

# CONNECTING PEOPLE

**ANNUAL REPORT 2025**  
Burlington County Library System



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Allison Eckel, Deputy Director  
Randy Brolo  
Tyler J. Burrell  
Tom Pullion, Library Liaison  
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Ranjna Das, Ex Officio

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Christina Nemphos, Chief Librarian, Branch Services  
Givane "Gigi" Hayes, Chief Librarian, Public Services  
Jess Farrell, Chief of Communications  
Tim Patton, Chief of Technology

**ON THIS PAGE:** Young learners looked on in awe during the Eyes of the Wild program at the Burlington County Library, as experts introduced a fascinating lineup of exotic, touchable and adorable animals.

**FRONT COVER:** Audiobook Nature Walk – a winning collaboration. In October, nature lovers and bookworms gathered at Pennington Park in Delanco for an Audiobook Nature Walk that blended literature, light movement and time outdoors.



## A Message From Our Director



Looking back on 2025, the Burlington County Library System continued to serve as a hub of connection, creativity and learning for our community. The year balanced innovation with simple delights — from new digital tools and hands-on programs to meaningful opportunities for families and neighbors to come together. This report highlights some of the moments that made our year memorable:

### Access to reading and learning expanded in meaningful ways.

Our team curated nearly 200 reading lists for all ages, while customers enjoyed an expanded digital magazine collection. Our overall collection grew by more than 62,000 items, including books, video games, Launchpads and screen-free Whazoodles — ensuring something new to spark curiosity and imagination.

### Learning and engagement thrived throughout the year.

A new partnership with HelpNow brought on-demand tutoring, writing and adult learning support seven days a week. Our reimagined Summer at the Library program hosted nearly 700 events and saw a 43 percent increase in attendance. Book Fest returned in the spring, and Fandom Fest drew over 800 pop culture fans in September. Creative exploration continued with access to more than 1,000 ad-free Creativebug videos.

### Library spaces — both physical and virtual — also saw significant enhancements.

The Pemberton Library completed a nearly \$1 million renovation, adding updated spaces for teens, children, technology and study. Online, we launched an upgraded virtual branch that fully integrates our website, catalog and events calendar, making it easier than ever to discover resources from anywhere.

Throughout this report, you'll see the energy, curiosity and connection that define our library system. From children and teens exploring new interests to one-on-one learning support and community-wide gatherings, our libraries remain places where everyone can learn, create and connect. This work is made possible by our dedicated staff, generous Friends groups and BCLS Foundation, and the guidance of the Library Commission.

We look ahead to 2026 with excitement, eager to continue offering opportunities for discovery, growth and inspiration throughout Burlington County.

**Ranjna Das**

Director, Burlington County Library System

“ Libraries often measure impact in the numbers of books borrowed, the strength of programs offered or number of computer sessions logged.

However, the real impact of our libraries is in the stories we connect you to, the inspiring and enlightening performances you attend and access to basic amenities that connect you to the world-at-large!

Be curious, stay inspired and continue visiting your library! ”

**Jonathan Chebra**

Chair, Burlington County Library Commission

**ON THIS PAGE:** Poet, writer and editor Nancy Reddy was one of the featured authors at the 2025 Burlington County Book Festival held in April. She presented excerpts and discussed one of her most recent books, *The Good Mother Myth*.

# Creating Meaningful Connections

Throughout 2025, we enthusiastically focused on positioning our libraries as vibrant destinations for meaningful experiences. We used our physical spaces, digital platforms and community touchpoints to bring those experiences to life. One standout example was Book Fest 2025, which successfully connected talented authors with our community and reinforced the library as a hub for inspiration and connection.





## Cultivating Community Engagement

There was a palpable excitement in the air when we opened the doors for the Burlington County Book Festival and watched the Burlington County Library come alive as a hub of meaningful literary connections. In its third year, the 2025 festival proved to be a resounding success. Co-hosted with the BCLS Foundation, the event was made possible with generous support from the Burlington County Commissioners.

Hundreds of county residents — along with visitors from across South Jersey — took advantage of the opportunity to meet and mingle with a diverse group of talented authors and to enjoy presentations, panel discussions and performances throughout the bustling day.

Among the highlights was a keynote address in our auditorium by renowned, best-selling DC Comics and television writer Tee Franklin, writer of the Harley Quinn graphic novels, based on the animated HBO series.

In our meeting rooms, award-winning illustrator Allen Crawford discussed his latest work, featuring illustrations inspired by Walt

Whitman's epic poem *Song of Myself* - and editor Kerri Sullivan's presentation was especially popular with aspiring authors. She spoke on the collaborative nature of publishing, shared valuable insights on drafting nonfiction proposals and discussed the process of promoting her collective publication *New Jersey Fan Club: Artists & Writers Celebrate the Garden State*.

Meanwhile, in the Children's Department, a standing-room-only crowd of kids and adults alike was delighted as cartoonist Jay Cooper demonstrated his creative process in real time, producing comic masterpieces before their eyes.

Throughout the library, hallways were lined with tables hosted by vendors selling book-related items. Local authors participated in meet-and-greets and book signings, while organizations such as the South Jersey Writers Group and the New Jersey State Library Talking Books and Braille Center shared information about their services and programs. Our Friends of the Burlington County Library, Inc. hosted a pop-up book sale, offering gently used books for sale.

In all, the festival featured more than 40 authors representing fiction, nonfiction, poetry and children's literature — making the 2025 Book Fest a memorable celebration of creativity, community, connections and the written word.

**ON THIS PAGE:** County Commissioner Tyler Burrell chats with author Kerri Sullivan about collaborating with other local authors and artists.

# POE-SSESSED

## STORIES & SECRETS of EDGAR ALLAN POE



Experience a haunting evening inspired by **Edgar Allan Poe**, featuring dramatic interpretations of his most iconic works including: *Annabel Lee*, *The Bells*, *The Raven*, *The Tell-Tale Heart* and *The Cask of Amontillado*. Presented by **Helen McKenna**, a lifelong Poe devotee and former Park Ranger at the Edgar Allan Poe National Historic Site. Performance is followed by a question and answer period.

**OCT. 28 at 6PM**

Burlington County Library

Tickets will be distributed at the auditorium doors starting at 5:15 pm. Each person may receive only one ticket, no individual will be given multiple tickets. A ticket guarantees a seat, so you don't need to stay in line. Seating will start at 5:45 pm. Attendance will be limited to a strict maximum of 250 people.

## Connecting Readers With Writers

### Poe-ssessed! Dramatic Interpretations, Stories Retold

Burlington County Library hosted a captivating performance featuring dramatic interpretations of Edgar Allan Poe's most iconic works, including *Annabel Lee*, *The Raven* and *The Tell-Tale Heart*. Through her powerful portrayal, Helen McKenna (*pictured left*) guided the audience on a journey from the heights of poetic beauty to the darkest corners of the human psyche. A lifelong devotee of Poe's writing, McKenna previously served as a park ranger at the Edgar Allan Poe National Historic Site, deepening her connection to the author's life and legacy. She debuted her acclaimed solo show, *Tell-Tale Poe*, in 1999 and continues to captivate audiences with an interactive, immersive performance style that brings literature vividly to life.

“ Even in the modern digital age, the power of books endures. ”

**Tom Pullion**

*Burlington County Commissioner,  
Liaison to BCLS*



### A Storyteller with a Local Lens

Dennis McDonald (*pictured above*) gained extensive knowledge of the area during his career as a photographer for the Burlington County Times. He used that insider perspective as a springboard to co-author several books about the region, including *Medford Through the Lens*, as well as books on Whitesbog and Smithville — two prominent and historically significant places in the county. McDonald attended Book Fest 2025, where he signed copies of his books and showcased rare photographs of the area.

# Expanding Our Reach

## Enriching Our Community

In September, the Burlington County Library auditorium came alive with the vibrant sounds and rhythms of Eco Del Sur, a dynamic group celebrating Latin America's rich cultural heritage through music and dance. The performance showcased both traditional and contemporary works from Mexico, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, Chile, Cuba, Costa Rica and Spain.

We continue to broaden our programming with intention — casting a wide, thoughtful net to ensure inclusivity across ages, interests and cultural backgrounds. Programs like Eco Del Sur exemplify our commitment to offering diverse, welcoming experiences that celebrate culture and bring our entire community together.





## Fans Flock to Fandom Fest !

Volunteers from the 501<sup>st</sup> Legion — known for spreading the magic of Star Wars worldwide — brought cinematic authenticity to our September Fandom Fest at Burlington County Library. Known for their screen-accurate costumes and carefully crafted props inspired by the Star Wars universe, the group delighted fans of all ages. During the all-day event, participants, customers and library staff celebrated fandoms with costumes, cosplay, photo opportunities and hand-made merchandise!

**ON THIS PAGE:** Collin Ortell, Adult Services Librarian at BCL, even paused for a photo beside one of the droids featured at Fandom Fest!



# Learning & Engagement for All

In 2025, we reaffirmed our commitment to creating fun, inspiring and meaningful experiences that support learning and community connection. Through programs, events and activities, the library engages residents of all ages in opportunities to read, learn, build skills and explore new ideas. All programs — including the 3D Modeling class featured on this page — are designed with clear outcomes in mind, ensuring each delivers meaningful value to our community and promotes lifelong learning.





## Mindful Play

Our DIY I Spy Jar activity at the Cinnamon Library featured a clear bottle filled with rice and small, hidden recycled objects waiting to be discovered. This hands-on sensory program encouraged focus, fine motor development and self-calming as children shook and turned the container to spot specific items. Along the way, they built color recognition, practiced turn-taking, strengthened listening skills and expanded language — all reflecting BCLS's commitment to learning through imaginative play and meaningful engagement.

## Everyday English

Participants in the ELL (English Language Learners) Conversation Circles at the Pinelands Library gathered in a supportive environment that fostered growth and connection. In a relaxed setting, learners practiced speaking and listening through discussions, interactive activities and real-life scenarios. From sharing personal interests to exploring traditions and daily routines, they built vocabulary, strengthened pronunciation, gained confidence and formed meaningful connections with others.

### Topics for Conversations

#### Activities

What is your favorite book?  
Where have you traveled?

#### Seasons

Do you enjoy the outdoors?  
What is your favorite season?

#### Traditions

Do you cook or bake often?  
What is your favorite holiday?



## Programs That Educate, Engage and Empower

Our talented and innovative staff connect with children, teens and families in creative, meaningful ways. From art and crafts to games and skill-building, these programs highlight how libraries inspire learning, imagination and community connection.

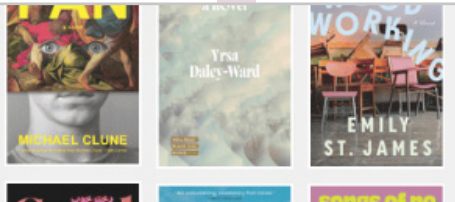
Summer at the Library launched with a relaxing, creative evening at the Pinelands Library, where participants embraced the “Color Your World” theme during a guided painting session creating starry night scenes inspired by the Milky Way above the pines.

Community members of all skill levels also came together for a hands-on craft program at the Burlington County Library, designing paper flower tea light holders with guidance from a professional art instructor in a welcoming, collaborative setting.

At the Pemberton Library, adventurous players explored the world of Dungeons & Dragons, building characters and teaming up for a one-shot quest filled with imagination and fun.

Across branches, chess programs invited kids to drop in for friendly matches and skill-building instruction, while teens learned the art of crochet step by step — encouraging creativity, focus and self-expression at every turn.





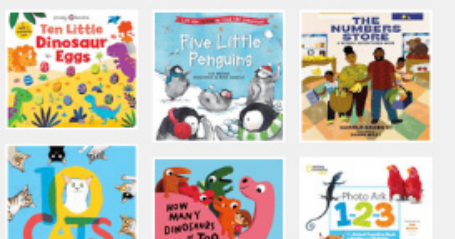
Hot Off the Press: Must-Read Debut Novels



Bloom Where You're Planted



Writings & Reflections on the Black Experience

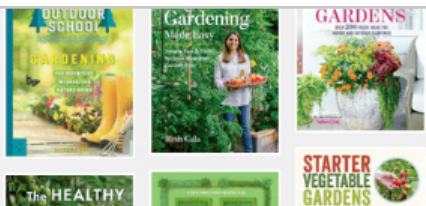


1-2-3 Count With Me!

# Our New Website Offers a Better Way to Explore Books!

# 193 Lists!

*Hundreds of meaningful connections to reading*



Gardening, Landscaping and Outdoor Spaces

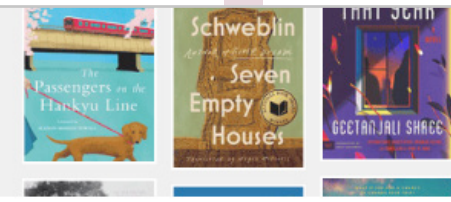
## Expertly Curated Reading Lists

Always focused on innovation, we migrated to a new website platform that offers fresh ways to connect library users with books, resources, events and services. Launched in May, the site brought our catalog, events calendar and online content together into one seamless destination, creating a more intuitive and engaging user experience.

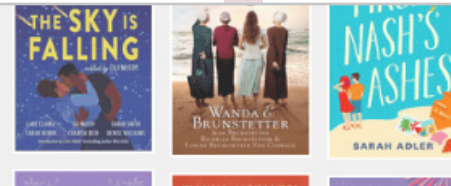
With content creation now easier and more flexible, our team curated nearly 200 book recommendation lists designed to connect readers with our collection. These lists serve a wide range of audiences — from parents and caregivers seeking children’s picture books to readers looking for inspiration that reflects their lifestyle, background, ethnicity, interests or preferred genres. Through this effort, staff thoughtfully highlighted the breadth and diversity of our wide-ranging collection.



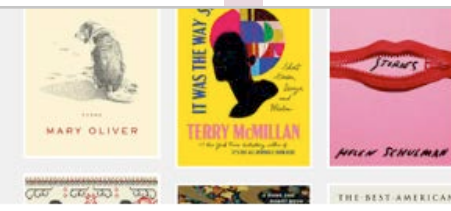
Chill Out this Summer with Spine-Tingling Graphic Novels!



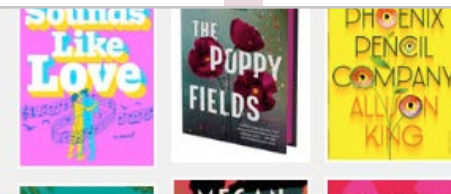
Women in Translation (WIT) Month is Celebrated in August



Swoon-Worthy Stories for Hopeless Romantics

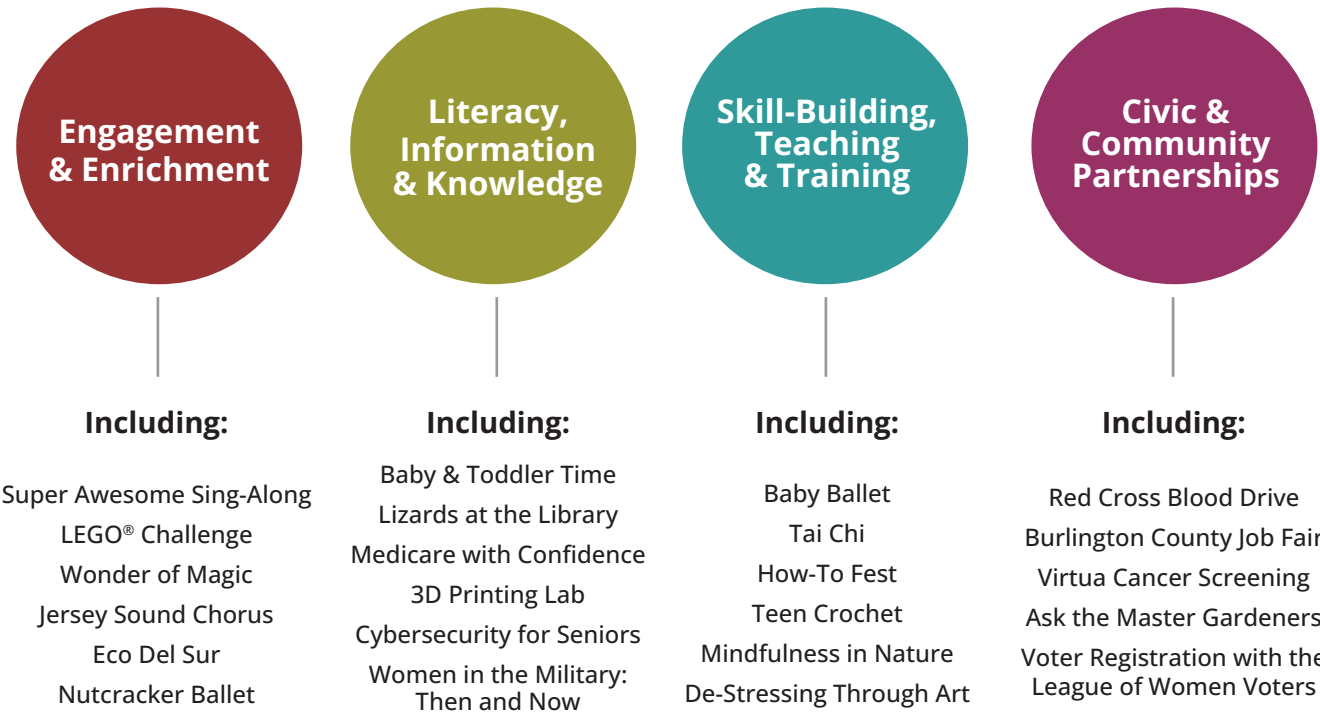


Reading Restart! Try Short Stories and Novellas



This Magic Moment: Tales of Magical Realism ✨

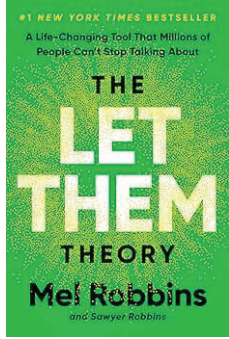
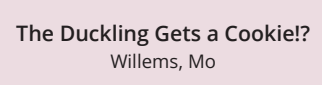
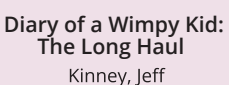

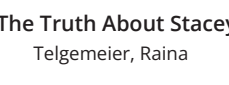
In 2025, our team hosted **3,424 programs** with **61,020 participants**. Each program was intentionally designed to deliver the following outcomes:





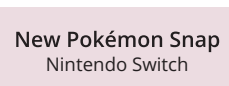
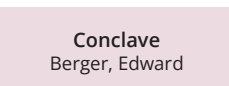
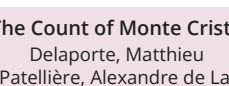

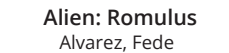


TITLE	CHECKOUTS
<i>The New Yorker</i>	6,117
<i>Woman's World</i>	2,310
<i>New Scientist</i>	2,275
<i>The Week Magazine</i>	2,208
<i>US Weekly</i>	1,896
<i>National Geographic Magazine</i>	1,600
<i>Prevention</i>	1,352
<i>Guardian Weekly</i>	1,229
<i>Newsweek</i>	1,118
<i>Cook's Illustrated</i>	939

Hosted on the **Libby App**, our **digital newsstand** with over 6,500 popular and special interest magazines, saw unprecedented growth and usage.

These are our top 10 downloaded titles!

ADULT FICTION	ADULT NON-FICTION	EASY FICTION	JUVENILE FICTION
			
The Women Hannah, Kristin	The Let Them Theory Robbins, Mel	Don't Let the Pigeon Drive the Bus! Willems, Mo	Kristy's Great Idea Telgemeier, Raina
			
The Housemaid Is Watching McFadden, Freida	The Demon of Unrest Larson, Erik	The Duckling Gets a Cookie!? Willems, Mo	Diary of a Wimpy Kid: The Long Haul Kinney, Jeff
			
The Crash McFadden, Freida	Original Sin Thompson, Alex Tapper, Jake	The Pidgeon Needs a Bath! Willems, Mo	The Truth About Stacey Telgemeier, Raina

VIDEO GAMES	DVD / BLUERAY	ONLINE RESOURCES	KANOPY FILMS
			
Sonic Mania Nintendo Switch	Wicked Chu, Jon M.	Kanopy	Anora Baker, Sean
			
New Pokémon Snap Nintendo Switch	Conclave Berger, Edward	NewsBank	The Count of Monte Cristo Delaporte, Matthieu Patellière, Alexandre de La
			
Nintendo Switch Sports Nintendo Switch	Alien: Romulus Alvarez, Fede	The New York Times	Lee Kuras, Ellen

# Behind Every Success is Our Team



## Staff Member of the Year: Colleen Howard

*Awarded for operational excellence*

In just a few years with BCLS, Colleen Howard (pictured) has become a go-to staff member for behind-the-scenes operations across BCLS. Her work spans administration, departments, branches and committees, supported by a strong problem-solving mindset and excellent vendor relationships. She recently expanded her role to manage Library Commission meetings and oversee system-wide statistics, including the annual report for the New Jersey State Library.

## Great Solution: Pinelands Branch

*Awarded for building a community partnership that increases library visibility and usage*

The Pinelands Library team's ongoing partnership with the Medford Education Association continues to drive strong community engagement. A recent collaborative summer reading kickoff attracted more than 475 residents. Library staff registered new users, renewed memberships and promoted summer reading, while family friendly activities and giveaways created a welcoming, high-energy event that encouraged greater library use throughout the summer months.

## Great Team: BCL Events Department

*Awarded for ensuring library spaces are vibrant, community-focused resources*

The BCL Events team maximizes library spaces through inclusive programming and equitable community access. In a recent tally, meeting rooms hosted 905 bookings and 107 auditorium reservations, supporting concerts, performances and educational programs for all ages. By working closely with residents, organizations and local partners, the team ensures library facilities remain welcoming hubs for connection, learning and collaboration.



## Reaching Beyond Our Walls!

Once again in 2025, Burlington County Library System staff looked beyond our brick-and-mortar buildings to connect with residents where they live, gather and celebrate.

Throughout the year, our outreach team hit the road, sharing information about the many resources, programs and services available through BCLS at festivals, fairs and community events across the county. Visitors met staff at

popular destinations such as the Burlington County Farm Fest, the Mount Holly Fire & Ice Festival, National Night Out celebrations, farmers markets, retirement communities and more.

Each interaction provided an opportunity to connect with community members and highlighted the wide range of library offerings — from books, digital resources to programs that educate, entertain and inspire.

**“Our goal with customer outreach is to create a welcoming, uplifting space where residents can unwind, connect with one another and leave with helpful tools and resources.”**

**Melissa**  
Burlington County  
Library Staff

# Library Financials

BUDGET		REVENUE	
Personnel	\$10,467,325	Dedicated Tax	\$14,000,000
Administration	\$658,600	Fines & Fees	\$105,000
Collections	\$1,202,349	Interest Income	\$220,000
Technology	\$668,000	State Aid	\$155,849
Programming	\$117,600	Fund Balance	\$417,192
Other costs	\$1,784,167	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$14,898,041</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$14,898,041</b>		

## Support from our donors ensures we continue to build on tax dollars.

Monetary contributions to the BCLS Foundation directly support a wide range of library initiatives.

Every purchase at our Friends of the Library used book sales extends that impact, generating additional funding for events, activities and community programming.

Support from grantmakers like the New Jersey Council for the Humanities offers essential seed funding that allows the library to introduce new initiatives and bring fresh ideas to life.



# \$102,766

We thank these library champions for their work in securing funds for the library system!

- BCLS Foundation
- Friends of the Burlington County Library
- Friends of the Cinnaminson Library
- Friends of the Evesham Library
- Friends of the Pemberton Community Library
- Bordentown Library Association
- Medford Library Association
- Individual Donations
- New Jersey Council for the Humanities

**ON THIS PAGE:** Shoppers browsed thousands of books for all ages and interests at a Friends of the Cinnaminson Library book sale, supporting the library while discovering their next great read.



**ON THIS PAGE:** The Paradise Island Dancers brought the spirit of a traditional luau to the Burlington County Library auditorium, showcasing the vibrant rhythms and rich cultural traditions of the Samoa.

## Burlington County Library System Locations

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

**Beverly Free Library**  
441 Cooper Street, Beverly

**Bordentown Library**  
18 East Union Street, Bordentown

**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

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

**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

### Mobile Library

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

**bcls.lib.nj.us**  
Burlington County Library System

*The mission of the Burlington County Library System is to enrich lives by providing opportunities for learning, growth and personal development.*