

Annual Report 2021



Millburn Free Public Library
200 Glen Avenue
Millburn, NJ 07041

www.millburnlibrary.org

December 21, 2021

Thank you, as always, for your interest in the Millburn Free Public Library. This year brought us some challenges as we continue to operate under the constraints of a global pandemic, but it also brought us much to be excited about.

Looking back to 2020, when in-person library services were abruptly halted by executive order from the governor as a way to stem the spread of Covid, the MFPL quickly launched a remote operation. As soon as we were allowed, we resumed on-site services. The return to “normal” has been carefully managed and has been successful. Our plan even became the model followed by other nearby libraries. The MFPL has returned to 7-day service, with browsing, computer access, hybrid programming (a combination of virtual and in-person), and great usage numbers.

While we are glad for the strides we made during 2020 and 2021, the project we are most excited about is our renovation. For several years, the Board of Trustees has been preparing for a renovation of the Millburn Library. This summer, the library advertised for bids and in October 2021 renovation work began in earnest. We expect to re-open at 200 Glen Ave in February 2022.

In the meantime, the library is operating out of a temporary location at 253 Millburn Ave, commonly referred to as “the old Annie Sez.” Please drop by to see us there and if you have any questions or feedback about the library please let me know.

*Michael Banick
Library Director*

Pandemic Response and Safe Reopening

In some ways, January 2021 feels like more than a year ago, especially when considering how far we have progressed within our Covid operation. Picking up where things left off in December 2020, in the first part of 2021, the Millburn Library was still working through its adopted safe reopening plan. Due to an uptick in Covid cases statewide, capacity limits and time limits remained in place and public computers were taken offline after a short return to service in late 2020. Books and movies that were borrowed were still quarantined in the auditorium for 72 hours upon return before being put back on the shelf, in keeping with the prevailing guidance.

By March, with a reduction in Covid transmission and new confidence brought forth by wide vaccine availability, public computer access resumed with select machines reactivated at properly distanced intervals. Attendance limits were raised to 50%, then 75%. By summer, attendance capacities were lifted and two more computers were turned back on for a total of 8 computers. PCs remained spaced apart for social distancing. Notary service was also re-started and quickly became very popular, with some months seeing as many as 70 notarial acts. In May we also reopened both sets of entrance doors (front and back) and deactivated the thermal camera. The quarantining of returns ended in June.

As of 12/31/2021, the library is operating with full services at its temporary site. There are public computers, soft seating, café seating, books and magazines for browsing, friendly help from staff members, and a combination of virtual and in-person services.

Renovation

The current library building opened to the public in 1977 and, aside from some minor improvements and ADA compliance projects, the library remained largely unchanged. With an eye toward refreshing the facility and making the best use of all interior space, the board began planning a renovation of the library in 2017.

The planning began with the Children’s Room. This space was chosen for several reasons. First, all of the furniture in that space was at end-of-life. The shelving was original to the building and was beginning to wear out. The space was also disproportionately small for the amount of activity it generates. More than half of the library’s checkouts came from the Children’s Room, but the Children’s Room amounted to about 10% of the library’s space. The lighting, which was original to the building, also made the room feel dark and uninviting. That, combined with the dark, heavy furniture, created a space that did not feel warm and welcoming. Even the orientation of the room was “off” with librarians seated in such a way that they had their backs to the patrons as they entered.

The new Children’s Room will be light and airy, with larger windows, new lighting, and light, bright colors. The room will be approximately 20% larger by consolidating the adjacent staff workroom and giving that space to the Children’s Room. We are very excited to be able to do this expansion without any new exterior construction.



Rendering of the new entrance to the renovated Children’s Room

The consolidation of the staff workroom necessitated big changes in this workspace, including new furniture and a new layout. One office, which also functioned as the library’s server room, was removed and the computer hub was moved to the second floor. Then, in order to give all visitors a chance to experience a new and refreshed library, the lobby, circulation desk, and gallery were to be given a full facelift with new flooring, laminated walls, ceilings, and lighting. The updated feeling then extended to the adult side of the library, with new carpeting, ceilings, lighting, paint, and layout. The entire first floor would now be renovated.

As a final touch, the Teen Area of the library, which is one of the busiest spaces after school, will be relocated from the front corner of the library to a new enclosed space under the library mezzanine. The hope is that this enclosed space will give young adults the space they need to collaborate and socialize, but also contain some of their noise and activity so that other library users do not feel as disturbed by the teens' presence.



Rendering of the new, enclosed Teen Room under the mezzanine.

After many years and much careful planning, the library board authorized the advertisement of bids for the project. The ad ran in July and bids were due in September. The contract was awarded in October and in late October, construction and renovation work began.

In order to maintain full service to the community, the Millburn Library leased an empty storefront at 253 Millburn Avenue, the former "Annie Sez." The library opened here on October 8th and will remain here until we move back to the main building at 200 Glen Ave, which is planned for some time in February 2022. The temporary site has been a huge success with good visitation, tremendous circulation and a well-used "mini library" of select items that we either brought with us to this site or that we have added to the collection since moving. The space is large, light, and has plenty of seating for all users. We have even resumed some on-site programming, especially for children.

For more information about the renovation, including photos and renderings, please visit the library website: <https://millburnlibrary.org/renovations>

Tropical Storm Ida Response

Torrential, unprecedented rain hit the area overnight on Wed 9/1 – Thurs 9/2/2021, resulting in dangerous flash flooding and widespread damage in the township. Fortunately, the library did not suffer any damage.

At just after midnight on 9/2, through coordination with the township fire department and the business administrator, the library opened as an emergency haven for 50 people rescued from flood waters. By 4:00 a.m. the number was down to about 20 individuals and by 11:00 a.m. on Thursday, the last person was picked up by family.

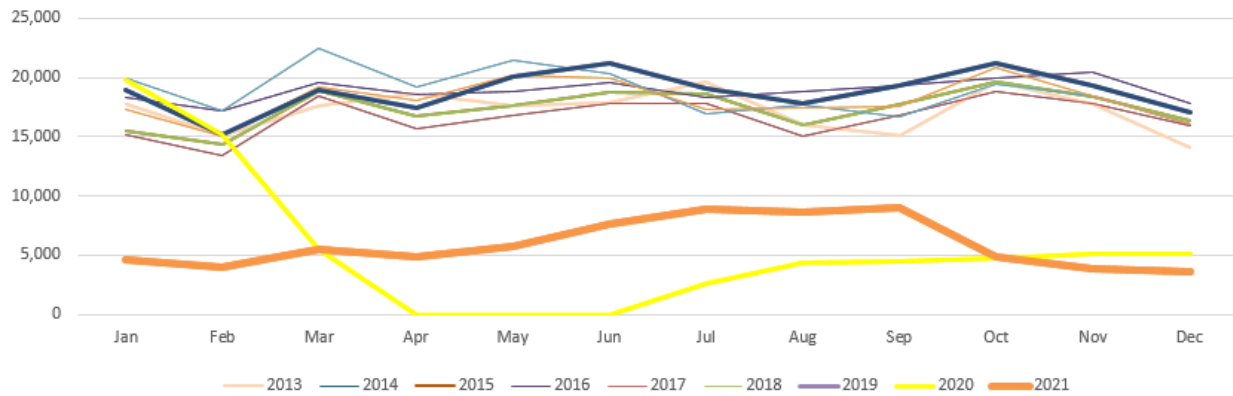
Over Labor Day weekend, a donation drive for clothing, cleaning supplies, and other items was conceptualized. The back half of the library auditorium became the hub for this project. The response was great and the space reached capacity by 6:00 p.m. on Tues 9/7. Community volunteers, under the direction of a volunteer coordinator, organized and arranged all donations. This space remained open for community members to take what they needed until the library closed for renovations in early October. Any remaining supplies were moved by volunteers to a local church.

On Fri 9/17 the front half of the library auditorium was used by members of the small business community to connect to a state website to assist with flood losses and recovery. Since that NJDEA website opened at 9:00 a.m. on that day, the library provided special early access to interested business owners, in order to allow timely submittal of online applications.

The Millburn Free Public Library was recognized for its Ida response efforts by the New Jersey Library Association.

Visitation

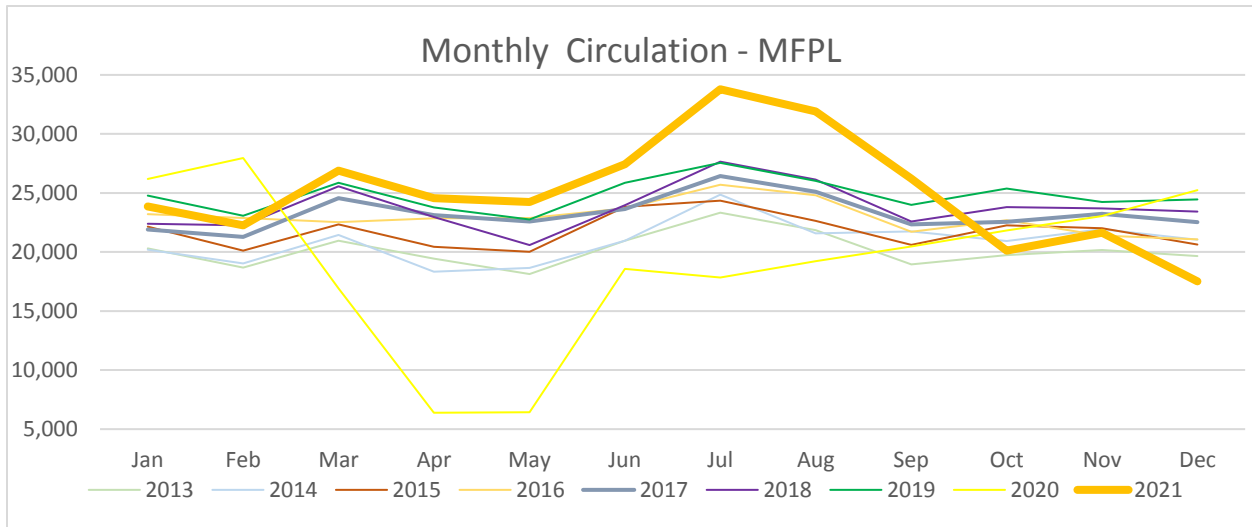
Visitation - MFPL



Year	<u>2014</u>	<u>2015</u>	<u>2016</u>	<u>2017</u>	<u>2018</u>	<u>2019</u>	<u>2020</u>	<u>2021</u>
Total Visitation	199,635	208,700	226,913	226,005	217,416	225,823	66,935	71,421

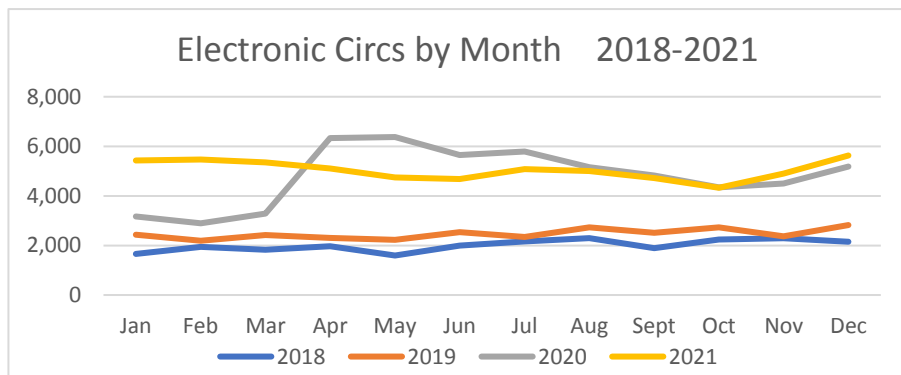
It is understandable that the pandemic dealt a serious blow to the library’s visitation numbers in both 2020 and 2021, first with the state-imposed building closure, then with cautious visitation after reopening. What is notable is that nearly every month since reopening has been busier than the previous month. The only exceptions have been the most recent months during our relocated operation out of our temporary site. This acute decline is mainly attributed to a drop in after school visits by teens who were heavy library users at 200 Glen Ave. We expect numbers to pick up when the renovated building opens in early 2022, provided the pandemic does not interfere with people’s plans.

Circulation



Year	<u>2014</u>	<u>2015</u>	<u>2016</u>	<u>2017</u>	<u>2018</u>	<u>2019</u>	<u>2020</u>	<u>2021</u>
Total Circ	250,676	261,397	275,405	279,250	285,032	297,792	230,065	300,375

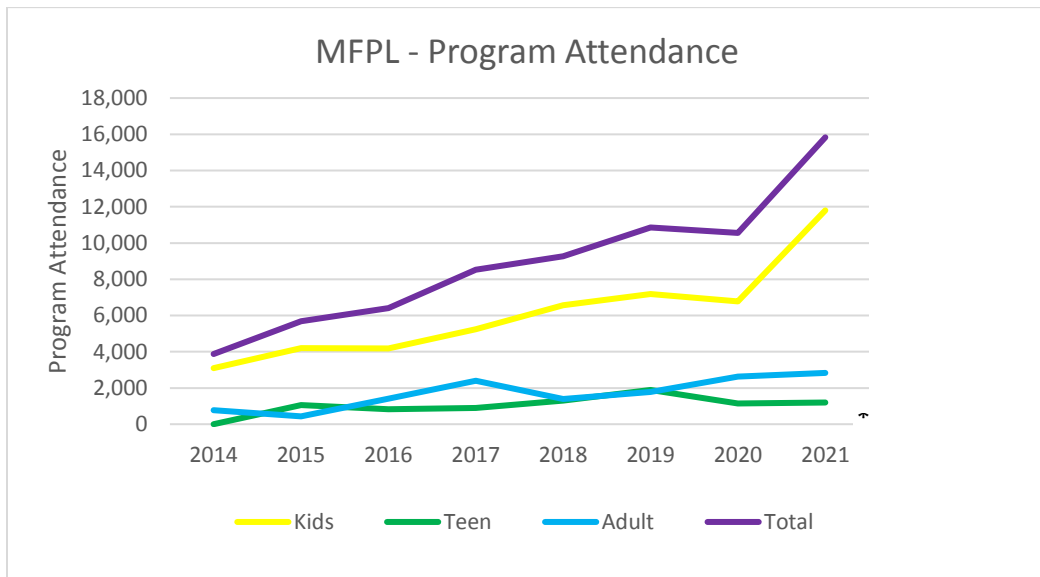
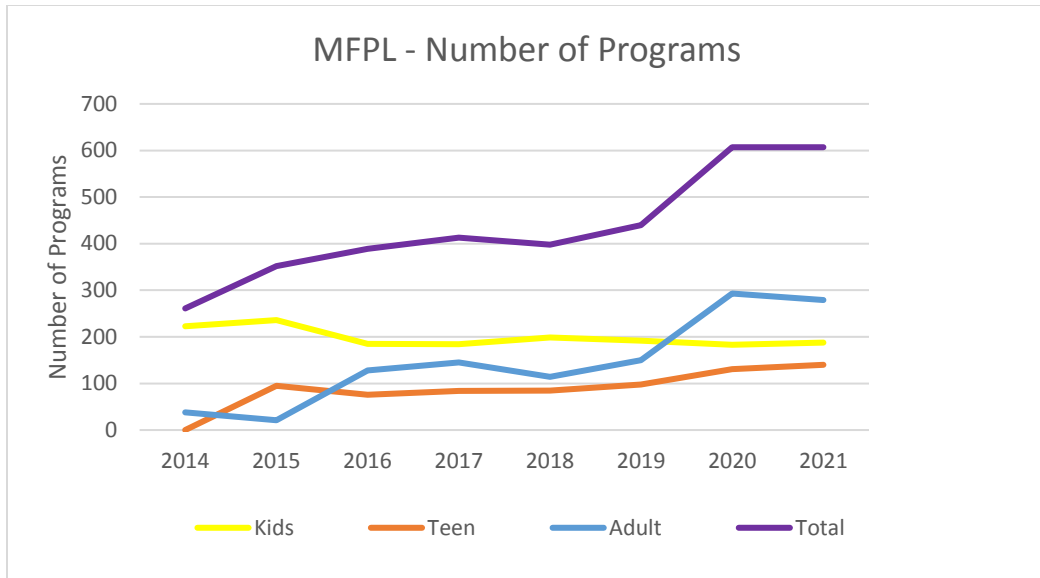
We did it! 300,000 checkouts in one year. That is a new record for the Millburn Library makes us a top library in BCCLS in both actual circulation numbers as well as circs per capita. Yes, the pandemic and state-imposed closure dramatically lowered the library’s 2020 circulation numbers, as shown, but the Millburn Library bounced back. Our e-book usage remained strong, fueled partly by convenience and partly by changes in consumer behavior due to the pandemic. For many years, digital resources, including streaming services, were always the library’s biggest area of growth. In 2021, we lent out over 60,000 digital items – a new record for this format – which is about 20% of our total checkouts. Print book readers should not be worried, though. The MFPL continues to add print titles to its collection, too, and will add nearly 7,000 titles to its collection in year 2021.



The library’s digital checkouts have more than doubled in recent years and now account for 1/5 of all checkouts.

Programming

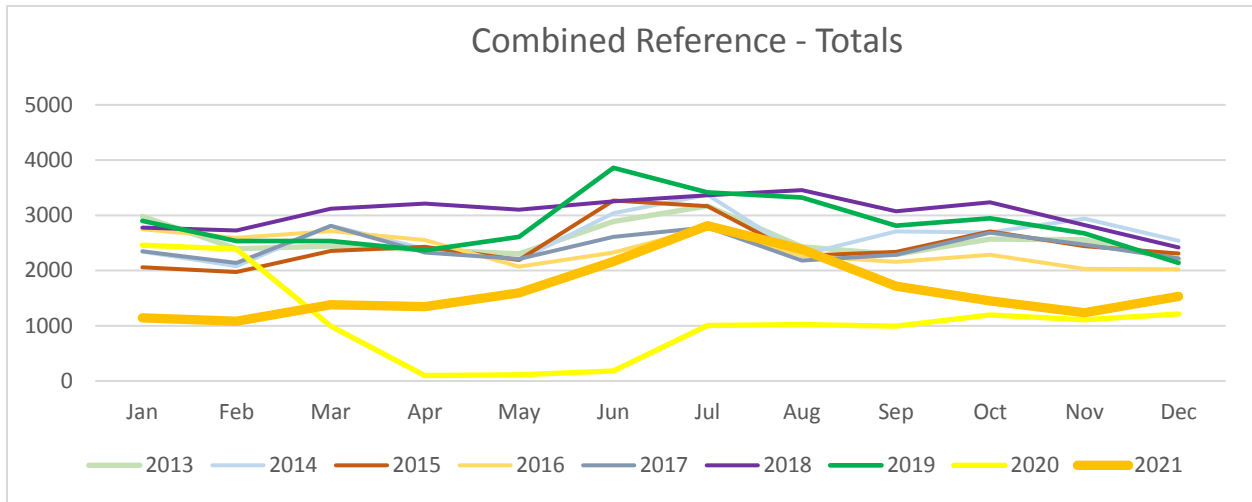
<u>YEAR</u>	<u>AUDIENCE</u>	<u># PROGRAMS</u>	<u>ATTENDANCE</u>	<u>Attend. per Progr.</u>
2014	Kids	223	3,094	14
	Teen	0	0	
	Adult	38	781	21
	Total	261	3,875	15
2015	Kids	236	4,198	18
	Teen	95	1,060	11
	Adult	21	434	21
	Total	352	5,692	16
2016	Kids	185	4,180	23
	Teen	76	825	11
	Adult	128	1,401	11
	Total	389	6,406	16
2017	Kids	184	5,234	28
	Teen	84	896	11
	Adult	145	2,396	17
	Total	413	8,526	21
2018	Kids	199	6,566	33
	Teen	85	1,296	15
	Adult	114	1,400	12
	Total	398	9,262	23
2019	Kids	192	7,188	37
	Teen	98	1,891	19
	Adult	150	1,784	12
	Total	440	10,863	25
2020	Kids	183	6,783	37
	Teen	131	1,136	8
	Adult	293	2,636	9
	Total	607	10,555	17
2021	Kids	188	11,802	63
	Teen	140	1,199	9
	Adult	279	2,831	10
	Total	607	15,832	26



The Millburn Library strives to offer educational, cultural and recreational programming for people of all ages. The library is very proud of its programming, which has been on a tremendous upswing for several years and really took off during the Covid pandemic. This is attributed to our growing reputation, our excellent lineup, and the convenience of online attendance.

Coincidentally, the library offered the exact same number of programs in 2020 and 2021 (607 programs). What is remarkable is that attendance soared 50% versus last year. While we are doing some in-person programming now, the online option has proved to be both popular and viable and will surely remain, at least for the near future.

Reference Interactions



Year	<u>2014</u>	<u>2015</u>	<u>2016</u>	<u>2017</u>	<u>2018</u>	<u>2019</u>	<u>2020</u>	<u>2021</u>
Total Reference	31,377	29,502	28,554	29,067	36,561	34,114	17,771	19,841

This chart shows the combined count of interactions at both the Children’s Desk and the Adult Reference Desk, as well as any remote interactions, such as reference e-mail, live chat, and text-a-librarian services. Our numbers continue to grow and we expect these to pick up even further after the renovation is complete and we move back to our main building at 200 Glen Avenue.

Personnel

The library had two retirements in 2021: Barbara Simmonds retired from the reference department after 39 years of service to the MFPL. Diane McKenna retired after 19 years as a library shelver and page. Three other librarians – one full-time, two part-time – resigned during the course of the year. All of our openings have been held in abeyance until now. In December, we began advertising to fill all vacancies with the goal of hiring to coincide with our grand reopening in spring 2022. At that time, the library also plans to expand operating hours to include four evenings per week.

In 2021, we welcomed new staff members Insha Fitzpatrick (circulation staff) and Matt Spitzer (technology librarian), and part-time librarian Eden Mazer Schwartz was promoted to full-time.

The labor agreement between the Millburn Free Public Library and the Communication Workers of America Local 1031 expired on December 31, 2020 and was extended for one year. That extension ends December 31, 2021 and we will enter a status quo period until a successor agreement is negotiated.

Professional Development

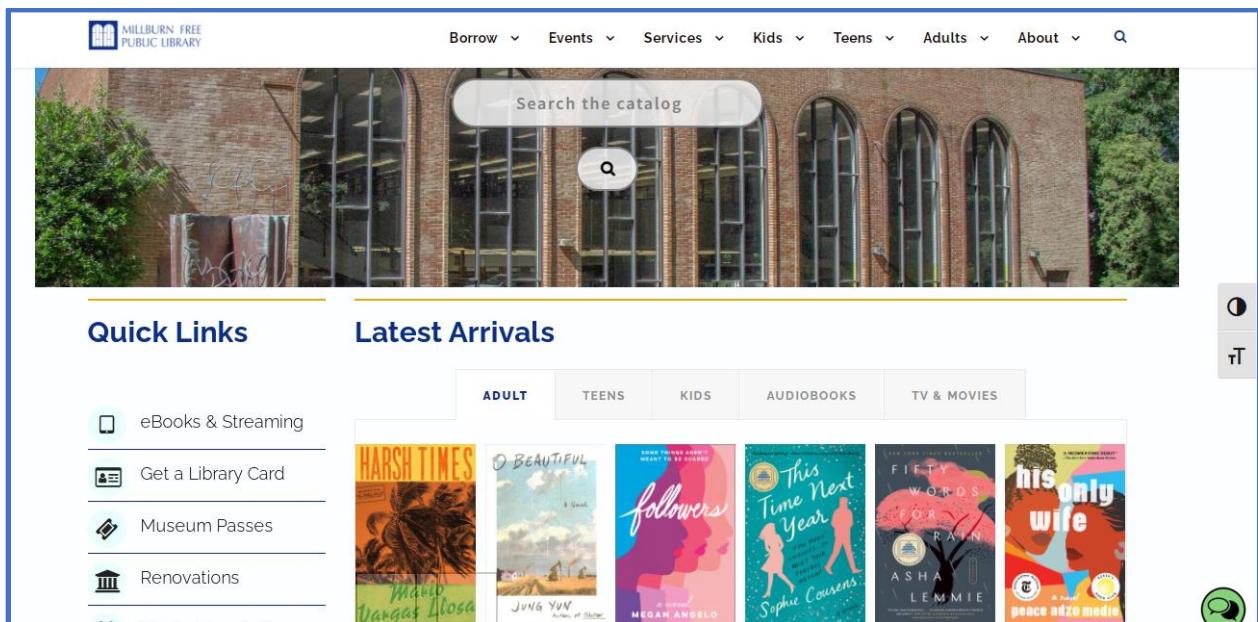
Professional development and continuing education are an important part of library work in order to stay abreast of developments in computer systems, publishing, e-books, library service ideas, and more. Due to the pandemic, all in-person conferences and trade shows were cancelled and all continuing education was virtualized. In year 2021, the MFPL staff logged 136 hours of continuing education through online meetings, workshops, and professional development programs. Of note, MFPL staff even presented at several programs, including the New Jersey Library Association annual conference, as well as several BCCLS workshops.

Strategic Planning

A strategic plan is an important document for decision making and resource allocation. Year 2022 is the final year of our current three-year plan. Time will be taken after the renovation is complete to work on our next plan for 2023-2025. Our plan identifies the values of the MFPL: Respect. Professionalism. Kindness. Knowledgeability. Fairness. Equal Access. And Privacy. It also lists the vision of the library: People want to be at the MFPL. The MFPL inspires and informs. The MFPL helps people live better lives. The three broad goals outlined in the plan are: (1) Enhance the Library Facility; (2) Connect with the Community; and (3) Strengthen and Protect the MFPL Brand.

New Web Site

With the onboarding of our new technology librarian, the library began working on a new and improved website. That new site launched in August of 2021. The new site is clear, easy to navigate, and includes many special features, including ADA compatibility. All of the work was done in-house and the hosting was moved from a private technology firm to a server at the NJ State Library, saving the library considerable money both up front and over the years.



The new library website: <https://millburnlibrary.org>

Goals for the Future

Finish the Renovation. The library's long-awaited renovation is now underway and should be completed in February 2022. Our immediate goal is to see this project through and to transition the library out of our temporary location and back into our main building. Full details of the renovation were outlined above.

Strategic Planning. The library's current strategic plan carries us through the end of 2022. This year, after the renovation ends, we will take on the task of preparing our next 3-year plan, including surveys, focus groups, and other input methods.

Fundraising. The Millburn Library is fortunate to be well-supported by the community through the 1/3 mil appropriation. That funding is excellent for meeting day-to-day operating needs. The library will explore, through its Friends group and through other means, the feasibility of other funding sources, particularly for more expensive capital improvements. This may even become a long-range goal expressed in the forthcoming strategic plan.

Further expansion of digital services. Recent years have shown us the value of a robust digital collection. The library will continue to explore additional ways to deliver content simply and cost effectively.

New services and outreach. It is important for the library to be connected with the community. Over the past year, we have done creative things to keep people engaged and to meet service needs. We have even spoken before community groups to help them know all that the library offers. In 2022, mindful of changing local demographics, the library will be broadening its world language collection and will be launching a new English Language Learning series for non-native English speakers.

Board of Trustees - 2021

Ruthie Binder, President	Term expires 12/31/2021
Sara Sherman, Vice President	Term expires 12/31/2023
Judith Eisner, Treasurer	Term expires 12/31/2024
Amy Ipp, Secretary	School Superintendent's Rep. Statutory seat.
Maggee Miggins, Trustee	Mayor's Rep. Statutory seat.
Dorothy Kelly, Trustee	Term expires 12/31/2022
Lisa Chenofsky-Singer, Trustee	Term expires 12/31/2025

The MFPL Board of Trustees meets on the third Monday of the month, unless it is a holiday. The Board has excellent attendance and has never had to cancel or reschedule a meeting due to a lack of a quorum. The meeting schedule, agendas, and minutes are available on the library website www.millburnlibrary.org > About > Staff and Board of Trustees.