

## Quechee Library report for the Working Group for the Status of Libraries in Vermont

The impact of the pandemic has been huge on library programming as we have strived to maintain the discussions that are so key to our missions of community engagement (with the library and, equally important, leading to intersections of different community populations) and providing intellectual opportunities. We never ceased the discussions but rather worked around the limits (masks and social distancing) as we also embraced technology, initially with a simple Zoom-only platform, then through hybrid programming allowing for simultaneous in-person and Zoom participation. The hybrid option then became even more accessible through the purchase of the Meeting Owl Pro camera and audio system.

We are now at the point where it is hard to imagine that a hybrid format won't always be the preferred option for discussions as we can keep people involved who may have moved, have transportation or time constraints, etc. while keeping the dynamic of in-person conversations.

Every month we have four discussion groups (sci fi, mystery, historical fiction--all hybrid from the library) and a senior citizen group held at Bugbee Senior Center. We have recently started a film discussion group which in its second meeting drew over 30 participants of several generations and locations.

To these programs we add Vermont Humanities Council scholar-led book discussions (several of which we have originated here and take pride in the issue-focused topics which then go on to travel the state). They include most recently one on the pandemic, one on *American Mob Violence*, and one called *Fear No Labor*. We also yearly create a series of programs linked to the Vermont Reads title; these too are issue-driven, meant to increase understanding of cultural diversity.

It is this adult programming that we believe creates the best outreach to the larger community, to bring more people into the library to benefit from available services of all types.

Attendance at most adult discussion programs averages 15. Occasionally, such as when we mounted a photo display and held a panel discussion called *Visible in Vermont*, partnering with other organizations to increase awareness of racial issues in Vermont---we have a full house of over 50.

Children's programming is less successful. Over the past few years attendance has diminished for almost every type of program and every age group. We attribute this to the busyness of children's schedules and to a high number of options in the Upper Valley and, for storytime, to universal pre-Kindergarten. Once again, the pandemic has had a huge impact while children remain unvaccinated. Programs will continue to be offered, but it is discouraging.

Contact emails: [kate@quecheelibrary.org](mailto:kate@quecheelibrary.org) and [marieke@quecheelibrary.org](mailto:marieke@quecheelibrary.org)

Marieke Sperry