Library Buildings Project PASSED!
2,716 YES Votes

Many thanks to the Bloomfield community for supporting the library buildings project!

Bloomfield Public Library
Annual Report 2021-2022
State of the Library

Bloomfield Public Library had a year for the history books. We kicked off a new strategic plan, passed a referendum for an exciting two-library buildings project, and stood up for your right to read through a forward thinking Intellectual Freedom and Censorship Policy.

The Library Board of Trustees continue to be laser focused on library services that improve the quality of life for all of our residents. BPL staff continue to identify where we could do better and then push to make those improvements happen. This year we were on double duty. We continued to provide excellent customer service while improving the current library experience across our library system, while also creating the library spaces of the future. In partnership with the Library Building Committee, we look forward to breaking ground sometime in the near future.

From laminating COVID-19 vaccine cards to lending out laptops, we are intentional with meeting our public where they need us to be. Our social justice programming continues to bring important topics to library programs and kitchen tables around Bloomfield, and our library newsletter informs more than 6,000 patrons weekly about the myriad of offerings available to them from their library for free with a library card.

Keep borrowing, attending programs and keep giving us feedback. Tell us what you want from your library. Museum passes, books, audiobooks, program ideas, access to digital offerings... the future is bright. We hope that our public takes the time to come and see for themselves all the things we have to offer. We’re here for you!

Elizabeth Lane, Library Director
Ava Biffer, Chair, Library Board of Trustees
Bloomfield Public Library aims to provide all members of our diverse community with access to comprehensive services, expansive print and electronic resources, technology, and expert assistance from a caring and responsive staff.

By breaking down barriers to access and opening doors to opportunity, building community, and encouraging lifelong learning, BPL works to improve the quality of life for all of our residents and strives to be the heart of our town.
Our Vision

1. One Library Card, Endless Possibilities
   Library cards are free! Bloomfield residents of all ages from birth are eligible for a library card, yet only 33% of Bloomfield residents have one.

2. A Library for Everyone
   Focus on excellence across the three locations serving all ages

3. We’re Here for You!
   Ensure positive patron experience through a responsive service model and empathetic staff, with access to collections, technology, and equipment.

4. Community + Library = A Better Bloomfield
   Be the place, virtually and in-person, for people to meet, learn, and connect.
The Board of Trustees of the Bloomfield Public Library governs the library by overseeing and recommending financial, administrative, and service objectives, and by strengthening, through advocacy, the library’s standing within the Town of Bloomfield. The board works closely with the Library Director in helping the library adhere to the values in its mission statement and achieve the goals outlined in its strategic plan.

Ava Biffer  
Chairperson

Leah Farrell  
Vice-Chairperson

Todd Cooper  
Board Member

Patrick DeLorenzo  
Board Member

Beverlee Merritt  
Board Member

Maxine Ursery  
Board Member

Board of Trustees

Highlights

- Adopted BPL strategic plan and social justice mission statement
- Approved collection development policy and intellectual freedom and censorship policy
- Authorized submission of $1 Million construction grant through state library
- Three trustees served as ad-hoc members of the Library Building Committee
The Friends generously supported us with our funding requests, including our yearly summer reading and winter reading programs, our annual Big Read program series, and our participation in the town-wide Juneteenth celebration. Their signature fundraiser is an annual book sale, and after the Community Room at Prosser closed down after yet another flood in Fall 2021, the Friends held their last book sale before the construction project begins in the Adult Reading Room of Prosser.

There are many assets that help a library to flourish: a friendly and knowledgeable staff, an expansive collection of materials, entertaining and educational programs, and a building that is comfortable and welcoming. There is another key feature that makes a library great: the Friends of the Library!

The Friends are a nonprofit volunteer organization dedicated to the support of the libraries through fundraising and advocacy. They are active users of the libraries and help raise community awareness and appreciation of their services and resources. "We believe that excellent libraries are essential to our community."

"It's a pleasure to report to you that we had a hugely successful sale...patrons remarked to us once again how much they value the Bloomfield Libraries and the welcoming and capable staff, whether coming from Bloomfield or surrounding towns. We always have the pleasure of saying 'thank you' with a big smile on your behalf!" Penny, Chair of the Friends
Summer Reading 2021
Bloomfield Public Library

We registered:
426 people

We ran summer programs for:
Children, Teen & Adults

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th># OF PROGRAMS AND ACTIVITIES</th>
<th># OF BOOKS READ OVER THE SUMMER</th>
<th># OF PROGRAM ACTIVITY ATTENDEES</th>
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<td>88</td>
<td>2300</td>
<td>1600</td>
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What did our children, teen, and adult participants have to say?

89.2% of participants strongly agree they felt welcome at the library this summer.

58.5% of participants strongly agree that they learned something because of library activities this summer.

60% of participants strongly agree that they got help from the library this summer.

"LOVE THE PERSONAL APPROACH WITH THE LIBRARIANS DURING PROGRAMS. THE PROGRAMS FEEL COMFORTABLE AND WELCOMING".

"THE LIBRARIANS ARE VERY APPROACHABLE, ACCOMMODATING AND HELPFUL"
Technology Services

In today’s world, digital literacy is as important as print literacy. Just as print literacy begins with access to books, digital literacy begins with access to technology. BPL provides computers, internet service inside/outside our buildings and at home through laptops and hotspots, an online digital library, and print/copy/scan/fax services. Access to hardware and the internet tells only part of the story of how BPL combats the digital divide. Our patient and talented library staff act as colleagues to our patrons, assisting them with whatever tasks and projects they are working on. Additionally, BPL provides the space necessary for focused work.

Our library is an office for everyone!
Highlights: Adult Services

Juneteenth, June 17-19, 2022

BPL partnered with the Towns of Bloomfield and Windsor and Blue Hills Fire House for a Juneteenth Celebration Weekend. We placed 3rd in Black History Trivia Night, marched in the Juneteenth parade, promoted our summer reading program at the Juneteenth Cookout at the Firehouse, and hosted a live concert on the McMahon Wintonbury Library lawn featuring Alika Hope and the Ray of Hope Project, who performed songs celebrating Juneteenth and Black History. The Friends of BPL funded an ice cream truck with cold treats of your choice for everyone in attendance.

Big Read: The Best We Could Do by Thi Bui

With funding from the National Endowment for the Arts, BPL partnered with Eastern CT State University to both celebrate the Asian community and "broaden our understanding of our world, our neighbors, and ourselves through the power of a shared reading experience" and public programming. Free copies of the book were generously provided by the Friends of the Library.

The BIG READ programming included the following virtual programs:

Half a Century and Half a World Away: Southeast Asian Immigration to the United States Since 1960

Refugees, Asylum Seekers, Undocumented Immigrants: What Is The Real Difference?

When the Past Becomes the Future: Teaching the History of Asian America

Social Justice Book Club: The Best We Could Do by Thi Bui facilitated by Librarian Rachel Tonucci
Highlights: Adult Services

Library patrons enjoyed ongoing programing through the library's virtual platforms:

- Local Author Panels
- Gentle Yoga / Chair Pilates & Toning
- Meditation
- Social Justice Book Club
- Opera Talks
- "Appy" Hour: Exploring BPL Online
- Lotus Lantern Craft Workshop
- Millennials Paint Night
- Line Dancing with Heidi
- Podcast and Movie Chats
- Entrepreneurship Series with Patrina Dixon
- Graphic Memoir Workshop
- Tech Time with Marc Edrich

Missed a virtual program?
Many of our virtual adult programs are recorded and available on our YouTube Channel:

- Understanding Autism Spectrum Disorder
- The Queens of Beer / Around the World in 80 Beers
- Real Talk About Fatherhood and Men's Health
- Making the Most of Your Healthcare Visit
- Cat Behavior 101
- Improve Your Balance
- Dr. King's Summers in CT Tobacco
- Cookbook Club at local eateries
- The Evolution of Hip Hop: Music, Technology, and Culture
Highlights: Youth Services

Storytimes
After providing storytimes via Facebook Live and YouTube for two years during the pandemic, in-person storytimes resumed in March of 2022 in the children’s department at both locations. At McMahon Wintonbury, we had *Welcoming Wednesdays* with Miss Mara and Miss Sheila. *Fun Fridays* with Miss Heidi and Miss Nicole happened at Prosser. Miss Sheila and Miss Mara were asked to read stories at the Auerfarm Scenic Reserve in a picturesque apple orchard at the top of a hill. They were joined by staff from the DEEP who were promoting their program *No Child Left Inside.*

Programs
Youth Librarians had a busy year, both virtually and in-person, delivering programs to 7,281 program attendees. Reaching babies through age 18, some of the virtual programs included:

- Tanglewood Marionettes
- Horizon Wings
- Author Talks
- Harris in Wonderland
- Mystic Aquarium
- Two Right Feet
- Jukebox Bingo
- Tween Book Club
- Pokémon Club
- Science Bytes
- Food Explorers
- Teen Anime
- CT Dept. of Energy and Environmental Protection

In-person programs included Take & Make Craft Bags, Pokémon Trading Zone and a special in-person “Meet a Park Ranger” program to kick off Summer Reading with real Park Rangers. We also had the joy of visiting Bloomfield's littlest ones on monthly visits to BELC, Creative Hearts, New Creations, CREC Head Start, First Academy at First Cathedral and First Congregational on a monthly basis.

Community
Youth Services staff were out and about in the community by participating in events such as Trunk or Treat, the bench memorial dedication, the little free library ribbon cutting ceremony, the cultural arts fair at BHS, and Read Across America.
More than just books!

BPL is proud of the variety of services and collections we offer our visitors!

- Our audio-enabled VOX books are more than just fun - they are an excellent resource for residents learning English and are offered in a variety of languages!

- BPL added two The Conscious Child: Family Book Discussion Kits (Immigration and Refugees) to encourage families to celebrate diverse voices and to facilitate family discussions about racial equity, identity, and justice.

- ComicsPlus is our favorite new database, bringing graphics and manga on-demand to users of all ages.

- Our newest Findaway product, the Playaway Launchpad tablet, comes loaded with a variety of learning games and is incredibly popular with youth of all ages, from preschool to teen.

- The Sprout Early Learning Backpacks are the perfect early literacy toolkit for families with a variety of stories and games/toys contained in one convenient backpack!

- BPL continues to add to our “Library of Things,” most notably with our growing collection of jigsaw puzzles to support this popular all-ages pastime.
Sharing is Caring

BPL staff are always looking to improve, collaborate and share library resources far and wide. We were honored to share some of our best practices and resources at the CT Library Association Conference, CEN Conference, University of Hartford, and the Alliance for Bloomfield's Children special parent meeting.

CEN Conference:
BPL Assistant Director Chris Siloac and BPL Director Elizabeth Lane presented about BPL's very popular Chrome Kit and Hotspot lending service, along with Ferguson Library's Maisam Nouh and Bridgeport Library's Elaine Braithwaite.

CT Library Association Conference:
BPL staffers Allison Wilkos and Elizabeth Lane presented in a session titled "Library Marketing: A Fresh Perspective", where they discussed BPL’s fun logo and team driven approach to sharing everything BPL has to offer using collaborative design, open communication, and clear strategic goals. BPL Board Member Maxine Ursery and Elizabeth Lane were on a panel of library directors and board members from Bloomfield, Southington and Coventry titled "How We Did It: Three Recent Successful Building Referenda Campaigns". They outlined Bloomfield’s thoughtful and concerted effort to include as many Bloomfield residents as possible in the planning of the library projects, including sending a library survey to every residence in the town through the mail.

University of Hartford & the Alliance for Bloomfield's (ABC) Children
BPL Youth Librarian Heidi Moon delivered "What Your Public Library Can Do For You" presentations that highlighted how public libraries play an integral role in the community and how public librarians can serve parents, students, teachers, school librarians and the general public, both to University of Hartford education majors and to attendees of the ABC's special parent meeting.
Community Partners Highlights

Community Partners in Action (CPA): Prison Arts
As part of our Big Read programming, we collaborated with Prison Arts and hosted an exhibition of artworks created both inside Connecticut prisons and on the outside, as individuals returned to the community. Important art and artists can come from anywhere, and the BPL Prison Arts exhibition was proof of that.

Dignity Grows
Dignity Grows is a non-profit whose mission is to provide individuals in need with essential personal hygiene products so they can attend school and work and participate in community life without interruption. Having basic hygiene necessities is life-changing, increasing one's sense of self-esteem and self-worth. BPL distributed 120 totes to men and women this year. Each Dignity Grows tote contains six hygiene products packed in a discreet, reusable shoulder bag, such as sanitary pads, deodorant, and hand wipes. We're here for you!

West Hartford-Bloomfield Health District (WHBHD)
During the summer of 2021, BPL hosted several vaccine clinics provided by the WHBHD. In addition to this offering for the public, BPL appreciated being updated on current public health guidelines to keep our staff and patrons safe and well. With this education and guidance, we never had to cease service to our community, making BPL one of the only CT libraries that never closed.
# Community Partners: We Thank You

- AARP Connecticut
- Access Health CT
- Adath Israel, Voices of Hope
- Alliance for Bloomfield’s Children
- Arts for Learning
- Avon Free Public Library
- Avon Senior Center
- Auerfarm
- Bloomfield Access Television (BATV)
- Bloomfield Adult & Continuing Education
- Bloomfield Beautification Committee (BBC)
- Bloomfield Center for Nursing and Rehabilitation
- Bloomfield Chamber of Commerce
- Bloomfield Conservation, Energy, and Environment Committee (CEEC)
- Bloomfield Early Learning Center
- Bloomfield Fire Department
- Bloomfield Lions Club
- Bloomfield Messenger
- Bloomfield Parks, Recreation, & Leisure Services
- Bloomfield Public Schools
- Bloomfield Rotary Club
- Bloomfield Senior Services
- Bloomfield Social & Youth Services
- Blue Hills Fire Department
- Bristol Health
- Canton Public Library
- Capitol Region Education Council (CREC)
- Capital Workforce Partners
- Carbone’s Kitchen
- Center for Medicare Advocacy
- Community Partners in Action
- Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP)
- Connecticut Forest & Park Association
- Connecticut Humanities Council
- Connecticut Library Consortium (CLC)
- Connecticut State Library
- Cora J. Belden Library, Rocky Hill
- Creative Hearts
- Dignity Grows Hartford
- Doll’s House Foundation
- Dun-Land-Woods Garden Club
- Eastern CT State University (ECSU)
- First Academy
- First Congregational
- Fox Rehabilitation
- Family Resource Center (FRC)
- Friends of Auerfarm Scenic Reserve
- Friends of Filley Park
- Friends of the Bloomfield Public Library
- Greater Hartford Transit District
- Hartford Foundation for Public Giving
- Hill-Stead Museum
- Meriden Public Library
- Headstart
- National Conference for Community and Justice (NCCJ)
- New Creations
- Quality Physical Therapy, Farmington
- School Readiness Council
- Seabury
- Simsbury Public Library
- Soroptimist International
- Southern CT State University (SCSU)
- Town of Bloomfield
- University of Hartford
- West Hartford-Bloomfield Health District
- West Hartford Public Library
- Wilson Branch Library, Windsor
- Wintonbury Historical Society
- Wintonbury Land Trust
**We are always learning!**

BPL staff had their first *staff away day* in September 2021 at the Hill-Stead Museum. As their mission statement reads: "Hill-Stead Museum, a National Historic Landmark, serves diverse audiences in Connecticut and beyond as a welcoming place for learning, reflection and enjoyment." And learn, reflect, and enjoy we did. One of the highlights of that day was the collaborative poem we created, "Let Us Go Then, You and I". Each staffer contributed one line, only knowing the one line before theirs. We were all so pleased with the result and we hope you enjoy it, too. Bloomfield loves poetry!

"Let Us Go Then, You and I"
A Poem by BPL Staff

Let us go then, you and I.
Walk in the rain and let the tears fall.
Rejoice in the knowledge that you are you
and every one of us contributes to the whole.
Each contribution brings something unique
and interesting, inspiring to us all.
At the same time we need some new walls.
But at the end, all is fair and not for the faint.
The faint and the fair is the start, not the end.
But the state of the heart determines the start.
Beginnings are hard. Start at the end.
Maybe you will find yourself
a new dog to walk.
Be careful, righty tighty,
Lefty loosey, not so easy to be free.
I left my cage and now exist in the real world.
More like the real word, a syllable away.

BPL was in attendance at the American Library Association Conference in Washington, D.C., the largest and most impactful conference for library professionals. Heidi Moon and Nicole Dolat brought back inspiring ideas and product information to the staff for the upcoming library building projects.
Our Team
The Staff of Bloomfield Public Library

1. Allison Wilkos
2. Michael Tobias
3. Sara Ray
4. Tom Nicotera
5. Dejah Murray
6. Elizabeth Johnson
7. Brooke Lyman
8. Lorri Huddy
9. Nicole Dolat
10. Sharon Emborsky
11. Shantel Isaacs
12. Sheila McCallum
13. Victor Giner
14. Rachel Tonucci
15. Joni Celmer
16. Carol Walters
17. Diahl Seccareccia
18. Jean-Michel Sibille
19. Quincey Gill
20. Chris Siloac
21. Melanie Bazer
22. Ricardo Hailey-Harper
23. Katherine Battle
24. Mara Whitman
25. Heidi Moon
26. Elizabeth Lane
27. Demoi Wright
28. Patricia McGuire
29. Zuzana Meistrick
30. Jean Rawlings
#ilovemylibrary

“A patron has been struggling with Zoom on her phone and her friend said 'ask BPL, they'll help you.' We do that!”

#technologyliteracy

“I recently attended a rather amazing library program entitled Stop the Leak. The program was well organized, the presenter was informative, concise, and articulate. I learned a lot. What I found most amazing is that this very important highly sensitive program... was offered by a library, your library. I hope you realize that the program helped people, some who perhaps never discussed the issue with anyone... Kudos.”

#healthliteracy

“"I love that yoga class and the wonderful teacher! I hope it goes on FOREVER! Bloomfield Library is doing us a great service by presenting it.”

“I continue to be very appreciative of the efforts you exert in maintaining a stimulating intellectual community in Bloomfield, through the broad reach of the Bloomfield Library.”

“"I helped a patron scan a photo from a Bloomfield High School yearbook in our History Collection. The photo was of a family member who died at a young age, and they don’t have any other photos of him. We scanned the image a few different ways and did a print test to make sure she had the best quality photo. She was so happy to have this special photo and thrilled with the assistance she received.”

#earlyliteracy

“The children love to see you and we love to see you even more. Thank you for reading to our children, creating wonderful projects with them, and always being so kind. We appreciate you so much!”

“You not only have all the up to date and diverse essentials, but the best staff. They are the soul of the library; they are so knowledgeable (almost like the walking encyclopedia), most helpful, patient, kind and cheerful. I appreciate them especially in this difficult and trying pandemic era. They not only help enrich my intellect but soothe my daily life.”

“I helped a patron scan a photo from a Bloomfield High School yearbook in our History Collection. The photo was of a family member who died at a young age, and they don’t have any other photos of him. We scanned the image a few different ways and did a print test to make sure she had the best quality photo. She was so happy to have this special photo and thrilled with the assistance she received.”
The Future is Bright!

The future is now at Bloomfield Public Library, and we are very excited for what the next few years promise for us. We believe we can create one of the best library systems in the state, a magnet for those looking at Bloomfield as a community to live in and a place for all current residents to grow in and enjoy. Our ambitious two-library building project will finally deliver the facilities that this dedicated and diverse community deserves.

As we design these buildings and plan future services, we start with one organizing principle – giving power to the people:

The Power...

to educate themselves
to connect with each other
to fully engage with the world
to achieve their aspirations
to solve problems
to find a quiet place of their own
to escape into a good book
to be part of something bigger