

## **Reimagining the Sonoma County Library**

*by Ann Hammond, Director, Sonoma County Library*

In late 2019, we were well underway with a new strategic plan, a process the library undergoes every five years. Then, the pandemic hit us and we had to pivot to a new type of service.

This winter, we restarted our plan and we're now calling it a Reimagining Plan. We know that your lives have been disrupted and your libraries have to change to serve you in this new normal. We are determined to meet this challenge.

Our Reimagining Plan will address library services, but as we gather information, we recognize that we have to think beyond the walls of our branches, and put our best efforts into planning for a future that addresses the realities of an extended fire season, annual power outages, floods, and a stubborn pandemic., with all the changes it brings.

School-age children and their families, community elders, and emerging community and business leaders have always been our core library boosters, but we have a responsibility to reach beyond these beloved supporters and learn who else needs us and why.

Our Reimagining Plan includes in-depth interviews with community service leaders, who are providing valuable insights into community needs. Along with staff feedback and your input, our final plan will be a comprehensive approach to serving our community in the uncertain times ahead.

We have three public listening sessions scheduled for our Reimagining Plan, and I'd love to see you join us at one of them. You can join us at 10 am on February 22, 10 am on February 27 or 6 pm on March 4. Please email [reimagining@sonomalibrary.org](mailto:reimagining@sonomalibrary.org) and we'll get you information on how to register for a session.

## **Reopening the libraries**

Sonoma County Library is working to reopen safely, while supporting our mission and protecting community members and staff. We plan to be ready to reopen by early April. When the doors open depends on a number of criteria, explained below.

Reopening has already begun. We have offered six-day-a-week curbside pickup since June, book drops are open more days, digital resources have increased and we are expanding WiFi outside our branches – Sonoma County residents are using their libraries!

When we reopen, it won't be exactly as it was. We will reopen at 25 percent capacity at first, with in-person appointments that will allow patrons to browse and use public computers. No in-person events are planned at this time.

Why aren't we open now? Libraries are not retail outlets, and people tend to spend more time in a library than in a store, so we must take a cautious approach and get it right.

Branches will be ready to reopen by late March, with new procedures, staff training, glass barriers, socially-distanced public computers, limits on the number of patrons in the branch, bilingual signage and adequate PPE to protect staff and visitors. Then, we wait.

When Sonoma County moves into the Red Tier, we will give staff and the community two weeks' notice to reopen. Based on a March 22 goal (and adding two weeks), April 5 is our earliest opening date.

If Sonoma County is still in the Purple Tier on March 22, libraries will remain closed to in-person service, but will stay ready and set an opening date for two weeks after we move to the Red Tier. Curbside pickup and returns will continue.

If Sonoma County returns to the Purple Tier after the library is open for in-person service, doors will close and curbside service will continue.

Because the COVID-19 pandemic is a fluid situation, it is possible that the library will not reopen on this schedule.

The library is committed to the health and safety of staff and patrons as we move toward reopening. Please reach out to me ([ahammond@sonomalibrary.org](mailto:ahammond@sonomalibrary.org)) or to Communications Manager Ray Holley ([rholley@sonomalibrary.org](mailto:rholley@sonomalibrary.org)) if you have questions.

*Ann Hammond, Sonoma County Library Director*

### **From Healdsburg Library**

*by Jon Haupt branch manager of Healdsburg Regional Library.*

The staff at the library have been glad to see many of you taking advantage of our increased hours since November, even with the series of holidays interrupting the flow of traffic. Our statistics have increased since announcing our new curbside hours, even during the hours we were already open. So far, the evening hours have been sparsely attended, but we expect as the days become longer and warmer, we will see more visitors at that time as well. If you're not sure about our new hours, consult our website at [sonomalibrary.org](http://sonomalibrary.org) or give us a call for the full information.

A week or so ago, our children's librarian, Charity, announced an opportunity to request bundles of children's picture books via a Facebook post. This announcement brought on a remarkable response and we have provided bags of books to many families since. Although that collection particularly needed some more readers to lighten our shelves, we have thousands and thousands of books in all subject areas, not to mention our DVDs, CDs and more. All of our reference staff are always happy to help pick out some items that would interest you. Perhaps you would like to learn about a new style of cooking? Might you have added a new family pet this year and need to learn more about caring for your new friend? Or maybe you would like to try a few binge-worthy television series out and see what you like. We can create a bundle of items for you to borrow. Reach out and give us a call at 707-433-3772 and we can talk it over.

Our magazines had to take a break during the summer and fall, but we are back to a point where we are lending current and past issues of magazines. You can search and find what we have available on our library catalog, [find.sonomalibrary.org](http://find.sonomalibrary.org), but to place a request, you'll need to give us a call. Magazines may be borrowed for three weeks at a time. Although a lot of magazines have sadly ceased publication this year, we still have many available in a variety of subject areas.

Charity misses seeing all of our little story-time friends in person every week. This last year, we have explored several different online platforms for virtual story-times. Some of you have already participated in live Zoom Story-times (you can find them at our events calendar: [events.sonomalibrary.org/events](http://events.sonomalibrary.org/events)) as well as watching pre-recorded story-times on our YouTube channel ([youtube.com/sonomalibrary](http://youtube.com/sonomalibrary)). We wanted to make sure you know about a special new Instagram account as well. We have a new program called SCL Kids Read ([instagram.com/scl.kids.read](http://instagram.com/scl.kids.read)) featuring new books to look for, early literacy tips and my personal favorite, the Story-time Breaks. These short (30 seconds to two minutes) videos are

here to teach you a song, a rhyme or a literacy trick while having a little fun at the same time. Charity and other children's librarians from Sonoma County provide these entertaining breaks that kids and adults will both enjoy. After watching, you can try them yourselves at home.

Happy watching and listening for 2021 from the staff at the Healdsburg Library, and we look forward to seeing you soon.

### **Hot topics at the library**

**Curbside hours expanding:** Curbside hours are expanding from 30 hours a week to 46, effective November 9. Hours will be: Monday–Tuesday, 12 to 7 pm; Wednesday–Saturday, 10 am to 5 pm, plus Sundays from 1-5 pm at Central. This will make curbside more convenient for working families.

**Foundation support:** The Sonoma County Public Library Foundation is supporting our 24/7 online library, with grants to expand digital resources, purchase Spanish-language eBooks for youth and extend our free WiFi outside our buildings.

**Supporting literacy:** The library played a key role in free lunch programs throughout the summer, distributing 9,900 books at 40 unique locations, including schools, housing complexes and youth clubs.

**Sonoma Responds:** Our unique community memory archive program is already garnering strong response from community members who want to help document this extraordinary time in our community.

### **Looking for books? We can help!**

Let us pick out a bundle of books for you to pick up via Curbside Pickup. Fill out the form below and your local librarian will select a variety of books for you, check them out to your library card, and then let you know when they are ready to pick up. This is a great way to learn about something new, read something you've never read before and get a surprise!

## **Please Support The Library's Reimagining Plan!**

*By Andy Elkind, Healdsburg's Sonoma County Library Commissioner*

Some of you may remember Robert F. Kennedy's famous speech when he quoted the Irish playwright George Bernard Shaw: "Some men see things as they are and ask why. Others dream things that never were and ask why not."

Now is the time for ALL of us to dream things that never were and ask why not. Specifically, for us to dream about what the Sonoma County Library can do and can be to meet the growing and changing needs of our community.

Back in the early months of 2020, the Library had just embarked on a project to develop a three-year strategic plan. And we had begun conducting outreach sessions under the guidance of our strategic planning consultant Diane Satchwell. Some of you may have attended the community session that was held at the Healdsburg Branch on March 7, 2020.

Then the pandemic struck. And as we sheltered in place to try to curb the virus, the Library had to halt the strategic planning process.

Since then, the Sonoma County Library has taken a number of ambitious steps to continue to provide meaningful resources and events to our patrons. We have greatly increased access to digital materials. Implemented curbside pickup. Hosted a wide variety of online programs. And embarked on an effort to extend our wi-fi signals to help close the digital divide for the many thousands of Sonoma County residents who lack access to high-speed internet service.

If we have learned anything over the past year, it's that none of us expects a quick return to "the way things used to be." As we recover from the virus and continue to face seasonal challenges like floods and wildfires, it's clear that flexibility, change, and innovation will become even more important in the months and years ahead.

So the Sonoma County Library has re-embarked on our strategic planning effort, but with a new twist. We're calling it a Reimagining Plan. Just as we would do with any strategic plan, we are reaching out to all the constituencies we serve and gathering input to help us chart a course ahead. But we are also challenging our commissioners, staff, patrons, and members of community members to consider their needs more broadly and to explore new ideas and visions of the role that the Library can play. It's an exciting process!

During the month of February the Library will be scheduling and conducting a few public sessions to gather input and perspectives. If you haven't already had a chance to participate, I hope you'll join one of those sessions. We need your perspective, your voice, and your imagination. Thanks in advance for helping us reimagine the journey ahead!

### **Thank you to Long-time Board Members**

**Diane Lubich** has been a volunteer at the library for 22 years, sorting donated books, becoming a life member of FOHL and serving as a Board member, including a term as Vice President. Diane says she is most proud of founding the "Specials" which has grown to have its own area at the book sales. Diane wrote, "Sorting books for our sales was very important to me for so many years. It was a big part of my life in Healdsburg. I have many wonderful memories of different instances and of many lovely people I have met through volunteering."

**Joan Gipe** served on the Board of FOHL for almost 15 years, including as Board Secretary for about 10 years, keeping careful records of the proceedings. In deciding to step away, Joan wrote that she was grateful to have had the experience of being a board member.

Both Diane and Joan have indicated their plans to continue as book sorters and book sale volunteers. The Board has expressed its thanks to them for their many years of exceptional and dedicated service. We hope their experiences will inspire others to become Board members.

## New FOHL Board Members

The Board appointed **Michiko Conklin, Earl Gwynne, and Shaun McCaffery** to fill vacancies until the general membership can meet to elect the Board for the coming year. The City Council has appointed Councilwoman **Skylaer Palacios** as liaison to FOHL and she will serve as an ex-officio Board member. **Shaun McCaffery** previously was a member of our Board in this capacity until his term on the City Council ended. Recognizing his dedication and support of FOHL and the Library, the FOHL board appointed Shaun as a regular Board member in January, 2021.

**Michiko Conklin** has recently moved to Healdsburg from Sebastopol. She is the Manager/Owner of the Patient Terrier Vineyard in Forestville, CA. Michiko's educational background includes a BA in Architecture from Yale, and an MBA from the Harvard Business School. Michiko is an avid reader of fiction and reads books almost exclusively from Library collections. She is a firm believer in public service and Library support. She volunteered for many years at her son's school library and more recently at the Sebastopol public library.

**Earl Gwynne** has been a hard-working, weekly volunteer with FOHL for over two years, moving donated books to our off-site storage units between Book Sale. He organizes and stacks the boxes of books by category. Earl also organizes helpers to bring the hundreds of boxes of books and display furniture to the library for each sale and to return items to storage when the sale ends. He has a background in accounting and has had his own business. Earl has been a thoughtful and helpful addition to our team of volunteers.

The Board has been meeting monthly via Zoom. If you might be interested in joining the Board or volunteering in other ways, please contact me by text or email.

Charlene Luks, President, (707) 494 7083 [charleneluks@msn.com](mailto:charleneluks@msn.com)

## Current Board Member

Charlene Luks	President
Tracy Logan	Vice-President, Chair LAB Fountain Project
Lyn Murray	Secretary, Donations sorting
Teri Loveland	Acting Treasurer
Ginni Lomax	Membership, Donations sorting
MaryAnn Gervais	Event Coordinator
Michiko Conklin	Digital & Social Media
Linda Selover	Newsletter Editor
Theresa Cabral	Newsletter mailing
Lena Darcy	Coordinator, Book Sales
Deana Fusco	Coordinator, Book Sales
Virginia Simonds	Donations sorting
Merl Griesert	Amazon Book Sales. Donations sorting
Earl Gwynne	Book Sale Set-up & Storage Coordinator

## Ex-Officio Board Members

Jon Haupt	Library Manager	
Shaun McCaffery	Ex-Officio Board Member	
Andy Elkind	SCL Commissioner/Hbg	<a href="mailto:aelkind@sonomalibrary.org">aelkind@sonomalibrary.org</a>
Sirie Thongchua	SCL Fund Dev Manager	<a href="mailto:sthongchua@sonomalibrary.org">sthongchua@sonomalibrary.org</a>
Skylaer Palacios	City Council Member/Hbg	<a href="mailto:spalacios@ci.healdsburg.ca.us">spalacios@ci.healdsburg.ca.us</a>

## Reviews

*By Lyn Murray*

Not a particular fan of audio books, but I did find myself checking out one of the Library's on-line offerings through OverDrive which has complete, simple, point and click instructions for getting started and finding what you want.

The Canon Book Club was reading *The Code of the Woosters* for some of its lighter holiday reading, and this was a perfect choice for an audio selection with its perfectly read British accents, ridiculous character names, contrived dramatic events and sound effects.

I felt as if 65+ years had rolled back, and I was listening to my favorite radio programs before lights out -- a very nice COVID coping experience.

*By Tracy Logan, Veep*

Barack Obama has his annual reading list that is always intriguing to me. I mean, seriously, if Obama likes it, I shall follow. Recently, I took him up on two of his recommendations:

**LONG BRIGHT RIVER** by Liz Moore

Could not put down this mystery-cop-thriller-family-sibling-children-parents novel. It definitely has a soul of thoughtfulness and care while zipping along to the unexpected conclusion(s). A whirlwind that makes you think- think about a number of issues, especially in these unprecedented times with its apt and pertinent themes.

**HIDDEN VALLEY ROAD** by Robert Kolker

Instantly found myself gripped by this exploration of one family's experiences with schizophrenia. And its overview of "mental health care"- such as it is and really is not- in the US. Talk about all in the family....I learned a great deal and it felt effortless. Helpful in these times of what I call Pandemic Brain: a bit of a short attention span theatre going on over here.

(And hey, I see now that Oprah also likes these two books!)

I got the ebooks via the Sonoma County Library LIBBY app which I have just fallen in love with: where had it been all my life?

Thank you Barack Obama for these recs-- and for so many things!

### **The Neapolitan Novels - by Elena Ferrante**

In 2003, my husband and I took my two teenage children to Italy. We took a train to see the exhibit at Pompeii and the Herculaneum. After that, we HAD to have pizza (my son was 13) at a local pizzeria. On the way, we encountered the steely glare of neapolitans and a wild ride back to the train station in a taxi driven by a man who called himself "Speedy Gonzales" and kept pulling up his shirt to show my husband his bullet wound scar as he literally drove up the wrong side of a busy street to "save time." We were not in a hurry.

I remembered that general feeling of perceived aggression and volatile intensity as I read the incredible Neapolitan Novels, beginning with "My Brilliant Friend" (333 pages, 2012), followed by "The Story of a New Name" (482 pages, 2013), "Those Who Leave and Those Who Stay" (437 pages, 2014) and finally "The Story of the Lost Child" (482 pages, 2015). It has been decades since any novels affected me so profoundly. The writing is superb and these volumes are a masterpiece in conveying the conflicting emotions, desires and interpersonal relationship over a lifetime between two extremely different women. The following quote matches my reaction to these books: "*Amazing! ... Reading Ferrante reminded me of that child-like excitement when you can't look up from the page, when your eyes seem to be popping from your head, when you think: I didn't know books could do this!*" —Elizabeth Strout, author of *Olive Kitteridge*. If you've been waiting to delve into these books, now is a great time to get caught up in the unforgettable lives of Lila and Lenu.

**FoHL Friends of the Healdsburg Library**  
**P. O. Box 1514**  
**Healdsburg, CA 95448**

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**Friends of the Healdsburg Library**

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