



Beautiful crafts and art were on display and available for purchase at a cultural festival held at the Burlington County Library in early December.



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Christina Nemphos, *Chief Librarian, Public Services*
Jess Farrell, *Chief of Communications*
Tim Patton, *Chief of Technology*

BCLS is proud to offer something for everyone, from our innovative StoryWalk® pathway for families (see cover photo) to classes, lectures, concerts and, of course, enlightening literature for all ages. Visit bcls.lib.nj.us for a complete rundown of our programs, products and services.

a message from our director

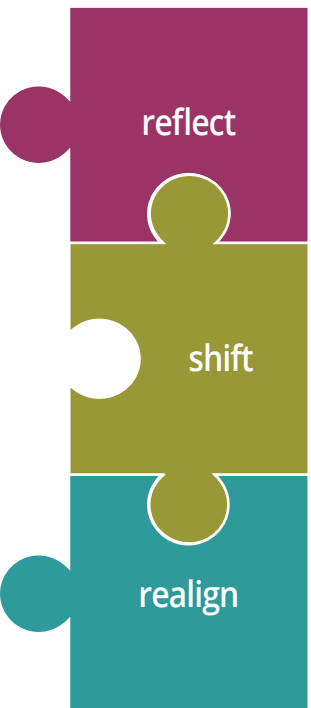
Piecing it All Together

AFTER A FEW YEARS marked by unprecedented challenges, 2023 was all about putting the pieces together and prospering! It was, essentially, a year of action at BCLS, and following months of planning, implementing and reaping the rewards, I'm excited to share a few noteworthy highlights.

Ever mindful of the rapid changes in technology, expanding our digital offerings remained a key priority last year.

As you page through this report, you'll discover some of the new learning opportunities available at BCLS, including our 3D Printing Club that guides customers step-by-step through the process of making unique creations that they can take home. You'll also read about our new Learning Circles that offer online courses in the social environment of a classroom, and some of the steps we've taken to better accommodate tech in our buildings.

We also placed greater emphasis on the power of play in 2023 by offering more opportunities for exploration. Children visiting our libraries will find new STEM Carts and Activity Stations, as well as fun Activity Kits available for borrowing. Ever-mindful of inclusion, diversity, equity and accessibility, we also introduced



Ranjna Das

a new Video Relay Service for our deaf and hearing-impaired customers, and we offered Sighted Guide Training to staff to improve customer service. In fact, customer experience remained a primary focus in 2023.

Throughout the year, we took steps to enhance library services while ramping up efforts to share information about resources and programs, including our first-ever Book Festival. Held in June, the event that gave readers an opportunity to meet a variety of authors while mingling with fellow book lovers proved to be such a success, we're bringing it back in 2024!

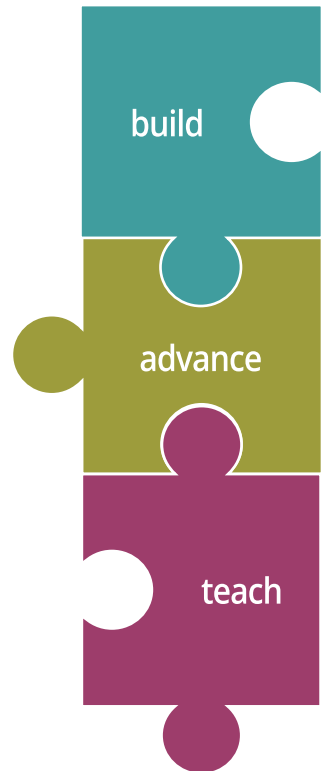
Finally, I encourage you to take a few moments to read about the achievements of some library staff members, as well as the exceptional support we received from our volunteer Friends organizations and the BCLS Foundation. Together, we look forward to making greater strides fulfilling our mission and serving the residents of Burlington County in 2024.

Ranjna Das

Director
Burlington County Library System

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

tomorrow's technology today



ADVANCES IN TECHNOLOGY occur at a dizzying pace – and so does the need to keep pace. In light of that, continuing to expand our digital readiness offerings to include broader skills and learning pathways remained one of our key priorities in 2023. And we got right to work!

We took steps to enhance learning

Investment in Spaces and Equipment

IN OUR ONGOING QUEST to better serve the needs of our customers, we began laying the groundwork for additional, improvements to our physical spaces, too.

BCLS was fortunate to be awarded \$1 million in state funding secured by State Senator Troy Singleton in the FY2023 budget that's earmarked for upgrades to four of our buildings: the Burlington County Library and the Evesham, Pemberton and Cinnaminson branches. Notably, the Friends of the Cinnaminson Library began raising additional funds last year that will augment the planned improvements at that branch,

opportunities, launched a new program to connect customers with the assistance they need, set our sights on redesigning some of our library spaces to better accommodate emerging technologies and more.

Here's a snapshot of some of the BCLS digital readiness offerings and enhancements we focused on last year:

including renovation of the main floor for improved access and new areas of public service.

We also added new software on children's computers systemwide to provide a safe and controlled digital environment, protecting young visitors from inappropriate content and online predators. Geared for children ages 3 to 12, Magic Desktop features thousands of age-appropriate activities, games and videos that capture imagination and inspire learning by turning a regular Windows computer into a safe, educational playground. ■■■■■

Fun While Learning

BCLS SPRINKLED a bit of "magic" on select computers throughout the system last year to make sure children visiting our libraries have a safe and secure environment to play games, watch videos, solve puzzles and more.

Magic Desktop, an edutainment software, is now available on computers

in all eight branches to prevent kids ages 2 to 12 from going onto Windows, providing a safe, educational online playground for them instead.

While engaging with Magic Desktop, children are able to improve their computer skills, like using a mouse on their own, while being

entertained.

BCL computers featuring a wizard on the monitor offer Magic Desktop software and all that's needed to access it is a library card number and pin.

Once your child is logged in, simply look for the Magic Desktop icon and then – let the magic begin! ■■■■■



3D Printing Club

IN 2023, the Burlington County Library relaunched its popular 3D Printing Club for tweens and teens. Participants gained hands-on experience with 3D modeling software and were excited to see some of their creations printed in real life with the library's MakerBot printer. ■■■■■

Learning Circles

IF YOU WANT TO enjoy an online course in a more social environment., such as in a classroom, our new BCLS Learning Circles are for you!

Introduced last year, these

programs feature library team members who help guide class participants through the first few units of a course and also share how to access remaining digital library material

from the comfort of home.

Course topics such as "Computer Organization and How to Organize a Computer" help customers hone their skills at their own pace.



BCLS hosted a mobile learning lab for senior citizens and County Commissioner Deputy Director Dan O'Connell (above, right) attended and spoke at length with many of the participants.

top 3

Adult Fiction

Lessons in Chemistry
by Bonnie Garmus
It Starts With Us
by Colleen Hoover
Mad Honey
by Jodi Picoult

Adult Non-Fiction

Atomic Habits: An Easy & Proven Way to Build Good Habits & Break Bad Ones
by James Clear

Adult Biography

Spare
by Prince Harry
I'm Glad My Mom Died
by Jennette McCurdy
Friends, Lovers, and the Big Terrible Thing
by Matthew Perry

The Body Keeps the Score: Brain, Mind and Body in the Healing of Trauma
by Bessel van der Kolk, M.D.

Killers of the Flower Moon: The Osage Murders and the Birth of the FBI
by David Grann

numbers of note

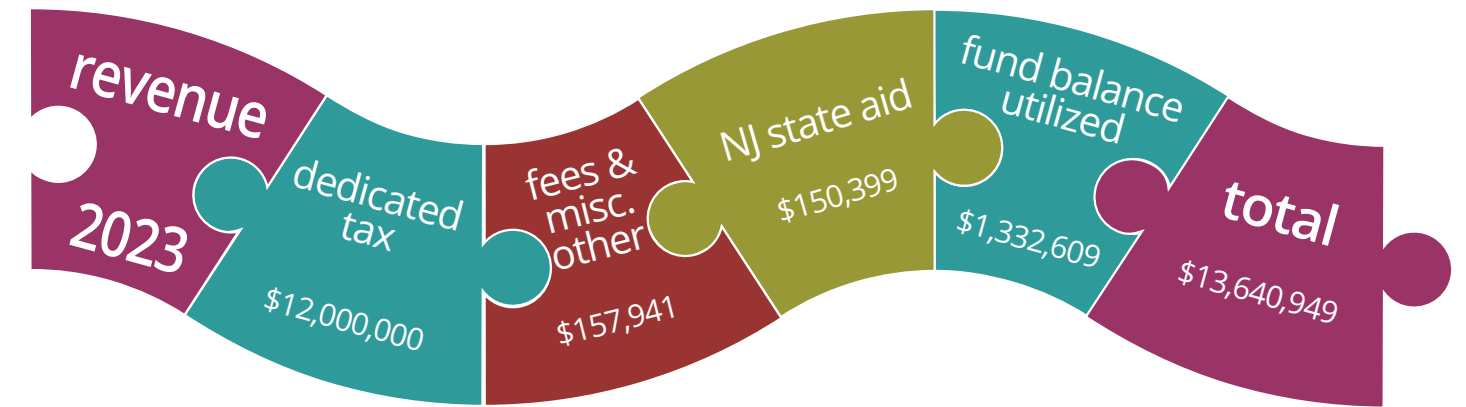
Our website received 2,222,267 visits.

68,659
sessions were logged on our 175 public use computers.

1,098
checkouts of our mobile hotspots were documented.

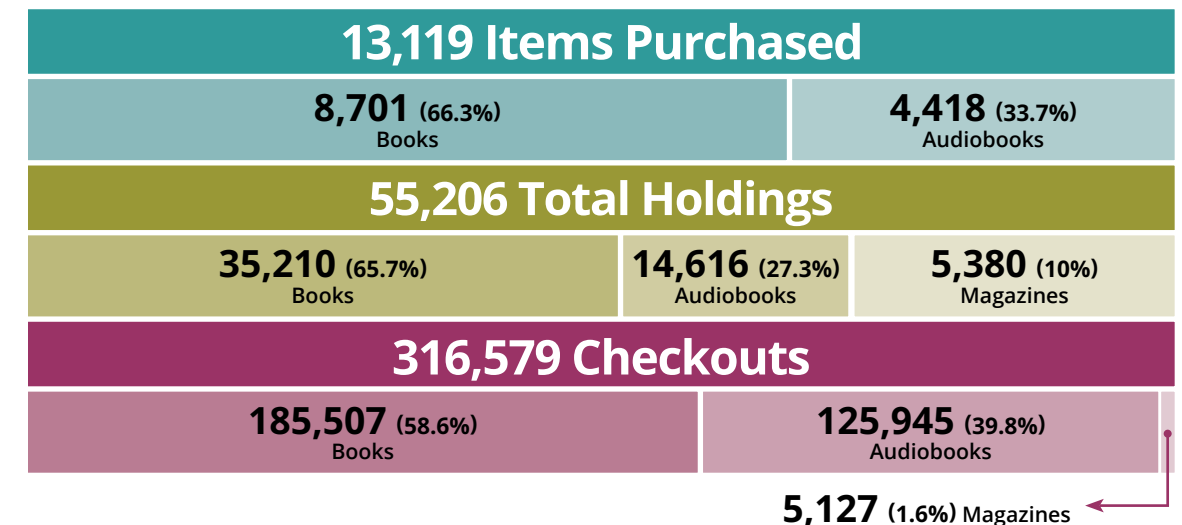
50,448
sessions were recorded on our public wi-fi network.

76,877
checkouts were registered on our self-checkout kiosks.



highlights of our digital collection

BCLS customers love downloading audiobooks and books using the **Libby app**, and we love our customers. So, we substantially increased our digital collection over the past year to make sure that fresh materials are always available to our cardholders.





Evesham Library challenged kids to “escape” from a room by solving puzzles based on the tales of everyone’s favorite boy wizard, Harry Potter. Over the afternoon, several teams of kids worked cooperatively to try to beat the clock.

the power of play

LIBRARIES OFFER boundless opportunities for exploration, and since we believe even our smallest visitors should have fun exploring, we placed a greater emphasis on improving the time they spend with us. In 2023, building discovery and exploration into everyday library experiences became one of our top priorities. With an eye toward enhancing the power of play, we took a two-pronged approach to achieving our goal: We reimagined our children’s rooms as spaces for fun and exploration; and we offered more self-guided discovery and learning opportunities for visitors of all ages and stages. To complement these in-house improvements, we made sure to expand our online offerings too. ■■■■



Activity Stations

KIDS LOVE STORY TIMES and sing-alongs, but we think it’s important for them to have fun playing at the library too. To spark young imaginations, we’re featuring simulated environments and toys to play with in our new Activity Stations, where children can explore and discover the world-at-large.

Now, kids can pretend they’re working in a doctor’s office, teaching in a classroom, or shopping in a retail store while having loads of fun. A chest filled with dress-up attire enhances the library play time. Our Activity Stations rotate around the system, so families can create new imaginary worlds again and again. ■■■■

More STEM Stations

WE CREATED more independent discovery and learning destinations for children and their caregivers to enjoy while visiting our libraries by adding more STEM carts throughout the system last year. Featuring games like marble run, building kits, coding, math and other themed activities designed to foster tomorrow’s skills, our STEM carts were already available at the Pinelands and Cinnaminson branches. Before the year ended, we made sure to make them available at all other branches too. Even at our smallest and space-challenged Riverton branch, visitors will find a dedicated shelf that houses new STEM supplies geared for independent learning. ■■■■



explore

imagine

top 3

Young Kids Books

Creepy Crayon
by Aaron Reynolds

The Duckling Gets a Cookie!?
by Mo Willems

Don’t Let Pigeon Drive the Bus
by Mo Willems

Older Kids Books

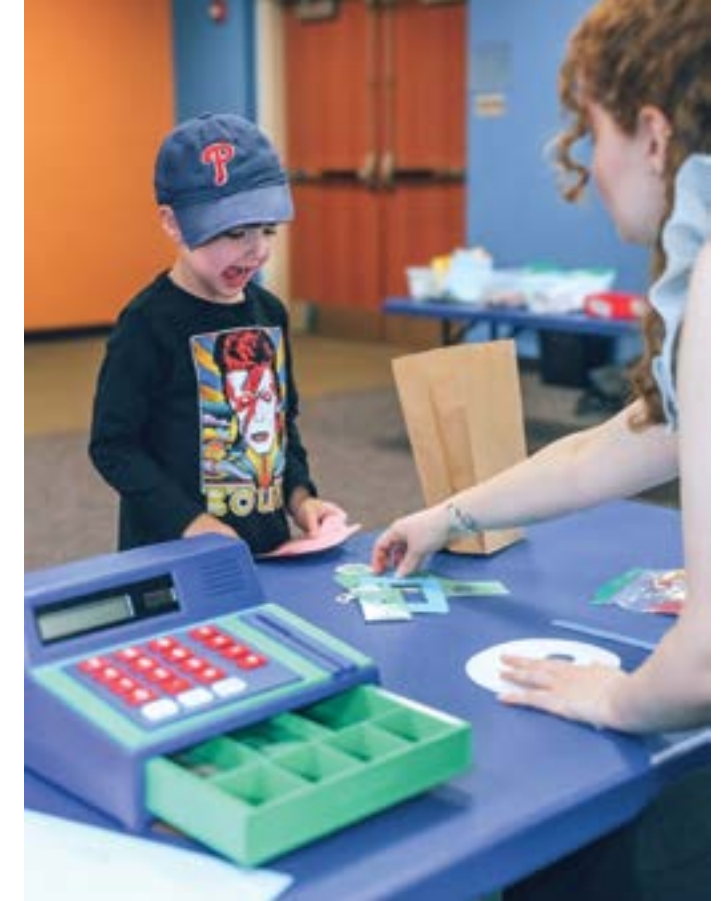
Diary of a Wimpy Kid: Rodrick Rules
by Jeff Kinney

Diary of a Wimpy Kid: The Third Wheel
by Jeff Kinney

Kristy’s Great Idea: A Graphic Novel
by Raina Telgemeier (Illustrator)
and Ann M. Martin (Author)



Tweens and teens at the Burlington County Library were successful in “staying afloat” while puzzling through a Titanic-themed escape room experience.



Little library visitors were given wallets stuffed with “BCLS Bucks” so they could visit an art shop to pick out and purchase whatever craft supplies they desired. Once the cash was spent, the kids made projects using all their newly bought materials.

After participating in a fun workshop about bridges, kids were able to take what they had learned, add a little imagination and, using different types of building materials, fabricate their own spans.

numbers of note

Our customers – and the books they read – are the reasons behind what we do. Just “check out” these numbers!

1,184,957 Items checked out	
731,321 (61.7%) Adult Services	453,636 (38.3%) Youth Services/Teens
61,162 Total number of borrowers	
60,189 (98.4%) In-County	973 (1.6%) Out of County
16,408 New library cards issued	

top 3

Teens/Young Adults Books

- The Summer I Turned Pretty*
by Jenny Han
- The Ballad of Songbirds and Snakes*
by Suzanne Collins
- The Book Thief*
by Markus Zusak

Video Games

- Super Mario Bros.*
- New Pokémon Snap*
- Animal Crossing: New Horizons*

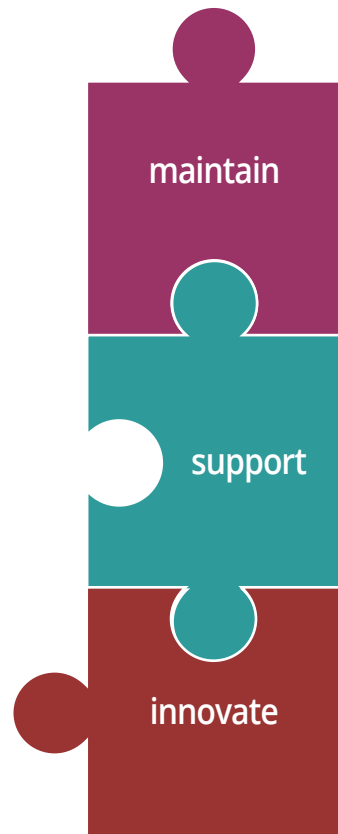


donations and grants

OUR VOLUNTEERS are our best supporters. Throughout 2023, our hardworking Friends organizations and the Burlington County Library System

Foundation raised funds for programs, equipment and facility upgrades. We're pleased – and grateful – to report that this year was no exception.

Friends Organizations



ALWAYS READY to roll up their sleeves to host library book sales and other fundraising events, our volunteer Friends of the Burlington County Library and the Bordentown, Cinnaminson, Evesham, Pemberton, Pinelands and Riverton branches continued such efforts. Every dollar raised helps move our libraries forward, so we were especially thrilled to receive a generous \$50,000 donation from the Friends of the Burlington County Library, Inc. that will go toward an ambitious facility building project now in the planning stages. As proposed, the

Learning Commons at Burlington County Library will redesign existing, under-utilized library space into a mix of areas for quiet, focused work, along with active vibrant areas for learning, creating, making, meeting and collaborating.

The goal of the Learning Commons is to connect people of all ages and backgrounds to one another in a social but purposeful setting to embark on personal learning journeys.

The \$50,000 Friends contribution will be used to help fund tech upgrades included in the proposed plan. ■■■■

Partnership Grant

IN FEBRUARY, we learned that the Burlington County Library was one of a dozen recipients of local historic preservation grants awarded by the Burlington County Board of Commissioners.

The \$8,500 grant will support the development of an inventory of the library's New Jersey Room Collection and a website for genealogy and local history

information. The historic preservation grant, which comes from the New Jersey Historical Commission and its County History Partnership Program, assists existing and emerging local organizations and other nonprofits that undertake history projects and programs. BCL was the only first-time applicant to receive funding.

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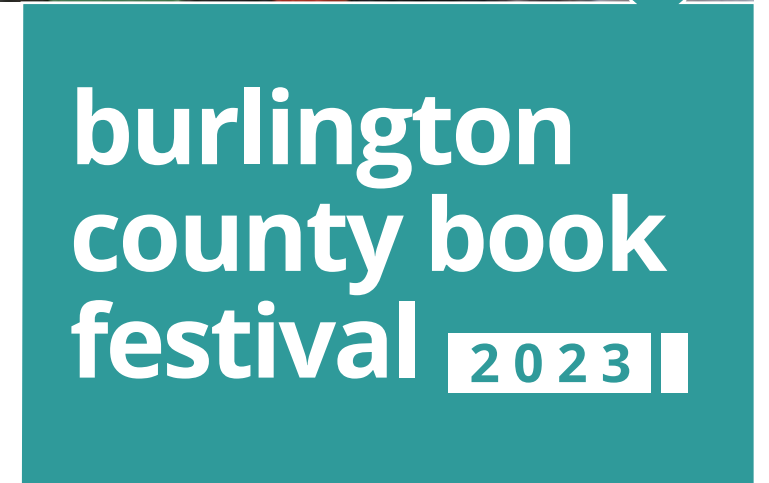


WE COULDN'T HAVE WRITTEN a better first chapter! Held in June, our first-ever **Burlington County Book Festival** was a great success and plans for an even more gripping chapter two – Book Festival 2024 – came to fruition.

Co-hosted by BCLS and the BCLS Foundation, Book Festival 2023 offered residents an opportunity to meet area authors, mingle with fellow book lovers and explore the world of literature inside the Burlington County Library and on library grounds.

The event featured notable authors of books for all ages and showcased a wide variety of genres, including mystery, fantasy, romance, historical fiction, nonfiction and more. Throughout the day, visitors relished the opportunity to meet writers, discuss their work, and perhaps take home a signed copy or two. They also: browsed merchandise created by local authors, artists and vendors; enjoyed games, crafts and activities; participated in a fun Book Trivia competition; and shopped for bargains at a special Friends book sale.

Continued on page 12





Fans of all ages had plenty of opportunity to greet their favorite characters of legend and lore at the first Burlington County Book Festival held last June.z

Continued from page 11

The festival also featured timed presentations throughout the day by a few of our distinguished authors, including: **Rann Miller, Jay Cooper, Larry Hanover** and **Davon Loeb**. We hope to build on our success with a repeat of this event in future years. ■■■■



leading by example



WE ARE PROUD to have a dedicated staff of professionals who work hard to provide opportunities for learning, growth and personal development. Last year, some of our colleagues took that dedication one step further by taking on important roles representing the system in statewide initiatives and organizations.

What a great way for our BCLS professionals to share their expertise on topics that affect libraries throughout New Jersey! BCLS staff leadership roles in 2023 included:

- Director **Ranjna Das** serving as President of LibraryLinkNJ (LLNJ) and co-chair of its Resource Sharing Committee.
- Collection Management/Digital Resources Librarian **Christian Pulverenti** sharing his expertise about digital resources on the New Jersey State Library E-Resource Advisory Committee.

- Chief Librarian **Christina Nemphos** serving as President of the County Libraries Section of the New Jersey Library Association (NJLA).
- Diversity and Access Librarian **Shazia Zaman** representing BCLS on the Diversity and Outreach Section of the New Jersey Library Association (NJLA).
- Reference and Lifelong Learning Librarian **Rosy Wagner** serving as Secretary on the Executive Board of the New Jersey Library Association (NJLA).
- Youth Services team members **Erin Sawadzki** and **Kaitlin McGee** (*above*) presenting Financially Lit Through Children's Programming at LLNJ's Fall Virtual Conference on Literacy. ■■■■

our libraries are for everyone

AT BCLS, WE STRIVE to make all members of the community feel welcome at all times. And, since we are always looking to improve, we are pleased to

report that last year we found new ways to ensure that everyone who visits the library finds it a warm, inviting place to be!

Team Training: Sighted Guide Training

ALL YEAR LONG, our Inclusion, Diversity, Equity and Accessibility (IDEA) Task Force continued to advance library initiatives aimed at ensuring we represent all members of the community. To improve customer service for our blind and visually impaired

customers, the task force offered Sighted Guide Training designed to enhance staff knowledge and skills. The hands-on, interactive instruction highlighted basic techniques for guiding a blind or visually impaired customer under different scenarios. Information

focusing on various types of vision impairment was also presented. Offered to BCLS staff in September, the training was made possible in partnership with the New Jersey Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired. ■■■■

Video Relay System (VRS) Service

FOR OUR CUSTOMERS who are deaf or hearing-impaired and speak American Sign Language (ASL), we are now able to offer a new service at the Burlington County Library through the use of video-conferencing technology.

Our Video Relay Service offers ASL interpretation for telephone calls between a deaf person and a hearing person at different locations; the deaf person connects to an interpreter using a videophone and a high-speed internet connection while the hearing person connects to the interpreter using a regular

phone. The new service was introduced at the Burlington County Library in the first quarter of 2023.

Provided through Sorenson, the calls are paid for by mandatory contributions from telecommunications users to the Telecommunications Relay Services (TRS) Fund, established by the United States government under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Customers who would like to use this service at the Burlington County Library may do so by visiting the VRS appointment page on the BCLS website. ■■■■

Welcoming our Youngest Visitors

It's widely known that babies should be immersed in books at the earliest stages of development. Our children's librarians offer Story Time programs for babies and toddlers to ensure that they and their caregivers experience the joy of reading together from the start. Here, library Commission Chair Jonathan Chebra visits BCL for the Baby Time program and to pick up a few books to read with his little one at home. ■■■■



A participant in the Mystery Book Club, held at the Burlington County Library, brought along an authentic indigenous totem to serve as a visual tie-in to the book the group was discussing.



Over the summer, Pinelands Library hosted Mellow Flow Yoga sessions to help class members develop strength and flexibility leading to a stronger connection between body, mind and breath.

Improving Conveniences

IN NOVEMBER, we launched a renewal service for most items in our collection. Now, all eligible material will be automatically renewed for four days before their due date, up to two times. All BCLS customers are automatically enrolled in this new program. ■■■■

top 3

Blu-rays and DVDs

A Man Called Otto
TopGun: Maverick
The Whale

Kanopy Streaming

Father Brown: Season 3
Manhattan: Season 1
Everything Everywhere All at Once

Museum Passes

Academy of Natural Sciences of Drexel
Woodford Cedar Run Wildlife Refuge
Battleship New Jersey

Online Resources

NewsBank
Kanopy Streaming
Ancestry Library Edition

There were chills aplenty on a hot August afternoon at the Cinnaminson Library, as kids shared favorite spooky stories with friends around an indoor “campfire.”



Stop by Pemberton Library and you'll see a new way to discover more about the library featuring flyers and posters promoting upcoming BCLS programs, resources and more. Located at the entrance, it offers library updates easily available in one convenient place.





bcls.lib.nj.us

Burlington County Library System



Burlington County Library
5 Pioneer Boulevard • Westampton

Beverly Free Library
441 Cooper Street • Beverly

Bordentown Library
18 East Union Street • Bordentown

Library Company of Burlington
23 West Union Street • Burlington

Cinnaminson Library
1619 Riverton Road • Cinnaminson

Crosswicks Library Company
483 Main Street • Crosswicks

Delanco Public Library
1303 Burlington Avenue • Delanco

Evesham Library
984 Tuckerton Road • Marlton

Florence Library
1350 Hornberger Avenue • Roebling

Maple Shade Library
200 Stiles Avenue • Maple Shade

Mobile Library

Pemberton Library
16 Broadway • Browns Mills

Pinelands Library
49 Union Street • Medford

Riverside Library
10 Zurbrugg Way • Riverside

Riverton Library
306 Main Street • Riverton

Sally Stretch Keen Memorial Library
94 Main Street • Vincentown

We visit more than 30 additional locations throughout the county on a regular schedule.

All photos are property of Burlington County Library System.

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