

Essex Library Association

2025 Annual Report

July 1, 2024 - June 30, 2025



Welcome to the Annual Report of the Essex Library Association!

I'm delighted to have this opportunity to acknowledge the work of our Board and Staff and show our appreciation for our supporters. We have had an exciting year at Essex Library Association. My deepest gratitude goes out to Executive Director Ann Thompson and her staff. Behind every program, every resource, and every answered question stands a team whose dedication often goes unseen, but never unfelt. To our library staff: thank you for being the heart of our library. You prove, day after day, that libraries don't simply hold knowledge – they share it through you. I sincerely thank Ann Thompson and her team for their hard work, professionalism, compassion, and excellence.

I also want to thank all of you, our dedicated patrons and Members for your financial generosity as well as your generosity of spirit. We presented 552 programs over the last 12 months and 8,069 of you were in attendance. We again exceeded our Annual Fund goal and received several generous Legacy gifts. This support has enabled us to continue to provide our programs and services as well as take care of needed maintenance and additions to our building and grounds. We are forever grateful for your partnership. As always, we want to thank the Friends of the Essex Library for their vital support in fundraising activities and for their role as ambassadors within the community. Their dedication and hard work inspire us all – they are an incredible group!

My thankfulness also to our Board of Trustees whose diligence and commitment to the library enable us to follow our Strategic Plan, consistently work together, and dream the tremendous dreams for our future. I have never seen such a hardworking group – you are all amazing.

These demonstrations of unwavering support ensure that Essex Library will continue to be a place of learning, growth, and connection for all. You all truly make a difference in our community and beyond.

Sincerely,

JoAnne Carter
President, Board of Trustees



Circulation Assistant Kellyn Kolber helps a patron at the Circulation Desk.



Sharing a Story in the Library.



Executive Director's Report

Essex Library enjoyed another terrific year, both in terms of usage and community impact. With a steadfast commitment to excellence, our dedicated and highly-trained staff worked to create a welcoming and enriching environment for all our patrons.

We issued new library cards to 274 Essex residents this year, and foot traffic was brisk with over 44,000 visits. These numbers reflect the demand for professional library services but also the community's recognition of our library as a vital resource. Our meeting rooms were in high demand by local non-profit organizations and remote workers. We were delighted to welcome back VRHS International Baccalaureate students for some of their final exams. We collaborated with numerous local non-profits on programs and hosted a non-profit volunteer fair to help potential volunteers meet and sign up for opportunities to help.

We hosted over 550 programs this year, attended by more than 8,000 people, an attendance increase of over 14%. Local parents and caregivers recognize the educational value in our Wiggle Worms, STEAM Saturdays and Little Learners programs which are heavily attended. Substantial sponsorships from Southeast Connecticut World Affairs Council and an anonymous donor enabled us to once again offer the popular Great Decisions discussions and a year of the Library Speaker Series- exceptional author talks for all ages.

Circulation rose again this year with nearly 51,000 print materials borrowed. The demand for eBooks and audiobooks continued to increase, with 129 new residents added to those already using our digital materials. Our staff has been instrumental in guiding patrons through the use of our digital platforms: over 5,477 eBooks, 5,422 audiobooks and 4,989 eMagazines were borrowed through our free Libby service.

The VRHS Warriors In The Community helped us move furniture and book stacks as we begin to implement an interiors facelift with plans that include, among other things, two new meeting rooms and custom shelving for a local history area to be completed in 2025 supported, in part, by a gift from the Clark family in memory of Sherry Clark. This refresh stems from our Strategic Plan and is designed to create more useful and comfortable work and reading areas. A new landscaping plan for the entire property is also underway, supported by a generous pledge.

In early 2024, the library received a substantial bequest from Richard Buel who sincerely believed in the value Essex Library brings to the community. This gift to the library's endowment will help support needed repairs and improvements in the next few years. As always, we are enormously grateful for the financial support we receive both from the Town of Essex and our patrons, as well as the countless hours of volunteer help that so many people provide. It would be impossible for us to serve as "the community center for lifelong learning and cultural enrichment" without it.

Ann Thompson, **Executive Director**



Warriors in the Community Day at Essex Library.

Thank You to Our Fiscal Year 2025 Collaborators!

Allison Horrocks
Alzheimer's Association - CT Chapter
Amanda Parks
Amston Home Transition Solutions
Angels Watch
Betsy Lerner
Bridget Quinn
Bushy Hill Day School
Casey Carle
Centerbrook Architects
Chester Library
Chris Whipple
Connecticut River Museum
Cool-ology
Critical Skills Education & Training LLC
CT Audubon Society
CT DEEP Fish with CARE Program
CT DEEP Master Wildlife Conservationist Program
CT Dog Gone Recovery
Czepiga, Daly, Pope & Perri
Darien Library
Deb Jaffe
Deep River Library
Digging for Good
Dwight Fowler
Eastern Connecticut Ballet
Ellen McNally
Essex Art Association
Essex Elementary School
Essex Fire Engine Company #1
Essex Garden Club
Essex Historical Society
Essex Island Marina
Essex Kindercare
Essex Land Trust
Essex Lions Club
Essex Preschool

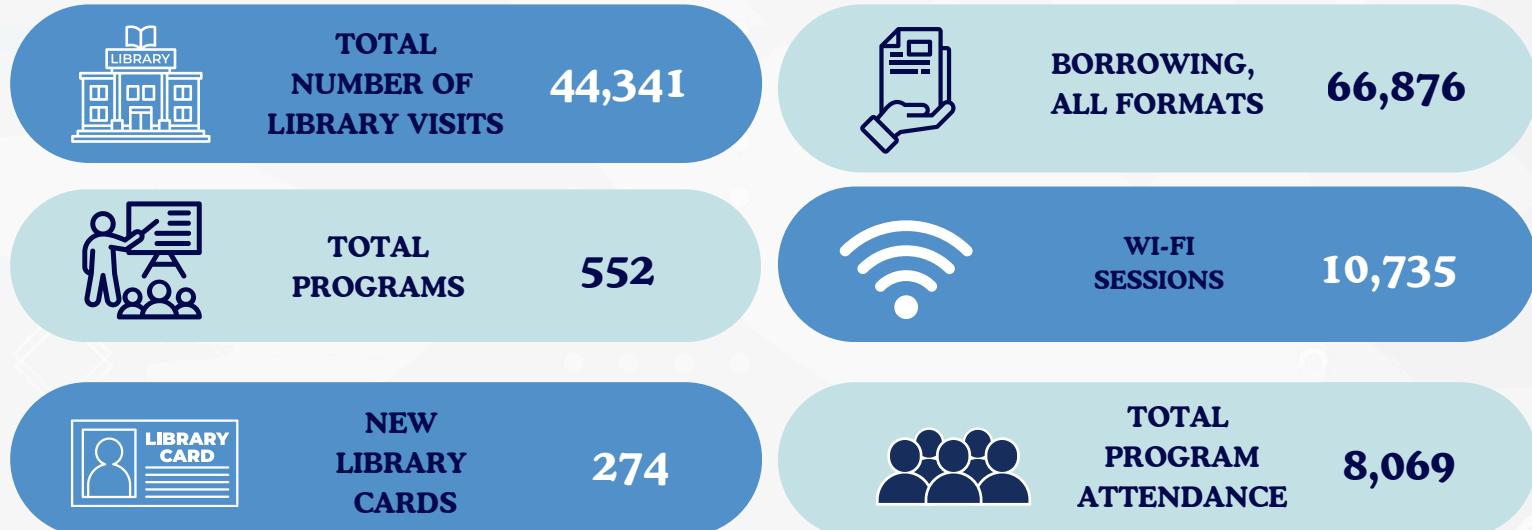
Fierce Spirit Yoga
Food Explorers
Fred Verillo
Free Lunch Studios
Furry Scaly Friends
Gary Ribchinsky
Hannah Clark
Hill-Stead Museum
Ivoryton Library Association
Ivoryton Playhouse
Ivoryton Village Alliance
Jeff Snow
Jill Dougherty
Jim Benn
Jim Lenn
Julie Ribchinsky
Juliet Grames
Keith Michael Fiels
Kona Ice of New London
Krissy Boys
Little Small & Co.
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Luanne Rice
Luke Bronin
Maureen Heidtmann
Mikel DelGado
Monica Peterson
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MyProductions CT
Nancy Beck
Niantic Children's Museum
Nick Bellantoni
Olena Lennon
Opera Theater of Connecticut
Orelene Weyland
PBS Independent Lens
Pam Gray

Peter Emanuel Jr.
Rediscovering History, Inc.
Renato M. Tonelli
Sarah Cody
Senior Resources Agency on Aging
Silver Spade, LLC
Sister Cities Essex Haiti
Social Security Administration
Society of Women Engineers
Steward Outdoor Day School
Susan Strecker
Sustainable Essex
The Bushnell Performing Arts Center
The Cheese Shop of Centerbrook
The Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station
The Cookie Jar
The Florence Griswold Museum
The Happy Vine
The Hotchkiss Library of Sharon
Theresa Zwart-Ludeman
Tri Gable Lea Farm LLC
Tri-Town Youth Services
UConn 4H Extension
Valley Regional High School Robotics Team
Walter Brockett
Yale Peabody Museum
Yale Science Talks



Fierce Spirit Yoga
in the Buel Room.

Quick Stats: Data as reported to the Connecticut State Library for FY 2025.



New at the Library

- With support from the Community Foundation of Middlesex County we added **two AWE Learning Stations** in the Children's Room offering creative educational tools for kids 2-8.
- A grant from the Enid Storm Dwyer Foundation allowed us to purchase a **book mending machine** that helps extend the useful lives of many books and stretches our book-buying dollars.
- We added a **digital library app** for mobile phones and devices that includes a mobile checkout tool.
- In response to requests for more streaming content we added **Biblio+** to our free digital content.

Treasurer's Report

The fiscal year ending June 30, 2025 was another strong year for the Essex Library Association. Unrestricted gifts of \$188,673 were 35.8% higher than FY 2024. Total operating revenue remained strong at \$560,335 which included \$340,438 from the Town of Essex. Expenses were well controlled and below budget. Current assets of \$5.548M are \$489,667 higher than last year reflecting strong investment returns, dividends, interest income, and capital gain distributions.

Respectfully submitted,

Stephen Brinkmann, **Treasurer**

2024-2025 Board Members

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Vice President

Gail Briggs

Treasurer

Stephen Brinkmann

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Andrew Corbin

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Rebecca O'Neal, Robert Parkerson

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Kevin Rogers, Jill Schwartzman

Friends President

Lisa Burkarth



Adults enjoying the Library's periodical area.

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.

Nicole Ballestas, 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.

Evelyn Benvie, Webmaster & Circulation Assistant: Evie helps manage 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. She provides friendly and accurate service to library users at our circulation desk and hosts regular Dungeons & Dragons sessions for teens.

Jessica Branciforte, MLIS, Teen Librarian: Jess oversees delivery of services for teens, including materials, programs, and outreach to area schools. She helps to guide this age group's volunteer efforts with a Teen Advisory Board and helps to provide a welcoming space where teens can explore interests, improve research skills, and connect with resources for their needs. Jess also delivers circulation services as a member of our desk staff.

Shea Campion, Circulation Assistant: Shea delivers circulation services as a member of our desk staff. Shea also assists in creating marketing materials and supports reader's advisory efforts.

Amy Gallagher, Circulation Assistant: Amy provides excellent and friendly service at the circulation desk. She also helps to manage the library's inter-library loan service for patrons.

Kellyn Kolber, Circulation Assistant: Kellyn delivers circulation services as a member of our desk staff.

Elizabeth Reinhart, MA & MLIS, Adult Services Librarian: Elizabeth hosts most of the adult programs, acquires materials, composes Ex Libris and marketing materials for services, and in addition to the HiFi Book Group, facilitates the popular First Thursday Book Group and its Saturday component. She also provides friendly and accurate service to library users at our circulation desk.

Diane Simoneau, Manager – Donor & Technical Services: Diane catalogs materials for all the collections and purchases DVDs for adult patrons. She also maintains the Library's donor engagement database. In addition, Diane works at the circulation desk with customer service expertise.



Thank You to Our Donors!

The following donors made gifts to the library between July 1, 2024, and June 30, 2025.

\$10,000 Or More

Herbert, Elizabeth and Tryon Clark
Friends of the Essex Library
Robert and Susan Grillo
Kitchings Family Foundation
Audrey Lyons *
Jim Childress and Ann Thompson
Town of Essex

\$1,000 - \$9,999

Anonymous
Janet Bailey
Bauman Family Foundation
Janet Bent*
Keith and Jane Bolles
Wendy Brainerd
Stephen and Alison Brinkmann Family Fund at the Community Foundation of Middlesex County, Inc. (CFMC)
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John Rogers and Andrew Corbin
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Matching gift

* Deceased



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Peter and Polly Zarella
Daniel White and Rose-Marie Zeegers
Drina Zuvic

Matching Companies

AT&T, Inc. (Corporate Communications)
Illinois Tool Works
Pfizer Foundation
Raytheon
Sanofi
Wells Fargo
Matching gift * Deceased



Captain Joseph Tucker Legacy Society

Planned Giving

Audrey Lyons (1924- 2024)

Frederick Szufnarowski (1949-2023)

Audrey Lyons and Fred Szufnarowski both volunteered for the Essex Library. As a member of the Friends, Audrey was a “mender,” helping extend the lives of many well-loved books. Fred was a Trustee who, as President of the Board, inspired innovation to help keep the community connected. Beyond their invaluable work supporting the Library’s mission, their time and efforts on behalf of the Library provided engagement and connection with friends in the community. With their bequests, they will enable others to enjoy enrichment and community connection for years to come.

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?



ESSEX LIBRARY
ASSOCIATION

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,
Ann Thompson, Executive Director,
860-227-1560
athompson@essexlib.org