



WASHINGTON COUNTY
FREE LIBRARY

Where People & Possibilities Meet

WASHINGTON COUNTY FREE LIBRARY

ANNUAL REPORT FY 2024



ANNUAL REPORT

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**WASHINGTON COUNTY
FREE LIBRARY**

Where People & Possibilities Meet

Mission

The Washington County Free Library is committed to building a strong, interconnected, diverse community by bringing people, information, and ideas together.

100 South Potomac Street Hagerstown, MD 21740
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A WORD FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Dear Patrons, Supporters, and Friends of the Washington County Free Library,

As we close another vibrant year at the Washington County Free Library (WCFL), we're excited to reflect on a period of remarkable growth, accessibility, and community impact.

Our doors saw an impressive 10% increase in visits compared to last year, even with a temporary closure in Williamsport. This is a testament to the continued importance of the library in our community as a place of learning, support, and discovery.

One of our most significant achievements in 2024 has been enhancing our community's access to technology. Through the valuable partnership with Washington County government, we were able to distribute over 3,300 Chromebooks to community members, empowering more people to connect, learn, and succeed in an increasingly digital world. This effort aligns with our mission to build a strong, interconnected, diverse community by bringing people, information, and ideas together.

The Library's focus on accessibility also extended to innovative ways of providing library resources remotely. The Smart Lockers at North Pointe, which make picking up materials convenient and accessible, saw a 17% increase in usage over FY23. This service has made library resources more convenient for patrons who may face transportation challenges or prefer the flexibility of after-hours access.

In addition, our programming in 2024 has evolved to better meet the diverse interests of our community. Notably, attendance at adult programs rose significantly, growing from 12% to 31% of our total programming participation. This increase reflects our commitment to engaging adults with valuable opportunities for personal growth, education, and community building.

We could not have achieved these milestones without the dedication and support of our staff, patrons and community partners. Your contributions have been instrumental in bringing our vision to life and making a lasting impact on the lives of our neighbors.

Thank you for being a part of our journey in 2024. We look forward to another year of growth, innovation, and community engagement in 2025, as we continue to shape the Library as a cornerstone of opportunity and inclusion for all.

Warm regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jenny Z. Bakos". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large, stylized 'J' and 'B'.

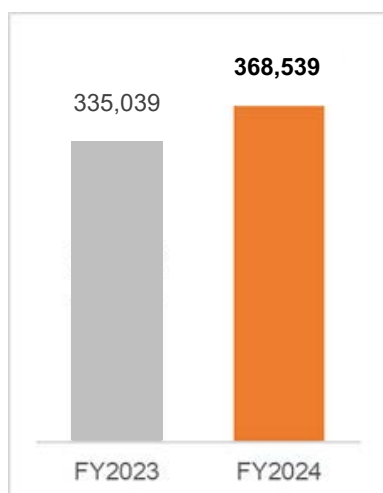
Jenny Bakos, Executive Director



LIBRARY USE

Residents of Washington County visited the system's **eight libraries** and **two bookmobile's** over **368,000** times! WCFL's collection of **528,907 physical materials** and **quality digital library offerings** ensures there is something for everyone to enjoy.

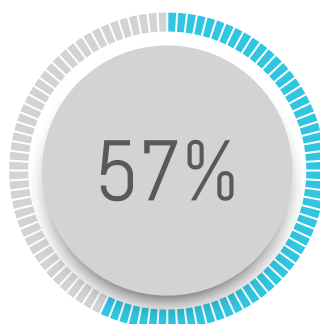
LIBRARY VISITS



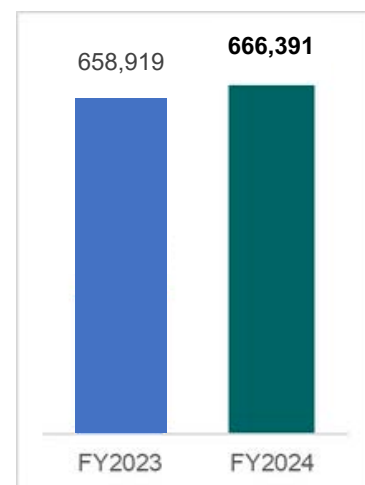
Visits increased by **10%** between FY2023 and FY2024.

TOTAL CARDHOLDERS

89,497 of 155,813 county residents are library cardholders.

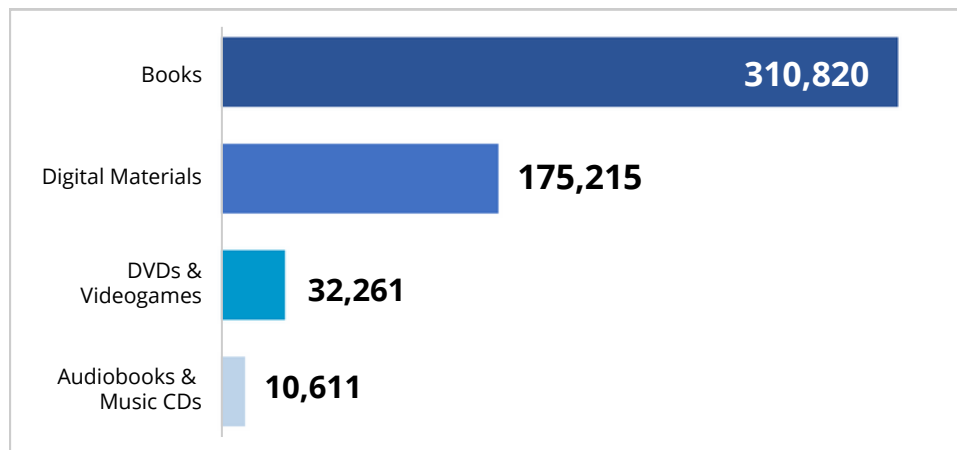


TOTAL CIRCULATION

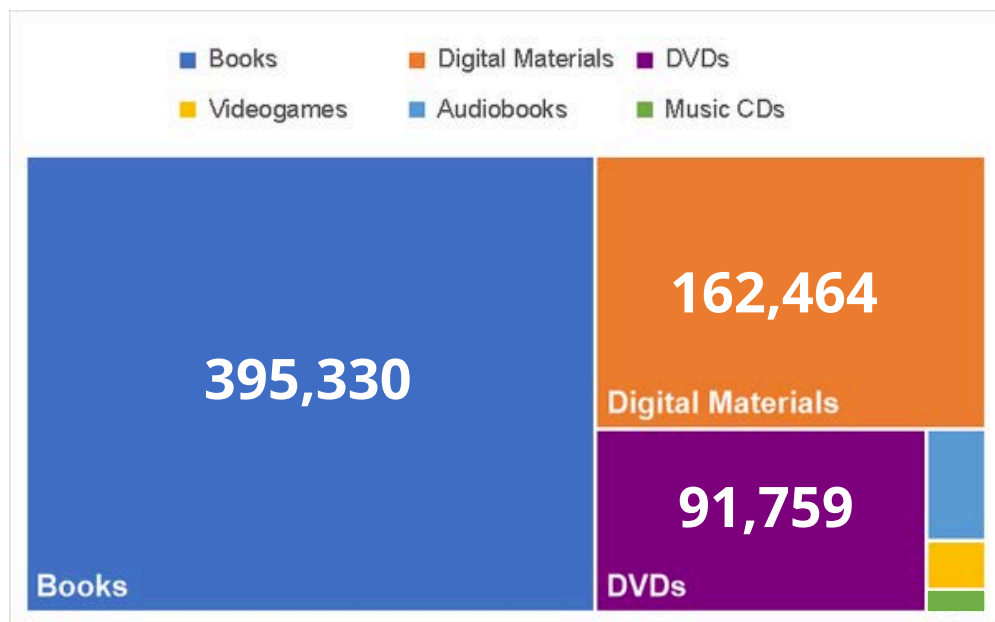


Circulation continues to see an **increase**.

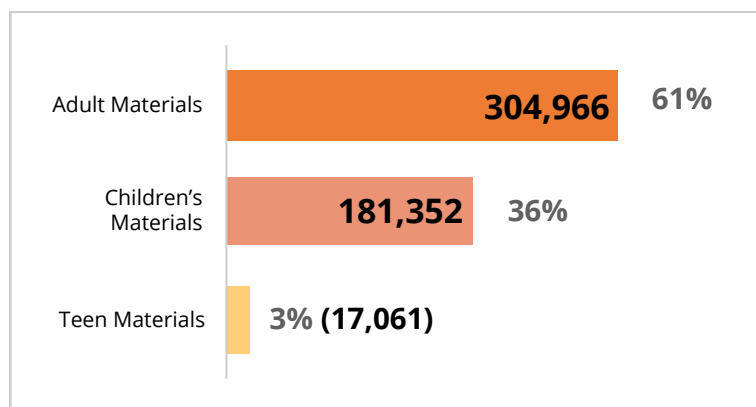
LIBRARY COLLECTIONS



CIRCULATION BY FORMAT



PHYSICAL MATERIALS CIRCULATED BY TYPE



INTERLIBRARY LOAN

Interlibrary Loan allows Washington County community members to access materials available in libraries throughout Maryland and beyond.

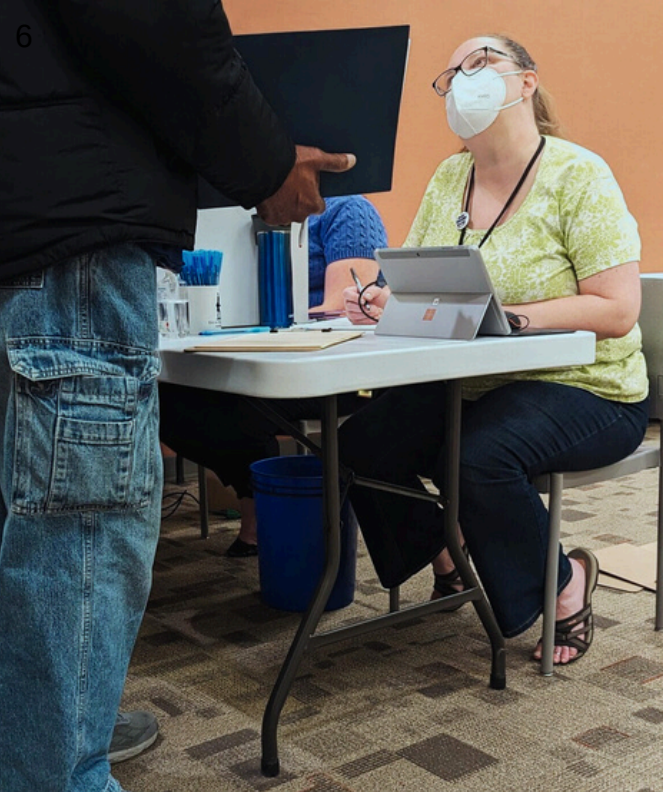
16,900
Total Materials

8,787
Materials Borrowed

8,113
Materials Lent

Library Stories

One patron left a voicemail to express gratitude for a staff member's excellent service explaining, "She helped me locate a book, and was the only one in any library in the state of Maryland that had this book I needed for a talk I'm giving next week. She put it on hold for me at the Circulation Desk. Then, she went above and beyond by getting it in her hands before I left for a two-hour drive to come and pick it up. Good service is so rare, it always deserves a comment."



ACCESS & ACCESSIBILITY

Washington County Free Library is dedicated to making life-changing services and resources available to all community members. Last year, access to pick up library holds was expanded with the North Pointe smart locker system. This year the locker system continues to serve patrons, with **17% increased usage** and a total of **5,140 checkouts**. With an eye on the future, WCFL is excited to expand locker services throughout the community in the coming year!

In an effort to close the digital divide and increase digital literacy in Washington County, through a grant provided by Washington County government via the Maryland State Department of Housing and Community Development, WCFL is the primary distributor of no-cost Chromebooks for Washington County households. During FY24, **over 3,300 Chromebooks were distributed** in every jurisdiction of Washington County. Giveaway events were available to people at every branch of the library system to increase digital equity, support online education, empower job seekers, and connect communities to essential services.



Library Stories

An elderly woman was trying desperately to obtain a copy of her birth certificate from the state of Washington. She had been to multiple organizations in the community and kept getting directed elsewhere. A library staff member assisted her to get a copy sent. The patron burst into tears of gratitude and said, "Thank you so much, you've helped me make more progress in fifteen minutes than I've had in three weeks!"

ACCESS TO INTERNET CONNECTIVITY

According to the 2020 Census, approximately 18% of households in Washington County do not have a home internet connection. WCFL branches have **104 public computers**, in addition to printers, scanners, and more to help lessen the digital divide in Washington County.



MEETING ROOMS & STUDY SPACES

Meeting rooms offer space for community organizations, businesses, and more, and study spaces offer students, small business owners, and others a quiet, private space to study or meet. This year, hosted events in library spaces included test proctoring, strategic planning sessions, apartment tenant meetings, public information sessions, team building workshops, homeschool co-ops, interviews, and more!

The Washington County Free Library now provides a wheelchair accessible, Telehealth Pod for health-related appointments at the Fletcher Branch in Hagerstown. It serves as a valuable access point, promoting health equity, and supporting community wellness.



ACCESS TO INFORMATION

Library staff work hard to meet a wide range of information needs for all community members quickly, efficiently, and compassionately. This year, staff answered **42,360 questions**. That's **116** questions per day! Community members visited WCFL's **33 premium digital services** for accurate, trusted database results a total of **62,064 times**, along with having access to an additional 12 state-sponsored and 14 non-paid digital resources.

Library Stories

A patron spoke with staff at the Williamsport Farmer's Market to express appreciation for a magnifying bookmark offered as a giveaway item at a previous Farmer's Market event. She said she is legally blind and found it difficult to read with a regular magnifying glass, but tha the rectangular bookmark was easier to use and allowed her to enjoy reading again. Staff discussed audiobooks, and other services available through the Maryland Library for the Blind and Print Disabled with her.





PROGRAMS

The Washington County Free Library offers programming for all ages groups. In fiscal year 2024, WCFL saw the **largest change in adult programming** with a rise from 12% attendance to a whopping **31%**. This is, in part, to a real push from our programming librarians who have come up with **new, exciting, and relevant events**.

During FY24, the Library had its first Gala Fundraising event to help support these offerings to the public. It was a fairytale costume ball called *A Night of Enchantment* and how enchanting it was! The Library was transformed into a mystical realm of magical creatures, sorcery, and fantastical adventures. It was a **sold out event** and we look forward to reimagining it this year!

30,069 PEOPLE ATTENDED
3,302 PROGRAMS



CHILDREN (60%)

TEENS (9%)

ADULTS (31%)



Library Stories

A regular patron at Smithsburg, made lovely quilt squares for the library. The squares are all different colors and patterns and now serve as storytime squares for the children to sit on as they listen to stories.

EARLY CHILDHOOD LEARNING

WCFL has focused resources to help foster caregiver engagement and support childcare providers in early childhood learning.

Storytimes with crafts, songs, and activities offer children and caregivers opportunities to engage with one another, learn, and grow. Children and young adults explored their interest in literature with book clubs and writing contents, as well as STEM with experiments and building challenges.

ENHANCING EDUCATION

Book giveaways, author visits, creative maker experiences, and more, offer students of all ages opportunities to learn and grow. Library staff are available to offer homework help and research assistance to K-12 students and beyond.

Many WCPS middle and high school classes visited their local libraries for tours and to learn about resources accessible with their RAIL (Raising Access to Improve Literacy) student library cards.



Library Stories

In Smithsburg, one young patron joined Infant Storytime after the pandemic and spent much of his time taking in everything as an observer. He has now graduated to Toddler Time and staff noted that he does all the movements to the songs! It's a great reminder of the social growth that happens in libraries at this age.



WCFL PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

History Around the County

Washington County is chock full of cultural and historic significance. Branch libraries support their community's excitement for history by regularly creating programs featuring local historians and authors. Boonsboro Free Library patrons have increasingly enjoyed speakers like Tom Clemens speaking about "Finding McClellan's Headquarter's at Antietam".

Symphony Storytimes

WCFL presented musical storytimes, where a captivating book is paired with a fresh musical score performed by a Maryland Symphony Orchestra musician to create an unforgettable experience for all ages!

Hagerstown Homesteaders

To start the new year, Information Services staff introduced Hagerstown Homesteaders, a monthly gardening club. This club teaches how to lay out garden plots, start indoor seedlings, transplant and direct sow seeds, garden maintenance, soil amendment, organic treatments for pest control, harvesting, canning and food preservation, and so much more. Interest in this program was so great that staff immediately had to create a second session of it, offering two iterations of the program per month!

Storytimes Around Town

Taking storytimes beyond the walls and into the community helps to reach people where they are. Williamsport Memorial library hosted children in the park, pizza parlor, plant shop, farmer's market and more! Making it easier than ever to participate.



WORKSHOPS AND CLASSES

Life skills workshops, financial and digital literacy classes, one-on-one job search support, and community partnerships help WCFL provide ample opportunities for job seekers, entrepreneurs, and business owners to learn and connect.

To foster an interconnected community, the Library incorporates multicultural and diverse thinking into programming, reaches out to historically underserved communities, and collaborates with other organizations to strengthen bonds.



Library Stories



A couple from Kansas stopped to take shelter during a tornado warning. They said, "When a warning comes across your phone in Kansas you had better take shelter quickly." They knew they would be safe in a library and picked up some local information while they were there.



RESPONDING TO THE COMMUNITY

Washington County Free Library strives to anticipate and be responsive to community aspirations and needs, both current and future.

Bookmobile's build community engagement by serving as a community hub. WCFL has helped serve patrons and continue its bookmobile legacy by adding another to its fleet. The new bookmobile serves most of our community centers, retirement communities, adult-living communities, and senior centers while the bookmobile bus continues to serve larger stops like schools, daycares and summer camps. The new truck is more maneuverable and can access more places the bus cannot due to its size. The shelves in the new truck are actually on wheels so that materials can be brought into centers and lobbies for community members to browse, too!

Library Stories

One teen has been coming regularly to the Young Adult Department for the last five years. He has recently opened up more to staff, joined the department's Discord to engage more with other teens, and recently said, "this feels like a second family." He even brought his visiting older brother, visiting before being stationed in Japan, into the department to introduce him to this second family.



WCFL PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

Homeschool Book Club

The Sharpsburg Library's Homeschool Book Club is beloved by the community. The Department of Agriculture presented their "Freddy the Fish" program, the VP of the town museum did a walking tour of Sharpsburg, and children were immersed in the land of Oz, complete with a yellow brick road and flying monkeys!

Partial Solar Eclipse Viewing

Through grant funding, the Space Science Institute offered eclipse glasses to all public libraries who submitted applications through their SEAL Project. These were distributed to all WCFL branches. Viewing parties were enjoyed by hundreds of patrons!

Writing & Design Contests

The library received over 100 entries into the annual Writers and Poets Contest with 30 winners from 2nd grade to adult. Author, Laura Gehl, made a special visit! Contests like these showcase the talent and creativity of Washington County residents of all ages!

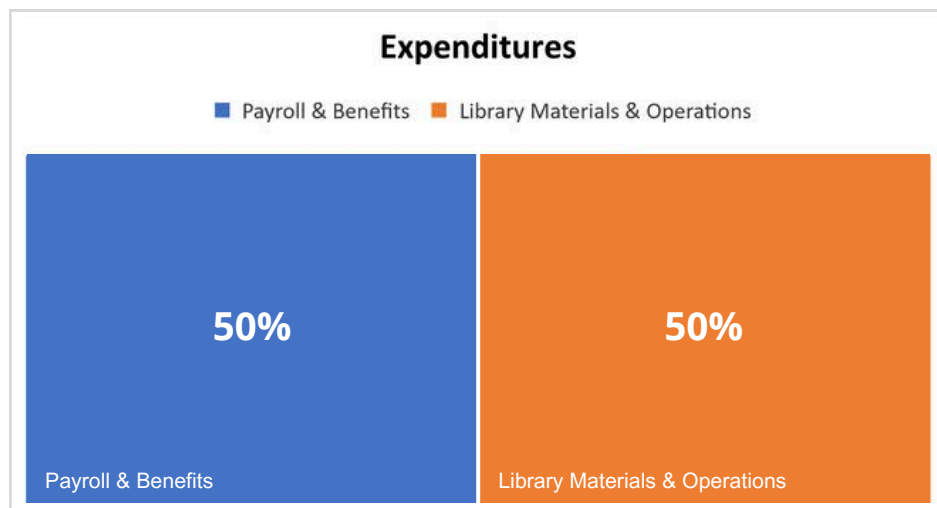
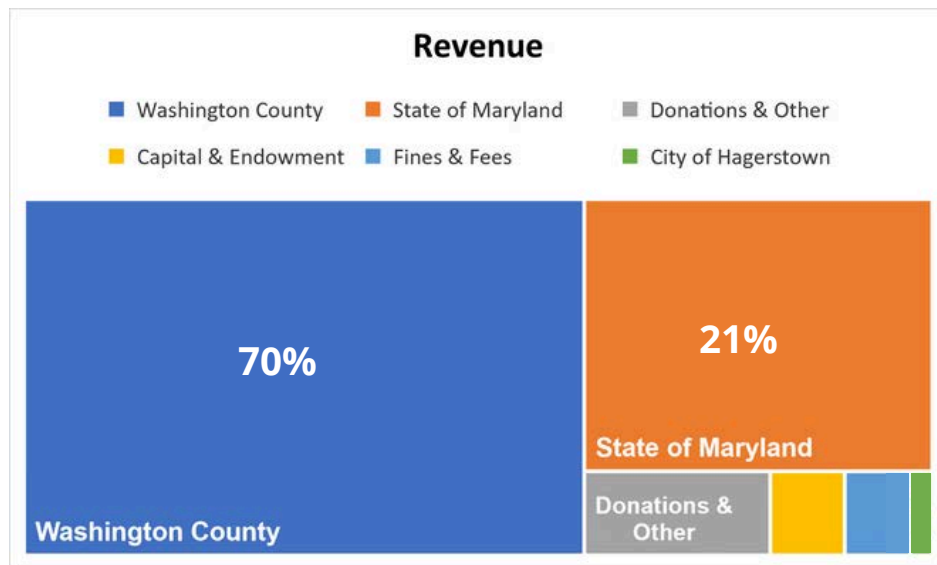
Summer Reading Club

Summer Reading Club helps prevent "summer slide" for students with a balance of self-paced reading goals and fun programs. Smithsburg hosted 8 Middle School classes for tours, a scavenger hunt, and to sign up. They connected with 140 teens! Brains and Brawn was the theme for their Summer Reading Club Kickoff event. It was an Indiana Jones type event with different activities including a hieroglyphics puzzle, land your foam airplane at the airport, dig for dinosaur remains, lasso a flamingo, shoot a poison dart, crawl through a mine to get a gem, outrun a boulder, and rescue the golden skull in the pit of snakes!



FINANCIAL OVERVIEW

TOTAL BUDGET: \$7,758,735.00



STAFF BREAKDOWN BY POSITION FY24

WCFL Personnel (Total FTE): 76

14 PROFESSIONAL LIBRARIANS

These positions require a **Master's Degree** from an American Library Association accredited college or university and a **Professional Librarian Certificate** from the State of Maryland, along with the completion of continuing education credits on an annual basis.

3 FT | 1 PT

PROFESSIONAL SUPPORT STAFF

These positions require either a **Bachelor's Degree** or a **Master's Degree** in a specialized field relating to either Information Technology or Finance.

12 FT | 20 PT

LIBRARY ASSOCIATES

These positions require a **Bachelor's Degree** and the completion of a LATI (Library Associates Training Institute) certification, along with the completion of continuing education credits on an annual basis.

20 FT | 25 PT

LIBRARY ASSISTANTS

1 FT | 3 PT

SECURITY OFFICERS

2 FT MAINTENANCE WORKERS

2 PT CUSTODIANS

RETURN ON INVESTMENT

Investing in the well-being of your community pays dividends. When you invest in your public library system, those dollars are put toward educational infrastructure, economic development, cultivating connections, and beyond.

The personal stories shared by Washington County residents who use the library, the quantitative data gathered throughout FY24, and the below Estimated Value of Library Services chart offer a snapshot of Washington County Free Library's impact.

ESTIMATED VALUE OF LIBRARY SERVICES

Quantity	Service	Retail Value*	Value
8,787	Materials Borrowed via Interlibrary Loan	\$26.00	\$228,462.00
395,330	Books and Print Materials Borrowed	\$23.00	\$9,092,590.00
108,597	DVDs and Other Media Borrowed	\$21.00	\$2,280,537.00
41,857	eBook & Audiobooks Downloaded	\$28.00	\$1,171,996.00
42,360	One-on-One Research	\$21.00	\$889,560.00
81	Tech Assistance	\$40.00	\$3,240.00
20,747	Children and Teens Programs Attendees	\$16.00	\$331,952.00
3,023	Self-Serve Programs	\$10.00	\$30,230.00
9,321	Adult Programs Attendees	\$19.00	\$177,099.00
62,064	Premium Digital Resource Searches	\$15.00	\$930,960.00
59,742	Computer and Wi-Fi Hours	\$19.00	\$1,135,098.00
2,750	Study Room Use	\$51.00	\$140,250.00
338	Community Meeting Room Use	\$256.00	\$86,528.00

*Retail Value based on estimates.

Total: \$16,498,502.00

For every **\$1** Washington County spent on library services, the community received approximately **\$4.75** worth in services.



Working hard to provide free materials, programs, and services to Washington County across 8 libraries and 2 bookmobiles

PARTNERSHIPS

Washington County Free Library is generously supported by elected officials at the city, county, and state levels. The Library wishes to thank Washington County, the City of Hagerstown, and the many community organizations that provide support for our classes, workshops, special programs, and activities throughout the year.

- Adkins Mini Golf
- Adventures in Fun Reptile Show
- Antietam Institute
- Antietam National Battlefield
- Antietam Pumpkins
- Appalachian Reptiles & Aquatics
- Authentic Community Theatre
- Baker Creek Seed Co.
- Baltimore Orioles
- Barbara Ingram School for the Arts
- Barbara Irvine Collection Exhibit
- Beginnings Daycare
- Bester Community of Hope
- Beyond Comics in Frederick
- BISFA
- Black Storytellers of Western Maryland
- Boonsboro Green Fest's Zero Waste Exchange
- Boonsboro Historical Society
- Boonsboro Museum of History
- Botanical Interests
- Boys and Girls Club of Washington County
- Bright Beginnings Child Care
- Buzz Worthy Apiary
- Cam Millar and the Weather People
- CASH Campaign of Maryland
- Chamber of Commerce President, Paul Frey
- Chick-fil-a
- Children in Need
- CISCO
- City Councilpersons, Peter Perini and Matt Schindler
- City of Hagerstown
- The Collegium
- Commonwealth Senior Living
- Community Action Council
- Community Foundation of Washington County
- Dairy Queen
- Denny's
- Department of Agriculture
- Didgeridoo Down Under
- Discovery Station
- D.M Bowman
- Dollar General
- Eastern Elementary School
- Elias Davison Homestead
- First United Bank and Trust
- The Flying Boxcars at Meritus Park
- Food Lion
- For Jars, Co.
- Fort Ritchie Community Center
- Frederick Keys
- Fresh Academicz
- Friends of the Library
- Fun and Learning Center
- Gimli the Dwarf Cat
- Good Shepherd Preschool
- Green Hill Farm
- Greenbrier Elementary School
- Greenlawn Cemetery
- Guys In Thin Ties
- Hadley Farms Bakery
- Hagerstown Chapter of the Embroiderer's Guild
- Hagerstown City Park
- Hagerstown Community College
- Hagerstown Mayor, Tekesha Martinez
- Hancock in Motion
- Hancock Lion's Club
- Hancock Senior Center
- Head Start of Washington County
- Healthy Washington County
- Herald-Mail Media
- Homewood Retirement Center
- Hope Through Birth
- Horizon Goodwill
- Hospice of Washington County
- Institute of Museum and Library Services
- International House of Pancakes
- Johnny's Seeds
- Judy Center of Washington County
- Kinder Haven Preschool
- Kiwanis of Hagerstown
- Krispy Kreme
- Labor of Love
- Leonard P. Snyder Fund
- Little Brick Coffee in Sharpsburg
- Little Jack's Preschool
- Live 96.7
- Loaves and Fishes
- Marshall Street School
- Martha's House
- Martin's Foods
- Maryland 529
- Maryland Coalition of Families
- Maryland Department of Health
- Maryland Department of Housing and Community Development
- Maryland Department of Natural Resources
- Maryland Humanities Council
- Maryland Science Center
- Maryland State Department of Education
- Maryland State Library Resource Center
- Maryland Symphony Orchestra
- The Maryland Theater
- Master Gardeners of Washington County
- Meritus
- Middletown Valley Bank
- Misty Meadows Farm Creamery
- Mr. Jon and Friends
- Neptune's Harvest
- The Nora Roberts Family Foundation
- On Stage Dance Performance
- Pitter Patter Playhouse
- Potomac Valley Audubon Society

- Power House Studios
- Prime Time for Women's smoothie bike
- Priority Partners
- Reading to Make Cents committee from Apples to Apples
- Rehoboth United Methodist Church
- Science in the Library
- Shango Mountain Taiko Percussion Group
- Sharpsburg Historical Society
- Sharpsburg Museum of History
- Sheetz, Inc.
- Sheehy, Hagerstown
- Sila Bartel
- Smith's Karate
- Smithsburg Advisory Board members
- Smithsburg EMS
- Smithsburg Historical Society
- Smithsburg Police Station
- Smithsburg Post Office
- Smithsburg Volunteer Fire Department
- Sprout: Plants & Things
- St Paul's Episcopal Church
- Star Theater
- State Library Resource Center (SLRC)
- Stone Werks Coffee + Sweets
- Stryker (the Flying Boxcars mascot)
- SueChefs
- Sunny Meadows Garden Center
- Texas Roadhouse
- The Greater Hagerstown Committee
- Thin Line Service Dogs
- Tony's Pizza and Italian Restaurant Williamsport
- Town of Boonsboro
- Town of Clear Spring
- Town of Hancock
- Town of Keedysville
- Town of Sharpsburg
- Town of Smithsburg
- Town of Williamsport
- TriState Astronomers

- United Way
- University System of Maryland at Hagerstown
- University of Maryland 4H Extension Office
- U.S National Park Service
- U.S Postal Service
- Vince's Pizza Smithsburg
- Virginia Piedmont Heritage Area
- Visit Hagerstown
- Volvo Group Trucks
- Waffle House
- WashcoLIT
- Washington County Agricultural Center
- Washington County Arts Council
- Washington County Board of Elections
- Washington County Chamber of Commerce
- Washington County Commission on Aging, Inc.
- Washington County Diversity and Inclusion Committee
- Washington County Family Center
- Washington County Health Department
- Washington County Historical Society
- Washington County Homeless Coalition
- Washington County Master Gardeners
- Washington County Museum of Fine Arts
- Washington County Public Schools
- Washington County Public Schools Meal Machine
- Washington County Reads
- WDVM
- Western Maryland Consortium
- Weis Markets
- Western Maryland Regional Library
- William Brish Planetarium
- WJEJ 1240 AM
- YMCA



Notable partnerships this year include:

- WCFL was one of the first locations in Washington County to receive a Narcan vending machine. Thanks to grant funding through the **Washington County Health Department**, WCFL can empower people with these harm reduction services that include doses of Narcan, safe disposal kits for medications, hygiene kits, gun locks, and medication safe storage devices.
- WCFL continued to distribute Covid-19 at-home test kits and KN-95 masks provided by the **Washington County Health Department**.
- 24,400 **WCPS** students have RAIL (Raising Access to Improve Literacy) library accounts they can use to check out materials or use library computers.
- In conjunction with the **CASH Campaign of Maryland**, WCFL began offering preliminary tax preparation intakes for residents of Maryland, West Virginia, or Pennsylvania making less than \$64K for the 2023 tax year.
- With support from **Merit Health** and the **Washington County Health Department**, WCFL has continued offering free 100% cotton menstrual products through the Aunt Flow program.



WASHINGTON COUNTY FREE LIBRARY

Where People & Possibilities Meet

BOONSBORO



CLEAR SPRING



HANCOCK



KEEDYSVILLE



HAGERSTOWN



SHARPSBURG



SMITHSBURG



BOOKMOBILE



WILLIAMSPORT



HOW CAN I SUPPORT MY LIBRARY?

washcolibrary.org/support

Join the Friends of the Library!

Join a group of library lovers who fundraise, advocate, and volunteer their time to support free library programs! Membership is just \$5 a year.

Speak Up!

Advocate for your library locally, at the state level, and at the federal level. Let your elected officials know why public libraries matter to you.

Donate!

Financially support your library to help further our mission, purchase materials, offer free educational and cultural programming, and more.

