“Buildings may not have been open, but libraries never closed.”
– Julius C. Jefferson Jr., 2020-21 American Library Association President
Eunice Johnson Rogers  
President

Willie S. Davis III  
Vice-President

The Honorable John Scott Vowell  
Parliamentarian

Fatima Carter  
Trustee

Lynn Flowers-Martin  
Trustee

Mona Lisa Morris  
Trustee

Sherri Nielson  
Trustee

Kimberly Richardson  
Trustee

James A. Sullivan  
Trustee

The Honorable Randall Woodfin  
Mayor, City of Birmingham

The Honorable William Parker  
President, Birmingham City Council
Welcome to our Fiscal Year 2021 Annual Report. This report covers July 1, 2020 – June 30, 2021, a year filled with unprecedented challenges, including a global pandemic, elections, political and social unrest, a census, and an economic downturn.

We all experienced a myriad of challenges – both large and small, personal and system-wide. Everyone had to cope with the inconveniences as well as the extra work imposed by safety precautions against Covid-19. But with these challenges came opportunities. The BPL team adapted, grew, and looked for new ways to provide essential services and resources in a time of tremendous need.

One of the darkest periods in my professional career came in September 2020 when 158 BPL team members were furloughed because of projected shortfalls in the City of Birmingham’s operating budget (due to the economic impact of Covid-19). The remaining 39 team members were tasked with continuing Curbside Pickup Service and reopening the Central Library for in-person service in October. We welcomed back our full-time furloughed employees in December 2020 and our part-time employees in January 2021.

Together we worked to create safe protocols for reopening all BPL locations while providing virtual programming, curbside pickup, and limited in-person service for the remainder of the fiscal year. This challenging situation presented us with an opportunity to re-connect as a team. I believe we bolstered employee morale since the furlough through our efforts to improve communication, to be transparent about necessary changes, and to applaud and encourage colleagues who find creative ways to serve our patrons during difficult times.

This year of challenges shined a light on the resiliency of the Birmingham Public Library, our team members, Board of Trustees, Friends Foundation, supporters, and community partners. Building on a strong foundation of delivering exceptional and innovative library services, BPL team members moved forward with determination. We continued to serve the community by providing library materials, answering reference questions, issuing library cards, maintaining collections, providing citizen services, and producing informative and entertaining virtual programs.

I am so proud of BPL’s commitment to offering support, educational opportunities, entertainment, connection, and access to resources people need to improve their lives. Despite the many challenges we faced, together we realized some remarkable achievements.

Janine M. Langston, Interim Executive Director
LIBRARIES CHANGE LIVES, and this last year made that most evident. Overcoming the unprecedented challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic and staff furloughs, the Birmingham Public Library (BPL) maintained its commitment to service excellence by rethinking its programming and making use of technology, like the Zoom platform, to offer the public their accustomed access to our resources.

BPL addressed the unique needs of Birmingham’s virtual learners by issuing more than 900 virtual student library cards and augmenting BPL’s digital collections with materials selected to benefit students, job seekers, and small business owners. Through curbside services, BPL safely provided physical library materials, printing and faxing services, and distribution of free school supplies. Curbside service also allowed us to deliver library-curated activities to learners of all ages. Over the year, 1,847 adults, children, and teens grabbed bright, educational activity kits.

“IT IS HARD TO IMAGINE A SERVICE/INSTITUTION AS VALUABLE AS THE BIRMINGHAM PUBLIC LIBRARY IN THE LIFE OF OUR CITY.
– Melanie Walker-Malone, Head of School, Red Mountain Community School
“I’ve been homeschooling my two daughters (ages 10 and 9) for five years now and I would feel completely lost without the library. I love that the services are free and the resources are endless. When the pandemic started, it affected us in many ways, just like it did everyone else. However, our libraries being closed was the biggest setback for myself and my girls. We were thrilled to have them open again for curbside pickup. Our libraries have allowed us to escape this COVID-weary world, one book at a time.”
– Kate Shadix
FY 2020-21
YEAR IN REVIEW
JULY 2020-JUNE 2021

11,440
SERVICE HOURS

190,651
LIBRARY VISITS

70,634
PROGRAM ATTENDANCE

130,728
LIBRARY CARDS

697,086
COLLECTION SIZE

70,634
CURBSIDE SERVICE

262,913
BPL WEBSITE VISITS

170,908
DIGITAL STREAMS AND DO

COVID TIMELINE

June 15, 2020
Curbside pickup began at Central, Avondale, Five Points West, North Birmingham, and Springville Road and continues until September 25, 2020.

October 1, 2020
Central opens for in-person service 10 a.m.-2 p.m. M-F and Curbside Pickup available at Central, Avondale from 9 a.m.-4 p.m. M-F and available at Five Points West and Springville Road from 9 a.m.-4 p.m. T and TH.

January 4, 2021
In-person service 9 a.m.-2 p.m. M-F alternating with a schedule with Curbside Pickup from 9 a.m.-4 p.m. M-F.
**SUMMER LEARNING**

- **33,232** Facebook views
  - BPL hosted 374 Virtual Summer Programs with 33,232 views and distributed 1,980 Grab ‘n Go Craft Kits!

**CITIZEN SERVICES**

- **183** public computers
- **21,458** patron log in sessions
- **678,240** total minutes
- **106,734** print copies
- **1,390** notaries
- **770** passports
- **14,213** faxes

**BIRMINGHAM CITY SCHOOLS PROGRAMS**

- **1,152** kids
  - BPL staff provided 42 programs to 1,152 students at Birmingham City Schools

**DOWNLOADS**

- **257,938** total checked out
- **3,857** books by mail

**BPL 2021**

- Expanded in person services at Central and Avondale to 9 a.m.-4 p.m. M-F and at branches alternating with a M, W, F and T and TH schedule with curbside pickup available 9 a.m.-4 p.m.

**February 22, 2021**

- Curbside Pickup available 9 a.m.-4 p.m.

**22,500**

- BPL was awarded $22,500 in grant and sponsorship funding
  - Community Foundation of Greater Birmingham
  - Birmingham Public Library Friends Foundation
  - NCWITT

**58K**

- Over 58,000 items circulated during June and July with 2,400 books delivered to Birmingham City Schools students for Literacy Programs

**OUTREACH ATTENDANCE**

- **2,084** outreach

**LIBRARSIDE SERVICE**

- **665**
Through a grant from the Community Foundation of Greater Birmingham, BPL addressed learning deficits among young children, resulting from remote and hybrid learning formats due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The “Summer Literacy Leaders program” provided free reading and math tutoring for 2nd-and-3rd-grade students in Birmingham City Schools and provided Birmingham City School System’s summer sites with satellite libraries to promote literacy.
During the last year, Birmingham Public libraries offered 39 educational support classes. Our contributions to our young students’ academic futures included classes on:

- 3D design
- artificial intelligence
- electrical engineering
- scratch coding
- HTML coding
- game design

695 students attended these in-person and virtual classes. And with many high school students unable to tour college campuses due to the COVID-19 pandemic, BPL stepped in to host virtual college fairs.

To assist adults facing career challenges due to the pandemic, BPL hosted Google workshops for job seekers and “Grow with Google webinars” for small business owners. In addition, BPL offered a week of daily webinars focused on helping those affected financially by the pandemic. Money Smart Week 2021 covered topics, such as:

- saving options
- income tax fraud
- budgeting tips
- managing federal student loans
- choosing a bank account
- housing protection

BPL partnered with the Dannon Project to provide free face-to-face social worker consultations to assist patrons needing help with issues, like:

- drug abuse
- unemployment
- community services
- homelessness
- domestic violence
- healthcare
- training and education
- mental health issues
- legal referrals

BPL also offered many all-ages programs that emphasized both physical and mental health, including:

- gentle yoga classes for seniors
- coping with pandemic fatigue
- mental health awareness
- weight loss tips and home workouts
- parenting teens during the pandemic
- navigating the health insurance marketplace and Medicare workshops
Dedicated to offering equal access to information and technology to all, social justice is always at the heart of library service. BPL made great strides in social justice programming in 2020-2021 through in-person and virtual programming. Our “Read-In for Justice” was formed in June 2020 amid national protests of racial injustice sparked by the death of George Floyd at the hands of Minneapolis police. The series of programs allowed people from the community to read books on race and social injustice.

We also proudly partnered with Random House Books to present “The Watsons Go to Birmingham 1963 – Celebrating its 25th Anniversary.” We hosted a virtual conversation with award-winning authors Christopher Paul Curtis and Varian Johnson designed to appeal to adult fans of the book, educators, librarians, and today’s generation of young readers.
We hosted a restored vintage Greyhound bus that is a part of the Freedom Rides Museum permanent collection in Montgomery as it retraced some of the Freedom Riders’ journey. The bus began its drive in Ardmore, Tennessee, on Tuesday, May 18, before reaching us at the Central Library downtown. This trek landed on the exact date and time the bus arrived in the city 60 years ago, where student Freedom Riders were met with violence.

BPL Archives Department Head Jim Baggett presented “A Conversation with Pulitzer Prize-Winning Author John Archibald,” who is well known for his award-winning columns appearing in the Birmingham News and AL.com since 2004. Columbia University awarded the 2018 Pulitzer Prize for Commentary to Archibald for his columns about Alabama politics, including controversial Judge Roy Moore.
The question of accessing the library and all its services led to our most innovative undertaking: the creation of BPL Mobile. This groundbreaking project embraces our past while looking to the future and will bridge the digital divide and bring traditional library services to underserved communities by offering computer training, notary services and traditional library services to the most underserved neighborhoods in Birmingham.

Honoring our commitment to preserving the past, BPL’s Southern History Department’s continuing excellence was recognized this year when Family Tree Magazine named the Birmingham Public Library as one of the top 10 libraries in the nation for genealogy research. That is not the only recognition they received this year. The Southern History Department and Archives Department combined accomplished:

• Southern History staff responded to 523 requests for articles and obituaries from the local newspapers.

• Archives staff researched, retrieved, and refiled 47,187 files, photographs, maps, scrapbooks, architectural drawings, audio recordings, and other items requested by patrons.

• Research requests came from patrons near and far, including 29 states, Italy, Belgium, England, France, Austria, the Netherlands, and Scotland.

• We reached hundreds of patrons during Family History Month (October) with a series of virtual programs conducted by well-known genealogy speaker J. Mark Lowe and with Libby Copeland, author of The Lost Family: How DNA Testing is Upending Who We Are.

In October 2020, BPL closed the chapter on the Eastwood Branch Library. This branch opened in 1982 in the former Eastwood Mall. It was designed to serve as a popular reading and browsing library, replicating bookstore merchandising techniques. Instead of relying on the Dewey Decimal system, books were shelved and displayed by popular genres. Due to a shift in population and shopping trends, the library relocated to the Shops on Montevallo in 1999. We acknowledge and salute the 38 years of excellent service this library provided to area residents.
And looking toward the future, the Birmingham Public Library has been chosen as one of 10 nationwide organizations to receive the 2021 Infy Maker Award. BPL will use the $10,000 grant to provide new STEM programming for 3rd through 12th grade students by creating maker kits for distribution at its afterschool programs and for youth-serving agencies close to library locations across Birmingham. These kits will be used for maker activities, including coding, robotics, electrical engineering, and design-based engineering.

Whatever the future holds, the staff of Birmingham Public Library has proven that BPL can and will persevere in fulfilling its vital role in the city of Birmingham.

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**GRANTS AWARDED TO BPL FISCAL YEAR 2020-2021**

**Library Sciences Technology Act (LSTA)** awarded $15,000 for Collection Development for Birmingham’s underserved communities. Includes educational and workforce development databases essential to teachers and students participating in virtual and hybrid learning.

**Infosys Foundation USA** awarded $10,000 for BPL’s Engineer BHM program focusing on teaching electrical engineering, making and coding to students in Birmingham area school systems interested in science, technology, engineering and math-related fields.

**Community Foundation of Greater Birmingham (CFGB)** awarded $16,000 for the Literacy Leaders program for rising 2nd and 3rd grade students to address learning deficits among young children.

**Alabama State Council on the Arts (ASCA)** awarded $3,500 for Bards & Brews, the Birmingham Public Library’s longstanding popular spoken word poetry/craft beer program, which features some of the nation’s most talented poets sharing their voices while supporting area businesses.
"In a time of uncertainty and confusion, the BPL system employees have worked tirelessly to meet the needs of their patrons. Since they closed to the public due to Covid-19, they have gained over 1,600 new library cardholders, loaned 18,408 items through curbside pick-up, electronically delivered over 12,000 items and had over 74,000 e-book/audiobook activities. All of this required the indispensable library staff."

– Alabama Library Association statement dated Sept. 28, 2021
I loved making this bookmark! I’ve learned that in times of pandemic, and political induced stress, creating art - in any and every form - does wonders for my spirit, and for my mental health. Thank you.”
– Facebook message

“My kiddo said it was the “best day of her life” she made all the wonderful crafts the minute we got home.”
– Facebook message
### Birmingham Public Library Locations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Library Name</th>
<th>Address</th>
<th>City, State, Zip</th>
<th>Phone Number 1</th>
<th>Phone Number 2</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Avondale Library</td>
<td>509 South 40th Street</td>
<td>Birmingham, AL 35222</td>
<td>205.226.4000</td>
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<tr>
<td>Central Library</td>
<td>2100 Park Place</td>
<td>Birmingham, AL 35203</td>
<td>205.226.3600</td>
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<tr>
<td>East Ensley Library</td>
<td>900 14th Street, Ensley</td>
<td>Birmingham, AL 35218</td>
<td>205.787.1928</td>
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<tr>
<td>East Lake Library</td>
<td>#5 Oporto-Madrid Blvd</td>
<td>Birmingham, AL 35206</td>
<td>205.836.3341</td>
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<tr>
<td>Eastwood Library</td>
<td>4500 Montevallo Road</td>
<td>Birmingham, AL 35210</td>
<td>Closed October 2020</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ensley Library</td>
<td>1201 25th Street, Ensley</td>
<td>Birmingham, AL 35218</td>
<td>205.785.2625</td>
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<td>Five Points West Library</td>
<td>4812 Avenue W</td>
<td>Birmingham, AL 35208</td>
<td>205.226.4013</td>
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<td>Inglenook Library</td>
<td>4100 40th Terrace N</td>
<td>Birmingham, AL 35217</td>
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<tr>
<td>North Avondale Library</td>
<td>501 43rd Street N</td>
<td>Birmingham, AL 35222</td>
<td>205.592.2082</td>
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<tr>
<td>North Birmingham Library</td>
<td>2501 31st Avenue N</td>
<td>Birmingham, AL 35207</td>
<td>205.226.4025</td>
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<td>Powderly Library</td>
<td>3301 Jefferson Avenue SW</td>
<td>Birmingham, AL 35221</td>
<td>205.925.6178</td>
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<td>Pratt City Library</td>
<td>509 Dugan Avenue</td>
<td>Birmingham, AL 35214</td>
<td>205.791.4997</td>
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<td>Smithfield Library</td>
<td>#1 8th Avenue W</td>
<td>Birmingham, AL 35204</td>
<td>205.324.8428</td>
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<td>Southside Library</td>
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<td>Birmingham, AL 35205</td>
<td>205.933.7776</td>
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<td>Springville Road Library</td>
<td>1224 Old Springville Road</td>
<td>Birmingham, AL 35203</td>
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<td>Titusville Library</td>
<td>#2 6th Avenue SW</td>
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<td>West End Library</td>
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<td>Woodlawn Library</td>
<td>5709 1st Avenue N</td>
<td>Birmingham, AL 35212</td>
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<td>Wylam Library</td>
<td>4300 7th Avenue, Wylam</td>
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For more information visit [www.cobpl.org](http://www.cobpl.org)