



Alpine Public Library 2021 Annual Report

The Alpine Public Library works to build community, encourage literacy, and promote lifelong learning. We endeavor to create and maintain a welcoming facility with relevant and enriching resources that connect our diverse and geographically remote area to the world.

The year 2022 marks 75 years of Alpine Public Library's service to the Big Bend region. We've come a long way in that time, from humble beginnings in the corner of a radio shop to a million dollar facility that impresses visitors from all over the world. Everything is made possible by our long list of volunteers and donors. Your generous support helps feed the minds and spirits of countless people of all ages.

APL, like most public libraries, is more than just a collection of materials, services, and programming. It is, as historian Christopher Lasch has said, a setting "in which people meet as equals". Our goal is to provide a safe, inviting place where community members from all walks of life can communicate, interact, and learn – to contribute in meaningful ways to the quality of life in our community.

A new initiative undertaken in 2021 aims to improve early childhood development and overcome setbacks resulting from the COVID pandemic. The library will enhance digital platforms and online resources and we are upgrading our digital literacy programs. Pre-COVID, our small robotics offering was becoming popular with kids, adults, and teachers. The plan includes an interactive whiteboard, two additional 3D printers, a makerspace, and robotics supplies. Many of our kids are anxious to return to the library and the hands-on experiences will enhance student learning. Whiteboard technology is interactive and immersive, which will make it possible for kids who have never attended in-person library programs to participate fully no matter where they live. Indeed, were it not for recent funding that has made internet access newly available to children living in remote and impoverished areas such as ours, these types of educational opportunities might not be possible.

APL is also participating in a STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Art, Math) education initiative created to increase and enhance STEAM learning opportunities for library patrons throughout the nation, including geographic areas and populations currently underrepresented in STEAM education. APL was one of 60 libraries nationwide selected to participate in NASA@ My Library. We are collaborating with Sul Ross State University, Alpine Independent School District, and the McDonald Observatory to implement this program. Our first

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program was in November and at least two more programs will be offered during 2022.

APL also had the opportunity in 2021 to provide a forum for area residents to discuss their experiences with health care resources in our area. Health care professionals recognize the challenges that they face in providing appropriate care; others in the community recognize the challenges that they face in accessing care. Both groups see the challenges from their own limited perspective. The conversation allowed individuals to see the issues from multiple viewpoints. Our goal was to arrive at an understanding of the issues faced by disparate individuals and share this understanding with state, county, and city government. The outcome of our conversation was identification of the need for a database of available health care resources in our area. Alpine Public Library will be working with the Big Bend Regional Hospital District and area health care providers to create that database.

Don Wetterauer
Executive Director

