

Librarian's Shelf by Karen Connell

Library Provides Essential Services to the Community

Every year, libraries across the state reflect on the impact they have made in their community. The Nebraska Library Commission uses this annual survey to gauge the quality and sustainability of Nebraska libraries and collect data on the types of services libraries are providing their communities. Data is reported by fiscal year, the most recent of which ran from October 1, 2018 to September 30, 2019.

Library service was provided to the community of Columbus, and through cooperation with Platte County, to the surrounding communities for a total of 4,118 hours last fiscal year. Those hours that the library building is open or the bookmobile is completing its county routes are not the only times library service is provided to the community.

Columbus Public Library offers a plethora of freely available information and entertainment online with countless videos and songs to stream, magazines and music to download, and tutorials to complete. Nearly 50,000 e-books and e-audiobooks were checked out & downloaded from your library's electronic collections on Overdrive, Cloud Library, and RBDigital. To access over 35 resources available through our Digital Library, all you need is a library card, which is free if you live, work, or attend school in Platte County. Digital Library cards are also available at no charge to walk-in visitors who are otherwise ineligible for borrowing privileges

The public library ensures that we are providing equitable access to the internet for all our citizens, a key element to being competitive and successful in today's United States. Last year, the Columbus Public Library's public access computers were used over 25,000 times for more than 20,000 hours. In addition to iPads provided for use in the library, many visitors continue to bring their own mobile devices and use the library's wireless internet to stay connected to the information and resources necessary for civic engagement and financial success that are increasingly available online.

In addition to all that is accessible online, the library building continues to be an active place with over 110,000 visits last year. Cardholders took home nearly 144,000 items from your library's circulating collection, which contains books, audiobooks, DVDs, magazines and newspapers, art prints, and projectors. For those items sought by a cardholder that the library does not own, we offer Interlibrary Loan services. Columbus Public Library borrowed 870 items from libraries across the country for our cardholders to checkout. We also lent 289 items to libraries who offer the same service to their communities.

Community meeting rooms were used over 1,500 times for individuals and groups to study, plan events or community service, discuss books, encourage and support one another, offer skill-building education, and more. Over 25,000 people enjoyed 560 programs throughout the year for children, teens, and adults. During the summer, 848 children, 208 teens, and 453 adults participated in the Summer Reading Program at the library or on the bookmobile.

Looking to the future, it is worthwhile to note that there are days when every meeting space is reserved and rooms reach capacity for public programs causing families to be unable to attend. These experiences are increasingly common as the library becomes an essential gathering place for the community.

The City of Columbus recognizes that a new building with integrated technology and flexible spaces would allow the Columbus Public Library to meet the changing needs of the community for years to come. With results from our last public input survey regarding building components, architects will begin evaluating potential locations. In a few months, we will once again ask you for your input as we continue to develop the best project for our community.