Director’s Message

I am delighted to pass the Library Director hat to my colleague, Lisa Rives Collens, Head of Patron Services, as I retire from librarianship after 50 years in the profession. THANK YOU to all who have used and supported Schlow Library and my personal development. My work has been truly enjoyable and rewarding thanks to great colleagues and community support. Now, I’ll have more time to read and enjoy all the treasures the library offers!

Cathi Alloway
DIRECTOR, SCHLOW CENTRE REGION LIBRARY

[ APRIL 2021 ]

Each year, we share this annual update with you to relay happenings at Schlow Library and stories about reading, learning, and moments of wonder that our Centre Region “living room” location had to offer in the past year. We never dreamed that analogy would take on a completely new meaning in the year that was 2020! Despite all of the challenges brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic, these past 12 months have taught us what you value most about Schlow Library: while it’s been difficult to focus this year—books and stories continued to provide a much-needed distraction, escape, and, yes, even relaxation.

So, here is our 2020 story—the ways in which Schlow Library’s dedicated team of volunteers and staff tried to turn the page and create the reading experiences, online opportunities, re-imagined programs, and unexpected chances for moments of enjoyment that you needed and deserve.

During March – December 2020, Schlow purchased 6,600 disinfectant wipes, 2,592 ounces of disinfectant spray, 2,268 ounces of hand sanitizer, 600 disposable masks, 172 reusable masks, and 5,700 disposable gloves.

“It is such a help to have the library being safe, but also supplying us with books to read.”
**Grab-&-Go Service**

As a special service during our building closure, Schlow staff selected and bagged gently used books for patrons to read or share. Each grab-and-go surprise was made available during regular doorside hours with a suggested $5 donation. Feedback from happy patrons confirmed this was a fun way to support Schlow while offering unexpected, as-is “new” books to take home. We plan to keep the idea going!

**Doorside Pick-Up Options Helped Patrons Enjoy “Schlow at Home”**

When COVID-19 safety measures meant access to our building would be suspended, Schlow staff created new ways for you to conveniently access books and materials. Dubbed “Schlow at Home,” our virtual library went into full swing offering options to browse the catalog, select reading treasures, make pick-up appointments, or stop by our parking lot and text to get service on the spot. We staffed regular doorside hours five days a week and created “how-to” videos to help ease the transition. Pick-ups also were available six days a week by appointment using an online reservation form. After choosing items and a time preference, patrons came to Schlow’s front door (wearing masks!), pressed the doorbell, and a staff member greeted them with their bag of checked-out materials.

“I HAVE VISITED NEARLY WEEKLY DURING THIS PANDEMIC FOR PICK-UP, AND YOUR SERVICES ARE INVALUABLE.”

**“Library By Mail” Makes Books Available to Homebound Patrons**

While many patrons continued to use doorside service themselves or had friends and family who made their pick-ups during the pandemic, we recognized that others didn’t have those same options. That’s why we continued to promote our regional libraries’ “Library by Mail” service, which was used frequently in the community during 2020. Any resident of Centre, Clearfield, Juniata, and Mifflin counties who is permanently or temporarily unable to leave home can use this free and convenient service. This included residents in at-risk populations for COVID-19. Details about “Library by Mail” are available on Schlow’s website.
Expanded WiFi Coverage & Hotspots

While Schlow’s WiFi signal was available in our parking lot since the beginning of the pandemic, we ramped up the coverage to help users enjoy a wider footprint and stronger signal. Our IT team led an initiative to upgrade access around the perimeter of the building, thanks to improvements to our network infrastructure. We also began offering Hotspot devices that allow connection to the internet anywhere there is T-Mobile coverage. The Hotspots can be checked out for up to six weeks at no cost to library cardholders in good standing. This new service was brought online and made available thanks to support from Centre Foundation and the generosity of Schlow donors.

Schlow Library’s Next Chapter:
Welcome Our New Library Director

We were thrilled to announce on Feb. 23, 2021, that Lisa Rives Collens will become Schlow’s next Library Director. Lisa is no stranger to the library, where she’s been part of the team for 13 years, currently as Head of Patron Services. Lisa’s passion for Schlow, our community, and most of all our patrons and families who love books and learning, shine through. We all will miss Cathi Alloway tremendously and know Schlow is in good hands going forward.

Library Cards for Every SCASD Student!

In fall 2020, we launched the “All Ready Access” Library Card Program, a collaboration between Schlow Centre Region Library and the State College Area School District to help increase access to reading and library materials for all students. Through the partnership, all Schlow resources — online and in print — were made available to every district student for free. Spurred on specifically by the COVID-19 pandemic, the program was another initiative in the long partnership between our two organizations. Students can now browse, borrow, and explore all that Schlow Library has to offer anytime at their own pace!
Homework Help with Virtual Tutors & More

With area students experiencing so many changes and study challenges in 2020, Schlow wanted to find even more ways to help. Cue HelpNow by Brainfuse, a unique service that offers free access to homework help—as well as test prep, video lessons, study tools, and more—every day. Specifically, HelpNow provides anyone from kindergarten through adult learners access to live tutoring daily from 2 to 11 p.m. in subjects such as math, reading, science, writing, social studies, languages, and more, at no cost. All that’s needed is a library card to log in. In addition to tutoring, the platform provides a learning library with thousands of lessons, quizzes, and tests to help students understand academic concepts. Recorded lessons and practice tests are also available to help build skills. Tutors are credentialed and undergo annual background checks. Details, including FAQs and easy-to-follow video tutorials, were added to the Schlow website and shared with school districts and the community.

BE INSPIRED: “Schlow Suggests” Offered New Ways to Discover Your Next Great Read

For anyone who missed browsing the shelves in person, found themselves pressed for time, or simply grew tired of unproductive scrolling, Schlow librarians stepped up in 2020 with “Schlow Suggests.” This new service offers personalized picks based on information you share in a quick online form that asks about favorite authors, genres, and general interests. Within five days of the request, Schlow librarians select five titles from among books, eBooks, audio titles, and more to have ready for patron pick-up. “Schlow Suggests” became super popular as part of our specialized offerings during this difficult year.

Virtual Children’s Book Browsing

To help those who missed browsing the Children’s Department in person at Schlow Library in 2020, our team created a set of videos highlighting new children’s books. Families were able to browse anytime online, with new videos added monthly. Our librarians also curated options and shared fun children’s titles in video browsing shorts posted weekly on Schlow’s social media sites.
[OUTREACH]

Rapid Setup of Zoom Rooms
Powers Community Connections

During the initial weeks of the COVID lockdown, Schlow recognized a rapidly emerging need to serve and support public meeting space online. The library team reached out to local community leaders to gauge interest, partnered with the Centre Foundation to secure funding, adapted its physical meeting room requirements for the virtual realm, and created easy-access Zoom Room options for library cardholders to reserve meeting space for semi-private gatherings and business meetings. A library staff member is available to start the meeting, provide tech help, and then hand over controls to organizers with IT staff on standby if needed. This is an ongoing service.

Schlow at Home helped patrons navigate pandemic services over 50,000 times in 2020 and offered new resources to enjoy at home.

Nearly 18,000 patrons attended live virtual programming to expand vocabulary, learn new things, and bolster their learning experience.

Over 2,000 attendees gathered at more than 130 public meetings through Schlow Library’s Public Zoom Rooms.

Technical Services added over 2,500 new print titles during 2020. 1,000 eBooks and about 250 eAudiobooks were also added and made available during the pandemic.

ESL Book Club met virtually more than 90 times to read out loud together in order to practice pronunciation and expand vocabulary. There is currently a waitlist to join.

Schlow Library installed sneeze shields at Patron Services and Adult Services desks, installed hands-free faucets and soap dispensers in staff and Community Room kitchens, and installed air purifying ionizers on three main HVAC systems in the building to keep staff and volunteers safe in the building during COVID.

BookFest Virtual Visit with Lisa Scottoline and Francesca Serritella had record attendance for a unique online offering during suspended on-site event: 14,447 (16,898 total impressions) people reached via Facebook livestream: 545 likes/comments/shares.

227 requests since the “Schlow Suggests” service debuted in August 2020. That’s more than 1,100 book recommendations!
Thank you for loving your library this fall/winter during the Schlow Library Foundation’s fall fundraising campaign, “Schlow at Home with You.” Over 800 donors made gifts totalling $101,200 to support Schlow Library Foundation and the services at Schlow. Of those donors, 100 were making their first gift, and we welcome them to the wonderful family of supporters who nurture Schlow Library with their generosity. Thanks to you, for the first time, over $100,000 was raised during this annual event! This is an amazing show of love, and we thank you. These funds will provide vital support that Schlow Library needs to operate and provide services during 2021.

[ UPCOMING EVENTS ]

Save these Dates!

Wednesday, May 15:
Anita Ditz Children’s Author Spotlight with LeUyen Pham

June 1-August 18:
"Tails & Tales" Summer Reading Program

July 7-9:
Bookfest PA 2021 (Virtual)

[SUPPORT SCHLOW]

Tuesday & Wednesday,
May 11-12:
Please support Schlow Library Foundation during Centre Gives.

THANK YOU