

BOSTON PUBLIC LIBRARY

MANAGEMENT DISCUSSION + ANALYSIS

FY23



OVERVIEW

As populist rhetoric rises in volume across America, the Boston Public Library finds its services and staff more necessary than ever. While shoring up policies to protect intellectual freedom, BPL has also been shoring up the services and programs we deliver to an even broader population, focusing on orienting the Library to become even more welcoming and more accessible to as many users as possible.

At the outset of her administration, Mayor Michelle Wu made the wise decision to move the BPL into the Human Services cabinet; many of the new, robust library services that launched this year were specifically targeted to align with that mission – including more than doubling the number of patrons engaged in our English for Speakers of Other Languages programs.

BPL continued to focus on making our spaces more accessible, as we continue to deliver on the Mayor's major capital investments in our branches. With several branches in the design and planning process, and a ribbon cutting scheduled for Fall 2023, our new spaces are designed to be even more accessible, open, and welcoming to all.

A crown jewel of capital investment was the opening this year of Special Collections, but even as the new space has been well-utilized, patrons are finding a more simple and welcoming way to access these materials, not only through the new public service model of the reading room, but also through the efforts of our digitization team as they continue to strategically surface and make accessible an ever-expanding percentage of our collections.

Private fundraising grew this year as well, with some funds specifically directed to supporting formerly underserved areas, including a \$1 million bequest targeted to enhancing our activities and collections serving LGBTQIA+ communities.

These funds also supported new staff positions. Although BPL continues to be challenged by vacancies, there was enormous progress this year in hiring staff for important, newly created positions, including new branch staffing levels that allowed us to return to full service hours in all 25 branches across the system.

Improving staff culture was also a priority this year, with robust new training opportunities for leadership and managers; the results of these trainings are already being felt through the system, with more implementation and creativity to come. Some of this creativity will come through staff re-engagement with other library organizations, as we help move the sector and profession forward in partnership with the Boston Library Consortium, the Urban Library Council, and the Public Library of America, among others.

Our future goals build on this work of inclusivity and accessibility; these themes will be reflected in the work of our strategic planning process, scheduled to kick off in Fall 2023. We look forward to reflecting on the findings of that process in next year's report.



ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT

Workforce Development

First-ever workforce development plan

To empower patrons to apply for jobs and strengthen their job readiness skills, Community Learning's workforce development team created a new workforce development plan. In creating it, they considered survey responses from 22 neighborhood branches, and synthesized those results with Boston's census data to determine the areas where the needs were highest for workforce development services. To add to this data, the Career Counselor met with patrons at eight neighborhood branches that supported Boston's most underserved communities

Launch of new programs

Based on the data surfaced in the development of the workforce development plan, the team launched a slate of new, neighborhood-based programs, including one-on-one career counseling and job/career tech access points at Roxbury, Codman Square, East Boston, and Hyde Park; launched four job readiness trainings in partnership with the Women's Lunch Place, PowerCorpsBOS, and the Office of Youth Empowerment's summer work interns for BPL.

To add to the collective strength of other organizations doing this work, BPL has also strengthened our relationship with the MassHire/Work Inc. Dorchester Access Point, and has become a community partner member of MassHire/DCAP Roundtable, which meets monthly. In only three months, more than 30 patrons received MassHire services at our branches.

In addition, the Workforce Development team was invited to share BPL's Workforce Development Plan with Mayor Wu's cabinet in June 2022.

Google Career Certificate Program

The Kirstein Business Library and Innovation Center (KBLIC) has enrolled more than 370 learners with in Google Career Certificate Programs covering topics on Cybersecurity, Advanced Data Analytics, Digital Marketing & E-commerce, IT Support, Project Management, UX Design, IT Automation with Python, Business Intelligence.

By the numbers

More than 300 community members have been served with career counseling services, while new workforce development programs have been attended by more than 560 participants.

Entrepreneurship + small business advice

Entrepreneur in Residence

Our very first KBLIC EIR, Dr. Allana Da Graca, booked more than 180 appointments over the course of her residency, assisting patrons on their entrepreneurial journey.

Score Boston Mentors

Offering twice monthly one on one support to our small business community, Score Boston assisted more than 70 entrepreneurs over the past 12 months

Free legal advice

Pro bono attorneys from Goodwin provided 54 virtual pro bono attorney consultations; while attorneys from Foley Hoag, a recent addition to our roster of advisors, have already provided 13 in-person one on one consultations to date.

SBA Mentors

Our partnership with the Small Business Administration has offered in person one on one support to 47 patrons

Program Highlights

Government Contracting 101: Basic Requirements for Federal Government Contracting, Mentor/Mentee EIR Showcase & Networking Event, Let's Get this Business Started, Grow with Google Marketing, Quickbooks Workshop, Small Business Resource Fair, Confident Public Speaking for Entrepreneurs

Small business Alcove

A modest capital investment into creating enclosed spaces in KBLIC, where small business owners can take meetings in a professional setting, has paid off with nearly 5,000 total hours booked by more than 1,600 unique users.

Financial Empowerment**Vita Tax Prep**

Our weekly drop-in partnership with the Volunteer Income Tax Assistance Program has offered support to nearly 420 patrons.

Workshop Partners

Babson Financial Literacy Initiative, CFA Society Boston, City of Boston Credit Union, Legal Services Center of Harvard Law School, Office of Consumer Affairs and Business Regulation, Our Village Initiative/Massachusetts Housing Partnership, Volunteer Income Tax Assistance

Program Highlights

Six-part First Time Homebuyer Success Series, Investing for Your Future, Estate Planning, Basics of Investing, Personal Budgeting



SERVING OUR COMMUNITY

Social support for our patrons

Established place for patrons to connect

BPL opened a Community Support Team desk on the mezzanine level at the Central Library in Copley Square to meet with patrons; in addition, the team provided regular drop ins at West End, Fields Corner, and Roxbury to connect patrons to social services.

Peer Navigator

A newly created Peer Navigator position will support BPL's social worker in building relationships with vulnerable patrons and connecting them to social services, expanding the Community Support Team's capacity to serve patrons across the system by increasing our presence at branch locations

Pine Street Inn

A formal MOA has strengthened our partnership with Pine Street Inn; an outreach clinician now works closely with BPL's social worker to connect unhoused library patrons to supportive services, provide shelter referrals, and host weekly office hours at the Central Library in Copley Square.

Street-level outreach

We have also strengthened our collaboration with Boston Health Care for the Homeless' street team and the Massachusetts Department of Mental Health street team to help streamline services for unhoused library patrons. Both those street teams are engaging in outreach at Copley on a weekly basis.

Internships increase capacity

The BPL's resident social worker supervised two graduate student interns from Simmons University School of Social Work. Each intern completed 672 hours of work at the library. Graduate students worked directly with library patrons to connect them to needed social services, and assisted in the staff needs assessment.

By the numbers

209 encounters with patrons experiencing homelessness; 98 patrons connected to social services; 110 referrals made; 185 appointments with patrons.

In addition, the BPL hosted more than 120 programs focused on patrons' health and wellbeing, which were attended by 885 patrons. Programming partnerships included the Boston Legal Services Center, March of Dimes, Boston Public Health Commission, Honoring Choices MA, the Boston Area Rape Crisis Center, Boston Senior Home Care, Signing Basics, the Parent Professional Advocacy League, and much more. Many of the workshops were held with options for Spanish translation.

Literacy and ESL

English Classes

BPL's leveled English classes focusing on grammar and vocabulary development continue to grow in strength. In FY23, weekly classes were offered at Copley, East Boston, Grove Hall, Roxbury, Connolly, Honan-Allston, West End, Egleston, Jamaica Plain, Roslindale, as well as online.

Classes are tailored not only to students' levels of fluency in English, but also their level of literacy in their native language, along with expanding vocabulary for daily life and increasing students' confidence in their abilities. Ranging from beginner English with a focus on phonetics to advanced classes helping students communicate with ease in workplace and academic settings, BPL's offerings this year also included reading and discussion classes and English conversation classes.

Particularly timely this year were the addition of classes in beginning English for Ukrainian refugees, focused not only on English speaking and reading, but also instruction in the ABC's, as Ukrainian speakers use a different alphabet than English speakers.

Digital Literacy for speakers of other languages

In partnership with St. Mark Community Education Program, digital literacy classes especially designed for English language learners have been offered at the Central and Roslindale locations, and will be expanded to Grove Hall later this summer.

Citizenship Preparation Classes

Also in partnership with St. Mark Community Education Program, citizenship classes focus on understanding basic civics and U.S. history, as well as familiarity with the vocabulary needed to prove English proficiency. Students practice reading and writing skills each week, along with learning new civics content. This past year, a new citizenship class was added to our schedule (Pathways to Citizenship), which focused on building English speaking and literacy skills for lower-level English learners.

Outreach

Literacy Services staff have trained community groups and BPL volunteers to work with limited literacy students. Staff have also shared library resources to assist with building English proficiency and literacy skills.

By the numbers:

Library staff and our partners conducted 835 classes or tutoring sessions with double the attendance over FY22, with nearly 11,000 participants.

Community History

Oral history backpacks

FY23 saw the deployment of the Oral History Backpack program. This portable toolkit teaches users how to design an oral history project and best practices for this process, and includes check lists and form templates, along with primers on how to craft questions, how to interview remotely via Zoom, and additional information for participants. The backpacks have now been catalogued and have begun circulating in select branches.

Harriet Tubman House Memory Project

Community members, including members of I Am Harriet and United South End Settlements (USES), have been working to preserve the history of the Harriet Tubman House in partnership with the Boston Public Library, the Boston Research Center at the Northeastern University Library, and Northeastern University Archives and Special Collections.

This project aims to collect, preserve, and center the stories and memories embedded in this beloved community space. In FY23, we convened a final focus group meeting; held a public community feedback session; and ensured the project's sustainability through working with community members to identify individuals in digitized photographs; inviting community submissions through oral history or written narrative; and publishing memoirs written in partnership with GrubStreet.

Neighborhood Public Art Project

The BPL is now collecting and sharing information about artwork that is publicly displayed in Boston's neighborhoods, initially focusing on Roxbury, South End, Chinatown, and East Boston. This work consolidates information sources including the Boston Arts Commission and the City of Boston Office of Arts and Culture. Works are hosted at the Neighborhood Public Art in Boston WikiProject, along with a public art map, which displays the artworks on an interactive map of Boston, accessible via a centralized website.

Chinatown Collections Project

Based on conversations with the Chinatown community, BPL staff identified a need for a multilingual database of historical collections and projects pertaining to Boston's Chinatown. This database is designed to contribute information to ongoing community projects, identify items in need of preservation support, and establish partnerships for future collaborative efforts, including digitization projects. The web site launched with input and feedback from the community, and continues to gather data about community collections.

East Boston History Portal

The portal aims to preserve and celebrate the history of East Boston, a community known for its diverse and changing population of immigrants. The project site draws materials from the Northeastern University Archives and Special Collections (UASC), including a digitized newspaper, photographs, political cartoons, and oral histories. It will eventually include a set of written memoirs created through community storytelling and memoir events co-organized by the BPL and the BRC in collaboration with GrubStreet (a Boston-based creative writing center).

Eliot School Portrait Project

The BPL is collaborating with Eliot School's artist in residence, Feda Eid, who is working with a group of about 10 teens this summer on a portrait photography intensive, culminating in a series of about 10-12 portraits of Boston residents this summer. There will also be an oral history component, in which teen participants will interview portrait subjects.

Memoir Projects

BPL collaborated once more with GrubStreet, Boston's creative writing center, to offer three multi-week memoir workshops based in three neighborhood branches: East Boston, Roxbury, and the South End. This initiative was funded by the 2022 NEH American Rescue Plan grant for Community History. GrubStreet is currently working on anthologizing stories created through memoir workshops; these anthologies will be added to BPL circulating collections.

Instruction and Technology

By the numbers

This year, 500 patrons received assistance from the Instruction Services team through either one-on-one technology assistance from a staff member or by attending one of the more than 170 free computer/digital skills training class held this year.

Much of this work was to support the Long Term Lending program launched earlier in FY23 and help ensure LTL recipients had the necessary tools, training, and comfort to use their new devices effectively and safely.

Youth Engagement

Pivot to Summer Learning

After participating in a two-year Urban Libraries Council initiative, the BPL transitioned the popular Summer Reading program to Summer Learning. While summer reading is still integral to serving kids while they are out of school, this year saw amazing partnerships with local organizations to put the emphasis on programs revolving around STEAM (science, technology, engineering, arts, and mathematics).

Program partners include such organizations as the Animal Rescue League, Model Zoo Organism, Boston Lyric Opera, Institute of Contemporary Art, Countdown to Kindergarten, and many more.

Early Literacy

The BPL's Future Readers Club, which focuses on children from birth to kindergarten, saw programming expand to every location, along with the distribution of take-home early literacy kits, scheduled programs in languages other than English, and educational programs for parents and caregivers about the importance of reading to children of all ages. More than 53,000 participants attended more than 1,800 programs focused on early literacy.

SuccessLink Teen Employment

Partnering with the City, the BPL employed 15 teens in branches and at Central as part of the City of Boston's SuccessLink Teen Employment program. Teens helped in the Collections Department, Community Learning, Research Services, Kirstein Business Library & Innovation Center, Welcome Services, and at several branches.

Outreach to DYS sites expands across the state

With a grant from the Boston Public Library Fund, and assistance from the Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners, the Youth Services team is expanding its successful outreach program with the Department of Youth Services (DYS) beyond the City and into the MetroWest and North regions. The goal of this program is to provide starter collections and professional development to local librarians so they can provide outreach to their local DYS sites. The collections will be funded and purchased by Teen Outreach staff, and the professional development will be handled by Youth Services staff.



ENRICHING OUR NEIGHBORHOODS

Connecting directly to the neighborhood

- A new social media presence for Mattapan, helmed by Generalist Kathleen Keleher, has been very successful in promoting resources and events, such as recent resume and cover letter workshops.
- School visits continue to enrich student and parent lives:
 - East Boston Branch Librarian Margaret Kelly attended a coffee hour with the principal of the McKay School to speak to parents about library services, finding that parents were particularly interested in homework support, English classes, job help, and the Pathway to Citizenship program.
 - Grove Hall staff spent two full days promoting BPL teen events and resources at Boston Latin Academy during BLA's Comic Con, and also visited the Bridge Boston Charter School to speak with approximately 300 students
- Brighton Children's Librarian Allie Hahn partnered with Allston-Brighton's Community Development Corp. to invite kids from the BHA's Faneuil Gardens development to attend a Science with Scientists program to learn about and perform chemistry experiments.
- The Jamaica Plain branch opened students' eyes to careers in library work by participating in the Apprentice Learning program with the BTU School, during which an 8th grade student is exposed to meaningful work experiences to spark thinking about their future in high school, college, and career.

- Grove Hall hosted their first “Chatty Wednesday,” a collaboration with the senior center next door. Twelve seniors came over to have coffee, tea, and chat, while the Department of Transportation was on hand to discuss the Blue Hill Ave study.
- Staff have been working with the coordinator of the Hernandez School’s new adult education program for parents, where adults came to the branch to explore the bilingual collection, read, and sign up for library cards. While they read, their children attended a STEM program. Most of the parents now have library cards, all families learned about school vacation programming, and there have been repeat events scheduled going forward.

Bringing services from Central to the neighborhoods

- The Legal Services Center of Harvard Law School hosted a CORI sealing and wrap-around program to increase trust and access to human services for returning citizens in three community forums held at neighborhood branches.
- Seven students enrolled in a Tech Goes Home program for returning citizens at the Mattapan branch, enabling them to learn basic tech skills in their own neighborhood, as opposed to having to come in to Central.
- Grove Hall hosted more than 50 people for a program organized by the Leventhal Map Center. A panel of four longtime Roxbury residents discussed what it was like growing up in Boston, followed by an audience discussion about how the neighborhoods of Dorchester and Roxbury have changed in the last 80 years.
- Mattapan hosted best selling author Terry McMillan. This type of author talk would usually be held at Central; however, we are working to bring more of this type of programming to the branches instead.

Vibrant new staff

Mayor Wu’s FY23 budget allowed for the addition of six new positions in our branches: two librarians and four library assistants. Collectively, the addition of these new positions and filling them with new staff members has energized the branches, offering support to an already committed and creative team.



SERVING THE DEMAND FOR COLLECTIONS

Browse | Borrow | Board

In partnership with the Mayor's Office of New Urban Mechanics and the MBTA, BPL launched a program of delivering instant access to eBooks and eAudiobooks without a library card. Twenty sidewalk decals were placed at various bus stop locations around the city. Due to the project's success, the scope was expanded to 33 additional locations outside of Boston to accommodate commuters during the Sumner tunnel closure. To date, 709 users have signed up for access to materials while commuting.

A new Zine collection

BPL has ordered, catalogued, and added more than 900 items representing 300 titles in new “Zine” collections at 8 locations, including Central, Jamaica Plain, Egleston, Fields Corner, Roxbury, Roslindale, and Parker Hill. “Zines” are self-published works that have a limited print run, and are usually created with the intention to share one's thoughts, feelings, creativity, experiences, and knowledge with others. *Zines* are part of a DIY culture, which often includes people from marginalized communities or those who do not have access to more mainstream publishing options.

Increasing inclusion in our collections

This year, BPL continued to update and increase our holdings in our World Language collections at all locations. This included working with individual branches to increase or add specific language collections to their locations, creating new selection teams of staff to order in languages outside of English, and adding new collection codes to promote browsing and decrease time spent in cataloging. In FY23, BPL added nearly 7,000 new world language items, in ten different languages across all locations.

Increasing access to today's news

Through a new partnership, BPL can now provide patrons free access to the current version of The Boston Globe. Like the New York Times, patrons will have access to 120 “seats” available daily for patron usage; each seat allows for 72-hour access to the Globe. Patrons have unlimited requests and can sign up again once their 72 hours are over.

By the numbers

| <i>Digital circulation</i> | | <i>Physical Circulation</i> | | <i>Total Circulation</i> | |
|----------------------------|------|-----------------------------|------|--------------------------|------|
| FY19 | 1.8m | FY19 | 2.8m | FY19 | 4.6m |
| FY20 | 2.2m | FY20 | 2.0m | FY20 | 4.2m |
| FY21 | 3.8m | FY21 | 1.4m | FY21 | 5.2m |
| FY22 | 3.7m | FY22 | 1.9m | FY22 | 5.6m |
| FY23 | 4.1m | FY23 | 2.1m | FY23 | 6.2m |

WORKING TO CLOSE THE DIGITAL DIVIDE

Long Term Lending

In FY23, BPL completed the launch of the Long-Term Device Lending program, distributing 3,000 Wi-Fi routers and 6,000 Chromebooks, purchased through Emergency Connectivity Fund (ECF) grants, to Boston Public Library patrons who do not otherwise have access to equipment or services sufficient to meet their educational needs.

Expanding connectivity

In September 2023 BPL will expand its Chromebook Home Connectivity Kit and Wi-Fi Hotspot lending programs, providing services to Boston Public Library patrons who do not otherwise have access to equipment or services sufficient to meet their educational needs, in order to reduce month-long wait times in these popular programs.



INCREASING ACCESS TO OUR SPECIAL & RESEARCH COLLECTIONS

Special Collections reopens

In September 2022, the Special Collections department reopened to the public following the completion of a \$15.7 million City-funded renovation. The library's extraordinary collections of rare books, manuscripts, photographs, prints, archives, and much more are once again available for in-person use. On September 13th, Mayor Michelle Wu, alongside library and city officials, marked the occasion with a reopening ceremony in the newly completed public space. The 31,000 square foot renovation includes improvements to public spaces, including a new reading room and lobby; upgraded collections storage for rare books and manuscript collections totaling nearly 7 miles of specialized shelving; new staff workspaces; and a state-of-the-art conservation lab and fire suppression system.

Founding Research Collection project progress

In 2020, the library received \$2.1 million in private funding to preserve, catalog, and make the Founding Research Collection discoverable by the public. Following the hiring of a project manager last year, a vendor was hired to clean 157,000 volumes and 16,000 linear feet of shelving. Over 100,000 items have also been inventoried. Cataloging work has now commenced with the hiring of 3 project catalogers and BPL staff is working in concert with the BPL Fund to complete the project proposal for the next phase of the project with the external funder. This is expected to kick off in early 2024.

Improving public access to Research Collections

We have now reinstated off-site retrieval of collections materials from offsite storage at City of Boston Archival Center (COBAC) for delivery to patrons at the Central Library, and moved back/reshelved 100,000 volumes in the research collection that were previously stored off site and publicly unavailable due to space impacts from the Boylston Street (2016) and Special Collections (2022) renovations at the Central Library.

National Digital Newspaper Program

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 has now completed the 2021-2023 grant activities. This project produced 100,000 pages of content to be made available via [Chronicling America](#) and Digital Commonwealth.

Expanding digital access to photojournalism

Special Collections and the BPL's digitization team have completed the *Boston Herald-Traveler* Photo Morgue (BHTPM) digitization pilot. In 1978, BPL acquired the BHTPM, which contains an archive of the newspaper's photographic prints totaling close to a million photographs. This collection is widely used but is not fully cataloged due to its vast volume. With funding from the Associates of the Boston Public Library, staff embarked on a pilot project with an external vendor to provide both imaging and transcription services for [16,000 photos from the collection](#).

Houghton Mifflin collection

The Cataloging and Processing team has established new workflows for cataloging and digitizing the Houghton Mifflin Company's Trade Reference Library, which consists of one copy of each book published by the Company from 1832 to roughly the present. To date, over 5,000 items have been cataloged (approximately 20% of the entire collection) and over 4,000 volumes have been digitized through [Internet Archive](#).

Preserving neighborhood news

BPL's FY23 newspaper digitization projects included digitization from BPL's microfilm holdings as well as processing of files previously digitized by MyHeritage. Highlighting Boston's neighborhood newspapers, the titles selected for this project span from the mid-1800s to mid-1900s, representing many newspapers that currently have limited online availability, including the *Roxbury Gazette*, *Hyde Park Times*, *East Boston Free Press*, *South Boston Gazette*, *Charlestown News*, and the *Dorchester Beacon*. The nearly 800,000 newly digitized pages of information are now available in Digital Commonwealth.

Expanding access to historical television footage

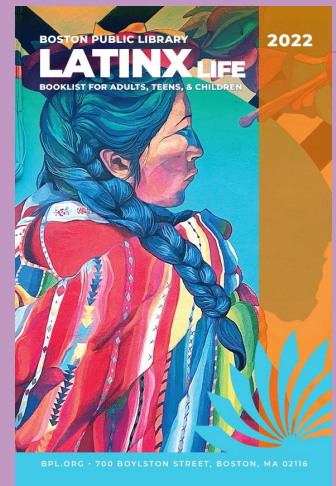
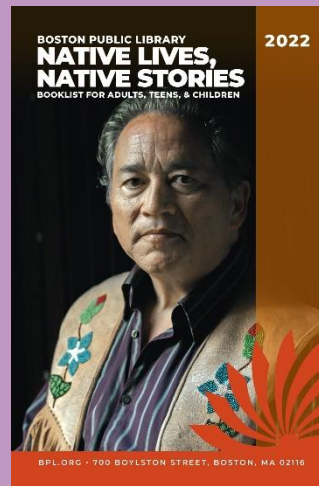
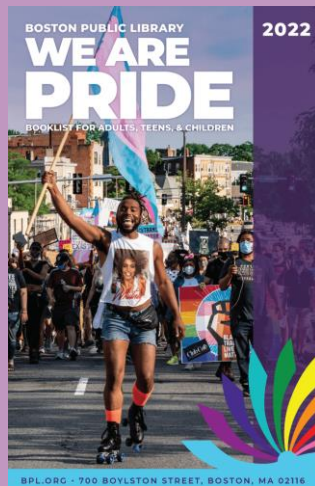
BPL's digitization team has now completed the ingestion of a portion of our first major video collection, [the WHDH collection](#). The WHDH Collection consists of some two million feet of film footage from 1961 to 1972, including news reporting and special programming covering Boston-area politics, education, activism, and policing ([view the collection](#)). Further digitization of film materials is scheduled for 2023-2024.

Online access to special collections

The digitization team has also added 62 BPL collections to Digital Commonwealth. The digitized collections showcase the range of BPL materials, including Medieval and Early Renaissance Manuscripts, American Revolutionary War-Era maps, Massachusetts WPA Federal Art Project Photograph Collection, and several newspaper titles and art collections. Digitized BPL collections received 1,160,698 views in FY23.

Digital Commonwealth Educational Fellowship

This one-year fellowship, supported by an MBLC grant, will evaluate and increase usage of digital collections in K-12 educational settings. Lara DeRose started on July 3, 2023 as the DC Education Fellow; in this position, she is creating online learning resources, promoting Digital Commonwealth at conferences and meetings, surveying K-12 educators about their usage of digital primary source materials, establishing connections with district-level curriculum directors and Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education administrators, and conducting research to better understand how digital collections can be integrated into curricula.



BRINGING EQUITY TO THE FOREFRONT

Affinity months

BPL's affinity group booklists continue to be well-crafted, well-read, and serve as the foundation of an increased effort to recognize Hispanic Heritage Month, Indigenous Peoples Month, Black History Month, and Pride. In addition, this year will mark the inauguration of a new booklist celebrating Disability Awareness Month. BPL's communications team has also begun partnering with the Special Collections, Collection Development, and Research Services departments to increase promote other items in our collections that build awareness of otherwise marginalized communities.

New Hispanic Heritage employee group

A newly formed group of Spanish-speaking staff are working to promote the Library to Boston's Latinx community, as well as increase the visibility of Latinx BPL Workers. Near term activities include tabling at the Puerto Rican Festival, Betances, and the Dominican Festival.

Collections Development Working Group

BPL is undertaking a system-wide review of how we purchase books, ensuring that many voices have input. Based on a recently implemented collection development policy, additional selection committees focused on ensuring that BPLs collections become ever more diverse and representative of our community.

Video Remote Interpretation

In partnership with the City of Boston's Office of Language and Communications Access, laptops have been installed in all branches and at the Central Library to quickly connect patrons who need to communicate in a language other than English to a trained interpreter. Our staff are then able to provide service and meet patron needs.

Menstrual Equity pilot program

Announced in concert with the Mayor and the Office of Women's Advancement, dispensers for free menstrual products have been installed in all three public restrooms at the North End Branch. The products were supplied through a partnership with the Mayor's Office of Women's Advancement and will be installed in an additional five BPL branch locations.

Formalizing recognition of affinity months/weeks/days

Adult Library Services has been meeting to review a drafted list of cultural heritage celebrations and identity awareness months/weeks; from here BPL will commit to planning and budgeting for its local programming, block programming, book displays, printed book lists, social media posts, etc. on a consistent basis across the system.



IMPROVING OUR SPACES THROUGH CAPITAL PROJECTS

Central Façade Study completed

As part of the McKim Master Plan process, the study evaluated 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 Central Façade study is now complete.

Connolly Branch Repairs and Refresh Study completed

This branch repair and refresh will focus on upgrading and replacing mechanical systems, windows, roof, and waterproof façade and assess space programming.

Hyde Park Branch Repairs and Refresh Study completed

The branch has undergone a \$614,000 repair project that began in August 2020. Repairs to the space included waterproofing the foundation walls, which was managed by the City of Boston's Public Facilities Department, as well as resetting the door threshold to offer an accessible entryway, installing an assistive listening system in Menino Hall, replacing and refinishing flooring in select rooms; and lighting and ceiling tiles in select areas, repainting the fireplace room, structural improvements and more.

Faneuil in construction

The renovation of the Faneuil Branch will focus on accessibility, new restrooms, furniture and finishes, technology, and programming space. This project is a collaboration between the Boston Public Library and the Public Facilities Department, and the architecture firm Oudens Ello Architecture.

Fields Corner in design

The \$12.1 million investment in the Fields Corner Branch includes a facility assessment, developing a building program, and supporting the construction of a new facility that supports the needs of the community.

McKim Fire Alarm Replacement in design

To bring BPL's safety standards up further, we will install new fire alarm initiation, notification devices, and wiring with full smoke detection coverage, all of which will report to a new fire alarm data gathering panel. The project will also include a fire rated emergency power room and a Boston Fire Department bi-directional antenna system.

Chinatown in predesign phase

The redevelopment of Parcel R-1 will create a mixed-use development with more than 100 units of income-restricted, affordable housing and a permanent Chinatown Branch of the Boston Public Library. Parcel R-1 is one of the last large municipally owned sites in Chinatown available for community based uses, and the selected use is based on several years of visioning workshops and planning studies.

Uphams selected a developer for housing + branch

The redevelopment of the former Bank of America property at 555-559 Columbia Road in Uphams Corner by Civico Development and DREAM Collaborative will create 33 units of affordable homeownership units in a development that will preserve the façade of the old bank building, provide parking, and deliver the shell of a new Uphams Corner Branch Library.

West End RFP process for housing + branch development of site

The City of Boston has issued a request for proposals for the redevelopment of the West End Library at 151 Cambridge Street. The request calls for a tower featuring between 17,500 and 19,000 square feet of leasable floorspace for the Boston Public Library, along with at least 11 deeply affordable housing units. Eight submissions to date have met the criteria for the City's RFP.

McKim Master Plan fundraising strategic planning

The Boston Public Library (BPL) has completed a conceptual master plan for the Central Library's McKim Building. As the execution of the McKim Master Plan will likely be the single greatest effort and largest financial project in a generation, the Library has requested additional engagement and strategic oversight at the level of the Trustees. It is hoped that funding for the McKim Building project will be obtained in phases from a combination of funding sources, including the Federal government, the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, the City of Boston, and from philanthropic support.



IMPROVING OUR OPERATIONS

Increasing branch capacity

FY23 saw the hiring and onboarding of six new positions in branches across Boston; these new positions have allowed our branches to return to their full hours of operation for the first time since the COVID pandemic.

- Mattapan Librarian
- Parker Hill Librarian
- West End Library Assistant
- South End Library Assistant
- Lower Mills Library Assistant
- Fields Corner Library Assistant

Improving cyber security

A new Cyber Security Analyst will ensure that we do not have a repeat of 2022's serious cyberattack, which brought down most of BPL's systems.

Shifts in the leadership team

The leadership team has new members, including a new Chief of Operations. The onboarding of this position also involved some significant restructuring of reporting, including:

- Special events reporting to Chief of Operations
- Human Resources now reporting to Chief of Staff

Strengthening the relationship between Research and Special Collections

A new leadership position, titled Director of Research and Special Collections, has been designed to strengthen the links between our special and research collections and increase opportunities for staff collaboration across our non-circulating collections.

Investments in leadership training

As an outgrowth of our EDI work with YW Boston, the entire leadership cohort took part in an extensive, multi-part leadership training initiative led by UMass Boston. The outputs of this training will be implemented in FY24, including more transparent and collaborative decision making processes, along with increased awareness of communicating those decisions at all levels of the organization.



INVESTING IN TECHNOLOGY

- **Polaris ILS Upgrade:** Upgrade to Polaris 7.4 to gain access to new features, including Aeon integration.
- **Community Oral History Backpack Initiative Coordination:** Assist with IT hardware and software selection and procurement for Community Oral History Backpack Initiative.
- **Makerspace 3D Printer Refresh:** Identify needs and outfit all BPL MakerSpaces with working 3D printers.
- **Video Interpretation Device Selection & Deployment:** Assess requirements for, procure, and install equipment to support pilot and scale-out of video-conference based language interpretation at BPL locations.
- **Rabb Quad Screen Replacement:** Upgrade Rabb Hall quad screen display.
- **Hybrid Work Pilot IT Equipment & Services Planning:** Develop and execute equipment distribution, remote access, and related communication plan to support City of Boston hybrid work pilot.
- **Board Management Platform Evaluation & Selection:** Conduct needs assessment, define requirements, identify & evaluate relevant alternatives, select and implement a board management platform.
- **Branch Statistics Reporting Improvement:** Develop and implement a replacement for the current email spreadsheet exchange for monthly collection of branch statistics used for annual reporting with a streamlined data collection process.



FY24 GOALS AND INITIATIVES



LIBRARY SERVICES

Social Work

- Expanding social service capacity by hiring full time Peer Navigator (certified peer specialist) and hosting 3 graduate student social work interns
- Complete patron needs assessment to gather patron perspective on social service needs and how the library can support vulnerable populations. Develop services based on this data and team's capacity.
- Incident report structure will be edited to include opportunity for staff to designate severity of incident and request a debrief (or some mechanism for staff to indicate that they need support)
- Continue to work with leadership to set priorities for implementing recommendations developed from staff needs assessment
- Social worker will begin offering Mental Health First Aid and Crisis Prevention training to BPL staff
- Launch Coffee Connection program at Newsfeed Café - purpose is to create relationship building opportunity for staff and unhoused/underserved patrons.
- Continue conducting branch visits to talk with staff. Need to visit Adams, Egleston, Brighton, West Rox, Connolly, Charlestown, Lower Mills, Parker Hill

Media Literacy

- Participate in Massachusetts Civic Learning Commission's (MCLC) Civic Learning Week
- Organize workshops with journalists on different news and media literacy topics. Ideas include:
 - Meet and greets with neighborhood newspapers at branches
 - "How Did This Get Made?" program about reporting and the journalistic process
 - Tips and Tricks from journalists about evaluating the news

- Organize creative programming focusing on Civic Engagement and Civic Participation. Potential ideas include:
 - A workshop on how to write letters to elected officials
 - Partner with City of Boston on a program to highlight different ways to get involved in their communities through City of Boston resources
- Establish and maintain bi-monthly outreach visits to the Boston Living Center, including hosting a knitting and current events conversation circle.
- Work with Collection Development Department to refresh media and journalism collections.
- Collaborate with Literacy Services Staff to pilot current event conversation group for ESL students.
- Begin circulating backpacks in select branches, with a plan for FY24 to hold public oral history workshops to coincide with the backpack rollout.

Improving our engagement with youth

Early Literacy

As part of the Future Readers Club, the library has renewed and reinvigorated our partnership with The Basics, a group creating strategies for whole communities to support vibrant learning and brain development among infants and toddlers, with a special emphasis on black families. Booklists, another round of take-home literacy kits, and a billboard campaign about the importance of reading are in the works for FY24.

Scholastic Support

The BPL will expand its Homework Assistance Program (HAP) to provide scholastic support and test preparation programming for high school students utilizing college mentors. There has been a large demand for test prep for teens, with waiting lists after each of our programs. HAP will continue to employ high school mentors to work with younger kids with their homework, and this expansion will see college students helping high school students with the test prep work.

Supporting our school libraries

With the addition of a new cohort of Boston Public School librarians coming on line, BPL is ginning up our efforts to support these librarians.



RESEARCH & SPECIAL COLLECTIONS

- Streamline the reference experience for patrons across all research and special collections through the building of collaborative service models, increased cross-training of staff, shared online reference portals, and improved navigation to collections and services on bpl.org.
- Build public awareness of special and research collections through BPL social media and patron newsletter promotions featuring recently digitized materials, newly acquired items, staff spotlights, and behind-the-scenes glimpses in our work stewarding the BPL's rare and distinctive collections.
- Lower barriers to discovery and encourage casual exploration of collections by the general public through regularly scheduled open houses, on-hold collections to support drop-in visits, and engaging rotations of collections in special collections lobby displays.
- Build internal structure and capacity to support class visits from local secondary and higher education institutions and build awareness of the library's services, collections, and online content through targeted outreach to educators.
- Explore and develop fellowship and internship opportunities to support exploration of collections, publications and programs highlighting research using BPL's collections, and build interest and experience for young people interested in working in the field.

- Launch the Arts Department’s collection management system *Collection Space* to provide online access to detailed collection information for visual materials held by Arts: photographs, prints, drawings, and fine arts.
- Use the recent Collection Storage Study to develop next steps for exploring options and opportunities for facilities and service models to meet the BPL’s current and future needs for collection storage that prioritize long-term stewardship, operational effectiveness, sustainability, and access.

OPERATIONS AND TECHNOLOGY

Ensure performance of critical systems to enable library service delivery

- **Cybersecurity Assessment & Remediation:** Conduct cybersecurity assessment using MBLC Cybersecurity Grant, developing and implementing recommended remediations.
- **Polaris ILS Upgrade:** Upgrade Polaris ILS to gain access to new features, including improved Aeon integration.

Enhance patron technology access

- **Patron Printing Improvement / TC Printing Documentation Update:** Improve patron printing experience, retaining the benefits of free printing while preventing its abuses
- **Faneuil Branch Renovation IT Equipment Planning and Deployment:** Assess needs, procure, and install IT equipment for reopening of Faneuil branch following renovation.
- **Quipu eCARD Implementation:** Replace current BPL electronic library card with Quipu eCARD as part of state-wide adoption led by MBLC.
- **RFID Evaluation:** Evaluate potential for RFID to replace TattleTape for collection security, improve patron check-out experience, and/or improve operational efficiency.
- **YLC Digital Billboard Coordination:** Coordinate with Youth Lead the Change representatives to plan and execute use of YLC grant to improve BPL digital signage.
- **Chromebook Connectivity Kit / Hotspot Expansion:** Evaluate continued demand for, procure, and deploy circulating Chromebook Home Connectivity Kits and Hotspots

- **Special Collections Reservation System Integration:** Integrate disparate systems to enable reservation of items in special collections.
- **Accessibility Technology Evaluation:** With Accessibility Committee, evaluate needs for accessibility technology and develop implementation plan.
- **Meeting Room Videoconferencing Enablement Prioritization:** Provide accessible programming and services to all patrons by expanding virtual and hybrid programming technology across all library locations

Improving metrics to understand our impact

- **Incident Reporting Database Enhancement:** Assess needs, define requirements, compare alternatives, select, and implement a replacement for or updates to the incident reporting database.
- **People Counter Replacement:** Replace all security gate-based people counters in all BPL locations with automatic network, people counters, improving the accuracy and reporting efficiency of visitor counts and enabling eventual removal of security gates when Tattle-Tape based collection security is formally dropped.
- **Dashboard Reporting System Requirements Definition:** Assess needs, define requirements, and develop projects for implementation of reporting dashboards for improved use of data in operational and strategic decision-making.

ENHANCING THE DIGITAL EXPERIENCE OF OUR COLLECTIONS

Adding value + diversity to digital collections

- Improve the quality and consistency of digitized items to make them more discoverable, understandable, and educational for users.
 - Perform large-scale audit of controlled data fields (genres, names, subject headings, etc.)
 - Explore collaborations with academic partners to use machine learning tools to enhance description, such as via automated transcription or geolocation tagging
 - Seek out institutions and collections that document the experience and expression of communities that are not well-represented in Digital Commonwealth.

- Build relationships with institutions representing traditionally marginalized communities
 - Collaborate with Special Collections curatorial staff to evaluate current digital collections, establish a baseline for measuring efforts to increase diversity, and prioritize digitization of existing and newly acquired collections representing diverse communities
 - Promote existing digital collections documenting experiences and expressions of BIPOC and other traditionally marginalized communities
 - Seek out trainings, conferences, and other learning opportunities related to DEI efforts in digital collection development
 - Review existing policies and procedures to evaluate ways in which they may be deterring or prohibitive for traditionally marginalized communities

Increasing access to digital collections

- Make digital collections more accessible, discoverable, and easy to use.
 - Work with statewide partners to promote sharing materials via Wikimedia Commons and identify public domain collections for upload
 - Develop and deploy newspapers digital library (massachusettshistoricalnewspapers.org)
 - Add features and improve user experience on digitalcommonwealth.org
 - Improve integration of digitized collections within other bpl.org web properties

ADVANCING EQUITY

- Continue to advance Collection Development Policy to affirm the BPL's commitment to equity, diversity, and inclusion principles through our collecting practices; this initiative prioritizes representation in our collections of the communities we serve; and lays out rationale and considerations for new collections.
- Offer staff learning and training opportunities such as a healing session for BIPOC staff, cultural competency workshops, and community building and staff retention skills.
- Creation of cultural heritage calendars to recognize and share in the many and various holidays and celebrations enjoyed by our staff and patrons.
- Hiring additional ESL instructors and multi-lingual staff to support our patrons who speak languages other than English.

COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

Aligning with our City colleagues

As BPL operationalizes our move to the Mayor's Human Services cabinet, BPL will prioritize enhancing our service alignment with three City departments: the Office of Youth Engagement & Advancement, the Office of Veterans' Affairs, and the Age Strong Commission. This will build on this year's partnership with OYEA on BPL's response to some youth behavioral issues; in addition, BPL will be creating its first 'Age Strong' specialty librarian.

Staff Support

- With input from staff at all levels, continue to hire and train new staff, including 10 new branch staff included in the FY24 budget.
- Improve documentation for processes and procedures
- Increase training opportunities
- Asked branch librarians what their ideal staffing situation numbers and worked to increase staff

Further Increase Community Engagement

- Continuing to create and execute on branches' tailored Community Engagement Plans
- Begin to hold meetings with Friends' groups on a quarterly basis
- Continue to decant BPL services out of Central and into branches, finding partnerships to broaden our reach even further
- Continue to work with staff and Collection Development team to ensure their collections reflect their communities

Creating Welcoming Spaces

- Continue to support ongoing capital projects at branches, including community outreach
- Ensure provision of interim services at locations undergoing renovation
- Increase targeted programming at each location
- Provide additional funds to branch locations for community appropriate programming

CONTINUED CAPITAL INVESTMENTS

Faneuil branch will reopen

We are looking forward to returning the branch to service with renovations focused on accessibility, new restrooms, furniture and finishes, technology, and programming space. A new addition will increase the square footage of the branch from 6,411 to 11,400.

Fields Corner branch will start construction

The \$12.1 million investment in the Fields Corner Branch includes a facility assessment, developing a building program, and supporting the construction of a new facility that supports the needs of the community.

Chinatown will start design

We look forward to a permanent home for the Chinatown Branch, which has been operating in temporary space since February 2018. The permanent branch will fulfill a long-term community goal to restore library services to the neighborhood.

Uphams in predesign phase

This process will build on goals established by the community, outlined in both Imagine Boston 2030 and the Upham's Corner Station Area Plan of the Fairmount Indigo Planning Initiative.

The process produced an RFP to solicit development services to deliver affordable housing, affordable commercial space, and a branch public library. This effort is guided by a unique partnership between the City of Boston, the Boston Planning & Development Agency (BPDA), the Dudley Street Neighborhood Initiative (DSNI), and the Upham's Corner community.

West End in predesign phase

One of the City of Boston's first Housing with Public Assets projects is in the predesign phase, with developer selection anticipated by Fall 2023.

Egleston Branch will start design

In FY19 a programming study launched at the Egleston Square Branch to assess the interior and exterior physical conditions of the building and to identify the library services needs of the community; this project is scheduled to go into the design phase in FY24

South End branch will start hybrid study and design

After a flood in 2023, the decision was made to expedite the study and design of this project. This will include a facility assessment, review of neighborhood goals, and development of an updated building program that.

McKim Master Plan fundraising strategic planning

As the execution of the McKim Master Plan will likely be the single greatest effort and largest financial project in a generation, the Library will need to seek funding for this project. It is hoped that funding for the McKim Building project will be obtained in phases from a combination of funding sources, including the Federal government, the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, the City of Boston, and from philanthropic support.