

# EUGENE PUBLIC LIBRARY

## YEAR 5 LEVY REPORT MEASURE 20-235



**11,895**  
activity kits given out

**1,500**  
new student cards

**23%**  
increase in digital  
collection use



**MORE Hours  
& Access**



**MORE Programs  
& Services**



**MORE Materials &  
Technology**



**Accountability  
& Transparency**

**E**ugene Public Library has been a cornerstone of our community for nearly 120 years. Throughout that time, the Library has supported an informed community, lifelong learning and the love of reading by providing access for all city residents to a universe of ideas.

In the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic that dedication hasn't waivered, though we have had to change the way we serve and meet the community's needs. Even with reduced open hours at our locations, EPL has remained one of the most visited and utilized places in Eugene, and many people shared the library has been a "lifeline" during the pandemic.

This levy report covers the time period of July 1, 2020 to June 30, 2021, which falls squarely in the pandemic. During this time the Library worked to pivot services to respond to changing COVID-19 restrictions.

Our 2021 numbers continue to reflect some

limits to hours, services and in-person programming. While the traditional circulation of books and resources changed, our virtual doors never closed. Over the course of the pandemic, Eugene Public Library has worked to increase digital access to address specific community gaps that align with our levy goals of access, programs, materials and technology. This included providing online programs, giving broader access to library resources for youth and when it was safe to do so, bringing back more traditional borrowing and some in-person programs.

The Library is a place for everyone, whether it be in person or virtually. We provide free cultural and educational programs for all ages that support a lifelong love of reading and provide a focus on literacy and informing our community. Your Library card is now more powerful than ever.

Eugene Public Library continues to serve our community, adjusting operations to provide safe access to resources that people of all ages and walks of life depend on.



# MORE Hours & Access

**A**ccess to services and resources are central to our mission at Eugene Public Library. Whether in person or online, access to free materials helps create an informed community.

*Our levy promise* was to increase hours (22 hours/week) at Bethel and Sheldon branches and restore Sunday morning hours at the Downtown Library. We did that, providing increased opportunities for cardholders to borrow materials and use resources.

COVID-19 restrictions, though, affected our open hours and access. Statewide restrictions closed our physical doors in mid-March 2020, and we quickly worked on increasing our digital access. To continue safely circulating materials, we began curbside pickup on June 15, 2020. We were able to reopen our physical locations Aug. 24, 2020 and returned the ability to physically browse the collection April 19, 2021.

One of the largest impacts of these restrictions was on physical visitors. In 2020, we had just under 189,000 visits to our three locations (118,000 downtown, 71,000 at the branch locations). In a typical year, the library system experiences more than 1 million visitors. As our hours return to pre-pandemic levels, we are seeing patron use increase, and the Library's average daily

visitor count (for all three locations) almost doubled from September 2020 to June 2021.

During this year we added 4,455 new cardholders. The total number of cardholders in FY 2021 was 105,254.

EPL continues to reach beyond our building. Staff participated in a variety of outreach events and programs, including programs with Food for Lane County. Additionally, EPL supplied books to social service organizations such as the NAACP. In FY 2021, staff participated in 63 offsite programs that reached more than 1,500 people.

The Library also worked to increase access for vulnerable and unhoused populations by using the Library's van to provide temporary internet hotspots in other locations around our community to help folks apply for stimulus support and other pandemic-related aid. Every day, we continue to build partnerships to increase this access even more in the future.



While circulation decreased because of COVID-19 restrictions, we saw an increase in activity at our Bethel Branch location, which circulated 22,724 more items this year compared to last. We also saw a 23% increase in circulation of electronic materials, with almost 100,000 more electronic items being circulated in FY21.

**TOTAL CIRCULATION**  
**1,641,833** items

Downtown	795,952
Sheldon Branch	136,560
Bethel Branch	176,867
Electronic Materials	532,454

## ACCESS REMAINS A TOP PRIORITY

During FY21, EPL collaborated with the Eugene Public Library Foundation and the 4J and Bethel school districts to expand library access to all district students, regardless of residency. Access for all students is a particular focus because a key indicator for future academic and professional success is the ability to read at or above grade level in third grade. Currently, approximately 50% of Eugene third graders read below grade level.



Starting in September 2020, every student in the Eugene and Bethel school districts became eligible for a free Eugene Public Library card, including those who live outside city limits. The Library has signed up more than 1,500 new students through this program.

This waiving of the usual non-resident library card fee was made possible by a three-year pilot partnership of the Eugene Public Library Foundation,

Eugene Public Library, Eugene School District 4J and Bethel Public Schools. Because the cost of a non-resident library card is prohibitive for some families, some youth that attend Eugene schools have not been able to have a library card even though their classmates and friends do.

A Eugene Public Library card provides access to many resources that promote success in school and beyond. The Library offers students opportunities including ongoing development of reading skills, researching school projects, building study skills, working with live online tutors and more. In addition to serving as a key to a universe of information and educational support in print and online, a library card offers nearly limitless opportunities to read for pleasure and enjoy movies, music, magazines and more at no cost.

# MORE Programs & Services

**E**ugene Public Library is so much more than books and resources – it’s a community that balances free, diverse programming with a patron-first approach to service. Adults, teens and kids alike are informed, entertained and inspired by our programs, and our community typically has access to new and emerging technologies through our Maker Hub and Media Lab, though both of those spaces have been closed because of COVID-19 restrictions.

## *Our levy promise*

was to increase events by a third over the life of the levy, setting a goal of 1,800 programs. During the pandemic, our ability to offer in-person programs was severely limited because of safety concerns and COVID-19 restrictions. However, staff went to work converting programs to online environments and created new opportunities for the community to engage.

We held 263 online programs during FY21, including programs that ranged from our popular Teddy bear picnic to a speaking event with American novelist and Circe author Madeline Miller. Throughout the year, we have held a variety of online book clubs as well.

We worked hard to continue providing programs that targeted youth. At the onset

of the COVID-19 pandemic, we began posting online storytime videos, which quickly evolved to a weekly livestream storytime, and our summer 2020 kids’ show series was changed from in-person to live, online events. All our virtual programs were available online for later viewing.



When restrictions allowed, EPL was able to hold 19 in-person events, predominantly tax aid assistance sessions, with 380 participants. Since we were unable to hold in-person storytimes, staff worked with Eugene Rec staff to create bilingual story walks in many neighborhood parks. These self-guided walks had pages from books printed large and placed along walking paths. They proved to be a popular activity for people of all ages to engage in a fun reading activity with their kids, outdoors with physical distancing.

**Eugene Public Library worked to continue engaging throughout the pandemic.** While we are proud of our online content, visiting the Library includes an enrichment aspect we wanted to still provide. Weekly activity kits for youth and adults were created to connect our community with fun and engaging activities they'd typically expect from a visit. These activity kits were extremely popular.

BETWEEN  
& Oct 2020  
Jun 2021  **11,895**  
KITS GIVEN OUT

Programs are only part of our promise. We also said we'd add more Maker opportunities. In a typical year, cardholders would have access to independent project work in our Downtown Library's Maker Hub and Media Lab.

In FY21, staff began creating maker kits that would allow for the community to

learn about and use maker tools and technology in their own homes. These kits, which debuted in late June 2021, have been part of our long-term maker plans and currently include items such as 360-degree cameras, button makers, invention kits, lap looms, slide scanners and more. And we'll continue to add new and useful tools to this program.

Connecting our community to resources is a huge part of the Library's work, and our best work is often done in partnership. When the pandemic made meetings in their offices impossible, Lane County Workforce Services reached out to Eugene Public Library to help support job seekers and local employers.

This partnership enabled Workforce's career advisors to meet one-on-one with more than 100 community members by appointment at the Downtown Library, which was spacious enough to allow for COVID-19 prevention



measures. Community members could get assistance with career planning, become more employable, improve job search skills and find employment.

Most of these individuals had been trying to accomplish their job research and applying on their own by phone. The opportunity to meet with advisors in person and have free access to a computer and the internet made a crucial difference. Advisors supported job seekers with online applications, resumes and cover letters, interview skill building, networking and training scholarships.

# MORE Materials & Technology

**E**ugene Public Library strives to be responsive to community needs and maintain a diverse collection of materials. That includes making items available in physical and digital formats to meet everyone's preferences and needs.

***Our levy promise*** was to return the Library's budget for books, movies, eBooks and other items to pre-recession levels, providing quicker availability of in-demand items and to increase internet access at Bethel and Sheldon branches.

Eugene Public Library continues to play a critical role in bridging the digital divide through internet access and online training, especially considering the global pandemic. This access benefits the public in everything from job hunting to staying in touch with distant loved ones.

When the Library opened our doors again in August 2020, we knew computer access was a critical need in the community. While access to the public computers was limited at the start of the pandemic, the Library continues to add back more computer access while maintaining safe physical distancing and safety protocols. A total of 41 computers are available to community members, including borrowable laptops. In FY21 we had 12,481 public computer users.

Our technology promise is about more than providing computers, it's about keeping people connected. For many in our community, the pandemic has created an increased reliance on mobile technology, and not everyone has access to Wi-Fi or consistent access to power to keep their devices charged. The Library worked to fill this gap by creating safe and comfortable spaces for the community to access public Wi-Fi and a space to recharge their devices and themselves.

TOTAL FY2021  
**75,021**  
MATERIAL INCREASE

Physical Collection  
**481,628**  
Electronic Collection  
**793,485**  

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COLLECTION SIZE  
**1,275,113**



As the pandemic and related safety restrictions continued into FY21, our community discovered an increased need for access to digital services and streaming services, which continue to dominate the online landscape. In addition, as the financial implications of the global pandemic continue, more and more community members are affected. EPL recognized early the challenges facing our community also meant cost was an increased barrier for many households. EPL's virtual doors were opened with access to a variety of educational resources and entertainment, as well as access to digital books and audio books.

And every day, we continue to build partnerships to increase this access

even more in the future.

Toward the end of FY21, the Library and its partner the Eugene Public Library Foundation, began a pilot project to start circulating Wi-Fi hotspots to increase our community's access to the internet. After a successful pilot, the new Wi-Fi hotspot lending began Sept. 13, 2021. Each device can be used by up to 10 people at once to access free high-speed internet with unlimited data. The Library will circulate 250 hotspots for individual cardholders and 250 for local agencies working with those in need of access.

Additional funds for this project were raised by the Foundation and the Friends of Eugene Public Library.



# Accountability & Transparency

**E**ugene Public Library meets the ever-changing needs of Eugeneans. We think trust and libraries go hand in hand. During a deep five-year study completed in 2016, the Pew Research Center found trust in libraries remained high because of their proven ability to curate and share reliable knowledge.

## *Our levy promise*

is to ensure accountability and transparency. In the measure, we promised to separate levy fund budgeting and accounting per state law, to prepare an annual staff summary of spending and performance measures, an annual review by the citizen Library Advisory Board and an annual City Manager's report to City Council.

Before the levy was passed, EPL's level of service was supported by \$10.6 million per year from the City of Eugene's general fund, plus donated funds.

## SOME DETAILS ON FY 2021 LEVY SPENDING:

The Library Local Option Levy is set at \$2.7 million per year for five years, in accordance with state law restrictions regarding how levies are structured.

<b>FY 2021</b>	<b>LIBRARY EXPENDITURES</b>	
	Levy Funds	\$2,262,070*
	General Fund	\$10,4080,370
	Misc. Trust Funds	\$268,745
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	<b>\$13,011,185</b>	

\*Each year of the levy, we intentionally reserved funds as part of budget planning for the full five years. While the levy provided the same amount of revenue each year, spending fluctuated because of ongoing expansion of services as well as increased costs, inflation and other factors. Funds were budgeted in order to ensure the ability to fulfill levy promises throughout the full five years.

This report shows one side of the levy story. The greater picture, though, shows how access to programs, materials and resources contribute to a more informed and engaged community. This is evident in countless stories from the public.

After all, libraries are not just about books, they are about people. The extended levy services helped Eugene Public Library meet the needs of the community even while we continue to adjust during the pandemic.



Library staff, partners and volunteers spend every day supporting an informed community and fostering lifelong learning and a love for reading. That's at the heart of our work.

We're committed to free access to the universe of ideas and information for our community as we serve through changing times. That dedication allows EPL to adapt and remain essential to the lives of residents, and it keeps the Library a truly public space.

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**In November 2020, Eugene voters overwhelmingly supported the passage of Measure 20-309, which provides an additional five years of support for EPL services.**

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Ongoing levy information is available to the public at [eugene-or.gov/levyinfo](http://eugene-or.gov/levyinfo). This report will also be available online after review from the Library Advisory Board and City Council.

  
**541-682-5450**  
**[eugene-or.gov/library](http://eugene-or.gov/library)**

