



**bcls**  
burlington county library system  
2020 annual report



**FROM THE PREVIOUS PAGE:** We asked team members from around BCLS to share their feelings about 2020. Determination, resilience, exhaustion and hope were just a few sentiments expressed while reviewing the past year, an unprecedented and extraordinary time defined by the onset of the coronavirus global pandemic.

Here are a few responses, many of which have the common theme of how important customers and colleagues are to the staff of BCLS. Look for more reactions throughout this report.:

- 1 I'M A FIGHTER.** I missed the daily interactions with my colleagues. We're a small branch and we're all work friends so it was a little weird not seeing them every day and laughing about something. I also missed our regular patrons. But we're back now and better than ever!  
**LETTICE LEWIS-BRYANT** *Librarian, Pemberton Library*
- 2 WE WILL GET THROUGH THIS.** Responding to patron queries and concerns from home during lockdown made me realize what a vital role the library plays in our community. We came out on the other side of COVID even stronger and more resilient, providing new services such as curbside pickup and loanable WiFi hotspots.  
**SCOTT HOMAN** *Librarian, Cinnaminson Library*
- 3 NO WAY.** Working during the pandemic meant facing challenges our team never imagined facing before, but I was grateful we could tackle them together.  
**VICKY ROSS** *Youth Services Librarian, Burlington County Library*
- 4 ARE YOU KIDDING ME?** Never did I dream we would have to close our doors, cancel in-person programs, and not see our customers for months. It was so exciting when we opened up again – seeing familiar faces and welcoming new visitors who discovered our online services during the pandemic.  
**JAIMIE DONNELLY** *Branch Manager, Maple Shade Library*
- 5 WE DID OUR BEST.** In a time when access to information seemed more crucial than ever, I was thrilled that Pinelands was able to offer the Park & Connect service, which extended free WiFi access 24/7 to our parking lots. Even when the building themselves were closed, keeping the community connected to information remained a top priority.  
**DANIELLE HAUBRICH** *Branch Manager, Pinelands Library*
- 6 BRING IT.** It was only when customers were allowed back in the building that I realized how important the social interaction aspect of a librarian's job is. We can forget that the small conversations with our "regulars" can have a great impact, not only for them, but also for us. (These moments) become important parts of our daily lives and COVID-19 wasn't going to stop that.  
**CHRISTIAN PULVERENTI** *Branch Manager, Riverton Library*
- 7 OVER IT.** I offer story times several times a week, both at the library and as outreach to places in our service area. I just want to get back to having more programs in-house and seeing more of our community!  
**THERESA PREZIOSA** *Librarian, Pemberton Library*
- 8 IT'S BEEN EXHAUSTING.** I got tired of working on separate teams and was so excited to see and talk with everyone again.  
**ELISA SCHOEN** *Library Assistant, Pinelands Library*



The mission of the Burlington County Library System is to provide opportunities for learning, growth and personal development.



## **burlington county library system 2020 annual report**

### **Burlington County Board of County Commissioners**

- Felicia Hopson, *Director*
- Daniel J. O'Connell, *Deputy Director*
- Linda A. Hynes
- Tom Pullion
- Balvir Singh
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WHAT A YEAR IT WAS! In 2020, BCLS, along with the rest of the world, faced extraordinary, unprecedented challenges. A global pandemic put us all on guard and like many organizations it made us reconsider our new place in the world at large. I'm happy to report that our team of dedicated professionals worked hard every day to find new ways to serve the community and offer much-needed support during a uniquely difficult time.

We kicked off the year with energy and enthusiasm, but COVID-19 shattered our plans and shuttered our doors. Suddenly, we were unable to interact with the public in our usual way – in our libraries and in-person. We turned to technology to guide us. At home, we flipped open our laptops to attend virtual brainstorming sessions, shared ideas via email and amped up our online screen time. Through it all, we continued to connect with our customers, and our digital branch, the BCLS website, became our lifeline to the community.

As you page through this year's Annual Report, you'll discover all the innovative ways we were able to reach out and serve during the tumultuous year. Like so many of our customers, I spent many quarantine hours enjoying our wonderful array of online resources, including some brand-new offerings we introduced during the shutdown. I streamed videos about baking, tackled sketchbook exercises and flipped through the pages of countless digital magazines. I used our Libby app to read *A Burning* by Megha Majumdar and *Sing, Unburied, Sing* by Jesmyn Ward. I even found time to explore a few cooking and gardening ebooks.

While enjoying our digital offerings, I also realized how fortunate I am to live in a well-connected home. It became very clear that connectivity and access was a struggle for many of the households we serve. So,



**RANJNA DAS**

while we were quick to expand our digital offerings and rely on our electronic news-letter and social media to stay connected, we also looked for fresh ways to close the digital divide so that others weren't left behind.

I'm proud of the way our employees were able to rally together during the darkest days of the pandemic while

dealing with challenges of their own, such as helping little ones navigate online classes at home. From their remote locations scattered throughout the county, they remained engaged and inspired. And when they were finally able to pull on their masks, head back to our libraries and safely open the doors once again, they were thrilled to welcome everyone back!

Last year was a year like no other, but bolstered by teamwork, creativity and determination, BCLS continued to fulfill its important mission.

Like so many others, we overcame much adversity in 2020, and we look forward to building on that success in 2021.

**RANJNA DAS**

*Director*

Burlington County Library System



IN EARLY 2020, BCLS was full of energy and buzzing with activity. Pushing strollers with little ones trailing behind, parents and caregivers poured into all eight library branches for story times, STEM programs and live performances. Teens got creative with crafts, discussed graphic novels and watched movies together. Members all across the Burlington County community, eager to gather and learn, attended health care seminars, computer classes and financial workshops. Families and seniors seeking top-notch entertainment tapped their toes in our auditorium.

But the year soon took an historic turn. The words *coronavirus* and *pandemic* started making headlines. Phrases such as *social distancing*, *community spread* and *rate of infection* began seeping into everyday conversation. And sadly, by the time spring arrived, nearly everyone in New Jersey was focused on yet another, more alarming term - *quarantining at home*.



- ▶ 2020 began with a calendar full of fun events for BCLS customers of all ages, from musical bubble parties for kids to book clubs for adult readers.
- ▲ But by mid-March, the only bubbles found in our shuttered locations were those created by scrubbing and cleaning our buildings, surfaces and materials.



LAST YEAR brought extraordinary, world-wide challenges and like everyone, BCLS was forced to adjust and adapt – again and again. It was a year like no other, fueled with uncertainty and apprehension, but also bolstered by teamwork, creativity and determination. Here is a look back at the tumultuous year as it unfolded:

As news of the dangers of COVID-19 began to spread in February, our libraries remained open, but as a precaution we paused use of our 250-seat auditorium and put a halt to popular large-scale programming. Soon after we suspended our Mobile Library services, canceled all programs and removed our online events calendar. Finally on March 15, as the world grappled with a new reality, the director announced that, "due to the rapidly unfolding situation," the best course of action would be to close all library locations to the public.

We had no way of knowing the challenges that lie ahead, but with schools, businesses and government offices closing around us and our own buildings shuttered for safety, BCLS staff began to strategize from home. Together from remote locations, our focus turned to engaging the community through our now-vital digital platforms. We swiftly started to triage questions posed by customers online and coordinate our response.

a closer look at:

## ONLINE RESOURCES

*top 3 services accessed*

**1**  **ancestry**<sup>®</sup>  
Remote-access genealogy records

**2**  **kanopy**  
On-demand streaming films

**3**  **Facts On File, Inc.**  
World almanac and reference materials



STAFF REMAINED FLEXIBLE and embraced our fully-virtual operation. We processed hundreds of new library cards, suspended fines and extended loan times for materials.

Quickly ebook checkouts spiked by 30 percent and online memberships surged, we fine-tuned our operations offering customer support and reference assistance through our online chat platform, our collection development team increased orders for digital material and our YS team recorded more than two dozen virtual story times. At the same time, our marketing team amped up efforts to highlight the many library resources and services available online.

## a closer look at: NON-FICTION

top 3 titles checked out



- ▲ **WE'VE GOT THIS.** To prepare our building to open to the public, we did a lot of heavy lifting...literally! We moved furniture, rearranged public computers and staff workspaces and created directional paths within the library to accommodate social distancing and make sure everybody was as safe as possible. At that time, we were working in teams to prevent having too many people in the building and we all had to give 110% every day. It was exhausting but totally worth it when people called or came in to the library and thanked us for reopening.

**NANCY FORT** (right) *Branch Manager, Cinnaminson Library*

- ▶ **LET'S GET BACK TO IT.** I've really missed seeing my library kids and doing programs. Coming up with program ideas and getting to craft and interact with the kids was always my favorite part of my job and I can't wait to start doing it again.

**JESSICA BARRY** *Youth Services Library Assistant, Pemberton Library*



OUR LIBRARIANS worked closely with marketing to offer new weekly digital content, including timely blogs, book reviews and movie recommendations via our increasingly popular virtual branch, the BCLS website. We gathered information about unemployment benefits, job leads and self-care to share.

For families quarantining at home, we introduced **At-Home Adventures**. Our online activities included movie nights, virtual museum visits and outdoor scavenger hunts. We offered access to **CreativeBug**, which features thousands of award-winning arts and craft video classes taught by experts and artists.

We launched **Flipster**, which is a new digital service that offers free access to the print versions of top magazines, including *The New Yorker*, *Yoga Journal*, *Parents* and *Vogue*. And we continued to reach out through our electronic newsletter and social media outlets to keep our customers informed and engaged.



▲ **HAPPY TO HELP.** Over the past year the need for change in the way we connect with and provide for under-served communities has become a priority for me and I'm overjoyed to be back in the library to help be a part of those changes.

**ROSY WAGNER**

*Teen Services Librarian, Burlington County Library*

## a closer look at: NEW ONLINE RESOURCES

*added in 2020*

 **ancestry**

Remote-access genealogy records

**Burlington County Times**

Local news and information

**creativebug**

Video arts and crafts classes

**Flipster**

Digital magazine distribution

 **JUST FOR KIDS**  
ACCESS VIDEO

Video-on-demand streaming service

 **The MAILBOX**

Classroom and activity resources

**The New York Times**

National and world perspective

 **Udemy**

Video business, tech and personal development classes



▲ **BCLS DID NOT LET ME DOWN.** During lockdown I was so proud of BCLS for embracing the electronic side of library services. All of my borrowing had to become digital and BCLS ordered all of the books and audiobooks I wanted to read. I was also charmed by the CreativeBug online service and used it to create an apron that I use often!

KRISTIE WINKS

*Youth Services Librarian, Cinnaminson Library*

a closer look at:  
**YOUTH FICTION**  
top 3 titles checked out

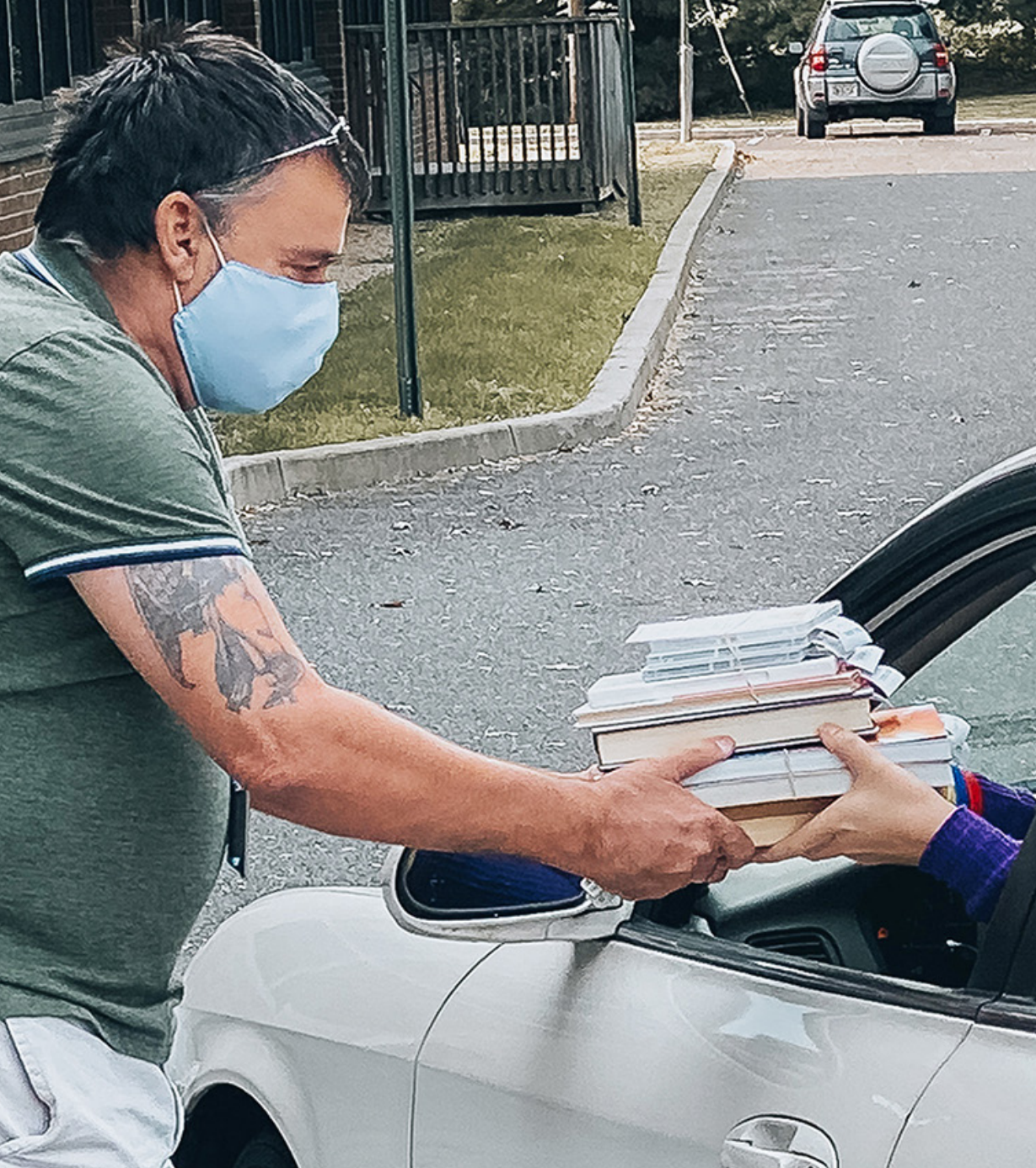


WITH UNCERTAINTY still swirling around us, we also searched for new ways to meet the evolving needs of the community. We launched a **Park & Connect** service to provide free WiFi 24/7 from the parking lots at the Cinnaminson, Pinelands and Pemberton libraries.

Summertime brought new challenges. With COVID-19 preventing in-person activities, we assembled a team to redesign our **Summer Reading** program to offer a totally virtual version instead. Kids were invited to access activities and reading lists selected by our librarians and earn digital badges by reading and reviewing books, completing activities and searching for secret codes. Virtual performances, courtesy of the **Friends of the Burlington County Library**, included online magic shows, silly fun with **Mr. Scott the Music Man**, a **Friends and Family Sing Along** and more.

In support of the Black Lives Matter movement, our librarians began to curate new reading lists and recommendations highlighting diverse authors and stories. Social justice was a national topic of discussion and the library did its part by making stories and resources for all ages available. We created a digital **Read Woke Challenge** that encouraged readers of all ages to explore diverse stories highlighting African American, LGBTQIA and strong female voices. Ten activity tracks were featured to promote positive discussions about different cultures, religions and race.





SUMMER also brought the first chance for a gradual return to work and a multi-stage reopening plan. Initially we made locations operational on a limited basis – the Burlington County Library in Westampton and the Cinnaminson, Evesham and Pemberton libraries.

Our modified operating schedule began in mid-June and our first priority was collecting library materials that were borrowed prior to the shutdown months earlier. With 61,000 titles checked out and plans to quarantine all returned materials for 72 hours before re-circulating, it was an ambitious undertaking. The following week, we launched an all-new **Curbside Service** at the four locations, first allowing customers to pick up materials on hold, then opening up circulation to additional books, DVDs and other items. During this initial phase, all library locations remained closed to the public as staff collected and managed items behind the scenes. We also resumed our **Library by Mail** service and made enhanced reference and customer service available.

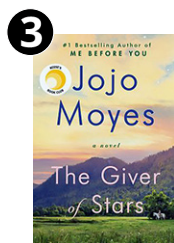
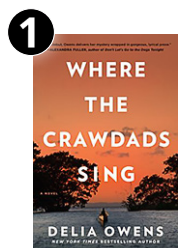


## a closer look at: CIRCULATION

Total items check out .....	767,661
Youth Services items checked out .....	243,221
Adult Services items checked out .....	524,440
Total number of resident borrowers.....	68,195
Total number of out-of-county borrowers .....	1,258
Total number of new library cards issued .....	12,417



a closer look at: **FICTION**  
*top 3 titles checked out*



AT THE SAME TIME, we took steps to safeguard operations inside our buildings. We reconfigured workspaces to allow for social distancing. We installed plexiglass shields at public desks and counters, distance markers on the floors, hand sanitizer stations and additional signage. Our new on-site protocol included enhanced facility sanitation procedures, face mask requirements and daily temperature checks. With safety foremost in mind, our phased-in, return-to-work approach allowed us to assess our progress and adjust as needed.

In July, we reopened the doors of the Burlington County Library. At this time, customers were invited to use the public computers by appointment. We soon expanded that service to our other three operational libraries, followed by Bordentown Library at the end of the month. By early August, computers-by-appointment were also available at our Maple Shade, Pinelands and Riverton facilities, and all locations offered limited public hours that included evening and weekend access.





ONCE OUR DOORS opened, we continued to expand. We partnered with the Burlington County Bar Association and South Jersey Legal Services to host monthly **Service Days**, giving residents an opportunity to consult with attorneys about tenant rights, unemployment/employment law and other legal issues.

At this time, Director Das reminded staff that "our roles have changed drastically but our service ethic has not," and she assured employees that the Burlington County community appreciated the effort. She proudly noted that *SJ Magazine* voted BCLS the "Most Fun You Can Have at a Library."

In September, we were thrilled to learn that BCLS was awarded a \$45,103 grant to fund a library hotspot and device lending program that will provide technology access to the county's disadvantaged population hit particularly hard by the COVID-19 pandemic. The library's application was selected as one of only 68 – out of more than 1,700 – to share \$13.8 million in FY2020 **CARES Act Grants for Museum and Libraries** funding from the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS). The grant enabled BCLS to purchase tablets and accessories and partner with other county agencies and local nonprofit organizations to bring internet connectivity and technology access to those who need it the most.

What's more, the **BCLS Foundation** launched its **Technology for All** campaign to raise funds to help bridge the digital divide.

## a closer look at: 2020 FINANCIALS

Total BCLS Budget	\$ 11,594,112.00	budgeted
Total Fines and Fees	\$ 63,161.97	actually rec'd
Total Library Grants/Aid	\$ 124,478.00	actually rec'd
Friends of the Library	\$ 36,205.74	supporting programming and various operating expenses

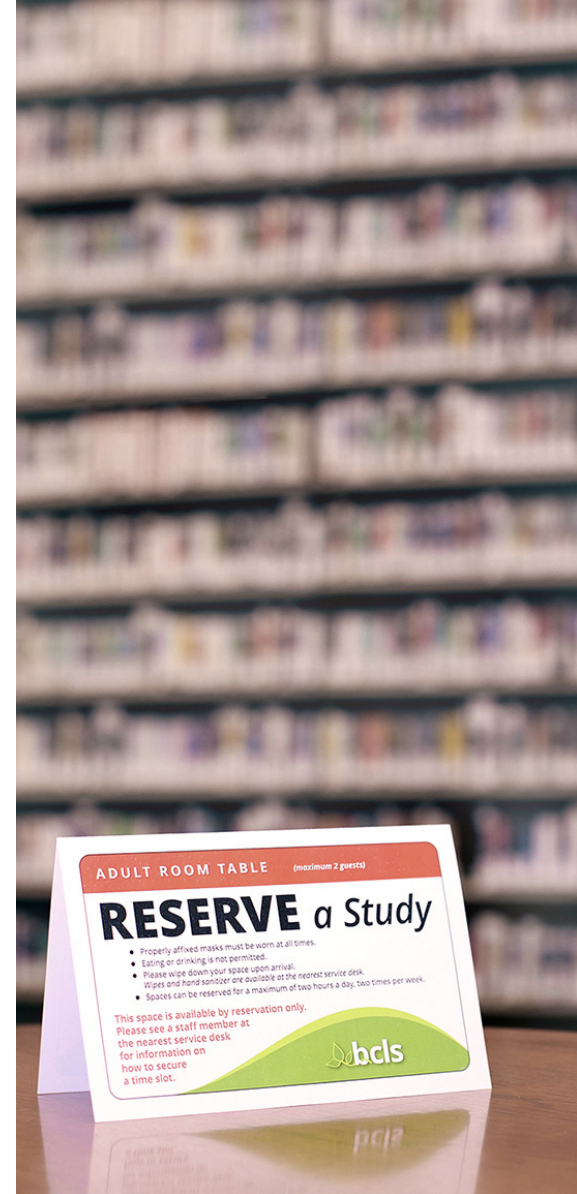


a closer look at:

## OUR "E" NUMBERS



- Our website had more than 4,748,100 pageviews in 2020.
- 9,591 customers signed up for our newsletter.
- Our Facebook followers increased to 3,776.
- Between Facebook, Instagram and YouTube, self-produced videos from BCLS have logged more than 45,000 views.

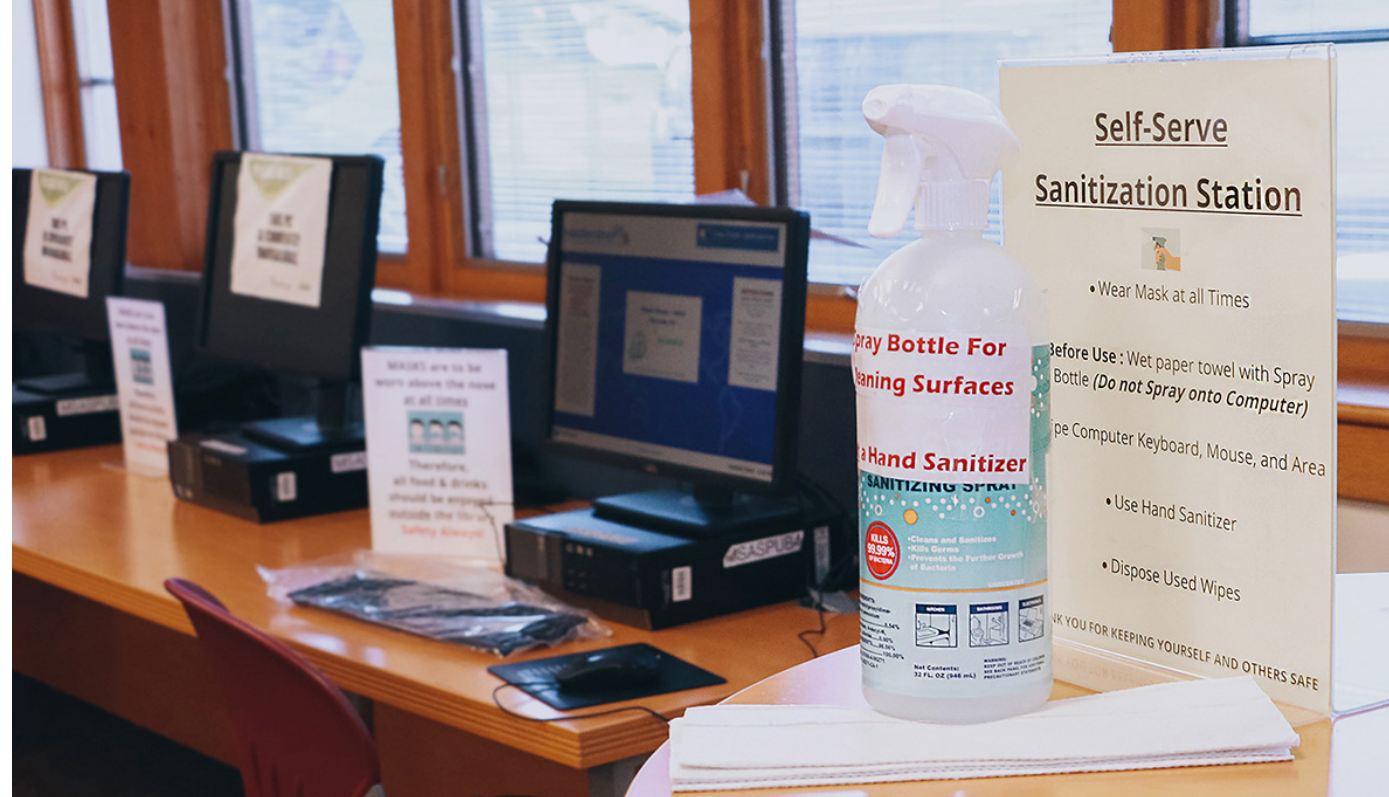


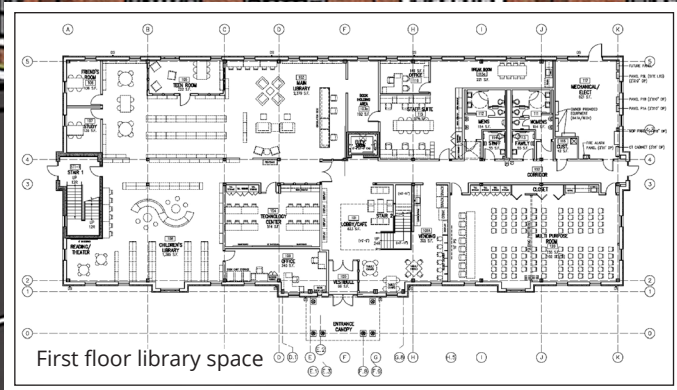
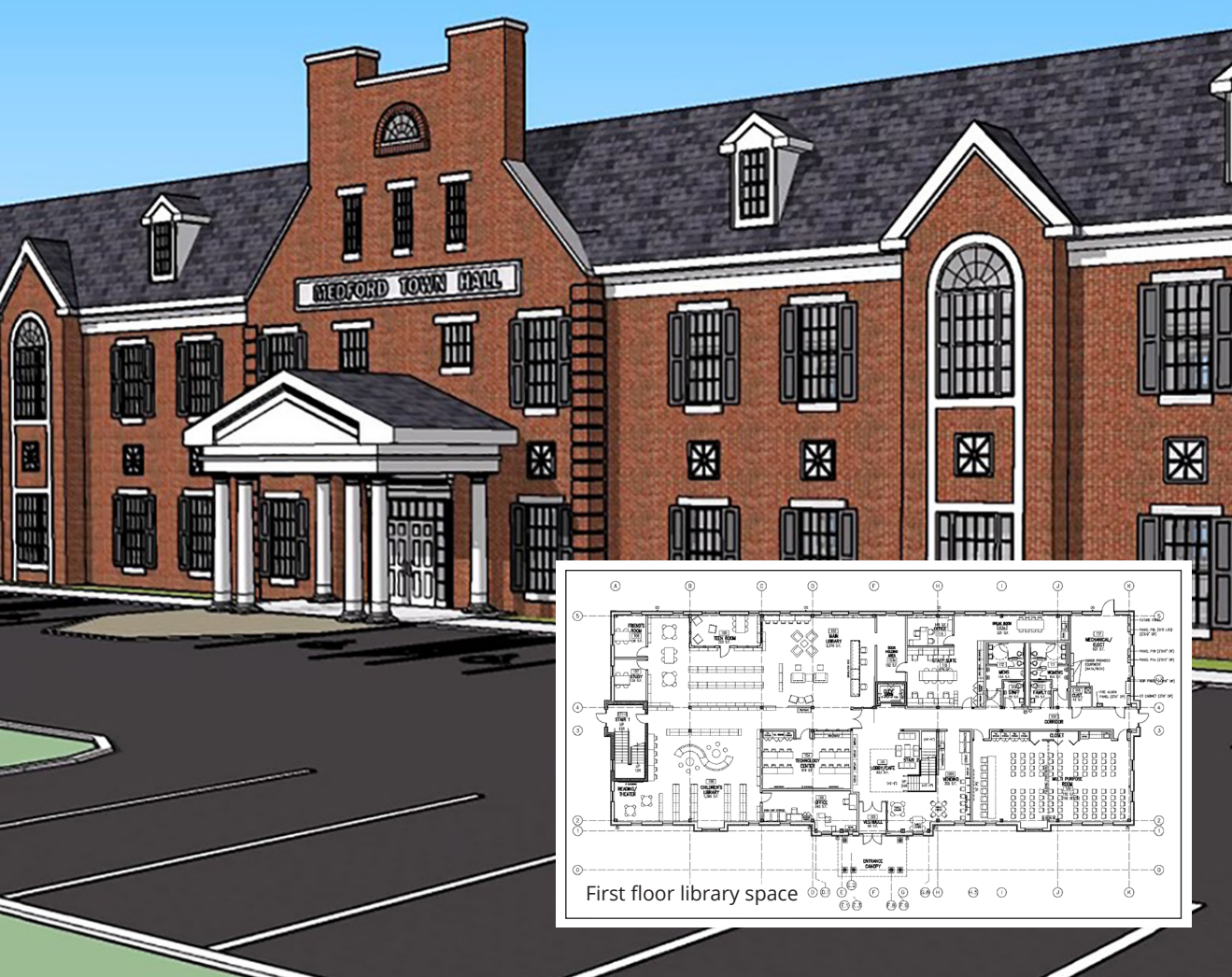
ADAPTING TO our "new normal" in the fall, we allowed customers wearing masks and maintaining social distance to begin spending more time in our libraries, too. All branch locations offered regular walk-in hours for those eager to safely browse our collections, pick up items on hold and check out materials on site. In-person library card signups and renewals were also made available and librarians offered research and advisory assistance. At the Burlington County Library, the Mount Holly Women's League added some holiday cheer by installing a "Wish Tree" in the lobby decorated with 316 tags featuring the wishes of children in need. Traditionally, presents donated by the community pile up under the tree, but due to the pandemic, gift cards and monetary contributions were requested instead to keep everyone healthy and safe.

FOR THOSE AT HOME we also launched a new service online called **Book Match** that provides readers with custom lists of titles based on survey answers and selected by our librarians.

As 2020 began to wind down in December, Director Das took time to reflect on the events of the troubling year and commended staff for turning "problems into progress." She also noted that the turbulent months didn't preclude behind-the-scenes planning for better days ahead. Despite the challenges:

- The much-anticipated BCLS website redesign got underway. Initial plans included analyzing the existing site, gathering feedback from library customers and creating a glossary of library terms for consistent use across all platforms.





- The marketing team began redesigning our logo and color scheme to give BCLS a fresh reboot.
- The Inclusion Diversity Equity and Accessibility (IDEA) task force was formed to support BCLS efforts to grow and change. The group has already curated resources and offered suggestions for books, webinars, podcast and articles about important equity topics such as race, LGBTQIA communities and accessibility.
- Construction of the new Pinelands Library, which is expected to be completed in the summer, continued to take shape while library officials focused on fine-tuning plans for its interior furnishings.
- And staff began planning for a yearlong celebration of our incredible 100th anniversary this year.

The coming months are sure to bring new challenges, but BCLS is ready to adapt and our goals remains the same. We look forward to providing more opportunities for learning, growth and personal development in 2021, and we're setting our sights on another 100 years of progress.



a closer look at:  
**VIRTUAL  
 STORY TIME**  
*top 3 titles viewed*

- 1** *I Say Ooh, You Say Aah* - 4,521
- 2** *Gracias, Thanks* - 3,459
- 3** *Unstinky* - 2,755

more personal looks at:  
2020



**I'M HERE FOR YOU.** Quarantine was a wake-up call. It brought to the forefront a deep appreciation for our institution and the role we play in building bridges and making lasting connections with members of our community. I truly missed our customers, the comradeship of my colleagues, and the joy of simply helping people.

**SHAZIA ZAMAN**

*Librarian, Evesham Library*

**BUSIER THAN EVER.** We were busier than ever in 2020! While the library had moved in a digital direction over the last few years, once our buildings closed we had to quickly pivot and bring what customers love most about us to them in their homes. We launched new resources on our website and developed a ton of content on our social media channels to continue to engage with people daily. I am so proud of the entire BCLS team for rallying together to bring the library to life in new ways.

**MORGAN BOYER**

*Chief of Communications, Burlington County Library*

**NUMBERS DON'T LIE.** (While everyone was in) quarantine, it was fulfilling to continue ordering materials for our patrons through our digital offerings. The library's quick decision to focus our collection development in this direction was spot-on and the statistics show that our customers appreciated it as well.

**RICK YANKOSKY**

*Youth Services Librarian, Pinelands Library*

**LOCKDOWN WAS LONELY.** I missed seeing and collaborating with our creative team. We have such a unique working culture and it was an adjustment working virtually but we always try to make the best of every situation. I am very proud of the work we produced during quarantine.

**CHELSEA BRACY**

*Outreach Coordinator, Burlington County Library*

◀ **I MISS THE KIDS.** The best part of my job has always been taking photos of all the amazing library events, but children's programs invariably are the most fun. When you spend 30 minutes or so interacting with a room full of happy three- and four-year-olds (*like at this JAN 2020 "red carpet" Academy Awards celebration*), you can't help but feel better about every other part of your day.

**MARYANNE  
CORSINI**

*Marketing and Graphics Coordinator,  
Burlington County Library*





## burlington county library system

Your valid BCLS library card may be used at any of our locations throughout the county.

**1** **Burlington County Library**  
5 Pioneer Boulevard  
Westampton

**2** **Beverly Free Library**  
441 Cooper Street  
Beverly

**3** **Bordentown Library**  
18 East Union Street  
Bordentown

**4** **Library Company of Burlington**  
23 West Union Street  
Burlington

**5** **Cinnaminson Library**  
1619 Riverton Road  
Cinnaminson

**6** **Crosswicks Library Company**  
483 Main Street  
Crosswicks

**7** **Delanco Public Library**  
1303 Burlington Avenue  
Delanco

**8** **Evesham Library**  
984 Tuckerton Road  
Marlton

**9** **Florence Library**  
1350 Hornberger Avenue  
Roebling

**10** **Maple Shade Library**  
200 Stiles Avenue  
Maple Shade

**11** **Pemberton Library**  
16 Broadway  
Browns Mills

**12** **Pinelands Library**  
39 Allen Avenue  
Medford

**13** **Riverside Library**  
10 Zurbrugg Way  
Riverside

**14** **Riverton Library**  
306 Main Street  
Riverton

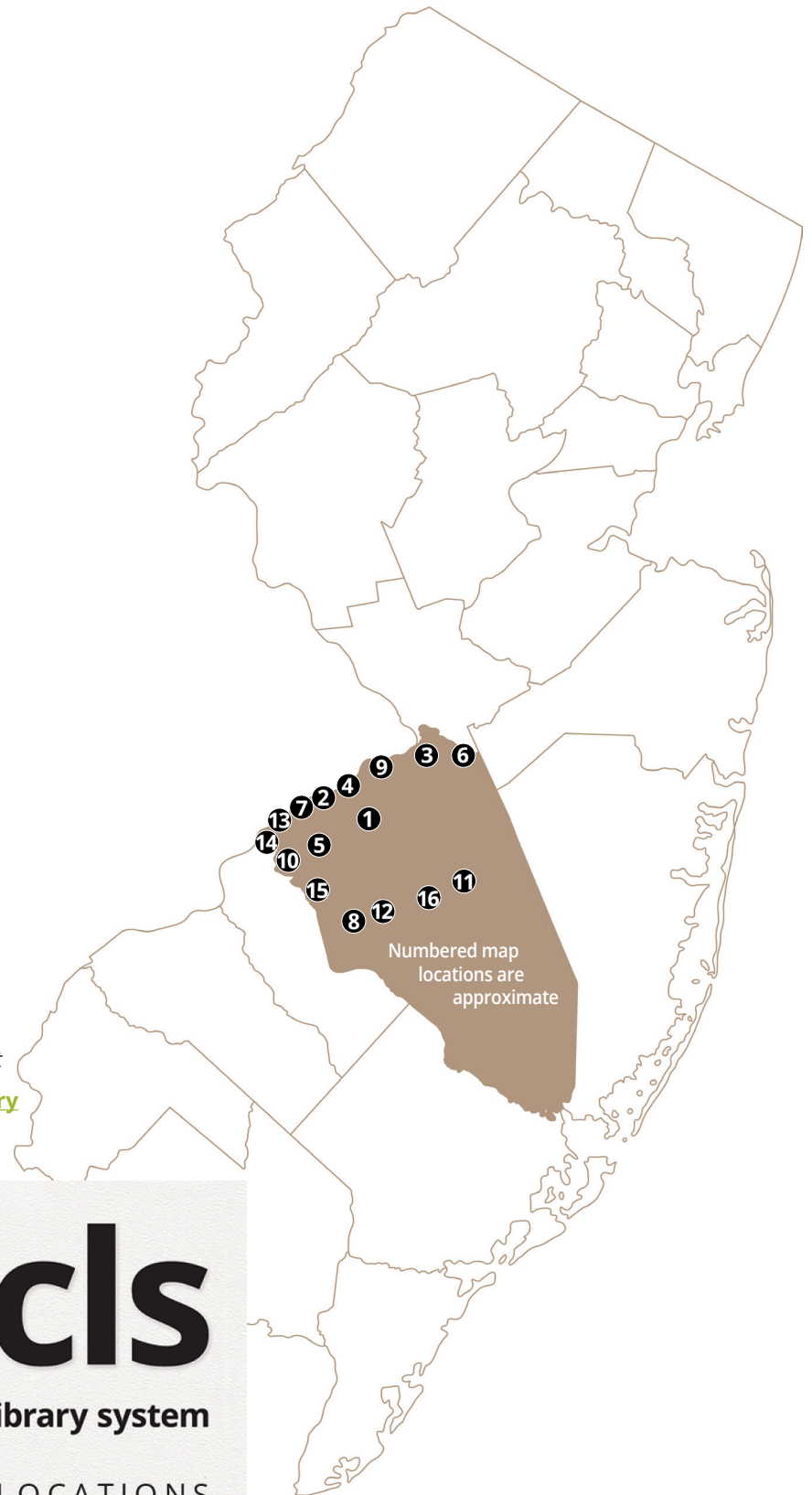
**15** **Rowan College at Burlington County**  
900 College Circle  
Mt. Laurel

**16** **Sally Stretch Keen Memorial Library**  
94 Main Street  
Vincentown

**★** **Mobile Library**  
We visit 27 additional locations throughout the county on a regular rotating schedule.

For the current schedule, visit

[bcls.lib.nj.us/mobilelibrary](https://bcls.lib.nj.us/mobilelibrary)



**burlington county library system**

a closer look at: OUR LOCATIONS

*click here*