

# Celebrating **150 Years** of Connecting Evanston



**2023**  
**Annual Report**

# Happy 150th!

6,470

VOLUNTEER HOURS

43%

INCREASE IN COMPUTER USE

5,269

LIBRARY CARDS ISSUED

283

FAMILIES GOT ONLINE AT HOME WITH OUR WIFI HOTSPOTS

1,218

GENEROUS DONORS (SEE PAGE 16 FOR OUR GRATITUDE!)

\$530

AVERAGE SAVED BY PATRONS USING THEIR LIBRARY CARDS

1.06M

ITEMS CIRCULATED (NEARLY 30% WERE eBOOKS AND OTHER DIGITAL MATERIALS!)

1,993

PROGRAMS HELD IN-PERSON, ONLINE, AND ALL OVER EVANSTON

## Our Board of Trustees

Evanston Public Library Board of Trustees are appointed by the Mayor and serve staggered three-year terms:

Tracy Fulce, president  
Arikpo Dada  
Kathryn Hazelett  
Cate Huggins  
Michelle Mills  
Meghan Shea  
Terry Soto  
Esther Wallen

Board meetings are held on the second Wednesdays of most months at 6:30 p.m. and are open to the public. Learn more and contact the Board at [epl.org/board](http://epl.org/board).

**Reflecting on our journey** from humble beginnings in 1873 to the vibrant hub of community engagement we are today fills me with immense pride and excitement. It's been an incredible 150 years of evolution, growth, and unwavering dedication to our mission of expanding access and fostering connection within the beautiful tapestry of Evanston.



*EPL's new Executive Director  
Yolande Wilburn*

As the newly appointed Executive Director, I am excited to present this annual report highlighting the significant milestones and accomplishments that have shaped our journey. From humble beginnings with just 932 books to our current extensive range of resources catering to diverse cultures, interests, abilities, and age groups, it's indeed been a remarkable evolution. Our dedication to inclusivity and belonging shines through in our robust programming, collections in both physical and digital formats, and our passionate team, which reflects the vibrant diversity of our community.

I am thrilled to embark on the journey with the Evanston Public Library team to steer us toward a future that mirrors our residents' dynamic needs. Guided by the invaluable feedback garnered through insightful community conversations, we are crafting a bold new strategic plan to honor our past and pave the way for the next 150 years of excellence.

I encourage everyone to join us in shaping this exciting new chapter. Your participation is vital, whether you wear our limited-edition EPL tee shirt, carry our tote, donate to support our efforts, attend our enriching programs, volunteer, or seek guidance for your next literary adventure. Our community's unwavering support and collective belief have propelled us through the last 150 years and will continue to steer us toward a sustainable future.

Together, let's celebrate our rich heritage, embrace the boundless opportunities that lie ahead, and reaffirm our steadfast dedication to the noble cause of access and belonging for all. The Evanston Public Library isn't just a building filled with books; it's a beacon of hope, knowledge, and community spirit. And with your continued support, there's no limit to what we can achieve.

Here's to the next 150 years of inspiration, connection, and empowerment!

Warm regards,  
**Yolande Wilburn**  
Executive Director  
Evanston Public Library

WE DID A LOT THIS YEAR

# 2023 at a glance

# Celebrating 150 Years

1873

Taxpayers vote unanimously for a 2 cent per \$1,000 tax, first founding EPL

1908

The Library's first building opens after a \$5,000 Carnegie gift

1946

The first commercially built bookmobile takes to the streets

1979

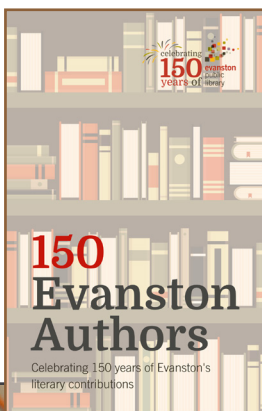
EPL gets its first online public access catalog

2023

EPL celebrates 150 years! Patrons check out a million titles visit more than 413,000 times.

**Our anniversary celebration** recognized 150 years of connecting to our Evanston community with special programming and book lists throughout the year, an open house, and an exhibit of historical images and artifacts from the last century and a half.

In honor, we also created 150 Evanston Authors, celebrating Evanston's literary contributions over the last century and a half. Stop by to pick up a copy and check out a book by a local author from our shelves.



*The Library's first book auto hit the road in 1920, and EPL was the first Library in the area to use a mobile unit in a city. Others had only been used in rural areas.*



*An Open House held in October at both our locations drew hundreds of patrons for free EPL branded giveaways, special drop-in programming, behind-the-scenes tours of the Main Library.*



# 150 years of inspiring curious readers

**The earliest hint** that Evanston's children might want to use the Library came in 1899 when the Library formed a league among school children to encourage an interest in books with the motto: "Clean hearts, clean hands, clean books." Since then, a lot of sticky fingers have paged through our children's collection, fostering a curiosity not just about books but the wider world.

Today, our summer **ABC Boosters** program, in partnership with D65, D202, and the Youth Job Center gets kids ready for kindergarten by improving language development and alphabet fluency -- all while employing teen helpers -- thanks to a D65 grant. Children who visited the library this year also practiced motor skills and critical thinking with crafts, and scavenger hunts, read to therapy dogs, and listened to dozens of books hand selected by our expert children's librarians and read aloud at our popular story times.



*Teen volunteers have been a part of our summer literacy programs for children since at least 1968!*

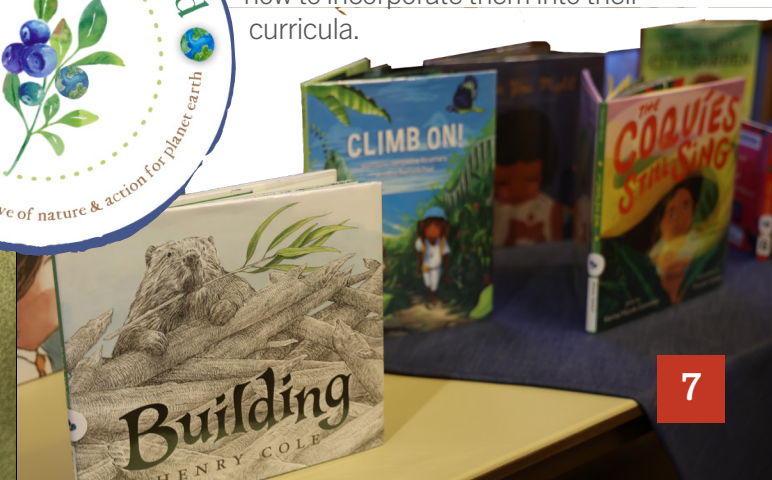
*Our story times have always been our most popular programs, and today, they're designed to be more inclusive than ever, with programs like the **Young and the Restless** geared towards even the tiniest bibliophiles, **Drag Queen Story Time** in honor of Pride Month, **Hearts of Readers** story time led by residents of Misericordia, and **Diversión en Español** for Spanish-speaking families.*



Thanks to a partnership with City Clerk Stephanie Mendoza, new families picking up birth certificates receive a Welcome Baby Kits with baby's first book, a bib, and resources for fostering early literacy.

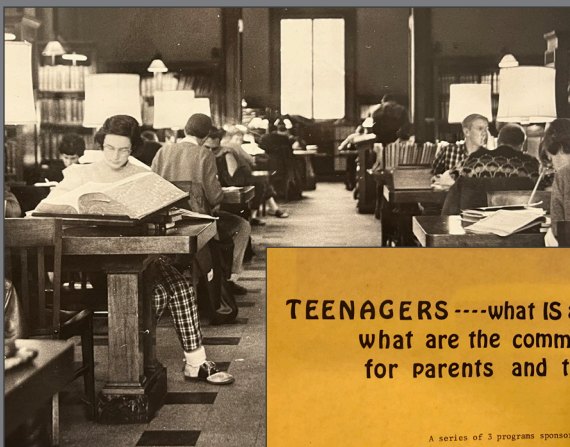
## The Blueberries return!

The nationally recognized **Blueberry Awards** made their return this year, honoring excellent children's literature that strengthens kids' connections with nature and fosters a greater appreciation for our environment. The Blueberry List is divided into one overall winner and 25 Honor books, plus six Changemaker books recognized for their outstanding achievement in educating and rallying kids to contribute to the environment in ways only they can. Our awards committee expanded their impact this year with programs for educators to learn about the books and how to incorporate them into their curricula.



# 150 years of growing alongside teenagers

**But first, we had to figure out who they were.** When our library staff began sorting through our archives of old news clipping about EPL's old programs and resources, one of our finds included a 1954 guide for parents called "What IS a Teenager?" We're happy to say we've since figured it out. Today's Evanston teenagers can drop by our Teen Loft any day of the week and discover something new for every interest, including our free STEAM opportunities for 5th-8th graders across Evanston. The **Cardboard Carnival**, **Code It Challenge**, and **Film It Challenge** engage teens with science and engineering and provide students who are underrepresented in STEM fields with the mentors, equipment, and instruction they need to compete on a level playing field, thanks to grants from the Office of the Illinois Secretary of State.



**TEENAGERS ----what IS a teenager and what are the community resources for parents and teens**

A series of 3 programs sponsored by the  
Evanston Public Library  
1703 Orrington Avenue  
Tuesdays May 8, May 15, May 22 7:30 p.m.



## EPL librarian wins ALA's 'I Love My Librarian' Award

The American Library Association recognized EPL's Innovation and Digital Learning Manager Elacsha Madison with the I Love My Librarian Award. Madison was nominated by Evanston community members for her innovative and collaborative programming, including a partnership benefitting Girls 4 Ghana -- Evanston teens (below) learn STEM skills while sewing sanitary pads for teens in Ghana to keep young women in school.



**"My son had a wonderful experience and gained so much more than just knowledge in STEM. Not only did he learn a lot this summer but he also learned how to be a kid and make friends. I really am grateful."**

-Evanston mom, about EPL's STEM summer camp

*In our wildly popular after school and summer camp gardening programs, teens learned indoor growing techniques like hydroponics, and gave away 336 heads of greens and another 216 bunches of herbs through community fridges, thanks to grants from the Whole Kids Foundation and KidsGardening.*

# 150 years of creating lifelong learners

For decades, our librarians have been spreading the message that your library is so much more than just books. From a collection of art you could borrow to hang in your home to pianola rolls for your player piano, the Evanston Public Library has been experimenting with new programs and services

No matter your age, there's always something new to discover at EPL, from a new book to your latent creative side. Thanks to a grant from Age Options, our recently expanded programs for older adults include popular art workshops led by professional artists to our Memory Cafes for adults with dementia and their caregivers.

## YOUR LIBRARY IS MORE THAN A STOREHOUSE OF BOOKS

Did you realize that films, projectors and screens, framed art prints by many different artists and in many varied sizes, sculpture, slides, records—classical to modern—and cassettes are also available at your public library?

There is a wide selection to choose from and it is so easy for you to use this special service. All you need is your library card to check out the 8mm films, records, slides and cassettes. You need your library card (and there is a small fee) to check out the 16mm films and equipment, framed prints and sculpture. If you have not borrowed a framed print or a feature-length film, please come to the Art & Music Department and discover for yourself what we have.

For more information call 475-6700, extension 58.

**"THE ANSWER PLACE"**  
EVANSTON PUBLIC LIBRARY

"I have always thought that the senior population is an underserved and somewhat ignored part of the community. These outreach programs are beneficial. I always feel so enriched when I leave!"

Art for Older Adults participant



Shorefront Legacy Center Founder Dino Robinson unveiled the newly integrated newspaper database at EPL's 150th Open House.

## Evanston's entire history in one integrated database

History looks different depending on who's writing it down. That's why EPL and Shorefront Legacy Center partnered up to preserve all of Evanston's current and historic newspapers in one integrated searchable database. You can now read the Evanston Newsette, Evanston's paper of record serving the Black community across four decades, alongside the Evanston Review and several shuttered papers under our Evanston History Resources at [epl.org](http://epl.org).



Get creative with our Sip N Paint programs for ages 21 and older at Temperance Beer Co. or our Art for Older Adults series.

# 150 years of engaging the Evanston community

Above, a community art installation painted by EPL patrons led by local artist Alfonso "Piloto" Nieves asks visitors to the Robert Crown Reading Garden to reflect on issues of migration.

In operation from 1975 to 1981 and staffed largely by Black librarians, EPL's West Branch in Evanston's Fifth Ward hosted events with noted Black authors including National Book Award winner Charles Johnson, programs for all ages, and once even Muhammad Ali (he stopped by after getting a haircut across the street).

Today, our engagement team is charged with bringing programs and services outside the walls of the library and bringing new patrons in through community collaborations. Beyond our extensive programming during Black History Month and Hispanic Heritage Month that collaborates with local BIPOC-owned businesses, our family engagement coordinators innovate with programs like **Tea & Talk** and **Cafecitos** that connect BIPOC community members with influential local leaders to support advocacy and belonging. They coordinate crafts, lectures, and events like Drag Queen Bingo for **Pride Month**. They also bring programs to unexpected locations, like our **Sip N Paint** and **Adult Lego Night** events at Temperance Beer Co. to spark an interest in all the library has to offer for potential new patrons.



The West Branch library operated 1975-81 with the goal of becoming an integral part of the surrounding community.



The popular Evanston Repair Cafe partners people with handy skills like clothing, electronics and jewelry repair and their broken items to get them working like new and keep them out of landfills.

## Fix it, compost it, or upcycle it at eco-friendly programs

With entire buildings full of books to borrow and return, there are few places more eco-friendly than a library, but EPL takes going green to a whole other level with programs to educate and inspire.

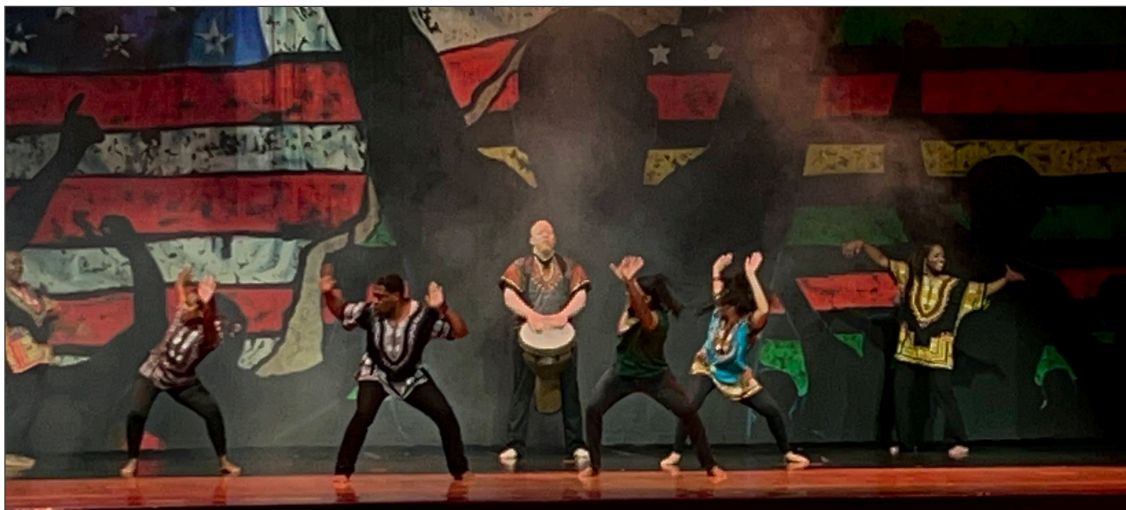
This year the Library hosted an entire week of programs in honor of International Compost Week, and you can even drop your own compostable items off in the bins at the Robert Crown Community Center.

Patrons conducted **6,258** searches on through EPL's Evanston Care Network portal, which connects residents to free and low-cost food, housing, childcare and other services, thanks to a grant from the Evanston Community Foundation.



**Evanston**  
Care Network

This summer EPL, in collaboration with the Fleetwood Jourdain Theatre brought **1619: The Journey of a People** to Evanston for a series of performances at Evanston Township High School and the community Juneteenth Celebration.



# Financial Summary

## FOR 150 YEARS, EPL'S MISSION HAS BEEN EXPANDING ACCESS TO IDEAS AND RESOURCES

**The Evanston Public Library** is committed to providing equitable access to resources despite the restrictions of our funding disparities. Through creative partnerships and generous philanthropic support, we're expanding our capacity. During 2023 our collaborative efforts enabled us to meet our individual fundraising goals one more time, demonstrating the power of community in driving positive change. We can't do this good work without YOU. Whether you contribute time, resources, or simply participate in our programs, your support enriches our library community.

Join us in our journey to ensure

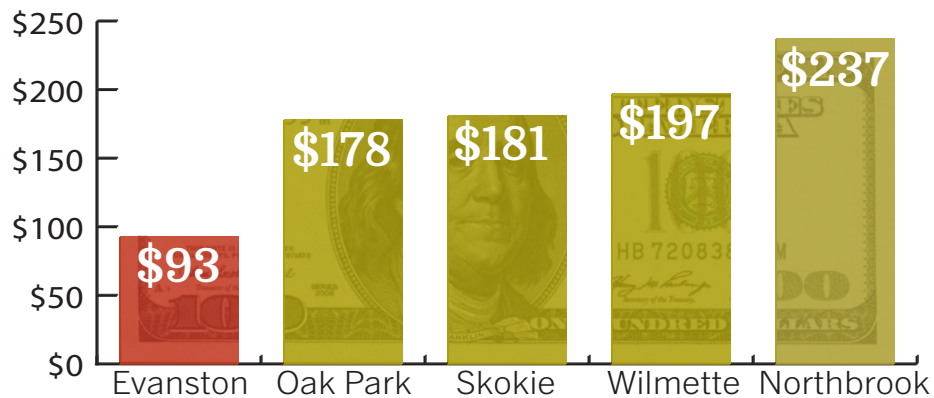
EPL remains a vital resource for all Evanston residents for years to come. Whether you're renewing your commitment or considering getting involved for the first time, your participation is essential. Together, we create a library that serves and strengthens our entire community.

To learn more about how you can contribute or get involved, please visit our website, volunteer at [epl.org/volunteer](http://epl.org/volunteer), or donate online at [epl.org/donate](http://epl.org/donate). For further inquiries, contact Wynn Shawver, Development Manager, at (847)-448-8657.

Ready to give? Donate online today at [epl.org/donate](http://epl.org/donate), or scan here:



### Local tax allotment per resident - far below our neighbors

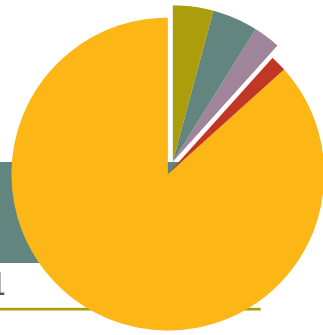


Source: 2022 Illinois Public Library Annual Report

Facing inflationary costs, in 2022, the Library Board increased its budget request by about \$25 a year for a median home. But EPL receives far less funding than our neighboring libraries — just \$93 per person in tax revenue on average, less than half than that of the Wilmette and Northbrook public libraries. About 3% of a property owner's tax bill, or roughly \$280 for a home valued at \$400,000, funds the Library.

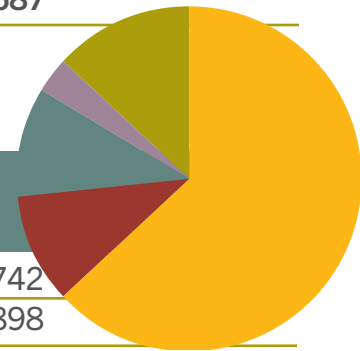
## Revenues

|                            |                    |
|----------------------------|--------------------|
| Philanthropy               | \$790,571          |
| <i>Donations \$403,878</i> |                    |
| <i>Grants \$220,233</i>    |                    |
| <i>Endowment \$166,460</i> |                    |
| Other non-tax revenues     | \$337,435          |
| Taxes                      | \$7,632,769        |
| Debt Service Fund          | \$507,912          |
| <b>Total Revenues</b>      | <b>\$9,268,687</b> |



## Expenditures

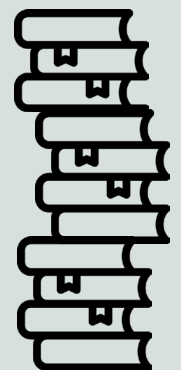
|                                |                    |
|--------------------------------|--------------------|
| Personnel                      | \$5,818,742        |
| Services, Materials, Equipment | \$965,898          |
| Library Collection             | \$951,256          |
| Shared City Services           | \$294,996          |
| Capital Expenditures           | \$1,192,903        |
| Debt Service Fund              | \$507,913          |
| <b>Total Expenditures</b>      | <b>\$9,731,708</b> |



## How do your savings stack up?

The Evanston Public Library offers a great return on your investment. The average library patron saves \$530 a year checking out books and other physical materials from our library, plus hundreds more on downloadable books, audiobooks and movies -- not to mention our nearly 1,000 free programs every year!

Find out how much you saved. Visit [epl.org/savings](http://epl.org/savings), enter your library card number, and see how your savings stack up!





# Thank you for your generosity...

The Evanston Public Library gratefully acknowledges the contributions of our donors.

## Organizational Support

### \$100,000+

Office of the Illinois Secretary of State

### \$25,000 - \$99,999

Evanston/Skokie School District #65

### \$5,000 - \$24,999

AgeOptions  
Cooperative Computer Services  
Reaching Across Illinois Library Systems (RAILS)

### \$1,000 - \$4,999

Califa Group  
Evanston Community Foundation  
Evanston Public Library Friends  
Institute of Museum and Library Services  
Partners of the Evanston Public Library  
The Links, Incorporated  
Whole Kids Foundation

### \$999 and below

National Science Foundation  
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### \$25,000 and above

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### Evanston steps up for the freedom to read.

When a series of bomb threats shuttered the Library this fall, Evanstonians stepped up with an outpouring of support including giving donations and wearing banned books tees in honor of the work we do every day to guarantee access to books and ideas.

Across the country, libraries have been facing challenges to their materials on their shelves. We are grateful to the Evanston community for your commitment to the freedom to read and your continued support for the Library.



*Tees, totes and other gear celebrating the freedom to read is still available for order at [epl.org](http://epl.org).*

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*Our falcon family returned to the Main Library's eaves in 2023 and hatched a chick, who met his adoring public during his banding.*

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