



ESSEX LIBRARY  
ASSOCIATION

*2022 ANNUAL REPORT*

Covering the period from July 1, 2021 – June 30, 2022



October 2022

## Welcome to the Annual Meeting of the Essex Library Association!

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

I'd like to express the Board's gratitude to Ann Thompson for taking on the role of Interim Director as we conduct the search for the next director. Ann has served for more than 20 years with the Library, most recently as Assistant Director of Public Services, and her dedication to our cherished community institution is evident in all she does. The efforts of the entire Staff have been exceptional during this period of transition.

On the financial front, the Board can report that the Library is staying the course through the recent downturn in the market, buoyed by the generous donations of supporters who give to the Library through the Annual Appeal. The Library was awarded a construction grant this year by the Connecticut State Library to improve the building's energy efficiency and accessibility, and a number of private and corporate sources provided additional crucial funding and grants. We have also received pledges to the Library's Planned Giving program, recently relaunched on the website. As always, we want to recognize the Friends of the Essex Library for their vital support and for their role as ambassadors within the community.

The Board is delighted today to recommend the candidacies of five new trustees: Gail Briggs, JoAnne Carter, Tom Gallucci, Susan Guernsey, and Howard Tuttle, each of whom brings a wealth of experience and knowledge to the Board and has shown a deep commitment to community service. Hans Ullstein is renewing his term of service.

I'd like to thank Mike Delouchry, who's stepping down, for bringing his considerable skill and fiscal discipline to the role of Treasurer this past term. Mike's leadership proved critical in getting us through the depths of the pandemic and its related economic consequences. Thanks also go to departing trustee Emily Rapp, who, among her many contributions, brought much-needed technical expertise to the functioning of the Library and the Board.

I am also leaving the Board this year after completing two terms. It's been my great honor to serve. My husband and I moved to Essex seven years ago and we knew immediately that the inviting brick building at the corner of West and Grove would become our indispensable resource and refuge. It's been my privilege to work with a group of trustees whom I've come to think of as the "Hardest Working Board in Show Business!". Thank you all.

After the meeting, please enjoy refreshments and the "Libraries Matter" presentation by guest speaker Jim Childress, Principal, Centerbrook Architects!

Sincerely,  
Kathy Bonomi  
President, Board of Trustees

## Interim Director's Report:

As town and state Covid-19 guidelines allowed last year, Essex Library transitioned from short visits to a completely open, mask-optional status. We welcomed over 30,000 in-person visits to the building; closely approaching pre-Covid activity. We resumed in-person programming in the spring but also continued hosting highly successful programs on Zoom, including attendees from around Connecticut and across the U.S. and Canada for programs on sustainability, cooking, garden design and author talks.

In September we welcomed Circulation Assistant Ellen Miller to the staff and in January we welcomed Children's and Teen Librarian Nicole Gaudreau and Circulation Assistant Evelyn Benvie. Over the year we provided MLS internships for two SCSU students and continued partnering with Valley Regional High School to provide employment opportunities for teens.

State and national recognition for Essex Library last year included the Connecticut Library Association's Award for Excellence in Print Publication for our Strategic Plan Card designed by Circulation Assistant Ellen Miller and inclusion in the Libraries & Veterans National Forum database for programming resources for veterans. Essex Library was awarded grants from, among others: the Community Foundation of Middlesex County (adding Memory Kits with robot cats Ella and Dewey for dementia patients and expanding foreign language materials to the circulating collection); the Association of Small and Rural Libraries (to add diverse biographies to our print and digital collections); Guilford Savings Bank (to fund purchase of 6 Chromebook laptops and *Cut The Cord* and the *Internet-based Genealogy Resources* series). We were awarded a second American Library Association Libraries Transforming Communities grant to provide programming on climate change and income inequality which has led to a partnership with UConn on research for a possible pilot program to help Connecticut's climate-vulnerable communities.

Our community partnerships continue to grow in number and depth. Essex Library is a collection point for the Region 4 Backpack Food Program as well as Shoreline Soup Kitchens & Pantries and, in collaboration with Sustainable Essex, we have collected hundreds of pounds of recyclable plastic. Our Little Free Library and Free Books Carts draw visits seven days a week. During FY '22 we've increased viewership on our social media platforms and saw record numbers of subscribers opening our Elations digital newsletter each month.

Last fall, the Board of Trustees endorsed the ELA 2022-2026 Strategic Plan. This plan will guide our work through 2026 and positions the library to support the community's free and equal access to information and ideas, preserving a foundation for meaningful connections among people through respectful dialogue and civic engagement. We have set ambitious goals and strategies for the coming years and the trustees and staff are looking forward to engaging in these efforts.

Respectfully submitted,



Ann Thompson  
Interim Director





### **Thank you to our FY '22 partners!**

Alzheimer's Association CT chapter, American Library Association, Centerbrook Architects & Planners, Charter Oak Genealogy, CHOICES, Community Foundation of Middlesex County, Community Music School, Connecticut Children's Medical Center, CT DEEP, Connecticut Women's Hall of Fame, Czeipiga Daly Pope & Perri, Darien Library, Denison Pequotsepos Nature Center, DIG USA, Essex Fire Engine Co. #1, Essex Garden Club, Essex Historical Society, Essex Meadows, Essex Park & Recreation, Essex Savings Bank, Experience Essex, Friends of the Essex Library, Guilford Savings Bank, Hartford Healthcare, Hotchkiss Library of Sharon, Ivoryton Library Association, Lyme Academy of Fine Arts, Merritt Parkway Conservancy, Money in Your Twenties, The Mount, New England Quilt Museum, Peach Pit Foundation, Region 4 Food Backpack Program, Region 4 Schools, River Valley Artists, SCORE, Shoreline Soup Kitchens & Pantries, Sustainable Essex, Town of Essex, Tri-Town Youth Services, Upward Business Systems, Yale Science in the News, U.S. Social Security Administration, Youth Mental Health Project



Photos: 6 Chromebooks and Robot Cats Ella and Dewey from the Library of Things. Little Free Library.

## **Committee Reports**

### **Buildings & Grounds Committee**

The Buildings and Grounds Committee meets on a monthly basis with the Executive Director and President of the Board. The overall objective of this group is to ensure that the buildings and grounds are maintained properly and provide a safe and pleasant experience for all. Routine inspections of the property are conducted with the Executive Director, and any issues requiring attention are identified and discussed. The Committee also monitors general maintenance items such as lawn and garden upkeep, housekeeping, and annual equipment maintenance. Issues requiring more substantial capital outlays are presented by the Committee to the full Board of Trustees at the monthly meetings for consideration and a vote.

The following projects were initiated or completed from October 2021 through October 2022:

1. In the Fall of 2021, the library applied for a State Construction Grant which would allow for greater energy efficiency by the replacement of window glass that had failed over its lifetime. The grant was also targeted to improve restroom accessibility with automatic door entry. The State Library approved the application last November and, after authorization from the Bond Commission in April 2022, the Library was awarded \$73,293.00, to be matched by library funds.

These projects are in the planning stages, with the accessibility work expected to be completed this coming Winter and the glass replacement project to take place in the summer of 2023.

2. In the late Winter, major chimney work was performed with the upper portion of the structure being totally replaced and properly sealed.

3. In early Spring, a new phone system and upgraded internet were installed, including an auto-attendant feature for call routing to various staff and voice mail functionality. These additions have substantially improved the internet capability and efficiency for the library staff.

4. In the Fall of this year, refurbishing work was completed on a multitude of exterior windowsills that had been leaking during storms. While none of the sills required replacement, extensive wood restoration was performed, and all areas properly sealed and refinished.

Tom Gallucci, Chair  
Buildings & Grounds Committee

### Development Committee

The Development Committee continued to meet on a monthly basis.

For the fiscal year of 2021-2022 Essex Library raised a total of \$151,958, from 493 donors.

As a point of comparison, in 2020-2021 the Library raised a total of \$102,054 from 459 donors. The increase in the FY 2021-2022 revenue represents a growth of 49%; the increase in the FY2021-2022 number of donors represents a growth of 32%.

Over the last few years, there has been notable growth in the number of NEW donors:

In FY2022, 76 new donors  
In FY2021, 30 new donors  
In FY2020, 43 new donors  
In FY2019, 30 new donors  
In FY2018, 18 new donors

The Annual Appeal mailing, sent in October 2021 more than doubled the previous number of letters that were mailed to donors/prospective donors.

The Committee completed a review of potential grants that could apply to the Library's needs. A grant that will provide for the upcoming construction project was discovered during the Committee's review.

Initial steps were taken to re-launch the Joseph Tucker Society, a program designed to confirm/grow the number of bequests to Essex Library.

## Finance Committee

The Finance Committee met quarterly over the last year in addition to ad hoc meetings to assess the impact of the prolonged challenges facing the library and the entire economy. The meetings included reviews with our investment advisors at Essex Financial Services with the focus the performance of our Endowment and Capital investment funds and the short and long-term health of our cash flow position. We also look to coordinate and collaboration with our other committees to include Building & Grounds and Strategic Planning to forecast and budget library operations and initiatives.

With continued support of the application and management of pandemic relief and grant programs, the library was able to complete and plan a number of necessary building repairs and improvements, initiate the funding plan to support of a 2023 and 2024 State Construction grant and finish the fiscal year with a cash surplus. Both the Capital and Endowment funds were negatively impacted by the recent economic declines but have taken measures to reduce risk and manage our cash position. As of the end of June 2022 they were down 10.4% to a combined market value of \$3,504,806.

Michael Delouchry, Chair  
Finance Committee

## Nominating Committee

The Nominating Committee put forth to the current Board of Trustees for their approval the nominations of new candidates for the Board.

The Board approved the nominations of JoAnne Carter, Gail Briggs and Howard Tuttle for three-year terms starting in October 2022, and of Tom Gallucci and Susan Guernsey to fill out the terms through October 2023 of two trustees who stepped down early. The five candidates demonstrate a desire to serve, possess excellent qualifications as Trustees, and have shown a commitment to community service. In addition, Hans Ullstein is nominated for a second three-year term starting in October 2022.

The Nominating Committee will present these nominations to the Essex Library Association at the Annual Meeting for approval by the members. The Committee will also present the slate of officers for the 2022-2023 year to the Board for their approval. The slate is as follows: President, Betsy Sandberg; Vice-President, Pamela Dumas Serfes; Secretary, Elizabeth Reinhart; and Treasurer, Howard Tuttle.

Kathy Bonomi has completed two full terms of three years as a trustee. Kathy served as President of the Board from 2020-2022 and is departing. Mike Delouchry, who served from 2019-2022 including two years as Board Treasurer, is also departing, as is Emily Rapp who

completed one three-year term. The Committee and Board thank them for their dedicated service to the Library.

Sandra Cahill, Chair  
Nominating Committee

### Personnel Committee

The Personnel Committee reviews staff changes, annual salaries, benefits, and library personnel issues as they arise and conducts the performance appraisal for the Executive Director.

Over the past year the committee instituted a system for periodic staff surveys and an exit interview process for departing employees. We defined a set of goals and objectives for the year with the Executive Director and oversaw the Director's performance review.

The Personnel Committee worked closely with the Executive Director, Treasurer, and Finance Committee to finalize the staff salaries and benefits lines in the budget for fiscal year 2023. We met with the Board to analyze and review the role of the committee and make recommendations for improvements going forward.

Kathy Bonomi, Chair  
Personnel Committee



### **STAFF MEMBERS**

Ann Thompson, MLIS - Interim 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 oversees library services, adult collections and acquisitions, and handles adult programs. Ann is the library's notary public.

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 on a regular basis to care for and extend the use of the library's materials.

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

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

Nicole Gaudreau, MLIS, Children's and Teen Librarian: Nicole oversees delivery of services for children and teens, including acquiring materials, hosting programs and conducting outreach to area schools.

Ellen Miller, Circulation Assistant: Ellen provides friendly and accurate service to library users at our circulation desk. She coordinates inter-library loan, manages statistical reporting needs, creates marketing materials for programs and services, and facilitates the popular First Thursday Book Group.

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, this year, led the conversion of information from our former donor database to the new DonorPerfect database. Diane also works at the circulation desk.

## **2021 - 2022 BOARD OF TRUSTEES**

**Kathy Bonomi (President)**  
**Betsy Sandberg (Vice-President)**  
**Michael Delouchry (Treasurer)**  
**Sandra Cahill (Secretary)**  
**Lisa Burkarth (Friends Representative)**  
**Pamela Dumas Serfes**  
**Tom Gallucci**  
**Susan Guernsey**  
**Michael Hammond**  
**Peter McAndrew**  
**Emily Rapp**  
**Elizabeth Reinhart**  
**Jill Schwartzman**  
**Hans Ullstein**