



# POSTSCRIPT

We're looking back at our report—"Standing Out from the Crowd: Worthington Libraries in the community and in people's lives"—a year later, in April 2021, after a global pandemic has upended life in Worthington and around the world. In January 2020, we completed our data analysis as we were hearing reports of the first positive COVID-19 cases arriving in the U.S. By early March, we were incorporating final edits to our report in preparation for sharing our findings at the Board of Trustees annual retreat at the end of that month. Instead, on March 14, Worthington Libraries closed our doors when orders from the governor closed Ohio schools and shuttered businesses statewide and we all went on lockdown to "flatten the curve." At the time, we didn't imagine how long library service—and everyday life—would eventually be disrupted.

In the last year, a familiar refrain found its way back in to articles about libraries during the pandemic: the crisis is an opportunity to "rethink the public library" (Marshall & Wiener, 2020) and to "defy the traditional characterization of the library as a place that only lends books" (Nye & Schipper, 2021). Media coverage early in the pandemic described libraries experiencing large gains in social media engagement, publishing a zine, offering a DIY-scrapbook-themed summer reading program (Fallows, 2020), creating an outdoor story walk and offering customized book boxes (Kaplan, 2020). We also learned about many libraries addressing equity issues in their communities by extending wireless access outside their buildings and lending hotspots, with one library opening their buildings for restroom-only access (Wilburn, 2020). Looking ahead to the future, we've heard a call for libraries to make a shift to a "digital-first model" (King, 2021), alongside news stories that characterize library e-book circulation as "climbing" (Narciso, 2021), "soaring" (Weingartner, 2020) or "skyrocketing" (Wilburn, 2020). Other libraries are reportedly expecting to maintain popular curbside pickup service while planning more flexible—and socially distanced—spaces for patrons to return to (Rosen, 2020).

Here in Ohio, a survey of public libraries in April 2020 found that the top pandemic services included extended Wi-Fi access, relaxed borrowing policies and expanded digital offerings (Ohio Library Council, 2020a); by September, top services included low-contact pickup options, virtual storytimes and virtual reference services (Ohio Library Council, 2020b). Even closer to home, some of our partner libraries in the Central Library Consortium fast-tracked construction of drive-up windows and installation of pick-up lockers; others introduced home delivery of materials and appointment-based visits to the library. Worthington Libraries offered many of these services before the pandemic and likewise worked to introduce more services to the people in our community.

Now, one year after we closed our doors, the country has a new president, all Ohioans age 16 and up are eligible for the COVID-19 vaccine, schools in Worthington have transitioned to "all-in" learning mode and the doors at Worthington Libraries are open once again. As the outlook has—

dare we say it?—improved, and we look ahead toward recovery, we can look past that familiar hype coming from outside and within the library community and look back at how people *actually* used the library to assess our efforts to adapt library services to a global pandemic.

We can also reflect on how our report’s conclusions might still be relevant. When our research found that borrowing and space are what people value most about the library and what set us apart within the community, what happened when use of library materials and access to library space were precisely what was unavailable during the pandemic? When we had learned that the adoption of the library’s digital and online services was limited in the face of other options elsewhere than the library, was it possible to successfully transition people to an all-online library experience? Did a focus on creating a friction-free library experience and engaging with our patrons at human scale make people’s lives easier and provide a sense of comfort at this difficult time? How *has* the pandemic impacted Worthington Libraries? What lessons have we learned for library service in the post-pandemic future?

## Pandemic patterns

The last day our libraries were open as usual—March 13, 2020—was a record day. When word got out that we would be closing our doors, we had a never-before-seen run on borrowing. Nearly 9,000 patrons visited our libraries that day, checking out about 28,000 items—compared to a typical Friday, that was more than twice as many visitors borrowing three times as much stuff!

Our subsequent closure was also record setting. Never before had Worthington Libraries closed its doors to the public for such an extended time. Like many other businesses and organizations, as the pandemic progressed, we undertook a phased re-opening approach, adjusting our service offerings based on expert guidelines and evolving conditions in our community. So far, we have progressed (and regressed) through three distinct service levels:

- **March 14 – May 25, 2020**  
Closed: Our doors were closed to the public and to staff. Circulation, including returns, was halted. The catalog, online and telephone reference services as well as e-books and subscription resources were available uninterrupted.
- **May 26 – September 7, 2020**  
Restricted access: Circulation of physical materials restarted and we introduced curbside and drive-up pickup service as well as returns. Materials such as summer reading prizes and voter registration forms were made available outside library entrances.
- **September 8 – October 15, 2020**  
Limited stay: We opened our doors to allow in-library reserves pickup, access to a limited collection with concierge service at first and, later, access to the full collection. Capacity was limited.
- **October 16, 2020 – February 7, 2021**  
Restricted access: We reverted back to curbside and drive-up pickup service only.
- **February 8, 2021 – present**  
Limited stay: We have opened our doors again to allow in-library reserves pickup, access

to our full collection and use of computers and office services. Capacity is limited and there are time limits for computer use.

As we moved through these service levels, library activities peaked and declined in distinctive patterns.

### Screen time only

While we were closed, our only options to provide library service were online and digital. While we saw increases in use of social media, circulation of digital materials and views of recorded programs, those gains turned out to be short-lived, diminishing once we began offering limited services.

Statistic	Annual sparkline, 2000-2020	Monthly sparkline, Jan 2020 - Feb 2021	Recovery snapshot, Feb 2021*
Facebook engagements			↓58%
Circulation of digital materials			↑8%
YouTube views			↓19%

### Social media

At the start of the pandemic, when we were under “stay at home” orders, our concept of “alone together” felt prescient. We say in our report that the library is a place of solitude for most, but people who use the library also find a sense of belonging. While we were all in forced solitude, our early efforts focused on creating that sense of belonging for our patrons online. After closing our doors, we stepped up our social media posting on Facebook and Instagram with light, humorous memes on a near-daily basis.

We appeared to be successful, at first. Our Facebook engagements skyrocketed in March, but had tapered off already by April and through to May and June, before bottoming out in July and August. In this timeframe, we experimented with “Stay-at-Home Game Nights” on Facebook. In the first weeks of our closure, engagement with our efforts was fairly high, but as the weeks wore on, the fatigue was practically palpable. Our first game night on March 26 drew 60 participants, but by its fourth and final week on April 16, just 20. A game night encore on July 13 as part of the summer reading program drew just five participants. Re-opening announcements in September and a single popular post (about a diamond lost in a book quarantine bin!) revived Facebook engagements in September and October, before declining again through today.

\* The “recovery snapshot” tracks the most recent statistic against a comparable pre-pandemic benchmark, such as the February 2021 digital circulation count compared to the monthly average of digital circulation for the 12 months prior to the pandemic, March 2019-February 2020.

### *Digital circulation*

At the same time, we put our digital materials front and center. Early on in the pandemic, we prepared a new featured title list of “Right-now reads (and other media),” by selecting titles available via hoopla and Kanopy without waitlists. Ever since, we’ve continued to feature streaming and downloadable titles for our usual title lists as well as our weekly staff picks. If ever there were a time for digital materials to shine, this was it!

For the year, circulation of digital materials did indeed increase, by 21% over 2019. Digital circulation saw its biggest bump in the months immediately after we closed. When compared to the average monthly digital circulation for the 12 months prior to the pandemic, digital circulation increased by one-quarter to as much as one-third (24-34%) each month from April through August. These gains started to taper off in September, but remained up by under one-fifth (14-19%) through January 2021. Because digital circulation had stopped increasing—and had even been declining—in the last two years, the numbers we saw at the end of 2020 are actually a return to our January 2017 high-water mark. In February 2021, we saw circulation of digital materials take another drop, standing at 8% higher than the pre-pandemic monthly average.

### *Recorded programs*

Unable to offer any live programming, on March 18—just days after we closed—we began offering recorded programs, dubbed “stay-at-home storytimes.” We started sharing videos on Facebook, before transitioning to our YouTube channel. Views of videos on our YouTube channel climbed in March and April and peaked in May, while library service was unavailable. In the summer, around the time we began offering limited service, views started to decline and bottomed out in the fall and winter.

During the pandemic, we published 110 new videos on YouTube, including 67 storytimes with 19 accompanying storytime extension videos, 21 book talks for children and teens, two adult programs that were streamed live and left on our channel and one how-to video on hoopla. Overall, we averaged 104 views per video, though that varied greatly depending on video type. Storytimes were the most viewed by far, averaging 153 views per video, while storytime extension videos averaged just 18 views. Booktalks averaged 34 views per video; adult programs averaged 55 views.

Although views can give us a rough idea of engagement with our recorded programs, a view on YouTube is logged when a viewer watches just 30 seconds of a video. Looking more closely at our engagement metrics, during the pandemic year, on average, people watched videos on our YouTube channel for just two minutes, or an average duration of one-fifth. Among our videos published during the pandemic, engagement was highest with our storytime videos, averaging a duration of one-fifth. Storytime extensions had an average duration of 17%, booktalks 16% and adult programs were the lowest at 11%.

It's worth noting that traffic to our new stay-at-home storytimes was overshadowed by our back catalog of videos published before the pandemic, which constituted 70% of our overall traffic for the pandemic year. The top seven most popular videos on our YouTube channel for the pandemic year were flannel board nursery rhymes published in 2008. Our top video overall—“Old Macdonald Had a Farm”—has been a juggernaut, with 1.8 million views since it was uploaded in

June 2008. Even during the pandemic it racked up nearly 15,000 views, accounting for 39% of total views on our channel. Engagement with videos from our back catalog is somewhat higher than our pandemic videos, with an average duration of about a third (34%).

Finally, YouTube provides metrics on the geographic distribution of our viewership for videos. Channelwide, just over half (55%) of our viewership during the pandemic year came from within the United States, with only 4% coming from within Ohio.

Ultimately, YouTube is a crowded space and our videos must compete with well-funded, professionally-produced content from high-profile channels. Reaching people in our local community with our recorded program content and sustaining engagement is more challenging now than ever.

### Borrowing leads the way

The decline in circulation we saw in 2020 was the highest—by far—since 1913, the library’s recorded history. For the calendar year, circulation of physical materials was down by nearly half (-48%) over 2019. That number rises to more than half (55%) when comparing the pandemic year to the 12 months prior to the pandemic. In April and May, circulation of physical materials plummeted by 90% compared to the monthly average for the preceding 12 months. (Even though circulation actually came to a standstill, automatic renewals still accrued on borrowed items.)

Once the library began offering limited service, a cluster of services followed the reverse pattern from digital and online services. Curbside and drive-up pickup, circulation of physical materials, reference service transactions and web traffic declined when we were closed, but began to recover when we moved to restricted access.

Statistic	Annual sparkline, 2000-2020	Monthly sparkline, Jan 2020 - Feb 2021	Recovery snapshot, Feb 2021
Curbside/drive-up pickups daily average			↑527%
Circulation of physical materials			↓48%
Email reference transactions			↑151%
Website sessions			↓25%
Account logins			↑5%
Hours and holidays website pageviews			↑534%

### *Curbside and drive-up pickups*

Before the pandemic, we offered drive-up service only at Northwest Library. In the 12 months prior to the pandemic, their drive-up window averaged 70 visits per day. During the pandemic, for the weeks when the library operated at the restricted access level from May 2020 through February 2021, curbside and drive-up pickups at all three libraries shot up to an average of 418 per day, a six-fold increase.

### *Physical circulation*

With curbside and drive-up service underway, circulation began a recovery through the summer months, climbing to 41% of the pre-pandemic monthly average in June to 57% in July and peaking at 61% in August before settling in to about half (48-56%) for each of the remaining months in the year. For February 2021, circulation of physical materials stands at about half (52%) of the pre-pandemic monthly average.

### *Reference services*

We saw a similar pattern with reference services. No matter the library's current service level, all our reference service points—email, IM/chat, text/SMS and phone—continued to be staffed. Looking month-by-month, at first, email inquiries dropped in April. Use of email reference only began to climb toward the end of May, peaking in June and July and humming along through the end of the year. (Chat and text/SMS were far less busy and less regular, but both also saw peaks in June.) After declining numbers in 2019, email reference saw large gains in 2020, with 179% more email tickets than in the previous year, and continues to be busy, with 151% more tickets in February 2021 than the pre-pandemic monthly average.

About two-thirds (65%) of all messages we received via email, IM/chat and text/SMS related to borrowing and account management. Questions about the mechanics of curbside and drive-up pickup—making, cancelling and rescheduling appointments—and on the status of returns due to quarantine procedures were largely behind the increases in online reference.

### *Web traffic*

Similarly, web traffic took a nosedive when we closed our doors. April saw the lowest monthly traffic to our website and catalog in 15 years. We saw less than one-third (30%) of our usual sessions on our website and catalog that month, compared to the previous year. Web traffic began to recover when we announced the rollout of curbside and drive-up service at the end of May. From June through the end of the year, web traffic recovered to about 80% (78-85%) for each of the remaining months in the year. February 2021 web traffic stands at three-quarters of the pre-pandemic monthly average.

For 2020, web traffic overall was down about one-quarter (-24%) from 2019. By comparison, account logins were down by just 8% and visits to our hours and holidays page, which we repurposed to list currently available services, were up a whopping 426%! Once borrowing became possible, people came back to our catalog and website to manage their accounts and check their options to access library services. In February 2021, account logins are up slightly (5%) and the hours and holiday page is even higher (534%) compared to the pre-pandemic period.

## Space appeal

Although our doors have been open only briefly in the last year, early signs suggest that our library spaces retain their appeal. When people had the option to enter the libraries, many did.

Statistic	Annual sparkline, 2000-2020	Monthly sparkline, Jan 2020 - Feb 2021	Recovery snapshot, Feb 2021
Curbside/drive-up pickups daily average			↑527%
Attendance in library daily average			↓85%

For the weeks that we were open in September and October 2020 and again in February 2021, curbside and drive-up pickups tapered off, with in-library attendance more than making up the difference. As noted above, from May 2020 through February 2021 for the weeks when the library operated at the restricted access level, the daily average for curbside and drive-up pickups was 418. When the library operated at the limited stay level, the daily average of curbside and drive-up pickups dropped to 325, a decrease of about one-fifth (-22%). For the same time period, adding in the in-library attendance to the curbside and drive-up pickups brought up the daily average of total visits to 755, an increase of 82%.

While the increase we’re seeing in in-library visits is promising, we have a long way to go to reach pre-pandemic numbers. For February 2021, the daily average of total library visits—both curbside and drive-up pickups and in-library attendance—for the days we were open stands at about one-quarter (26%) of the pre-pandemic period.

## Ups and downs

Other key service areas—children’s services and programs and events—were more mixed during the pandemic year.

Statistic	Annual sparkline, 2000-2020	Monthly sparkline, Jan 2020 - Feb 2021	Recovery snapshot, Feb 2021
Summer reading club registrations			
Number of programs offered			↓95%
Program attendance			↓98%

### *Children's services*

Our research found that borrowing and spending time in library spaces were the biggest draws when it comes to children's services. With those services largely unavailable, we have had mixed success adapting our library services for children.

When confronted with planning a summer reading program during a pandemic, when kids hadn't been to school in weeks and summer camp options were slim, we thought about ways we could help families stay busy and engaged throughout the summer. As part of our "Magic Unbound" summer reading program, we introduced "Magic Mail," weekly emails with suggested activities and recommended e-book and streaming video titles. The reaction was promising initially—the first email sent on May 29 was opened by 67% of recipients and 9% clicked on links—but interest waned by the end of the summer. By its last week, on July 16, only 36% of recipients opened our email and just 2% clicked on links. When all was said and done, participation in our summer reading program was the lowest it's ever been—only about 2,500 people registered, less than one-third (29%) the number of registrants the previous year.

We had more success with our "Take It and Make It" craft kits for kids. Distribution ramped up in the fall and peaked in the winter months. We gave out more than 200 kits each month in October and November and more than 500 each month in December, January and February. People ask for them by name and have expressed disappointment on social media when they aren't able to nab one due to limited supply.

As school ended and spring and summer brought better weather, families may have naturally drifted away from screens to the relative safety of the outdoors. As winter set in, they appeared to be more receptive, especially to hands-on activities.

### *Programs and events*

In the 12 months prior to the pandemic, we offered more than 1,800 programs; from March 2020 through February 2021, we offered just 156, a decrease of 92%. Attendance numbers decreased by about the same amount (89%).

Far and away, our greatest pandemic programming success was the jointly-planned, citywide "Let's Talk About Race: One Book, One Community" program featuring an author visit by Jason Reynolds. More than 2,700 people attended the live, online Zoom session, nearly three times as many as had attended previous in-person events with Dan Rather and Rick Steves! Other successful offerings included an online version of "Books & Brews," drawing nearly 100 attendees (about half the attendance of prior years). Long-standing programs held outdoors also fared well: our annual electronics recycling event attracted 300 attendees (three times previous years!) and a puzzle pickup brought in 50 attendees (comparable to pre-pandemic offerings). A four-part online discussion series on racial justice and social equity averaged about 18 attendees per session.

We have otherwise struggled to reach people online, even with timely, thoughtful and popular programming. Expert-led live Zoom programs on voting, job seeking and mental health averaged seven attendees in 2020 and 2021. Zoom-based offerings of two book groups—"Let's Dish" and "Literary Libations"—are down by half, averaging seven attendees online in 2020 and 14 in person in 2019.



We've received only a small number of inquiries about programs via online reference and social media or at our libraries. Some of these were inquiring specifically about the Jason Reynolds program, but most were asking when in-person storytimes might return. Recorded programs may have tided over families for a time, but they are eager to return to storytimes in the library.

Our report noted that people do not prioritize library programs in their busy lives. While online programs may offer potential to reach larger audiences for our most prominent events, online versions of most programs are not appealing widely in our pandemic-fatigued, over-Zoomed lives. As the weather improves, outdoor programs, especially those for children and families, may be our best bet.

## Out of sight, out of mind

Despite all of our efforts to extend and adapt library services, many simply cannot be offered safely when community spread of coronavirus is as high as it has been in the Worthington area. These types of services remained completely unavailable for the last year, even when we (briefly) opened our doors. Although plans had been in the works when we were open for restricted access in October 2020, we were not able to offer access to technology and office services, such as computers, copiers and scanners, until February 2021. The Homework Help Centers remained closed to students. We did not offer passport processing or notary service. Meeting rooms, tutor rooms and study rooms have been closed to the public. The quarterly Friends Foundation book sales have been discontinued and book donations are not being accepted.

We received only occasional inquiries about some of these services, making up just 8% of all the messages we received via email, IM/chat and text/SMS in the course of the year. At the start of the pandemic, we theorized that record numbers of people out of work would need library services and explored ways we might help with job seeking and unemployment applications, but those types of inquiries never materialized. We also prepared to meet the needs of students attending school remotely by subscribing to Brainfuse's HelpNow, a live online tutoring service. Despite promoting HelpNow prominently on our homepage daily since we subscribed in September 2020, there have been only 111 clicks in six months. We received only four inquiries about help with school via online reference.

Our research found that most people were not interested in our more novel services nor were they using specialized reference services. In the last year, when these services were completely unavailable, by and large, their absence went unnoted.

## Toward recovery

Looking back at these library usage statistics, it's clear that there's no single pandemic library experience. People's library usage ebbed and flowed from month to month, due to people's evolving moods and priorities as well as the library's evolving service levels, not to mention the evolving weather. The picture looks different when we narrowly view library usage during the pandemic months versus when we put the pandemic experience in the context of the "before times." Things look pretty good, for a pandemic. But we have a long way to go to normal.

While we may not have been able to accurately predict how the pandemic would play out in libraries based on our research, the patterns we saw in library activities through the last year reinforce our study's findings. Let's reconsider the four guiding principles we identified in our report against the backdrop of the coronavirus crisis.

## Library amplified

### *(Accept no substitutes)*

Our research found that borrowing is our stand-out service. That was as true in 2020 as ever. Digital and online services—including newly reimagined online versions of services—didn't suddenly appeal to people during the pandemic. And if not now, when?

Looking specifically at circulation, we can see the limits of the digital experience. Because digital circulation made up only about 11% of total circulation in the 12 months prior to the pandemic, the relatively modest increase in usage didn't come close to making up the shortfall in circulation of physical materials. With physical circulation in 2020 dropping by nearly half (-48%) over the previous year, the 21% increase in digital circulation could only shore up the decline in total circulation to -41%. A fully online library experience of e-books and social media doesn't satisfy the longing people feel for books and the experience of visiting the library. A patron commenting on Facebook on our re-opening announcement in February 2021 captures it perfectly: "I want to go hang out with the books!"

As we took steps to re-introduce library service after our closure, gains—or smaller than expected losses—in other areas were largely driven by borrowing. The prospect of borrowing brought people back to our website and to their library accounts; the new mechanics of borrowing brought people to our email reference service. Borrowing itself—tried-and-true borrowing of books, DVDs, CDs and other physical materials—brought people back to the library, first via curbside and drive-up service and, briefly so far, into our buildings.

The services we offered over the last year are largely stand-ins for more familiar library services. As we re-introduced people's preferred services, their use of the substitutes declined. When we introduced curbside and drive-up service, e-book usage dropped off. When we opened our doors, curbside and drive-up service slowed. When the library was not available, people may have settled for an online substitute, but what they wanted was the library as it was. As we offered more access to borrowing and to the library space, people responded. As we begin to recover, our focus should continue to remain on offerings that amplify our previously well-loved services.

## Friction free

### *(Easy does it)*

During the pandemic, we did everything we could to reduce friction for people using the library. We emailed library card numbers to newly registered card holders and suspended the requirement to show identification in person. We've been more lenient with our procedures for retrieving forgotten library card numbers. We extended due dates and renewals and suspended overdue and missing item notices. We introduced curbside pickup and immediately streamlined the service: at Northwest Library, we did away with appointments and at Old Worthington and Worthington Park

libraries, we introduced a text/SMS option. When we couldn't safely accept payments, we made printing and copying free. We received many words of appreciation from patrons, including this remark after a curbside pickup at Worthington Park Library in November: "That was so easy! I wish everything were run like the library!"

Even after just a few weeks with our doors open, patrons have already begun to inquire about additional ways the library can make their lives easier. When we tracked interactions with patrons in the first two weeks of March 2021, a number of visitors to Old Worthington Library brought up the inconvenience of having to enter and exit the building through different doors. Others wondered whether notary and passport services were available yet.

Adapting our services as well as our policies and procedures makes the library more convenient for patrons in a time when everything feels difficult. We expect to continue offering online library cards and curbside pickup services even after the pandemic and should explore whether other adaptations can become permanent practice. Convenience services should be a priority for return once they can be offered safely.

## Alone together

### *(Together again)*

Our research found that the library ambiance sets us apart from other destinations in the community. Entering the library immediately evokes a mood and a state of mind, and people appreciate the warm welcome they find among library staff and other patrons. Despite our best efforts at the start of the pandemic, the aesthetic experience and sense of belonging that people find in our library spaces does not seem to extend to the online realm, in the long term. In September 2020, when we announced our plans to re-open library buildings for browsing on Facebook, our followers were ecstatic, with comments highlighting the importance of visiting the library, including "My happy place!" and "I am beyond thrilled to have my libraries back!" A patron visiting Old Worthington Library during this time exclaimed, "If it weren't for the virus, I would lay down on the floor and kiss it! I have missed you that much!"

While people are not yet encouraged to spend time in our libraries—seating has been removed, study rooms are closed to the public and limits are placed on computer use—the number of people we've seen return is encouraging. And those who are returning want more. Of the inquiries we recorded from library visitors in early March 2021, more than a third were about spending time in the library space, such as availability of seating and places to study or work and access to newspapers and magazines. Although it may take many months before it is possible, our goal is to be together again.

## Human scale

### *(Reflect and represent)*

Operating at human scale may have proven to be our most important principle in how we engaged with our patrons during this difficult time. On the one hand, the pandemic has been happening on a global scale, and we've fretted about how libraries, the economy, our healthcare infrastructure and so on have been impacted by the coronavirus crisis. On the other hand, the pandemic has touched

every aspect of individual people's daily lives, including how we work and go to school, how we grocery shop and run errands, how we interact with loved ones—everything!

In addition to the services described above, in the last year we have engaged with our patrons at human scale in countless big and small ways: telling our patrons we miss them; calling seniors in our community to check in on how they're coping; adding touchless faucets and toilet flushers to keep people safe; launching a mobile app with handheld self-checkout; developing a survey with community partners to check in on how people were faring; passing a resolution to affirm our commitment to be an anti-racist organization; signing off our emails to patrons with "take care" or "stay safe" or "be well."

Our efforts seem to be working. As part of our Worthington Community Coronavirus Survey, respondents were asked to rate the reactions of 12 different groups to the coronavirus crisis. In the just-concluded second wave of the survey, more than two-thirds (70%) said the library was "reacting about right," ranking third behind healthcare officials (81%) and people in their own household (89%) (Community Coronavirus Task Force, forthcoming). In a crisis, people in our community trust Worthington Libraries to do the right thing.

However, we mustn't be complacent. In the first wave of the survey, back in September 2020, we found that about one-fourth of respondents experienced a loss of income during the pandemic with about 10% reporting difficulty affording their expenses, like food and rent; about one-quarter of respondents were experiencing high distress levels as far as mental health; 15% of parents of school-age children said they couldn't provide much—or any—help with their children's schoolwork (Community Coronavirus Task Force, 2020). Without a doubt, there are people in our community who could use what we can provide. But, the people who were out of work did not come to the library asking for our help; those who were feeling anxious and isolated did not attend our online programs with mental health experts; the families who struggled to adapt to remote school did not find our live tutoring resource. What's more, the survey itself did not reach a representative sample of our community, leaving out the very voices of the most marginalized groups among us. Engaging with our patrons at human scale means we need to work harder to reach everyone—especially the under-represented members—in our community. To do so, we must be prepared to do things differently.

As we recover, we must continue to recognize people's humanity and lead with our humanity. That means taking what we have learned from our research and the experience of the last year and offering the library services we know people value, now and in the future. We must aim to reflect and represent all members our community to be the library they want, need and deserve.

—Kara Reuter, April 2021

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