

# WHAT IT TOOK TO TURN THE PAGE

IN 2021 AT SCHLOW CENTRE REGION LIBRARY

Your Centre for Reading & Learning

[MAY 2022]



We share this **annual update** with you each spring to relay happenings at Schlow Library, with highlights about reading, learning, and moments of wonder our community library offered during the prior year. Despite the ongoing challenges brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic, 2021 proved to be a time of inspiration, growth, and transition. You've told us that books and materials continued to provide much-needed relaxation; programs, offered online and back in person, brought restoration; and services exceeded expectations.

So, **here is our 2021 story**. We're calling it "**Chapter YOU**" because Schlow's dedicated team of volunteers and staff tried to turn the page throughout the year specifically with our patrons in mind. Enjoy these highlights as a reminder of how your support kept us going and growing. For that, we're Schlow grateful!

[NEW START]

## Director's Message



**Lisa Rives Collens**  
DIRECTOR

One of my most joyous moments of 2021 was reopening the building and watching it come alive again as people of all ages walked through the library doors. This return to activity reminds me that the library is more than a mere building. It's a cherished community hub supporting our interests, learning, and moments of connectedness. I am proud of everything we were able to achieve together in 2021 and look forward to sharing new experiences in 2022!

“

*I just wanted to tell you that I don't know what I would have done without the library this past year. Thank you so much!*

”

# 2021



[TRANSITIONS]

## Phased Reopening Successful Thanks to Patron Input

As part of a stepped approach to reopening the building in 2021, we completed a patron survey early in the year to assess comfort level with returning to in-person services. Based on survey input and positive community health metrics, Schlow reopened in phases. Initially, we offered lobby reserve pick-ups in May. In-person browsing and wider building access followed in June, which aligned with our popular Summer Reading Program. Staff worked together to welcome our community back. Overwhelmingly, patrons were excited to come into the building and shared their appreciation with staff for all that was done to maintain services throughout the pandemic.



[UPDATED]

## Teen Space Gets a Makeover

Schlow's second floor houses the library's extensive young adult fiction and graphic novel collection, as well as the one-of-a-kind chess set by local artist Mark Pilato and a Stomper courtesy of the Jana Marie Foundation. Thanks to the generosity of the community, local teens found new lounging furniture in the graphic novels area installed in December. The teen space sees regular use by area middle, high school, and college students for lounging, playing a game of chess, or just pursuing a stack of titles to take home.



[CHILDREN'S SERVICES]

## Virtual Toddler Learning Centre Filled Need for Families

Our virtual Toddler Learning Centre program became quite popular in 2021, with registrations filling up within 24 hours and a large waiting list. To meet the demand, we added a special spring session in May so that more families were able to participate. This program, which is recommended for toddlers 18-36 months, features a partnership with an Early Childhood Specialist from Strawberry Fields and a take-home pack of activities that families do together throughout the five-week program. Families with young children particularly value the social and educational opportunities the TLC provides.



“ You all rock!  
Thanks for hanging in there during  
the pandemic. We value libraries and  
library employees! ”



[TRANSITIONS]

## Expanded Hours Helped Get Back to the Schlow You Know

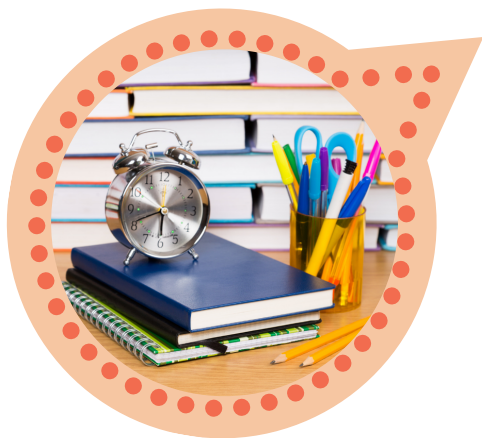
We took another step in our reopening plan, “Getting Back to the Schlow You Know,” in early September to expand hours. Beginning September 8, the library opened to patrons and visitors seven days a week with hours that remain in effect today. We offered a mix of in-person and online programs and events during the fall. We also continued to provide services through our virtual branch, open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.



[SPECIAL SERVICES]

## Auto-Renewals Ease Returns

We introduced an automated renewal service in November as another step toward an easier and more convenient library experience for patrons. Most items checked out on a library account now renew automatically on their due date. Patrons don't need to sign up or take any action—this service enhancement benefits all patrons with active accounts! Eligible items may be renewed a total of two times, whether through automatic renewals, manual renewals online, renewals by library staff, or a mix of these options. The renewal period is for the same length of time as the original loan period, and reminders are sent via email. Any blocked accounts will not be able to take advantage of auto-renewals. More details at [go.schlow.org/autorenew](http://go.schlow.org/autorenew).



“Thank you for keeping us informed and educated!”

[OUTREACH]

## PA CareerLink Returns Giving Schlow Patrons Access to Job Help

Schlow collaborated with PA CareerLink to ensure the Link—an ADA-accessible mobile career center with seven computers, internet access, printing, and a presentation screen—returned downtown in 2021. Instructors hold office hours either in the Link or inside Schlow (if the Link is unavailable) on the fourth Tuesday of the month. PA CareerLink offers a variety of services for job-seekers, including career guidance, assistance with searching and applying for jobs, resume and cover letter review, and work readiness workshops. The Link provides services for Centre, Clinton, Columbia, Lycoming, Mifflin, Montour, Northumberland, Snyder, and Union counties.



QUICK  
TIPS



[COLLECTIONS]

## Diversity Audit Begins to Enhance Children's Department Collections

We continued a multi-year diversity audit of our Children's Department collections—with a review of 765 picture books in 2021—that is aimed at increasing overall representation. This audit examines the race and gender of the characters and authors of new books added to our collection to help us ensure it is diverse and provides a good representation of the community we serve. We are making progress, but more work needs to be done.

[VOLUNTEERS]

## Super Clean Shelves Make a Comeback Thanks to Local Student Group

On a September evening, five Penn State students from the philanthropy club ServeState were the first volunteer group Schlow had in the library to work on supplementary cleaning (dusting shelves, wiping down furniture, window ledges, etc.) since winter 2020. Because of their unwavering diligence over three hours, the students were an excellent bunch to get Schlow started back into the routine of having volunteer cleaners. Prior to the pandemic, this activity usually happened once or twice a month. Thank you, ServeState!



[MULTIGENERATIONAL PROGRAMS]

## Two-Decade Tradition: Go & Chess Club Teaches Strategy, Offers Fun for All

For more than 20 years, Schlow's popular Go & Chess Club has been a programming highlight offering kids, teens, and adults the chance to learn and have fun while practicing patience, tactics, and critical thinking skills. The club returned to in-person meetups during the fall, with players of all skill levels coming together on select Saturdays in the Downsborough Community Room. Go to Schlow's website to learn how to join in and ramp up your winning strategies.



# 2,521

### Volunteer Hours

in 2021 and more than 1,100 so far in 2022! The help provided by volunteers is crucial to Schlow's service mission.

In honor of National Volunteer Week in April, we acknowledged library volunteers' efforts during the pandemic and all through the year.







[OUTREACH]

## StoryWalk Outing, Frost Fest Highlight Return of In-Person Events

We held a successful StoryWalk Celebration at Autumnwood Park in October for children and families that featured a new story installation, "Plants Can't Sit Still," by local author Rebecca E. Hirsch, who attended. StoryWalk can be enjoyed anytime at Autumnwood in Ferguson Township or Tri-Municipal Park in Centre Hall. Also this fall, we created a new video public service announcement featuring StoryWalk. Produced by our friends at C-NET, the video is available on Schlow's YouTube channel.

“

*Thanks to the library for its large selection of children's books. I have been able to read to my grandson for 30 minutes every night during the pandemic. I am very grateful!*

”



We were equally excited to celebrate Frost Fest 2021 in December with activities in the library! Our life-sized winter game filled the entire Downsborough Community Room and was enjoyed by more than 100 children and adults. The game featured special areas such as Narwhal Nook and Penguin Pond. In the Children's Department, families went ice fishing, explored winter sensory bottles and bags, and played Ice Block Jenga.



Check out the Summer Reading insert to see what's happening now!



Schlow presented **194** programs for children in 2021.  
**3,359** kids and **3,056** adults attended.



[AUTHOR VISITS]

# Popular Authors Inspire Schlow Readers with Virtual Visits

In May, the Children's Department hosted the first Anita Ditz Children's Author Spotlight program with author and illustrator LeUyen Pham joining us virtually. Pham has illustrated over 100 books, including the popular *Princess in Black* series by Shannon and Dean Hale, the *Freckleface Strawberry* picture book series by Julianne Moore, and the Caldecott Honor Book *Bear Came Along* by Richard Morris. This program honors Anita Ditz, Schlow's former head of Children's Services, who served area families for 34 years.



Nearly **2,000**

attendees at in-person programs for adults and teens, and over

- **7,000** virtual attendees among all age groups.

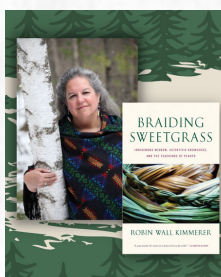
## Other featured author programs at Schlow this past year included:

A conversation with NYT bestselling novelist J. Courtney Sullivan (*Friends & Strangers*) closed out BookFest PA 2021, part of the Central Pennsylvania Festival of the Arts online event in July. Sullivan and celebrated fantasy/horror artist and novelist Brom (*Lost Gods*) were guest speakers for the program. In addition, 17 local and Pennsylvania authors participated in the virtual tent.

Historian and author Nancy Marie Brown visited with Schlow readers virtually in November to discuss her book, *The Real Valkyrie: The Hidden History of Viking Warrior Women*. Brown's nonfiction books have been favorably reviewed in *The New Yorker* and *The New York Times*, among others.

Kid-favorite middle grade author Stuart Gibbs came to Schlow's Zoom Room in November to meet with local families. His popular series include *Spy School*, *FunJungle*, *Charlie Thorne*, and more. Gibbs discussed his writing process and life as an author, much to the delight of the group.

In December, Centre County Reads—a collaborative partnership that encourages county residents of all ages to explore the human condition and community issues by reading and discussing the same book—chose *Braiding Sweetgrass: Indigenous Wisdom, Scientific Knowledge, and the Teaching of Plants* by Robin Wall Kimmerer as its 2022 community read. Schlow Library serves annually as a CCR coordinator. This year's programming launched in January, culminating in a March 2 online visit with Kimmerer as part of the Penn State Department of Landscape Architecture's Bracken Lecture Series.





## [TECHNOLOGY]

## Website Revamp Features Security Enhancements, New Look

For much of 2021, Schlow staff from all areas of the library worked on a major refresh to our website, aka digital branch, which now accounts for one-third of all library transactions. The goal was to keep the site closely attuned to patron needs. The updated site, launched in March 2022, includes necessary security upgrades while adding features to improve overall user experience.



## [CHILDREN'S SERVICES]

## Technology-Themed Maker Kits Debut

The Children's Department began offering Maker Kits designed for families to be able to explore technology at home. Offered for three-week checkout, the kits initially included Dot & Dash robots, Little Bits, Osmo Coding Awbie Game, and The Finch. Find more information at [go.schlow.org/makerkits](http://go.schlow.org/makerkits). Funding for the Maker Kits is provided by a grant from the State College Downtown Rotary Club.



Schlow's popular Summer Reading Program took off in 2021, serving

**1,183**

kids ages 3-12

**74**

babies & toddlers

**187**

teens

**358**

adults



**131,754**

streams or downloads of books, movies, comics, music, and more using Hoopla, Kanopy, and OverDrive combined

**14,184**

Computer & WiFi Sessions

**5,500**

new titles catalogued by Technical Services, adding 1,800 duplicate copies of bestsellers

**1.4 million**

website visits in 2021, roughly 200,000 more than in 2020

**3,000**

reserve requests placed weekly on average in 2021, up from 1,000 per week before the pandemic

**3,421**

eBooks added to the OverDrive collection




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**Save  
the  
Dates!**

**June 1–August 17**  
“Oceans of Possibilities”  
Summer Reading  
Program

**July 16**  
BookFestPA 2022 Returns  
to Schlow Library’s Parking  
Lot Grounds

 To support the programs you love,  
consider donating to the Schlow Library  
Foundation via [schlowlibrary.org](http://schlowlibrary.org).



Please accept our sincere appreciation and thanks for all of the varied ways that members of the community support Schlow Centre Region Library. Through using our services, participating in programs, providing generous donations, and advocating about the importance of libraries—Schlow Library truly would not be what it is today without YOU!

Thank you for showing love to the library this past fall/winter during the “On the Go with Schlow” campaign. The generosity shown during this fundraising initiative is what supports the programs and services going on now. More than 730 donors made gifts totaling \$97,500, and 80 of those were first-time givers who joined our Schlow family of giving. Special thanks to all of you who support the library in so many ways.

*Thank you!*