



Montgomery County Library Board

May 12, 2021

ATTENDEES: Briskin-Limehouse, Christman, Duval, Lighter, Manubay, Marcum, Melnick, Negro, Rippeon, Roberts, Slade, Spencer, Villar, Watts

STAFF: Anita Vassallo, Director, Montgomery County Public Libraries; Maddie Hines, Manager, Digital Strategies; Ray Bryson, Program Manager, Digital Strategies; Laurie White, Social Media Manager, Digital Strategies; Regina Holyfield-Jewett, Recording Secretary

GUESTS: Linda Pottern, Chair, Davis Library Advisory Committee; Jennifer Reesman, Public

The meeting was called to order by Vice Chair Briskin-Limehouse at 7:00 PM

INTRODUCTIONS:

- Roll call of Board members; guests were introduced.

MINUTES AND LAC APPLICATION APPROVALS:

- The minutes from the April 14, 2021, meeting were approved.
- The following LAC application was approved:
 - Gaithersburg - Miller

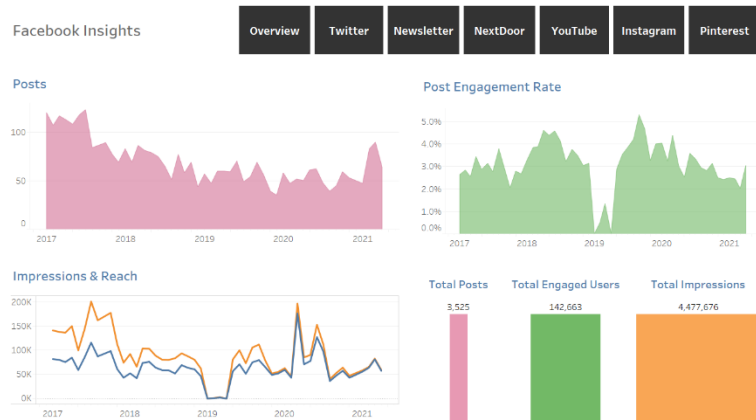
PRESENTATION: Social Media Analytics Dashboard (Digital Strategies Team)

- Maddie Hines, Manager, Digital Strategies
 - Highlight efforts to reach communities and to achieve specific goals by exploring new strategies for online engagements.
 - Began aggregating MCPL's social analytics to capture and provide a baseline to better assess our digital efforts.
 - New social media campaigns we have been successful with, different platforms that we started to merge on to, and building an online community while closed for COVID-19 and also into the future when we move into a hybrid model.
 - The Digital Strategies Team members who work most closely on this are Ray Bryson and Laurie White.
 - Ray Bryson is presenting the Tableau dashboard that was just created about a month ago, which aggregates all MCPL's different platform analytics into one digestible dashboard showing who we are impacting, what resources are being used, and which strategic goals are being met via our social media efforts.
 - Laurie White is responsible for engaging customers in the online environment via Facebook, Nextdoor, the blog, and the newsletter.
 - Social media and aggregating the data is only a small part of our huge chunk of work. The team is very busy, tapped into the community, and engaged online.

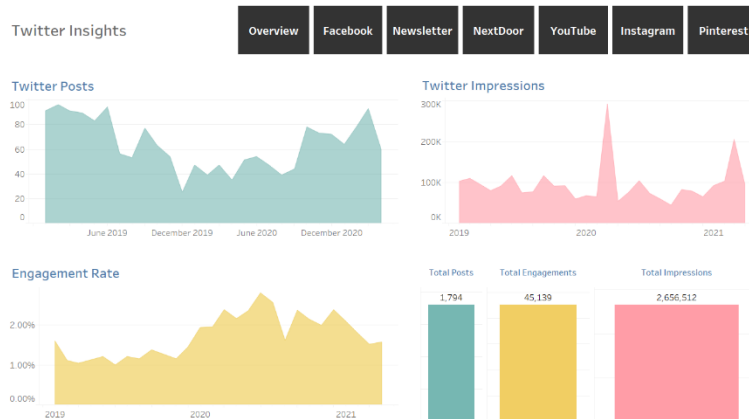
- Our goal is to make sure we are offering the same level of service as we did pre-pandemic. As we do begin to open up, to have a hybrid model so that our customers can engage with libraries in various ways.
- Ray Bryson
 - Social Media Overview
 - Splash page:



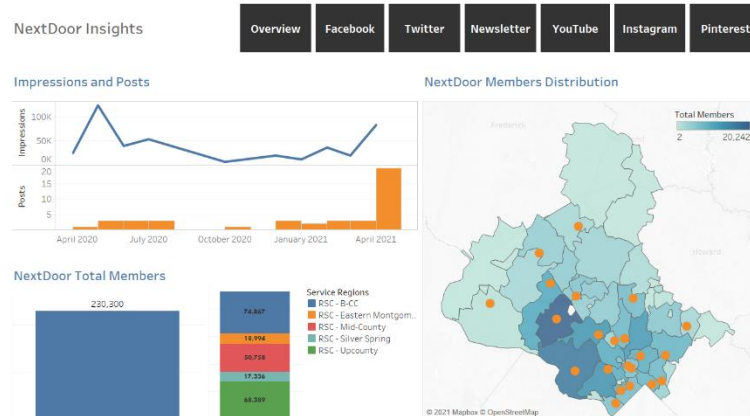
- Facebook



- Twitter



- Nextdoor



- It is very difficult to aggregate the data across all of the different social media platforms.
- It is important to have a baseline to give some idea how to improve.
- Show the growth of the number of followers over time. It is good to have a curve that is going up.
- The spikes seen here are related to the onset of the pandemic.
 - Efforts during this time resulted in more followers – reaching more people.
- Build a community externally and internally. It is important to have staff participate in this process.
- We have been doing more videos. We want to track hours watched for videos (book talks, summer reading, etc.).
- An impression is if the item comes across your view in your feed. What defines an impression varies from platform to platform.
- Engagement rate is how many times an item is liked, shared, commented on, etc.
- Nextdoor is a hyperlocal approach. The county created service regions. Digital Strategies can create hyperlocal posts to target different areas of the county.
- Can overlap with other demographic information.
- Laurie White
 - Since beginning in September, has been getting the lay of the land. Reviewing MCPL’s goals and how our social media feeds into them.
 - Working to increase the community of current cardholders and connect with those who do not have cards.
 - MCPL has a very large event calendar. There is a daily effort to push these programs out on various platforms.
 - Building ties with partners – government, nonprofits, authors, etc.
 - To be seen as an informational resource.
 - Always keeping in mind the question: What is going to be the result of this? The big picture.
 - Focus on the big platforms - Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Nextdoor - although these platforms often require advertisement – pay to play.
 - Facebook – share others’ posts and materials to get more visibility.
 - Nextdoor – 230K people who signed up for the County’s Nextdoor.

- Increased engagement by 200% over the past two months. This isn't valuable if it doesn't mean someone has found what they are looking for.
- MCPL has a plethora of digital resources. Since these have been pushed out more via social media, there has been a 240% increase in usage. Branches were also sharing on community listservs.
 - It is important to drill down to determine the reason for the increase.
- Workforce and Job Seekers initiative, which is a priority for MCPL and the County Executive.
 - Meets monthly with the Marketing Team to discuss upcoming Workforce and Job Seeker programs.
 - Specialized graphics were made to promote these programs. Cross-publicized via newsletter, press releases, social media, etc.
- Involved with the planning committee for MoComCon. It is very important for social media staff to be involved from the beginning to understand all the ins and outs and how best to publicize the event.
- Another focus is on alternative spaces other than Nextdoor.
- **Questions/Comments:**
 - The team should be very proud. This was an excellent presentation. It was interesting to learn how the libraries get the word out to the public. We need a way to share some of the engagement that is going on.
 - Role of LAC in helping with outreach. Is it appropriate to ask them to engage with posting?
 - MCPL has been using Board and LAC members to share information on resources and programs.
 - There is collaboration with other stakeholders such as FOLMC.
 - Have conversations to determine how to engage LACs more.
 - Have often asked LACs to promote library services and resources via their community networks.
 - LAC and Board members can follow MCPL on all social media platforms; like, share, and repost to spread the word into the online environment.
 - The Digital Strategies Team also manages the website.

DIRECTOR'S REPORT:

- **Personnel** - The following staff changes took place during the month of April:
 - Separated from County service:
 - Cedric Clark, Branch Manager, Germantown
 - Hsiu-Chen (Emily) Chen, Library Assistant I, Gaithersburg
 - King-Hwa Jiau, Library Assistant I, Olney
 - Patricia O'Callaghan, Librarian I, Marilyn Praisner
 - With the onset of the pandemic, there have been more retirements.
 - Currently, there is a 20% vacancy rate.
 - There is a robust recruitment plan in place.
 - The library pages will be called back to work in a few weeks.
- **Refresh/Construction Updates:**
 - Long Branch - Project completed. – Will plan an in person reopening
 - Germantown - Branch closed at 6 pm on April 24, staff worked in the building for one week packing up items, shelving returns, staff re-assigned to other locations on

- May 3, Demolition began on May 3, book drop will remain open during construction.
 - **Potomac:** Architect retained, and kickoff meeting held with DBDC/DGS. Assessment is completed.
 - **Maggie Nightingale:** Anticipating a late summer closing date for renovation. DGS is working on permits. It is a leased facility.
 - **Damascus:** Facility Assessment started.
- **Wheaton Library** will resume Holds to Go and telephone services on May 24. Work has been completed on the plaza area.
- **Upcoming Events**
 - Contemporary Conversations with Haben Girma – Conquering Harvard and Becoming a Disability Rights Advocate; Saturday, June 5: 3:00pm - 4:30pm
The first deafblind person to graduate from Harvard Law School, Haben Girma is a human rights lawyer advancing disability justice.
 - The 2021 Summer Read and Learn program is set to kick off on June 16. This year's theme is Tails and Tales. Will be able to do some outdoor programming.
- **Recovery Plan:** On June 1, MCPL will reopen the following six branches on an appointment basis for browsing and checking out materials, picking up holds, computer use, print/copy/scan services, information and circulation services. These six branches will discontinue the Holds to Go service. Collaboration rooms, study rooms, meeting rooms, and discovery rooms will not be available at this time. The hours at all branches will be 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. on Monday, Wednesday, Friday and Saturday; and noon to 8 p.m. on Tuesday and Thursday.
 - [Connie Morella Library](#), 7400 Arlington Road, Bethesda
 - [Gaithersburg Library](#), 18330 Montgomery Village Ave.
 - [Marilyn J. Praisner Library](#), 14910 Old Columbia Pike, Burtonsville
 - [Olney Library](#), 3500 Olney-Laytonsville Road
 - [Rockville Memorial Library](#), 21 Maryland Ave.
 - [Silver Spring Library](#), 900 Wayne Ave.
 - These branches were selected for a combination of their physical size and regional distribution throughout Montgomery County.
 - Another six branches will reopen on June 14, with the remaining reopening on July 6. Noyes Library will remain closed due to its square footage.
- **Budget Update:** MCPL's Operating Budget was on the Council's consent calendar to be approved at the [May 12 worksession](#). It was removed from the consent calendar and approved after Council had addressed the plans for reopening libraries. The approved budget protects the collection budget and provides funds for some technological improvements.
- **Comments/Questions:**
 - Board members should take time to view the May 12th AM Council worksession. There is a wonderful support for Libraries by the County Council members.
 - Please expound on the Basics Pilot and the Open Plus project.
 - The [Basics Pilot](#) is a partnership that includes Montgomery County Department of Health and Human Services Head Start, Early Childhood Services and School Health Services; Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) Division of CARES Act, Early Childhood and Title I; Montgomery Moving Forward, an initiative of Nonprofit Montgomery; and MCPL. One of the goals of the pilot is to help parents/guardians understand how important early literacy is in children's lives and how to engage with language skills. Lauren Martino has attended the Basics meetings representing MCPL. This

year the focus is on a certain zipcode in Gaithersburg. Parents are encouraged to sign up for a text service to remind them of early literacy behaviors they can demonstrate with their children.

- Open Plus project – This is a project utilizing Bibliotecha. It is a system that will allow us to offer access to our library buildings outside of our operating hours. Customers would have to have a valid library card and be registered for the program. This will be piloted at the Maggie Nightingale branch in Poolesville, where customers do not have easy access to other branches. It will be put in place after the branch has been refreshed. There will be security cameras tracking the activities during these hours, which should prevent damage and theft. The pilot will be evaluated.
- There will be brief refresher training to help everyone with the reopening. The training coordinator has been working on a refresher packet (cash register, copier/printer). There has also been training on de-escalation techniques.
- During the Council session segment regarding Noyes, it was mentioned that the MOU with Noyes would be revisited. It was good to hear Council’s support of Noyes and the entire Library system. Council wants to take another look at Noyes and maybe shift funding from the community and Noyes Foundation to the County. This is an opportunity for the Board to form a taskforce to take a look at the programming at Noyes to see how it can be placed in other County facilities. Taking into account all the scientific and educational information that has come out about early literacy, it is important to expand what Noyes has to offer to the rest of the County. [Negro]

CHAIR’S REPORT:

- None

WORKGROUP REPORTS:

- Library Policy and Practices (Lighter, Duval, Briskin-Limehouse, Manubay)
 - Tim Lighter replaces Bill Duval as the chair of this committee.
 - If anyone else would like to join the group please let Tim Lighter know.
- Legislative and Public Affairs Workgroup (Rippeon, Melnick, Negro)
 - Advocacy video will be released very soon.
- LAC and Board Activities (Roberts, Villar)
 - No report
 - Robyn Watts expressed interest in serving on this workgroup.

OLD BUSINESS:

- There are rules in place regarding LAC membership, reapplying and tenure.
 - There is some degree of flexibility.
 - The terms are for three years. LAC members can reapply. They can serve in perpetuity
 - Office terms have been waived in the past. The Board liaisons can bring any term issue before the full Board.

NEW BUSINESS:

- None

LIAISON REPORTS:

- Marilyn Praisner – Met on April 15. Very happy to be one of the reopening branches. Plan to meet in June.
- Silver Spring - Meeting on May 17. Sure they will be excited to be partially reopening.
- MCPS – Working with MCPL Outreach Team and Summer Reading Committee on the 2021 Summer Reading program. Lauren Martino and Amy Alapati have spoken with teachers and media specialist. Planning for a bigger and better program than last summer. There are only five weeks of school remaining.
- Twinbrook – Continues to be defunct; will probably reconstitute after it reopens.
- Rockville Memorial – Met on May 4. Very excited about reopening. One suggestion was to add language about COVID protocol to the appointment-based policy.
- Accessibility Advisory – Will meet in a couple of weeks.
- Olney – Will meet next month. The Greater Olney Civic Association is creating their agendas and would like to include library services as a topic. Tim Lighter and Director Vassallo will discuss via email who should represent MCPL.
- Little Falls – Next meeting is June 1. Diane Mesirov, who volunteered on the Little Falls LAC and FOL chapter, passed away on April 17.
- Chevy Chase – Meets on May 19.
- Kensington Park – Has not met in a while. Still waiting to hear from the manager.
- Davis – Postponed the April meeting. Scheduled to meet on May 25 when they will hold elections.
- Quince Orchard – Will not meet until the branch reopens to the public.
- Noyes – Meeting May 13 and will hold election of officers.
- Gaithersburg – Met on May 11 and held elections. Branch Manager Cindy Schweinfest is excited about reopening.
- Maggie Nightingale – Scheduled to meet at the end of May.
- Montgomery College – Dr. Pollard, MC President, has accepted a position at Nevada State College. She will be transitioning over the next several months. An interim president will be assigned and a full search will take place. She is holding a college-wide town hall to present the state of the college moving forward. There has been some conversation around returning to campus; there is pressure that surrounding community colleges are beginning to reopen and some never closed. There is some anxiety from staff about coming back to work. Currently, the library is short-staffed – down seven positions. Have to be strategic regarding reopening and expectations. Libraries submitted a grant from the \$17.3M received in federal funds to help with a PA system, high flex classrooms, RFID, and self-checkouts. The new ILS is scheduled for June 20, 2022. Library renovations are moving slowly. The state pushed back funding to 2022. The County will fund the Takoma Park project. There is a feasibility study for a campus in east county – Colesville/Burtonsville area. An implementation team is working to develop a virtual campus for 2023.
 - MC had designated a large amount of their CARES funding for students. If you know any students who are taking courses at MC, please encourage them to apply for CARES funding. They can apply online.
- White Oak – Will meet in June and hold elections.
- Aspen Hill – Met this week. It was good conversation. They are interested in social justice and DEIA (diversity, equity, inclusion and access) mission, so if the Board begins working in this area, the AH LAC is interested. The chair is ending her term in June. No one has expressed interest in the chair position.
- Wheaton - Has a meeting scheduled for June 21.

- Long Branch – Sent out a request for information. There has been a shift in managers.

PUBLIC COMMENT:

- As a member of the public and someone who works mostly with children who are deaf and hard of hearing and those with disabilities across our community, I want to publicly comment that the reopening plan, its timeline and the process of making an appointment, is woefully inadequate to providing a community with access. I would encourage this Board and everybody here to do all that they can to provide children with access. There are many children who have not touched a physical book in over a year. I know we have wonderful digital programs and holds to go but for many families and community members they are simply inaccessible. I am extremely disappointed. It's past time, it's beyond time. Our community has done a great job. I know there is anxiety. I know that librarians and library staff can think creatively about how to ensure access that is truly safe for our community. I hope you will take this comment into consideration as you move forward with your reopening plans. [Jennifer Reesman]
 - Tim Lighter, AAC liaison, will send Jennifer Reesman an email invite to attend an AAC meeting.

ADJOURNMENT:

- The meeting was adjourned at 8:45 p.m.