

# Bigelow Free Public Library

54 Walnut St.

(978) 365-4160

www.bigelowlibrary.org



## Annual Town Report July 2020-June 2021 (FY21)

### Who's Who

#### Staff

Director:

Marie Letarte

Head of Youth Services:

Deborah Marini

Head of Adult Services:

Melissa Fournier

Library Assistants:

Laura Boivin

Kathleen Mullin

Mary Smith

Hadley Roberts

Martha Napoli



Front of the Bigelow Free Public Library, August

#### Trustees

Chair:

Gloria Parkinson (2021)

Vice Chair:

Wendy Neil (2021)

Secretary:

Karen Nugent (2022)

E. Russell Grady (2022)

Sarah Laganelli (2023)

Stephanie Amell (2023)

### Mission Statement

The Bigelow Free Public Library supports the community of Clinton and its residents by offering materials and programs to entertain, educate, and enlighten the population. The staff fulfills the needs of patrons through research assistance, interlibrary loans, readers advisory services, and purchases, as well as offering programs related to this mission.

(Quoted from the 2018 Strategic Plan)

## Introduction

The library is a department of municipal government of the Town of Clinton, under the authority of an elected six-member Board of Trustees. The board delegates responsibility for library and staff management, collection development, and general administration of public library services, to the Director of the Library. The Director is appointed by the Trustees.

The residents of the Town of Clinton are fortunate to have a vibrant and active library, which includes Youth and Adult Services areas, serving patrons from ages 0 to 100+. All programs, special events, and materials are organized, coordinated, or managed by the library staff, and offered completely free to the public.

The library and trustees welcome the support of residents and other municipal officials to keep the library current and relevant in this fast-paced, digitally-driven world.

### Regular Library Hours:

Tuesday: 9am-6pm  
Wednesday: 9am-8pm  
Thursday: 9am-8pm  
Friday: 9-6  
Saturday: 9-2  
Sunday & Monday: closed



Tuesday book group, staying distanced in July

## Challenges of FY2021

Following the pandemic during the last quarter of FY2020, the Bigelow Library faced several challenges during the year, including the majority of the time working under COVID limitations, but the staff faced the challenges with innovative ways to continue serving the public while keeping themselves and patrons safe with distancing, outside programs, and contactless

pickup of materials.

Fiscal Year 2021 started out with a continuation of the COVID-19 restrictions first implemented in March 2020. With masks on and distancing requirements implemented, the library staff welcomed patrons into the library building by appointment in early July. Staff continued to assist patrons both remotely and in person with personalized printing, faxing, scanning, and research services. The outside Book Shack pickup remained popular through the entire year, even after the library openly fully.

With a full-time library assistant position vacancy, the library administration reconfigured the position into two part-time staff positions to better accommodate the needs of the youth services area.

The library welcomed patrons back to the library with in-person events like book club discussions, story times, and live music on the front lawn. Required distancing protocols were delineated by spray-painted circles or precisely-placed



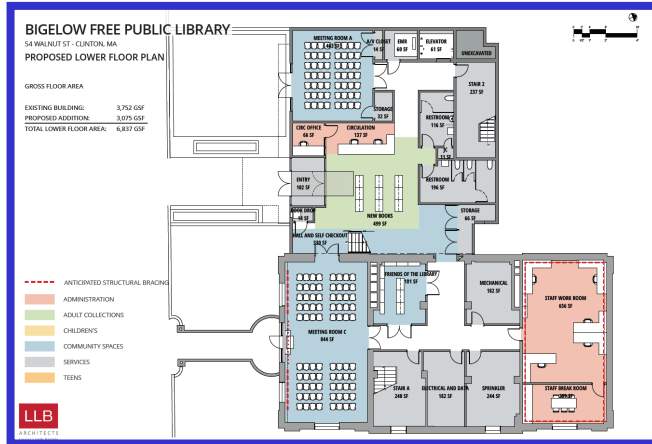
Knock on Wood live in August

chairs. Story time was presented on the lawn during the good weather in early fall with family-sized circles for proper distancing as well.

### Library Facilities Challenges & Opportunities

The building itself presents challenges (most of which are ongoing), including water damage, insufficient insulation, outdated HVAC system (by that, we mean none), and single-

pane century-old windows. The roof, which had been replaced several years ago, continued to leak through the vents, which had not been replaced. In June, the roof vents were replaced with solar-powered fan units. The rear wall in the community room, which had previously been fixed based on the assumption of ground water seepage, continues to deteriorate. Several theories on the source of the water were presented, including cracks in the masonry and water leaking off the roof of the fire escape, although they are not mutually exclusive.



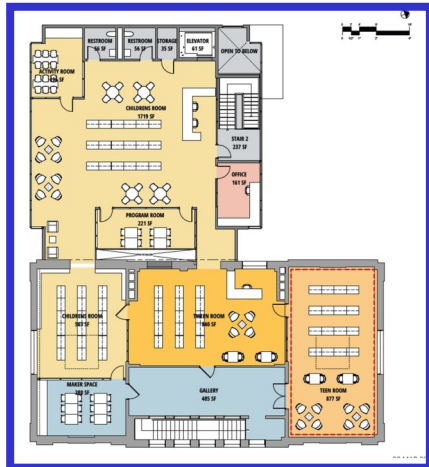
Proposed design of lower level presented by LLB with addition

The Board of Trustees has recognized the need to draw attention to the limitations and challenges of the library building in its current state. Using non-appropriated state aid funds (which had been put aside for several years for this very purpose), the Trustees hired the firm of LLB Architects to do a feasibility study on the building, its assets, and opportunities.

The final presentation included assessments of the building, including, but not limited to, masonry, electrical, technical, organizational design, architecture, and accessibility, none of which are up to twenty-first century standards or building codes.



Proposed design of first floor by LLB



Proposed design of second floor

As the pièce de résistance, LLB presented several potential designs (including the one pictured here—the full report is available at the library) for a Bigelow Free Public Library of the future. It was determined that any substantial renovations will require ADA compliance and significant upgrades to all facilities-related services in the library.

At this point in time, the Trustees are not married to the design (or even dating) but the feasibility study presentation did inspire realization of the incredible potential of a renovated or new library for the Town of Clinton and the pros and cons of the library in its current location. The full study is available at the library and online.



Story time on the lawn

### General COVID-19 Response

The library opened with limitations early in the year, first via appointments, then fully open in March 2021, just about a year after the pandemic started in 2020. Patrons returned slowly, still accustomed to using the contactless services in the Book Shack, and possibly reluctant to share space with other people. Due to its popularity, the Book Shack remained open the entire year, which probably contributed to patrons’ slow return to inside the building.

Evening and weekend hours were added back to the schedule during the year.

While complying with the limitations imposed by the Governor’s office, the staff continued to serve patrons remotely with printing, faxing, copying, and scanning services as well as Readers Advisory and research. Although many patrons were thrilled to be back in the library building, others were happy to continue accessing materials and printing services remotely.

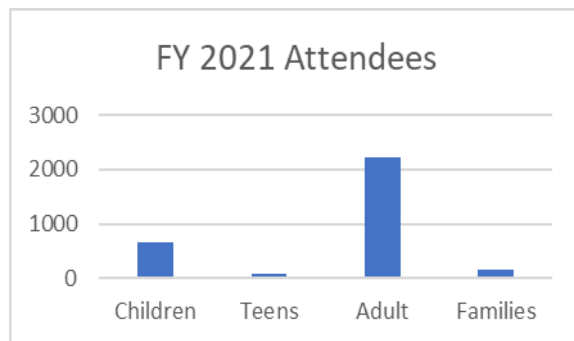
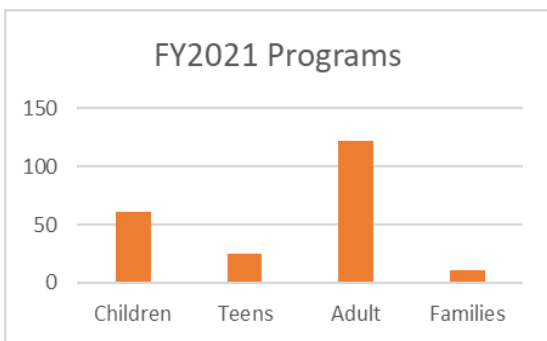
### Programming & Special Events

During August and September, the Bigelow Library offered in-person events, such as story



Salsa class outside, sponsored by CHNA9

time, book club, musicians, and library laps, outside on the lawn or in Central Park. When the weather cooled, the staff again took advantage of Zoom or FacebookLIVE for programs and presentations. By using Zoom, people were able to attend from all over the country—or world—because they could attend from home.





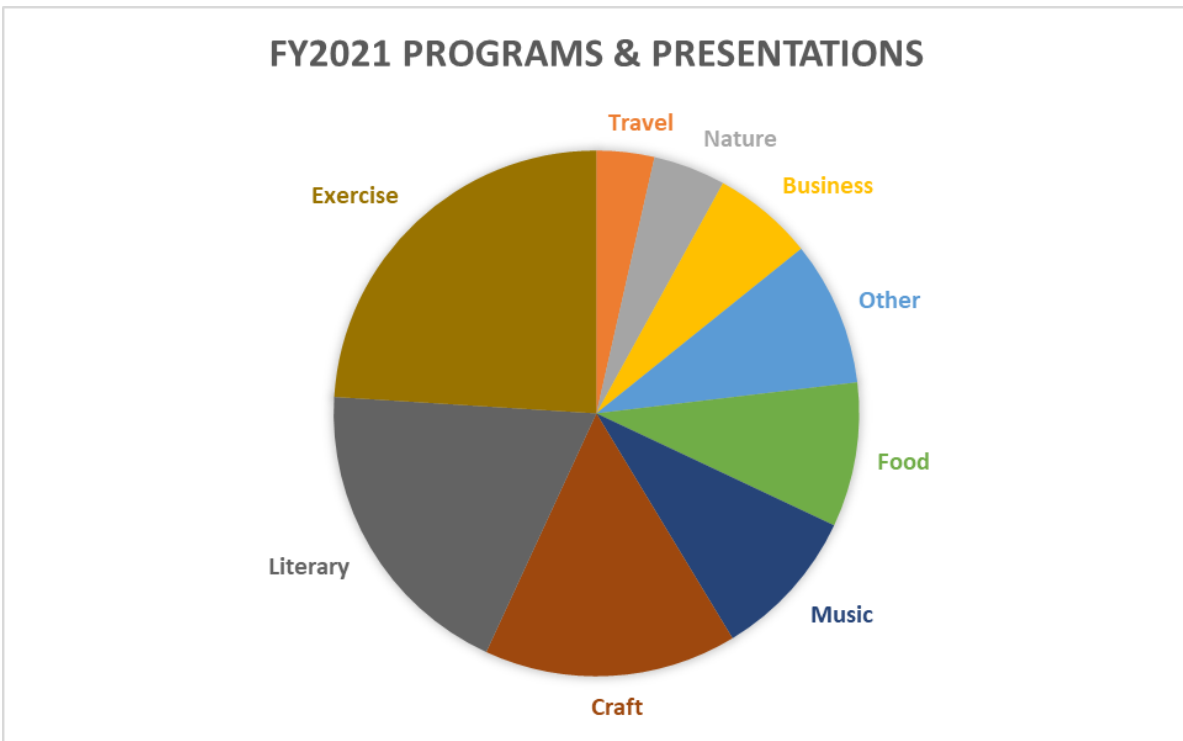
Winter Festival

Most of the year’s youth programs were adapted for viewing or participating online. With the hiring of a native Italian/Spanish speaker in September, the library was able to offer bilingual story times via the library’s FacebookLIVE account plus a monthly Italian Circle for family conversations.

On the snowiest Friday in February, the library offered a family-friendly outside firepit & snowshoe testing event. Patrons arrived in their warmest gear, some with marshmallows. Everyone was excited to test out the snowshoes before borrowing them from the library.

The firepit was used several more times on Family Firepit Fridays as well as for outside Book Group Discussions.

With all of the electronic and virtual programming during FY21 the Bigelow Library staff began using a new online registration system (Assabet Interactive) to enable patrons — both local and national — to more easily register for programs and access the Zoom links. Virtual programming also increased inter-library collaboration & promotion for programs. Bigelow Library was able to host many more programs by cost-sharing with co-hosting libraries.

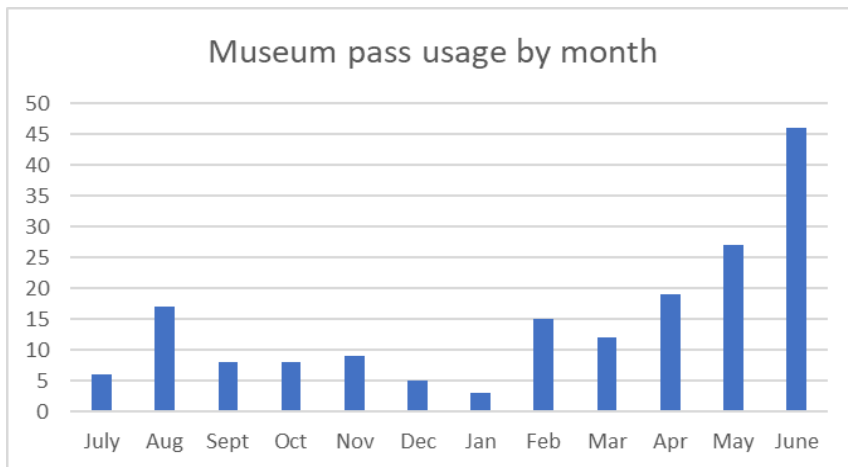
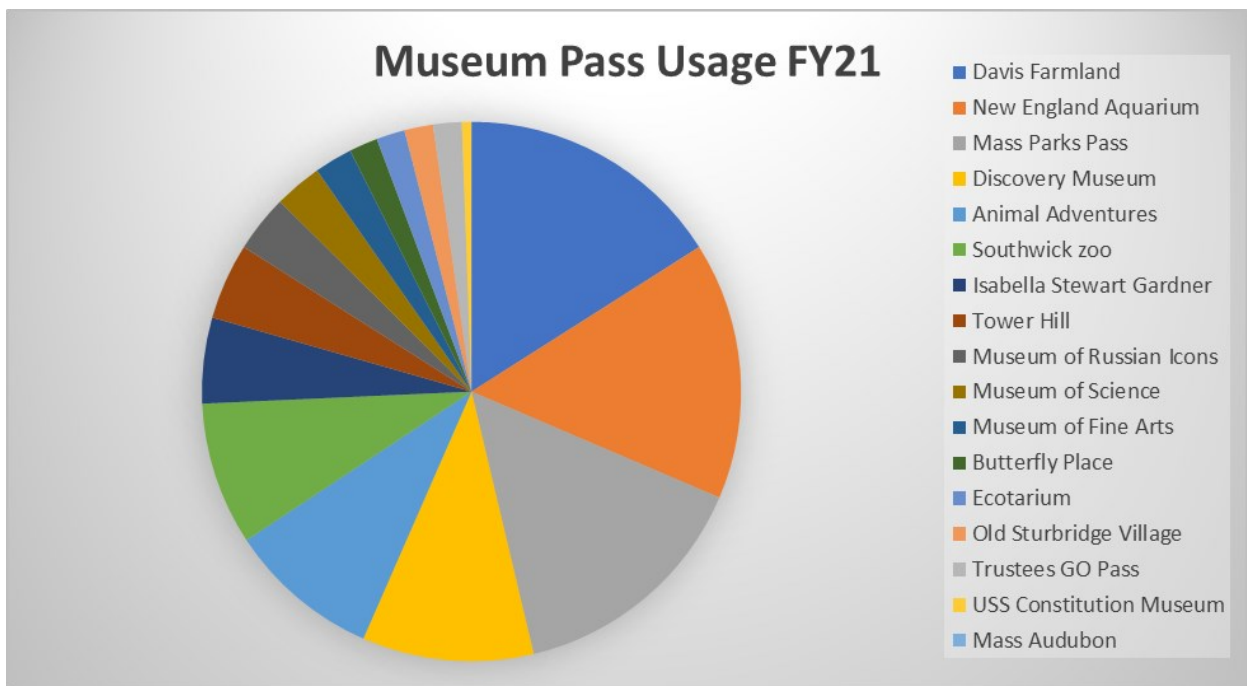


**Breakdown of program type.** “Other” includes automobile, occult, along with a handful of other topics. Exercise includes co-sponsored programs like qi-gong, library laps, drama, and dancing. Business programs include job hunting and computer coding.

### Museum Passes

As museums reopened in the spring, the library also subscribed to an online museum pass reservation system that allows patrons to print their own passes, depending on the attraction. Some favorites (such as Davis Farmland or Tower Hill) still require patrons to come to the library to pickup and return passes, but many organizations do not. The top three attractions were Davis Farmland, New England Aquarium, and the Massachusetts State Parks Pass. The total for the year was 175 passes borrowed.

It's no surprise that the most popular month for passes was June—most places were open by then and school was out for the summer. (In a usual [non-COVID] year, July and August are the busiest months.)



Top: Breakdown of museum pass usage by attraction—Davis Farmland was the most popular.

Left: Museum usage by month from July 2020 to June 2021.

## All About Grant-funded Programs

The Bigelow Library was awarded a \$10,000 LSTA (Library Services & Technology Act) grant by the Institute of Museum & Library Services, administered by the Board of Library Commissioners. The grant, “Everyone is Welcome At the Table” programming started October 1st and ran through September of the following year.

Also from the IMLS/BLC partnership, the library was awarded a CARES Act grant of \$1,660 for “Things to Do Without Screens,” for outside art and craft projects. Both grants spanned two fiscal years, October-September.

The Bigelow Library spent a \$600 FY2020 award from the Community Health Network of North Central Mass (CHNA9) for Salsa lessons to support the mental and physical benefits of dance. The CHNA9 awarded the library \$1,000 for “Exercise for People Who Hate Exercise.” However, it was not spent in FY2021, due to the timing of the award.

The Friends of the Bigelow Library donated \$1,000; the funds were used for various programs throughout the year. Hip Hop Dance & Dolley Madison were each funded with a Cultural Council grant from the Town of Clinton.

The Bigelow Library appreciates all of our funders & supporters.

### Everyone is Welcome At the Table

- Multiple Cooking demos with Simply Creative Chef Rob Scott
- Hidden Veggies cooking demo
- Herbal remedies for Colds
- Build a grow tower
- Nutrition 101
- Wellness for Working Women
- Health benefits of Tea
- Edible Landscaping
- Cookbooks for adults and youth
- Ingredients for many cooking demos
- AtoZ World Food database
- Recording equipment
- Ayurveda intro and cooking demo
- Cooking Gene author Michael Twitty
- Grow your own salad
- Author talk with books, George Zaidan



Left: Grow Your Own Salad event with Growing Places

### Fun Things to do Without Screens

- Make your own Hula Hoop Workshop
- DIY silk scarf dyeing
- Storywalk supplies
- DIY lotion bars

Right: Logo for Everyone is Welcome At the Table



## Collaborative & Cooperative Programming

The staff of the Bigelow Library works with other organizations in (or out) of town to pool resources, save money, or increase awareness of services. This year was no exception, except that the collaborative programming was virtual, rather than in-person. Library staff stepped up to present various craft and cooking events via zoom. Below are listed people who generously offered their time at no cost to present a program.

- AAA out of Connecticut offered relevant programming free to the library, allowing us to record and post on Facebook and the library's youtube channel for a limited time.

- During our "Get a Job Month" series in August, a number of people offered programs free, also letting us record them and post on Facebook and youtube

- Several authors visited virtually: Nancy Thayer (*Girls of Summer*), Rishi Reddi (*Passage West*), J.D. Wells (*The Kidnapping Club: Wall Street, Slavery, and Resistance on the Eve of the Civil War*), Jeanne McWilliams Blasberg (*The Nine*), Marjorie Turner Hollman (*Finding Easy Walks Wherever You Are*), Sydney Sherman (*You Are Not Alone*), George Zaidan (*Ingredients: The Strange Chemistry of What we Put in Us and on Us*)



Tuesday Book Club chats with Jeanne McWilliams Blasberg via Zoom



A Friend from In The Meadow Farm gets a treat

- Seven local libraries (Lancaster, Bolton, Berlin, Hudson, Leominster, Boxboro) co-sponsored a series of travel programs with Clinton, reducing the price per library to less than \$100.

- As part of our Everyone is Welcome At the Table, Brian McNally presented a virtual cooking program via Facebook

- Dvora Eisenstein presented a qigong class via Zoom for any library that shared the link with its patrons, which we did

- Jackie Chabot from In the Meadow farm visited and kicked off Summer Reading with a visit from two alpacas

- The following individuals presented free to us, but with the support of the Cultural Council: MUSIC Dance (*History of Hip Hop & Performance*) and Janet Parnes (*The Rise of Dolley Madison*)



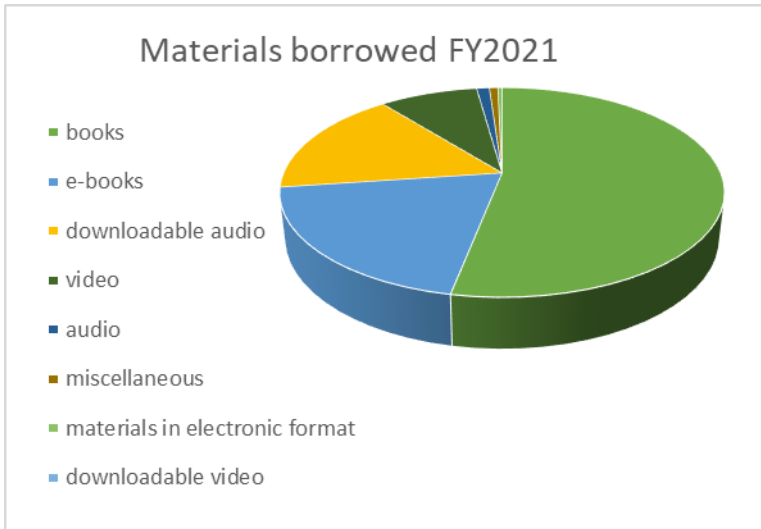
## Electronic Resources

The library offered the following research tools online during FY21, some for just part of the year, others started anew. The list of online offerings may change from year to year.

- **Overdrive/Libby** — ebooks, e-audios, magazines, and videos available as part of our membership in the CW MARS library network.
- **Novelist** — author read-alikes and suggestions on what to read next; provided by CW MARS.
- **Universal Class** — more than 500 classes from accounting to yoga, including crafts, health, careers, computing many others, some including CEU credits.
- **Kanopy** — films, documentaries, Great Courses, Kids videos available to stream with no wait times
- **Freegal** — free music to download or stream.
- **Mango Languages** — self-paced language-learning with more than fifty languages available
- **Ancestry & HeritageQuest & Fold3** — genealogy tools to research your family. Ancestrylibrary let users access their information from home with a library card for the first time ever, due to the pandemic
- **Odilo** — digital Spanish titles to download and read on your device with no wait times.
- **Hoopla** — thousands of videos, audiobooks, music, comics, and ebooks accessible online with no wait times.
- **AcornTV** — a very popular service for its access to British television (ended in May)
- **LearnItLive, Method Test, Great Courses** — streaming options for educational opportunities, like exercise, history, or standardized test practice (ended in May)
- **Qello Concerts** — streaming classical music performances (ended in May)
- **IndieFlix** — independent films to stream with your library card (formerly part of RBDigital, now accessible through LibbyApp)
- **Clinton High School Yearbooks** — access most years from 1917-2020, scanned from the original yearbooks.
- **Gale research databases** — thousands of articles from reputable sources, including newspaper archives. Funding and access provided by the MBLC
- **AtoZ Food America & AtoZ World Food**— history, traditions, recipes from around the United States & the world (both funded by IMLS, administered by MBLC)
- **Wowbrary** — a weekly update to your email of new items available in the library, including ebooks & emagazines  
**Use your library card for access—available online.**

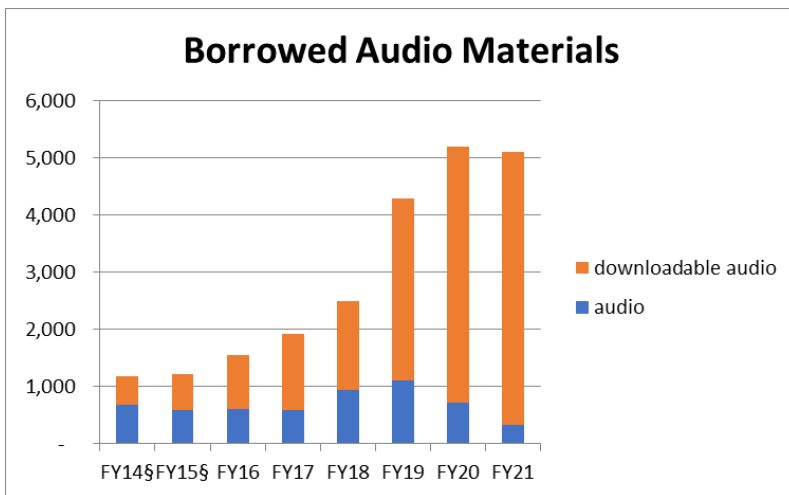


## Library Trivia Center



On the left, materials are listed in order of popularity, books being the most borrowed items, downloadable video being the least.

- Books continue to be the most popular materials borrowed, although ebooks & e-audios have been increasing every year since 2015. Patrons collectively borrowed an additional **2,817** ebooks or e-audios from the Boston Public Library.
  - We loaned **4,823** items to other libraries and borrowed **3,898** items from other libraries during FY21.
  - Patrons borrowed **175** discounted or free passes to **20** different attractions, but the bulk of these passes went out during May and June.
- These numbers are smaller than in past years, due to COVID. Use of electronic resources was generally higher than in past years.



As noted in the chart the left, patrons have really embraced downloading audio books in lieu of borrowing books on CD. It's easy with smart phones and other devices.

## Conclusion

The Board of Trustees and the Bigelow Library staff work together to make and keep the library relevant for the twenty-first century and beyond. This mission includes offering programs for all ages (from the very young to the very old). To this end, the library staff collaborates with preschools, day cares, homeschoolers, senior centers, Clinton Public Schools, and beyond the borders of Clinton to make this happen. In FY2021, this also included programs offered through digital platforms.

The FY2021 budget of \$418,897 was less than **1%** of the Town budget. For this small investment of \$30 per person, Clinton residents benefited from \$557,000 worth of library services. As indicated earlier in this report, services range from lending books and videos to sponsoring events and conducting research.

The Bigelow Library has always been part of the sharing economy—before there was a sharing economy. This year, the COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted some of the technological and financial disparities in and around Clinton.

The Bigelow Library—and other libraries—is positioned to offer equity of access to information, technology, and culture to the residents of Massachusetts. Part of the library’s continued state certification requires that we offer regular library goods and services free to any resident of the Commonwealth.

The staff offered services and programs throughout the year, despite the limitations of the building, which suffers from ongoing water damage. Additionally, the library is not up to current code for ADA compliance—including number and location of restrooms and emergency exits. Twenty-five percent of the building continues to be unavailable to the public due to accessibility issues. The trustees are committed to modernizing and maintaining the building to accommodate all Clinton residents far into this century and beyond.

To view the results of the assessment/feasibility study commissioned by the Board of Trustees, please visit our website, <http://bigelowlibrary.org/about/staff-and-trustees/trustees-reports/bigelow-free-public-library-building-analysis-feasibility-assessment/>

### Respectfully Submitted by the FY21 Board of Trustees:

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stephanie Amell</li> <li>• Sarah Laganelli</li> <li>• Wendy Neil (vice chair)</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Karen Nugent (secretary)</li> <li>• Gloria Parkinson (chair)</li> <li>• E. Russell Grady</li> </ul> |
|---|--|