ANNUAL REPORT 2023
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LIBRARY BOARD OF TRUSTEES

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School Representative

Francine Kitts  
Friends of the Library

Riya Karnik  
Student Representative  
1/2023 - 6/2023

Jannat Zaanoun  
Student Representative  
9/2023 - 12/2023
It is hard to believe that 2023 is now behind us! The year was filled with activities for all ages and an exciting renovation and that made for an eventful year.

After years of planning, the Library completed a renovation of the circulation area. Moving the wall created a more open floor plan and expanded the entrance area with three modern service desks, creating the focal point of the area. Each desk is equipped with up-to-date technology allowing staff to offer efficient and friendly service. The staff and I thank everyone for their patience while the renovation was being completed.

- The Library held over 1000 programs for all ages. Storytimes, book discussions, lectures, sewing classes, Socrates Café and more, there was something for everyone!
- New public computer tables were installed. The tables provide a spacious work area and task lighting and more privacy.
- The Outreach Department was busy as usual circulating over 50,000 items throughout the Township. A new service called Bundles of Joy for parents and families was introduced in the fall and continues to grow. Check it out on page 12.
- The Friends of the Library added two new American Girl Dolls, Kavi, and a Bitty Baby, and funded the popular museum pass program.
- The Farmers Market returned to the Library parking lot for its second year. Ruth Santulli, the Library’s new Market Manager, scheduled over 20 vendors, several of whom were new to the Market.
Looking forward to 2024 there are many exciting events and services on the horizon.

- The Library will celebrate its 35th Anniversary on April 1, 2024, with several special events during April, May, and June.
- The Library Foundation will host its first Golf Outing on June 10 at Greenbriar Whittingham golf course.
- The Bookmobile will be adding weekend and evening stops to their schedule later in the year.
- The popular Farmers Market returns for a third season.
- A new circulation system will make locating and checking out materials easier.

This is just a preview of what is to come in 2024. Watch the Library’s website, Facebook, and Instagram accounts or sign up for the Library’s e-newsletter and be one of the first to know when something new and exciting is happening at the Monroe Library!

I will see you at the Library,
Leah Wagner
2023 was the year of upgrades for the Circulation Department. The much-anticipated Circulation Desk renovation was completed in November.

Visitors may have experienced some dust and noise during the construction, but every effort was made to minimize disruptions during library hours.

The project results have generated a lot of positive feedback from patrons and staff alike: better lighting, more workspace, a wider entrance, and a more modern appearance are just a few.

Library Director Leah Wagner said, “The Circulation Desk and surrounding area are part of the original building from 1997. The goal of this project is to ease congestion of checkout lines and to create more space. We have been planning for this upgrade over the last five years and are excited to see it come to fruition.”

The construction of the Circulation area was completed on time. We celebrated with a ribbon cutting attended by Mayor Stephen Dalina, the Library Board of Trustees and Circulation Manager Jaclyn Gryszka.
NEW COMPUTER DESKS

The Library had new computer desks installed. The new desks have task lighting and provide desk space for Library users to work more comfortably and with greater privacy.

CIRCULATION

- The Library operated a total of 345 days in 2023.
- This year the Library circulated a total of 271,952 items.
- The busiest day of the week was Saturday.
- Circulation staff welcomed 2,345 new patrons to the Library and ended the year with a total of 28,496 registered Library patrons.
- Two new libraries joined the Libraries of Middlesex Automation Consortium (LMxAC) allowing Monroe Township residents access to those Library’s collections.
- As always, our goal is to provide outstanding customer service while continuing to meet the needs of the growing community.
Planned more than 400 in-person, virtual, and/or hybrid adult programs.

Collaborated with:
- Monroe Township Cultural Arts Commission.
- Monroe Township Environmental Commission.
- Monroe Township Senior Center.
- The Friends of the Monroe Township Library.

Partnered with:
- Monroe Township Tax Office to make appointments for the public for Anchor rebate application assistance at the Library.
- AARP to make appointments for the public for tax filing assistance at the Library.
- Middlesex County Surrogate’s Office as a remote location to meet with residents.

Adult Services Coordinator, Jennifer Rojas, served on the Mayor's Wellness Commission to plan and promote several community-wide health and wellness events.

Scheduled more than 175 one-on-one technology assistance appointments.

Provided off-site health and technology education programs and book cafe at Monroe Township Senior Center.
YOUTH SERVICES

CHILDRENS SERVICES

- Youth Services held 481 programs in 2023 with 9,189 attendees.
  - Youth Services staff collaborated with the Community Center to offer monthly storytime during their “Toddler Tuesday” program.
  - Makerfest 2023 was held on March 25 and brought over 1,000 people into the building.
  - Camp Library 2023, our annual Summer Reading club - hundreds of kids participated and read!
  - Summer Camps included Shark Tank, Guided Painting class, Public Speaking, Video Game Creation, and 3D Printing class.
  - Halloweekend included a Spooky Storywalk, Magic Show & Spooky Storytime.
  - Lynnette Fucci, Head of Youth Services, hosted a Halloween Costume Swap.

- Kavi and Bitty Baby were added to the American Girl doll collection thanks to the Friends of the Library.
- As of October, all music CDs were discarded from the Youth Services Department.
• Collaborations and visits with the Monroe Township Schools:
  ○ RAVE Readers were finally back in the classroom for the first time since 2020. We hosted a reception in June to thank them!
  ○ Brownies & Books collaboration with the Monroe Township Education Association.
  ○ Miss Lynnette & Youth Services Librarian, Becky Osowski’s annual end of year school visits were a hit (despite the AQI alerts!) The 5th grade list was updated and the students LOVED the new books.
  ○ Miss Becky visited all the Kindergarteners in the School District from September - November.
  ○ Miss Lynnette was a guest reader at Barclay Brook in November.

TEEN SERVICES

• Teen Services held 166 programs in 2023, with 3,167 attendees:
  ○ 231 volunteers who logged 3,228 hours in shelf-reading, Math and Reading Buddies, Tech Buddies, program prep, reader’s theater and more.
  ○ There were 10 programs on college readiness, including essay writing, paying for college, getting the most out of high school, and practice ACT and SAT tests.
  ○ Some fun programs this year included the monthly Teens Cook Series, knitting classes, Cricut classes, a murder mystery party, all kinds of art classes, including our collaboration with New Beginnings Animal Rescue in New Brunswick for a shelter pet art contest.
The Library awarded 7 volunteers with the President’s Award for Volunteer Service for the first time.

Emily Mazzoni, Young Adult Librarian, visited the middle school ELA classes and Media Center 10 times and saw 887 students.

Miss Emily helped 11 teens with their college applications and essays.

The Young Adult collection is circulating really well, with books on the New shelf going out an average of three times during their six-month New status.

Manga and graphic novels continue to see some of the highest circulation numbers.
Bundles of Joy, a delivery service to parents welcoming a new child, was created as a collaboration between the Outreach & Youth Services Departments. Six families are currently receiving delivery with another family expected to start in February 2024.
• 400 stops were completed in 2023 with 9,318 patrons visiting the bookmobile.
• Visits to Falcon Care continued to be successful with 90 students registered by December with 31 of these students receiving their first library card.
• Visits to Academy Learning Center resumed in March. All 18 classes can check out books at each visit.
• Evening visits in the parking lot of Mill Lake School were more popular than ever this summer with 105 patrons visiting over 4 stops.
• In coordination with the Extended School Year Program, the Bookmobile visited MTHS and Oak Tree over the summer.
• Staff and volunteers walked with the Bookmobile in the Jamesburg Memorial Day Parade and distributed 500 flags to onlookers.
Outreach and Youth Services staff supported the Monroe Township Police Department at National Night Out. 792 attendees visited the library’s table and loved the opportunity to spin the prize wheel.

Outreach staff promoted library services to 579 attendees at Octoberfest.

The Bookmobile was decked out in lights for the township’s annual Holiday Car Parade.

Four new stops were added to the regular schedule, The Fairways, Monroe Parke, Monroe Place and a morning visit to the Community Center.

During the renovation of the Circulation Desk, the Bookmobile was open in front of the library. We were able to assist 242 patrons seeking library services while the Library was closed to the public for two days when flooring was installed.
AT HOME SERVICES

This personalized service is for patrons who are unable to visit the library due to health or mobility issues. Library staff members visit with Monroe residents at their homes to provide:

- Library materials:
  - Reading and entertainment items in multiple formats.
  - Spark Kits for patrons and families experiencing issues with memory loss and dementia.
  - Listening devices for the visually impaired from The Talking Book and Braille Center, part of the NJ State Library.

- Services:
  - Notary Services at homes and facilities.
  - Technology assistance at homes and facilities.
  - Coordination of books for book clubs in facilities.
  - Collect and deliver eyeglasses.

- Information:
  - New book release flyers.
  - Various safety flyers distributed throughout the year.

- Personal Connections:
  - Birthday cards - Celebrated two residents who turned 100 or better!
  - Bookmarks made by middle school and high school volunteers.

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<tr>
<th>TOTAL ITEMS CHECKED OUT</th>
<th>7034</th>
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<tr>
<td>TOTAL NUMBER OF PATRONS EVERY 3 WEEKS</td>
<td>97</td>
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<tr>
<td>TOTAL NUMBER OF COMMUNITIES SERVED</td>
<td>24</td>
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FOR LIBRARY VISITORS

- Facilitated the move and operation of public computers for patron use in newly designed spaces with John Mazzola, IT Specialist.
- Teen tech volunteers were given with an opportunity to interact with patrons and assist with computer/device questions.
- Provided one-on-one Device Advice Sessions for patrons four times per week throughout the year.

FOR LIBRARY STAFF

- Facilitated the movement and operation of computers for staff use in renovation circulation space with John Mazzola, IT Specialist.
- Designed and implemented training classes for staff for Microsoft 365 including Outlook, Calendar, Teams, and OneDrive.
- Initiated Lunch and Learn style sessions to assist staff in adapting to and incorporating new technologies in their day-to-day tasks.

NORTHSTAR DIGITAL LITERACY LEARNING

- Initiated the use of the Northstar Digital Literacy Learning Resource through a grant from the New Jersey State Library (NJSL) and served as a Northstar Online Learning (NSOL) Administrator.
- Visited the Senior Center to share Northstar Digital Literacy access for digital literacy learning.
24/7 LIBRARY SERVICES

The Library offers a variety of resources that are available 24/7 from home or anywhere Monroe residents may have an internet connection. Library cardholders can access:

- Ancestry Library and MyHeritage.
- Mango Language learning.
- Novelist and BookBrowse.
- LinkedIn Learning and LearningExpress.
- CreativeBug.

The Library also provides a number of ways to access ebooks, digital audiobooks, digital magazines, as well as streaming movies and music:

- eLibraryNJ (via Libby or an internet browser).
- Hoopla.
- Kanopy.
- Freegal Music.

ELECTIONS - POLLING PLACE

The Library has served as a polling location for Monroe Township’s Ward 2 District 4. In 2021, the Library was also selected as an early voting location for all of Middlesex County. The Library is proud to serve the residents of Monroe and Middlesex County in this way.
NEW TO THE LIBRARY

- Adult Services - part-time Adult Services Librarian, Rebecca Wood.
- Adult Services - part-time Senior Library Assistant, Mia Reiser.

NEW ROLES

- Kelly Palombit became Outreach Manager. She started her career at the Monroe Township Library at the Welcome Desk and previously was the Bookmobile Manager. Kelly continues to expand and enhance Outreach services to Monroe Township.
- Patricia (Patcy) Drake became Technology Training and Support Specialist. She also started her career at the Welcome Desk before obtaining her Masters in Library Science and working part-time as a Reference Librarian. Patcy brings years of experience teaching technology to Library users and staff.

NATIONAL PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

- Emily Mazzoni, Young Adult Librarian, served as an ALA Librarian Advisor for the Great Stories Club grant and as the Administrative Assistant to the YALSA Michael L. Printz Award Committee.

MOVING ON

- Kim Zito retired from her long time role as a part-time Reference Librarian. She served the Monroe community since she joined the Library in 2004.
2023 YEAR IN REVIEW

271,952
Items Checked Out
48% Youth Services
19% BKM/AHS

1,073
Library Events

32,090
Attended Library Events

2,345
New Cardholders

117,246
Visits to our website

+5.36%
from 2022 to 2023 in Downloads/Streaming

Farmers Market

Monroe Market

20+ Vendors

500 Average Weekly Attendance

33,541
E-Books Borrowed

24,884
Digital Audiobooks Borrowed

8,472
Digital Magazines Borrowed

6,456
Movies Streamed

Monroe Township Public Library
4 Municipal Plaza | Monroe Township, New Jersey 08831 | 732-521-5000 | www.monoetwplibrary.org/