



From the State Library - January 13, 2021

Dear Librarians,

As Library Program Director at the State Library, I wanted to take a moment to say **thank you** to each and every one of you involved in providing library services to your communities. The past year has been incredibly difficult. Besides the raging global pandemic, many of us also experienced a widespread drought, a rare derecho that caused terrible damage across the state, and watched civil and political unrest unfold across the country. Even in dealing with all of that, you have stepped up and continued to provide exemplary library service and support to your communities.



When Governor Reynolds shut library doors to the public last spring, you reacted quickly to find innovative ways to continue to give access to library materials to patrons; in many cases, taking much more work on the part of staff to find and deliver curbside. You offered increased internet access by making your wireless networks reach outside your buildings and leaving it on at all hours. You rapidly pivoted from giving in person programs to virtual programming, mastering Zoom meetings and Facebook Live at a record pace. You found other ways to engage your citizens, such as placing Story Walks around your community. Alternative methods for library board meetings were devised and tweaked to ensure they continued to occur and met public meeting rules.

At the State Library, we know and see that things are very different for libraries right now, and statistics may not be bearing out the effort and care you've put into your work these past months. That's okay. We believe you have all done your absolute best to serve your community during this crisis. Some of you may now be finding yourselves in the difficult position of defending those disappointing statistics to your funding bodies, many of whom don't understand the lengths you've gone to in providing much needed services. We encourage you to highlight the new things you are doing and the impact that has resulted and we hope for positive outcomes from those discussions.

We have heard stories from large and small communities across the state that have shown your commitment to keep your library relevant in your community and help your patrons who are also experiencing hard times. We know too that this work can take a toll. Please take care of yourselves as best you can; you are important to us and to the people of Iowa!

So again, thank you for doing a wonderful job despite the challenging circumstances. Please don't hesitate to reach out to me with any thoughts or feedback.

With appreciation,

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