

## 2020 Year in Review



2020 was a whirlwind of emotions. We experienced unfamiliar situations and found innovative ways to adapt to hardships. Our staff exceeded expectations and remained dedicated to our customers while safely managing the accessibility of library materials and services. Staff have treated customers with the same care they always have, despite lingering fears amid a pandemic, and even found new ways to connect with customers and entertain Oklahoma County families. It's remarkable what we were able to accomplish together in 2020 and we will continue to grow stronger together through 2021.

Here is a brief list of our system-wide accomplishments. This list is not comprehensive and may not include some of your local branch or department's accomplishments, so please, print this month's edition of ShelfLife and write in some of your own accomplishments in 2020. To see more from the 2020 fiscal year, be sure to checkout our [2020 Annual Report](#).

### New Buildings & Renovations

#### Belle Isle Library Renovation

The Belle Isle Library is in the middle of an extensive remodel, launching the 1960s style library into the future. The renovation will add 14,000 square feet to the library, creating a much larger meeting area, five new study rooms, a children's room, a large teen space, expanded restrooms and a makerspace. In addition, the library will add new furniture, more computers

and more parking. The library is slated for reopening in early 2022. In the meantime, customers can enjoy library services at the temporary Belle Isle location.

#### Del City Library Groundbreaking

We broke ground on a brand new 16,000-foot Del City Library at the former site of AMF Sunny Lanes Bowling. Del City Library staff eagerly await the opening of their new location in March 2021. The grand opening event will pay homage to Sunny Lanes with staff bowling shirts and bowling-themed giveaway items, inviting the community for socially distanced tours and other creative events to keep customers safe during the pandemic.

### New Programs, Services & Experiences

#### Curbside Services

Maintaining normalcy while also caring for the safety of our customers and staff has been of the utmost importance to us



this year. Our curbside services have allowed us to serve our customers and provide access to the information and entertainment they need during this challenging time. We've received positive feedback from customers using our curbside service and we recognize this service could benefit our customers' busy lifestyles even after we transition back to our full-service options. We look forward to implementing permanent curbside services at all our library locations in 2021.

### Experience Passes

Metro Library customers can now experience OKC in a new way using their Metro Library account. Customers can visit a local library to check out an Experience Pass, which became available Nov. 1. Each library has one [Experience Pass](#) available to loan for up to seven days. One pass can be used to get up to five people admission to the Oklahoma City Museum of Art.

### Spoticus Pen Pal Program

While we may not be able to visit in person with many of our customers during this time, little library customers can now [write snail mail to their favorite library mascot](#). Spoticus, our beloved multi-color dalmatian, responds to each letter and drawing with care. Check out some of these heartwarming letters from children.

### Expanded eResources

This year we launched and promoted more remote access eResources than ever before. With our community

staying home more in 2020, free access to quality news, information and entertainment has become more vital.

"It was amazing to see the usage of eResources increase so much this year especially at the beginning of the pandemic," Collection Development Librarian Kristine Magers said. "It gave me so much hope to see that even when our buildings were closed, our community knew we still had resources for them and were eager to use our services virtually."

Metro Library customers can now access popular news sources from anywhere, including remote access to the [Washington Post](#) and the [New York Times](#). Ancestry.com responded to the pandemic by offering remote access for their library account customers, something our customers have never before been able to do. [Hoopla](#) and [Kanopy](#) temporarily offered more credits and even made kids content unlimited so it did not count against monthly borrows. We also launched [TumbleBook Library](#), featuring over 1,100 titles for grades K-6, including animated, graphic novels, readalong books and National Geographic videos. [Brainfuse's HelpNow](#) and [JobNow](#) eResources expanded their live services to include help filling out FAFSA forms and navigating unemployment benefits.

### Virtual Walking Tours

Our Special Collections and research team has been hard at work on many projects, but one gem this year was their virtual tours. These tours are a unique way to get our customers engaged with the library, learning about history and connecting them with free entertainment to experience outside on foot or in their cars. Tours this year included [Fairlawn Cemetery](#) and [The Life of Ralph Ellison in OKC](#).

### New Interim Executive Director

Larry White, our current interim executive director, began his new role in August 2020 following Julie Ballou's retirement after 27 years of dedicated service to our library system. Larry has over 25 years of library experience and began working at Metro in 2019 as director of strategic planning and projects before he was promoted to the deputy executive director of strategic planning and services in January 2020.



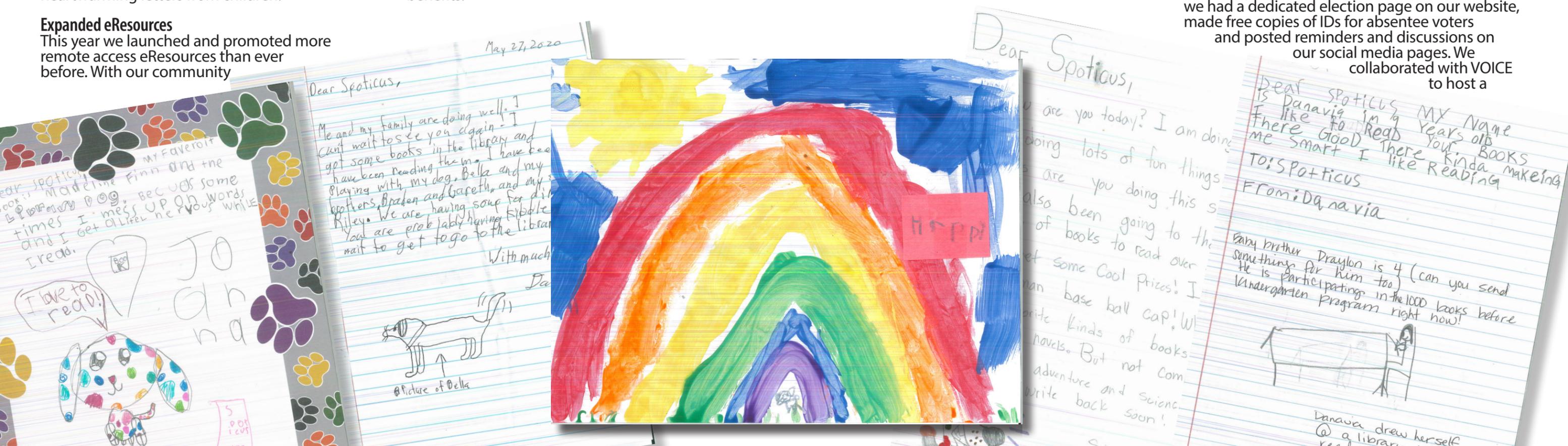
### Online Programming

We made a huge shift as a library system to implementing virtual programming options, which required staff to adapt quickly to a few new software solutions and even for staff to develop some skills in videography. During a time when we have all felt a bit sapped of energy and outlets to relieve stress, our staff somehow managed to ramp up creativity. We shifted to using Zoom, livestreaming programs on social media, and creating and curating pre-recorded content for our customers.

"Our system made a hard pivot in March and April to find ways to provide virtual content to reach our customers. I'm so thankful for and proud of our engagement staff for their hard work in creating ways to modify programs and services. Trying new things, especially during times of crisis, can be really challenging and so many staff stepped up to make it happen," Teen Services Manager Emily Williams said.

### Civic Engagement

2020 was a busy year in many aspects. Not only did we face a global pandemic, but we were also inundated with election information. As a part of the library's commitment to civic engagement, we had a dedicated election page on our website, made free copies of IDs for absentee voters and posted reminders and discussions on our social media pages. We collaborated with VOICE to host a



discussion with local candidates and hosted a Voting 101 program with League of Women Voters.

### Book Talks & Book Clubs

Although we were not able to interact with our customers in person much this year, we found ways to bring them valuable content at home, including book talks discussing a wide range of genres and award-winning titles. Following the announcement of the [Sequoyah Book Award](#) nominees, staff contributed videos on every nominated title and the talks were sent out to teachers across Oklahoma County.

Collection Development Librarian Sadie Bruce curates a list of upcoming titles being added to our collection each month in her fun and engaging "[Shelf Sneak Peek](#)" segment on social media, where Sadie reminds viewers to "put 'cha self on hold."

In 2020, [Tailored Titles](#) contributors not only recommended titles during their monthly live chats, but also recorded book talks discussing some of their favorite reads.

Teens aren't left out of the fun! Teen Services Manager Emily Williams and Teen Librarian Shelbie Marks created a lit-erary hit in 2020 with their "[Teen Book Hotline](#)" segment on Instagram.

In addition to recorded book talks, library staff continued to offer a variety of book clubs via Zoom for every age and genre interest. One popular book club was the Head Over Heels romance book club, in conjunction with OverDrive, giving customers access to the featured title without waits or holds.

Other book clubs included a comic book club, Between the Covers, What's Your Poison, teen science fiction fantasy, cozy mystery and more. Some featured titles included "The Ballad of Songbirds and Snakes," "Flora and Ulysses: The Illuminated Adventures," "Nine Perfect Strangers," "Runaways," "The Magic Tree House" and others.

### Health & Wellness

Recognizing that our customers were facing unprecedented times this year, our staff also focused efforts to organize health and wellness programs hosted by professionals in the field. Programs included Stay Active and Independent for Life (SAIL), Total Wellness with OCCHD, yoga and tai chi.

In addition, we offered a variety of self-care focused programs, [Alzheimer's and dementia informational programs](#) and support groups, Medicare 101, Family Issues Community Outreach, a physical therapy talk series, Social Workers in the Library, Building Healthy

Relationships, Healthy Living with Arthritis, a variety of collaborative [health programs](#) hosted by the OSU OKC Extension and more.

### Children & Teen Programs

2020 was a challenging year for children, parents and teachers. Children have had to adapt to staying home and distance learning has become the norm.

One beloved program adapted to a virtual environment was Children Reading to Dogs, in which children join an online Zoom session and break out into virtual rooms with a therapy dog and a library staff member to work on their reading. The model for the virtual version of the program was featured in several library publications and received national attention.

STEM programming also continued in a virtual format with [STEM Saturday](#) videos hosted by children's librarians Chelsee Bumann and Breanna Salzsieder. Those videos, featured on our social media pages, taught students through DIY science experiments.

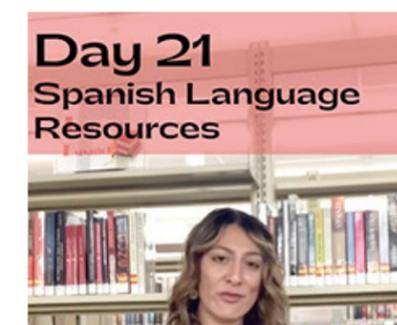
Storytime, [Mother Goose on the Loose](#)® and other popular children's programs also continued through social media channels and hybrid formats in which parents could pick up a take-home kit associated with a recorded storytime reading posted as a YouTube video.

[123! Play with Me!](#) continued with Zoom sessions and recorded videos, giving parents the opportunity to chat with professionals as well as view educational videos on social media hosted by professional librarians with tips for having a better playtime experience.

New children's programming also emerged during the pandemic. That programming included the Spoticus Pen Pal Program, virtual dance parties, virtual escape rooms, take-home kits and more. Our librarians have continued to host virtual learning clubs, including LEGO, robotics, coding and others. Programs featuring popular online games like Minecraft and Animal Crossing were a hit this year as children and teens looked for new ways to interact with their peers in a fun and safe online environment.

Programs like homework help, Rocket Readers, STEAM camps and others continued to teach students valuable learning concepts at home and with take-home kits.

Book clubs, including Little Lit, Remote Teen Book Club, Anime Club and others hosted virtually continue to offer children and teens a space for discussion and comradery.



### Diverse Programs

Our libraries strive to offer programs that celebrate the diversity in our community. This year we hosted engaging online programs celebrating Hispanic heritage, including [salsa, mambo, Cuban rumba](#) and [conga](#) dance classes; bilingual storytimes; a concert with [Latin Mojo](#) and various programs celebrating Dia de Los Muertos. We hosted a Noche de Cuentos series celebrating the power of storytelling and Hispanic heritage with stories read in Spanish by the author, Xavier Garza.

Native American Heritage Month included a virtual tour of the First American Museum, booktalks, discussions about sovereignty, an Indigenous storytime, a cooking demo and a program about [Native American representation in cinema](#) with Bird Runningwater of the Sundance Institute. We also began offering [Indigenous Storytime](#) as a monthly program, posted on Facebook for parents to share with their children anytime.

Other programs we hosted this year include the PBS film screenings of "The African Americans," historical presentations including Black Towns Coast to Coast and [more](#). Downtown Adult Librarian Sarah Brown hosts an annual [Historically](#)

[Speaking](#) event series featuring diverse topics, including representation, education, storytelling, art and more. We also celebrated [Pride month](#) with online crafting programs, storytimes and featured Metro Library Podcast episodes.

### Neighborhood Arts

This year's [Neighborhood Arts programs](#) were hosted entirely online with some sessions hosted via live streaming on social media and others using pre-recorded performances uploaded to YouTube. Performers included the Sugar Free Allstars, MICROgiant, Lucas Ross, Mister Puppet Show, Race Dance Collective and others.

### Author Events

This year we hosted [local and national authors](#), including William Bernhardt, Rebecca Balcárcel, [Ellen Crosby](#), [Megan Miranda](#), [Jennifer L. Armentrout](#), [Caleb Roehrig](#), [Tracy Wolff](#), [Jen DeLuca](#), [Alexandria Bellefleur](#), [Alisha Rai](#), [Aimee Agresti](#), [Bryn Greenwood](#) and [Kristyn Kusek Lewis](#). Ongoing programs such as Author Hour and annual events including Lit Fest have given our customers the opportunity to explore new genres and learn more about the publishing industry.

### Take-Home Kits

The pandemic forced us to come up with new ways to host programs that typically would not allow for an online-only format. Programs including crafting, science, sensory experiences and others were continued through take-home kits. These popular programs could not have happened without the work of our librarians who lovingly counted out supplies down to the last push pin and paper clip, wrote out detailed instructions and recorded tutorials and supplemental educational videos to give customers a positive experience.

### OKC StorySLAM

One unique online program that caught the attention of our Facebook followers was our [live StorySLAM](#) events in partnership with OKC StorySLAM, an OKC storytelling event. Prior to the event participants can submit their written story and after one practice session they perform the story for live viewers. All stories must be true and performed from memory. This year's event topics included [schooled](#), [stories of sacrifice](#), [paranormal](#), [Black stories matter](#), [vacation](#) and [Pride](#).

### Reading Programs

Last year our libraries hosted the Book Bingo [Winter Reading Challenge](#), the Spring Reading Challenge and the [Summer Reading](#) program. While things were a lot different in 2020 and we had to quickly adjust to an entirely online format, we continued to see successful participation from our customers and learned ways to make our 2021 virtual reading programs even more successful.

### 31 Days of the Library

We went out with a bang in 2020, promoting a huge chunk of our services through [video tutorials and creative videos](#) featured on our website, Facebook and Instagram feed. Customers got an inside look at the services that our library staff are most enthusiastic about and learned how their Library offers services at a price that cannot be beat.

### Metro Library Podcast

The Special Collections department dropped several new [podcast](#) episodes this year, including a series on the Oklahoma City National Memorial, LGBTQ history and more.

