This has been a remarkable year in the University Libraries. When Ball State University pivoted in March 2020 to remote learning in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the University Libraries closed to the public, and expanded online access to scholarly resources, library services, and virtual research assistance to advance the university’s teaching and learning mission. Overnight, we went from welcoming an average of 4,500 daily visitors to Bracken Library and the branch libraries to connecting with students and faculty through chat, email, telephone, and web conferencing platforms. Soon, the Libraries was facilitating no-contact, curb side pickups of books and other library materials and providing emergency scanning of archival materials not already available through the Libraries’ Digital Media Repository. Whether reporting to Bracken Library to support remote and pickup services or working from home with a laptop to assist with copyright questions, deliver a virtual instruction session, or transcribe a handwritten diary from the archives, the dedicated staff of the University Libraries made extraordinary efforts in extraordinary circumstances.

In August, the Libraries reopened to the campus community, supporting preparations for a return to on-campus learning. With safety protocols, including reduced seating capacity, physical distancing requirements, and mask wearing, in place, we welcomed back students, faculty, staff, and members of the local community. Despite the strangeness of the “new normal,” we are seeing students hard at work throughout the Libraries, and we are finding new ways to connect, providing uncompromised access to scholarly resources, expert research instruction and assistance, and modified space for focused study and collaborative learning.

In spite of the significant investment in planning and response to the disruption of COVID-19, the Libraries continued to advance strategic goals formalized in last year’s planning, and this newsletter will introduce some of those important accomplishments and initiatives that are making a difference in the learning experiences of students at Ball State University.

Thank you for your on-going support and interest in our work and for your generous contributions to and participation in the transformative mission of the University Libraries.

Sincerely,
Matthew C. Shaw, MLS, MA,
Dean of University Libraries

Dear Friends of Bracken Library,

I hope this message finds you and I send my sincerest wishes of good health to you and your loved ones during this difficult pandemic.

COVID-19 has presented a host of unprecedented professional and personal challenges to members of Ball State University community in 2020. Despite these circumstances and with significant adjustments and precautions, our students, faculty, and staff have continued to engage in highly meaningful learning, research, and community endeavors.

I am deeply appreciative of all of the work of my colleagues here at Ball State University Libraries who have deployed great innovation and creativity to adapt to the necessary adjustments of pandemic life. In doing so, they have demonstrated exceptional dedication and innovative proclivities to provide access to collections, technology resources, services, and expertise to advance the work of learners, educators, and scholars at Ball State throughout this difficult year.

My sincere appreciation also extends to our many generous benefactors and Library Friends who have continued their support of Ball State University Libraries throughout 2020. At a time when the economic realities of the pandemic have strained budgets at institutions of all types nationally and globally, financial support from selfless supporters like you has become increasingly critical.

This generosity was especially evident on Ball State Day (April 7, 2020), the University’s award-winning, 24-hour, online fundraising event held regularly in April. University Libraries was able to reach its fundraising goal with 52 gifts totaling over $3,500. Overall, the University raised $511,206 from 5,382 gifts, including support directly for students and families who face significant financial hardships as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. I feel humbled by the graciousness that was shown by so many!

Despite the ongoing challenges presented by the pandemic at this time, I remain thoroughly optimistic that University Libraries and the Friends of the Alexander M. Bracken Library will continue to foster and develop thriving, collaborative partnerships with learners, scholars, and community members here at Ball State. Thank you again for your ongoing support of Ball State University Libraries!

Sincerely,
Michael Szajewski
Executive Secretary

Financial donations by the Library Friends to existing Ball State University Foundation accounts supporting the University Libraries are always greatly appreciated, and we would like to thank all of our Friends.

The following donors made contributions of $100 or more in fiscal year 2019-2020:

Jennifer Abrell
Byron and Keiko Adcock
Steve and Joan Anderson
Dixie Lee Barton
Richard Biehl
Norbert and Cynthia Brocken
Billy Buffalo
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John Butler
Linda Caldwell McCleary
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Amy Townsend
Nancy Turner
Warren and Joy Vander Hill
Judith Walden
Kevin and Maryann Watts
Don and Sue Whitaker
Daniel Young
Carol Zuck

LETTER FROM EXECUTIVE SECRETARY

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Executive Secretary
In the fall of 2019, Ball State University Libraries partnered with the Office of Inclusive Excellence and the Multicultural Center to engage a filmmaker that engages the campus community in learning and discussion about film as a means of challenging racial bias and to promote social justice. Entitled “Reel Inclusion,” the series hosted three film screenings for the Ball State University campus community during the 2019-2020 academic year.

For example, the first screening on March 12, 2020, was presented by the pandemic. University Libraries are more than equal to the challenges presented by the pandemic.

The series launched in September of 2019 with a screening of the film 2016 documentary Accidental Arrivals, which highlights the challenges of students who are first-generation students and those who have immigrated to the United States.

The second screening on March 30, 2020, was directed by filmmaker Eliaichi Kimaro, a mixed-race, first-generation student from Tanzania, who explores the experiences of individuals who have immigrated to the United States.

The final screening on May 13, 2020, was presented by professor Liza Teeter, Department of History, who discussed the themes of immigration and social justice in the context of U.S. history.

Over the summer, library personnel prepared to open the doors for the resumption of in-person services in the fall. However, the COVID-19 pandemic was ongoing and staff were concerned about physical distancing and ingenuity of staff throughout the University Libraries.

While most staff were working online, a small and dedicated group of staff were working on an ongoing basis to support the needs of the Ball State University community. These staff members were responsible for maintaining the online catalog, answering questions from students and faculty about course assignments and meeting learning objectives. A live chat function embedded in the guides provided a convenient avenue for students to meet with librarians in real time as needed.

For those nearby, curbside service was available to borrow and return books, audio/visual items related to Jewish studies, world history, Shakespeare, religion, World War II, The Holocaust, and other topics. Other services included online appointment setting, electronically faxing materials via interlibrary loan. However, these past months have shown that the dedication and ingenuity of staff in University Libraries are more than equal to the challenges presented by the pandemic.

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