

Director's Report
June, 2020

Well, things are definitely different than our last meeting! I hope everyone has been able to stay home/stay safe as much as possible during this time.

I've been sending out monthly reports, so will have a shorter report here with some numbers on our most current statistics.

Things have settled down to a more regular level of work lately. Our largest group of members are our school library staff, and they have been working toward all the things they needed to finish before the end of the school year. We were also putting up daily activity pages for libraries to share with their patrons, and that has ended with the end of the school year. We are keeping the archive of all the pages on our website, so they will continue to be available to anyone.

Podcast Material:

We have continued to write, record, produce, and distribute two podcasts each week. Over the last few weeks we have been more creative with our recording of episodes: I've done some at home with our equipment, we have done several with Guest Hosts recorded online, and Angie and I have gone to the office for short recording sessions.

This week our Reading With Libraries episode features Ariel from Great River, and we are discussing the genre of Middle Graders books. Our final episode of the season will drop on Thursday, and as always in the final episode, will feature Minnesota books.

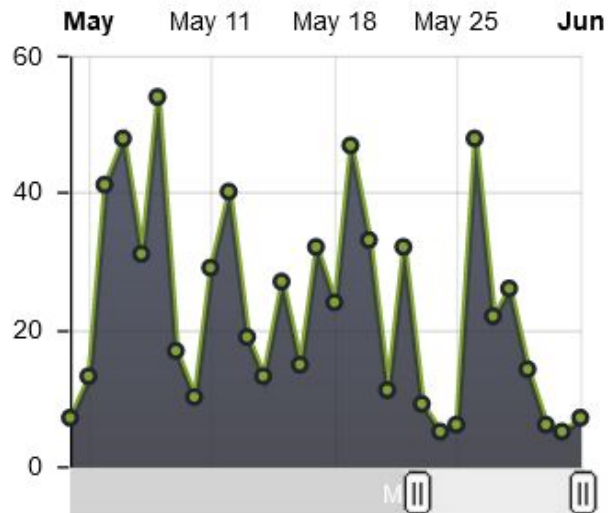
Our plan for the summer had been to follow last year's plan, and recruit a lot of school library people to come in and record with us while they had time off from their library work. I would still really like to do that, but at this time we just don't know whether it will be possible. I am hopeful that at least we can record episodes online with our school library members, so we will have a season of Linking Our Libraries episodes ready to go in September. As with so many things, we will continue to make tentative plans, and will have alternatives ready to go.

We also create the Browsing Books episodes that drop each Tuesday. These are short podcasts, about ten minutes, and we use a different MN state park each week as a prompt to suggest books. This week we are using Lake Bronson as our starting point. Our reading prompt is: "This park has the largest observation/water tower across Minnesota state parks! So let's celebrate that by reading a book about a tower, or a high place."

During the summer, we will continue to drop Browsing Books episodes into the feeds of both podcasts, so our subscribers will continue to get new content each week. We currently have episodes written, and recorded, to last into August; so that is covered.

Here are the latest stats for Linking Our Libraries:

| Downloads | |
|-----------|-------|
| Jun | 7 |
| May | 734 |
| Apr | 1,011 |
| Mar | 618 |
| All Time | 7,128 |



You can see that April was our highest point - with a lot of people listening to our training podcasts. We have not been producing new content here - this is on hiatus while we are producing Reading with Libraries; so this is where Browsing Books episodes come out. These numbers will fall off over the summer, but we are very pleased with this!

And here are our stats for Reading With Libraries.

| Downloads | |
|-----------|--------|
| Jun | 7 |
| May | 1,054 |
| Apr | 646 |
| Mar | 641 |
| All Time | 13,128 |



These are our new episodes. Each week we look at a new genre, and we spend about 30 minutes sharing information about the genre, looking at other resources, and talking with our

Guest Host about books in the genre. After we wrap up the season, we will put new Browsing Books episodes up each week on this feed as well as Linking Our Libraries.

Website Material:

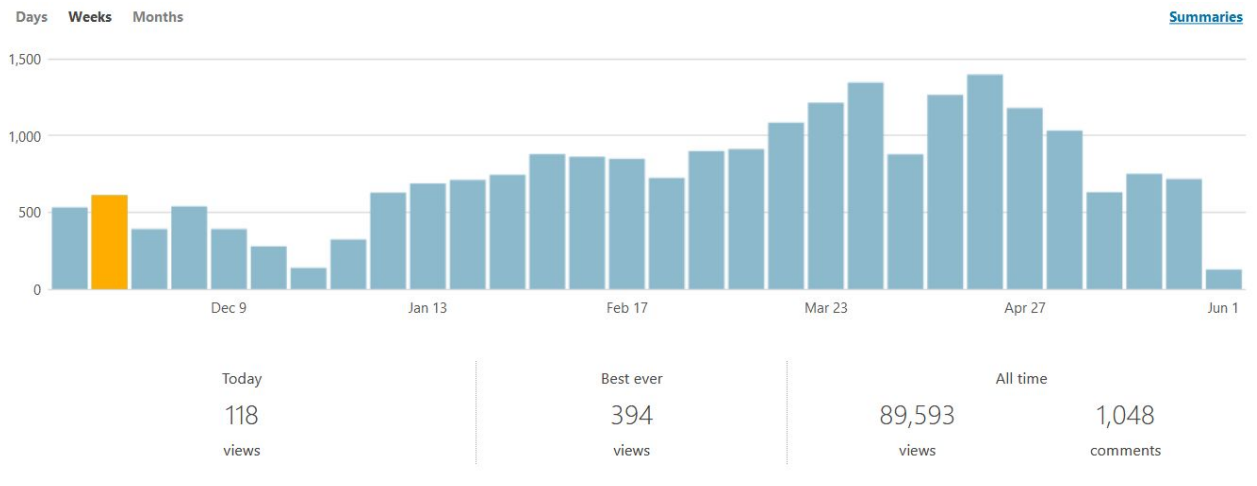
We have continued to post five to eight articles on the website each week. This will be our final week of the season to post so much content, and to send out our newsletter on a regular basis. Generally, the majority of our members are closed down over the summer so we save content to share when they are more available. However, we do anticipate all of our members will be more available this summer, so we will be sending out sporadic newsletters to be sure we are sharing any information we have for them.

Here is a shot of daily website statistics:



You can see just when our schools shifted away from their regular work, to working on wrapping up the school year! So we anticipate these numbers will fall somewhat over the summer, but we will see what happens with them and how much content they will want to get from us.

These are the weekly stats for the website:



I had mentioned at our last meeting that our numbers had risen in January, and you can see that here. Then as the schools closed their physical operations, you can see our numbers shooting up. A lot of that rise was driven by people coming to do our CE classes, and that was pretty exciting to see each day!

These are the monthly stats for the website:



I think this really shows the payoff of the time we have spent building our community, and making connections with people across our system. We have members all over the place, and doing so many different things - it's just great to see them coming together as a community.

These are our most-read articles/webpages over the last 30 days:

May 2, 2020 to Today

| Title | Views |
|---|-------|
| Linking Our Libraries | 258 |
| Reader's Advisory: Storywalk titles! | 242 |
| | 129 |
| Home page / Archives | 102 |
| PD: Linking Our Libraries podcast classes | 87 |
| Season Five Episodes Linking Our Libraries | 76 |
| Season One Podcast Episodes | 65 |
| Season Two Episodes: Linking Our Libraries | 60 |
| Linking Our Libraries: Season Three | 53 |
| Season Four episodes | 52 |
| Reading With Libraries | 47 |
| Reader's Advisory: Dial A Story! | 41 |
| What Are We Doing Today? | 40 |
| Do you have a 3D Printer? Let's #HackThePandemic! | 36 |
| Episode 502: Customer Service | 34 |
| Episode 511: Hiking | 28 |
| High School Reading Challenge | 27 |
| Episode 501: Cataloging | 25 |
| Episode 512: Pandemic | 24 |
| Working At Home and Online: We Can Do This! | 21 |
| Podcasts | 21 |
| About Us | 21 |
| The Post-Pandemic Future of Libraries | 21 |
| Episode 210: Magical Realism | 21 |
| Training Tips: Reader's Advisory tips | 20 |

As you can see, it is our Linking Our Libraries training material that is really driving people's interests right now. We will be ramping that up over the summer, so hopefully we can continue to build on this in the fall.

These are the website stats from the last quarter:

March 3, 2020 to Today

| Title | Views |
|--|-------|
| Linking Our Libraries | 721 |
| | 573 |
| ⊕ What Are We Doing Today? | 521 |
| Reader's Advisory: Storywalk titles! | 503 |
| PD: Linking Our Libraries podcast classes | 402 |
| ⊕ Home page / Archives | 359 |
| Season One Podcast Episodes | 306 |
| Reading With Libraries | 212 |
| ⊕ Library Life Online | 209 |
| Season Two Episodes: Linking Our Libraries | 205 |
| Linking Our Libraries: Season Three | 170 |
| Episode 502: Customer Service | 162 |
| Reader's Advisory: Dial A Story! | 151 |
| Season Five Episodes Linking Our Libraries | 143 |
| ⊕ AASL Recommended Apps: PBS Kids Games | 136 |
| Season Four episodes | 125 |
| CMLE Blog | 120 |
| Training Tips: Reader's Advisory tips | 113 |
| High School Reading Challenge | 97 |
| Basic American Sign Language for Library Staff eCourse | 97 |
| Episode 201: Community Engagement | 92 |
| Science Fair idea generator | 90 |
| About Us | 83 |
| Working At Home and Online: We Can Do This! | 81 |
| Podcasts | 81 |
| Training Tips: Student Library Assistant Training Guide: Shelving Basics | 76 |
| Episode 210 Customer Service | 69 |

Our Linking Our Libraries material has been very popular during the quarantine, and our daily What Are We Doing Today? pages for kids were very popular. After a while, there were many commercial resources providing similar material so it was fine that our numbers were falling. As I mentioned earlier, we are keeping all of our material on the website, so it is available to be shared at any time.

Summer Plans:

We have a lot of summer plans. As always, this is our time to get caught up with things, to get things cleaned up and ready to go for our members.

Whether we can do our podcast recording in person or online, getting at least twenty long episodes written and Guest Hosts recruited to participate is our goal. We want to get all of the Linking Our Libraries podcast recorded, and then also get people in to do some Reading With Libraries episodes. These are so time-consuming to make and record and get up, we do not have time to do it during the school year when we are busier with member needs.

We will also be working on revamping the website. Soon after I started at CMLE, we completely redid our entire website. It was a massive amount of work, but the site was not good before that. So now we are updating and revamping it each summer, to keep it fresh and to keep material updated so members can find it all. We are not going to do a massive overhaul of the design - I love the colors and design Angie created last year, it looks so cheerful and friendly! But there are always more things to do: moving content, dropping things off the menu, creating more material in other areas. It's slow and time-consuming, and requires a lot of focus so we don't lose track of small details. So it is good to do over the summer.

We will also be working on more material from our Strategic Plan. I had anticipated creating the template book for school libraries over the last school year; but having the VR kit grant took up that time. So it will be a project to work on over the summer.

And we will be working on the constant updating of our member chart. This will be particularly relevant this year, as we have heard about members losing their library and school jobs, and have been finding people gone when we reach out to them. There are always a number of people who leave their jobs, and new people to track. We do not have an easy way of knowing this information, so it means looking up everyone to see where they are. We do track emails that bounce back to us from the newsletter, but it again is time-consuming to do so is good to do over the summer.

I had wanted to spend a lot of time going through our paper files, to see what all is there. We have a lot of material that we probably do not need to hang onto, but also some great material from our organization's history. Ideally, down the road I would like to get a grant to bring in a consultant to start scanning our older material, so we can keep digital copies online to back up our paper material. I'm not sure how possible or preferable it will be to work on this project over this summer. Depending on how the virus situation affects daily work life, this could wait until next summer.

Continuing Education/Training

This is an important part of our strategic plan, and we have been building up our resources here. We have several seasons of Linking Our Libraries episodes that we will be working to translate into short classes. This is a good way to build on content we already have, to help make it more useful and relevant to members.

We will also be creating online training for our VR/AR kits. As we have discussed, the headsets themselves are not difficult to use - and kids who are experienced with video gaming are picking it up right away. But the behind-the-scenes material takes some time to work on, and it is not an intuitive process. One lesson we learned in our first year with these kits is that members really need to have our training before they get the kits. We are wasting their time by giving them the kits and asking them to work out the tech themselves.

We held several in-person sessions last year, and will hopefully be able to do so again in the upcoming fiscal year. But it is unlikely that will be able to happen any time soon. So over the summer, we will be writing, filming, and producing a series of short videos to give people the training experience on their own schedules. And this may also have the benefit of giving the training to a wider audience, which may make the process of using the VR kits easier.