



TO: Library Board of Directors

DATE: December 13, 2024

RE: **LIBRARY BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING**

LIBRARY BOARD OF DIRECTORS:

Wednesday, December 18, 2024
5:00pm – Green Room
Worcester Public Library
3 Salem Square
Worcester, MA 01608

cc: City Clerk's Office

AGENDA
WORCESTER PUBLIC LIBRARY

Library Board of Directors
Wednesday, December 18, 2024
5:00pm – Green Room
Worcester Public Library
3 Salem Square
Worcester, MA 01608

Mission Statement:

The Worcester Public Library serves as a gathering place that actively promotes the free exchange of ideas in our democratic society. The Library makes information and services available to all people while fostering intellectual freedom, protecting privacy, encouraging personal growth and enrichment, and celebrating our diverse community heritage.

1. Call to Order
2. Approval of November 26 meeting minutes
3. President's Report
 - Nominations for Board officer roles
4. Executive Director's report
 - Q&A
5. Administration Committee report
 - Executive Directors review
6. Legislative Affairs Committee report
7. Friends report
8. Foundation report
9. New business
10. Adjournment

Call in # 1-646-558-8656
Meeting ID: 889 1886 7431
Passcode: 688912

WPL ED review

Prepared by the Administration Committee for the Board 2024

Overall, the Board is pleased with Jason's performance, rating him between average and exceptional on many dimensions of his review. From the Board's perspective, Jason has been a leader for the Library in what has been a trying year, with intensified community issues related to patron behavior, mental health, and violence. He has kept the Board up to date on all struggles and his plans to support the library and his staff as they address the same. Additionally, he has taken the comments and suggestions from his review last year to heart and implemented them with much success, which is apparent in our discussions with the staff in preparation for this year's review.

As Jason and the staff continue to address issues and the overall operations of the Library, it is apparent that Jason would benefit from delegating to his leadership team. It will allow Jason more time to focus on expanding the Library's reach in the greater community and to continue his work toward increasing the respect and support for the Library.

Jason had identified significant goals for the coming year, which include improving relations within the City Administration while continuing to fight for equity within the City compensation structure to ensure that the Library is able to retrain and attract the best candidates to assist in carrying out our Mission. Jason will also focus on identifying a clearer vision for the One City/One Library Branches and how to best serve those patrons while not depleting our resources. The Board will continue to support Jason in these efforts in the upcoming year.

**Worcester Public Library
Library Board of Directors
Tuesday, November 26, 2024
5:00 PM**

**Worcester Public Library
3 Salem Square
Worcester, MA 01608**

In Person: Stephanie Pasha, Christina Andrianopoulos, Katie Bagdis, Sen. Harriet Chandler, David Dominguez, Roseann Fitzgerald, Laura Nicole Miller, Matthew Noe, Sheila Trapasso

Library Staff: Jason Homer (Executive Director), Doug Lord (Director for Library Services), Jennifer Marien (Deputy Director for Adult Services), Angela Bennett (Deputy Director for Youth Services), Cara Stone (Executive Assistant to the Executive Director)

Others: Dory Rourke (Worcester Public Library Foundation)

Virtual: Jessica Walsh

Not in Attendance: Moses Laguerre, Gail Schuyler

1. Call to order at 5:04 PM
2. Approval of October 23 Minutes

President asked if there was any discussion of the minutes. Since there was none, she asked the board in person and on zoom to approve the minutes. MOTION TO APPROVE by Sen. Harriett Chandler which was SECONDED by Sheila Trapasso. The Minutes were unanimously approved

3. President's Report (Pasha)

Stephanie Pasha opened her report notifying the Worcester Public Library that Moses LeGuerre's father recently died. She asked the WPL board for a moment of silence in honor of Moses' late father.

Next was an icebreaker where the WPL board members shared their favorite Thanksgiving side dishes.

Stephanie thanked Cara Stone for her great work on the November 2025 Celebrate Our Library event and for her role in supporting Julius who told his story at the beginning of the Celebrate Our Library event

Pasha reminded the WPL board that there are two vacancies on the WPL board in January 2025 and applications are due by 12 Noon on 12/6/2024. Matthew Noe noted that it would be good to have candidates from districts not currently represented on the WPL Board (Districts 3 and 4).

She also noted that she is seeking nominations for Officer roles and if you are currently serving as an officer, let her know if you would like to continue your service or to contact her if you have questions about those roles. The election takes place in January 2025.

Save the Date for the WPL Holiday Luncheon on 12/19 from 12-2 PM. There is new merchandise available for sale in the Friends Bookstore available for your holiday shopping.

Pasha asked if there were questions about her report. Since there were none, she yielded the floor to Jason Homer for his report.

4. Executive Director's Report (Homer)

Highlights from the Report:

ED Jason Homer noted that October 2024 was a very busy month for the WPL Library. It includes a report on the "You Belong Here" event which was co-sponsored with the Downtown Worcester Business Improvement District and was a successful community event that began as an art project.

Study Pods: The new Study Pods are now available and in use. In the first four days, there were over 100 bookings from patrons.

Aubrey Beardsley Book Media Coverage: The book "Early Works of Aubrey Beardsley" published in 1899 was checked out in 1973 and returned to the WPL on November 12, 2024 when the book was given to the Cambridge Public Library. ED said that the book will be added to the WPL computer catalogue and will be part of The Worcester Collection which is managed by WPL librarian Alex London.

There was some discussion about the historical book collection of the Worcester Public Library. ED noted that the original collection of the Worcester Public Library was from Dr. John Green and that December 23rd marks the 165th anniversary of the library.

ED returned to highlights from his Report which is organized by the WPL's Strategic Roadmap. He reviewed the "Connect Our Community" the WPL's partnership with Paws for People, Goal #3 (Literacy and Learning) the Diwali Celebration. For Invest in Staff, he summarized the Staff Development Day where Angela Bennett and Jason Homer hosted trivia for the staff. The winning team was made up of staff from One City One Library (named One City One Winner). The WPL is hard at work at building the digital equity infrastructure now that \$100K has been received from the Massachusetts Broadband Initiative (MBI)

Other Announcements:

Children's Services: ED worked with City to allocate remaining ARPA funds for a new program being run by Angela Bennett in Children's Services. On January 7, 2025, Every K-3 teacher is being invited to visit the WPL to build their classroom library with 50+ books per teacher. ED noted that public school libraries are not accessible to many of our students. Fowler (sp?) has been an amazing partner. Additional giveaways to students are planned and the Friends of the WPL are also partnering with this effort.

On November 18, 2024, ED moderated a panel for the Worcester Education Collaborative's [John E. Bassett Symposium](#) to shift the focus of literacy from third grade to kindergarten. The keynote speaker was Ralph Smith who is the managing director of the Campaign for Grade-Level Reading. He delivered an exciting program which explained the importance of students who can read at kindergarten have stronger literacy skills. ED noted that the WPL's focus on early-childhood literacy dovetails with this important research.

On 11/19/2024, the WPL hosted a regional naturalization ceremony which Roseann Fitzgerald attended. ED encouraged the WPL board to attend one of these ceremonies if you have a chance. There were 76 people naturalized and the WPL hosted a small reception afterwards. It was a moving event and a snapshot about what America is about.

ED noted to the WPL board that it was announced today that the City of Worcester has secured a space for a day shelter on Gold Street, but it will not open until 2026. ED was deeply disappointed that a shelter is not available in downtown Worcester. ED hopes that the RMV shelter opens in a couple of weeks and not opening the permanent shelter demonstrates a lack of commitment to this issue from the City of Worcester.

Questions?

David Dominguez asked about the WPL's current process of the preservation of old books. ED noted that the WPL has its precious books in protective boxes and in a climate-controlled space.

David also noted that the Diwali Celebration sounded wonderful and asked if this was a partnership with the India Society of Worcester. Jen Marrien was unsure, and ED noted that India Society members attended the event.

David commented on the popularity of the Museum passes which ED noted are funded by the WPL Foundation and the Friends of the WPL.

He asked how the WPL increases books in other languages. Katelyn Duncan makes recommendations based on patron interest. The WPL has a new book buyer for Albanian books. ED says that he and the WPL staff look for new book dealers to fulfill reading expectations for patrons seeking books in other languages.

David asked what is the difference between class visits and class attendance in his report. ED explained that Class Visits is the number of classrooms visited by the WPL librarians and class attendance is the number of students with whom the Librarians interacted.

David inquired asked about the WPL Foundation presentation. ED explained that the WPL Foundation had funds of \$500,000 remaining from the last campaign. These monies are now being used to complete the WPL 1st floor and children's space renovations which include some of the following recent changes:

- welcome desk split into two desks
- new office next to community resources office
- new bookshelves on popular reads section
- new benches on the first floor

David then asked for an update on the Library at Great Brook Valley. ED noted that Trinity Financial will complete a new library (with 23 units of housing) in Great Brook Valley. Leases from \$1 to \$10 per year with a 20-year minimum. ED noted that this is a very exciting project and construction is now underway.

Matthew Noe then asked about the graph on staff development in Goal #4. Doug Lord responded that the numbers for tracking in the current year are good but the metrics for 2023 were tracked differently. He noted that number of professional development activities and staff participating in them has increased in 2024.

Sheila Trapasso then noted that as a former kindergarten teacher, she is thrilled about the project to build classroom libraries for Worcester's kindergarten teachers. ED Jason Homer thanked her for her kind words.

5. Finance Committee Report (Pasha)

Matthew Noe was unable to attend the last meeting held on November 18, 2024. Stephanie Pasha and Roseann Fitzgerald noted that the purpose of the meeting was to request \$6,000 from Trust Funds to fund the "Stand with Libraries" event scheduled for Thursday, December 5, 2024. The Finance Committee approved the funding request. Pasha noted that the WPL has learned that the event will now be held on an alternate date and to stay tuned for the new event date.

6. Administration Committee Report (Bagdis)

Bagdis reported the Committee met on Thursday evening. The Committee is working on the review of the Executive Director. Bagdis said the WPL would hear more about the review in the next couple of weeks and would be asked to submit their feedback by mid-December.

7. Friends of the Library Report (Homer)

ED Jason Homer provided the report since Gail Schuyler was not able to attend.

The Friends met at 5:30 PM. They have decided to move their monthly meeting to 4:30 PM because of the dark nights. ED said they are considering a Zoom component to their meetings. They meet only 10 times per year.

There is new Merchandise being sold by the Friends including coffee mugs and coffee gift sets which are \$28 for the set. Also, there are new T-shirts, mugs and Tote Bags with the new WPL logo. [Their Bonfire online website is live](#) for Holiday ordering which provides T-Shirts, Sweatshirts and Hoodies in multiple colors and sizes using a single-color of the Logo.

Post-holiday there is a plan to sell the Worcester Wares WPL Pride T-Shirts through the Friends Bookstore.

Save the Date: The Friends will have their Holiday Booksale on 12/6 and 12/7 during the City's Festival of Lights. The Frances Perkins Booksale will take place on January 27, 2025.

Senator Harriet Chandler asked if there is a way to improve the marketing of these opportunities. ED said that he can mention this to the Friends. ED says that Friends have done a great job moving sales to an online space. ED complimented Rosemary McCarthy's vision to get their programming beyond book sales.

8. Foundation Report (Fitzgerald)

Roseann Fitzgerald noted that she attended the WPL meeting at Holy Cross on 11/20/2024.

Chrissy Murray, the WPL Foundation Director was unable to attend tonight's meeting but asked Roseann to extend her thanks to the WPL Directors who attended the Celebrate Our Library fundraiser. 165 attended the event and she noted that changing the time to 5:30 PM was successful and the WPL Foundation may try to start its 2025 at this time too.

Chrissy is still compiling the final numbers for the event. The Fund A Need received \$28,300 in pledges and the raffle was just under \$4,000.

The President of the WPL Foundation is Sue Hunt from the College of the Holy Cross and the Foundation welcomed three new trustees to the board: Brendan Hanson from Berkshire Bank, Beth McTigue from CliftonLarson and Akosua Agyepong from Turco Legal.

Save the following dates:

Mini-Golf Event 5/2 and 5/3/2025

The WPL Foundation Annual Meeting will be 9/18/2025.

Roseann noted that Chrissy Murray noted that the “You Belong Here” celebration with the Worcester Business Improvement is still paying dividends for the WPL Foundation and the WPL as a creative force in the Worcester community.

9. Marketing Report (Andrianopoulos)

Although not on the agenda, Stephanie Pasha asked Christina to summarize the report of the Marketing Committee for the WPL which met on 11/25/2024.

The committee focused on a 2025 Marketing Campaign to have 1 million visitors. Linnea Anderson wants to launch the campaign on 1/2/2025. The 1 millionth visitor would receive a black library card and have balloons fall on the 1 millionth visitor.

Partnerships with the Worcester Historical Museum are planned (along with the anniversary of the Worcester Voting Conference and the Museum’s candlepin bowling exhibit.

There is also a plan to launch March Meowness II in 2025 and create a purr-ness wall with photos submitted of cats. This would include a partnership with the Worcester Animal League.

The Marketing Committee meeting ended at 6:20 PM.

Sen. Harriet Chandler suggested focusing on dogs rather than cats. ED Homer noted that dog owners are not as intense as cat owners.

Stephanie thanked Christina for her report and then asked the WPL board to remember to patronize small businesses on Small Business Saturday on November 30, 2024.

10. Adjournment

Since there was no new business, a motion was requested to adjourn by Stephanie Pasha. MOTION TO ADJOURN by Katie Bagdis and SECONDED by Sheila Trapasso. The motion was approved unanimously.

The meeting was adjourned at 6:04 PM

Respectfully submitted,

Roseann Fitzgerald

Cara Stone

From: Katherine Bagdis <bagdis@mountaindearborn.com>
Sent: Tuesday, December 3, 2024 5:47 PM
To: Stephanie Pasha; Cara Stone
Cc: Jason Homer
Subject: Admin Minutes 11/21/24

CAUTION: This email originated from outside of the library. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.

Cara,

Here are the minutes for the admin committee meeting on 11/21

Attendees: Stephanie Pasha, Matthew Noe, Laura Miller, Katherine Bagdis (Chair)

Meeting was called to order at 5:15 p.m.

- I. Review of Jason's Self Evaluation as part of committee's performance review of ED over the past year. Self Evaluation is attached for review.

Motion to enter into Executive Session to discuss ED performance made by Miller, seconded by Noe. Approved unanimously.

Entered into Executive sessions at 5:20 p.m.

Exited Executive Sessions at 6:15 p.m.

Meeting adjourned at 6:17 p.m.

CARA – Please include Jason's self evaluation which is in the link in his email below with the minutes for the board to review.

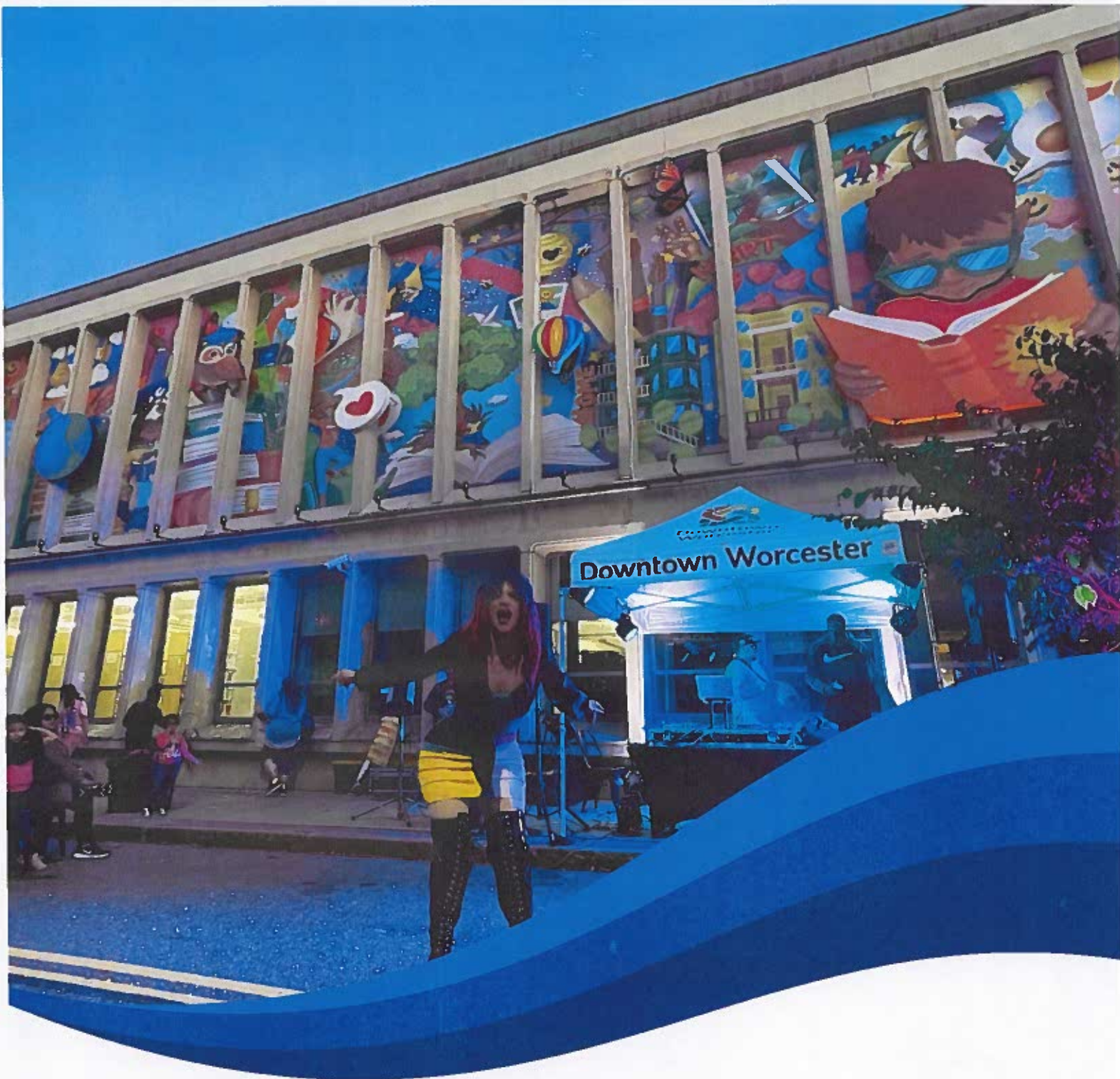
Thanks!

Katie

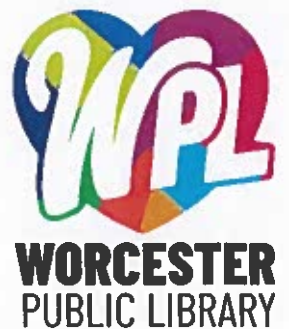
Katherine A. Bagdis, Esquire
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Worcester, MA 01608
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Direct Phone: (508) 459-7275
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Please be sure to copy my paralegal, Angela (asanborn@mountaindearborn.com) on all correspondence.

Please visit our website at www.mountaindearborn.com



NOVEMBER 2024 REPORT



www.mywpl.org

Report of the executive director



Save the Date & Spread the word! The Main Branch will host a *Build Your Classroom Library* event for K-3rd Grade Worcester Public School Teachers on January 7th from 4:00pm to 7:00pm. Teachers will be able to fill bags with brand new, hand selected titles in English, Spanish, Vietnamese, and Portuguese to fill their classroom libraries in time for the spring semester. Titles were chosen to encourage independent reading at the K-3rd grade level and to support literacy in every classroom. The books were purchased using ARPA funds.

Naturalization Ceremony

Seventy six people from all across the Commonwealth took the oath of allegiance and became U.S. citizens at WPL on Tuesday the 19th.

City Manager Batista and Mayor Petty led the ceremony, sending a strong message of unity and welcome to new citizens and loved ones.

Many found the ceremony hopeful given the upcoming federal government's administrative transition.

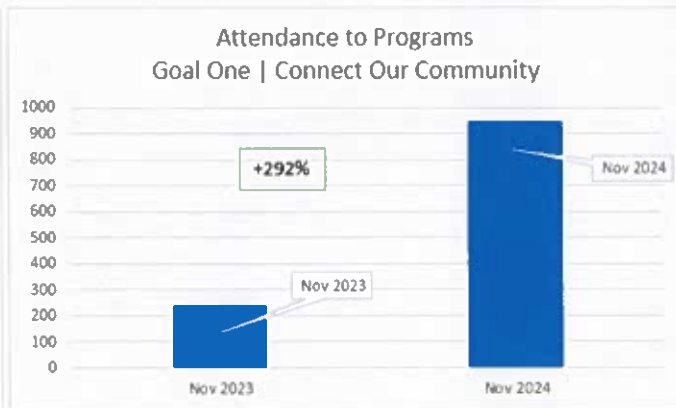
Deputy Director of Youth Services Angela Bennett, Manager of Adult Services Tara Jankowski, and Head of Talking Book Services Lee Anne Hooley have been invited to participate in an Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) grant-funded national initiative that focuses on Building Equity-Based Summers (BEBS). The trio will join their cohort for an intensive training throughout January and monthly through the summer. WPL hopes to gain insights leading to increased summer participation outside of the traditional methods.



Goal 1 Connect our Community | November 2024



- Grow and strengthen our partnerships throughout the community
- Respond and act on community needs
- Commit to diverse community engagement



Highlights

Grow & Strengthen Partnerships

The UMASS Road to Care van is a massively important part of the library's partnerships serving those without reliable access to health care and also uninsured persons throughout the community. See also Goal Five.



Respond and Act on Community Needs

The Teen Department has used branch programs as opportunities for teens to produce items that are fun and can be turned into holiday gifts. Recent programs at the Great Brook Valley Branch saw teens creating one-of-a-kind face scrubs and handmade soaps.

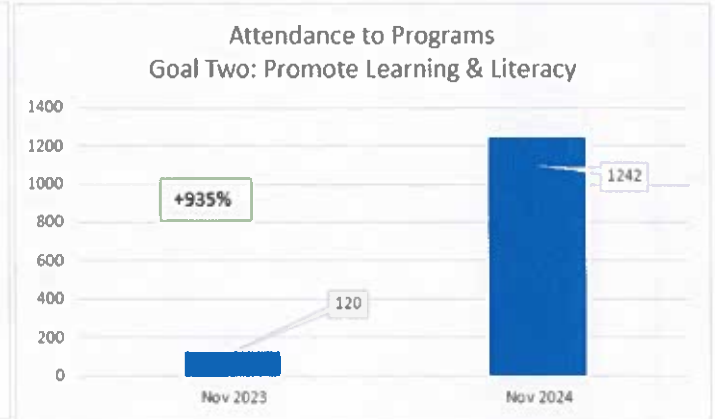
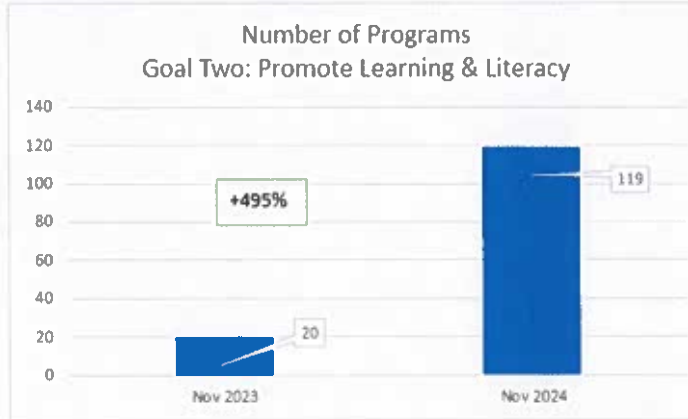
A new initiative for Spring '25 is Frances Perkins Branch Children's Librarian Rebecca Raineri's parent preschool fair. This will help parents with the readiness process, will bring in private schools, and will provide families with information about what they should be working on at home before the first school day.

Given the library's central location and access to many constituents, many partners use WPL's space for open office hours. These include Representative Mary Keefe, Friends of Worcester Wildlife, the Middle District Attorney's Office, WPI, Mass DOT and many more!

Goal 2 Promote Learning & Literacy | November 2024



- Engage community in learning
- Promote digital literacy with a commitment to eliminating the digital divide
- Encourage curiosity and exploration



Engage community in learning 56 learning programs ranged over all ages and locations. One, the *Letters About Literature Tween Writing Workshop* coordinated by Tween Librarian Alicia Rogers, was an informational and instructional session on the state’s annual *Letters About Literature* contest. The program asks students to write letters to authors about why their work (a book, short story, poem, essay, or play) is important to them. Sponsored by the Massachusetts Center for the Book, the statewide *Letters About Literature* program awards 1st, 2nd, and 3rd place cash prizes and several honorable mentions.



The Hour of Code™/‘Hora del Código® event drew 5 tweens. This was the third session and the tweens will continue to build on their previous knowledge through the winter.

Curiosity & Exploration

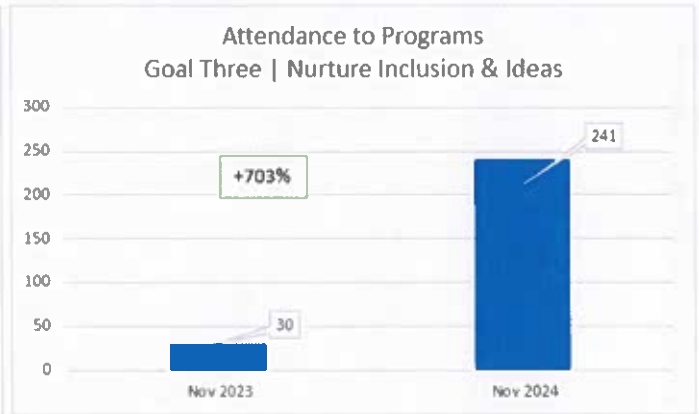
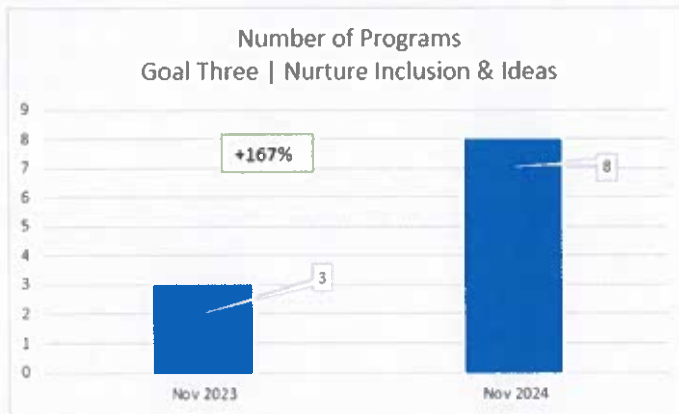
64 programs held, including including Librarian Kira Higgins-Simmons’ *DIY Crafts for Adults* series that drew 48 attendees over four sessions. Patrons were led through different art forms such as paint scraping, book making, and macrame.



Goal 3 Nurture Inclusion and Ideas | November 2024



- Make improvements in accessibility to all library resources
- Create culturally responsive programs & events that reflect community
- Shape inclusive and diverse library collections



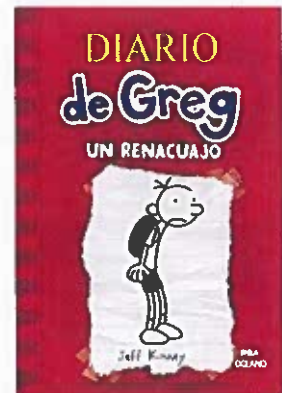
Create culturally responsive programs and events that reflect our community

A well-planned and significant key activity was Children’s Librarian Cara Young’s *Nifty Nails* program on Saturday the 16th. 75 attendees improved their skills at painting their nails in this social, free activity. Novices and experts alike avoided the cost of a nail salon. Planned follow-ups to this event will include older children and hair styling events.

The previously mentioned Naturalization Ceremony was also a beacon of cultural responsibility and inclusion.

Shape inclusive and diverse library collections

Branch Youth Services Librarian Megan McCraw is adding to the language collections at the OCOL branches. Children’s Albanian books will be added to the much-appreciated Haitian books at Goddard and also sets of popular titles in Portuguese. Plans to reorganize and prepare the OCOLs for space for World Language collections in Arabic, Chinese, and Vietnamese are underway.



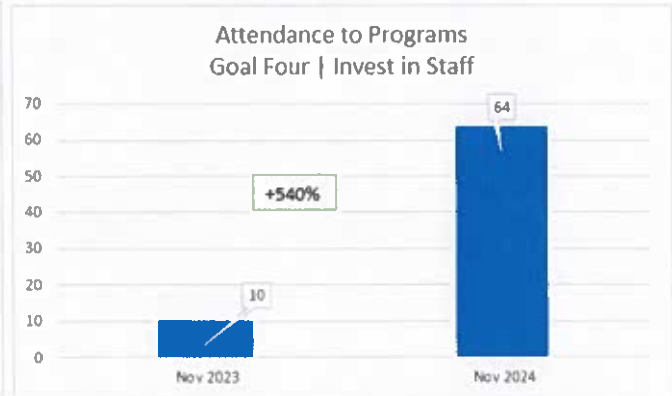
Improve Accessibility

Shifting and space corrections on the 2nd floor have been completed; Biographies are now located on the second floor which clears space for a larger Study Pod to engage with those who need social services and more tables for individuals to study.

Goal 4 Invest in Staff | November 2024



- Foster professional development
- Enhance leadership development and produce career pathways
- Shape mentorship and feedback initiatives



Foster Professional Development | Angela Bennett attended the 2nd annual John E. Bassett Symposium, hosted by the Worcester Education Collaborative and emceed by Executive Director Jason Homer. The session focused on the latest information emerging about learning—the key takeaway was that early learning is essential. With current trends, the children that are already behind before entering Kindergarten have very low odds of catching up and high odds of falling even further behind. The Superintendent then called for the community’s support to get kids Kindergarten-ready.

Enhance leadership development and produce career pathways

Community Relations & Communications Manager Linnea Sheldon presented at the Library Marketing and Communications Conference (LMCC) in St. Louis. participants on the strategies behind WPL's successful "March Meowness" initiative. The LMCC is the only event of its type for this library specialty, designed for library employees involved in marketing, communications, public relations, social media, and outreach in academic, public, and special libraries. Conference sessions explored issues that are important for this niche of library work, and the event will include time for attendees to network and to discuss mutual challenges.

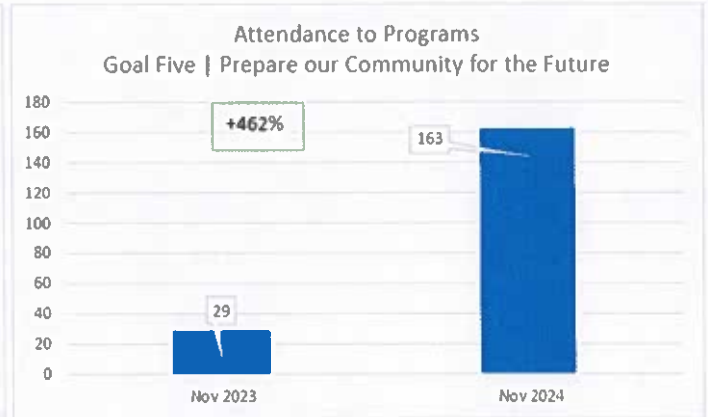
Shape feedback initiatives and mentorship

50+ staff attended a one-hour presentation on *Slips, Trips & Falls* by COW's Department of Inspection Services. The presentation brought forward the importance of asking questions, taking action to protect employees and patrons, and encouraged attendees to provide feedback on the facility when it is needed.

Goal 5 Prepare our Community for the Future | Nov 2024



- Enhance digital resources and invest in technology infrastructure
- Update spaces for creativity and innovation
- Build sustainable practices



Enhance digital resources and invest in technology infrastructure

63 WiFi hot spots were purchased and added to the circulating collections; their deployment is ongoing, though most have been circulated to grateful patrons.



Update Spaces for Creativity and Innovation

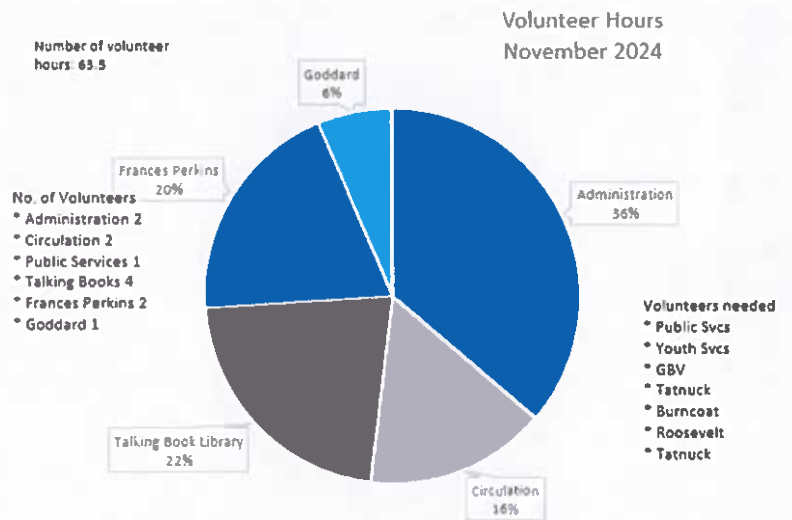
The electrical work that was bonded in 2020 for Frances Perkins Branch is finally coming to fruition. The main electrical panel will be upgraded - replacing a panel that was too small for the library. The project required trenching and briefly disrupted parking. This upgrade makes an HVAC upgrade, scheduled for summer of 2025, possible. This money has been previously appropriated and the work has just taken longer.

Sustainability programming at WPL includes a partnership with the UMass Road to Care Van which parks every Tuesday rain or shine all the weeks of the year. This vital partnership provides free health visits with a group of medical providers from UMass Memorial Health to include primary care, substance use disorder treatment, screenings (e.g., blood pressure, cholesterol, etc.) and lab and medication services. This service receives hundreds of visitors each year at the library location alone and ranks high among patrons' perceived value.

Report of the Human Resources & Development Manager

Volunteer Efforts

The Human Resources Office (HRO) onboarded one new volunteer who will be recording for Talking Books. HRO also began recruitment of volunteers to help with a number of children's events throughout December and January.



Staff Development and Engagement

HRO coordinated an All Staff Meeting on Friday, November 8 for 'Slips, Trips, Falls' which was trained by Department Name. This was a refresher for some, and a new training for others.

One new manager attended a three part webinar: 'HR Crash Course for Library Managers' to develop the tools necessary for their success.

Recruitment and Employment

No positions were filled

At the end of November there were 8 open positions.

Three are posted / reposted

- (1) GL4 Adult Services – Reposted – Interviews in process
- (1) GL2 Tech Services – Posted – Close date 12/13/24
- (1) L2 TBL – Posted – Close date 12/13/24

Two will be filled by internal candidates

- (1) L2 GBV – Internal candidate accepted internal transfer/Dec
- (1) L2 N&M – Internal candidate accepted internal transfer/Dec

Three are in process

- (1) BKM Librarian – Waiting for RFP from City to post with new salary
- (1) GL2 TBL – Waiting for RFP from City to post with new salary
- (1) PT GL2 Adult Services – Candidate withdrew - making determination regarding this position.

Report of the Administrative and Operations Division

HIGHLIGHTS, November 2024

Administration Division includes Communications, Information Technology Services, Talking Book Library, Borrower Services, Community Resources, Security, and Financial Services.

Communications:

WPL and the Foundation had approximately 45 press mentions during the month, with a lot of interest in the long-overdue library book that was recently returned. One press release was sent.

Facebook saw 9,032 engaged users this month with a reach of 144,341. Those figures are 158% and 147% higher than last month and 305% and 263% higher than last year. TikTok followers and likes continue to...tick...upwards.

Community Relations & Communications Manager Ms. Linnea Sheldon met with a Quinsigamond Community College student to begin a mentorship and also with CW MARS' Marketing Task Force to discuss future endeavors.

Community Resources Report

WPL proudly hosted a Naturalization Ceremony on 11/19, at which 76 people from 25 different countries became new citizens with a large, supportive crowd of library staff and visitors on hand to cheer them on. Upwards of 175 people attended the ceremony and reception afterwards. Circulation staff Tamarah Al-Faris and Tracy Baizley worked together to register new citizens for library cards after the event.

Christina Connolly and Azajuah Johnston-Fils met with outreach staff from Center of Living & Working, Genesis Club, and Community Healthlink this month. All three organizations will partner by tabling at WPL in an effort to make connections and create opportunities for resource-sharing. By the start of 2025, WPL will host 9 partner agencies with scheduled outreach activity on a regular (weekly / bi-weekly) basis.

Combining New Americans Librarian Katelyn Duncan's and Ms. Johnston-Fils office hours and impromptu 1-on-1's provided by all Community Resources staff, 50 patrons received focused, expert help, for average of 20 minutes each, on resources including immigration, citizenship, language translation and ESOL learning, writing and resume help, mentoring, first aid, and social services of all kinds.

HIGHLIGHTS November 2024 | Administration & Operations Division, continued

As shared within the goal reports, the Division had another excellent month of programming with the various English and citizenship classes and the Road to Care van achieving a total of 571 attendees.

Talking Book Library

As the department's vacancy moves towards being filled, TBL is restructuring work. Librarian Joel Kiesling and Head of Talking Book Services Lee Anne Hooley have met with ILS provider Keystone systems and book vendor Baker and Taylor to learn about cataloging and acquisition processes. These procedures have not been updated in a long time, and the meetings are helping to determine ways in which tasks can be done quickly and efficiently.

Kiesling is doing outreach, has made great connections, and is looking forward to beginning programming opportunities.

Assistant Circulation Manager Victoria Zayas-Comisky welcomed her son Rowan on November 8. Both mom and baby are healthy and are spending quality time at home.

Rita McGinty attended Abby Kelley School Curriculum Night on 11/19 with Rebecca Raineri, where they registered new library cards, promoted library services, and engaged the public.

Outreach staff from partner agencies provided patron drop-in support for a total of 26 hours.

Talking Books Librarian Cheryl Conn is processing, recycling, and reusing old cartridges - a huge, two-year project. With this hard work, over fifty thousand cartridges have been re-labeled and converted for re-use in on-demand services. This work provides a 10-1 space savings ratio.



Report of the Library Services Division

HIGHLIGHTS, November 2024

The Library Services Division includes Collections, Youth Services including the four OCOL branches, and Adult Services including Newspapers & Magazines, and the two branches.

The Main Library's Children's Department staff is weeding the nonfiction section to rearrange the layout of that section of the room. The section of books closest to the desk has an un-intuitive flow, working in a circular, counterclockwise direction. This will also give the high-circulating "Audio Enabled Books" (often called Wonderbooks) collection and World Language Collections room to breathe and grow.

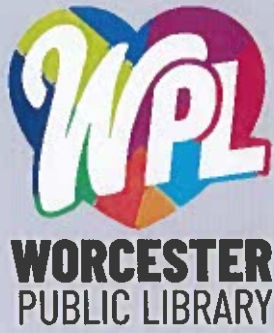
Beanie Boo, a little tiger that usually lives on the desk of Linden Bainbridge's desk at the Goddard Branch, joined students on their international adventures this fall. He has been sending back photos of himself from Portugal, Belgium, The Netherlands, Australia, and China. He finally made it back to Massachusetts for a brief stop in early December but will be back on the road to Canada over winter vacation. This photo is from his latest trip to China.



One highlight that went exceptionally well was when a parent shared with Rachel that her two daughters loved Afternoon Storytime so much that they memorized all the songs and had been doing presentations of them at home.

The Teen Department participated in the virtual New England Teen Summit, an all-day virtual conference that highlights Teen Advocacy and incorporating DEI initiatives into teen programming. Sessions included consideration of teen volunteering as a core library Service and a how to structure nonfiction comic activities for teens.

Rachel Archeron attended a webinar called *The Gender Binary is a Big Lie: A Celebration of Gender Diversity in History and Today* that was rated as excellent. One of the speakers was children's author Maya Christina Gonzalez.



LIBRARY USE

NOVEMBER 2024

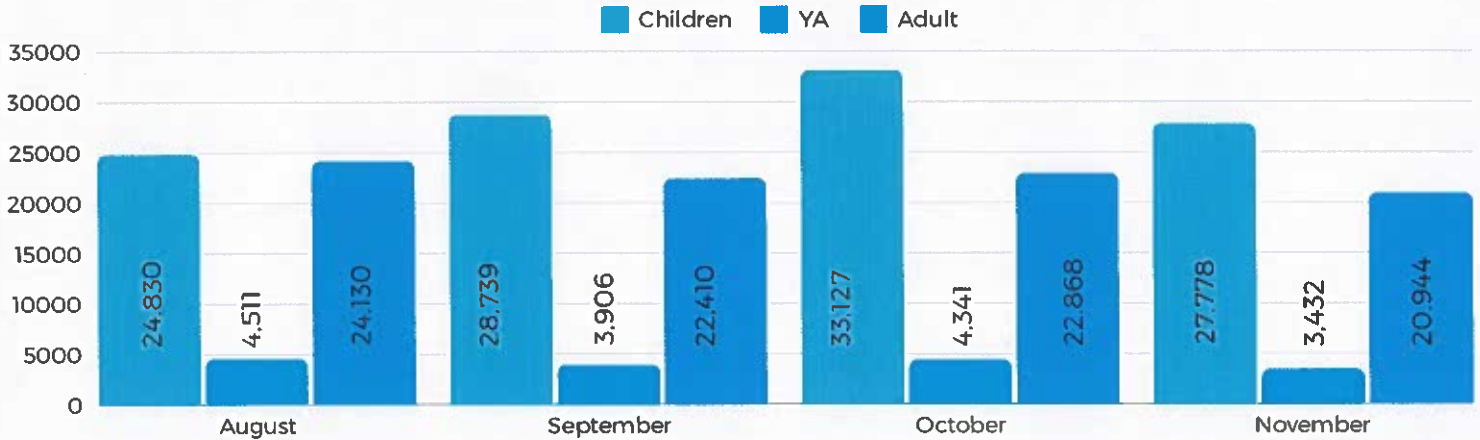
15,975

Patron Assists
(all transactions)

36,641

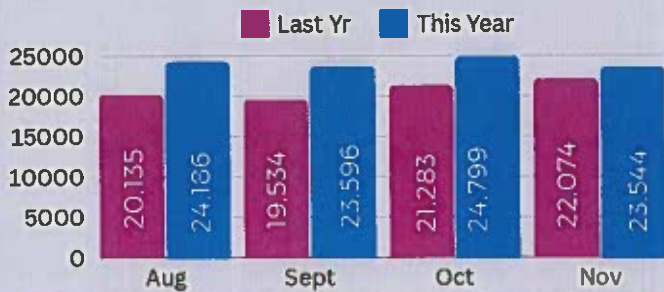
Patron Visits
(all branches)

CIRCULATION (PHYSICAL)



Circulation declines reflect seasonal patterns; when comparing to 2023, the drop in young adult circulation is within just a half percentage point, the children's decline is within two percentage points, and the adult drop is roughly half of last year's figure. Additionally, the Collections Department successfully processed and deployed an impressive total of 1,878 materials of all kinds from paperbacks to WiFi hotspots.

EBOOK CIRC



Circulation of electronic media (e-books, e-audio and e-video) remains strong.



OCT

Express Sessions

804

Computer Sessions

54,287

Wireless Sessions

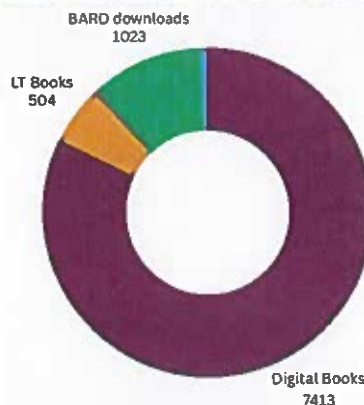
10,977

Website Visitors

35,992

TALKING BOOK LIBRARY

Weather closing in contributes to circulation drops leading up to winter months. Digital books continue to be the largest share of materials at 79%; BARD downloads are almost 11% and LT books are over 5%.



ONE CITY, ONE LIBRARY

217 Class Visits

3,911 Class attendance



JASON HOMER

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SELF EVALUATION

FY2024



WORCESTER
PUBLIC LIBRARY



Budget & Financial Management

The FY2025 budget process was smoother than the previous year as I tried to increase transparency and engagement. While the City's process still remains somewhat siloed, I refused to let information live in pockets, and as a result there were no surprises. We are still asked to do more for as little as possible, and next year we have set the intention to ask for our needs and not hold back because of guidance, as that has not benefitted the library. FY2026 will require the Social Services Specialist to move to the budget off the ARPA payroll. City Council has already ordered this, and we will not need special advocacy for that position. My focus for FY2026 will be to ask for librarianship items and to not hold back because we need safety items addressed first. With the City's new Strategic Plan and our new Strategic Roadmap, I will leverage those two documents to position us forward.

It should be noted that we were able to get our second full-time security guard mid-year, which speaks to our collaborative approach being successful.

State Budget & Earmarks: I was again asked to speak as part of the State Budget request, and we were successful in our budget asks. This year we received \$100,000 in an earmark for our work with the schools thanks to Representative Mary Keefe, who called me on the phone and asked to provide her a pitch via text in under 15 minutes. We also secured all \$100,000 from MBI for Digital Literacy Initiatives.

Federal Budget: Maria McCauley (Cambridge) and I were 2 of the 36 librarians in the country asked to advocate for Federal Funding in March 2024 with the American Library Association.

Foundation: This year I have worked closely with the Foundation to secure the single largest donation to the Foundation.

ARPA - Funded Changes

I was able to work with the City Manager to secure significant funding to address needs on the second and third floors of the Main Library, positioning the changes as necessary to continuing service at our current levels. This project used \$220,00 to re-imagine the second and third floor to be more patron-focused and to make adjustments we were not able to make during the renovation.

Computer Stations: New collaborative computer stations that both increase visibility and access to our patrons. While only a month out, I am excited to see how the usage will change over the coming year.

New Study Pods: There are now five new study pods available on the third floor. The study rooms on the first floor are consistently booked, and this will add significant more availability for those who need a separate space for any reason.

Refinished Tables: We used some of the money to refinish all the tables on the second and third floor, many of which were showing real wear after they were added in 2001.

New Chairs: Combining two sources of funding, we were able to purchase all new chairs for the entire library, giving all of the hard wooden chairs to the schools and replacing them with durable chairs suited for longer use.

... Coming soon will be the purchase of books and materials to create a robust collection of eBooks for all WPS students.



Staff Development and Communication

If FY2023 was all about moving people into the right roles and responsibilities, FY2024 was all about celebrating the work of staff.

Joel Kiesling won Massachusetts Library Association Outstanding Innovation and Excellence Award

Katelyn Duncan won the Thomas S. Green Public Service Award

Christina Connolly won the YWCA's Tribute to Women: Katharine F. Erskine Award

Linnea Shelton won honorable mention as *Library Journal's* Marketer of the Year

Keys to the City: Seven staff received keys to the city for March Meowness and Katelyn Duncan won one for her Green Award

Excellent Employer: The WPL was honored at the Statehouse in April after being named an Excellent Employer by the Gensis Club



Additional Communication Channels: In Summer of 2024, I implemented a new communication tool in the form of twice a month newsletters in Google docs. It has enabled me to constantly update staff and keep them informed. I am getting a lot of positive specific feedback that staff find the newsletters useful and productive.

- The feedback form I created last year is still going strong and is proving to be very useful in addressing issues and giving me the tools to address things that have not yet been addressed.

Empowering Staff Learning: There are more staff in library school than ever previously recorded by the WPL, as a testament to the growth mindset we are moving towards. With a record number of staff attending MLA in May 2024, two staff presenting at NELA 2024, and Linnea presenting at two national conferences, the WPL staff are taking their place as thought leaders.

Staff Safety: Issues of safety and security were rocked in August 2024 when a staff member was attacked by a patron and sent to the hospital. During this process, I did all in my power to update and communicate with staff about adjustments and changes. The difficult part of this messaging remains in the fact that after all was said and done, as I spoke to numerous libraries, we have many processes in place that most other libraries simply did not have. I am working with the City Manager on a sustainable option for security and he has been extremely helpful in developing useful paths forward.

Leadership Positions filled this past year:

- Deputy Director Youth Services
- Deputy Director Adult Services - Internal
- Deputy Director Borrower Services - Internal
- Director Library Services
- Manager - One City, One Library

Staff Changes this year: 22

Number of Promotions of Staff: 11

Number of New Hires of Staff: 11



LIVING — March 22, 2024

This library is letting people pay late fees with photos of their cats

For the month of March, the Worcester Public Library is letting people pay late fees with a photo of their cat in a program called "March Meowness."



Taking our place as change makers

March of 2024 altered the course of the WPL when staff created "March Meowness" and it became my job to sell it to the world. The entire month was media training on the fly, jumping into spheres not normal for a public library. From BBC to NBC, March Meowness was the thing we needed to unite our library in a way never before seen. Staff came out of the woodwork to help us spread the message and get the work done as a library.

Following March Meowness, Linnea has been on a presentation tour that will take her to the National Library Marketing conference in November 2024 after NELA in October and the Association for Rural & Small Libraries in September.

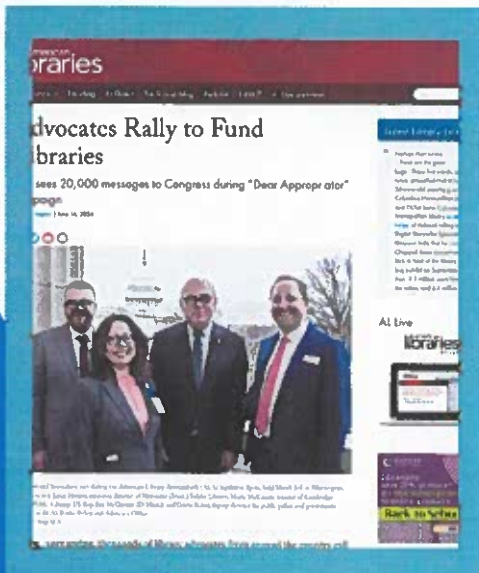
IMLS National Library Medal: An exciting addition to our epic March was being named an IMLS National Library Medal Finalist (one of only 15 libraries across the nation for 2024). While we did not win, we did launch a storytelling campaign that got more engagement than all of the other libraries and helped us solidify our brand as a library embedded within our community - eager to deliver amazing services.



Publicity and Interviews



- [Worcester unveils new library vending machine](#)
- [Worcester Public Library unveils new mural at Perkins branch](#)
- [Worcester Trees, Parks, Nonprofits Get Boost In 2024 State Budget](#)
- [Worcester Public Library ready for block party this weekend](#)
- [2023 Worcester Pride Festival Set To Take Over Downtown](#)
- [In Worcester, mobile clinic provides relief to Worcester residents struggling with addiction](#)
- [Worcester Library Holding Community Resource Fair](#)
- [Worcester library grapples with higher prices for e-books, audiobooks vs. print](#)
- [The Week in Libraries: November 17, 2023](#)
- [Communities take action amid migrant influx, housing crisis](#)
- [Worcester libraries and homelessness: City councilor requests...](#)
- [Worcester City Council discusses how unhoused use the library](#)
- [More than just books: Worcester's 'Library of Things' lends the public appliances and more](#)
- [Worcester to celebrate Black History Month](#)
- [Jason Homer seeks to stand up for marginalized voices as a librarian](#)
- [Worcester Public Library named finalist for national award](#)
- [Despite increase in incidents, Worcester library staff hopeful](#)
- [Worcester Public Library adapts to safety issues, growing community need](#)
- [Worcester Library Hides Golden Tickets In Books For Chance at Prizes](#)
- [Massachusetts libraries are boosting their mission with new hires: social workers](#)
- [Advocates Rally to Fund Libraries](#)
- ['A lot of people in need': Social workers added to staffs at Mass. libraries](#)



Boards & Committees

- Central Mass Library Advocates CMLA - President
- Public Library Association PLA - Advocacy Task Force
- Massachusetts Library Association MLA – Legislative Committee
- Worcester Cultural Coalition WCC - Vice President
- Worcester Academic and Research Collaborative ARC - Co-chair

Particular items of note:

- **Digital Equity:** The move to throw our efforts into digital equity was rooted in positioning ourselves as the change makers for the city. Admittedly, FY2023 was a year to reflect how often the library is expected to fall in line and not drive change, FY2024 was about changing that.
- **Breakthrough Collaboration:** Working with the consultants has been deeply rewarding and a significant amount of work. I am eager for them to deliver recommendations after the focus groups in October of 2024. When those are complete, I will look to have the Admin Committee meet with me to address changes that need to occur.
- **Strategic Roadmap:** With the Strategic Roadmap now complete, I will look to make action plans and move the WPL towards a culture of data-driven responses to issues rather than reactionary.
- **My Work in the Community:** While not usual, I am sincerely proud to have been asked to deliver a speech on culture's role within the community at a street naming in the Summer. While this is not the task of the library director, it was requested due to my work in the community and the fact that it was recognized by key members of the community meant a great deal.
- **Mentorship:** Last year's evaluation highlighted the loneliness of my role and it was asked I seek mentorship. This year, at the ALA Fly-in I found an important partner in Cambridge's Maria McCauley, who I has been an amazing peer. The Breakthrough Collaboration team has been amazingly supportive and I see both Tim and Hamish as trusted mentors. Finally, the Urban Library Council will be invaluable to my development as they focus on CEO relationship building, and I look forward to leveraging that organization to find more peers and mentors.

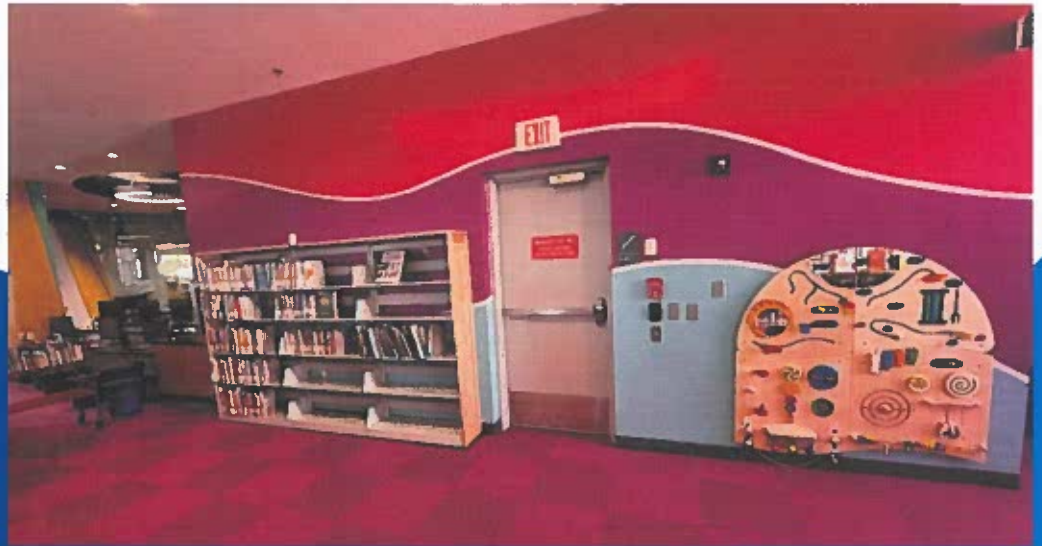


Goals Not Yet Accomplished

With GBV on the horizon, I need to carve out time to build a strong plan for the branches. That being said, at some point we as an organization will have to come to terms with the problems that One City, One Library cause, both for our schools and the WPL as an organization.

With all the changes to leadership, there were significant delays in the website and new mobile app, and those will be high priority items come December 2024.

Goals for Next Year



Leadership Adjustments and Pay Equity: My number one goal for next year is to increase the pay of the leadership and non-union management teams. The collective bargaining unit saw a huge increase, and now I have a scenario where union staff will make more than their supervisors. With all Deputy Directors new within the last 12 months, I cannot afford to search for new roles because they are underpaid. I cannot lose great talent because the City leadership does not value the library's impact, which is clear based on actions.

- Within leadership adjustments, I will need to continue to find ways to separate the work of the Directors and myself, as the staff still struggle to not come to me for everything.

Adding Personality and Clarity to Main Library: The 2021 renovation focused on making everything clean, but the stars of the renovation were the places where our community saw themselves, like the stair mural and the Pappas Children's Center.

Set a Plan for All Branches: With One City, One Library continually taking from library services to benefit the schools; and GBV renovation on the horizon, I will need to produce, along with the Board, a clear vision for the branches.

