

The library as a gathering space

By Paulina Poplawska, Library Director

Autumn is one of my favorite times of year. I love the cool crisp air, the falling of leaves, and the changing of colors. It makes for a magical time before the blitz of winter's arrival. As we begin the last quarter of the year, it's a time to ponder what's ahead for us at the library. Libraries have learnt to be nimble as we navigate these changing times. Thank you for your patience as we find new ways to offer the services and resources you value and find ways to provide them in a safe environment.

One of our overarching goals as a library is to be a community gathering space. That has been the culture and practice since before my time here. We don't enforce a quiet library; many think we still do because that's unfortunately a library stereotype. Our goal is to be a bustling place of learning and resource sharing. We strive to have a robust programming schedule and encourage patron interactions.

Because of the pandemic we are not able to provide a community space to the same extent we have in the past. Following Minnesota Department of Health and CDC guidelines, we have adjusted the help we provide to patrons on the computer; book groups are not meeting in person to energetically discuss their titles; nor do we have playful storytimes in our beautifully repainted Youth Services department. For the safety of patrons and staff in person programs are not yet available.

What we do have is virtual programming – book clubs that have been meeting online and in local parks. The Youth Services department has started a virtual Teens Talk Books for the younger set every second Thursday of the month. Check out our website at newulmlibrary.org (Library Events) or the library's Facebook page for information on upcoming programs.

Patrons can still walk in and use the public access computers. We have the Memory Lab Network and microfilm available by appointment. Some of the study carrels in the non-fiction area are available for individual study, to be used with one person at a table. We recommend that patrons keep their study to an hour. Carrels are available on a first come, first served basis and are use at your own risk. We have one of our book sale shelves back up for those interested in buying a book to keep. We plan to continue contactless hold pickup and will be bringing it into the lobby of the library in the weeks to come. We'd be happy to pull a selection of titles for you. Call 507-359-8331 to speak to staff. We have e-books and e-audiobooks available through Libby from the comfort of your home.

Thank you for your continued patience, understanding, support, and flexibility as we ensure the safety of library patrons and staff. I'm excited to see the library as a gathering space once again. As always, we look forward to seeing you in the library!