

Essex Library Association

2023 Annual Report

July 1, 2022 - June 30, 2023

Welcome to the Annual Meeting of the Essex Library Association!

October 25, 2023

Thank you for joining us in person at the Library for the opportunity to acknowledge the work of our Board and Staff, show our appreciation to our supporters, thank the trustees who are stepping down, and vote on those up for election this term.

The most impactful and meaningful event of the past year culminated in naming Ann Thompson the new Executive Director of Essex Library. As you know, Ann stepped up to serve as Interim Director in July of last year, when a Search Committee was formed. After a thorough search the Board made the decision that the best talent was right here under our roof. Ann brings a plethora of experience within the library world and the local community and, most of all, she brings her enthusiastic support of our patrons, many of whom Ann knows very well. Ann has already built a strong team here in her first months as Executive Director. Given Ann's many strengths, we look forward to her future accomplishments, and, thus, the Library's.

On the financial front, the Board can report that the Library remains in a comfortable position, buoyed by the generous donations of supporters who give to the Library through the Annual Appeal. We have also received pledges to the Captain Joseph Tucker Legacy Society, the Library's Planned Giving Program. A recently created brochure accompanies this letter. As always, we want to recognize the Friends of the Essex Library for their continued vital support and for their role as ambassadors within the community. We can't sing their praises enough for all that the Friends do!

The Board is delighted today to recommend the candidacies of two new trustees: Rebecca O'Neal, who will assume her duties of Trustee immediately after this evening's vote, and Bridget Quinn, who will assume her duties at the beginning of January, each of whom brings a wealth of experience and knowledge to the Board. New to the Board since the last Annual Meeting is Stephen Brinkmann, serving as Treasurer.

I would like to thank Howard Tuttle, who is stepping down, for his commitment, his considerable skill and fiscal discipline, and for his unending support of the Library. Additionally, the Board accepted the resignation of two Trustees over the past year: Tom Gallucci, who moved from Essex, and Hans Ullstein. Both contributed a great deal of expertise to the Board.

I am also departing the Board after completing two terms. I will miss my many interactions with the Staff and the Board. The Library and the people and purposes it serves are very dear to my heart.

After the meeting, please enjoy refreshments and the presentation by guest speaker, Christine Palm, State Representative, who will speak about library-related legislation in Connecticut.

Sincerely,

Betsy Sandberg President, Board of Trustees

Executive Director's Report

It has been a busy and productive year at the Essex Library, the first fully-open, mask-optional year since the pandemic began. Our community was eager to return to in-person programs and events and borrowing materials so you'll easily notice the substantial increases across our circulation, attendance, and participation measurements. Each year Essex Library endeavors to fulfill its mission: to be your center for free, reliable information; to stimulate curiosity, nurture creativity and enable discovery, and to be a window into the world. Furthermore, we strive to do that in an environment where all feel safe and welcome.

The success of the Essex Library depends on many: trustees, friends, volunteers, community partners, expert staff, and our generous donors. Together, we were able to provide new services, add dozens of items to the Library of Things, and hundreds of materials to our other collections. We expanded operating hours and offered eclectic and dynamic programs that inspired the community. Moreover, Essex Library joined the list of fine-free Connecticut libraries in May 2023. All of these initiatives stem from the Library's 2022-2025 Strategic Plan that positions the Library to support free and equal access to information and ideas and serve as a hub for enriching the lives of Essex residents in significant and meaningful ways.

Our community partnerships multiplied again this year affording programs in a multitude of subjects including financial literacy, environmental issues, fire safety, local history, mental and physical well-being, author talks, and crafting skills. Important collaborative initiatives inspired us to collect non-perishable food for the food-vulnerable in our community and, together with Sustainable Essex, we kept hundreds of pounds of recyclable plastic out of the Essex landfill. Our Little Free Library is well-loved in receiving daily visits. We continued our efforts with UConn faculty to help their research on Connecticut's climate-vulnerable communities, including Essex. Community engagement also increased this year with record high numbers of subscribers reading our monthly newsletters and a marked growth of followers on our social media platforms.

I am grateful for your steadfast support and look forward to seeing you at the Library in the coming year!

Respectfully submitted,

Ann Thompson
Executive Director

BY THE NUMBERS

		2021-2022	2022-2023	
M	Total Annual Library Visits	30,099	39,677	
	Total Items Circulated	48,822	60,062	
	Number of in-person, on-site programs	99	332	
	Attendance at in-person, on-site programs	840	4,251	

Financial Summary for Fiscal Year 2023

eliminary Unaudited Statements	Actual	Budget
	7/1/22-6/30/23	7/1/22-6/30/23
Income		
Total Gifts, Grants, & Bequests	163,102.70	96,000.0
Total Miscellaneous Income	2,966.57	2,300.0
Town of Essex	321,676.00	321,620.0
State of Connecticut	2,788.43	1,000.0
Operating Income	490,533.70	420,920.0
Expenses		
Total Collections & Programming	29,013.12	43,600.0
Total Administration	73,437.15	81,250.0
Total Facility	86,283.09	105,100.0
Total Personnel	304,476.31	370,350.0
Operating Expenses	493,209.67	600,300.0
Net Operationing Revenue	(2,675.97)	(179,380.0
Endowment Withdrawal	-	125,000.0
Interest and Dividend Income	122,516.20	-
Net Change	119,840.23	(54,380.0
Endowment & Capital Fund Balance 6/30/2022	3,504,805.96	
Endowment & Capital Fund Balance 6/30/2023	3,915,807.77	







Thank You to Our Fiscal Year 2023 Partners!

Alzheimer's Association CT Chapter

American Library Association

Zay Amsbury

Chet Arnold

Backus Hospital

Brainerd Library

Centerbrook Architects & Planners

CHOICES

Community Foundation of Middlesex County

Community Music School

Connecticut Children's Medical Center

CT Department of Banking

CT DEEP

Connecticut Humane Society

CT Section of the Institute of Electrical and

Electronics Engineers

Connecticut State Library

Richard Conniff

Pam Constable

Sue Cornell

Czepiga Daly Pope & Perri

Darien Library

Denison Pequotsepos Nature Center

Electric Vehicle Club of CT

Essex Fire Engine Co. #1

Essex Garden Club

Essex Historical Society

Essex Land Trust

Essex Meadows

Essex Park and Recreation

Essex Savings Bank

Experience Essex

Friends of the Essex Library

Goshen Public Library

Gunn Memorial Library and Museum

Hartford HealthCare

Hotchkiss Library of Sharon

Ivoryton Library Association

Ivoryton Playhouse

The Learning Consultants

Morris Public Library

Rep. Christine Palm

George Penniman

Region 4 Food Backpack Program

Region 4 Schools

Julie Ribchinsky

River Valley Artists

Rebecca Russell

Kristie Schmidt

SCORE

Shoreline Jazz Quartet

Shoreline Soup Kitchens & Pantries

Richard Spearrin

Square Foot Gardening Foundation

Stewart B. McKinney National Wildlife Refuge

Sustainable Essex

Southeast Connecticut World Affairs Council

Sam Tanenhaus

Town of Essex

Tri-Town Youth Services

2-1-1 Child Care

UConn Disaster Research Team

UConn Extension Service Middlesex County

U.S. Social Security Administration

Mike Urban

Valley Warriors In The Community

Visiting Nurses of the Lower Valley

Yale Science in the News

Youth Mental Health Project

Kate Zernike

The only thing that you absolutely have to know is the location of the library.

ALBERT EINSTEIN

Committee Reports

Building and Grounds Committee

The Building and Grounds Committee meets regularly throughout the year. The committee's purview is to plan for and provide oversight of that portion of the Association's budget allocated for the maintenance and improvement of the Library's building and grounds. Issues requiring additional capital outlays are presented by the Committee to the full Board of Trustees for consideration and approval.

The following projects were initiated or completed from October 2022 through October 2023:

- 1. The Committee conducted, along with its architecture and engineering consultant, project specification and bidding process in connection with the terms of the State Construction Grant that the Library was awarded to replace window glass and install automatic restroom door entry devices. After analyzing the bids, the Committee and Board concluded that the bid estimates and overhead required to complete the proposed work substantially exceeded initial planning estimates and that the bid assumptions should be reconsidered, including options for undertaking certain of the work without the availability of or conditions of state funding. The Board elected to withdraw from the grant process and forfeit the construction grant. Thanks to committee member, Jane Siris, for her expertise and hours of support for this project.
- 2. The Committee researched, and the board approved, the acquisition of an automated external defibrillator (AED) device for the Library. Thanks go to committee member Peter McAndrew who provided much of the expertise and persistence to see this project through.
- 3. Then-B&G Committee chair, Tom Gallucci, and former committee member, Gary Riggio, identified a water leak along an exterior portion of the foundation. Working through contractors, the source of the leak was detected, the problem analyzed, the footings excavated, and the leak repaired before more damage occurred.
- 4. Former committee chair Tom Gallucci also supervised the work of contractors to repair water and insect damage to the exterior wall of the space used by the Friends of the Essex Library.
- 5. An interior space planning study was commenced with Jim Childress, FAIA, Principal of Centerbrook Architects & Planners, who is volunteering his time.

Michael Hammond, Chair

Development Committee

The Development Committee met monthly this year.

In fiscal year 22-23 (July 1, 2022-June 30, 2023), the Essex Library raised \$163,102. This is a 7.3% increase over the previous year. Five hundred twenty-one gifts were received from 498 donors; there were 42 new donors to the Library.

Annual Appeal \$86,717 Unrestricted Gifts \$56,755 Restricted Gifts \$19,630

The Annual Appeal letters were sent out in October 2022. Residents of Essex, Centerbrook, and Ivoryton generously responded to this appeal. Your donations helped the library continue to expand programs and services.

A sub-committee of the Development Committee updated the Captain Joseph Tucker Legacy Society brochure. Residents who are interested in knowing more about being a member of the Society can contact the Library for more information.

The Development Committee continues to look for new and creative ways to increase funding to the Library through donations, grants, and bequests.

We are thankful for all the donors who gave to the Essex Library this year. No matter the size of the donation, your gift positively impacted the work of the Library!

Susan C. Guernsey, Chair

Finance Committee

The Finance and Investment Committees met periodically over the course of the year to ensure the financial needs of the Library were being met. Fiscal 2023 was a year of transition for these committees. I took over from Treasurer, Howard Tuttle, in the Spring. At the same time we converted our accounting system to an online version of QuickBooks. At the end of the fiscal year, our longtime bookkeeper retired, necessitating a change in that role. I'm happy to report that while we've encountered some bumps with all of these changes, we were able to continue to meet the ongoing financial needs of supporting our physical plant along with our extensive programming.

Gifts to the Library were significantly higher than budgeted and slightly ahead of last year. Meetings with our investment advisors at Essex Financial Services focused on the performance of our Endowment and Capital investment funds and the short- and long-term health of our financial position. These accounts increased in value by 11.7%, which puts us in a strong financial position to meet the ongoing needs of the Library. Working with our external accounting firm, Wollack Lewitz, we completed the necessary paperwork to apply for Employee Retention Credits of which we received \$86,754 in July; this credit will be reflected on FY 2024 statements.

Stephen Brinkmann, Chair

Nominating Committee

It has been a busy year for the Nominating Committee. Our work included:

We developed an updated Board Member Packet with important information about being a Trustee and resources for further information from ACLB and the CT Library Association. This packet includes a Welcome letter by the Board President, Bylaws of ELA, Contact List of Trustees and committee assignments, the Strategic Plan, Board minutes, and financial information for three prior months and the Conflict-of-Interest Disclosure form. In addition, we inserted the Annual Report, ELA and Updated Captain Joseph Tucker Legacy Society Brochures, an organizational chart of Library staff with role descriptions, and the Board annual calendar. The Employee Handbook will be added when it is revised and finalized. This complete Board Member Packet is more thorough and will help new members better understand the culture of Board membership.

We designed Board Position Candidate Information to be posted on our website to attract potential Trustees and make them aware of Board responsibilities and possibilities for membership. We are hoping this posting will encourage members of our community to contact us if they want to consider becoming a member of the Board of Trustees.

In addition to identifying two new Trustees for the 2023-2024 slate, we developed a list of Trustees who have been vetted and are willing to join the Board whenever we need to appoint new Trustees during the next 2-3 years. We developed an excellent pipeline of potential Board members who are actively engaged with the library and have great interest in joining us whenever spots become available. This list is fluid and crucially important to the Nominating Committee, especially in the event a Trustee must suddenly resign for personal reasons.

We are in the process of implementing a mentor program for new Trustees; this will include asking a current Trustee to mentor a new member of the Board. This is a very important step in both educating and retaining new Trustees. It will also give a new member a contact person with whom they can call upon to ask questions and reach out to with any difficulties they may encounter. It also helps new Trustees to feel more welcome.

Currently, we have 13 Board members and Ann Thompson, Executive Director. We need to maintain 12-15 Trustee members. We purposely left openings for potential Board members with specific skills and attributes we need now and in the future. In compliance with the Strategic Plan, we want to "recruit, engage and retain volunteers to meet the needs of the Library" and of our community. We are committed and actively involved in recruiting Trustees who can contribute diversity that better reflects our community, its needs, and the ever -changing challenges of our current population.

A sincere thank you to our committee members: Elizabeth Reinhart, Betsy Sandberg, Sandy Cahill, Jill Schwartzman, Gail Briggs. Their hard work and wisdom move us forward.

JoAnne Carter, Chair

Personnel Committee

The Personnel Committee began meeting in January 2023 and gave early priority to an in-depth review of ELA's employee benefits to assess whether they were comparable to those of other association and municipal libraries. The PC approached the review in full agreement with Executive Director, Ann Thompson, that ELA staff are the library's most valuable resource and staff retention is critically important to a library's long-term success.

The PC's review work involved many robust and thoughtful discussions about ELA's employee benefits, including: Paid Vacation Time, Paid Personal Time/Sick Leave, Healthcare and IRA contribution, as outlined in the ELA Employee Handbook, Revised 2021. Findings that emerged from the review show that while progress has been made in improving ELA staff benefits, it is critical that the Personnel Committee remains vigilant in its efforts to regularly examine salaries and benefits with an eye to identifying any needed changes.

Another priority for the PC this year was collaboratively partnering with our ED in the shaping of Annual Goals that focused on areas with the potential for the greatest impact and library benefit, and crafting them with clear, concise language and measurable outcomes.

Complementing the work of annual goal setting, the PC considered ways to make the Executive Director's Annual Review process most meaningful and constructive. Drawing on the expertise of the whole Committee, we developed a new Annual Review template with sections devoted to the ED's Annual Goals and Self-assessment, and the PC's feedback. The new review template captured, in effect, the year-end dialog between ED and the PC about the year's accomplishments, opportunities for continued growth, and provided a comprehensive record of the ED's work done this year.

The PC also updated the 2022 ELA Staff Survey, shortening and simplifying it, before sending it to current staff. Survey changes sharpened its focus on the measurement of employee job satisfaction.

To keep all of us on track, chronologically, the PC also developed a timeline for the ED's annual goal setting, year-end self-assessment, and the PC's Annual Review.

With many thanks to the entire Personnel Committee: Stephen Brinkmann, Sandy Cahill, Pamela Dumas-Serfes, Michael Hammond, Peter McAndrew, Betsy Sandberg, and Jill Schwartzman.

Gail Briggs, Chair

2022-2023 Board Members

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Betsy Sandberg

Vice President

Pamela Dumas Serfes

Treasurer

Stephen Brinkmann

Secretary

Elizabeth Reinhart

Friends President

Lisa Burkarth

Board Members

Gail Briggs
Sandy Cahill
JoAnne Carter
Susan Guernsey
Michael Hammond
Peter McAndrew
Jill Schwartzman

Howard Tuttle



Library Staff

Ann Thompson, MLS, Executive Director: Ann leads and is responsible for day-to-day management of all library operations. She supervises staff, manages the budget, and advocates for the Library. She also hosts programs and facilitates the Third Wednesday, Classics, and American History Book Groups.

Evelyn Benvie, Circulation Assistant: Evie provides friendly and accurate service to library users at our circulation desk. She manages our website and social media platforms and mends books on a regular basis to care for and extend the use of the library's materials.

Deirdre Brennan, MLS, Interlibrary Loan and Circulation Librarian: Dee provides friendly and accurate service to library patrons at our circulation desk. She also coordinates our inter-library loan services and manages complex statistical reporting needs.

Aliza Cirillo, Library Page: Aliza works at our circulation desk and assists with shelving materials and preparing activities for our children's programs

Cameron Dodge, Library Page: Cameron ensures a quality patron experience by shelving and filing materials.

Nicole Gaudreau, MLIS, Children's and Teen Librarian: Nicole delivers services for children and teens, including acquiring materials, hosting programs and conducting outreach to area schools. Her STEAM Saturdays and Wiggle Worms Storyhours provide valuable opportunities for young families to connect beyond the sessions themselves.

Ellen Miller, MLIS, Adult Services Librarian: Ellen provides friendly and accurate service to library users at our circulation desk. She hosts most of the adult programs, composes Ex Libris and marketing materials for services, acquires adult materials, and in addition to the HiFi Book Group, facilitates the popular First Thursday Book Group and its new spin-off.

Diane Simoneau, Manager – Donor & Technical Services: Diane catalogs materials that are added to the collections and purchases DVDs for the Library. She also provides acknowledgment for and recording of gifts from library donors and, over the past year, led the conversion of information from our older donor database to the new DonorPerfect database. Diane also works at the circulation desk as an expert hand with customer service.

Anastasia Wilson, MLIS, Community Engagement Librarian: Ana provides friendly and accurate service to library users at our circulation desk. She devises and hosts programs for patrons of all ages including the popular Preschool STEAM Lab and Dungeons & Dragons sessions. Ana also contributes to the composition of library-wide marketing materials and reports.

Thank You to Our Donors!

The following donors made gifts to the library between July 1, 2022, and June 30, 2023. Your support helps us offer outstanding programs, materials, and services throughout the year.

\$10,000 Or More

Dick Buel Friends of the Essex Library Kitchings Family Foundation Ann Thompson & Jim Childress Richard Tredwell

\$1,000 - \$9,999

Janet Bent Sandra Childress Mary Coolidge Claire Crosby* Jonathan & Emme Deland Rodney & Eugenie Devine Robert & Theresa Dryfoos Essex Garden Club **Essex Savings Bank** Charles Everett Glenn & Melissa Jacobsen

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Drina Zuvic

Matching gift * Deceased













Captain Joseph Tucker Legacy Society



Captain Joseph Tucker, Essex Library Association's First Benefactor

Join the Captain Joseph Tucker Legacy Society

The Captain Joseph Tucker Legacy Society provides financial resources for the Essex Library Association, which enriches the community for now and future generations.

Are you willing to make a difference?



Why Should I Make a Legacy Gift?

- A planned gift costs nothing now, but demonstrates your pledge to the Library's future.
- A planned gift is not binding and can be modified if circumstances change.
- Gifts from your estate to the Essex Library Association are exempt from federal taxes.

How Will Your Bequest Make A Difference?

- Ensures intellectual freedom and safe, free access to information for all.
- Enhances life-long learning and well-being.
- Supports economic, cultural, and educational enrichment to promote and maintain a vibrant community.

How Do I Give a Legacy Gift?

- Designate the Library as a beneficiary of a retirement account, pension plan or life insurance.
- Include a gift to the Library in your estate or trust documents in a specific amount or as a portion of your assets.

For more information,
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