

2022 Annual Report

Dakota County Library

➤ Message from the Director

Reflecting on the year 2022, reminds me of the famous quote by ancient Greek philosopher, Heraclitus, “Change is the only constant in life.” We began the year in full pandemic mode, by summer, we were able to restart in-person youth programs and toward the end of the year, construction began on what will be the 10th library location. While change can bring challenges, I’d like to share some of the exciting events that happened in 2022.

We started the year with eliminating overdue fines on youth materials and it’s been exciting to see more youth using library services, particularly this past summer when we were once again able to offer the variety of events for children and families. For many families we serve, storytime is an important part of the week and it’s wonderful to offer that fun learning opportunity again.

We know there are barriers that keep people from using the library and it’s our on-going goal to reduce those as much as possible. We made strides by expanding visits with seniors who have barriers to transportation. We introduced Fresh Start, a program to remove accumulated fines from formerly incarcerated individuals allowing them to use the library services to support re-entry in the community.

While we’ve always worked hard to connect and engage with our community through outreach, in 2022 we added a new position – a Community Outreach Coordinator to our Youth and Adult Services Team. This position will allow us to be even more effective in connecting with county residents and raising awareness of what the library has to offer. We also now have a community engagement vehicle, our On the Go van. You’ll see this van in parades and at community festivals, so stop by and say hi!

This past fall, we broke ground on a new library in South St. Paul. Construction will continue throughout 2023 and we look forward to welcoming South St. Paul Library as they join the county library system in 2024.

Throughout all of this, staff have worked hard to make Dakota County Library a welcoming place. Our commitment to you, our community, led us through this year of changes. I see our connection to community growing even stronger as we work to break down barriers and create more access to the library.

Sincerely,
Margaret Stone, Library Director



2022 By the Numbers

Resources & Expenditures

Budget: \$14,325,615.32
Staff: 128.83 FTE

Personnel: \$10,665,100.41



Library Materials: \$2,226,466

Technology, Programs, and Services: \$1,434,048.91



5.045 million
checkouts



2.058 million
visits to the
library website
and catalog



1.164 million
in-person
visits



493,106
Wi-Fi
sessions



360,410
uses of online
research tools



138,873
active library
members



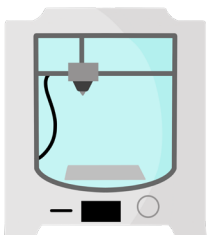
112,919
internet
computer
sessions



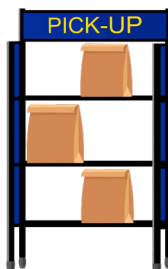
34,381
people
attended
1,604
in-person
and virtual
programs



12,278
meeting room
reservations



6,017
iLAB
reservations



2,351
curbside
appointments



318
materials
mailed to
customers

➤ 2022 Behind the Numbers

Preparing to Welcome the South St. Paul Library

For nearly a century, the City of South St. Paul has operated its city library. On Tuesday, Sept. 6, the Dakota County Board of Commissioners voted to join the South St. Paul Library with the Dakota County Library system. In recent years, the South St. Paul Library operated as a county-associated library, sharing resources including the library's catalog and material delivery system. Due to increasing operational challenges and maintenance costs in the 95-year-old building, a new South St. Paul Library is being built at the corner of Marie Avenue and 7th Avenue North, four blocks from its current location. The library is scheduled to open spring of 2024.

Reigniting Youth Summer Learning

During the summer months, Dakota County Library provided a variety of youth and family events while welcoming residents back to the library after a two-year hiatus. From June through August, we hosted 95 in-person storytimes and five Kids Craft Fairs with more than 800 participants. Collaborating with Dakota County Fleet, Dakota County Parks and city partners, the library hosted eight Mighty Machine events for 2,000 attendees. This popular program offers youth the opportunity to climb inside and learn about snowplows, street sweepers, fire trucks and other vehicles.

The library distributed more than 16,000 free books to youth, ages birth to 18 during the Summer Discovery program. Summer Discovery encourages summer reading and learning. Participants also received a reading and learning activity guide designed for their age group. To support Summer Discovery and summer events, 100 teens volunteered with the library's Volunteer program that offers leadership opportunities and activities to develop teens' skills and interests.

Library Resources Bring Big Value to the Small Business Community

Dakota County Library provided more than \$1.4 million in value to the local business community in 2022. The Urban Libraries Council, an innovation and action tank of public library systems, used their business value calculator to estimate the dollar value the library's concrete resources such as training, research tools, technology, and meeting spaces offered to small businesses and the local economy.



Dakota County Library provided over

\$1.4 million

in support to Dakota County entrepreneurs and small businesses through workshops, research services and access to physical space, technology and equipment.



➤ 2022 Behind the Numbers Cont.

Somali Stories at the Library

Dakota County Library created a special series of Somali storytimes led by local author and educator, Deqa Muhidin, who writes under the pen name Nura Sirad. Offered at Burnhaven Library, more than 35 caregivers and children attended each session. The storytimes are designed to promote culture, language and literacy skills. Deqa shared that the class brings joy to families as it gives families the tools needed to share traditional stories while promoting literacy. The events create ties between families and the library and connect young residents of Somali descent with the languages of their parents and grandparents. In response to community member requests, the library will continue to offer the Somali storytime series.

Adding Native Grasses and Flowers to Library Lawns

Dakota County and the City of Eagan converted an acre of turf grass, on the east side of the Wescott Library, to a new habitat of native grasses and flowers. This conversion reduces maintenance and irrigation and creates food sources and nesting spaces for pollinators. A pathway in the habitat leads to a public art piece from the HeART of Eagan's, Art on Loan program. The art piece will rotate every two years. A pollinator garden was also installed at the Pleasant Hill Library in Hastings, which hosted several successful Plant-a-Patch for Pollinators events in 2022.

Metro Libraries Ranked # 1 in E-book Circulation

Twin Cities library cardholders checked out 9 million e-books, digital audiobooks and digital magazines in 2022. The Twin Cities Metro eLibrary (MELSA) was the highest circulating consortium in the country. Library cardholders anywhere in the seven-county metro area can borrow digital materials from any of the counties' library systems using the Libby app. Dakota County Library cardholders are prioritized on request lists for Dakota County-purchased materials.



➤ 2022 Behind the Numbers Cont.

Library On the Go

The Dakota County Library's On the Go Van helped raise awareness of the library and connected staff with residents who face geographic, transportation, language and economic barriers. The library's community engagement coordinator and other staff used the van to bring services to 8,575 residents at 51 community events including storytimes at apartment complexes, sharing resources with older adults at music performances, and participating in local city parades. The On the Go van will return to local events this summer.

We Are Water

The Minnesota Humanities Center selected Dakota County as a host site for the We Are Water MN exhibit. This traveling exhibit aims to strengthen partnerships and increase residents' understanding of water. From Oct. 13 through Dec. 5, the Pleasant Hill Library hosted the indoor exhibit which included hands-on activities such as water-themed puzzles, puppets, books, and audio and video recordings of area residents reflecting on their personal connections to water.

The library partnered with Native American artist, Robert DesJarlait from Red Lake Nation to create a water-themed coloring book featuring original artwork focused on water animals and their spiritual connection to Ojibwe clans. The coloring book included simple tips for conserving water at home and discussion questions for children and families. We Are Water MN also had an outdoor exhibit at the Lebanon Hills Visitor Center. The county and its partners organized multiple water education events including water treatment plant tours, smart salting workshops, a Story Trail featuring the book "We Are Water Protectors", a nitrate water testing clinic and a panel discussion about protecting water.

