

MINUTES
REGULAR MEETING OF THE
BUFFALO & ERIE COUNTY PUBLIC LIBRARY BOARD OF TRUSTEES
January 19, 2023

The regular monthly meeting of the Board of Trustees of the Buffalo & Erie County Public Library was held on Thursday, January 19, 2023, at the Central Library and remotely pursuant to due notice to trustees. The following members were present:

Kimberly Johnson, Chair
Carima El-Behairy, Vice Chair
Alan J. Bedenko, Esq., Treasurer
Joel Moore, Secretary
Michael Amodeo
Kathleen Berens Bucki*
Lucy A. Candelario
John D. Craik
Frank Gist
Theodore K. Johnson
Sharon M. Kelly, Esq.
Elaine M. Panty
Christopher Sasiadek, Esq.

*Trustee Bucki attended the meeting remotely due to an extraordinary circumstance; pursuant to the B&ECPL Procedures for Trustee Videoconferencing, she was a full participant in the meeting.

Chair Kimberly Johnson called the meeting to order at 4:01 p.m. A call of the roll was taken. A quorum was present.

Chair Johnson first asked for a moment of silence to honor long-time Library Trustee Sheldon Berlow, who had passed away the week before. Following the moment of silence, she stated the Board was better for having had him. Trustee Kelly noted an obituary was in that morning's Buffalo News.

Agenda Item B - Approval/Changes to the Agenda. There were no changes to the proposed agenda.

Agenda Item C - Minutes of the Meeting of December 15, 2022. On motion by Trustee Amodeo, seconded by Trustee Bedenko, the Minutes were unanimously approved as mailed.

Agenda Item D – Report of the Nominating Committee. Nominating Committee Chair Elaine Panty reported the committee met on January 5. The following slate was nominated for 2023:

Chair: Kimberly Johnson

Vice Chair: Carima El-Behairy

Secretary: Joel Moore

Treasurer: Alan Bedenko

Executive Committee Members: Sheldon Berlow, Lucy Candelario, Elaine Panty

Agenda Item D.1 – Election of Officers and Executive Committee. Trustee Panty noted due to the passing of Trustee Berlow, there was an opening for nomination to the Executive Committee. She nominated Trustee Christopher Sasiadek. This was seconded by Trustee El-Behairy. There were no other nominations from the floor for Officers or Executive Committee members. On a motion by Trustee Amodeo, seconded by Trustee Gist, nominations were unanimously closed.

On a motion by Trustee T. Johnson, seconded by Trustee Craik, the slate as amended was unanimously approved.

Agenda Item E – Meeting Schedule for 2023. The 2023 meeting schedule was included in the Board packet as an information item. Meetings will continue to be held on the third Thursday of the month at 4:00 p.m.

Trustee Moore asked if there was an option to receive the Board packet by email only. Assistant to the Director Erin Vest noted that notice must be mailed per NYS Education Law.

Agenda Item F – Report of the Chair. Chair Johnson opened the floor for trustees to share memories of Sheldon Berlow. Trustee Panty, Trustee T. Johnson, and Trustee Gist shared stories. All agreed he held wide-ranging interests, was not afraid to discuss any topic, and was deeply passionate about the Library.

Chair Johnson continued her report, asking trustees to complete the *Contact Information Update Form*, *Committee Volunteer Form*, and *Conflict of Interest Statement* provided at their place and return them to Erin Vest. She also noted there are currently two openings for contracting library liaison assignments and passed around a sign-up sheet for those interested.

Chair Johnson noted a copy of Education Law Section 226 was provided to each trustee, with the section on trustee absences highlighted. A copy of the *B&ECPL Procedures for Trustee Videoconferencing* was also provided. She reiterated the need for an in-person quorum in order to properly convene a meeting. The past two meetings have had issues

with quorum; the November meeting was cancelled due to a lack of quorum, and the December meeting was only able to be held because she came in person after having had surgery. She urged trustees to attend meetings and provide appropriate and timely notice of attendance or absence.

Trustee Panty asked to speak on the topic. She stated over her 34 years on the Board, there were only two times prior to this year that she could remember when a meeting could not be held due to lack of quorum. Then they almost had two in a row. She noted Deputy Erie County Executive Lisa Chimera tried to attend both meetings, and our issues with quorum did not go unnoticed. It is important to maintain a good relationship with Erie County, as they approve our funding. She also opined it was disrespectful to library staff, who do the work behind the resolutions each month. She also noted the need to set a good example for contracting library boards. Finally, she asserted the work the Board does is vitally important to the functioning of the Library and needs to be taken seriously. Trustee Gist responded that part of the issue was coming out of the era where virtual attendance was allowed in all cases and counted for quorum. Trustees have to get back into the habit of attending in person.

Chair Johnson next noted Library Advocacy Day in Albany is scheduled for February 28. She plans to attend and asked trustees to consider attending as well.

Finally, Chair Johnson reported the B&ECPL Board of Trustees had 100% participation in trustee giving in 2022. She thanked Trustee Kelly, Assistant Deputy Director Joy Testa Cinquino, and Development Manager Maureen Germaine for their work. She also asked that trustees consider giving earlier in the year in 2023.

Agenda Item G – Committee Reports.

Agenda Item G.1 – Executive Committee. The Executive Committee met on January 12, 2023. A copy of the written report was included in the Board packet. Trustee El-Beahiry summarized the meeting. Trustee Panty moved to have the written report entered into the Minutes, Trustee T. Johnson made a second, and this was approved unanimously.

Present: Executive Committee Chair Kimberly Johnson, Vice Chair Carima El-Beahiry and member Elaine Panty. Also present were Director John Spears, Chief Operating Officer Jeannine Doyle, Chief Financial Officer Ken Stone and Development & Communications Clerk Melissa Burgess.

The meeting of the Executive Committee began at 4:01 p.m. After a call of the roll, it was noted that a quorum was present.

The Executive Committee reviewed the proposed agenda for the January 19, 2023 B&ECPL Board of Trustees meeting.

Trustee Panty recapped a recent meeting of the Nominating Committee, noting that a member of the committee recently resigned from the Board. The election of officers and the Executive Committee will take place at the January Board meeting.

Discussion ensued about the Board's meeting schedule for 2023, which includes the standard meeting on the third Thursday of each month at 4:00 p.m. Chair Johnson noted that she would like to bring a preliminary discussion to the table about changing the time, particularly to be considerate of Library staff who attend. She reiterated that this is a discussion that can be had on an annual basis, and is not intended to accommodate any specific Trustee.

Director Spears stressed that Library staff will continue to perform their role in facilitating the Board, regardless of when meetings are held. He noted that how Boards operate has changed drastically since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as the overarching changes in the world and society at large. Trustee Panty said that attendance was never a problem until recently, and reiterated that the Board still requires an in-person quorum to take action.

Chair Johnson plans to address the issue of meeting quorum, as well as overall attendance expectations for Trustees, at the January board meeting. Trustees will also be reminded of the importance of RSVP'ing to meetings with appropriate notice. In addition, Chair Johnson will report on a recent program at the Frank E. Merriweather, Jr. Branch Library in honor of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

Trustee Panty provided an update on behalf of the Policy Committee. Three policies have been amended to include legal updates and patron-inclusive language. COO Doyle noted that the EEO policy had an additional change to reflect the updated New York State Human Rights Law, which adds citizenship and immigration status as a protected class.

CFO Stone reviewed Resolution 2023-4, which will allow the Library's Petty Cash Fund to be realigned and align the titles of specific lines with what is recorded in the SAP system. He also noted that the Library is projected to finish out 2022 better than expected and slightly under \$100,000 over budget.

Director Spears said that he plans to discuss the Regents Advisory Council's vision for New York State libraries at the January Board meeting. A copy is included in the monthly report, sent to all trustees and staff. He will also discuss his recent trip to Albany to testify on eBooks, digital materials and the challenges of digital publishing.

Director Spears also noted that Library Advocacy Day in Albany is coming up on Tuesday, February 28. An invitation will be sent to Trustees. Members of Library Administration as well as representatives from contracting libraries typically attend.

Finally, Director Spears reported that he has been asked to edit the American Library Association's Intellectual Freedom Manual. This is a great honor, with more details to come.

Trustee El-Behairy noted that there would be a Report of the Foundation at the January 19 meeting. The Foundation meets the day prior.

The Association of Contracting Library Trustees is next meeting on Saturday, January 21 at the West Seneca Public Library. It is anticipated that a representative will attend the January Board meeting.

COO Doyle briefed the Committee on Resolution 2023-5, which will approve a new contract with CMU, which represents full-time and regular part-time clerical and maintenance employees within the contracting libraries. The four-year contract contains terms similar to the recently-approved CSEA contract.

Finally, Director Spears noted the addition of Resolution 2023-6, which speaks out against book banning. In doing so, B&ECPL would join a group of other libraries including PULISDO and other New York libraries. A brief discussion ensued to discuss previous challenges the B&ECPL has faced, as well as the presence of First Amendment auditors in libraries.

Following review, the Executive Committee had no further changes to the proposed agenda.

With no further business to discuss, the Executive Committee meeting adjourned at 4:54 p.m. on a motion by Trustee El-Behairy and a second by Chair Johnson.

Agenda Item G.2 – Policy Committee. The Policy Committee met on January 6, 2023. A copy of the written report was at each trustee’s place, as well as posted online. Trustee Panty summarized the meeting. Trustee Sasiadek moved to have the written report entered into the Minutes, Trustee Kelly made a second, and this was approved unanimously.

Present: Chair Elaine Panty and members Michael Amodeo and John Craik. Also present were Chief Operating Officer Jeannine Doyle and Assistant to the Director Erin Vest.

The meeting of the Policy Committee began at 1:00 p.m. A quorum was present.

COO Doyle noted all policies on the agenda were due for annual review. The Equal Employment Opportunity & Anti-Harassment Policy included several changes to reflect legal updates, changes in library practices, and utilization of more patron-inclusive language. She noted the new references to an Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Officer; if the changes to the policy are approved by the Board, a current staff member outside Human Resources would be charged with the duties of that role, and a new generic email address would be created for reporting instances of harassment. Following review, Trustee Amodeo moved to have the amended Equal Employment Opportunity & Anti-Harassment Policy brought to the full Board for approval. Trustee Craik made a second, and this was approved unanimously.

COO Doyle next reviewed the amended Sexual Harassment Prevention Policy. Trustee Amodeo asked about the ability of a patron or staff member to file a criminal complaint instead of addressing instances of harassment through the Rules of Conduct. COO Doyle recounted instances when law enforcement was called due to violations of the Rules of Conduct or trespassing following a ban from the library. The committee agreed to add the language “and applicable laws” to the relevant section to better address this possibility. Other changes to the policy were based on changes in New York State law. Trustee Craik moved to have the Sexual Harassment Prevention Policy with the aforementioned amendment brought to the full Board for approval. Trustee Amodeo made a second, and this was approved unanimously.

No changes were recommended to the Procurement Policy this year. On a motion by Trustee Amodeo, seconded by Trustee Craik, the committee unanimously agreed no changes to the Procurement Policy were necessary at this time.

Finally, COO Doyle provided a summary of changes made to the B&ECPL Personnel Policies and Procedures Manual since the last annual review. The policies are the responsibility of Human Resources, who may make changes throughout the year. In 2022, the Whistleblower Policy was updated by the Board, and a policy regarding COVID-19 procedures was removed from the Manual. She noted all boards in the System review and readopt the Manual each year. Trustee Amodeo moved to bring the updates before the full Board for approval. Trustee Craik seconded, and approval was unanimous.

With no further business, on a motion by Trustee Amodeo, seconded by Trustee Craik the Policy Committee adjourned at 1:20 p.m.

Agenda Item G.2.a – Amend Equal Employment Opportunity & Anti-Harassment Policy. Chief Operating Officer Jeannine Doyle explained Resolution 2023-1 as presented, noting one additional change was made after the Policy Committee review to reflect a change in NYS Human Rights Law. Trustee T. Johnson moved for approval, Trustee Sasiadek seconded, and the following was approved unanimously.

RESOLUTION 2023-1

WHEREAS, the Buffalo & Erie County Public Library Board of Trustees adopted an Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) and Anti-Harassment Policy on April 20, 2017, and the policy has been reviewed and/or amended periodically, most recently on November 18, 2021, and

WHEREAS, B&ECPL’s System Administration has recommended updates to the policy to reflect changes in New York State law, including additional protected classes, changes to library practices, and utilization of patron-inclusive language for clarity, and

WHEREAS, these changes have been vetted by B&ECPL legal counsel, and

WHEREAS, the Policy Committee recommends the attached proposed amended EEO and Anti-Harassment Policy for approval by the full Board, now therefore be it

RESOLVED, that the Board of Trustees of the B&ECPL adopts the proposed revisions to the B&ECPL's EEO and Anti-Harassment Policy to supersede and replace the existing policy last amended November 21, 2019, and be it further

RESOLVED, that copies of the approved amended EEO and Anti-Harassment Policy replace the existing policy in the B&ECPL Personnel Policies and Procedures Manual as Chapter 8, Section 1, and be it further

RESOLVED, that the amended EEO and Anti-Harassment Policy replace the existing policy in each Contract Library's annual agreement, Exhibit G, and be it finally

RESOLVED, that the Board of Trustees of the B&ECPL authorizes this policy be transmitted to all B&ECPL libraries, Contract Library Directors, and Contract Library Trustees and authorizes public posting on the Library's website.

Agenda Item G.2.b - Amend Sexual Harassment Prevention Policy. COO Doyle explained Resolution 2023-2 as presented. Trustee T. Johnson moved for approval, Trustee Candelario seconded, and the following was approved unanimously.

RESOLUTION 2023-2

WHEREAS, the Buffalo & Erie County Public Library Board of Trustees adopted a Sexual Harassment Prevention Policy on December 18, 2018, and the policy has been reviewed and/or amended periodically, most recently on December 16, 2021, and

WHEREAS, B&ECPL's System Administration has recommended updates to the policy to reflect changes in New York State law and inclusion of language specific to non-employee incidents, and

WHEREAS, these changes have been vetted by B&ECPL legal counsel, and

WHEREAS, the Policy Committee recommends the attached proposed amended Sexual Harassment Prevention Policy for approval by the full Board, now therefore be it

RESOLVED, that the Board of Trustees of the B&ECPL adopts the proposed revisions to the B&ECPL's Sexual Harassment Prevention Policy to supersede and replace the existing policy last amended December 16, 2021, and be it further

RESOLVED, that copies of the approved amended Sexual Harassment Prevention Policy replace the existing policy in the B&ECPL Personnel Policies and Procedures Manual as Chapter 8, Section 2, and be it further

RESOLVED, that the amended Sexual Harassment Prevention Policy replace the existing policy in each Contract Library's annual agreement, Exhibit I, and be it finally

RESOLVED, that the Board of Trustees of the B&ECPL authorizes this policy be transmitted to all B&ECPL libraries, Contract Library Directors, and Contract Library Trustees and authorizes public posting on the Library's website.

Agenda Item G.2.c - Amendments to B&ECPL Personnel Policies & Procedures Manual and Employee Handbook. COO Doyle explained Resolution 2023-3 as presented. Trustee T. Johnson moved for approval, Trustee Amodeo seconded, and the following was approved unanimously.

RESOLUTION 2023-3

WHEREAS, the Board of Trustees of the Buffalo & Erie County Public Library has the power and duty to determine and carry out all policies and principles pertaining to operations of the library and the exclusive power and duty to control library personnel, and

WHEREAS, on December 18, 2014, the Board of Trustees of the B&ECPL approved and adopted the B&ECPL Personnel Policies and Procedures Manual and the B&ECPL Employee Handbook to be effective January 1, 2015, and

WHEREAS, thereafter, each Contracting Library Board within the B&ECPL System adopted same, and

WHEREAS, the Human Resources Department reviews the policies and procedures in the Manual throughout the year and makes changes as necessary, and

WHEREAS, changes to said policies and procedures may require corresponding updates to the Handbook, and

WHEREAS, On December 20, 2018 the Library Board approved Resolution 2018-44 directing annual review by the B&ECPL Policy Committee of all changes made by the Human Resources Department to the B&ECPL Personnel Policies and Procedures Manual and Employee Handbook in the course of the 12 months prior to the Committee's review with subsequent Committee recommendation for approval by the full Board, and

WHEREAS, on January 6, 2023, the B&ECPL Policy Committee reviewed the changes made by the Human Resources Department to the policies since its last review on November 18, 2021 and recommends approval by the full Board, now therefore be it

RESOLVED, that the Board of Trustees of the B&ECPL approves the revisions to the B&ECPL Personnel Policies and Procedures Manual and Employee Handbook made since November 18, 2021, and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Human Resources Department will continue to update the B&ECPL Personnel Policies and Procedures Manual and the Employee Handbook, as necessary, and will distribute same to all departments and contract libraries as set forth in the Introduction to the Personnel Policies and Procedures Manual.

Agenda Item G.3 – Budget and Finance Committee.

Agenda Item G.3.a – Realignment of Petty Cash Fund. Chief Financial Officer Ken Stone explained Resolution 2023-4 as presented. Trustee T. Johnson moved for approval, Trustee Craik seconded, and the following was approved unanimously.

RESOLUTION 2023-4

WHEREAS, it is necessary to periodically review the use of the Buffalo & Erie County’s Public Library Petty Cash Funds, and

WHEREAS, identified changes in the operational needs and usage patterns of the Library necessitate adjustments within these funds, now therefore be it

RESOLVED, that the Board of Trustees of the Buffalo & Erie County Public Library authorizes adjusting the Library Petty Cash Funds balances as follows:

Name	Current	Revised	Notes
City Branch Change Fund	200.00	200.00	
Change Machine Central	250.00	200.00	Quarter Machine
Second Change Machine Central	0.00	200.00	Dollar Machine
Secondary Change Fund	450.00	500.00	Extra Quarters and Dollar Coins
Circulation Change Fund	641.00	441.00	Fine Free less cash needed
Imprest Fund	2,000.00	0.00	Credit card purchases
Petty Cash Checking - Travel	5,000.00	0.00	
Petty Cash Checking	0.00	7,000.00	Correct Title/Merge Travel & Imprest fund
Petty Cash Regular	500.00	500.00	
Total Petty Cash Funds	9,041.00	9,041.00	

and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Board of Trustees of the Buffalo & Erie County Public Library authorized the Library Director or his designee to undertake the actions necessary to implement the above changes.

Agenda Item G.3.b – Monthly Financial Report. The monthly financial report for the year as of November 30, 2022 month-end close was included in the Board packet as an information item. CFO Stone state the Library remained within budget. Looking at unofficial year-end numbers, utilities are set to be over budget by \$67,000 for 2022. He noted natural gas prices have been moderating, and because we accounted for higher prices in the 2023 budget, there should be no similar issues in 2023.

Trustee Gist asked if there were any issues during the blizzard. CFO Stone noted some security and maintenance staff stayed at the Central Library for the duration of the storm without going home. Director Spears provided them with a tab for food at Braymiller Market at the suggestion of Assistant Deputy Director Judy Fachko. There were no issues with power at the Central Library. However, the Isaías González-Soto Branch Library did experience a power outage and a heat outage due to a burst pipe. He was able to do an emergency order, and it should be fully functional by the end of the month. In the meantime, they were able to do a workaround to restore heat to the building. He noted the branch was already under construction, so water damage was limited as furnishings and library materials were not in the building.

Trustee T. Johnson asked about the overage for the Workers Compensation line. CFO Stone noted that expense can fluctuate year-to-year. However, the rate we get is through Erie County and is significantly lower than what we could obtain on our own. Unemployment insurance is similar.

Agenda Item E – Report of the Director. Director Spears reported the Association of Contracting Library Trustees would be meeting that Saturday, January 21 starting at 8:30 a.m. at the West Seneca Public Library. System trustees are welcome to attend, and several parts of the meeting would meet the training requirement for library trustees. There will be presentations on challenges to library materials, book selection and weeding, system updates and trustee training, and member involvement in ACT.

Director Spears reported he would be editing the next edition of the *Intellectual Freedom Manual*. This American Library Association publication is the best practical reference for the *ALA Bill of Rights* and associated policy statements, reflecting the current state of intellectual freedom, censorship, privacy, and more. He will be working with Erin Berman of the Alameda County Library on the approximately 2-year project, which could involve some travel to Chicago (paid for by ALA). He has previously worked on the other side of the project, updating policies while on the ALA Intellectual Freedom Committee.

Director Spears reiterated Library Advocacy Day in Albany is scheduled for Tuesday, February 28. He asked that any trustees interested in attending the event let him and Erin Vest know by Monday, January 23. He noted hotel rooms had been booked for Monday night, and transportation would be provided. On the day, B&ECPL representatives will attend 30-minute meetings with NYS senators, assemblymembers, or their staff. NYLA will provide talking points, including construction and operating aid. He noted Heidi Ziemer at WNYLRC is helping with setting up meetings.

Director Spears reported he had missed the December Board of Trustees meeting to testify before the NYS Assembly Committee on Libraries and Education Technology. NYLA selected him and 15 other librarians from across the state to provide testimony

on the future of libraries. He presented on digital content. Other topics included book challenges, staffing school libraries, and participation in the NYS retirement system. Another area of focus was civil service. He noted issues with recruiting librarian staff stem from the timing of the testing and scoring as well as the requirement for professional experience for the entry-level title of Librarian I. There are currently B&ECPL staff with librarian degrees working in lower-level titles due to these issues; often they will leave for other employment opportunities before being able to be hired as librarians at the B&ECPL. COO Doyle noted the exams can only be given approximately every 1.5 years currently; before about five years ago, they were offered on a continuous recruitment basis. Director Spears noted one idea is to increase the number of non-competitive Librarian Trainee titles at the B&ECPL, at least until proposed civil service reforms are made. Overall, he stated his experience in Albany was fascinating. He noted the chair of the committee at that time had toured libraries throughout the state and noted she had enjoyed her time at the B&EPCL.

Director Spears next brought up the Regents Advisory Council on Libraries' *Vision 2022* report, which was included as part of his director's report. The report lays out strategic priorities for libraries of all types going forward. He noted these priorities reflect a new direction for libraries, broadening the focus from books and literacy to establishing themselves as community organizations that advance the public good. Three priorities are to ensure the public has access to information and the internet; advance diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging; and ensure the social wellbeing of communities. These goals necessitate going outside of the library and into the broader community. Director Spears noted the final goal was exemplified in the way the community used the Frank E. Merriweather, Jr. Branch after the May 14 mass shooting as a space to heal as well as obtain resources.

Director Spears asked trustees what they felt about the report. Trustee El-Behairy stated the report resonated with her. She felt there was a lot the B&ECPL was already addressing. Trustee Gist noted he has always advocated for the lending of laptops and hotspots. Director Spears reported the program to lend these devices has expanded and is in all B&ECPL libraries. The program was recently supplemented with additional laptops from a grant, and the Library also started lending hotspots on their own. He noted one issue is how to address lost items, as replacement costs are very high compared to other lost item fees. He noted the items are bricked if not returned, but losses still occur. It is something they are working through.

Trustee T. Johnson voiced his support of Resolution 2023-6, noting the B&ECPL should be a leader in the fight against book bans, before leaving the meeting at 5:05 p.m.

Trustee Panty opined the B&ECPL does have programs for the community, but it needs to find new strategies to get that information to the public. She particularly noted the need for outreach to some refugee communities. Director Spears noted he had recently

spoken to COO Doyle about the message of the library. He noted often what our libraries – and libraries in general – do is reported as a list, which can make it hard to establish a brand for the Library or libraries as a whole. Trustee Moore suggested “community conduit of learning.”

The following report was submitted by the Director and transmitted to Board members prior to the meeting:

B&ECPL Monthly Report December 2022

The Regents Advisory Council on Libraries has worked with library staff and stakeholders throughout the state to create a document (attached to the end of this report) that provides a vision for what libraries in New York should be. It is a bold document, and the State Library is encouraging libraries to discuss, embrace, and provide services that demonstrate these values.

Frank E. Merriweather, Jr. Branch Library – The Merriweather Library has become a true community meeting and programming space. The library finished 2022 with a grand total of 924 community-led programs and events in the library. This is a testament to what the library space means to the community. In addition, the Frank E. Merriweather, Jr. Branch Library began a partnership with Rooted In Love by installing a community refrigerator in the vestibule area to provide fresh produce/healthy food and household items to community members.



Literacy Buffalo- Niagara Partnership – Literacy Buffalo-Niagara has been offering digital literacy training at the Frank E.

Merriweather, Jr., Elaine M. Panty, and Leroy R. Coles, Jr. branch libraries. The representative assists patrons in any technology needs they may have. These particular branches welcome many patrons using our computers and require one-on-one assistance with a wide variety of digital tasks.

It Takes a Village Community Day – Information Services and Outreach Librarian **Andrew Maines** coordinated the *It Takes a Village Community Day* held at the Central Library on December 10. During the event, Belmont Housing Resources for WNY, Spectrum Health & Human Services, the Fruit Belt Community Land Trust, the Community Health Center of Buffalo, and other agencies discussed community resources they provide. The event also featured music from the Phenomenal Ladies of Rhythm and a food and clothing give away.

Wellness at Central – New York State Public Health Corps Graduate Fellow **Sophia Charles** and Information Services and Outreach Librarian **Shanley Olszowy**

coordinated the *Wellness at Central* program on December 15. In addition to tabling by various agencies, including Community Access Services, Field & Fork Network, the Kidney Foundation of WNY, Erie County Department of Health, BestSelf Behavioral Health, Restoration Society, and the University at Buffalo's *Buffalo MATTERS* (Medication Assisted Treatment & Emergency Services) program, the event also featured short presentations about their services from the Kidney Foundation and the Field & Fork Network in the Ring of Knowledge at the Central Library.

1. Public Services

Central Library:

Programming Highlights – The Launch Pad Makerspace began a weekly *Drop-In Painting* program on Fridays beginning December 9. Literacy Buffalo Niagara started providing their *Digi-Skills* program for adults in the Computer Area at the Central Library on Mondays beginning December 12. This program provides one-on-one assistance to help improve computer and digital literacy skills. Information Services and Outreach Librarian **Jacob Rachwal** presented an online instructional video titled *Cooking with a Librarian- Panettone Bread* on December 21. The recipe was from the book *Christmas: Making the Perfect Celebration* by Carolyn Bell. The video received many positive reviews on the Central Library's Facebook and YouTube pages.

Tours – Children's Services and Outreach staff welcomed class visits that included programs and tours throughout the month for Cub Scout Pack 583, West Buffalo Charter School, Buffalo Public School #32, Bennett Park Montessori, Buffalo Academy of Science Charter School, and Westminster Community Charter School. Tours were also provided throughout the month. **Shanley Olszowy** hosted a "Haunted" tour of the Central Library on December 9 for High School students from Ellicottville Central School District's Literary Club, ESPRA (Ellicottville Students Preserving the Reading of America). The students were interested in hearing about Central's haunted history and touring the stacks, as they were reviewing ghosts in literature such as found in Dicken's "A Christmas Carol." The students were also very interested in learning more about the Launch Pad Makerspace and how to have games sent to their local library from the Gaming Unplugged collections. Special Collections Manager **Susan Buttaccio** attended the *Buffalo & Erie County Public Library 1st Annual Trustee Holiday Gathering* held in the Collections Gallery space on December 14. She provided brief tours to members of various Library Board of Trustees and their guests interested in the *B is for Book* exhibit. Rare Book Curator **Amy Pickard** provided a Rare Book tour on December 21, to Library Director **John Spears** and his guest, Matilda Koskas, Head of Legal Deposit, Bibliothèque Nationale de France. Ms. Koskas was shown the *B is for Book* exhibit, the Mark Twain Room, the *Quadrupeds* exhibit, and many treasures in the Rare Book collection.

Buffalo Branches:

Programming Highlights – The Buffalo Branches welcomed patrons with seasonal/winter holiday crafts and programming. Programming was offered for children through adults. Crane Branch Manager **Dan Lewandowski** traveled to branch libraries to offer his popular gingerbread program. All Buffalo Branch libraries offered

take and make crafts, as well as one-on-one technology trainings. North Park Branch Library and the Elaine M. Panty Library offered storytimes.

Outreach:

University Express – As part of the Erie County Senior Services’ University Express program, TechKnow Lab Librarians **Brendan Chella** and **Jacqueline Hovey** provided *Computer Basics* classes at the Tosh Collins Community Center, Westminster Commons Senior Housing, and Schiller Park Senior Center throughout the month.

BPOkids – Children’s Services and Outreach Librarian **Jennifer Lelinski** and Page **Sumia Akter** participated in the Buffalo Philharmonic Orchestra’s *BPOkids Jingle Bell Jam* pre-concert activities on December 11. They promoted the library and distributed Take and Makes to participants.

B is for Book Exhibit:

	Number of Visitors		
	Month	YTD	From Opening (9/2020 to Present)
Non Tour-Related	2,218	22,489	48,583
Tour/Program	296	1,390	2,526
TOTAL <i>B is for Book</i>	2,504	23,879	51,109

2. Collection Development

Buffalo Firefighters Story – **Susan Buttaccio** added a new piece to the Rich Newberg Reports Collection on the Library’s Digital Collections platform, *The Buffalo Firefighters Story*, highlighting the commitment and sacrifice of some of Buffalo’s Bravest.

Physical Collections:

	Item Adds		Title Adds		Collection Size
	Month	YTD	Month	YTD	
Juvenile Print	2,662	31,017	309	3,313	542,086
Young Adult Print	397	5,978	73	1,143	78,978
Adult Print	2,689	45,321	585	9,125	1,798,934
Media	2,391	32,992	342	4,041	566,343
Other*	1,705	22,601	45	409	174,267
Subtotal	9,844	137,909	1,354	18,031	3,160,608

*Includes magazines, generic copies, and other

Electronic Collections*:

	Item Adds		Title Adds		Collection Size
	Month	YTD	Month	YTD	
eBooks	10,747	38,760	2,348	17,551	103,069
eAudiobooks	25,494	66,764	1,262	5,302	70,245
Digital Magazines	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	4,428
Subtotal	36,241	105,524	3,610	22,853	177,742

* The B&ECPL also provides access to all *hoopla* eBooks, eAudiobooks, videos, and music albums. These titles are not included in the collection size total, as they are not owned by the B&ECPL.

All Collections:

	Item Adds		Title Adds		Collection Size
	Month	YTD	Month	YTD	
Total	46,085	243,433	4,964	40,884	3,338,350

3. Funding/Fundraising

Fundraising:

Campaign Name	Campaign Dates	Raised to Date
Annual Appeal Total	January 1 - December 31, 2022	\$371,115.51

Trustee Giving - Thank you to Buffalo & Erie County Public Library Trustees! We had 100% giving from you in 2022. Your financial support is appreciated!

Year in Review - The B&ECPL conducted a variety of fundraising efforts throughout 2022, including:

- *2022 Yearend Appeal* -1,062 donations were received in November and December, raising \$79,765.88.
- *Bucks for Books* - 483 donations were received in 2022, raising \$64,273.35.
- *Giving Tuesday* - 69 donors supported the Library on November 29, raising \$3,803.00.
- *Online Store* - 49 items were sold in 2022, with the Library receiving \$1,160.72.
- *Amazon Wish Lists* - 47 items were bought by donors for the Little Free Pantry and Library By Mail/Mobiles Department, totaling almost \$1,000 in goods.

4. Staff Development

Technology Training - All staff throughout the system were required to complete technology training in 2022 appropriate to their position in order to meet the annual requirement for New York State Minimum Public Library Standards. The majority of staff completed training on Libby or hoopla to better serve patrons using these services.

Public Health Literacy - **Sophia Charles** and **Shanley Olszowy** provided a presentation for B&ECPL managers and directors on December 14. They gave an overview of public health and its relation to equity and social justice and shared how public health goals were being addressed at the Central Library.

Webinars - Staff attended many pertinent webinars in December, included *Disinformation and the Literacy Landscape* (presented by Niche Academy), *Libraries and the Substance Abuse Crisis* (presented by Niche Academy), and *Remember Your Patrons Living with Memory Loss* (presented by WebJunction).

5. Communications

Media:

Type of Communication	Topic	Air Date/Publish Date
Live morning show from Central Library interviews with Children’s	Technology, programming, and sensory story times	Spectrum News, December, 1

Services and Outreach Manager Kristi Dougherty Library Director John Spears		
Media Event at the MRW Branch Library - with Congressman Higgins, Deputy County Executive Lisa Chimera, County Legislator Howard Johnson, Project Flight co-directors and founders Elizabeth Cappella and Geraldine Bard, students from St. Joseph's Collegiate Institute, and Library Director John Spears	Unveiled the Equity, Social Justice, and Peace Collection	WGRZ and WBFO, December 16 and 17
Taped Radio interview with Library Director John Spears, Project Flight, and St. Joseph's Collegiate Institute	Equity, Social Justice and Peace Collection	WBFO Radio, will air in Jan 2023

Social Media:

	Staff Activity		Public Activity		Followers	
	Month	YTD	Month	YTD	Month (New)	Total
Facebook	89	1,287	5,027	38,657	25	11,295
Flickr	-	224	2,026	65,260	-	59
Google Ads ¹	N/A	N/A	1,856	30,779	N/A	N/A
Instagram	23	346	1,551	42,999	87	4,576
Pinterest ²	88	658	249	1,215	2	2,115
Podcast ³	2	36	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
TikTok	-	10	174	1,903	2	388
Twitter	49	694	287	5,692	56	10,987
YouTube	4	100	862	15,615	7	463
Total	255	3,355	12,032	202,120	179	29,883

¹Google Ads is provided to the Library through a grant. Monthly activity based on public clicks and verified calls from the Library's online advertisement.

²Pinterest analytics currently unavailable.

³Podcast public activity measurement cannot be tracked accurately because it is available through multiple applications.

6. Partnerships

Children's Centers in the Courts YWCA WNY - On December 6, 400 children's books were delivered by the B&ECPL Shipping Department to the drop-in child care center at the courthouses. Children's Services and Outreach Manager **Kristi Dougherty** coordinated with Receiving and Distribution Supervisor **Cynthia (Cindy) Zubler** and Children's Centers in the Courts Program Coordinator Stefanie Kerr to have the books delivered.

Erie County Correctional Facility - The Erie County Correctional Facility and the B&ECPL Institutions Department reopened the Library at the Erie County Correctional Facility in Alden, NY after a two-and-a-half year closure related to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Help Me Grow Western New York - Ann Kinney, Centralized Access Point Coordinator, and Danielle Galenski, Systems Builder from Help Me Grown Western New York, presented to the B&ECPL Youth Services Group on December 12 via Zoom. Community resources for families and providers and child development information were shared.

Legal Aid Bureau of Buffalo - Andrew Maines meet with Nadine Patterson and Susan Ministero from the Legal Aid Bureau of Buffalo on December 12 to plan a bi-monthly walk-in legal clinic at the Central Library. The first session is tentatively scheduled to begin on January 20, 2023.

B&ECPL staff were also in contact or attended meetings with representatives of the following organizations:

- Arts for Learning WNY
- Buffalo Urban League
- Literacy Buffalo Niagara
- The Buffalo History Museum
- New York State Department of Corrections
- New York State Department of Labor
- New York State Library
- New York State Office of General Services (OGS)
- Project Flight
- Western New York Library Resources Council (WNYLRC) Committees

7. Planning for the Future

Erie County Department of Mental Health - Assistant Deputy Director **Dorinda Darden**, **Sophia Charles**, and **Shanley Olszowy** met virtually on December 20 with Mark O'Brien, Commissioner of Mental Health, and Amy Rockwood, Director of Planning and Evaluation for the Department of Mental Health. They discussed potential collaborations on Health and Wellness programs, services, and trainings. Commissioner O'Brien will be providing *De-Escalation Training* at the B&ECPL's *Manager-Director Meeting* that will be held at the Central Library on March 8, 2023.

The opening of the 2023 *We are Beautiful: An Evolution of Black Dolls* is scheduled for the Frank E. Merriweather, Jr. Branch Library on Thursday, February 2 at 6 p.m. Special guest will be Connie Porter, author of the American Girl *Addy* books. Erie County Legislature Chairwoman April N.M. Baskin and the library present the exhibit through the end of March.

8. Director Activities

Meetings/Events Attended by Director December 2022

Date	Meeting/Event
December 1, 2022	Media Interview - Spectrum News

Minutes of the Board of Trustees

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December 1, 2022	Virtual Meeting - Erie County Cultural Collaborative Group
December 1, 2022	Legislator Visit - NYS Senator Timothy Kennedy
December 5, 2022	Meeting - Samantha Purpora, Mark Kross, Tom Murphy
December 5, 2022	Meeting - May 14 Community Collecting Oral History Working Group
December 5, 2022	Meeting - Joy Testa Cinquino
December 5, 2022	Meeting - Rare Book Room Exhibits/Displays Process
December 5, 2022	Conference Call - Briana McNamee, Lobbyist for New York Library Association
December 5, 2022	Meeting - Administrative Team
December 6, 2022	Meeting - Samantha Purpora
December 6, 2022	Meeting - Ken Stone
December 6, 2022	Event - Industry Night at the Botanical Gardens
December 7, 2022	Meeting - Dorinda Darden
December 7, 2022	Meeting - Amherst Public Library Board of Trustees
December 8, 2022	Meeting - Dan Caufield & Mark Kross
December 8, 2022	Meeting - B&ECPL Board of Trustees Executive Committee
December 9, 2022	Event - Creative Mornings
December 9, 2022	Legislator Visit - NYS Senator Patrick Gallivan
December 9, 2022	Meeting - Joy Testa Cinquino
December 12, 2022	Meeting - Samantha Purpora & Joy Testa Cinquino
December 12, 2022	Virtual Meeting - Mission: Ignite & WNYLRC
December 13, 2022	Meeting - Samantha Purpora
December 13, 2022	Virtual Meeting - PULISDO
December 13, 2022	Meeting - Ken Stone
December 14, 2022	Meeting - B&ECPL Managers/Directors
December 15, 2022	Testimony - Public Hearing of NYS Assembly Standing Committee on Libraries and Education Technology
December 16, 2022	Meeting - Judy Fachko
December 16, 2022	Event - Unveiling of Literacy Library Collection for Equity, Social Justice & Peace at Frank E. Merriweather, Jr. Branch Library
December 16, 2022	Meeting - Joy Testa Cinquino
December 16, 2022	Meeting - ErieNet Board of Directors
December 17, 2022	Event: The Christmas Piano Classics at Central Auditorium
December 19, 2022	Media Interview - Buffalo What's Next
December 19, 2022	Meeting - Administrative Team
December 20, 2022	Meeting - Samantha Purpora
December 20, 2022	Meeting - Ken Stone
December 21, 2022	Virtual Meeting - WNY Digital Equity Coalition
December 21, 2022	Tour of Special Collections with Mathilde Koskas, French National Library
December 21, 2022	Virtual Meeting - Erie County Legislator April Baskin
December 21, 2022	Meeting - Judy Fachko
December 21, 2022	Meeting - Dorinda Darden
December 22, 2022	Virtual Meeting - Affordable Connectivity Outreach Grant Program
December 22, 2022	Meeting - Dorinda Darden & Samantha Purpora
December 22, 2022	Meeting - Ken Stone
December 29, 2022	Meeting - Dorinda Darden & Samantha Purpora
December 30, 2022	Meeting - Joy Testa Cinquino

Appendices

A. Monthly Statistics

System Programming Statistics:

Regular/Virtual	Number of Programs		Total Attendance	
	Month	YTD	Month	YTD
Regular*				
Adults	431	6,721	1,311	21,429
Children 5 and under	1,109	19,258	2,703	42,528
Children 6-11	1,322	17,539	2,685	38,347
Intergenerational/Combined	6,567	55,329	10,191	109,506
Teens	252	3,622	648	7,971
Regular Total	9,681	102,469	17,538	219,781
Regular Total				
Virtual				
Live Virtual				
Adults	10	206	81	2,961
Children 5 and under	1	6	1	58
Children 6-11	0	5	0	114
Intergenerational/Combined	61	104	241	5,960
Teens	20	114	33	793
Live Virtual Total	92	435	356	9,886
Recorded Virtual				
Adults	7	140	115	3,126
Children 5 and under	0	90	0	2,741
Children 6-11	2	41	541	4,418
Intergenerational/Combined	16	244	338	8,215
Recorded Virtual Total	25	515	994	18,500
Virtual Total	117	950	1,350	28,386
Grand Total	9,798	103,419	18,888	248,167

*Regular programs include group programs, one-on-one programs, and self-directed programs (including individual take & make crafts).

Other Statistics:

Consolidated statistics on library visits, website visits, circulation, computer sessions, wifi usage, and program attendance and a summary of open hours can be found at www.buffalolib.org/about-becpl/monthly-statistics.

Detailed reports on circulation, computer sessions, wifi usage, and library visits can be found at www.buffalolib.org/monthly-statistics/2022-circulation-public-access-computer-wifi-and-library-visits-detail.

B. Contracting Library Activity Reports

Eden Public Library – submitted by Donna-Jo Webster, Library Director

Festive Concert – As a “special gift” to the community, Eden Library welcomed our town’s very own Mountain Dulcimer Players and members of the Eden Chorale for a

festive concert event on December 14. Guests enjoyed live music, seasonal tunes, a fun sing-along segment, and light refreshments in an intimate holiday setting. Concertgoers shared their gifts as well, bringing in more than 30 pounds of non-perishable items for donation to the Eden-North Collins Food Pantry.

Calligraphy Program - Roycroft Master Artisan and library board member Linda Meyer brings her talents to the library with a Calligraphy Mini-Class on January 25, in celebration of National Handwriting Day. Participants will learn basic brush skills in this beautiful, timeless art form dating back to the Shang and Han dynasties of ancient China. Sounds much more fun than getting a text message!

In Memoriam - The Eden community mourns the recent passing of Frances Palmerton, 99, who served on the library's Board of Trustees for 36 years. As board president, Mrs. Palmerton played an instrumental role in the construction of the current library building.

Grand Island Memorial Library - submitted by Bridgette Heintz, Director

Book Club - Our Adult Book Club held their final meeting of the year on December 19, and they discussed *The Vanishing Half* by Brit Bennett. The club has approximately 20 members who meet once a month in the library meeting room. They are a lively, cohesive group who are open to new members and opinions during their meetings to stoke the discussion. The January 10 discussion will be about the book *The Personal Librarian* by Marie Benedict.

Accidental Art (Part Deux) - The Grand Island Library's Volunteer of the Year and retired Art Park Artist, Marsha Mis, ran a second session of her Accidental Art series. The program is geared to adults 18 and over, and Marsha runs the sessions like college freshman design classes where she gives a short lecture on art history relevant to the three projects she then leads participants through. This time, the 12 participants made 'sculptures in a sack' where everyone was given a sack with miscellaneous items such as fabric, wood pieces, string, etc. and encouraged to make a sculpture, 'alien eggs' out of glow sticks and biodegradable packing peanuts, and 'Orson Bean trees' out of newspaper.

French & Sicilian Cookery: Recipes from Our Mothers' Apron Strings - Run by retired B&ECPL Librarian Salvatore Bordonaro and his colleague Linda McNamara, these demos are always in high demand. This time Linda and Sal made swiss chard and potato stew, paninis two ways (turkey and veggie) and creamy cheese potato soup two ways (regular and dairy-free vegan). 33 participants went home with full bellies and recipes (the staff might have reaped some benefits as well...).

Joseph Ellicott: A Historical Portrayal - Retired teacher, local actor, and Grand Island resident Dennis Upton channeled Joseph Ellicott for an audience of 33. The presentation centered on Ellicott's life in Western New York in the late 17 and early 1800's.

Pint-Sized Playgroup – Beginning in January, our Youth Services Librarian, **Carly Spatar**, will be opening the library meeting room for a few hours on the last Saturday of the month to families with children ages 0-5 years for an open playgroup. General Programming funds were used to purchase toys to support this program. With the popularity of our Itty-Bitty and Preschool Story Times, families were asking for an unstructured open playtime where their children could further socialize with each other. Ask and you shall receive!

Regents Advisory Council on Libraries

VISION 2022

New York State
Library

Adopted by the Regents Advisory Council on Libraries
June 24, 2022

Regents Advisory Council on Libraries

Meg Backus (2025), Vice Chair
Greg Benoit (2023)
Tatiana Bryant (2023)
Greta Byrum (2026)
AnnaLee Dragon (2025)
Sandra Michele Echols (2026)
Chancey Fleet (2024)
Susan Kowalski (2022)
Miranda Mims (2025)
Beth Patin (2026)
Susan Polos (2022)
Grace Riario (2023), Chair
Juan Rivera (2022)
Jamie D. Smith (2024)
Alicia Thompson (2024)

New York State Library Staff

Lauren Moore
Carol Desch
Liza Duncan
Natalie McDonough
Amy Heebner
Amy Peker
Sarah McFadden
Larissa Brenner
Ashley Gauvin-Manning
Jessica Golden

The Vision 2022 was funded through the Federal Library Services and Technology Act, with funds awarded to the New York State Library by the Federal Institute of Museum and Library Services. The New York State Library is a program of the Office of Cultural Education in the New York State Education Department.

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When the pandemic halted many in-person services, we were inspired to see how libraries across the state demonstrated their ingenuity and dedication by shifting to virtual services and making difficult decisions about how to best protect the safety of staff and patrons in the face of unprecedented challenges and change.

As the pandemic continues to disrupt daily life, we've seen how the disruption in library services disproportionately affects traditionally marginalized communities, compounding the impact of reduced services in other sectors, including schools and public transportation, which exacerbates existing inequities.

The way out of this crisis is to seize the opportunity to reaffirm the vital role libraries play in community restoration and building. We firmly believe that the future of libraries and equity depends on what we do now as a profession. Libraries are experiencing a paradigm shift, from a focus on sharing materials to prioritizing building relationships and collaborating with stakeholders to work toward shared outcomes. We can maximize this critical moment to rebuild connections, center the community, and embody the public's imagination.

The following document provides a road map for the future of New York libraries, reflecting our shared value and vision of the future. Let the journey begin!

Regents Advisory Council on Libraries

Our Values

As part of the Regents Advisory Council on Libraries Vision 2022 process, multiple interviews were held with stakeholders, focus groups, and surveys collecting data from hundreds of libraries around the state.

Academic, public, school, and special libraries took part in the process, revealing the shared values of New York's library community, which inform our vision of the future. These values are the basis for the strategic priorities in our Vision framework, guiding both internal and external decision-making.

Our shared values include:

- Universal Access
- Equity for All
- Resilient Communities
- Passionate Advocates
- Innovation Engines

Universal Access

All New Yorkers have a right to excellent library service. Libraries play an essential role in ensuring all New Yorkers have the information they need to participate in public life fully. New York libraries believe the public's right to freely access a wide range of resources and services is essential for informed decision-making, lifelong learning, and self-actualization. To support universal access, we champion intellectual freedom and the right for people of all ages to read freely. Information literacy requires critical thinking skills, honed by reading and interacting with multiple viewpoints, evaluating and identifying authoritative sources, and encouraging lively debate and conversation.

The 21st century requires navigating the digital terrain, and digital equity is critical for an informed populace. New York libraries play an active role in ensuring people can connect to the Internet, are comfortable using technology in their everyday lives, and understand how to evaluate and contribute content. Many people affected by the digital divide face other structural obstacles, limiting their ability to participate in civic life, enjoy remote work and learning, or access content. The library is the sole point of connection for some communities -- allowing people to work remotely, develop content representing diverse views, take classes, be active citizens, and communicate with loved ones.

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Equity for All

New York benefits from having one of the most diverse populations in the country. Multiple languages and ethnicities contribute to a vibrant, dynamic population that requires flexible, innovative libraries able to meet the needs of patrons from around the globe. Our libraries champion equity, diversity, and inclusion and model how to incorporate it by having collections, staffing, programming, and leadership reflect our communities. We foster brave environments where community members may convene authentic conversations around racial and social justice and advocate for the needs of our communities.

Libraries serve their communities in many ways. Students are connected to resources to ensure their success, and first-generation college students benefit from personalized reference services. People experiencing unemployment or underemployment or returning to the workforce benefit from workforce development services, including assistance in finding, preparing for, and securing jobs or embarking on a new career. Adult learners can become better readers and obtain high-school equivalency certification through adult literacy classes, enabling them to apply for more competitive jobs. Recent arrivals attend English Language Learning classes to acclimate to their new home, make friends, build new networks, and navigate daily life. Incarcerated patrons benefit from library services at their facilities. For those returning from incarceration, libraries may be the first step to connecting with resources to facilitate the transition to life outside of an institution.

Resilient Communities

The success of libraries is inextricably bound to the success and growth of our communities. Libraries are part of a sustainable ecosystem, requiring active participation in and with their communities. Libraries embrace respectful, collaborative partnerships. We work with other stakeholders and community members to maximize our impact and leverage economies of scale to benefit the public good. We understand the link between community health, social wellbeing, and resilient communities and strive to create spaces for people of all walks of life to converge, exchange ideas, and become informed. Our libraries' mission, vision, and strategic directions align with our communities' goals and aspirations.

Passionate Advocates

As trusted institutions, libraries advocate for the public good through intellectual freedom, transparency, net neutrality, digital justice and inclusion, and creating equitable, inclusive organizations that welcome all experiences, talents, and perspectives. Our profession emphasizes data-informed decision making. Library workers use their expertise in aggregating and analyzing data to benefit our patrons, organizations, communities, and stakeholders. We hold ourselves accountable by operating with transparency. We appreciate the investment and value the trust communities place in libraries.

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Innovation Engines

Libraries spark curiosity, excite learners, and cross-pollinate innovation across sectors and industries. By strategically collaborating with stakeholders, libraries continuously evolve -- learning, growing, and recalibrating services to support their communities

We're courageous. We take risks and learn from our mistakes. We leverage our expertise to help people compete in a global marketplace by providing space, tools, and resources to help them innovate and succeed, ensuring our communities have a vibrant economic base.

Our Vision

How can libraries help communities navigate a landscape where the social, environmental, and political tectonic plates are constantly shifting?

That's the conundrum the Regents Advisory Council on Libraries has been exploring. To help chart a way forward, the RAC gathered information from hundreds of stakeholders.

After distilling multiple conversations, surveys, and written feedback, we created the following framework.



Libraries Advance the Public Good

New York's libraries are part of the state's critical infrastructure. They ensure every New Yorker has reliable, equitable access to crucial information, services, and lifelong learning and connection opportunities. As disinvestment in critical social infrastructure has weakened faith in institutions and government, libraries have stepped up to meet the needs of New Yorkers.

The stress of responding to these needs without additional funding for services places libraries in a precarious environment. It creates a substantial obstacle to successfully and effectively serving and supporting communities.

In response to this challenge, the Regents Advisory Council on Libraries has established the following framework identifying strategic priorities and collaborative action to help libraries devote necessary resources to ensure community resilience during an uncertain and tumultuous time.

Strategic Priorities

- Libraries Ensure All New Yorkers Have Access to Information & the Internet
- Libraries Advance Diversity, Equity, Inclusion & Belonging
- Libraries Are Essential to the Social Wellbeing of Communities

Strategic Priority 1: Libraries Ensure All New Yorkers Have Access to Information & the Internet

New York libraries are dedicated to universal access, based on the idea that society benefits when everyone has an equal opportunity to leverage the power of the Internet. By focusing on solutions and working in intentional partnership with our communities, libraries can help New York achieve its vision of digital equity. Closing digital equity gaps in New York will require the coordination, cooperation, and intentional capacity-building of the many organizations working to support digital inclusion.

To support statewide digital equity efforts, libraries may employ the following strategies:

- Promoting information fluency for all New Yorkers by providing services that address information literacy challenges.
- Protecting the privacy and digital security of library users and community members, by providing secure networks and devices for public use within library spaces and by educating the public about digital security threats and ways to protect individual privacy online, both in the library and at home or work.
- Ensuring digital tools are fully accessible and usable for all users, and that vendor contracts ensure and protect the privacy of library users.
- Identifying and developing solutions to digital inequity at a societal level to ensure ubiquitous, high-speed, wired, and wireless internet access for all New Yorkers.
- Building, maintaining, and supporting digital equity ecosystems across community sectors.
- Developing and employing digital inclusion strategies that address the intersectional conditions contributing to digital inequity.

Strategic Priority 2: Libraries Advance Diversity, Equity, Inclusion & Belonging

Libraries work toward equity for all by making a material difference in the lives of people who have been denied power and opportunity based on race, gender, sexuality, national origin, spoken language, or disability. We advance and model socioeconomic and racial equity policies and practices.

New York libraries may advance diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging using the following strategies:

- Advancing the State Education Department's Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Framework.
- Promoting intellectual freedom by curating diverse library collections and public programs and preserving access to extensive community repositories.
- Recognizing, acknowledging, and eliminating systemic barriers to library services, including those within the library profession and governance structure.
- Centering justice by identifying, sharing, and promoting resources and opportunities that restore dignity, acknowledge past harm, and celebrate diversity.
- Resisting surveillance technologies and corporate control of core library services to protect the interests of the public.
- Prioritizing diversity in the library profession, ensuring that library staff, administration, trustees, Friends, and volunteers reflect their communities.
- Investing in scholarships to attract diverse students to the profession.
- Eliminating systemic barriers to hiring and retaining talented staff with a variety of lived experiences.
- Working with vendors committed to upholding diversity, equity, and inclusion principles.

Strategic Priority 3: Libraries Are Essential to the Social Wellbeing of Communities

As community anchors, libraries strengthen civic relationships and build social cohesion by creating a shared space, convening and hosting critical conversations, and providing resources and programs to inform, create, entertain, and weave broad social networks. We will continue to build collaborative relationships to develop thriving, resilient, and responsive communities.

To achieve this vision, libraries may use the following strategies:

- Incorporating historically marginalized perspectives into planning, processes, narratives, and decision-making about what is best for a community.
- Building community relationships and taking deliberate action to achieve shared or co-created objectives.
- Mapping the connections of knowledge, talents, resources, and aspirations among residents or groups by utilizing Asset Based Community Development.
- Securing sustainable funding for libraries to adapt and grow with their communities.
- Advocating for all New Yorkers to have access to certified librarians in their communities and schools.
- Providing library trustees with education and resources to help them best serve the interests of their institutions and communities, now and into the future.
- Planning for and responding to disasters and crises, including climate change, mass incarceration, public health emergencies, and widespread disinformation, and ensuring the continuity of library services when communities most need them.
- Preserving library materials and the cultural history of communities.
- Constructing, renovating, and maintaining sustainable, accessible library buildings that welcome the entire community.

New York's Libraries

When it comes to libraries, New York is a treasure trove. More than 7,000 libraries provide New Yorkers with educational, informational, and recreational resources. There are three types of library systems that coordinate to meet the needs of New Yorkers: public library systems, reference and research library resources systems, and school library systems. Each system serves specific types of libraries, as outlined below:

Public Library Systems support the 757 public libraries, with 1,070 outlets throughout the state. Each of the 23 public library systems serves a specific geographic region, coordinating interlibrary loan, professional development, and outreach services –including support for libraries in correctional facilities throughout the state. Each system has a central (or co-central) library to provide reference and information services to patrons throughout the state.

The nine regional Reference and Research Library Resources Systems include libraries in public and private colleges and universities, special libraries, public libraries, public library systems, and school library systems. These systems support 286 degree-granting higher education institutions. They provide a range of professional development and serve as a bridge between the different types of libraries in New York.

New York has 40 School Library Systems that work with 4,236 school libraries in 731 school districts and 1,656 nonpublic schools to provide professional development, share resources, and provide exemplary services to students throughout the state. As liaisons to the State Education Department, school library systems support school librarians as co-educational partners with teachers to ensure that all students develop the information literacy skills needed to be active, informed citizens and lead successful lives.

Each system supports different types of libraries throughout the state:

- **Academic Libraries** support the instructional and research needs of students, faculty, and administration at colleges and universities. While access to these libraries requires attendance at the attached institution, the collections include government documents that the public may access. Academic libraries often have archives, which collect, preserve, organize, describe, and share original material and special collections for research. Archives conserve history while providing transparency and accessibility to significant collections.
- **Public Libraries** provide programs, services, and resources for the public. Designated “the people's university” in 1938 by Alvin Johnson, public libraries are usually funded by and support the communities they serve through taxes, grants, and donations. Residents can obtain a library card at no additional cost, gaining access to a wide range of materials, programs, meeting space, professional reference and research services, workforce development support, and bridging the digital divide through the internet and computers.
- **School Libraries** provide access to resources for public or private school students, teachers, school administrators, and parents. These resources include materials supporting the educational curriculum, computers, and access to the internet to support digital equity, train students in information and digital literacy, spark curiosity, develop a love of lifelong learning, and prepare students for college and careers.

- **Special Libraries** curate collections and materials to support specific interests or fields of study and may support institutions such as hospitals, museums, the military, law practices, professional associations, and historical sites. These libraries provide materials and resources to support a specific focus of the organization. Special libraries may have archives, which include a wide range of material, including but not limited to governmental records, maps, audio recordings, electronic documents, art, films, and photographs.

Moving Forward

The Regents Advisory Council shares this framework as a springboard for the future. We hope everyone in the library community sees themselves in this document and uses their creativity and imagination to act on the strategic priorities which resonate with their communities. We look forward to watching New York's libraries breathe life into the Vision 2022 plan.

Agenda Item I – Report of the Foundation. Trustee El-Behairy reported the Library Foundation had met on January 18, 2023. They conducted some housekeeping business, reviewed their bylaws, and established a process for nominations to the Board. Trustee Gist asked about the Chair; Trustee El-Behairy stated it is currently Jack Connors.

Following her report, Trustee El-Behairy left the meeting at 5:07.

Agenda Item J – Report of the Association of Contracting Library Trustees (ACT)/ Contracting Library Trustee Report. There was no representation from ACT at the meeting. Director Spears reiterated ACT was holding a meeting on January 21 at the West Seneca Public Library.

Agenda Item J.1 – Contracting Library Liaison Report(s). Trustee Craik stated the Eden Library has phenomenal youth programs. He noted after a recent short story program, the library has been working to help get a young patron published.

Chair Johnson noted an opening remained for a trustee liaison to the North Collins Public Library. Anyone interested should contact Erin Vest.

Agenda Item K – Public Comment. Odessa Hunter commented she is continuing to seek justice for an incident with security staff, stating she had not gotten a definitive answer to her previous communications. She provided a letter to Chair Johnson, who stated there would be a response.

Agenda Item L – Unfinished Business. None.

Agenda Item M – New Business.

Agenda Item M.1 – CMU Contract Approval. COO Doyle explained Resolution 2023-5 as presented. Trustee Panty moved for approval, Trustee Amodeo seconded, and approval was unanimous.

RESOLUTION 2023-5

WHEREAS, full-time and regular part-time clerical and maintenance employees employed by the Contracting Libraries petitioned the New York State Public Employment Relations Board (hereinafter “PERB”) for recognition as a bargaining unit in 2010, and

WHEREAS, the Board of Trustees of the Buffalo & Erie County Public Library (B&ECPL) was granted the authority by the respective Contracting Library Boards of Trustees to negotiate fair settlement of a collective bargaining agreement with the Clerical and Maintenance Union of the Buffalo & Erie County Public Library - Contracting Libraries, NYSUT/ AFT (hereinafter the “CMU”), and

WHEREAS, the existing contract with the CMU ran from January 1, 2019 to December 31, 2022, and

WHEREAS, over the course of said contract, 2 Erie County bargaining units, AFSCME and CSEA, negotiated new contracts which included wage increases for

CMU counterparts in blue and white collar positions at the Central Library and Buffalo City Branches, and

WHEREAS, as result of the negotiated CSEA and AFSCME collective bargaining agreements, a significant disparity exists in the pay scales for blue and white collar employees holding same job titles across the B&ECPL System, and

WHEREAS, the Board of Trustees and Library Administration have consistently expressed a need to achieve sustainability in the future while ensuring the level of service which our patrons demand and recognizing the hard work and dedication of our employees who provide such service, and

WHEREAS, the duration of the proposed agreement is January 1, 2023 to December 31, 2026 and includes salary increases for employees effective January 1, 2023; January 1, 2024; January 1, 2025; and January 1, 2026, and

WHEREAS, the proposed Agreement also adds language relating to use of vacation leave, sick leave and union release time which will be mutually beneficial to the labor relations efforts of all parties, and

WHEREAS, the Board of Trustees has been briefed on the Agreement, now therefore be it

RESOLVED, that the Board of Trustees of the B&ECPL endorses the proposed Agreement under the terms and conditions discussed and authorizes the Library Director and/or their designee to execute the proposed Agreement following ratification by the CMU, and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Library Director or their designee is authorized to implement budget transfers needed to implement these changes.

Agenda Item M.2 – Resolution Against Book Bans. Director Spears introduced Resolution 2023-6. He noted it was based on a template resolution from the organization United Against Book Bans. If the Board approves this resolution, he will take the necessary steps to join them as a partner institution. This would mean sharing some information with them and distributing some information from them.

Trustee Amodeo asked about how books could be banned at the B&ECPL. Director Spears noted there have been book challenges at libraries throughout the system; earlier in the year, he had reported on an instance at the Aurora Town Public Library. Most are informal, but there is also a formal process detailed in our Collection Development Policy. If an individual or group pursues the formal review process, the Library would determine whether to keep, move, or remove the material in question. Director Spears noted bans are still rare at public libraries generally, but there is a growing nationwide trend of challenges to library materials especially those by or about persons of color or

LGBTQ+ individuals. This resolution does not reflect a specific issue we are having with challenges but would be a statement to the community that we are opposed to bans in general. That said, it could always happen here.

Trustee Moore asked if this stance would be consistent across the whole System. COO Doyle noted collection development is done at the System-level, and the Collection Development Policy is a System-wide policy. All libraries have also adopted the ALA *Library Bill of Rights*. It is hypothetically possible that a contracting library board could ban material at their library, but that would be a violation of their contract with the System. Director Spears noted he does not believe this will be an issue; ACT has specifically asked for a presentation about pushing back against book challenges. He noted there are individuals that may personally object to certain materials, but they understand the duty of the Library to make them available.

Trustee Gist asked if *Mein Kampf* is in the B&ECPL collection. Director Spears confirmed it was. He noted that the right to free speech protects all types of speech, including hate speech, in the United States. Items reflecting all types of views are represented in library collections. Trustee Craik asked if this meant everything is fair game, including holocaust denial. Director Spears stated there are limits when it comes to blatant misinformation, but there are areas that are more grey that have no good answers. Trustee Moore noted some materials are useful as educational tools for what not to do. Director Spears agreed, noting that it is easier for academic libraries to retain these types of materials for research purposes. In public libraries, it can be more tricky, as the public can take misinformation at face value. Director Spears noted one workaround is to not purchase certain materials for the public library but assist patrons with obtaining them through interlibrary loan from academic libraries if requested.

Trustee Sasiadek asked who currently handles book challenges at the B&ECPL. Director Spears noted most challenges are informal and handled by public service staff. Formal challenges would be handled at the System level. He noted he had assisted with the complaint at the Aurora Town Public Library by refocusing the conversation on how to find the items we have in the collection that they want to engage with instead of on the items they did not want to see. The more staff can engage in these types of conversations about how the library exists for everyone, the less likely we will see formal challenges.

Trustee Kelly noted there was a repetitive clause in the resolution as written. The Board agreed to delete the ninth "whereas" clause. Following this discussion, Trustee Amodeo moved for approval of the resolution as amended, Trustee Moore seconded, and approval was unanimous.

RESOLUTION 2023-6

WHEREAS, reading is a foundational skill, critical to future learning and to exercising our democratic freedoms, and

WHEREAS, libraries provide access to books that offer teachable moments for readers of all ages and expand our understanding of people with different backgrounds, ideas, and beliefs, and

WHEREAS, books are tools for understanding complex issues, and

WHEREAS, limiting young people's access to books does not protect them from life's complex and challenging issues, and

WHEREAS, young people deserve to see themselves reflected in a library's collection, and

WHEREAS, librarians are professionals trained to not impose their own thoughts and opinions on which ideas are right, but to make knowledge and ideas available so that people have the freedom to choose what to read, and

WHEREAS, removing and banning books from public libraries or public schools is a pathway to government censorship and the erosion of our country's commitment to freedom of expression, and

WHEREAS, a large majority of Americans across the political spectrum oppose book bans, now therefore be it

RESOLVED that the Board of Trustees of the Buffalo & Erie County Public Library endorses the following statement:

Individuals should be trusted to make their own decisions about what they read and believe. Further, parents should not be making decisions for other parents' children about what they read. We are united against book bans.

THEREFORE, BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Board of Trustees of the Buffalo & Erie County Public Library will act to protect the rights of all to access a variety of books, in schools, in libraries, in bookstores, online, and elsewhere.

There being no further business, on a motion by Trustee Amodeo with a second by Trustee Moore, the meeting was adjourned at 5:33 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Joel Moore
Secretary