



The Big Read

For many years, the Fresno County Public Library has been a proud recipient of the National Endowment for the Arts Big Read grant, which supports libraries and other nonprofit organizations in an all-community book discussion designed to broaden our understanding of our world, our communities, and ourselves through the joy of sharing a good book.

Citizen: An American Lyric was the 2020 Big Read selection, a genre-defying blend of lyrical

prose, poetry, artwork and images by award-winning and New York Times best-selling author Claudia Rankine. The book explores moments of racism and microaggressions that surface in everyday encounters. **Citizen** programs included discussions on race and racism, poetry readings and workshops, and an author guest lecture hosted by the Library's Big Read partner, Fresno City College. While planned programs were cut short by the stay-at-home order issued in March, the Library kept the national conversation on equity, diversity and inclusion going in the wake of demonstrations across the country.

The Library again partnered with Fresno City College, the 2021 recipient of the NEA grant, to host the first completely virtual Big Read. It featured **An American Sunrise**, a work of poetry, memoir, and tribal history by Joy Harjo, the first Native American U.S. Poet Laureate and a member of the Muscogee Creek Nation.



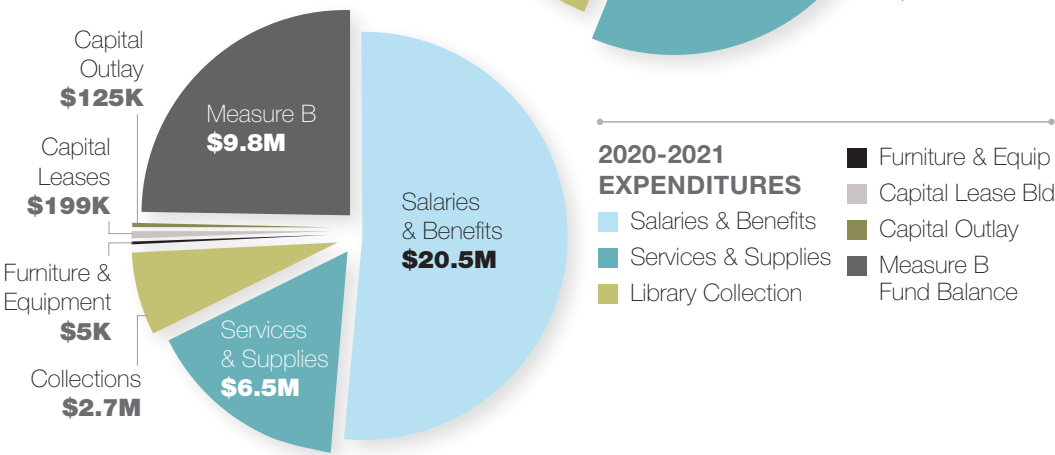
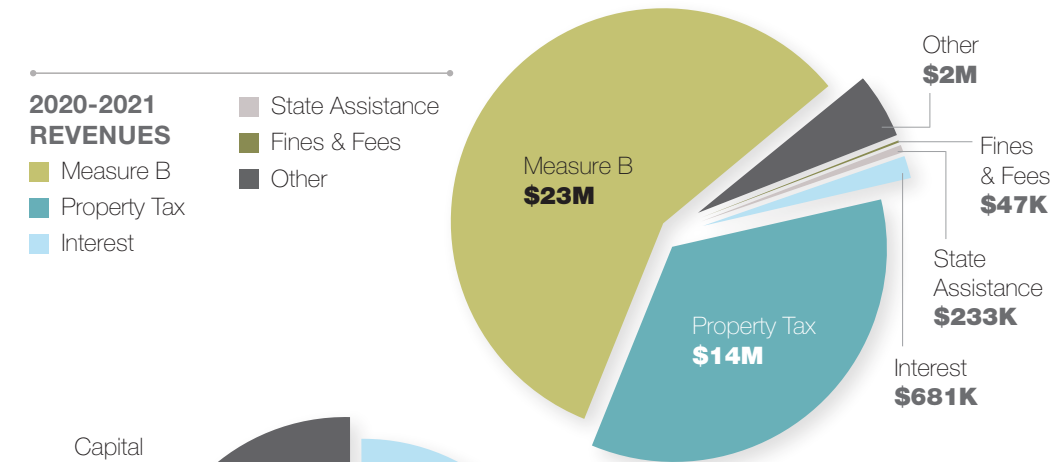
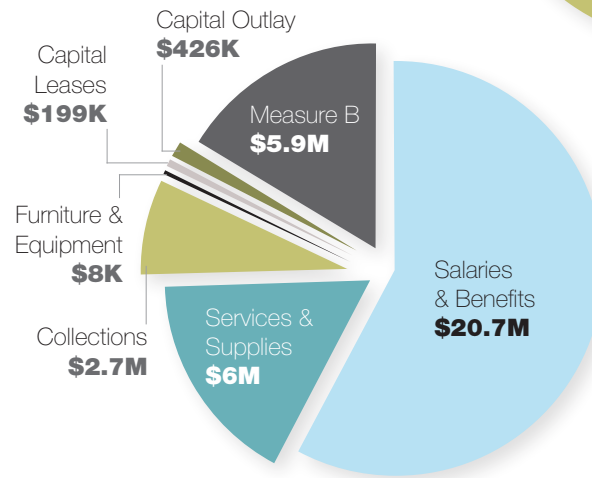
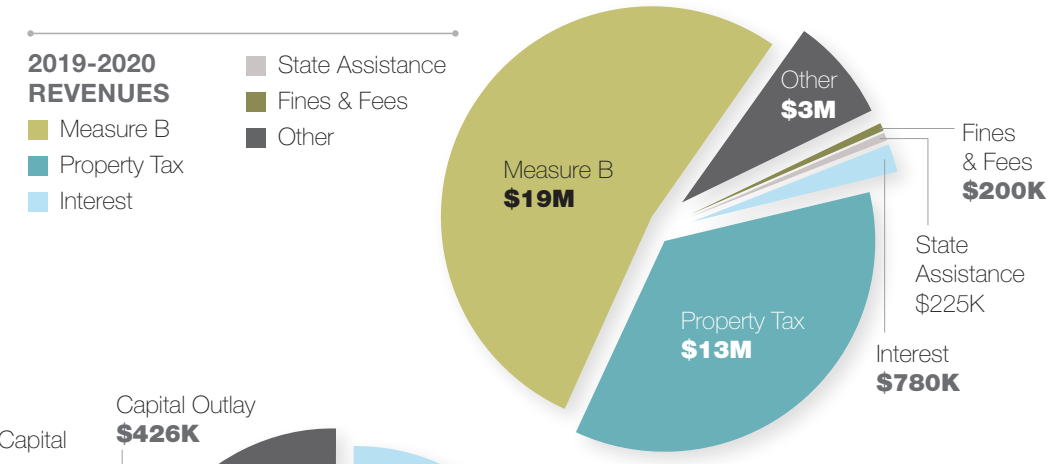
Evicted Exhibit

In the fall of 2019, the Library hosted the traveling **Evicted** exhibit at the downtown Fresno Central Library. It was inspired by Matthew Desmond's Pulitzer Prize-winning book **Evicted: Poverty and Profit in the American City**.

Using large visuals, graphics and images from tenant families, the **Evicted** exhibit graphically illustrated the reasons behind eviction and how to better understand why it happens. Visitors left with an understanding of how to change their neighborhoods, help keep families in their homes, and alleviate the downward spiral for those living on the economic edge.

From September - December 2019, more than 12,000 people visited this exhibit. A few short months later, the eviction issue was further complicated by the growing COVID-19 pandemic, making the topic even more timely.

Revenues | Expenditures



ANNUAL REPORT

2019-2020 | 2020-2021

- Administration**
 Raman Bath, County Librarian
 Sally Gomez, Associate County Librarian
 Karen Coletti, Executive Secretary
 Jeannie Christiansen, Library Business Manager
- Division Managers**
 Jennifer Bethel, Community Engagement
 Terrence Eckman, Infrastructure
 Michelle Gordon, Support Services
 Lisa Lindsay, Public Services
 Susan Renfro, Marketing & Community Relations
- Board of Supervisors**
 Brian Pacheco, District 1
 Steve Brandau, District 2
 Sal Quintero, District 3
 Buddy Mendes, District 4
 Nathan Magsig, District 5
- Jean Rousseau, County Administrative Officer
 Paul Nerland, Chief Operating Officer
- fresnolibrary.org

Our Mission

We transform lives and strengthen community by providing opportunities to connect, grow and be inspired.

Our Vision

A place for anyone. Something for everyone.



A Focus on Digital

As with many businesses, nonprofits, and other government agencies, the Library has focused on increasing digital services. We moved many of our popular programs online, including Summer at Your Library, our Family Literacy Series, and our Driver's Education course. We also increased the ease of accessing digital books, music, and magazines by introducing our Instant Digital Library Card, and library card self-registration through the Library's website. We were pleased to see that our digital services were well-received and utilized extensively by our community.

	2019-2020	2020-2021
eBook checkouts	413,853	512,414
children's eBook checkouts	67,970	103,253
new instant card holders	2,716	5,759
virtual programs & outreach	41	555

Poetry Contest

Every April community members of all ages are invited to submit their original poetry for the Library's Annual Poetry Contest. It is judged by local published poets, with prizes generously funded by the Friends of the Fresno County Public Library.

For the first time in its 21-year history, the 2020 Poetry Awards Reception was broadcast online via Zoom instead of hosted in-person due to COVID-19. The Library received more than 600 submissions, not only from Fresno County, but from across the country and around the world, as a global community sheltering in place sought outlets for creativity and expression.

The success of the 2020 virtual poetry contest kicked off more than a year of experimentation and innovation as the Library looked for additional ways to reach the community in new ways. Below is the 2020 winner of the grade school category.

How I Feel About Covid-19

When you started we didn't care
 The next day we were struggling for air
 You made me turn into a rotten pear
 Many elders struggled for care

First I thought homeschooling would be easy
 Then it turned out to be really not breezy
 Life under quarantine is really uneasy
 My life became very cheesy

Water, toilet paper, Lysol, everything is gone
 All I get to do all day is mow the lawn
 If I want to go somewhere I remember its closed so I frown

The news makes me over exaggerate
 My life got a big update
 I am sad to see the number of the cases of the state
 When this is over I will celebrate

Greetings!

The Fresno County Public Library has a long history of keeping our programs and services responsive to the ever-changing needs of our community. These past two years have been no exception to that tradition.

From creating virtual programs for the first time to emergency assistance for our colleagues in other county departments, the Library's diverse services have continued to be a cornerstone in the Fresno County community.

Please continue reading as we share with you the highlights of our team's activities over the past two years.

Thank you,
Raman Bath, County Librarian

Serving the Community

Curbside Services For the first time ever, the Library launched curbside services. With branches closed due to COVID-19, we made sure the community still got the resources they needed. From entertainment and taking a break from the stress of our emergency state, to being able to print documents needed for filing for benefits, we were here to help.

Helping Throughout the County As a department of the County of Fresno, the Library is dedicated to helping wherever needed. Over the past two years, our staff members have been working alongside other county departments to ensure the community's safety.

Department of Public Health As part of Fresno County's COVID emergency response, many Library staff members worked alongside the Department of Public Health. They were trained to relay up-to-date COVID information and provide quarantine and isolation guidance.

Library staff members started by answering phone calls from the general COVID helpline. They then went on to become contact tracers, as well as members of the Medical Investigation Team, and eventually helped to staff vaccine clinics.

County Election Centers During the 2020 election, Library staff dedicated four days to ensure that voters could cast their ballots at polling stations throughout Fresno County.

Fire Response During the Creek Fire, Library staff members aided the community in disseminating emergency information and creating a Creek Fire Resources web page that featured available resources provided by local government and other agencies.

Looking Forward

All Library branches are now back to full pre-emergency hours of service. While we were never gone entirely, we know the few months we couldn't open our doors were challenging for many of our residents. And while we are excited to be back, we will also be keeping some of our new services, like virtual programs and access to digital library cards. This emergency has taught us new and more efficient ways to reach our community, and we are excited to continue them.

Our community has been through one of the most challenging times our world has ever seen. While we have experienced the pressures and strains alongside everyone, we have also seen Fresno County residents' resiliency and strength. We have never been more hopeful for the future of our libraries and hope that you will visit your local branch soon.

Friends of the Library

Founded in 1980, the Friends of the Fresno County Public Library consists of community members who serve as a link between the Library and the community. Members of the Friends of the Library support the Library generously through donations, volunteering, and advocacy. With branch chapters in 15 locations, the Friends hold book sales, support programs, and act as a strong advocate for the Library. Currently, the Friends of the Library has more than 4,000 members.