Annual Report 2023

Compiled by
Laura Haynes

broome county
public library

A note from our Library Director:

Dear BCPL community,

Each year, this letter provides me with the opportunity to reflect on the progress, challenges and changes that have shaped the work that we do on behalf of the community at the Broome County Public Library. As I enter my 4th year as BCPL's Library Director, I am proud to present this report and all of the hard work and dedicated service that it represents.

The statistics that we have compiled for 2023 capture an interesting transitional moment in the work that we do at BCPL and in the library field more broadly: you will see that our door count is finally approaching pre-COVID levels but that our circulation of books and other traditional library materials is lagging behind this trajectory. At the same time, our programs and more innovative collections and services are seeing record growth. All of this clearly indicates that we are staying relevant to this community through ongoing innovation and reinvention. Our society is suffering from a period of profound loneliness, social isolation, and polarization. BCPL is here to provide an open, welcoming space free of commercial or political pressure.

I continue to be very proud of the excellent team that we have assembled. Our staff remains quite small for the size of our facility and for the amount that we accomplish, but their dedication, creativity and empathy are truly mighty! Moreover, with strong support from Broome County and the City of Binghamton, we have been able to add several new positions, each of which has an enormous positive impact on our ability to serve the community. Take a look at our new website and online calendar—2023 was our first full year using them—for the results.

Thank you for your ongoing patronage and support of our Library!

Josias Bartram
Library Director

A note from our new Board President, **Kate Miller-Corcoran:**

For the past five years I have had the honor to serve on the Broome County Library Board of Trustees. During this time I have seen the library transform - and the building I walk into today is not the same one I did five years ago.

This is thanks in large part to an incredible and hardworking Library staff. They are dedicated to upholding the idea that libraries are one of the “last bastions of democracy” - one of the few places left in our society where people can enter without the expectation of payment, and where people can access knowledge in a number of different ways, not just through books. The Library staff does this through the programs they run, the questions they answer, and the space they create for our community each day.

I am honored to enter 2024 serving as your Board of Trustees President. As a Broome County native - raised in Windsor, and now living on the West Side of Binghamton - I grew up enchanted by the Carnegie Library building at 78 Exchange Street and the knowledge and adventures that it held. All these years later, I hope to help keep that same feeling alive at 185 Court Street.

We have been very lucky to have had JoAnne Hanrahan leading us as Board President for the past three years. With she and Josias guiding us, the Library has come out of the limited access pandemic days and is growing into a vibrant, well used community space.

Of course innovative programming and beautiful spaces don’t pay for themselves. An immense amount of gratitude is due to the Friends of the Library, the Broome County government, the City of Binghamton, the Conrad and Virginia Klee Foundation, the Community Foundation of South Central NY and every single person who makes a purchase at the Friends of the Library booksales.

We hope this year you’ll join us for one of our great programs, like Lego Club, Dungeons and Dragons or the Hungry Ear, or just come visit and sit in our Reading Garden to rest for a bit.

Respectfully yours,

Kate Miller-Corcoran
Board President

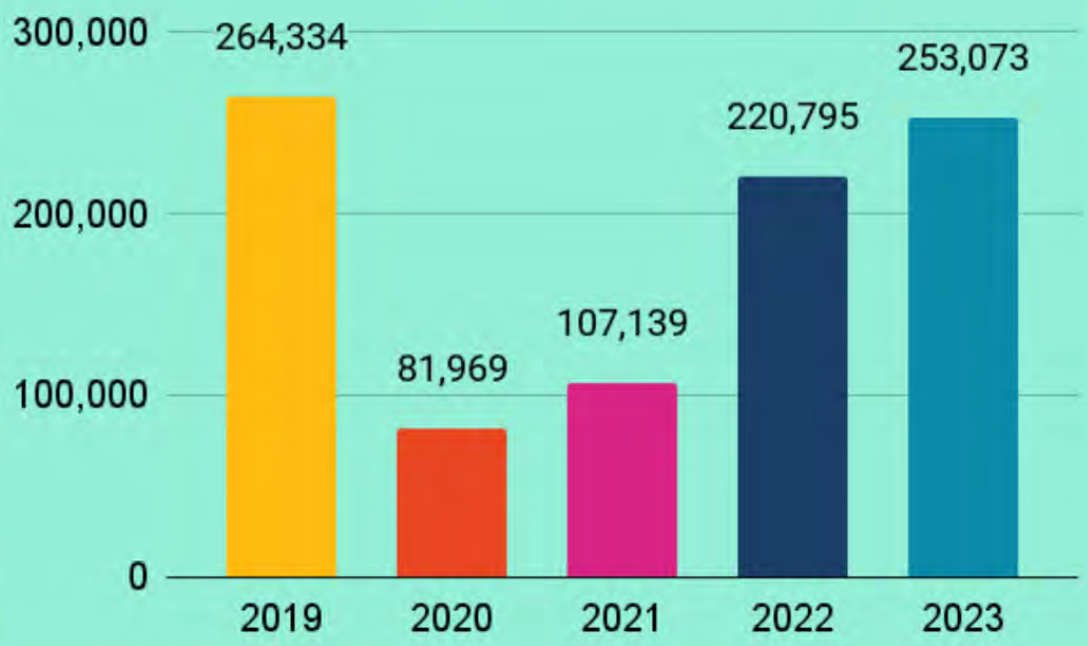
Facts at a Glance:

Our statistics increased in several areas between 2022-2023:

2022	2023
220,795 →	**253,073** total library visits
5,131 →	**5,684** facebook followers
853 →	**1,009** instagram followers
564 →	**882** programs offered
7,029 →	**8,829** total program attendance
1,917 →	**2,146** new patrons registered
15,382 →	**19,677** public computer sessions
298,976 →	**543,951** wireless sessions

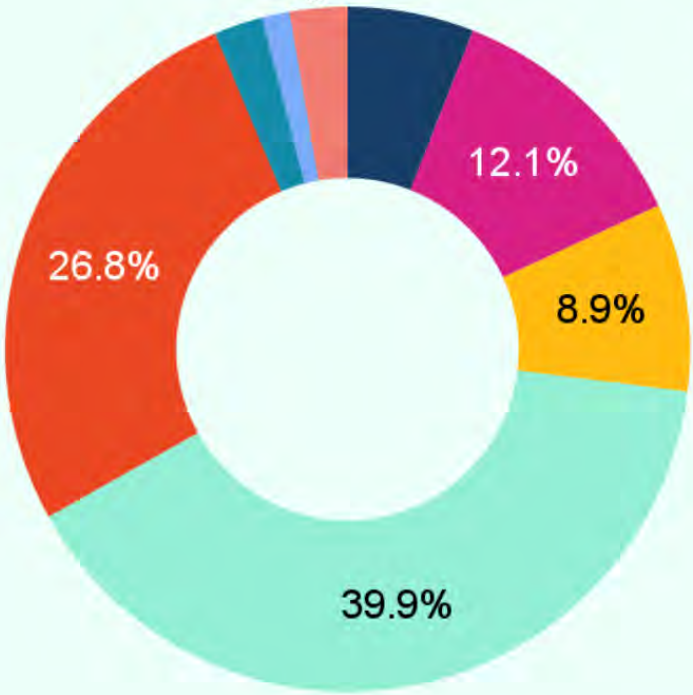
Door Count:

Door count continues to increase, nearly to pre-pandemic levels:



Financials:

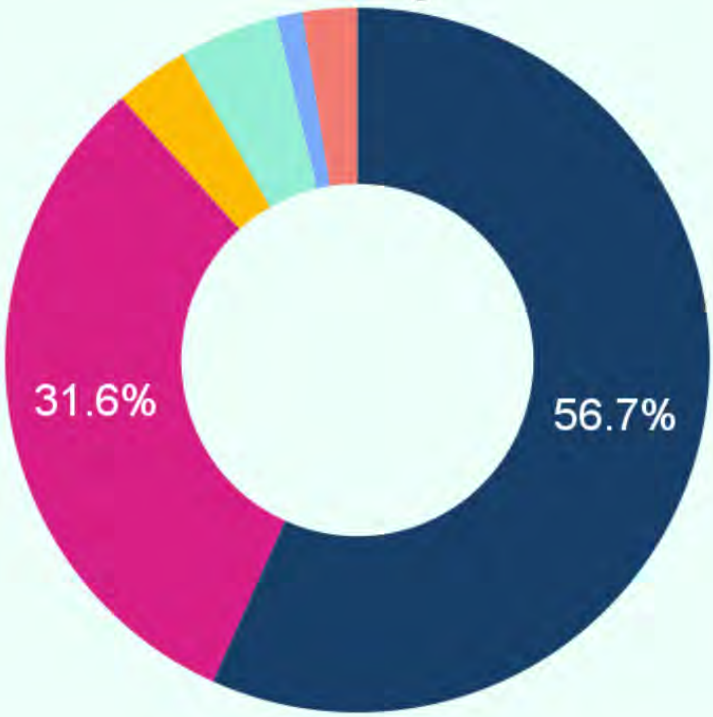
Expenses



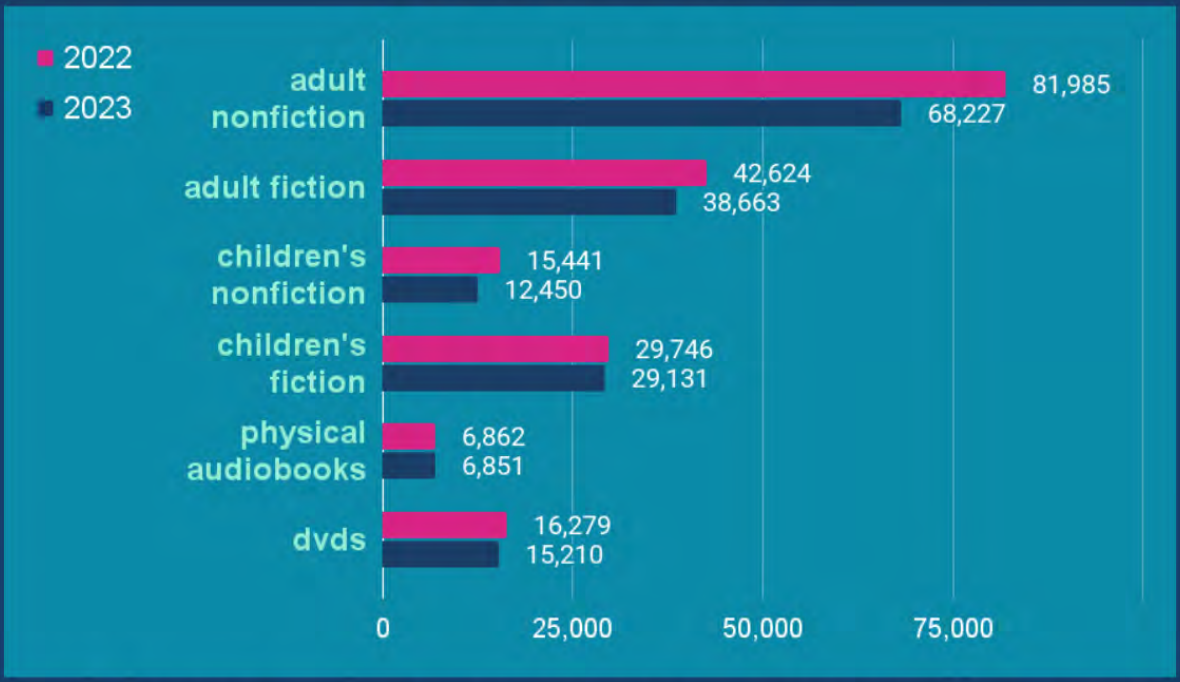
- Computers and networks
- Facilities
- Collections
- Salaries
- Benefits
- Miscellaneous
- Friends of the Broome County Public Library
- Friends of the Broome County Public Library grant funding

Revenue

- Broome County
- City of Binghamton
- New York State
- Local funding
- Friends of the Broome County Public Library
- Friends of the Broome County Public Library grant funding

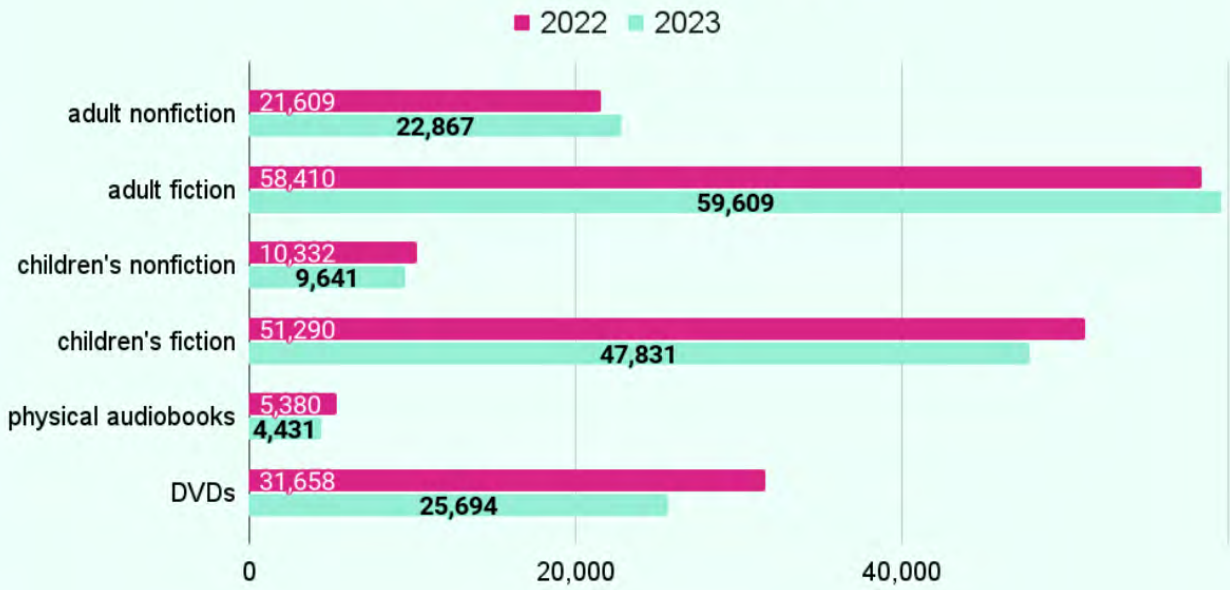


Collections:



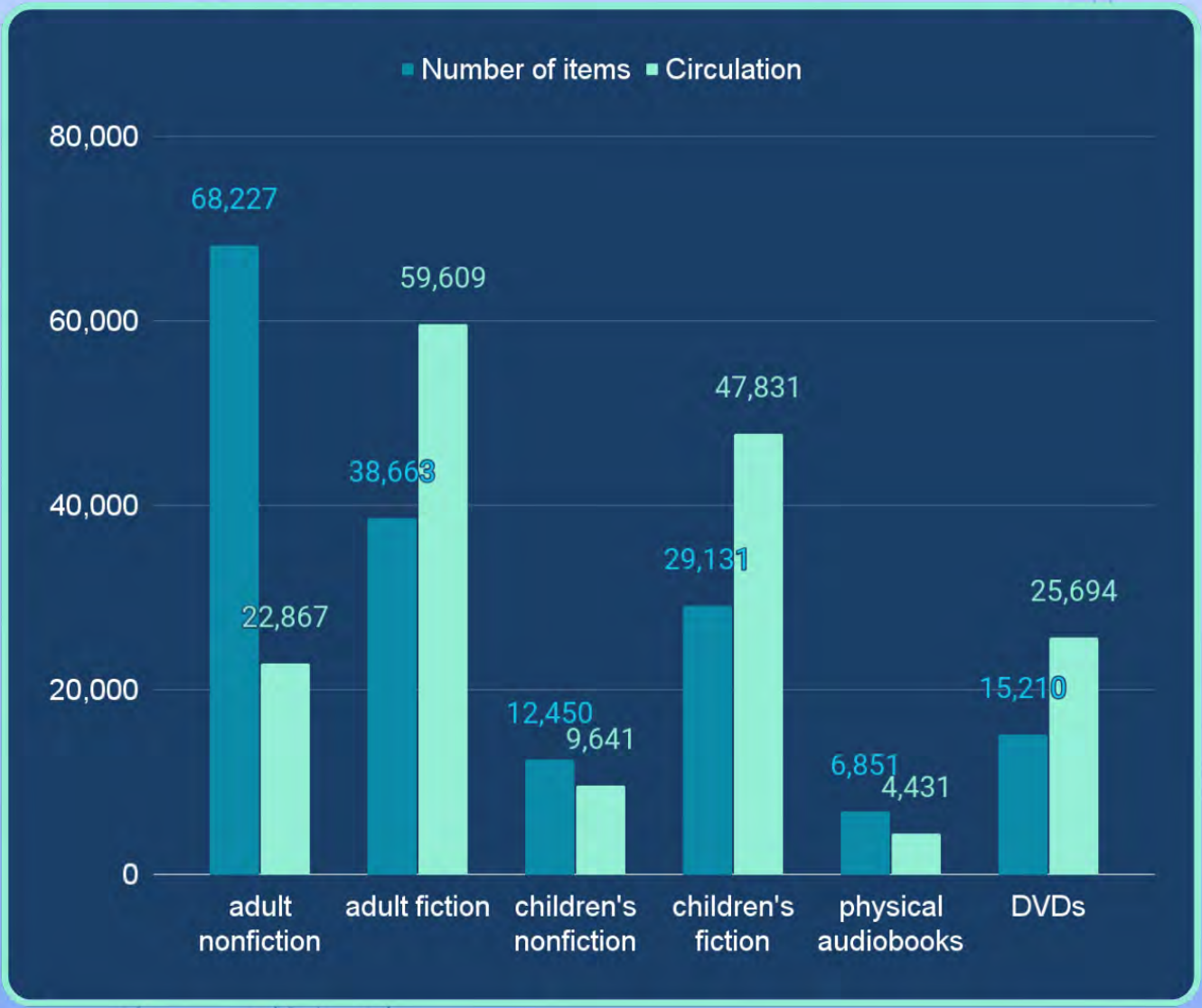
Our collection numbers have decreased as we weed our collection to ensure that the materials we provide for checkout are in good condition, are relevant, meet DEI standards, and are up-to-date. We also need to make space on our shelves for new books.

Circulation:



Circulation increased for adult fiction and nonfiction, but decreased in other areas. Though we are decreasing our collection, our circulation has increased. We track the circulation of recently added books.

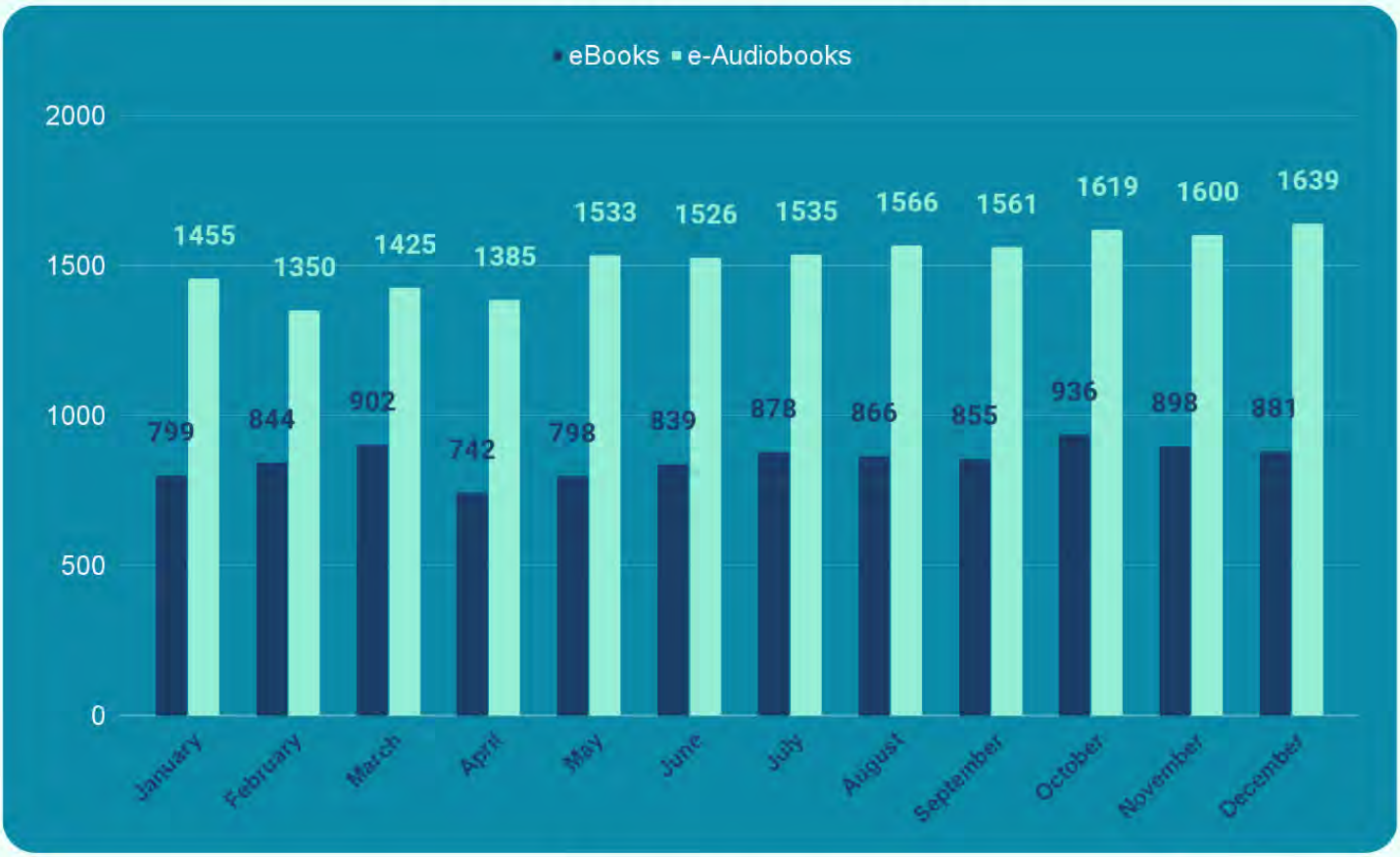
Comparison of Collection to Circulation



This is a visualization of a comparison between the amount of items in various collections throughout the Library versus the amount of times those items circulated. Young adult books are included in adult fiction and nonfiction. Of the categories shown on this graph, fiction makes up the largest portion of total circulation at 58%.

Digital Content

This graph shows the number of eBooks and e-Audiobooks that were checked out by BCPL patrons via both Libby and Hoopla in 2023. e-Audiobook usage seems to be on an upward trend.



Social Media:

This graph shows the **reach** of our Facebook page in 2023. Reach is the number of people who saw content on our page.

Total reach: 216,711

Staff Spotlight: **Gill Friedlander**

For our staff spotlight this year, we spoke to Gill Friedlander, Librarian I for Information Services. Gill is an integral part of the Information Services team and works tirelessly to provide the community with innovative programs and services. Gill is the founder of Queer Coffee Hour, a popular social club for queer adults, and she also runs many art programs for adults. We highlighted her perspective below.

1. What are you passionate about and how have you brought that to BCPL?

I'm passionate about public libraries! We have the power to make positive impacts on the communities we work within, and we have the ability to help communities have the resources, spaces, and tools needed to grow and thrive. I went into this field after working within the community engagement department of a slightly larger urban public library, because I loved how the work gave me endless opportunities to connect with my community and help connect people, especially those part of marginalized communities, with our services and resources. I got to see firsthand the impact we had, and I wanted to keep doing it. This job lets me bring my passion for community engagement, advocacy, and social justice to my workplace, and it offers me chances to find creative ways to help create change.

2. What do you like about working here?

I love how we can essentially try anything, as long as we can provide justification. I appreciate that my advocacy, drive, passion, and creativity are viewed positively, and that we are given room to do work that fuels our individual passions. I also love that our department embraces failure as a learning tool. We are given space to experiment with different ideas, and if they fail we evaluate and move ahead. We feel comfortable to take big leaps, because we have the needed support no matter what happens. I've gotten to increase our harm reduction tactics; I've started an LGBTQIA+ social group; I've helped launch a Period Pantry. There's trust that we'll do good work and produce good results, and it makes us better employees. I also love working with our community. It's not always easy, but I chose public libranship because I love working with people. I enjoy helping people, creating safe spaces, and making myself a trusted and soft landing space for our community. I learn so much from our community members, and I never take that for granted.

3. What's the best book you've read recently?

I Keep My Exoskeletons to Myself by Marissa Crane. It's set in a near-future dystopian society, and it follows a person named Kris struggling to raise her new baby after her wife dies. It's raw, honest, and so incredibly beautiful, and it captures ideas of loneliness, grief, and community amazingly. Kris is a delightfully messy human, and I loved to see that wholeness that books so often skip over. It broke my heart over and over, but it also reminded me of the power of found family and love, especially within queer communities.

Adult Programs

We offered 401 programs for adults in 2023. Here are some highlights:

We partnered with BC SAFE (Broome County Suicide Awareness for Everyone) to present the Chalk the Walk Gallery Opening. Chalk the Walk is a suicide awareness campaign where Broome County residents are encouraged to create chalk drawings with messages of hope and resilience. There are prizes for different categories, such as best use of color and most inspiring message. At the event, all chalk entries are displayed in the colonnade and prizes are awarded. In 2023, there was an addition of an open mic portion of the evening, as well as a black light display of inspiring messages created at the Chalk the Walk booth at LUMA Projection Arts Festival. We had 40 attendees, and will also be hosting the event in 2024.

Our DIY sock gnome program was a popular craft, with 19 attendees.

Our other offerings included:

First Thursday Book Club
Take and Makes
Playshop for Adults
Read Between the Dines
Group Reiki
Beginner/Advanced Beginner Yoga
Gentle Yoga
Coloring Club
Tech Thursday
Journal Decorating
One-Shot Club
Dungeons and Dragons
Blood Drive
Queer Coffee Hour
Acoustic Jam
Cozy Café
Sit and Stitch
Mini Painting
Quilting Club
Monkeypox Vaccine Clinic
Cult Classic Film Night
The Hungry Ear
Bingo
Silent Book Club
Sound Bath Immersion with Reiki
Acrylic Paint Pouring
Fuse Bead Art
Knitting Group
Binghamton Poetry Project
Rock Painting
Coaster Decorating
Splatter Painting
Ridiculous Art Night
Crime and Craft
Candle Holder Painting
Queerly Reads
Financial Crisis Counseling
A Conversation with Hugh Ryan
Afternoon Book Club

Youth Services Programs

We offered 228 programs for children and teens.
Our offerings included:

Family Game Days | Crafty Kids | Family Movie Days | Winter Reading Program | Grab-N-Go Bags | Preschool Story Time | Family Story Time | Homeschool Art Classes | STEAM Days | Summer Reading Program | LEGO Club | Queer Coffee Hour for Teens | Tween Wednesdays | Family Pride Event | Family Shark Party | Summer Camp Party | Eclipse Program | Dan the Snakeman | Interactive Nightmare Before Christmas Movie | Teen Game Days | Columbus Park Storytime | Earth Day Celebration | Bubbleman | Lapsit Story Time | Borrow a Grandparent | Ukrainian Bilingual Story Time | Teen Dungeons and Dragons | Family Halloween Party | Eclipse Program | Read for the Record | Trick-or-Treat Programs

Featured program: Teen Craft & Chat

As its name implies, at Teen Craft & Chat, teens are able to work on fun arts and crafts while talking with peers of their age. Our program provides the opportunity for teens to socialize with peers outside of a school environment where there is no pressure to pay strict attention or get work done on a timeline. This program has been growing in success to a consistent five or more teens every week!

In this multimedia collage, over eight people helped put something on the canvas. From paint, to stickers, to pieces of cardboard, everyone collaborated to create a fun and colorful work of art!

Tote bag decorating is a favorite activity. Sometimes teens go free hand and other times will use stencils to draw on the bags that they can then bring home to use for school or anything else!

Tabletop RPG Programs for Adults

Our tabletop gaming programs for adults began in November 2022 and continued throughout 2023. When we launched the program in 2022, we intended to create a safe space for players, whether they are new to the hobby, new to the area, or haven't played an RPG in years. These programs are funded by the Friends of the Broome County Public Library.

D&D

Many participants express that prior to playing in our programs, they wanted to get started with Dungeons and Dragons but didn't have anyone to play with. We are thrilled that our gaming programs continue to provide an opportunity for participants to socialize, make friends, and build community connections.

With sustained interest in Dungeons and Dragons specifically, we continue to book out several months in advance. We ran a total of five Dungeons and Dragons campaigns in 2023. We promoted the program very seldom, yet we remain fully booked for several months.

Tabletop RPG Mini Painting

Mini Painting meets every month on the third Monday of the month, unless the Library is closed. We have steady attendance at this program. Below are some of the minis that were painted by patrons in 2023!

Introducing our new Game Master: **Wakelyn Stewart**

My name is Wakelyn! I'm 24, my pronouns are they/them, and I've been running tabletop RPGs for eight years. I'm really into progressive rock, folk horror, cowboys, and local history! I've lived in Binghamton all my life, and I'm really happy to be able to give back to the community that raised me through the programs I'm running.

1. What do you enjoy most about being a Game Master?
The best part of DMing, for me, is opening up the imaginative space, allowing those around the table to at once forget their troubles by entering a fictional world and discover more about themselves by making choices and facing situations that they never would in real life. When the players are fully immersed in the illusion, thinking as their characters would think and treating the fantasy world and the characters inhabiting it as real and complex and important, it's almost a form of magic. Like a good book, the game can uplift the oppressed and broaden the perspectives of those with power, and offering that to the community (especially fellow queer people in the community) is incredibly important to me.

2. How do you envision the future of gaming events at BCPL?
With our events, we're creating a safe and welcoming space for people of all ages and backgrounds to connect and form community--as that community grows, both within the boundaries of our events and outside the library walls, I expect more people will seek active participation in the community and open up opportunities for programs we haven't even considered yet. Personally, I'm looking forward to expanding our scope further beyond just D&D: the game is a great entry point to the hobby, but far from the only one, and the vast breadth of experiences on offer in the tabletop gaming space creates plenty of opportunity to engage and empower all kinds of different people who may not be drawn in by the heroic medieval fantasy of D&D.

3. What is your favorite book you've read recently?
I've been glued to Seth Dickinson's Exordia, a science fiction novel about the ways stories are used to justify violence. It's equal parts thrilling, hilarious, thought-provoking, and nauseatingly terrifying; I've loved Dickinson's fantasy work, and I was overjoyed to discover that their whip-smart sociopolitical analysis and gut-wrenchingly human character work functions just as well applied to Obama-era America as it did to the workings of old-school colonialism in their Masquerade series.

Period Pantry

The Period Pantry was established in March 2023 after Sarah Seese and Alexis Bronson—public defenders for Broome County—saw a great need for their clients & community to have no questions, no boundaries, open access to menstrual products.

The Period Pantry is funded solely by community donations and grants. There is an Amazon wishlist which is shared periodically, and interns from Binghamton University have hosted fundraisers on campus where they have either collected product or monetary donations for the Pantry. The Broome County Period Pantry has also been the recipient of grants from the Binghamton Rotary Club, The Small Community Fund & The CFSCNY Community Hygiene Product Fund.

It is kept stocked by Sarah, Alexis, and their interns. These individuals stock the Pantry with products nearly every other day, which highlights how much of a need there is for these items in our community.

Produce Pantry

The Farm to Library program started in June 2023 to welcome community members to share in the local bounty found in Broome County and beyond.

All members of the community are invited to give or receive free produce from local gardens, farms, and other sources during the Library's hours when surplus is available.

The initiative is a collaboration between the Broome County Public Library and the Broome County Department of Health's Creating Healthy Schools and Communities program (CHSC), with assistance from the Rural Health Network of South Central NY and their Public Health AmeriCorps program.

Displays

We put up several new displays every month. Here are some highlights from displays that made an impact in 2023.

Banned Books:

This was a display of banned books in May 2023 that featured descriptions of why each book was banned on pieces of paper shaped like flames, to evoke Fahrenheit 451. We got a lot of positive feedback on this display, with 120 likes on a post featuring the display on Facebook. We particularly wanted to do this display to feature the justifications for banning that may be surprising for our patrons, like the justification for banning the beloved classic Strega Nona which was "depicting magic and witchcraft in a positive light."

Tough Topics:

This display was created with young readers and their grown-ups in mind. The idea was "tough topics", things that adults might have difficulty addressing with their children. Topics included consent, body positivity, racism, gender identity, and LGBTQIA+ families. Some examples of titles include "Want a Hug?: Consent and Boundaries for Kids" and "Say the Right Thing: How to Talk About Identity, Diversity, and Justice."

We would like to thank the following for their support of the Library:

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Binghamton City Council:

Olamni N. Porter
Kinya T.S. Middleton
Robert C. Cavanaugh, II
Nate R. Hotchkiss
Hadassah J. Mativetsky
Michael Kosty
Michael J. Dundon

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Megan Heiman, **Deputy Mayor**

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