

## Accomplishments + Goals



FY2022



## Overview

FY22 was the year of the pivot. To continue providing the best hybrid public service to our patrons, the BPL simultaneously began to reopen its doors for service and programming while continuing to lay the groundwork for a fully reopened BPL system. This involved facing challenges of staffing engendered by the Great Resignation, managing through ongoing shifts in COVID-related protocols, and rebuilding an in-person work culture after 18 months of remote work.

Returning to in-person service has meant implementation of critical technology plans, preparations for the return of our Special Collections to public use, staffing positions that offer critical human service related functions, while continuing the work of making the Boston Public Library a more equitable, diverse, and inclusive institution.





## FY22 Major accomplishments

### *Economic empowerment*

Economic empowerment was – and continues to be – a key priority for the BPL.

To ensure that Boston residents are able to come out of the pandemic with the skills and tools they need to return to work, the Kirstein Business Library and Innovation Center (KBLIC) continued to cultivate relationships with partner organizations to offer recurring, quality mentorship, consultations, and programming.

***Building Partnerships*** -- Over the year, KBLIC has offered 43 workforce development workshops, including contracting two career consultants, who provided 22 workshops focusing on career skills and motivation. A new and critical partnership this year was our relationship with Google Business, with whom KBLIC offered a series of skill building workshops including email marketing, Google Ads, reaching customers, training on how to get your business on Google Search and more.

KBLIC also continued its partnerships with Goodwin Law, who offer pro-bono small business clinic sessions; with Babson College, with their Financial Literacy Project offering bimonthly programming on topics including investing, credit cards, student loans, and insurance, among others. KBLIC also continued its partnership with the Legal Services Center, with monthly virtual mentoring on navigating SNAP benefits, Morgan Stanley Financial Advisors for pro-bono workshops on 529 plans, cyber security, and women and wealth.

**Financial empowerment** -- Ensuring financial empowerment also means helping patrons become financially literate. For the first time, KBLIC offered a three-part financial literacy program entirely in Spanish, in order to facilitate financial literacy in patrons for whom English is not their native language. In addition, KBLIC offered programs including Banking 101; Ins and Outs of Credit Cards, and Taking Stock of the Stock Market.

**Skill building** – KBLIC continues to offer patrons the opportunity to come out of the pandemic with a broader skill set, while also providing the materials and spaces in which to do that.

The InnoLab continues to be a hub of creativity, helping creatives launch their projects including a podcaster who interviews people of color about their side hustles; recording capabilities for a veteran musician specializing in funk and soul music, and an artists documenting his Black Lives Matter mural with the assistance of KBLIC's Adobe software.

KBLIC also hosted creative software workshops on a variety of topics, including website design, audiobook creation, Audacity, podcasting, freelancing, infographics, and Canva graphic design tutorials.

The virtual #CoffeWithKBLIC series offered streaming broadcasts of classes promoting community partners and resources such as JVS' Bridges to College program; Sources for your Small Business, and Nubian Square's Reevx Lab co-working space.

## *Serving the Community*

**A dedicated department** – this year saw the creation of an entirely new department at the BPL – Community Learning, which will coordinate the delivery of needed social services across the system; instruction in literacy and English as a second language; citizenship resources; basic education and skill building; health and wellness; and news literacy.

To ensure that patrons can learn about these services in a centralized manner, the highly-visible Information desk on the second floor of the Boylston Street building has been repurposed as a central location for Community Learning staff to provide services and referrals in this area of work.

**Staffing for service** – working with the Boston Public Library fund, the Library Services division has been able to create key staff positions in order to better service our patrons with the highest needs. These include a Nutritional Literacy Coordinator; a volunteer coordinator, a literacy instructor, a library social worker and a mobile and outreach services supervisor, along with a career counselor and workforce development librarian.

**Strengthening English language learners** – Among the programs offered to the more than 15,000 patrons who took advantage of BPL's ESL programs was an innovative partnership between our ESL staff and our Community History staff, who coordinated the first ever ESL neighborhood walking tours, in which ESL students explored Boston's neighborhoods in their own language of origin.

The virtual environment led to a major expansion of ESL classes for multiple levels of learning, with new ESL classes focused around news literacy, reaching and discussion, Spanish language, singing, and workforce preparedness. In addition, the return to service allowed for the long-delayed in person ESL classes and conversation groups at branches, including a group specifically for Haitian Creole speakers at the Mattapan branch.



### *Increasing access to our special collections*

***Special Collections renovation preparing for public reopening*** – Construction has now completed on the \$15.7 million [Rare Books and Manuscripts renovation project](#) and the beautiful new spaces for staff and public are being prepared for reopening. As of the end of April, approximately 275,000 bound volumes and over 2,000 linear feet of manuscripts have been returned from offsite storage and reshelfed on over 7 miles of newly constructed stacks. The renovation features state-of-the-art environmental controls, fire suppression, security, and storage conditions. Staff is now moving into the space and focused on technology implementation, hiring, and collection maintenance tasks in preparation for the Fall 2022 reopening.

***Founding Research Collection project launched*** – In 2020, the library received \$2.1 million in private funding to preserve, catalog, and make the Founding Research Collection discoverable by the public. This groundbreaking collection—amassed over nearly a century and now totaling well over 500,000 items—is an expansive, non-circulating repository of books, pamphlets, journals, and many other kinds of materials that provide broad coverage across a wide variety of subjects. A project manager has now been hired to develop and oversee implementation of this work; next steps include vendor selection for cleaning and inventorying the volumes in preparation for a major cataloging project.



**National newspaper digitization grant underway** – Through the assistance of the Boston Public Library Fund, BPL was awarded a \$200,000 grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities to join the [National Digital Newspaper Program](#), a long-running effort coordinated by the Library of Congress to build and maintain a free online digital library of historical newspapers from all U.S. states and territories. BPL’s Digital Services staff has convened an advisory committee of scholars and experts to identify significant newspapers from the library’s extensive microfilm and print archives for inclusion in this national collection, which will then be digitized and made available via [Chronicling America](#), a web site providing full-text searching and display of over 18 million pages from over 6,000 newspaper titles published from 1777 to 1963.

**Collection Storage Study completed** – This City-funded study was conducted to determine current and future collection space requirements in the Research and Special Collections at the Central Library and the City of Boston Archival Center (COBAC). The study’s primary goals included supporting preservation, facilitating retrieval, and providing lasting public access. Components included an assessment of existing space conditions and constraints, measurement of the various collections by format and subcollection (including over 400,000 linear feet of books on shelves), and developing options for acceptable storage, including current space needs and projected growth.



## *Enriching our neighborhoods*

**Community Celebration of Roxbury** – In October, the BPL held a community celebration of the recently renovated Roxbury Branch. The Roxbury Branch in Nubian Square (formerly Dudley) underwent a \$17.2 million, 27,000 square foot renovation that began in November 2017 and was completed in October 2020. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the community was not able to come together and fully celebrate the completion of the new building until then. The BPL presented a series of interactive, family-friendly activities in partnership with the Boston Book Festival, including crafts for kids and a storytime with local authors, who read a book they wrote about growing up in Roxbury.

**Resilient Garden kits** – For the third year, BPL is holding its annual distribution of seed kits for gardeners. The Resilient Garden Kits originally started as a streamlined way for branch libraries to convert their seed library supplies into ready-to-go kits for folks to pick up at their branches during the early months of the pandemic. Each kit has a preselected assortment of 8-10 seeds, in one of two themes: The original **Resilient Garden Kits**, to grow herbs and vegetables for cooking, and popular **Herbal Wildflower Kits**, with an assortment of flowers that double as pollinators with home uses.

**Spice Bank Collective** – This year, BPL launched the first ever Spice Bank Collective, in collaboration with the Greater Boston Food Bank (GBFB). Patrons are encouraged to bring unopened spices and dried herbs to their local participating branch. With the help of the GBFB, each branch will select a local food pantry to donate to. Additionally, donations dropped off at the Newsfeed Café, located at the Central Library in Copley Square, will be matched by the Café.

By providing access to spices, the BPL hopes to offer a way to maintain a sense of cultural identity and family traditions, encourage creative and nutritious cooking, and promote the abundant cultural make up that is found in Massachusetts.



## Continued demand for collections

### By the numbers –

Digital circulation		Physical Circulation		Total Circulation	
FY18	1.6m	FY18:	3.0m	FY18	4.8m
FY19	1.8m	FY19	2.8m	FY19	5.1
FY20	2.2m	FY20	2.0	FY20	5.1
FY21	3.8m	FY21	1.4m	FY21	5.2
FY22	3.6m (est)	FY22	1.7m (est)	FY22	5.3 (est)



## Visitors

FY18	3.5 million
FY19	3.5 million
FY20	2.3 million
FY21	235,000
FY22	2.1 million (est)

**Deploying Opening Day Collections** – In a year that not only saw a return to in person service but also the reopening of two major branches, along with preparations for renovations at a third, the Collections Team oversaw the delivery, layout, storage and shelving of more than 70,000 volumes at the Adams Street, Rosindale, Faneuil, and Hyde Park branches.

**New, more equitable ways of ordering books** -- BPL implemented a new collections ordering plan, creating 16 selections teams, consisting of 56 staff members. As part of this process, BPL created and assigned funds to branch locations for discretionary books and collection spending, distributing 150,000 among 23 locations.

**Year Long Reading Challenge** -- For the first time, Reader Services coordinated a yearlong reading challenge to promote community reading and to challenge patrons to explore new reading habits. The challenge included monthly themes, recommended lists featuring titles each month that were available digitally, and monthly book discussions for children, teens, and adults, led by various staff members.

**Genre-based newsletters** – in collaboration with BPL's Communications team, Reader Services rolled out six genre-based newsletters, focused on Science Fiction and Fantasy; Fiction, Mysteries, Romance, Biography and Memoir, and Historical fiction. These newsletters are remarkably successful, with a nearly 50 percent open rate.





## *Working to close the digital divide*

**Outdoor WiFi Zone expansion** – In partnership with the Mayor’s Office of New Urban Mechanics and the City of Boston’s Environment Department, the BPL’s outdoor WiFi zones at the East Boston, Egleston Square, Codman Square, Brighton, Mattapan, and Grove Hall branches received additional seating, shade, lighting and cooling facilities. In addition, in November 2021, the Outdoor Wi-Fi Zone program received an AARP Community Challenge Grant to extend the program through spring 2022. We also added additional winter workstations at the Roxbury and Hyde Park branches. These zones provide free, outdoor WiFi 24 hours a day at 14 locations, with over 24,000 wireless sessions taking place between August 2020 and December 2021.

**Long Term Device Lending program** – BPL rolled out its pilot Long Term Device Lending program in partnership with the Boston Housing Authority. In order to target the unmet digital needs of vulnerable and eligible library patrons in public housing, the program will distribute Chromebooks and WiFi devices through the Boston Housing Authority’s communities. These devices will be sent directly to eligible patrons under long-term loan agreements. The BPL and BHA are currently reaching out to key vulnerable constituencies, including seniors, disabled citizens, new immigrants, and veterans, with plans to broaden outreach to all residents who lack home internet or a device.

**Recovery from a significant cyberattack** – The BPL was victim of a significant cyberattack this year. When the attack was discovered, there was grave concern that significant portions of our data had been lost, which would have significantly impacted the BPLs functioning for the foreseeable future, but our IT team, working together with DoIT and external consultants, were able to reconstruct critical systems and return the BPL to full functionality with an extremely minimal loss of data.

## *Bringing equity to the forefront*

**Equity Program Officer** – This year, the BPL welcomed Roudnie Celestin, its first-ever Equity Program Officer, a new position created to help the BPL fulfill its mission of becoming a more equitable and anti-racist institution. The BPL’s Equity Program Officer’s role is to make the BPL’s racial equity statement actionable, primarily through leading eight working groups across the organization. The working groups cover hiring and recruiting, professional development, internal communications, decision-making, collection development and affinity groups for employees of color. The Equity Program Officer will guide the groups toward concrete steps in becoming an anti-racist organization.

**Launch of EDI working groups** – As part of the work undertaken with YW Boston to chart a path forward to making the BPL a more equitable and anti-racist organization, an employee cohort identified four working groups to analyze internal processes and promulgate recommendations.

These groups will work on issues including professional development; recruiting & hiring; internal communications; and collaborative, transparent decision making. The work of these groups will align with the City of Boston’s activities in this area, including the City’s REAL Training Program.

Through soliciting additional employee feedback, BPL has also launched another series of workgroups, including the BIPOC Resource Group, an Indigenous Peoples’ Issues group and a Climate Change Response Team.

**New booklist** – The Boston Public Library printed and published its first-ever “Native Lives, Native Stories” booklist and special events. The booklist features 63 works published in the last year concerning the experiences of Native and Indigenous communities throughout North America. Copies were distributed at all library locations, and the list also appears on the [BPL website](#). BPL continued to observe the month by holding events including author talks and a book group discussion, and pieces from the BPL collection were highlighted on social media throughout the month.

**New Language Access and Communications working group** – The Chief of Communications and Chief of Adult Services have convened a new working group to ensure that the BPL is in compliance with all City of Boston policies and processes around ensuring equitable access to services and programs for English Language Learners.



### *Improving our services and presence through capital projects*

**Opening of the Roslindale Branch** – Mayor Michelle Wu and the Boston Public Library celebrated the renovation of the Roslindale branch of the BPL. The branch underwent an \$11.7 million, 14,855 square foot renovation that began in October, 2019.



The programming, design and construction of the branch was managed by the City of Boston's Public Facilities Department, with consultation from the Mayor's Office of Arts & Culture and architecture firm Leers Weinzapfel Associates.

***Opening of the Adams Street Branch*** – The new Adams Street branch of the Boston Public Library opened in July. The programming, design, and construction of the \$18.3 million reconstruction project was managed by the City of Boston's Public Facilities Department, with consultation from the Mayor's Office of Arts & Culture, architecture firm NADAAA, and J&J Contractors, Inc. The new branch was designed with the input of the Dorchester community, and entirely reimagined the prior space to prioritize inclusivity, transparency, access, and outdoor programming.

***McKim Master Plan complete*** – Thanks to an investment of \$800,000 from the City of Boston's Capital plan, the BPL was able to undertake a master planning project in partnership with the City of Boston's Public Facilities Department and Operations Cabinet, along with architecture firms Shepley Bulfinch and designLAB. The project was designed to explore how the BPL can improve access and performance within the building while providing opportunities for education, interpretation, and engagement. The plan also included an evaluation of the existing building systems, art and architecture conditions, special collections, back-of-house operations, public interfaces, exterior façade, and issues of accessibility in order to uncover opportunities for improvement.

The two focus areas of the McKim Master Plan were the third floor, along with the front entry and plaza to the building. The third floor of the McKim building has fallen into disrepair and has been closed off to the public for many years. The master plan envisions restoring this space to its former glory and returning it to public service as a one-stop reference space that includes reading rooms, multipurpose program spaces, small study rooms, and upgraded technology.

The front entrance of the McKim building is currently only accessible through a temporary metal ramp, while the plaza in front is in need of repair due to broken stones and has much more potential as a space for public gatherings and activities. The master plan envisions creating sloped walkways on either side of the front doors to provide an accessible entrance that compliments the architecture and also envisions seating areas and greenery on the plaza to create places for people to gather and to enjoy Copley square.

The next step for the master plan is to determine a phased approach to complete and fund all the work described in the plan.

***National and local recognition of our capital projects*** – the following page contains a list of all awards that have been won by BPL's new and newly-renovated capital projects.

Branch	Awarded by	Awards	Year
Adams	Society of Registered Architects	Unbuilt Award	2019
	Architect's Newspaper	Best of Design, Unbuilt	2019
	Interior Design Magazine	Best of Year Award, Library Category	2021
	American Architecture Awards	Unbuilt Award	2021
	Architect's Newspaper	Best of Design Award	2021
	American Architecture Awards	Winner	2021
	Interior Design Magazine	Global Future Design Award, Institutional	2021
	AIANY	Merit Award	2022
Roxbury	ALA/IIDA	Interior Design Award	2021
	AIA/ALA	Library Building Award	2021
	Boston Preservation Alliance	Preservation Achievement Award	2021
	IIDA New England	Award, Community and Culture category	2021
	AIA New England	Award	2021
	Boston Society of Architects	Sustainable Design Award	2021
		Honor Award for Design Excellence	2021
	Architect's Newspaper	Best of Design, Public: Honorable Mention	2021
	AIA Committee on the Environment	Top Ten award	2022
Roslindale	Preservation Massachusetts	Mayor Thomas M. Menino Legacy Award	2022





## FY23 Goals and New Initiatives

### *Library Services*

***Increase efforts around workforce development + economic recovery*** – We will be working with the BPL Fund to increase outreach services, partnership opportunities, and career placement services. With the hiring of a new Career Counselor, we will now be able to implement a client-based working model in Community Learning and KBLIC. KBLIC will also host an Entrepreneur in Residence.

***Preparing returning citizens for new technologies*** – For the first time, BPL will conduct a Tech Goes home training program with a cohort of returning citizens, serving a minimum of 40 students.

***Enhanced access to basic adult education and services in underserved communities*** – BPL will survey targeted communities to determine demand for services, to understand whether our offerings are the correct ones. Based on survey results, BPL will create new outreach plans in Community Learning to focus on underserved communities; in addition, plans already include hiring a Mobile and Outreach Supervisor; expanding Conversation Circles and literacy classes to meet demand, and launching an Adult Online High School program statewide by giving out 50 scholarships to prospective adult students. This program offers full high school diplomas, rather than GEDs.

***Support new Boston Public School librarians*** – As a result of the introduction of a new cohort of Boston Public School librarians, BPL will strengthen our support for the Metro Boston Library Network by repositioning the department, and reconfiguring staffing to include new positions that will assist these new librarians.

***Return to in person programming*** – BPL will continue to balance virtual and physical services to best serve the needs of our patrons in Boston, across the State, and beyond, providing large marquee programs in a hybrid virtual/in-person format, while returning to in-person programming as conditions allow. We will continue to bolster outdoor programming opportunities in the spring, summer, and fall.

***Better serving our younger patrons*** – BPL will define a plan for youth engagement work; convening a staff conversation in March with children’s librarians to develop a new way of looking at the Homework Assistance Program. Our Youth Services team will also audit and document our system-wide activities related to STEAM, in order to assess where improvements can be made.

***Enhancing professional development in Youth Services*** – BPL will create new, annual training opportunities for teen and children’s librarians by identifying the needs for professional development from children’s and teen librarians; creating a working group of librarians to identify possible trainings, and creating a budget to support trainings for both children’s and teen librarians.

### ***Increasing access to our special & research collections***

***Return of special collections to in-person public service*** -- This year will see the completion and opening of the Rare Books space and the reopening of special collections reading room to public service. This will entail moving the entire staff and collections into the new space; implementing new technology to facilitate tracking materials and patron requests; and preparing to re-introduce our special collections to the public through media outreach, a refreshed presence at bpl.org, and targeted outreach to specific stakeholders.

***New focus on archival material*** – The reopening of Special Collections does not mean the work is over. One major area of focus moves to our archival collections: a new Archives team has been hired and that department’s work will be focused on surveying existing archival collections and establishing physical and intellectual control of more than 500 legacy collections stored throughout the Central Library and COBAC.

***Improving access to research collections*** – Currently, significant portions of BPL’s research collections are stored in multiple locations, as many sections of collections were moved over time during the 2016 renovation of the Central Library and the current Rare Books renovation project. The library will be hiring a new Research Collection Manager to steward these collections and work with staff and stakeholders to evaluate preservation needs and identify and address access issues with these collections.

### ***Enhancing operations and technology to benefit patrons and staff***

***New Chief Technology Officer*** – The BPL has hired Keith Gillette as our new CTO. In his role, Keith is bringing a new perspective to transitioning our legacy systems, shoring up our technology infrastructure, further enhancing the BPL’s use of technology to streamline staff communication, and ensure that BPL’s technology security infrastructure is sound and secure.



***Videoconferencing in all locations*** – COVID made it extremely apparent that enhancing ways to communicate in person over systems like Zoom and Teams can be a valuable asset to increasing access to programs and services. To this end, the IT team plans to roll out videoconferencing capabilities across all locations of the BPL.

***New data analytics*** – Benchmarks and data have become even more crucial in a post-pandemic world, as we attempt to discern where we need to point additional efforts to aid patrons in their recovery. BPL will roll out a data analytics program for all staff to be able to run basic reports from anywhere, creating a set of benchmarks and encourage attention to using data to support the decision making process.

### ***Advancing our formal equity program***

***Making collaborative decisions*** – working with our Equity Program Officer, BPL will be convening a workgroup to improve and clarify decision making processes and authority at all levels of the organization with a view to reasonableness, inclusiveness, collaborative decision making, and transparency, appreciating the responsibility and accountability of all staff.

***Internal communications*** – A BPL team will be promulgating and implementing recommendations about how to develop functioning internal communication processes across all levels of the BPL that include all voices, particularly staff on the front line. These recommendations will outline various ways to communicate that recognize different needs in effective communication.

***Training*** – This year, BPL will also focus on developing a range of training programs for all staff that encourages cultural competency and respect for knowledge and experience already within our racially and ethnically diverse staff; encourages staff to take advantage of training offerings that support everyone's work success, enhances equity, recognizes non traditional qualifications, and facilitates career advancement.

***Focus on continuing to diversify our collections*** – We will continue to evaluate the new collections ordering plan, convening a staff input session; incorporating a diversity audit for library circulating collections, and creating a staff committee to create criteria for selection and review.

## *Enhancing community connections*

**Community outreach plans** – To better link community members to library programs and services within the BPL system and beyond, each of the BPL’s 25 neighborhood branches has drafted a formal community engagement plan. Community engagement is the process of working collaboratively with community members – be they library patrons, residents, faculty, students, or local organizations – to address issues for the betterment of the community.

Outreach is an extension of services and programs beyond the physical or virtual spaces of the library and focuses attention on services that are inclusive of traditionally underserved populations. By drafting formal plans, BPL is increasing our accountability to our community, and will not only help us strategically meet our users beyond our walls, but will also help promoting services and programs for non-users, the underserved, and people with special needs throughout the City of Boston.

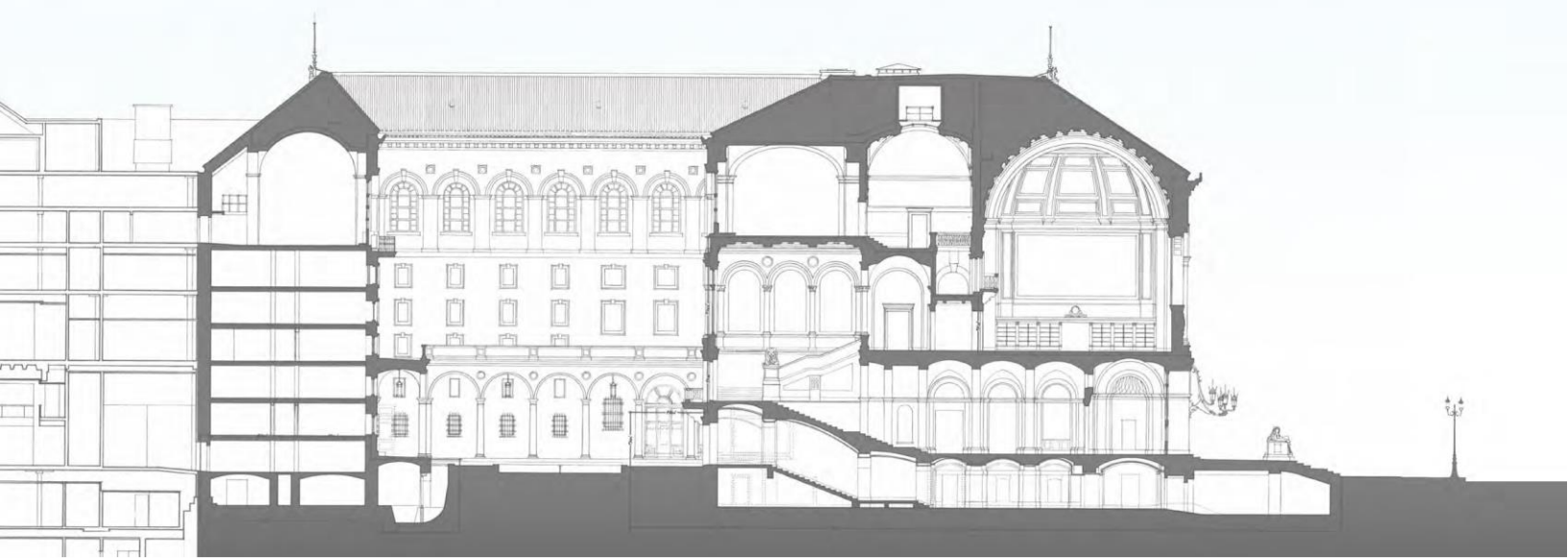
## *Improving stewardship of our collections*

**Continued process improvement of new collections policy** – this year, a newly formed Collection Review Committee will review the 2021 collection plan and current selection and maintenance practices, in order to make sure that we are responding to our community needs, and serving underrepresented or underserved members of our community. In addition, they will develop new guidelines to ensure that our collections are regularly reviewed to make sure that our existing materials are relevant and appropriate. BPL will also develop a streamlined selection process to ensure timely ordering and delivery of materials to patrons.

**Institute formal goals for collection development** – the Collections team will implement new goals for building and maintaining the BPL’s collections. These goals lay out that collections should:

- Feature content both by and about diverse individuals and a range of groups (e.g., races, ethnicities, gender identities, sexuality, disabilities, veteran status, and education level);
- Include collections in languages other than English, which should be regularly updated, maintained, and evaluated;
- Include high interest materials that may be outside the mainstream publishing and reviewing journals;
- Include up to date and accurate resources supporting education and self-improvement;
- Include materials to reach patrons at a variety of reading levels and literacy skills;
- Be accessible in a variety of formats, including books, audio books, large print, graphics, and downloadable + digital formats; and
- Consist of information that is accurate, current, and respectful





## Multi Year Projects/Investments

### *Continuation + Completion of capital projects*

- Complete Collections Study
- Complete Codman Programming Study
- Complete construction of Faneuil branch
- Complete Central Façade Study
- Start construction on McKim fire alarm panel
- Start North End programming study
- Start South End programming study
- Start/continue design process for
  - Fields Corner
  - Chinatown
  - Uphams Corner
  - West End
  - Egleston
- Determine strategy and timeline for McKim Master Plan
- Determine direction for work needed at Hyde Park and Connolly Branches

### *Collections*

The BPL has received \$2.1 million in private funding to revitalize the library's Founding Research Collection. These funds will enable the library to clean, catalog, and preserve 400,000 volumes of the collection, making them fully accessible to the public for the first time in the digital era. The initial stage of the project is underway, and we anticipate it continuing through 2023. Once the first phase of the project is complete, the BPL intends to continue this important work with the remainder of the Founding Research Collection.