



## STOCKED UP: EVEN DURING A CHALLENGING YEAR, RPL CUSTOMERS HAVE ACCESS TO BOOKS

“Responding to a pandemic was not taught in library school,” says Library Director Audrey Betcher, adding, “Thankfully we have a nimble, creative staff who continue to develop new ways to offer services.”

Throughout the last year, services have changed dramatically at Rochester Public Library (RPL). With a unique library location (one of the busiest, most visited libraries in the state), library staff knew it would be difficult to offer “business as usual” during the health crisis. At the same time, community members needed books, movies, and access to the internet.

Generating new service models may sound simple enough, but processes, procedures, limited space, city-mandated health and safety protocols, and uncertainty about the future of the health crisis meant any new delivery system needed a thought-out plan. The following are different ways staff implemented materials delivery systems over the past year:

**MARCH, 2020: Online Resources** Within days of closing the library’s doors, use of the online OverDrive/Libby resources skyrocketed. Staff adjusted the purchasing budget to reflect greatest need. Compared with 2019 use, digital checkouts increased 35% in 2020.

*"Stocked Up" continued on page 11.*

## IN THIS ISSUE



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# WHAT WE'RE READING: ASIAN AMERICAN & PACIFIC ISLANDER HERITAGE BOOKS

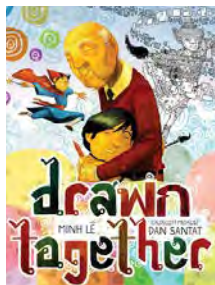
We stand in solidarity with members of the Asian, Asian-American, and Pacific Islanders (AAPI) communities. Hate crimes towards AAPI cannot be tolerated. This May we are highlighting AAPI books to raise awareness of the AAPI experience.

## PICTURE BOOKS



### **BIG MOONCAKE FOR LITTLE STAR** by Grace Lin

Little Star nibbles at the Big Moon Cookie created by her mother.



### **DRAWN TOGETHER** by Minh Le

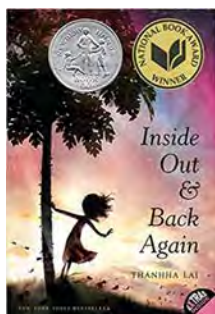
A boy and his grandfather communicate through art and fantasy, overcoming language and cultural barriers.

## JUVENILE FICTION



### **A THOUSAND BEGINNINGS & ENDINGS** by Ellen Oh

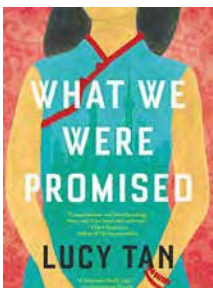
Fifteen authors of Asian descent reimagine the folklore and mythology of East and South Asia.



### **INSIDE OUT & BACK AGAIN** by Thanhha Lai

Told through a series of poems, Lai's book shares the story of a young girl and her family's resettling in Alabama, after leaving Vietnam in 1975.

## ADULT FICTION



### **WHAT WE WERE PROMISED** by Lucy Tan

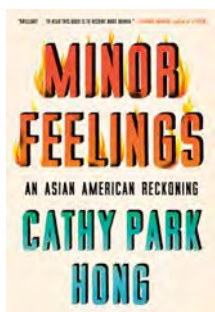
Set in modern Shanghai, a debut by a Chinese-American writer about a prodigal son whose unexpected return forces his newly wealthy family to confront painful secrets and unfulfilled promises.

## ADULT NON-FICTION



### **25 EVENTS THAT SHAPED ASIAN AMERICAN HISTORY: AN ENCYCLOPEDIA OF THE AMERICAN MOSAIC** by Wesley Yang

This book provides detailed and engaging narratives of 25 pivotal events in Asian American history.



### **MINOR FEELINGS: AN ASIAN AMERICAN RECKONING** by Cathy Park Hong

Poet and essayist Cathy Park Hong blends memoir, cultural criticism, and history to expose the truth of racialized consciousness in America. Binding these essays together is Hong's theory of "minor feelings."

## BE A FRIEND! SUPPORT THE LIBRARY THROUGH A FRIENDS' MEMBERSHIP

With the Bookstore closed due to COVID, 2020 was a challenging year for the Friends. You can still support the library by becoming a member of the Friends of the Library!

Learn more at [www.rplmn.org/friends](http://www.rplmn.org/friends)



**FRIENDS OF THE  
ROCHESTER  
PUBLIC LIBRARY**



## MORE LEAKS PLAGUE LIBRARY

A faulty pipe connector led to a small water leak at the library in March, leaving some small damage to the Friends' Bookstore but major damage to boxes of previously donated books.

While the leak was caught in time to prevent major damage to the library building, more than 400 books were ruined. The books had been carefully curated by Bookstore volunteers, and were ready to add into the store's inventory. The space has been repaired, and volunteers are once again able to use the store to complete a digital inventory.

While the recent water leak created damage to the Friends' store, it pales in comparison to the 2019 water leak at the library, which took almost six months to repair and included new carpet, ceiling tiles, and wall coverings.

## BUILDING AN ONLINE STORE

-by Pat Stephenson

The Friends' Bookstore Management is excited to announce that we are working toward having our bookstore go virtual.

With the aid of Reference Librarian Susan Hansen, we have begun scanning our bookstore books to compile an inventory.

Even though our physical Friends' Bookstore is temporarily closed as a preventive measure, we are hoping to allow you the option to browse books online and purchase for grab-and-go pickup.

A recent water leak in the store interrupted this project, but we hope to get back to work soon, to continue expanding the online storefront.

We also look forward to the time when we will be



able to safely reopen our bookstore. Thanks to our wonderful customers, book donors and hardworking volunteers, the Friends typically raise over \$70,000 annually from the sale of used books, CDs, DVDs, games and puzzles.

All proceeds from the bookstore benefit Rochester Public Library.

# LIBRARY BUILDING SPACE NEEDS

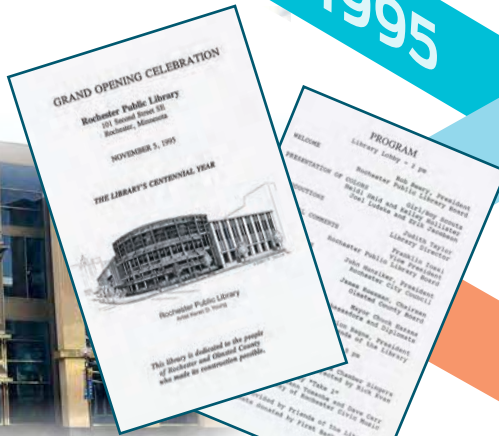
EARLY 1990s

## EARLY 1990s

Planners design a new library building, meant to have enough space to serve Rochester through the year **2015**. Building design = 93,594 square feet.

## 1995

Building opens at 101 2nd Street SE.



1992

## 1992

A reduction in sales tax funding force library staff to cut almost 11,000 square feet from the original design plans. Library Director Judith Taylor predicts the reduction in space will **“result in outgrowing the new library well before it reaches its 20th birthday.”**

1995

## 2006

Library Board Planning Committee examines possibility of expanding current building, saying **“the general consensus...is that the library should grow by moving up to a third floor of the existing building.”**

2006

## 2010

Proposal before city Sales Tax Advisory Committee requests funding for library expansion. The project, estimated around \$18M, does not move forward.

2010

## 2012

Revised strategic plan calls for more space for library programming. Floor plan reconfigured to maximize space for the public, reducing staff space.

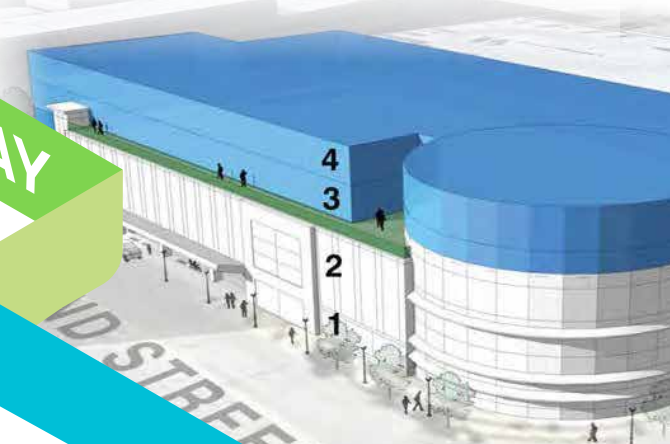
2012

2016

## 2016

Proposal to expand library by two floors is presented to City Council. General idea is supported, but the project lacks funding.

TODAY



**108,714**  
Library Service  
Population  
in 1995



**287,619**  
Items in  
Collection  
in 1995



**.78**  
Sq. Ft.  
Per Person  
in 1995



**8,401**  
People Attended  
Programs  
in 1995



**149,191**  
population of  
Rochester in  
2019



**457,831**  
Items in  
Collection  
in 2019



**.57**  
Sq. Ft.  
Per Person  
in 2019



**119,456**  
People Attended  
Programs  
in 2019

↑ **37%**  
increase

↑ **59%**  
increase

↓ **30%**  
decrease

↑ **1,332%**  
increase

# LIBRARY BUILDING SPACE NEEDS

The library has struggled with a lack of space even before the building opened in 1995. Branches, location, and current economic conditions have been discussed throughout the last three decades. In January 2021, the Library Board shared their position on addressing space needs.

## THE LIBRARY BOARD IS UNWAVERING IN ITS BELIEF THAT:

- 1 The Library has outgrown its current space and must continue planning for the future.
- 2 The Library must maintain a downtown presence.

## WHY DOWNTOWN?

The Board recognizes that the library is centrally located for the library service area (which includes all four quadrants of Rochester, as well as Byron and Dover/Eyota). Currently, downtown is the only location with reliable, consistent bus transportation and also the most centrally located area.

## WHY NOT BRANCHES?

Branches continue to be a part of our discussion, but the downtown location needs to be addressed first. Branches may play a role in the future, but ongoing operational costs will need to be considered. Additionally, there is still a lot of work for city planners to do before branch location(s) could be determined: transit routes, zoning, and other factors are yet to be decided. For over 60 years, the RPL Bookmobile has served as a mobile branch of the library, delivering resources throughout the community. It is often the busiest bookmobile in the state, based on annual circulation statistics.



## WHY NOW? DURING A PANDEMIC?

The library has been undersized for years, and the problem will continue to grow along with the city's population growth. Historically, libraries tend to be more heavily utilized following years of economic downturn as community members look to libraries for information and resources. The COVID-19 health crisis has highlighted racial and socio-economic inequities in our nation. Libraries will continue to be a valuable resource for the community, post-COVID, especially for under-resourced populations.



ROCHESTER  
PUBLIC LIBRARY  
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## LETTER FROM THE FOUNDATION DIRECTOR

Thank you so much for your ongoing support! So many of you came together to allow us to remove fines and support important Rochester Public Library initiatives in 2020. We were able to conduct focus groups with under-resourced groups, support tutoring through technology, help folks searching for jobs last year, as well as purchase new materials (just to name a few things). Your gifts made a huge impact for our community and we are tremendously grateful. As you know, our library is so much more than books...I hope you've seen the amazing work the talented library team has accomplished through the pandemic. Thank you for believing in the importance of our library.

Do you have a story to share about how the library has impacted your life? We would love to hear from you!

With Gratitude,

**Brenda Kardock**

Rochester Public Library  
Foundation, Executive Director



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[www.rplmn.org/donate](http://www.rplmn.org/donate)  
Please pitch in what you are able so we can fund new books, hotspots and programs due to COVID budget cuts.  
If you would prefer a prepaid envelope mailed to you, please call us at 507-328-2387.



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Thy Chea  
*in appreciation of NRI Electronics, Inc.*  
Susan Dahmus  
*in appreciation of RPL staff for all their great work this year.*  
Mark Homard  
*in appreciation of RPL staff during Covid-19*  
Jim & Jean Jahn  
*in appreciation of Steve Mosing*  
Karen Kilpatrick  
*in appreciation of the library staff and volunteers!*  
Samantha LeVan  
*in appreciation of Heather Steinkamp & Emily Vale*  
Lela Lofgren  
*in appreciation of the Library staff!*  
Thomas Saunders  
*in appreciation of Rochester Public Library*

Lorie Schultz  
*in appreciation of RPL staff & celebration of distance learning for my children*  
Christine Schwartz  
*in appreciation of the important work libraries do*  
Carolyn Vitek  
*in appreciation of Elizabeth & Tim Curry*  
Laura Helle  
*in celebration of Dorothy Stobaugh*  
Scott & Karen Lemke  
*in celebration of Brenda's first year at RPLF*  
Kelly Olson  
*in celebration of Chill Out & Stop Making This Weird: A Girl's Survival Guide Extraordinaire*  
Katherine Sawinski  
*in celebration of RPL Seed Library*  
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## — IN APPRECIATION, CELEBRATION AND HONOR —

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*in honor of John E. Dunlap*

Jane & Mary Eliz Campion  
*in honor of the Library Staff*

Thy Chea  
*in honor of Presidents' Day*

Susanne Todd Daood  
*in honor of my book club*

Tana Elias  
*in honor of Patricia Calvert*

Julianna Gilkinson  
*in honor of Linda & Bill Thompson  
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Keith & Carol Hartley  
*in honor of our granddaughter  
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Nancy J. Larson  
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Marie A. Wilson  
*in honor of Andy Stehr*

Colleen Worisek  
*in honor of the Bookmobile Staff*

## IN MEMORY

Mr. Lynn Behnke  
*in memory of Carla Behnke*

Ms. Angela A. Allers  
*in memory of our dog Pringles*

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*in memory of Richard A. Bedard*

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Memorial Donation

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Memorial Donation

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Memorial Donation

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*in memory of Gil F.*

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book lover*

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DRIVE!

MAY 1-11

Visit [givemn.org](http://givemn.org) anytime  
between May 1-11 and search  
for "Rochester Public Library  
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your donation.

#SpringForwardMN

Spring  
Forward  
MN   
May 1 - 11, 2021

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### IN MEMORY

Cynthia Rothstein  
*in memory of Rose Marie (Rossi)  
Laabs*

Richard & Beverly Sanders  
*in memory of Audrey Anderholm*

Gayle Sanderson  
*in memory of Benjamin  
Sanderson*

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*in memory of Amanda Carlson*

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Brenda Kardock

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Richard & Marjorie Manahan

Mayo Clinic Emeritus

Erik & Elizabeth Ritman

Mr. & Mrs. Benjamin Scott

Irene & Roger Seabright

Pat & Dave Siljeborg

Sally Trippel

Glenn & Ella Vanlaningham

Sandra Weissler

## FINE FREE INITIATIVE SUPPORT

In June 2020, overdue fines were officially eliminated for Rochester Public Library cardholders. In addition, all prior fines and fees were erased, providing all cardholders with a "fresh start."

Throughout the last year, individuals, businesses, and organizations donated \$52,400 to support going Fine Free.

**\$16,360**

74 Individual Donations

**\$7,000**

Rochester Area Foundation

**\$2,000**

7 Local Small Businesses: Custom Communications, Inc., Sterling State Bank, Hiller Stores Inc., Lemke Pest Control, ServiceMaster of Rochester, Rory's Home Improvement, and Bowlocity

**\$27,040**

Anonymous Donor

**\$52,400**  
TOTAL DONATIONS  
SUPPORTING FINE FREE

"Stocked Up" continued from cover page.

**APRIL, 2020: Delivery** was offered to area households, with library staff dropping materials off in the driveways, porches, and entryways of local residents. This labor-intensive service was originally offered to anyone who was interested, but once Curbside options started, delivery was geared only towards those who couldn't leave their homes. In the first month, 231 individual deliveries were made, with hundreds of items dropped off. The service ended in October, as demand for other services increased.

**APRIL, 2020: Curbside Pickup** was launched, and soon became incredibly popular. During the early months, cars were often lined up around the block, stretching to Broadway Avenue. By mid-summer, the system was working well, with staff efficiencies added to reduce wait times. When cooler weather began arriving, staff made plans for two new services: **Curbside in the Ramp** (by appointment) and **Walkup Windows**.

**JUNE, 2020: Bookmobile Holds Pickup** added another option for accessing materials. Staff created a new route, with longer stops, to make sure each location provided adequate time for picking up holds. Visits to the Bookmobile helped alleviate pressure downtown, and also gave Bookmobile "regulars" the option to have easier access to library materials.



**OCTOBER, 2020: Curbside in the Ramp** allowed for continued delivery of items to people in their vehicles, as the cooler temperatures arrived. This service proved to be labor-intensive, but necessary as the pandemic worsened through the late fall and early winter months. In all, between October 2020 and March 2021: 10,471 pickups were scheduled for RPL customers.

**NOVEMBER, 2020: Walkup Windows** Thanks to CARES Act funding, the library was able to install two windows for delivering holds. Similar to bank teller windows, these devices allow library staff to safely pass items from inside the library to customers waiting outside.

**MARCH, 2021: Library Express** While community members expressed gratitude for being able to borrow items throughout the pandemic, many people said they really missed browsing the stacks. Starting on March 11, 2021, visitors were able to return to the library for browsing

and borrowing. In the first four days of the service, over 1,000 people visited the library.

With so many options for distributing materials to community members, we will continue to adapt to the changing situation to provide the best service possible.





# ROCHESTER PUBLIC LIBRARY

101 Second Street SE  
Rochester, MN 55904  
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## GET A FREE REPLACEMENT LIBRARY CARD IN 2021!

Our library cards have been updated to reflect the new City of Rochester brand.

Stop by during Library Express or visit [www.rplmn.org/card](http://www.rplmn.org/card)

### LIBRARY EXPRESS THUR-SUN | 10AM-6PM

BROWSE

BORROW

INTERNET

30  
MINUTES  
PER DAY

### WALKUP WINDOWS MON-SUN | 10AM-6PM \*Thursdays until 8PM

507-328-2300 | [www.rplmn.org](http://www.rplmn.org)

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## WIT, WISDOM & WINE 2020 RECAP

Many thanks for your support in making our first virtual Wit, Wisdom & Wine so successful!

Participants had their choice of 8 speaker and 4 experience sessions delivered via Zoom. The "Wit" auction had 3,635 page views and 136 bids.

Wit, Wisdom & Wine 2021 raised more than \$34,000 overall!

FIND US ONLINE  
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