



LONG BRANCH
Free Public Library



2023
Annual Report



“There is not such a cradle of democracy upon the earth as the Free Public Library, this republic of letters, where neither rank, office, nor wealth receives the slightest consideration.”

Andrew Carnegie



Dear Community,

Reflecting on the past year fills me with immense pride and gratitude as I share the achievements of the Long Branch Free Public Library. Libraries have long-served as sanctuaries for books and knowledge, and our staff honor this role with dedication and resilience.

This year, due to the temporary closing and relocation of the Main Library, we actively set out to host our regular and special programs at various locations throughout the city with wonderful partners such as the **Long Branch Cultural and Arts Center, Long Branch Recreation Department, the Senior Center, and St. James Episcopal Church**. We participated in over thirty city-wide events, answered over 15,000 reference questions, lent over 61,000 items, held 267 children programs, engaged over 5,000 children in learning and creativity, added 880 new card holders to our 4,800 active members, and more.

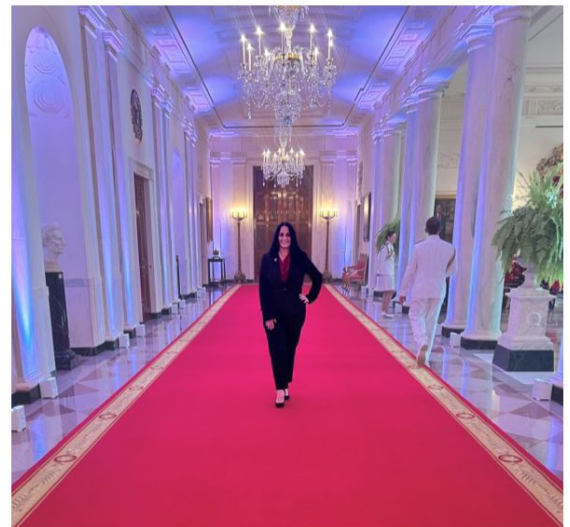
Belonging to the Libraries of Middlesex Automation Consortium (LMxAC) has been invaluable, especially during our transition. With access to a vast collection of over 2.5 million items, collaborative purchasing power, and professional development opportunities, LMxAC has greatly supported our endeavors. **Now comprising over 40 libraries and branches across three counties, LMxAC continues to enrich our library services during our renovation.**

I am also thrilled to announce that thanks to our community's majority vote on the NJ Library Construction Bond Act, we secured \$6.2 million in funding, enabling us to commence work on a historic restoration project to preserve our beloved Carnegie Library. **This project will enhance our facilities with a new local history room, a vibrant teen space, a sensory room, an energy-efficient HVAC system, dewatering solution with a new generator, and more.** These enhancements ensure that our library remains a cornerstone of Long Branch. Despite the challenges of relocating our century-old library to a smaller temporary location, our team's commitment remained steadfast, with a collective job satisfaction rate of 9 this year!

Yet another highlight this year was our library being one of four libraries to receive the prestigious 2023 National Medal for Museum and Library Service. This Medal, the highest federal honor bestowed upon libraries, was received at a White House ceremony from First Lady Dr. Jill Biden. It will stand as a testament to our unwavering commitment to excellence and innovation.

As we embark on this new chapter, I extend my heartfelt thanks to our patrons, staff, volunteers, and partners for their unwavering support in ensuring that **our library remains one of the city's primary anchor institutions of education, civic engagement, and community.** Together, I am confident that we will continue to achieve greatness in these areas - for generations to come.

With great appreciation,
Tonya Garcia
Library Director





Board of Trustees Members

Each Member of the Board of Trustees works tirelessly to ensure the library follows its mission and vision.

Mayor

John Pallone
Unexpired

LB Superintendent

Francisco Rodriguez
Unexpired

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Roberto Ferragina
12/31/2025

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12/31/2025

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Joy Bastelli
12/31/2028

Trustee

Jack Kearns
12/31/2026

Trustee

Willie Snell
12/31/2028

Trustee

Linda Toye
12/31/2024

Our Year In Numbers

Our mission as a public library is to provide equal access to innovative, barrier-free resources that meet the needs and interests of the community with a commitment to serving every individual. We are extremely proud that we successfully met our mission in 2023.

61K

Print
Materials
Loaned



15K

Digital
Materials
Loaned



15K

Reference
Questions
Answered



885

New Library
Patrons



466

Notary
Requests
Fulfilled



411

Social Work
Clients
Served





Our Digital Collection

In 2023, we expanded our digital collection by adding more eBooks and eAudiobooks to Libby. After highlighting our digital collection during our Go Green campaign, we found that there was a 24% increase in digital checkouts.

1087

Movies & TV Shows
streamed via Kanopy

4928

eBooks & eAudiobooks
streamed via Hoopla

10874

eBooks & eAudiobooks
streamed via Libby

Our Print Collection

In order to prepare for library renovations, a large portion of our print collection was deposited in storage. Patrons continued to visit and borrow print books regularly from our Temporary location and Elberon Branch even with a smaller selection of books available.

Physical or Print
items borrowed via Lxmac

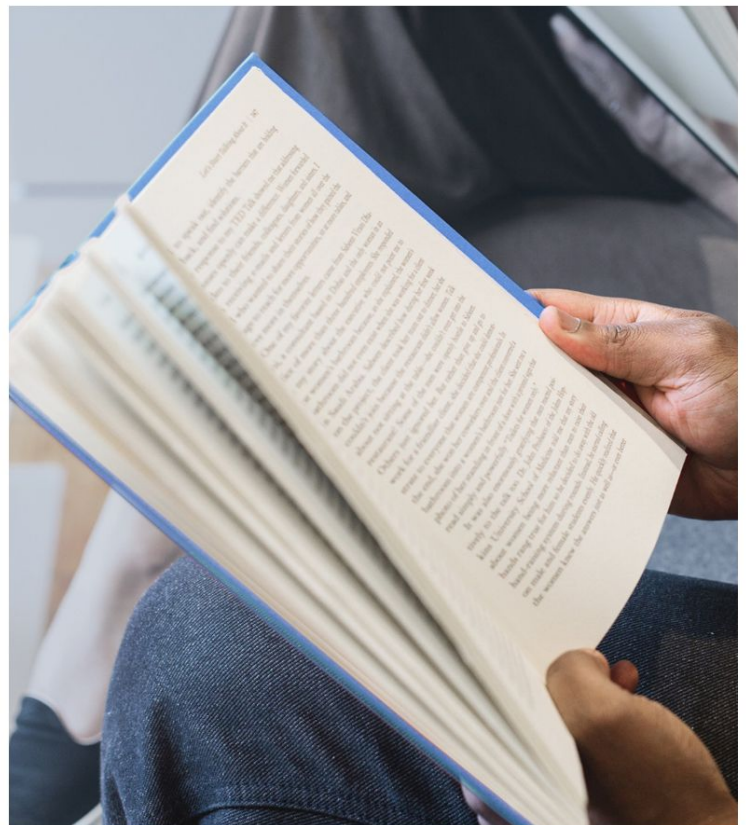
19524

In-Person
visits to the library

52125

Physical or Print
items borrowed total

61525



Adult Programming

In 2023, the Main Library and Elberon Branch were able to host a wide array of in-person programming. Once we moved into our Temporary Library, most Adult Programs were hosted at the Elberon Branch Library. Despite these changes, program attendance remained high both for new programs like Beginner's Yoga and Estate Planning, as well as recurring programs like our Nonfiction Book Club and Spoken Word events.

115

Adult Programs
hosted

1804

Adult Program
attendees

61

ESL Classes
hosted with CARC

815

ESL Class
attendees





Youth Programming

Despite changes to our programming space, Mrs. Tara and Ms. Nekesha continued to host programs at the Elberon Branch. Our partnership with the city also allowed us to host programs like the Children's Fine Art Class outside the library.

47

Teen Programs
hosted

267

Children's Programs
hosted

5664

Youth
program attendees



Our New Chapter

The Main Library has been undergoing an extensive renovation for the past year. We hope to reopen the Main Library, restored to its majestic Carnegie origins, in the fall of 2024!

Major system upgrades are also being made. These include efficient lighting, waterproofing, a new HVAC system, and a new generator.

New Features Include:

- Arched glass entryway window - a nod to the original stained glass window
- Indoor columns accentuating the original ceiling design
- Newly elevated ceiling revealing the original Carnegie windows
- A traditional color palette, complimented by our cherished Long Branch Green hues
- Timeless pendulum lighting



The Institute of Museum and Library Services National Medal was awarded to the Long Branch Free Public Library!

In 2023, our library received the IMLS National Medal at the White House from First Lady Dr. Jill Biden and IMLS Director Crosby Kemper. This is the nation's highest federal honor for libraries and museums.

We are incredibly proud and thankful to all of our hardworking staff, our Board of Trustees, our Mayor, Congressman Pallone, Senator Booker, our Friends of the Library, and of course, our Director Tonya Garcia. Most importantly, we are thankful to our beloved library users who make this now nationally-recognized library their center of the community.



Generous Donation Received in Honor of Joseph Reale

In November of 2023, the Library was honored to receive a significant donation of \$6,500 to the esteemed Long Branch History Room, made in loving memory of Joseph D. Reale, Jr. by his devoted family.

“Joe Reale loved Long Branch, and loved its history. He also loved the Long Branch Public Library, and would be very happy to see the great history of Long Branch preserved and shared with generations to come. We are extremely pleased to make this donation on his behalf.” - Scott Gaito and the family of Joe Reale.



1st Latino Small Business & Entrepreneurship Forum

In 2023 the Library hosted the first Latino Small Business & Entrepreneurship Forum in Long Branch. Our partners were able to connect Spanish-speaking small business owners with resources to keep their businesses growing strong, assist with mental health needs, and so much more.

We thank our partners at Small Business Development Center at Brookdale Community College, Greater Long Branch Chamber of Commerce, the Vin Gopal Civic Association, Galindo's Kitchen, Barrio Antiquo, and the City of Long Branch Office of Community and Economic Development.



Summer Reading Participation Increase

During the Library's Summer Reading Program staff, encouraged patrons of all ages to sign up and read as many books as possible.

This year, the Friends of the Library took part in our Summer Reading Program and generously donated 6 Amazon Fire Tablets. One entry into a raffle for each of these tablets was generated for each book read.

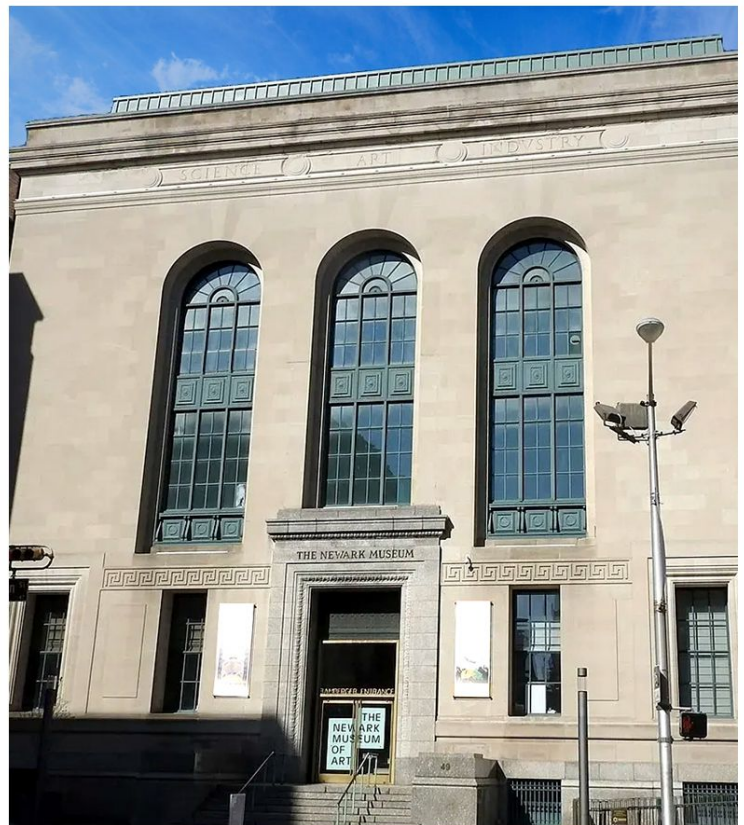
By encouraging patrons to join at outreach events and by incorporating these exciting prizes, **144 people** participated in the program - an increase of **48%** in comparison to 2022!

New Museum Passes

At the end of 2023, the Library increased its range of museum passes available to patrons. With a library card in good standing, patrons 18 and older can save money by checking out one of eight museum passes free of charge!

Passes available include:

- The American Museum of Natural History
- Brooklyn Botanic Garden
- Intrepid Sea, Air & Space Museum
- Liberty Science Center
- Monmouth Museum
- Museum of Modern Art
- Museum of the American Revolution
- Newark Museum of Art





List of Staff & Administration

ADMINISTRATION

Library Director

Tonya Garcia

Librarian IV

Kate Angelo

Assistant to the Director

Molly Sullivan

Librarian IV

Janet Birkhead

Librarian II

Wesley Blackburn

Building & Grounds

John Callery

LIBRARY SERVICES

Adult, Reference & Volunteers

Janet Birkhead (Mgr.)

Elberon Branch Library

Tara Sullivan (Mgr.)

Anya Wells

Casey Dasilva

Community Engagement & Outreach

Wesley Blackburn (Mgr.)

Lisa Kelly (Mgr.)

David Perez (Mgr.)

Social Work Services

David Perez (Mgr.)

Local History

Janice Grace (Mgr.)

Family Services

Nekesha Marshall (Mgr.)

Yanique Thompson

Cristina Asuncion

Circulation

Wesley Blackburn (Mgr.)

Cadene Patterson (Mgr.)

Gianna Mul-Furrigno

Yeymi Guerra

Technology & Career

Kate Angelo (Mgr.)

Michelle Servellon

Salvador Romero

Technical Services

Thalia Sweet (Mgr.)

Henrietta Dawson



Support the Long Branch Free Public Library & Join the Friends!

Consider joining the Friends of the Long Branch Free Public Library! This group is dedicated to supporting and improving the library. Through an annual membership drive and other fundraising initiatives, the Friends enable the purchase of resources that fall outside the scope of the library's operating budget including but not limited to the library's museum pass loan program, special programs, author talks, history tours, teen supplies, special events and more!

The Friends of the Long Branch Free Public Library support the Library through fundraising, volunteering, and promoting the library! To join the Friends of the Library, please send an email to Wesley Blackburn at: wblackburn@longbranchlib.org.



Donations

If you wish to donate directly to the Library, that is also an option. Gifts and bequests to the library are deductible under the federal income, estate, and gift tax laws. With support from generous individuals and businesses, we can develop and expand special services such as our job search resources, special collections, reentry services and so much more. We appreciate all your support and no donation is too small! For your safety, cash is only accepted in person at the front desk. For any questions regarding general gifts, please email Molly Sullivan, Assistant to the Director, at msullivan@longbranchlib.org or call 732-222-3900 x2250.



LONG BRANCH
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The Long Branch Free Public Library welcomes comments, questions, and suggestions. Please reach out to Library Director Tonya Garcia with feedback.



tgarcia@longbranchlib.org



732-222-3900 x2240