

## A Conversation with **Judy Russell**

Library Director of Converse  
Free Library in Lyme

### ***How did Converse Free Library stay connected to the local community during the state's pandemic lockdown?***

My staff and I remained connected with our patrons through all the usual channels, like Listserv, social media, and newsletters, but we stepped up our output and inserted check-in phone calls with patrons to our routines. That addition was definitely a positive outcome of the quarantine. We had some lovely conversations about everything. That is the beauty of libraries: no subject is irrelevant!

### ***What types of things were residents sourcing from your library while they were under quarantine?***

Books, books, and more books! We provided curbside service at the beginning of quarantine, but it quickly became apparent this was not a sustainable practice, in spite of our earnest attempts to be contact-free and disinfected. With the financial help of our Friends group, we were able to increase our spending on virtual materials: eBooks, downloadable audio, and streaming video.

### ***Tell us about a few of the library's special services and programs.***

Every Tuesday afternoon, I am available to help patrons with getting the most out of their tech devices, especially pertaining to access to our virtual library services. I make no promises that I can solve every problem, but we usually make out well, and a week never goes by where I do not learn something useful from the interactions. The library works collaboratively with almost every organization in town, providing programs and sharing resources. Lyme excels at collaboration, I believe, along with volunteerism. Additionally, we are an after-school hub.



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### ***How have libraries changed with the times that might surprise those who haven't visited lately?***

Librarians are at the leading edge of every major societal change. We prove again and again that, whether it be transforming ourselves and our patrons through community engagement, providing access to the latest technology with hands-on activities, or setting standards for safety and communication through reliable sources of information during the pandemic, we are ready to learn, change, and grow for the communities we serve.

### ***When you can get away from work, what activities do you enjoy in the Upper Valley?***

Thirty-two years ago, my husband and I met and were subsequently married at the Post Mills Airport, where he keeps and flies his old, single-engine tail-dragger and is Chief Tow Pilot for the Post Mills Soaring Club. Our family and our social life as a couple evolved from that place, so it is sacred ground for us. **H**