

PROPOSED
MINUTES
REGULAR MEETING OF THE
BUFFALO & ERIE COUNTY PUBLIC LIBRARY BOARD OF TRUSTEES
March 20, 2025

The regular monthly meeting of the Board of Trustees of the Buffalo & Erie County Public Library was held on Thursday, March 20, at the Central Library and remotely pursuant to due notice to trustees. The following members were present:

Carima El-Behairy, Chair
Christopher Sasiadek, Esq., Vice Chair
John D. Craik, Esq., Treasurer
Prof. Christine P. Bartholomew, Esq., Secretary
Michael Amodeo, Esq.
Nathaniel W. Barnes
Kathleen Berens Bucki, MLS
Lucy A. Candelario
Kimberly Johnson
Theodore K. Johnson
Sharon M. Kelly, Esq.
Elaine Panty

Chair Johnson called the meeting to order at 4:03 p.m. A call of the roll was taken. A quorum was present.

Agenda Item B – Approval/Changes to the Agenda. Trustee Sasiadek asked the Board if they were interested in entering into Executive Session to discuss proposed Resolution 2025-10 – Reappointment of Director Spears. Members of the Board decided that would not be necessary. Therefore, there were no changes to the agenda.

Agenda Item C – Minutes of the Meeting of February 20, 2025. Trustee Sasiadek summarized the minutes. He informed the Board that there was no quorum present for the meeting held on February 20, 2025. Per the notice that was sent out to members and the public, the Executive Committee met to discuss informational and action items. Trustee Bucki reviewed and proposed corrections to several grammatical errors. It was agreed that these corrections will be made. Discussion ensued regarding the minutes and titles.

Agenda Item D – Report of the Chair. Chair El-Behairy began her report by acknowledging and thanking Erie County Legislator Lawrence Dupre and Erie County Liaison David Bojanowski for attending the Board meeting. Next, Chair El-Behairy thanked the Library Administrative team for the Trustee Orientation on Saturday, March 15. She stated that she found it to be very informative. She reminded the Board

that attendance counted toward their annual Trustee Education requirement. She also stated that the *ACT Workshop* will be held on Saturday, March 22, at the downtown Central Library and encouraged Board members to attend. Following that, Chair El-Behairy shared that the grand reopening event for Isaías González-Soto Branch Library will take place on Saturday, March 29, at 11:00 a.m. Discussion ensued about proposed events and the Black Doll Exhibit.

Next, Chair El-Behairy notified the Board of a Library fundraiser slated for Friday, May 9, titled *In Conversation*. The event is meant to celebrate intellectual freedom and highlight the essential role of libraries in our communities. She encouraged Board members to get their tickets to the event which will be held at The Admiral Room, located at 237 Main St. Buffalo, New York 14203. Following that, Chair El-Behairy shared that Jack Connors from the Library Foundation Board will be presenting at the May Buffalo and Erie County Public Library Board meeting.

Finally, Chair El-Behairy reminded Board members who are liaisons to specific libraries that they should visit when they can. She compiled a list of the libraries and their Board meeting dates.

Agenda Item E – Committee Reports.

Agenda Item E.1 – Executive Committee. Trustee Sasiadek summarized the Executive Committee report as presented below. Trustee T. Johnson motioned to enter the report into the minutes, Trustee K. Johnson seconded, and this was approved unanimously.

Buffalo & Erie County Public Library
Board of Trustees – Executive Committee
March 13, 2025

Present: Executive Committee Chair Carima El-Behairy, Vice-Chair Christopher Sasiadek, and members Lucy Candelario, Sharon Kelly, and Elaine Panty. Also present were Deputy Director – Public Services Dorinda Darden, Deputy Director – Chief Operating Officer Angela Marinucci, Assistant Deputy Director – Controller Emily Patronik, and Assistant to the Director Caitlin Goodrich

The meeting of the Executive Committee began at 4:02 p.m. After a call of the roll, it was noted that a quorum was present.

Chair El-Behairy began the meeting by reviewing the proposed agenda for the Board meeting on Thursday, March 20. Next, she asked if there will be any changes to the agenda. Deputy Director-COO Marinucci stated there are none. Next, Deputy Director-COO Marinucci explained the proposed Resolution 2025-9 - Wide Area Network RFP Award. She explained that the current contract term is set to expire, therefore an RFP was issued. There were two submissions. Discussion ensued about the time sensitivity of this proposed resolution since the closing date for the E-Rate funding year application is Wednesday, March 26. Trustee Panty asked about federal funding. Discussion ensued regarding E-Rate and federally funded programs.

Following that, Assistant Deputy Director-Controller Patronik shared that she will present on the monthly financials ending on December 31, 2024. The Business Office finished all their entries and Assistant Deputy Director-Controller Patronik is confident to report the numbers. Next, she shared that she is planning on holding a Budget and Finance Committee meeting after the Board meeting in April. Discussion ensued regarding topics for the Budget and Finance Committee, such as pre-budget planning, where to allocate savings, etc.

For Report of the Chair, Chair El-Behairy stated that she will be discussing the Trustee Orientation scheduled for Saturday, March 15, and that she will remind the Board of the ACT Workshop on Saturday, March 22, at the Central Library. Following that, she will report on the grand reopening of the Isaías González-Soto Branch Library on Saturday, March 29. The event begins at 11:00 a.m. with presentations, and there will be celebrations throughout the day. Discussion ensued regarding the reopening and the mural that was installed by local artist Angelee Vargas. Further discussion ensued about the reconstruction and repairs done at the Isaías González-Soto Branch Library.

Next, Trustee Candelario asked about the process for renaming the auditorium at the Isaías González-Soto Branch Library. Deputy Director – Public Services Darden shared that when the Frank E. Merriweather, Jr. Branch Library’s auditorium was renamed the Dr. Eva M. Doyle Auditorium, the process was initiated by former New York State Senator Timothy Kennedy. Further discussion ensued regarding the renaming process, and Deputy Director – Public Services Darden stated that the President of the Hispanic Heritage Council of WNY, Casimiro D. Rodriguez, Sr. will be informed of the process of renaming an auditorium. Further discussion ensued about the administrative team reviewing the potential process of renaming spaces within libraries, approvals, etc.

Next, Chair El-Behairy brought up the proposed Resolution 2025-10 – Reappointment of Director John Spears. Discussion ensued about the proposed resolution and his previous evaluation.

Following that, Trustee Sasiadek asked about potential areas within the Library that federal funding or lack thereof might impact. Discussion ensued about E-Rate and New York State funding. Further discussion ensued about inflation, utilities, tariffs, and the impact of sales tax.

There being no further business, Trustee Sasiadek motioned to adjourn and Trustee Kelly seconded. The meeting ended at 4:22 p.m.

Agenda Item E.2 – Budget and Finance Committee.

Agenda Item E.2.a – Monthly Financial Report. Assistant Deputy Director – Controller Emily Patronik summarized the monthly financial report ending on December 31, 2024, which was provided to the Board in their packets. Discussion ensued regarding fringe benefits and other budgeted items. ADD-Controller Patronik reminded the Board, particularly members of the Budget and Finance Committee, that they are meeting after

the Board meeting on April 17. Further discussion ensued regarding utilities, meter readings, and the continuous monitoring of utility costs.

Agenda Item F – Report of the Director. Director Spears began his report by thanking everyone, both the members of the Library Administrative team and the Board members that attended the Trustee Orientation on Saturday, March 15. He stated that he felt that the orientation was informative and that the engagement by the Board members was appreciated. He went on to thank them for taking an interest in the operations of the Library. Next, Director Spears encouraged attendees of the orientation to submit comments or suggestions to make the orientation even better in the future.

Next, Director Spears informed the Board that both the New York State Senate and Assembly released their one-house budgets. He stated that the Library is encouraged since the Senate and the Assembly asks, in terms of Library Operating Aid and Construction Aid, are actually increases over the New York State Executive Budget. Discussion ensued regarding the budgets, asks from libraries across New York, per pupil aid, and other library-related financial information.

Following that, Director Spears shared information on what has been transpiring with the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS). An Executive Order was issued calling for the elimination of the IMLS and six other Federal agencies. Director Spears stated that there have been a number of questions given these agencies were established by Congress. As of now, the statutory requirements of IMLS are being continued, however, at the barest level possible. Funding for the IMLS was approved in a continuing resolution, however, that only goes until September 2025. Discussion ensued regarding the IMLS and the Office of Management and Budget. Next, Director Spears stated that 90% of the Library budget comes from property taxes. The Federal funding the Library typically receives is through e-Rate and occasional grants. Discussion ensued regarding funding, IMLS, potential lasting impacts, advocacy efforts, and outreach.

The following report was submitted by the Director and transmitted to Board members prior to the meeting:

**B&ECPL Monthly Report
February 2025**

History Month Programs - System-sponsored *Black History Month* programs were provided at select library locations. Programs included *African American Cultural Center Drum Workshops*; *Buffalo Stories: Buffalo History Channel Screenings*; *Daughters of Creative Sound Performances*; *Dolls & Society Workshops* presented by Doll Collector and Curator Lisa Jacobs-Watson; *Underground Railroad and the Power of our Stories* presented by Saladin Allah, Director of Community Engagement at the Niagara Falls Underground Railroad Heritage Center; and *Vibrant Strings Concerts*.

Additionally, System Adult Outreach Services Manager **Carol Kowalik-Happy** hosted Don Jones, Founder and Chairman of Verite Capital Partners at the Central Library on February 5 to provide a lecture on minority entrepreneurship, starting a small business, and investing in the Buffalo community. Attendees included Erie County Legislator Lawrence Dupre and Dale Martin from WUFO Radio. On February 8, **Carol** was co-captain for the *Together as One: The Journey Continues Bus Tour*, which stopped at the Buffalo Museum of Science, the Buffalo Black Achievers Museum, and the Central Library. Brother Clifford Bell and Ms. Ellen Harris-Harvey presented on the Buffalo African American Museum's *The Making of a Monument* exhibit located on the second floor of the Central Library. The *Say Their Names: Honor Their Legacy* exhibit was also available to view. Genealogy Specialist **Rhonda Hoffman** screened the Buffalo History Channel video *Buffalo Stories*, a documentary on Buffalo's African American history, at the Central Library on February 8. *Buffalo Stories* was also shown at the Newstead Public Library on February 1, Lackawanna Public Library on February 5, and the Dudley Branch Library on February 22 in honor of *Black History Month*.

Black Doll Exhibit Opening – Deputy Director of Public Services **Dorinda Darden** provided welcoming remarks at the special opening ceremony of the *6th Annual Black Doll Exhibit - A New Era: Celebrating Black Dolls and the New Era of Beauty* held at the Central Library on February 22, in partnership with New York Senator April Baskin and Lisa Jacobs-Watson. The event featured a screening of *Black Barbie: A Documentary* in the auditorium and was followed by a virtual *Question and Answer (Q&A) Session* with the film's writer/director Lagueria Davis hosted by WKBW-TV news anchor Pheben Kassahun with assistance from Lisa Jacobs-Watson. During the event, Davis informed the audience that she learned the previous evening the documentary had won the *NAACP Image Award*. She received a round of applause from the audience. The *Black Doll Exhibits*, designed by Library Graphics Manager **Dawn Stanton**, are on display at the Central Library, Frank E. Merriweather, Jr. Branch Library, Leroy R. Coles, Jr. Branch Library, and Isaías González-Soto Branch Library until April 1.

Community Resource Fair - System Adult Outreach Services Librarian **Jacob Rachwal** collaborated with Peaceprints of WNY to hold their *Community Resource Fair* at the Central Library on February 5. Thirty agencies and community organizations participated and shared their resources with library patrons.

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Leaders are Readers School Award for Literacy – Martin Road Elementary School in Lackawanna, as the recipient of Project Flight's *Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Leaders are Readers School Award for Literacy* presented an assembly program on February 25. Dr. Geraldine Bard and Dr. Elizabeth Cappella, Co-Directors of Project Flight, and **Dorinda Darden** provided remarks at the event. Over 3,000 books have been awarded to the students and school.

Jazz Sunday Concerts – More than 100 people total attended two live *Jazz Sunday* concerts at the Central Library on February 2 and February 23. The concerts were underwritten by the American Federation of Musicians. The Library was honored with a plaque for presenting these popular musical programs in partnership with the

Buffalo Musicians Association, Local 92. Upcoming *Jazz Sunday* concerts are scheduled for April 6 and April 13 at 2 p.m.



Photo - Buffalo Jazz Collective with the plaque for the Library

1. Public Services

Central Library:

Children's Librarian **Erin Burke** created a Kid Librarian of the Month program. Throughout the month of February, patrons were able to fill out an "application" for this position. A total of 20 children applied, and the Kid Librarian was chosen by random drawing. The winner worked with a librarian to set up a book display and make an accompanying sign. This month's Kid Librarian display was based around the books *Diary of a Wimpy Kid* and *Dork Diaries*. They also had a chance to go behind the scenes with a brief tour of the workspace and the stacks. Through this program, kids (and their families!) gain exposure to librarianship, a better understanding of some of the inner workings of the library, and the opportunity to contribute to the space, building the sense that it truly belongs to them.

Technology Clerk **Amanda Brown** hosted a *Cold Sowing Workshop* on February 8 with guest speaker Sylvin Ashbrook from Grassroots Gardens. Seventeen attendees learned how to get a jump start on their gardens by starting seeds outside in recycled milk jugs.



Photos – Sylvain Ashbrook assisting patrons with Cold Sowing

Adult Services Librarian **Kuniko Simon** coordinated Wednesday's *Movie Matinee* by checking movie and image licensing and ratings and preparing synopses for movie flyers. Selected movies for Black History Month were *Forge* (2024), *Respect* (2021), *Green Book* (2021), and *Jumping the Broom* (2011).

Teen Services Librarian **Kelly Woods** and Library Assistant **Sarah Barry** hosted *Slime Night* in the Teen Space on February 12. This program was a big hit, with 70 teens participating. Teens were able to choose from a variety of scents to add to their concoctions; strawberry lemonade was the top choice.

Buffalo Branches:

Frank E. Merriweather, Jr. Library Programming Highlights

The Merriweather Branch Library hosted Giant Donut Night on February 5, an opportunity for families to paint and decorate giant donuts. Approximately 15 adults and children came to enjoy the night and a few kids opted to leave their donuts on display for everyone to enjoy. Paula's Donuts donated two dozen donuts for everyone to enjoy while creating their donut masterpieces.



Photos – Children presenting their donut crafts and the giant donuts displayed on top of library shelving.

Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) began provided free tax preparations on Saturdays starting February 8, a service heavily used by patrons.

The branch hosted a variety of community-led events and meetings in their auditorium, meeting room, and Miles Room spaces in February, with a total of 68 bookings from outside groups. Some highlights include:

- The Tradition Keepers Black Storytellers of WNY organized a *Tribute to Mother Mary Carter Smith* on February 1. The program included tradition storytelling, dance performances, and poetry to honor Mary Carter Smith, a noted educator who used and promoted storytelling as an educational tool.
- On February 8, local historian and educator Dr. Eva M. Doyle hosted a film screening to share her own film, *Eye on the Prize*, about the history of Haiti.
- Kind Fool organized and led *WRITE ON!*, an intuitive writing workshop, on February 13. This writing workshop meets monthly and is supported by a grant from Roswell Park.
- An African drum and dance organized by Erico Ansuade took place on February 19. The program featured a community drum circle and lesson, dance performances, and food for the community.
- As a tribute to Malcolm X, community members hosted a viewing and discussion of a documentary about Malcolm X.

Crane Library Programming Highlights

Branch Manager **Caroline Kennon** hosted a special Take Your Child to the Library Day storytime on February 1, reading the book *Dinosaur vs. the Library*. Twelve patrons attended; by pure coincidence, this group had *three* sets of twins!

The library hosted a Thursday afternoon *Lego Club* with 27 patrons attending in February. Legos are put out on a table in the children's area and all completed projects are displayed on the library's holds shelf for the week.

Staff orchestrated a *February Scavenger Hunt* in which young patrons found nine images hidden throughout the children's section and then picked a prize from the branch's treasure chest. The theme for February was cartoon hearts, and the library had 178 patrons participate.

Senior Page **Thomas Wagner** moderated a Nintendo Switch gaming program on Thursday afternoons tailored for kids under 12. The program is limited to four participants per week, so registration is required; participants have the choice of playing four different games (*Mario Kart*, *Mario Party Superstars*, *Overcooked*, or *Sports*).

Systems Librarian Trainee **Amealia Brousseau** hosted *Baby and Toddler Storytime* every Friday morning in February with a total of 161 patrons attending.

Staff created and distributed 298 take and makes in February, including 48 Valentine Love Bug Bookmark crafts, 36 Love Bug Roll crafts, 60 Valentine's Day Beaded Heart Necklace crafts, 60 Valentine's Day Heart Magnet Picture Frame crafts, 36 Animal Ice

Skating Tissue Paper crafts, 36 Glitter Snowflake Mosaic crafts, and 22 Snowflake Bookmark crafts. Many of these crafts were distributed on Take Your Child to the Library Day on February 1.

Other programming highlights from February include:

- A Valentine Making event was held on February 10, providing supplies for kids to make valentines, including doilies, sparkly card stock, stickers, paint markers, and Valentine's themed treats.
- *Drag Story Time* was presented by Buffalo Drag Story Hour on February 15, with 22 patrons attending. The theme was Valentine's Day and included singalongs, group dance, and the book *Love You Forever*.
- *Old Time Jam* was hosted in collaboration with musician Jake Sanders on February 15. This monthly program involves two hours for local musicians of varying expertise who play stringed instruments to come together and play old time music; ten musicians attended.
- On February 21, a Family Matinee Movie featured the film *The Princess and the Frog*. Attendees were provided themed coloring pages, popcorn, and juice boxes.
- *Cryptids, Creatures, and Conspiracies Trivia Night* was hosted by Library Clerk **Arden Mohr** on February 24 for adults with 28 patrons attending. Those on the winning team each received a cryptid-themed coloring book. Enthusiasm for these trivia nights has been high, and patrons have been given the chance to submit suggestions for future themes.
- The all-female Black percussion group *Daughters of Creative Sound* held a program on February 24, with 16 patrons attending.
- A book club in collaboration with patron Jacyra Guard was held on February 24. Patrons discussed the book *Bear* by Julia Philips.

System Services:

Special Collections Librarian **Adam Rubin** and Rare Book Curator **Heather Gring** led a workshop on *Personal Archiving* on February 15 at the Central Library. Participants learned how to apply archival methodology to caring for their family archives and received an archival storage box and some enclosures to get them started.

Rhonda Hoffman hosted the *Choose Your Genealogy Adventure* group meeting held virtually on February 18. She presented on *Advance Your Research at the Grosvenor Room*. Participants learned about the library's online resources through an online competitive scavenger hunt. The winner, Craig Kanalley, will receive an hour of personalized research in the Grosvenor Room collections.

Jacob Rachwal worked with Pati Aine Guzinski from Erie County Department of Health to hold a *National Wear Red Day* event at the Central Library on February 7. This all-day event was dedicated to raising awareness about heart disease in women. It included presentations on Women's Health, AED training, and Hands Only CPR training. FeedMore WNY was also present to provide heart healthy snacks for those in attendance.

Dr. Amy Graves Monroe, Associate Professor at the University at Buffalo Department of Romance Languages and Literatures, presented a lecture on *Why So Many Bibles? A Journey into the Influence of the Printing Press on the Holy Writ* on February 14 at the Central Library. Graves Monroe focused exclusively on bibles in the Rare Book Room collection, and some bibles were available for patrons to view during the lecture, which was hosted and curated by **Heather Gring**.

The NYS Department of Taxation and Finance has collaborated with the B&ECPL to provide free one-on-one income tax assistance to patrons on Thursdays from February to April in the TechKnow Lab at the Central Library.

Displays and Exhibits:

A Merriweather Library patron curated and exhibited a display in the vestibule titled *African Americans and Labor: A Legacy of Strength and Resilience*. Additionally, staff created Black History Month displays for the adult and children's areas of the library.

Adult Services Librarian Trainee **Faith Miller** created a display titled *Boost Your Trivia Skills with These Books*, featuring adult nonfiction titles that provide trivia questions, fun facts, world records, and information on notable musicians, artists, comics, and history. This display tied into Central's monthly trivia program, and **Faith** used the display to advertise the event.

Elaine M. Panty Branch Library Manager **Stefanie Anawald** created fiction and nonfiction displays focusing on African American History month, President's Day, Valentine's Day, and romance.

Dudley Branch Library staff created a Dr. Seuss' Birthday display, including coloring sheets and bookmarks, as well as a Black History Month window display highlighting the achievements of famous Black African Americans. Library Assistant **Ana Sennett** made a marvelous *Fall in Love with the First Line* blind date book challenge which involved covering books with paper and writing only the first line of the book on the cover to entice patrons choose a book "date."

Rhonda Hoffman created a genealogy display titled, *Time Travel Through Your Family Tree: No DeLorean Required*. The display features Grosvenor Room genealogy resources and will remain on exhibit until September 2025.

Tours and Visits:

Rare Book and Map Librarian **Charles Alaimo** provided a tour of the Grosvenor Room, *Rare Books 101* exhibit, Mark Twain Room displays, and the closed stacks for patrons on February 22.

Outreach:

Teen Services Manager **Taylor Harding** and **Amealia Brousseau** taught Media Literacy classes at Charter School for Applied Technologies on February 25 and 26. **Taylor** and **Amealia** spoke to 200 students in eight classes. **Taylor** also attended Nardin Academy's first Leadership & Career Exploration Fair on February 27. **Taylor** spoke to 11 students interested in librarianship as well as those who had a passion for libraries and wanted to learn more about the profession.



Photo – Taylor Harding discusses librarianship with Nardin Academy teens

Leroy R. Coles, Jr Branch Manager **Danielle Ptak** attended Highgate Heights' Family Game Night, an event to promote literacy and math skills, on February 13 alongside System Youth Outreach Services Library Assistant **Emily McDonald**. They talked to 60 attendees about upcoming library events, gave away books and other freebies, and challenged kids to make Word Rockets.

Children's Librarian **Heather Bermingham** continued to provide weekly storytime and craft outreach programs to the Universal Pre-K class at Lighthouse Center on Jefferson Avenue. This month's storytime and activity topics included Black joy and Valentine's Day. Additional topics explored were dinosaurs and patterns, in support of the school curriculum.

Mobile Services Library Assistant **Heather Leaderstorf** and Mobile Services Librarian Trainee **Olivia Adams** visited the Lord of Life Adult Day Health Center in Depew on February 3. The Library2GO Van monthly outreach stop provides clients with an opportunity to socialize and participate in Library programs. Using air-dry clay and beans, those in attendance made valentine crafts. Mobile Services Manager **Andrew Maines** tabled at the Buffalo Common Council's 2nd annual *Buffalo Money Mastery* free financial literacy workshop at the University at Buffalo South Campus on February 8. Community partners from the Board of Block Clubs, Buffalo Public Schools Adult Education Division, Buffalo Department of Assessment and Taxation, and M&T Bank also participated in the all-day event. Mobile Services Librarian **Jennifer Block** and Mobile Services Senior Page **Mary Bridgens** visited Buffalo Public Schools #301 Burgard High School's *Saturday Academy* on February 8. **Jennifer** and **Mary** met with many families, promoted library programs and services, and issued library cards.

Jacob Rachwal attended the *Health and Wellness Fair* at Westminster Community Charter School in Buffalo on February 8. He distributed information on library programming and made buttons and magnets for the 50 people in attendance. **Jacob** also tabled at the *2025 Prepare to Fly Job Fair* held at the Charter School for Applied Technologies High School on February 11. He interacted with over 60 high school seniors, distributing library card applications and sharing information on library programs, services, and resources such as the *Online Winter Reading Contest*, Libby and hoopla, job searching resources, health information databases. **Carol Kowalik-Happy** was a panelist at the *Small Business Resource Day* at the University at Buffalo's Center for Entrepreneurial Leadership on February 12, along with representatives from The Exchange at Beverly Gray, SCORE Buffalo Niagara, That Brown Bag Minority Business Directory, the Small Business Legal Center, and the Buffalo Purchasing Initiative. **Carol** answered questions and talked about the library resources during the session. **Carol** was also part of a panel at The Exchange at Beverly Gray for the final class of the winter, *Minority- and/or Women-owned Business Enterprise Session* on February 26. System Youth Outreach Services Librarian Trainee **Amealia Brousseau** and **Emily McDonald** tabled at the Buffalo Philharmonic Orchestra's *BPO Little Kids Series* held at Kleinhans Music Hall on February 1 and February 8. There were over 350 attendees who visited their table to do a toddler craft and learn about the library during the two-day event. **Amealia** provided a *Storytime* for students at the *Just for Kids After School Enrichment Program* at the Park School of Buffalo on February 3.

2. Collection Development

Physical Collections:

	Item Adds		Title Adds		Collection Size
	Month	YTD	Month	YTD	
Juvenile Print	2,661	4,151	262	417	510,689
Young Adult Print	252	569	76	127	69,298
Adult Print	2,466	5,576	523	1,145	1,766,864
Media	2,736	5,036	362	983	516,286
Other*	1,590	3,053	5	20	172,408
Subtotal	9,705	18,385	1,228	2,692	3,035,545

*Includes magazines, generic copies, and other.

Electronic Collections*:

	Item Adds		Title Adds		Collection Size
	Month	YTD	Month	YTD	
eBooks	4,351	9,161	1,395	3,183	127,678
eAudiobooks	8,299	18,522	345	805	64,015
Digital Magazines	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	5,721
Subtotal	12,650	27,683	1,740	3,988	197,414

*The B&ECPL also provides access to all *hoopla* eBooks, eAudiobooks, videos, and music albums. These titles are not included in the collection size total, as they are not owned by the B&ECPL.

All Collections:

	Item Adds		Title Adds		Collection Size
	Month	YTD	Month	YTD	
Total	22,355	46,068	2,968	6,680	3,232,959

Digital Collections – Adam Rubin has completed adding the main part of the *Say Their Names: Honor Their Legacies* collection to the digital collections. In cooperation with Dr. Barbara Seals Nevergold, further items will be added over time to complement the collection.

Rare Books and Special Collections – The Rare Book Room has acquired a number of notable early Tarot decks, including a locally made vintage letterpress deck, created by a resident artist Jameson Alea at the Western New York Book Arts Center. Special Collections Librarian **Libby Stengel** is working with Shantelle Patton, CEO of That Brown Bag Minority Business Directory, to acquire all published volumes of That Brown Bag, a directory of Black-owned businesses in Western New York and Toronto.

3. Fundraising

Fundraising:

Campaign Name	Campaign Dates	Raised to Date
Annual Appeal Total	January 1 – February 28, 2025	\$191,802.48

Upcoming Fundraiser - The *In Conversation* fundraiser, in partnership with the Library Foundation, is confirmed for the evening of Friday, May 9. The event will be a conversation between Susan Orlean, author of *The Library Book* and Margaret Sullivan, former editor-in-chief of *The Buffalo News* and public editor of *The New York Times*. Sponsorships are available. This will be a ticketed event. Contact Maureen Germaine at germainem@buffalolib.org with any questions.

Mass Email – A *This March at Your Library* issue was sent to all library cardholders that opted in to receive communications (over 90,000), with a 39% open rate.

Graphics – The Graphics Department provided signage, posters, flyers, ads, etc. for the following libraries in February: Central, West Seneca, Grand Island, Crane, Gonzalez-Soto, Clearfield, North Park, Hamburg, Kenmore, Collins, Coles, and the Bookmobile. They also revised the V.I.P. Program benefit brochure and continued to work on the upcoming launch of the new B&ECPL System brand.

4. Facilities

On February 3, the New York State Library Construction Aid Program held an online construction contacts meeting to provide updates for the upcoming construction aid application period. Topics of discussion included leases for libraries, language in

project narratives for the proposed work, NYLA education/construction conference, closing out FY 2019-2020 projects, updates to the construction aid website, and proposed 2024 legislation that could impact the System's funding allocation.

On February 6, Library staff met with associates from the Burchfield Penney Art Exhibit to discuss the installation of multiple framed pictures and art at the Gonzalez-Soto Branch Library. The pictures will be hung on the interior of the assembly room wall and will be in place for a period of six months. Following the installation, an unveiling ceremony will take place either in late March or early April.

On February 6, Library staff, along with Erie County DPW personnel, Watts Architects, and Montante Solar met to discuss the roof replacement and green roof installation at the Central Library. Topics of discussion included city codes and fire codes associated with the project, revisions to the proposed layout of the green and solar elements, budget updates, interconnection plans between the solar panels and the Central Library main switchgear, and an updated work schedule. The project is still on schedule to be advertised in the fall of 2025.

On February 11, Library facility and maintenance staff met with Erie County DPW staff and Trautman Associates to discuss the ongoing loading dock rehabilitation project. Items discussed included clarifying change orders submitted by the contractor and addressing questions submitted by the contractor relating to the design specifications on the construction documents. A follow up meeting with all parties is scheduled for March 5 to provide an updated schedule to complete the work.

On February 13, the Erie County Legislature discussed the resolution submitted by Erie County DPW on behalf of the Library supporting the Central Library Space Utilization Study. The legislature asked for clarification regarding the budget; it was clarified that the resolution language regarding the budget shifts was accurate: increasing the new balance of the DPW account from \$700k to \$990k, with \$290k from the Library to pay for the study. Ultimately, the resolution passed, which will allow the DPW to formally enter into a contract with the awarded firm, Bostwick Design Partnership.

On February 27, Erie County DPW hosted a site walkthrough at the Central Library in advance of RFP proposals for a new Architectural and Engineering consultant to provide on-call professional services at the Central Library. Specific areas of interest were the exterior marble panel stabilization, chiller replacement, Rare Book Room HVAC replacement, boiler replacement, snowmelt boiler replacement, and air handler replacement. Other assignments for the selected firm will be assigned based on the needs of the facility and available funding. Proposals are due Monday March 17, 2025.

5. Staff Development

Strength Based Leadership Seminar with Erie County - On February 6, three staff members participated in *Strength Based Leadership*, an in-person seminar hosted by Erie County at their 43 Court Street training facilities. This three-hour session was designed

to help attendees discover the power of their strengths and unlock their potential using the Strengths Finder 2.0 assessment tool. Participants were then encouraged to begin to make the most of their own talents and of those who they supervise. **Heather Gring, Amanda Hernandez, and Kuniko Simon** participated in this course. There are already plans in place to continue this partnership with Erie County's Staff Development team and send more library employees to additional offerings on an assortment of topics in the coming months.

Cardholder Signup Policies Virtual Class - Seven members of the Circulation Committee attended the American Library Association's (ALA) class called *Cardholder Signup Policies: Access in Practice* that was held online on February 27. The one-hour session aimed to help attendees get a better understanding of the range of cardholder policies that already exist in public libraries, as well as new trends and patterns nationwide. The class also provided case studies of libraries who have successfully restructured their cardholder signup policies to increase access. The employees who participated in this ALA event are all members of the Circulation Committee: **Nicole Bermingham, Tom Carloni, Dan Lewandowski, Emily McDonald, Angela Pierpaoli, Linda Rizzo, and Robyn Teubner**. This course was suggested by Linda Rizzo, who was a great help in organizing participation.

Mental Health First Aid Certification Online Training Series - Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) courses are nationally recognized training programs developed by the National Council for Mental Wellbeing. This seven-hour online course with both on-demand and live instructor components teaches participants how to identify, understand, and respond to signs of mental illness and substance abuse disorders. **Maria Lowe and Aaron Swan** have been working in collaboration with Human Resources Staff Development to get their staffs through this program. In addition to the ten staff members who completed the Youth MHFA course in January, in February another twenty staff members completed the Adult MHFA course across two sessions held on February 13 and 27. The final two sessions of this series are in March, with the goal to put at least another twenty staff members through the program at that time.

Webinars - Employees attended a range of webinars and other online learning programs in February, with several staff members going to these sessions: *Library GreenScapes: Cultivating Climate Resilience, Community, and Learning Outdoors* (from Delaware Division of Libraries), *Enhancing Storytime to Build Children's Math Skills* (from Monroe County Library System), and *Brief But Descriptive ALT Text: Writing Effective ALT Text* (from Niche Academy).

6. Communications

Media:

Type of Communication	Topic	Air Date/Publish Date
Media Alert & Earned Media	New Era in Celebrating Black Dolls	Covered by The Buffalo Challenger, and WBLK Radio

		tinyurl.com/BlkDollLibrary25
Earned Media -	Rare Books 101 @ Central	February 2025 Spree Magazine
Earned Media - TV News feature	Chief Operating Officer Angela Marinucci talks about the proposed space utilization study and the value of libraries	February 6, 2025 WKBW TV Channel 7 News tinyurl.com/37x2z7ny
Earned Media - Print feature	Library Announces New COO and trustees	February 2025 Bee Publications
Earned Media - Print feature	Upcoming Friendship Matters author event (Merriweather Library, April 5).	February 2025 The Buffalo Challenger
Earned Media - Digital Feature	Getaway Mavens "Visit 25 Touchstones and Homes of Famous Writers" post includes a recommendation to visit the Mark Train Room @ the Central Library	February 26, 2025 https://www.getawaymavens.com/tour-homes-of-famous-writers-northeast-us/
Earned Media - Radio interview	Carol Kowalik-Happy interviewed on about a financial support program geared toward minority small business owners	February 3, 2025 WUFO radio

Social Media:

	Staff Activity		Public Activity		Followers	
	Month	YTD	Month	YTD	Month (New)	Total
Facebook	81	188	1,979	5,726	78	14,312
Flickr	-	-	1,756	5,542	-	59
Google Ads ¹	N/A	N/A	2,857	6,000	N/A	N/A
Instagram	16	41	11,368	21,259	208	7,407
Pinterest	41	51	72	127	-2	2,052
X(formerly Twitter)	37	84	125	361	-57	10,545
Bluesky	14	43	102	239	251	1,016
YouTube	8	13	1,962	5,971	8	768
TikTok	1	1	882	1,478	18	1,024
Total	198	421	21,103	46,703	504	37,183

¹ Google Ads is provided to the Library through a grant. Monthly activity based on public clicks.

Popular Post – After Buffalo Bills quarterback Josh Allen was “spotted reading” at the NFL awards, we capitalized on the attention to reading... and it paid off! Across three social platforms (Facebook, X, Instagram) this post received 66,171 views and garnered 4,287 likes, 23 comments & 107 shares!



Photo – Buffalo Bills Quarterback Josh Allen reading former Buffalo Bills Quarterback Jim Kelly's autobiography.

7. Partnerships

Community Organizations Active in Disaster Communication Workgroup - Carol Kowalik-Happy attended the *Erie County Community Organizations Active in Disaster (COAD) Communication Workgroup* on February 5. The purpose of this group is to define and strengthen communication roles, channels, and messages to support preparedness, response, and recovery. The group discussed four projects they will be working on.

Families Together in New York State - Jacob Rachwal met on February 6 with Precious Lugo, Statewide Youth Engagement Specialist for *Families Together in New York State* to finalize details of their *Job Fair* in April.

Journey's End Refugee Services - Brendan Chella met with a representative from Journey's End Refugee Services in Buffalo on February 18 to explore partnership opportunities for technology training for refugees and immigrants.

Other Meetings – Public and System Services staff were also in contact or attended meetings with representatives of the following groups and organizations:

- Buffalo Museum of Science
- Child Care Resource Network
- Erie 1 BOCES (Board of Cooperative Education Services)
- Erie County Caregiver Coalition
- Erie County Historical Commission
- Explore & More – The Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Children's Museum
- 5/14 Buffalo Massacre Community Memory Coalition
- Homeless Alliance of Western New York

- Live Well Erie Working Groups
- Outreach Coordinators in New York's Public Library Systems
- Western New York Library Resources Council (WNYLRC) Committees

8. Planning for the Future

Amealia Brousseau is planning for the upcoming **GLYS WNY Conference** with **Kelly Woods**. **Amealia** is creating a book list for LGBTQIA+ YA titles. Both she and **Kelly** will be presenting in a segment called *Book Bites* at the conference.

9. Director Activities

List of Meetings and Events

Attended by Director John Spears

January/February 2025

DATE	MEETING / EVENT
January 3, 2025	Meeting - Joy Testa Cinquino
January 6, 2025	Meeting - Administrative Team
January 7, 2025	Meeting - Emily Patronik
January 9, 2025	Meeting - Marketing/Brand Information with Sean Piazza, Dawn Stanton, and Joy Testa Cinquino
January 9, 2025	Event - AKA Sorority Book Donation
January 9, 2025	Meeting - Executive Committee
January 10, 2025	Meeting - Maureen Germaine
January 10, 2025	Meeting - Joy Testa Cinquino
January 13, 2025	Meeting - Administrative Team
January 13, 2025	Virtual Meeting - Steering Committee - 5/14 Community Collecting Initiative
January 14, 2025	Virtual Meeting - PULISDO
January 14, 2025	Meeting - Emily Patronik
January 15, 2025	Meeting - Jack Connors, Buffalo & Erie County Library Foundation Board
January 15, 2025	Virtual Meeting - NYLA Legislative Committee
January 15, 2025	Meeting - Lackawanna Public Library Board
January 16, 2025	Media Interview - Buffalo News reporter Ben Tsujimoto
January 16, 2025	Virtual Meeting - 2025 MetLib Conference Planning Committee
January 16, 2025	Meeting - Kristi Dougherty, President, Librarians' Association
January 16, 2025	Virtual Meeting - Public Library System Directors
January 16, 2025	Meeting - Board of Trustees
January 16, 2025	Meeting - Budget and Finance Committee
January 17, 2025	Meeting - Personnel Matter

Minutes of the Board of Trustees

Page 19

January 17, 2025	Meeting - Dorinda Darden
January 17, 2025	Meeting - Joy Testa Cinquino
January 17, 2025	Meeting - Emily Patronik
January 21, 2025	Meeting - Angela Marinucci
January 21, 2025	Meeting - Joy Testa Cinquino
January 21, 2025	Virtual Meeting - WNYLRC
January 21, 2025	Virtual Meeting - Central Library Space Utilization Study with Bostwick Design
January 22, 2025, to February 19, 2025	Out of Office
February 20, 2025	Virtual Meeting - MetLib Standing Committee
February 20, 2025	Virtual Meeting - Public Library System Directors
February 20, 2025	Meeting - Board of Trustees
February 24, 2025	Meeting - Administrative Team
February 25, 2025	Virtual Meeting - American Library Association Committee on Professional Ethics
February 25, 2025	Meeting - Emily Patronik
February 25, 2025	Meeting - Angela Marinucci and Emily Patronik
February 27, 2025	Meeting - Angela Marinucci
February 28, 2025	Meeting - Dorinda Darden
February 28, 2025	Meeting - Emily Patronik

Appendices A. Monthly Statistics

System Programming Statistics:

Regular/Virtual	Number of Programs		Total Attendance	
	Month	YTD	Month	YTD
Regular*				
Adults	1,119	2,281	2,912	6,537
Children 5 and under	1,252	2,560	6,040	10,351
Children 6-11	2,817	4,838	5,359	9,312
Intergenerational/Combined	6,052	10,067	10,798	17,429
Teens	294	534	590	1,025
Regular Total	11,534	20,280	25,699	44,654
Regular Total	11,534	20,280	25,699	44,654
Virtual				
Live Virtual				
Adults	17	29	160	289
Children 5 and under	3	3	39	39
Children 6-11	2	2	25	25
Intergenerational/Combined	5	10	48	115

Teens	8	9	10	11
Live Virtual Total	35	53	282	479
Recorded Virtual				
Adults	3	7	864	1,130
Children 5 and under	0	0	0	0
Children 6-11	2	5	478	795
Intergenerational/Combined	7	15	814	1,830
Teens	0	0	0	0
Recorded Virtual Total	12	27	2,156	3,755
Virtual Total	47	80	2,438	4,234
Grand Total	11,581	20,360	28,137	48,888

*Regular programs include group programs, one-on-one programs, and self-directed programs (including individual take & make crafts).

Other Statistics:

Consolidated statistics on library visits, website visits, circulation, computer sessions, Wi-Fi usage, and program attendance and a summary of open hours can be found at <https://www.buffalolib.org/about-becpl/monthly-statistics>.

Detailed reports on circulation, computer sessions, Wi-Fi usage, and library visits can be found at <https://www.buffalolib.org/monthly-statistics/2025-circulation-public-access-computer-wifi-and-library-visits-detail>.

B. Contracting Library Activity Reports

West Seneca Public Library – submitted by Robert Alessi, Director

Seed Swap – In honor of National Seed Swap day (last Saturday in January), the Friends of the West Seneca Public Library hosted their 6th annual (and largest to date!) seed swap. For two hours on a Saturday afternoon, approximately 55 people stopped in and traded seeds, stories, and suggestions on all things gardening.

Spotlight on Local Authors – Many talented local writers have been “booked” at the library recently to share their work. Mystery writer Lissa Marie Redmond hosted a talk and signing in January. At the beginning of February, Lisa Chrapowicz conducted a storytime featuring her picture book *Bessie’s Big Adventures: In the City of Buffalo*. On February 27, *Creating Reading Rainbow: The Untold Story of a Beloved Children’s Series* co-authors Barbara Irwin, Tony Buttino Sr., and Pam Johnson shared insights on the award-winning show; the program was moderated by West Seneca Public Library Director **Robert Alessi**. During the next two months, Rachelle Moyer Francis (*The Two Wives of Millard Fillmore*), MaryJean Zajac (mystery author of the Cetta Borski series), and West Seneca Town Historian/author Jim Pace will each be presenting at the library.

Baby Rave – We hosted our first baby rave on February 3. Babies 24 months and under plus their caregivers (83 total attendees) danced and played with scarves while

listening to EDM versions of baby songs. Some song titles included "The Library Jawn" by Mega Ran and "The Litsy Bitsy Spider" by Pj Panda. Our next Baby Rave will be held in May along with our first Toddler Rave!

Mario Day – On March 1, Children's Librarian Trainee **Emily Sieg** and Librarian **Susan Blake** organized our 2nd national Mario Day celebration. Approximately 140 people participated in Mario-themed crafts, games (including both live action AND video game versions of Mario Kart), photo ops, and more.

Candyland - On February 21, Children's Librarian Trainee **Emily Sieg** held our very first Life-Sized Candy Land game. All eight sessions were fully booked, with a total of 28 people participating. A special thank you to Senior Page **Maggie DeWitt** for lending some tremendous artistic talent in order to create the game board!

TAG - The very first meeting of the all-new West Seneca Public Library Teen Advisory Group (TAG) will take place on April 24 at 6 p.m. The TAG will be a way for teens to advise the library on programs and services of interest to them. They will have the opportunity to assist in implementing programs, gain leadership experience and skills, as well as meet new people. Volunteer hours may also be awarded.

University Express – Starting in April, the West Seneca Public Library will become a new site for hosting events offered through the University Express program administered by Erie County. For this first semester of participation we have five different events scheduled onsite between April and July, and are also partnering with the West Seneca Senior Center to be certain to offer a wide selection of programming over a variety of days and times.

West Seneca Art Society – The West Seneca Public Library continues to collaborate with our incredible community partner, the West Seneca Art Society. Every quarter, the Society installs a rotating exhibit featuring two different artists on top of several book cases called "Above the Stacks". The Society also provides painting and drawing classes for everyone from children through adults in the makerspace. Another project involving the Art Society was recently unveiled in which local auto body business CarStar donated their time, materials, and expertise to clean and repaint five book carts, followed by West Seneca Art Society members decorating the two end panels of each cart. These carts are both fully functional for use during our day-to-day operations AND unique pieces of art!

Agenda Item G – The Association of Contracting Library Trustees (ACT)/Contracting Library Trustee Report. Martha Buyer shared that the *ACT Workshop* will be held at the downtown Central Library on Saturday, March 22. She stated that 76 people signed up to attend.

Agenda Item H – Public Comment. None.

Agenda Item I – Unfinished Business. None.

Agenda Item J – New Business.

Agenda Item J.1 – Resolution 2025-9 – Wide Area Network RFP Award. Deputy Director – Chief Operating Officer (COO) Angela Marinucci summarized proposed Resolution 2025-9 as presented below. Deputy Director – COO Marinucci explained that e-Rate pays for almost 90% of the cost of the Library System’s WAN service. Discussion ensued regarding the RFP and the proposed resolution. Trustee Bartholomew asked how many responses the Library typically gets for an RFP like this. Business Office Manager Tracy Palicki stated that it is fairly common to get two or three responses. She went on to share that the RFP is published locally and that it also goes into a system that shares it across the country.

RESOLUTION 2025-9

WHEREAS, the Buffalo & Erie County Public Library (B&ECPL) System utilizes a complex wide area network (WAN) connecting the Central Library to each of the thirty-six (36) City branch and contracting libraries allowing the System to efficiently provide patron access to the Internet, and

WHEREAS, these services are eligible for e-Rate program discounts, which currently pay almost 90% of the cost of the Library System’s WAN service, and

WHEREAS, pursuant to e-Rate program requirements, on October 18, 2024 the Library posted an online *FCC Form 470 Description of Services Requested and Certification* and issued a Request for Proposals (RFP) seeking a three (3) year base contract with up to one (1) voluntary extensions of three (3) years, and

WHEREAS, a total of two (2) vendors submitted proposals in response to the RFP, and

WHEREAS, the Library’s RFP review committee determined that the three (3) year costs for the service levels needed by the Library as proposed by Spectrum Enterprise were lower than the other proposals, and

WHEREAS, the committee’s review of vendor qualifications, technical and service proposals, found the Spectrum Enterprise proposal as highly qualified, now therefore be it

RESOLVED, that the Board of Trustees of the B&ECPL System designates the services proposed by Spectrum Enterprise as the best and lowest cost response for the Library’s WAN at the projected bandwidths needed, and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Library Director and/or designee(s) is authorized to negotiate and execute the necessary documents to enter into a three (3) year agreement with up to one (1) optional voluntary extensions of three (3) years each with Spectrum

Enterprise pursuant to the terms and conditions of the RFP and response, and be it further

RESOLVED, that if an agreement with Spectrum Enterprise is not successfully negotiated and executed, the Library Director and/or designee(s) is authorized at their discretion to negotiate and execute the necessary documents to enter into an agreement with the next highest rated proposer, ErieNet, and be it finally

RESOLVED, that the Library Director and/or designee(s) is authorized to file all necessary e-Rate forms and certifications on or before the respective e-Rate filing deadlines throughout the term of this agreement.

Trustee T. Johnson made the motion to approve the proposed resolution. Trustee Panty seconded, and this was approved unanimously.

Agenda Item J.2 – Resolution 2025-10 – Reappointment of Director John Spears. The proposed Resolution 2025-10 was summarized as presented below.

RESOLUTION 2025-10

WHEREAS, John Spears was appointed Director of the Buffalo & Erie County Public Library effective April 11, 2022 per Resolution 2022-7, and

WHEREAS, John Spears completes his three-year term as Director on April 11, 2025, and

WHEREAS, John Spears has fulfilled his responsibilities as Director to the satisfaction of the Board, and

WHEREAS, the Buffalo & Erie County Public Library Board of Trustees recommends reappointment of Library Director John Spears to another three-year term, now therefore be it

RESOLVED, that the Buffalo & Erie County Public Library Board of Trustees hereby approves the reappointment of John Spears to the position of Director for a three-year term effective April 11, 2025, and be it further

RESOLVED, that John Spears's current salary and benefits package will remain the same as it is at the time of this Resolution; however, they are subject to periodic review and change by Board Resolution.

Trustee Panty made the motion to approve. Trustee T. Johnson seconded, and this was approved unanimously.

Agenda Item K – Adjournment. There being no further business, on a motion by Trustee T. Johnson with a second by Trustee K. Johnson, the meeting was adjourned at 4:40 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Christine P.
Bartholomew
Secretary