

Lowville Free Library
Annual Letter to the Community

Often we get questions about what life at the library is like. *What happens in the library every day? Must be pretty quiet, right? Do you read a lot? Are libraries still needed?* Some days are quieter than others, but they are relatively few and far between. We read a lot, but not at work (unless it's for story time). As for whether libraries are still needed:

In 2017, Lowville Free Library had 19,340 visits—people coming to borrow materials, utilize services, access the internet, attend a program, or use our space. That comes to an average of just under ten people walking through the doors every hour the library is open. We have 3,741 registered borrowers, but many others come into the building registered with another library in our system, or for a service or program they did not need a card to use.

Every day, we gather new newspapers and local notices and turn on the seven public computers, as well as the other tech access we offer—copier, printer, fax. Throughout an average day, ten people will log onto one of our computers, for a total of 3,140 computer use sessions in 2017. Others will visit the library to read the newspapers and utilize the other technology services the library offers, like Wi-Fi access and online databases. Last year, the library's Wi-Fi was accessed 12,324 times.

Lending materials is the most recognized part of library services, and remains the bulk of what we do every day. In 2017, adult fiction and nonfiction items were checked out 11,915 times from Lowville Free Library, as well as young adult items 829 times, and children's items 7,199 times. We put in a lot of work on the collection—keeping up with new releases, replacing outdated materials, filling collections, shifting to make things more accessible. As a relatively small public library, the number of books we can keep on the shelf is limited in terms of space and resources, but we want our collection to be the best we can make it. As of the end of the 2017, Lowville Free Library held 16,861 print materials, 1,263 media materials, and 7,208 digital materials.

As a small library in a rural area, the access to resources that a library system can give an individual library is a huge asset. We are proud to be a member of North Country Library System (NCLS), where we have access to many more physical and digital materials, as well as databases, because we cooperate with other libraries in Lewis, Jefferson, St. Lawrence, and Oswego counties. During an informal survey at the beginning of the summer last year, patrons often said the most valuable service we offer was interlibrary loan. Overall, we received 4,054 items from other libraries for our patrons, and sent out 3,243 items to other libraries in the system—total, that is over 600 items in and out a month.

You may not think of library staff as a service that the library offers, but throughout each week, our wonderful staff and volunteers help patrons search for materials, research topics, use databases and tech services, give tutorials on technology, and much more. Many of these things happen spontaneously during the course of a day, but we are also always glad to schedule time with patrons to help with one of these areas. Plus, we are always glad to discuss your latest read.

Most days see our community spaces being used for either a library program or by another community organization for programs or meetings—and many days, more than one. During 2017, we held 45 programs for adults, 95 for young adults, and 78 for children; 218 programs in all, with a total attendance of 2,340. This included everything from story time and teen group to adult painting classes and summer reading events. In addition to library sponsored programs, the community rooms were signed out by community members 232 times (a number which does not include drop-in users).

Financial support for Lowville Free Library comes primarily from public funding, including the Village of Lowville, Town of Lowville, Town of Watson, Lowville Academy and Central School District

(LACS), Lewis County, in addition to state aid in the form of services offered by NCLS. The library was the recipient of an increase in funding on the school ballot, which received overwhelming support from voters in the LACS district.

Our funding is supplemented by donations, fundraisers, and grants. We are grateful for grants funded in 2017 by The Pratt-Northam Foundation, Elks Lodge #1605 in Lowville, North Country Prenatal/Perinatal Council, and Stewart's Shops. Grant funding covers almost all of our programming expenses.

Our board of trustees, along with the other work they do for the library, worked hard on fundraisers to support the library including the annual Garden Tour in July, a garage sale and book sale during August, and the Calendar Raffle in November. Look for all of these fundraisers to return in 2018.

During 2017, the lower floor of our building flooded multiple times. It limited our service and programs through the whole summer, and during significant portions of the rest of the year. We are addressing the problems that caused the flooding, and are so grateful for the patience, understanding, and concern everyone has shown throughout this process. With luck and hard work on the part of board and staff, we hope to have everything fixed soon, and even better than before.

Lowville Free Library has a wonderful staff, many willing volunteers, and a hard-working board who make all of this possible. On our board this year, Mary Pelletier-Hunyadi served as president, David Fraser as vice-president, and Karen Oldroyd as secretary, with trustees Sheree Vora, Sue Rubenzahl, Michele Gingerich, Shannon Schrag, and Jackson Hyde, and Sharon Sears as treasurer. After 11 years of serving on the library board, Patty Burke finished her last term at the end of 2017. Bill Waite and Mary Comet joined the board at the beginning of 2018.

There are a variety of ways that we measure and evaluate our service as a library, and this one seems particularly relevant this year. Using a calculator generated by the American Library Association, which uses an average value of services and materials to estimate library value, for every \$1 spent by Lowville Free Library in 2017, our patrons and community received \$5.94 in service.

We believe in the library, both as an idea and as a reality in our community.

Thank you for believing with us.

Sincerely,

Meghan Harney
Director, Lowville Free Library