

ANNUAL REPORT 2024

Bellingham Public Library

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"Perhaps no place in any community is so totally democratic as the town library. The only entrance requirement is interest."

— Lady Bird Johnson

Library Staff

Bernadette Rivard
Director

Cecily Christensen
Reference Librarian

Melissa Denham
Youth Services
Librarian

Amanda Maclure
Public Services &
Teen Librarian

Pauline Krajcik
Anne Kuncewicz
Barbara Pacak
Library Technicians

Carol Bonnell
Library & Accounts
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Diane Nelson
Library & Children's
Assistant

Catherine Perreault
Mary Rivet
Ashalena Rua
Jane Vichi
Library Assistants

Amanda Campano
Custodian

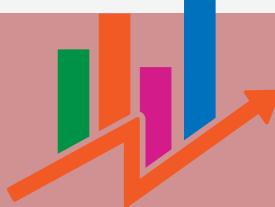


Bellingham Public Library

THE LIBRARY CONTINUES TO REBOUND!

Honorable Members of the Select Board and the Bellingham Community: We are thrilled that use of the vast majority of library services are continuing to increase following the impact of the pandemic earlier in the decade. We are confident that our usage statistics will continue to climb in 2025 and will hopefully soon rebound to pre-pandemic levels in all categories!

Service	2024	2023	2022	2021	2020	2019
Days & Hours Open	280 2,565	294 2,626	283 2,320	241 1,793	146 975	274 2,487
Physical Items Checked Out	79,705	77,044	74,145	63,406	45,776	81,758
Ebook Checkouts	17,778	16,331	13,289	12,524	10,993	10,453
Library Visitors	71,618	66,039	50,843	29,744	20,646	70,854
Museum Pass Use	317	296	218	171	108	613
Meeting Room Use	1,349	1,455	862	439	413	1,632
Internet Use	10,371	8,049	6,085	3,133	2,183	14,424
Adult Programs & Attendance	164 2,022	150 1,479	73 537	51 448	43 453	98 799
Children's Programs & Attendance	332 7,255	487 11,923	705 14,635	484 10,229	298 7,514	877 24,957
Teen Programs & Attendance	161 3,381	149 3,023	156 1,990	78 937	50 844	102 1,893



STRATEGIC PLANS



We are wrapping up the final 6 months of our FY2021–2025 Strategic Plan. Many of the strategic objectives in the plan were impacted by the pandemic. Below is a list of the objectives and their status as of the end of 2024.

Completed Facility Projects

- Paint/Side Building Exterior – Completed September 2022
- HVAC System – Replaced chiller in Spring of 2021. Boilers replaced in 2024.
- Upgraded all 2x2 lighting fixtures to LED – Completed in 2024

Pending Facility Projects

- Paint lofted interior spaces – Will be scheduled in 2025.
- Vending Machine – Delayed due to covid, no new date anticipated.
- Upgrade lighting – Additional fixtures still need replacing, funding options being explored.
- Increase storage space – Install shed in area outside Teen Room, anticipated in spring 2025.
- Outdoor space for children's programming – Funds were approved in November of 2020, project scheduled for spring of 2025.
- Bathroom remodeling – Delayed to FY26 at the earliest.

Projects with no formal plan for implementation

- Generator to insure power during outages
- Connect to Town Sewer – 30+ year old septic system is working properly
- Doors for entrance to Children's Room

Programs & Services Plans

- School Outreach – In 2023 we greatly expanded our partnership with Bellingham Schools. Since then we have held a Teacher Orientation Day in August and have been working with teachers and school administration to get library cards for Bellingham Public School students. We have also been working with administration on assessing and providing advice for the school libraries.
- Community Outreach – In FY23 we hosted the Mass. Memories Road Show, a project to digitize local history photos for the UMass archive. In FY23 we were also awarded an LSTA Open for Business Grant that enabled us to start a new program, a Community Business Expo, which is now an annual event. We have also started two additional annual community events, an Art & Photography Show and a Local Author Expo.
- After School Programming – Each day after school from 60 to 80 4th to 12th graders come to the library after school for our After School Kids (Grades 4–6) and Teen Room Activities (Grades 7–12) programs.
- Our preschool programs continue to be one of our most popular offerings, with dozens of families coming to the library for each of these programs.

Technology

- Computer Hardware & Software – We are purchasing new equipment each year to meet technology needs, including staff computers, and public computers and Chromebooks for the After School Program. The wi-fi network was upgraded and additional access points were added in the building. We also upgraded our event calendar and room booking software. Also upgraded was our museum pass and library of things reservation software.
- Publicity, Social Media & Website – In 2024 we overhauled our website to a new Civics Plus platform, installed an electronic sign board to promote library events and continued to grow our social media presence.



In the spring of 2024, we began work on our new plan for FY2026–2030. The plan was the result of two community surveys, focus group meetings with library staff, and a diverse group of library stakeholders. At the conclusion of the planning process the following goals were identified:

Develop Multilingual and Inclusive Programming

Create inclusive programs that serve all age groups and abilities, ensuring the library is a welcoming space for everyone.

- Expand multicultural resources and bilingual books, especially for children.
- Host language classes and conversation circles that meet the needs of both immigrants and residents in learning new languages.
- Create inclusive programs that serve all groups and abilities, including enhanced programs for individuals with disabilities insuring the library is a welcoming space for everyone.
- Expand collections (books and other formats) that are multilingual and also written in native languages to be more reflective of the needs of Bellingham.

Enhance Digital Literacy and Accessibility

As technology continues to play a crucial role in everyday life, the library will prioritize expanding offerings related to digital literacy.

- Increase availability of technology help sessions, expand access to computers and high-speed internet, and provide workshops on using resources and digital tools effectively.
- Address the digital divide by expanding the availability of hotspots and Library of Things to include more devices and educational tools that patrons can check out and use at home.

Build Strong Community Partnerships and Expand Physical Spaces

Strengthen the relationship with local schools, businesses and cultural organizations to offer joint programs.

Expand the physical space to accommodate more community oriented features.

- Enrich the library's offerings to increase community engagement.
- Expand library space to offer more leisure programs.
- Work with Bellingham Public Schools to ensure that teachers, parents and administrators are well informed about the resources available at the library.

Increase Community Support Services

Develop programs and services that offer community support.

- Expand support services by focusing on mental health needs, parenting, job skills and development, and new resident orientations.
- To foster a more engaged citizenry, develop programs that encourage civic engagement and awareness, such as hosting local government candidate forums, town service introductions, and local issue workshops.

Facility

Maintain a modern library facility that provides a welcoming, functional space to the community.

- Maintain and remodel interior and exterior spaces in the building to best meet the needs of the community.
- Explore options that are environmentally friendly and energy saving.



LIBRARY PROGRAMS

We offered 657 library programs during the 2024 calendar year that were attended by 12,658 people!

Adult Programs

2,022 adults attended 164 programs including: Yoga, Music Concerts, and Craft & Art Programs. We also hosted the town's Annual Veterans' Day Program.

In 2024 we hosted our Annual Art & Photography Show and our first Local Author Expo, which will become an annual event!

Special Programs included our second annual Bellingham Business Expo. We hosted a Community Solar Eclipse Watch Party on the Blackstone Street Fields in April. We handed out 500 pairs of solar eclipse glasses to members of the community at this event.

We also started a new monthly adult craft program called Chat & Craft!



Art & Photography Show Winners



Library Staff at the Eclipse



Pumpkin Painting at Chat & Craft

Teen Programs

3,381 teens attended 161 programs at the library in 2024. These teens participated in our after-school program. From 2 to 4:45 pm each school day, dozens of 7th to 12th graders find their place in the library Teen Room to do homework, play videogames, make crafts, and hang out with their friends.



LIBRARY PROGRAMS

Children's Programs

7,255 children and caregivers attended 332 programs for preschool children and school kids in kindergarten through 6th grade.

Our regular weekly programs included: ASK (After School Kids), Alphabits, Baby Time, Film Fridays, Read to Freedom the Reading Dog, Ring a Ding, and Sensory Story Time.





SERVICES

Partners

The library partners with a number of organizations in Massachusetts to provide expanded library services to our residents. These include:



The **MBLC** is the state agency that certifies libraries and ensures that state standards for library services are being met. Public libraries are required to meet certain budget and service levels each year in order to maintain certification and receive State Aid. By maintaining certification last year, the library will receive **over \$40,000** in State Aid in FY2025, the highest State Aid ever awarded to the library. For the third consecutive year our library has met all state requirements.



CWMARS is our library network. Our annual dues to the network funds the shared library patron and item database, a staff and public computer network, our Wi-Fi network, and access to numerous electronic resources, including eBooks.



Massachusetts Library System (MLS) – The library is a member of MLS, which provides delivery of items between Massachusetts libraries, as well as access to online resources. They also provide continuing education for library staff.

In 2024, over 11,000 items (books, DVDs, audiobooks, and more) were borrowed from our partner libraries through MLS delivery. In addition, we sent out over 9,000 items to our partner libraries.



The **Friends of the Bellingham Library** provide financial support for library programs and services that are outside of the municipal budget, including: Museum and Attraction Passes, Summer Reading Performers, funding for supplies for crafts for patrons of all ages, and so much more. Their annual fundraising provides between \$10,000 and \$15,000 in services to library patrons.



SERVICES

Electronic Resources

The library continues to expand resources that people can access online.

In 2024 we offered access to the following resources, by category.

The numbers reported are the number of patrons using each resource.

Resource Category & Details	2024	2023	2022
eAudiobooks from Hoopla & Libby	9,362	6,915	5,310
eBooks from Hoopla & Libby	8,596	8,074	7,274
Genealogy Resources from Ancestry.com and more!	734	400	4,712
Job & Career Resources from Learning Express	197	285	669
Journal and Magazine Articles from Gale Databases	357	280	170
Magazines from Flipster, Hoopla & Libby	1,863	1,642	697
Movies & TV from Hoopla, IndieFlix, Kanopy and Qello	836	1,394	903

Access all of these resources at our website:
<https://www.bellinghamma.org/298/Resources>





SERVICES

Electronic Resources – continued from the previous page

Resource Category & Details	2024	2023	2022
Music from Freegal, Hoopla, and Qello downloads and streaming	3,795	6,464	4,536
Newspaper Articles from the Boston Globe & New York Times	357	252	171
Tutoring Services from Brainfuse's Help Now!	353	381	124
Online Courses & Tutorials from Craftsy, Great Courses, Niche Academy and Universal Class	149	1,642	697
Language Learning Resources from Mango Languages, Lingo Lite, and Transparent Language	1,542	2,300	1,672
Lesson Plans for Kids from Teachables & Educate Station	453	235	new in 2023
Online Author Talks from Library Speakers Consortium, Events & Attendance	37 172 live 753 watched recording	new in 2024	

COMING IN 2025!

Conversation Circles – English Conversation Group – Starting in January!

Participants can practice speaking English with other adult English language learners in a relaxed, comfortable place, and meet new friends as we learn by talking together. Conversations will be facilitated by a library staff member or volunteer. It is designed for people who can speak English but want to improve their English conversation skills. It is not an English class, but a place to practice speaking to become more fluent in the English language.

Genealogy Club – Starting in February!

Catherine Perreault, Library Assistant and genealogy researcher, will host a monthly meeting of a Genealogy Club in the evening on the fourth Monday of each month.

Multicultural Festival

The library is planning a multicultural festival in mid to late June. This will be an opportunity for the community to learn about the music, food and culture of the diverse Bellingham community.

MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR

It is my great pleasure to serve Bellingham as your Library Director. I look forward to continuing to expand our library services for the community. We are excited to introduce new goals and programs, developed with input from our stakeholders, to benefit the Bellingham community.

Cordially,



Bernadette D. Rivard

Bernadette D. Rivard
Library Director