective Jan. 8, 2024, the library became an official department for the first time since 1985.

The project to upgrade the western lot moved forward. On April 10, Council adopted Resolution 23-030, supporting improvements to the grounds. During the summer, the Friends of the Library hired local experts to conduct a survey of plant species in the area. In October, work crews laid the gravel for the first part of the trail upgrades.

- Jan. 18: New microform reader set up.
- Feb 1-28: National Love Your Library Month. Prize drawings in the library each week.
- Feb. 3: Library videophone replaced.
- Feb. 4 and 9: Alice Porter teaches two workshops on making accordion-book boxes.
- Feb. 6: Scan-to-email function set up on the library's public copier.
- Feb. 25: Celebration of Lifelong Learning honors Samantha Cunningham and Thea Person.
- Mar. 4: In-person workshop led by Dimi Macheras and Casey Silver, authors of *Chickaloones*.
- Mar. 9: Local writer Derek Stonorov, author of *Living in Harmony with Bears*, visits the library.
- Mar. 14: Lt. Browning from the Homer Police Department delivers a talk on *Parenting in the Digital Age*.

I would like to thank everyone who contributed so much. Our hardworking staff prove every day that the library is the heart of Homer. The Friends of the Library poured their energies into a huge range of public programs and provided invaluable support for library operations, especially the summer reading program. Members of the LAB carried out their duties thoughtfully and considerately, spending many hours reading the challenged titles, hearing input from the public, and debating revisions to library policies. Volunteers donated more than 2,400 hours of labor, not to mention thousands of dollars to the Giving Tree, the library endowment and the Friends of the Library. Finally, a big thank you to all the library patrons and community organizations that gave their time and expertise to speak up at public meetings, collaborate on programs, participate in events and just come in to read. The library is what it is because of your efforts.



Homer High School Swing Choir performed at the Celebration of Lifelong Learning, February 25

January

The library hosted a showing of the Royal Shakespeare Company's *King Lear* on Jan. 13. The new microform reader was set up on Jan. 18, offering much greater zooming, contrast adjustment, cleaner prints and the ability to save and email images.

At the Jan. 17 meeting, the LAB heard more public testimony on the petition to remove LGBT+ books from the children's and young adult collections, then voted to retain each of the 55 items in its existing location.

- Mar. 16: The library upgrades from version 3.1 to version 3.9 of the catalog software.
- Mar. 23: Public phone replaced with a new armored model.
- Mar. 24, 6:15-7:45: Margaret Willson visits the library to talk about her newest book, *Woman, Captain, Rebel*.
- Mar. 31: First-ever wedding in the library.
- Apr.-Jun.: The Art in the Library program displays photographs by R. J. Nelson.
- Apr. 1: Monthly checkout limit on Kanopy is raised to 5 videos per patron.
- Apr. 6: Community Poetry Reading.
- Apr. 7: Final memorial plaque for Duffy Murnane installed in the front entryway of the library.
- Apr. 10: Council adopts Resolution 23-030, supporting improvements to the library grounds.



The memorial bench for Duffy Murnane was completed and dedicated on April 26

February

Community Recreation and SPH kindly donated four sun lamps to the library for checkout. The library videophone was replaced, and the main public copier was upgraded with the ability to scan to email, not just to USB. Interlibrary loan fees increased by \$2 to cover the rise in postage costs. The LAB and PARCAC committees passed motions of support for improvements to the western lot, and the ADA Commission expressed verbal approval.

Staff began overhauling the library policies, combining them all into a single document and editing to remove duplication, internal contradictions and out-of-date material, as well as adding sections to cover new and emerging policy concerns.

The Celebration of Lifelong Learning on Feb. 25 was a smash hit! Nearly all 80 tickets sold out and the building was packed. Congratulations to Samantha Cunningham and Thea Person, our adult and youth awardees, respectively.

March

Marylou Burton, a long-time member of the Friends of the Library, received the Audrey Kolb Award from the Alaska Library Association. The award is given to individuals who “have shown a significant contribution in the life and activities of libraries,” a description which fits her perfectly.

On March 16, the library shifted the catalog into the cloud and jumped eight versions of the software. The new catalog brought significant improvements to workflows and greatly reduced the burden on the City IT staff.

- Apr. 10, 13, 17 and 20:
Workshops teach participants how to make an accordion book-in-a-box out of a poem and pictures.
- Apr. 21: Reading by local poet Peter Kaufmann.
- Apr. 26: Ceremonial lighting of the lotus lamp marks the completion of the Duffy Memorial Bench.
- May 5-6: Spring Book and Plant Sale.
- May 6: Bookmobile at the Safe and Healthy Kids Fair.
- May 15: *Little Loon Finds His Voice*, by Yvonne Pearson, is the first book of the season featured on the Story Walk Trail.
- May 21: Volunteers with Serve the City help clean up the landscaping at the library.
- Jun. 3: Summer@HPL kicks off with crafts, games and storytime.
- Jun. 6-Aug. 1: Outdoor Adventures and Stories in partnership with the Center for Alaska Coastal Studies.

Building maintenance staff replaced the public phone with a new armored model. The lock on the front door broke in mid-March, forcing us to leave one door closed until March 28.



Friends of the Library volunteers handed out more than 800 free books during the Independence Day parade

April

Community members gathered in the library on April 6 to share their favorite poems, and local author Peter Kaufmann gave a reading on April 21. The Duffy Murnane memorial bench reached completion this month, with a plaque installed on April 7 and a ceremony of lighting the lotus lamp on April 26.

- Jun. 6-8: In partnership with Challenger Learning Center of Alaska, *Science in the Summer: Be a Physicist* teaches kids about science and science careers.
- Jun. 9: After nine years of invaluable work at the library, Jackie McDonough steps down as Library Technician I.
- Jun. 12: In partnership with Pier One Theatre, kids perform a book.
- Jun. 14: Leap into Science explores light and shadow.
- Jun. 15: The Story Walk Trail features *Butterfly Park*, by Elly MacKay.
- Jun. 17: Cartoonist Lee Post teaches families and adults how to tell a story in cartoon form.
- Jun. 20: David Scheel, author of *Many Things Under the Water*, visits the library to talk about his book and his research on octopi.
- Jun. 19-20: Midsummer Magic takes kids on a trip to find Shakespearian sorcery both indoors and outside.



Young writers read their work on-air at KBBI on July 18

May

The book and plant sale was successful, as always. On May 19, Samantha Cunningham from the Homer Fire Department provided all staff with training in using the AED machine at the front desk.

Volunteers carried out a day of service on May 21, helping to clean up the library grounds. Parks staff also surveyed the grounds and noted a number of issues, including invasive species, problems with drainage and settling and various minor maintenance tasks. Going forward, the City will care for the Margaret Pate garden on the south side of the library and the flowerbed at the base of the Homer Public Library sign.

June

The summer reading program kicked off on June 3. On June 21, local community members celebrated the summer solstice with a street fair on Hazel Avenue. David Scheel's author talk was a great success, with more than 50 attendees. The bookmobile received a new access ramp.

After nine years with the library, Jackie McDonough stepped down as Library Technician I on June 9. Over that time, she did superb work staffing the front desk, repairing materials, training volunteers, assisting with policy rewrites, organizing materials in the vertical files and duplicates collections, and generally being amazing. We will miss her!

- Jun. 21: Summer solstice celebration and street fair on Hazel Avenue.
- Jun. 22-Jul. 14: Teens collaborate to produce their own 'zine.
- Jun. 28: Leap into Science explores balance.
- Jul.-Sept.: The Art in the Library program displays oil paintings by Achim Jahnke.
- Jul. 4: The bookmobile participates in the Independence Day parade.
- Jul. 5: The library implements automatic renewals.
- Jul. 11-18: Mercedes Harness leads a writers club for young participants. Authors have the chance to add their books to the library's collection and read their work on KBBI.
- Jul. 12: Leap into Science explores wind.
- Jul. 15: The Story Walk Trail features *I Got Rhythm*, by Connie Schofield-Morrison.
- Jul. 19-22: LEGO contest.



Volunteers from Global Credit Union provided mountains of food for the End of Summer Reading Party on July 29

July

The library implemented automatic renewals on July 5, which means items renew themselves without human effort unless a) they're on hold, b) the renewal limit has been reached, or c) the patron's card is blocked. Patrons who have email addresses in the system receive a notice that the item has or has not renewed.

The entryway of the library displayed a friendship banner, painted by local schoolkids in honor of Homer's sister-city relationship with Teshio, Japan. It will hang there all through 2024, the 40th anniversary of the relationship.

Our tiny Friends of the Library volunteers were very enthusiastic about handing out books in the July 4 parade—we distributed 800-1,000 titles.

The summer reading program reached its grand conclusion on July 29! Upwards of 100 people attended, with lots of chalk-drawing, game-playing and hot-dog-eating. Many thanks to the volunteers who helped set up and take down, to say nothing of local businesses which donated prizes and food.

Much of the equipment in the server room was replaced on July 1-2. The new upgrades allow for better routing of traffic within the building and improvements to the wi-fi system. The public works department cut a new drainage channel from the staff parking lot and dredged the ditch at the south side of the main lot.

- Jul. 27-28: In partnership with Challenger Learning Center of Alaska, *Science in the Summer: Be a Physicist* teaches kids about science and science careers.
- Jul. 29: End of summer reading party includes music, games, ice cream and hot dogs, with prizes for reading-challenge participants and LEGO contest winners.
- Aug. 6: Commemoration of the Hiroshima bombing features a replanting of the memorial ginkgo tree.
- Aug. 8: Corky Parker, author of *La Finca*, visits the library to talk about her book.
- Aug. 15: The final Story Walk Trail book of the season is *Blueberry Shoe*, by Ann Dixon.
- Aug. 28: City Council passes Resolution 23-082, adopting the revised Homer Public Library Policies and Procedures.
- Sept. 5: Dawn Brooks begins work as a Library Technician I.
- Sept. 8-9: Fall Book and Plant Sale.



Staff from Public Works dredged out the drainage channel on the south side of the parking lot on August 15

August

On Aug. 6, the library hosted a ceremonial replanting of the ginkgo tree, commemorating the bombing of Hiroshima. On August 8, author Corky Parker delivered a talk about her life running a bed and breakfast in Puerto Rico.

On Aug. 29, City Council voted to approve the revised library policies and also allocated funding for upgrading the trail surface on the western lot. The Homer Public Library sign at the corner of Heath and Hazel received repairs and a fresh coat of paint. Thanks to artist Brad Hughes, who both created and repaired the work.

The library submitted three building-related projects for Homer's 2024-2029 Capital Improvement Plan: replacing the siding, installing a sliding gate at the entrance, and an engineering study for possible future remodeling.

September

The library hosted a candidate forum for borough mayor and borough assembly on Sept. 14, and a forum for city council candidates on Sept. 18. Despite some technical issues with the first one, both fora gave candidates a chance to present themselves directly to constituents. Many thanks to KBBI, KDLL, the Peninsula Clarion, the League of Women Voters and the other volunteers who put the event together.

Building maintenance installed new burners in the boiler room, which proved their worth during the later months of the year. The September book and plant sale went well.

- Sept. 14: Candidate forum for Homer assembly seat and borough mayor.
- Sept. 18: Candidate forum for Homer city council.
- Sept. 26: Zoom author visit by Margaret Willson, author of *Woman, Captain, Rebel*. This is a followup to her in-person talk on March 24.
- Oct. 1-Jan. 31: Art in the Library displays works by Elizabeth Kandror.
- Oct. 6: Author visit by John Messick, author of *Compass Lines*.
- Oct. 12: Discussion panel with Guiding Growth.
- Oct. 20: New fish added to the fish wall in front of the library, honoring donors who contributed to the library endowment fund or the Friends of the Library endowment.
- Oct. 24-31: Wi-fi nodes upgraded throughout the library, allowing faster data and more simultaneous users.



Halloween in Homer is serious business

October

On Oct. 20, Moose Run Metalsmiths installed new fish on the fish wall, for the first time in nearly 20 years. The fish wall is an art installation in the plaza outside the library and features copper fish adorned with the names of major donors. Current policy awards a small fish to donors who contribute \$500 in direct financial assistance to the library (preferably through one of the endowment funds), while donors who give \$2,500 or more qualify for a large one.

On Oct. 10, work crews began spreading gravel for resurfacing the Story Walk Trail. Crews from public works have since made some changes to address drainage issues. The survey of plants on the western lot is complete, and the western lot committee chose a few plants to explore further for signage and programs. City IT staff upgraded the wi-fi system, which increases the number of simultaneous users from 40 to 60 and allows higher bandwidth.

- Oct. 26: Author visit by local writer Robert Stark, author of *Warflower*.
- Oct. 31: Trick or treat in the library.
- Nov. 30: *Juneau to Juneau* travelogue by Marylou Burton.
- Dec.: Revisions to the teen area, including new seating, tables and lighting.
- Dec.: Giving Tree up in the lobby.
- Dec. 31: The balance in the library endowment fund stands at \$56,496.11.

November

On Nov. 16, the Attorney General of Alaska posted a public letter to all school and public libraries in the state. The letter reviews state laws governing sexual offenses against minors, and warns librarians that including “indecent materials” in the library collection may be a prosecutable offense if minors are able to find those materials.

The library hosted an excellent travel program by Marylou Burton on Nov. 30, describing her six-and-a-half-year voyage around the world with her husband. Ninety-six people attended!

December

We added new chairs, tables and lighting in the teen section. Throughout the month, patrons purchased 38 books from the Giving Tree and donated more than \$900 in gift certificates to the Homer Bookstore.

We revived the digital picture frame that displays Homer patrons with their library cards from 2011, and it’s out on the table by the front desk. During 2024, the Friends of the Library will add new photos to the show.



In 2011, City IT Network Administrator Tomasz Sulczynski showed off his library card for the slide show

Thank you!

Our deepest thanks to all those who supported the library over the past year. Many members of the public contributed their time, energy and money to guarantee the success of the institution. We here recognize those who donated to the library's long-term sustainability:

Library Endowment Fund

Anonymous (2)

National Philanthropic Trust

Donna and Wayne Aderhold

Dave Berry

Marcia Kuszmaul

Kerry Ozel

Friends of Homer Public Library Endowment Fund

Anonymous

Doug and Landa Baily

2023 by the numbers at Homer Public Library



125,675

Visits to the library



157,634

Items checked out

729

New library cards issued

13,504

Patrons attended programs

1,135 attended
Summer Reading events

2,919 sessions
Study Rooms + Meeting Room

25,595 sessions
Public computers + library WiFi

2,466

Volunteer hours logged



www.cityofhomer-ak.gov/library