We are absolutely delighted to close the books on 2020 and look forward to the new year. Our statistics and numbers for the year are included in this annual report, but our narrative is critical in providing context for the challenges that our library and archives had to maneuver. The question for us was not if we could solve a myriad of complex new problems, but how we would do so.

Here are some of our fall 2019 and early spring 2020 milestones:

Redesigned space on the fourth floor, paving the way for an active student and faculty “arts corridor.” We invested further in our Aesthetics of Research programming by planning and scoping out a “Boiler Room” artmaking space.

Launched “Lethal Ladies—The Women of True Crime” fall programming series.

Developed programming initiatives which included Afrofuturist Zine Night in partnership with the Chicago Public Library, CCC’s annual faculty Publication Celebration, and Aesthetics of Research “Future Tense: Imagined Worlds from the Margins.” We welcomed a new Artist-in-Residence, Julia Arrendondo.

Launch 2020 with a new Blended Services model, one that provided consolidated support at library point of entry for all reference, research, check-out, interlibrary loan, and reserves questions. Reference and Access staff, with support from other departments and student workers, worked together to develop and offer training and staff the redesigned space.

Library Collection Statistics...

Print Books: 222,790
Physical Video: 22,887
Physical Music: 22,925
E-books: 67,543
Streaming Video: 997,946
Journals: 274
E-Journals: 29,128
Databases: 138
Research Guides: 99

Designed initial plans and space for a “Little Free” project, in which a Little Free Library, a Little Free Food Library/Pantry, and a Little Free Art Library would co-exist.

Began to discuss how we would reinvest in the Center for Black Music Research collection, and what staffing and support would be most critical as we further link this singular collection to Columbia’s curriculum and mission.

Made plans to reanimate a practicum program.
AND THEN, EVERYTHING CHANGED.

Our story is no different from other academic libraries who dealt with pandemic. On March 16, we closed the library down. On March 17, we went online and successfully provided remote services from that date through June 29. Each staff member learned to work successfully from home or a remote space. We learned that we were nothing if not nimble, and we moved forward by initiating radical collaborations with faculty and encouraging library staff to suggest innovative ideas to manage what we never could have anticipated. Here are some highlights:

We learned all new ways of delivering services and resources. Streaming media and electronic resource requests went through the roof. We created a multitude of new research guides, videos, and tutorials, and collaborated with faculty to take formerly classroom-based research and instruction into varied new formats, from Canvas modules to live synchronous sessions.

LIBRARY USAGE STATISTICS...

Physical item circulation: **12,488**  
E-book use: **12,940**  
Streaming video & music: **12,695**  
Articles accessed: **141,167**  
ILL lending: **2,697**  
ILL borrowing: **1,628**  
Research guide use: **32,757**  
Visitors: **60,985**


College Archives and Special Collections collaborated on two student-based pandemic projects which will form a permanent collection: “Capturing Quarantine: Student Life During a Pandemic,” and “Stuck Indoors.” Knowing it would be challenging to provide full access to the College Archives, staff went on the offensive and created the Archives Live Lab (ALL), a new service that turns in-person class visits into personal ones, allowing Archives staff and faculty to stream from the Archives in high definition video. College Archives also took on new responsibilities as overseer of a new College Records Management Program.

LIBRARY TEACHING & ASSISTING STUDENTS

Hosted **3,530** students in **176** sessions  
Reference questions answered:  
In person: **527**  
Via chat and email: **815**

COLLEGE ARCHIVES AND SPECIAL COLLECTIONS

Hosted **2,115** students and researchers  
Reference questions answered: **5,524**  
Digital objects online: **3,526**  
**61,771** Digital downloads by **2,328** institutions in **191** countries  
Full Archives Annual Report: [https://tinyurl.com/7n2xxurn](https://tinyurl.com/7n2xxurn)

We understood the importance of allowing controlled access to our singular print collections. We made this possible through a reservation system which would provide access and allow us to monitor physical distancing. We reactivated I-Share interlibrary loan processes and opened the floodgates for borrowing and lending.

We migrated to a new library services platform during this time. Circumstances were certainly not ideal, but along with the other 90 CARLI libraries, we moved from the Voyager system to the cloud-based Alma unified library services platform on June 24.
In anticipation of returning to our physical spaces, we also created a plan for **reconfiguring our spaces**, floor by floor, to accommodate physical distancing. Our facilities team was instrumental in making this possible. We removed seating, converted group study rooms into individual spaces, created processes to accommodate mouse and keyboard checkout, and instituted self-service options whenever possible. Face masks were (and are) required; we learned to enforce this policy.

We convened the first-ever **Faculty Library Advisory Group (FLAG)**. Originally scheduled to meet in March 2020, Covid-19 shut that planning down. But in October, we met via Zoom, with faculty representatives from each of the academic departments and all library and archives staff members attending. One of the many positive outcomes of this gathering was a renewed interest in and focus on the library liaison program, with faculty members agreeing to be our liaisons in communicating important news regarding services, resources, and programming.

We made plans to **officially go fine-free** in January 2021, as we believe that imposing monetary fines is a form of social inequity and creates yet another barrier to providing basic services to all users.

Library staff played a central role in training for and activating a **Covid-19 Call Center**.

In the midst of a pandemic, we actually recruited. We had made the case to hire an **Instruction and Online Learning Librarian** in mid-2019, and there was no better time to reanimate this search than in the midst of transitioning to remote and online instruction. Hillary Ostermiller started work in July. Once we were back onsite, we hired the critical and vacant **Access Services/Stacks and Equipment** position. Reggie Kirkwood joined us in August.

**All Aesthetics of Research** programming shifted online, including a virtual Manifest, Book Club, Artists discussions, Wicked Week, FrankenToys, and ARTIVISM, the intersection of arts and activism, with a laser focus on diversity and antiracism. We broadened our Artist-in-Residence program and offered two residencies. We collaborated with the Provost’s Office to support All-College meeting, Publication Celebration, Faculty Showcase, and Faculty Development Days. We presented a poster session on Curated Learning and Social Media in the Academic Library at the Illinois Library Association conference in October.

Library and Archives staff also worked with Ames Hawkins, presenting online workshops and training sessions for **Faculty Development Days**, emphasizing resources and support for online and remote instruction.

We participated in the **Incident Assessment Task Force (IATF)** plans to reopen the campus.

Library staff partnered with Academic Technology and the Provost’s Office to provide support for the **Teaching Online at Columbia College Chicago (TOCCC)** program aimed at preparing faculty for remote instruction; three librarians taught sections of this course.

We developed a **reopening plan** which was more aggressive than most CARLI libraries, many of whom remained closed. Beginning in September, we were open and accessible 74 hours/week and we offered print reserves resources. We knew this was controversial, but we also knew our students were counting on those materials. We delivered all expected services, while also adhering to Reopening Archives, Libraries, and Museums (REALM) requirements.
LESSONS LEARNED AND PLANS FOR THE FUTURE:

One of our favorite quotes this year was provided by Lawrence Gerstein, Director of the Center for Peace and Conflict Studies at Ball State University: “In the rush to return to normal, use this time to consider which parts of normal are worth rushing back to.”

We are taking that advice to heart, and will spend a portion of 2021 preparing a new three-year framework for Columbia’s library and archives, one that embraces the hard lessons learned in 2020, focuses on building a strategic culture, and represents our mission of providing a “gathering place for intellectual and artistic freedom and expression, where we consistently surprise and delight our community with a fierce dedication to coloring outside of the lines in support of continuing education, research, and creative practice.”

We choose to invest in a “start-up” culture in the new year, discarding processes and practices that no longer are relevant, and focusing on our core mission. Brian Mathews writes that “startups are organizations dedicated to creating something new under conditions of extreme uncertainty.” He states that “the goal is to build something that doesn’t exist and to create something that wasn’t there before that is now absolutely essential.” We began this work in the spring and will continue on that path. The pandemic changed us and broadened our world view; we rededicate ourselves to playing a critical and measurable role in ensuring the success and safety of our students and faculty.

Finally, we believe Black Lives Matter, we support Columbia’s DEI and Antiracism Transformation Team (ArTT) initiatives, Social Justice initiatives, and our programming, instruction, recruiting, outreach, and collection development practices will continue to build on that.

Jo Cates
Library Director