

# 2025 Annual Report







21 Madeira  
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25 Monfort Heights

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28 North Central  
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30 Norwood

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# Our Library: Where Our Community Connects

## 41 Locations for Lifelong Learning

In 2025, the Cincinnati & Hamilton County Public Library continued carrying out our mission by connecting people with the world of ideas and information. Whether you want to read, meet, work, learn, or create, the Library is the place where everyone belongs.

CHPL's 41 locations are often where children first discover the joy of reading — even before they start school. In 2025, 86 youth-focused staff were trained in techniques to help achieve the state's goal of building early literacy skills guided by the Science of Reading. Through our broad collection, engaging programs such as Storytimes and Summer Reading, and book deliveries to educators across the county, our staff and resources foster a lifelong love of reading.

The Cheviot and Oakley branches opened fresh public spaces as part of our Building the Next Generation Library initiative. Work also began at the Avondale, Oakley, Mariemont, Miami Township, Mt. Washington, and Symmes Township branches, and the Library acquired a site for the new College Hill Branch. These improvements are making an impact in the communities they serve: CHPL in-person visits are up 6% over 2024. And it is, of course, CHPL's dedicated staff who ensure community members find books and materials, build their workforce, education, and technology skills, and can access support for their small businesses and entrepreneurial endeavors. Our staff members work every day to provide life-long learning opportunities for everyone.

In October, Cincinnati hosted the sold-out Urban Libraries Council Leadership Forum for the first time, generating significant economic impact and elevating Cincinnati's profile as a hub for knowledge-sharing and civic engagement. It was an honor to show off what our staff, Trustees, partners, volunteers, and donors already know: our Library plays a crucial role in our community.

My thanks go out to YOU!



*Paula Brehm-Heeger*

Paula Brehm-Heeger  
Eva Jane Romaine Coombe Library Director



# A Place for Minds of All Kinds

Throughout this report, read about the ways we connect with the community through our Strategic Priorities. [CHPL.org/strategic-framework](http://CHPL.org/strategic-framework)

## From the Board President

It's been an honor to serve as president of the Board of Trustees for one of the busiest libraries in the country! I've been fortunate to see firsthand how the Library listens and finds the best ways to serve our communities.

More than half of our 41 library branches (two of those in 2025) have now received improvements thanks to CHPL's Building the Next Generation Library initiative. A combination of state funding and taxpayer support in Hamilton County is critical to continue providing excellent library spaces, services, and resources for all ages.

CHPL's staff continue to set the standard for innovative public service. For the first time in the 20-year history of their honor, Library Journal (LJ) has honored 2 staff from the Cincinnati & Hamilton County Public Library by naming them LJ Movers & Shakers. Michelle Matthews, Community and Employee Engagement Director, and Keloni Parks, Branch Manager of the West End Branch, received this prestigious national recognition honoring 50 library professionals from around the world who are innovative, creative, and help shape the future of libraries.

As we look ahead, our responsibility is clear: to ensure the Library remains a trusted, welcoming space that fosters literacy, lifelong learning, and connection for generations to come. Thank you for standing with us and for championing the Library as a vital resource for all.



Christopher A. Harding  
President, 2025 Board of Trustees  
Cincinnati & Hamilton County Public Library



# Ways You Connected with Us



**19,465,783**

Items borrowed



**4,331,366**

Customer visits

(in person, drive-thru, curbside,  
and holds lockers)



**407,989**

Library cardholders



**4,406,377**

Books and items in CHPL's collection



**7,335,984**

Digital items borrowed

(eBook, eAudiobook, streaming music,  
and other digital formats)



**4,024,838**

eBooks and eAudiobooks in  
CHPL's collection





**372,092**  
Attendees at CHPL events

**2,591,598**  
Research database sessions

**1,713,385**  
On-hold items filled

**27,508**  
Equipment uses at Library MakerSpaces

**1,344,360**  
WiFi sessions at branch libraries

**79,839**  
Meeting and study room reservations

**197,362**  
Documents faxed and scanned for free



# Encouraging Limitless Learning

## Supporting Ohio's Early Literacy Goals

The Library is where many kids first fall in love with reading. In 2025, CHPL empowered **86 youth services staff with Science of Reading techniques** to champion the state's early literacy initiatives.

Toddler superfans like Willow can't get enough of the magical **storytimes at CHPL's 41 locations**. Thanks to CHPL's investment in staff training, Willow and her friends are ready to shine in kindergarten!

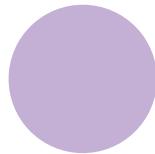
“

*In the mornings, I say, 'Do you want to go to the Library? Do you want to go to storytime?' I love that she is developing such a love for Libraries.*

*It's extremely important for the Library to offer storytime for families and that they can have this resource so close to them, wherever they might be.*

- Willow's caregiver, Jaimee

”





**180,062**

Children and caregivers at Library storytimes



**5,528**

Library storytimes



**3,251**

Teacher Collections serving educators



**23,595**

STEM event attendees



**7,006**

Adult Education and Workforce Development class attendees



**6,035**

Senior event attendees



# Providing Reliable Information

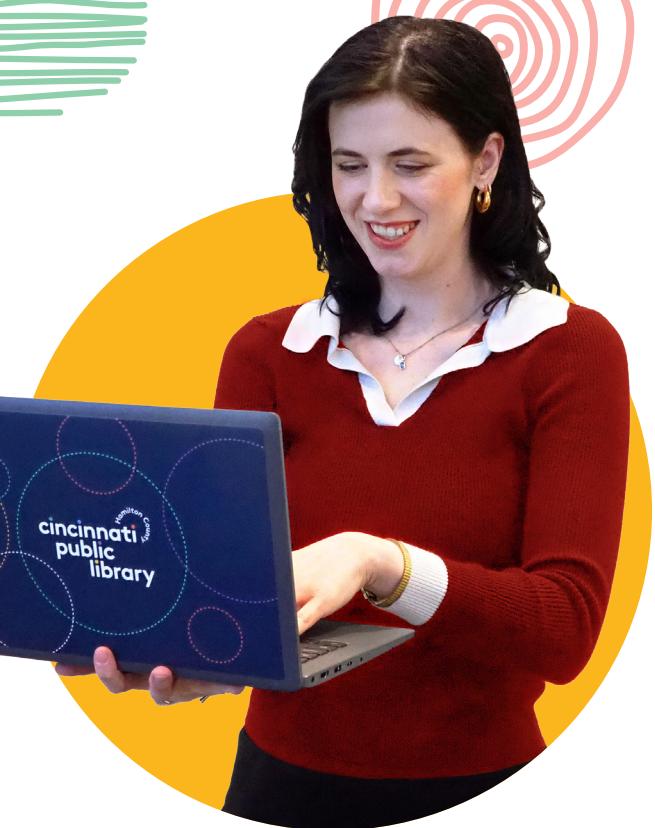
## Expanding Access with Digital Materials

Digital checkouts continue soaring in popularity because of their convenient, 24/7 access to an ever-growing list of titles. More than 165,696 **CHPL customers borrowed eBooks and eAudiobooks** in 2025, while Library staff continued optimizing purchasing strategies to **lower customer wait times** and manage digital cost per circulation.

### Another Libby App Digital Checkout Record



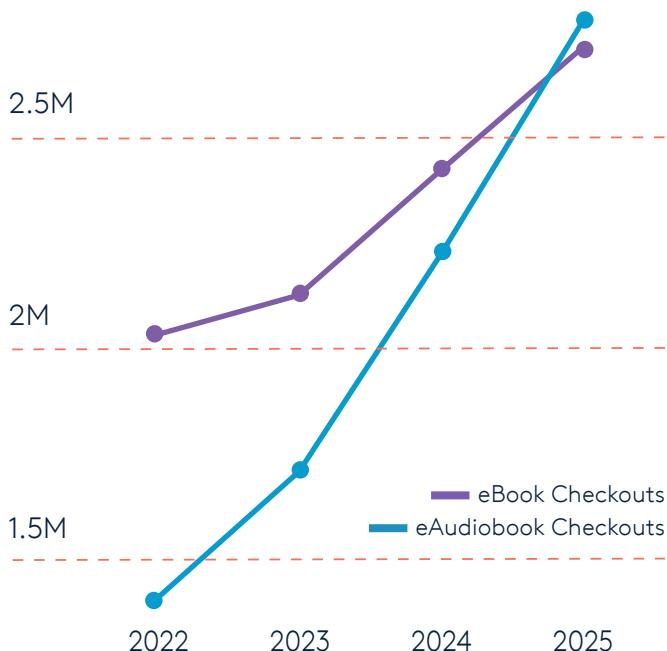
### Top Digital Formats in 2025



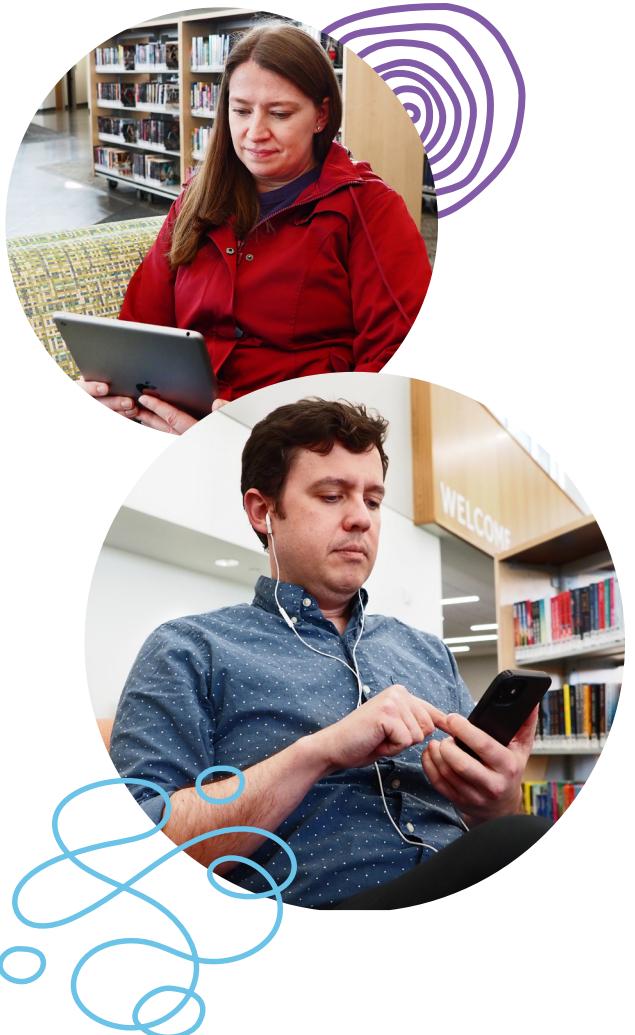
While print materials remain the most popular, CHPL is committed to offering the latest high-quality resources in the format that works best for each customer. In 2025, **cardholders chose from more than 4 million digital materials**, more than 150 research databases, virtual events to attend from their living room, and more – all free with a library card.

## eAudiobooks Overtake eBooks in 2025

eAudiobooks are now CHPL's most checked-out digital format, surpassing eBooks in 2025.



eAudiobook use has steadily climbed since 2009!



**“** I had the honor to introduce a new customer, Sister Janet, to Libby at a one-on-one tech appointment. Sister was thrilled to be able to access eAudiobooks and eBooks at a volume and font size that met her needs. Even more thrilling was that the Bluetooth feature connected her cochlear implant!

- Christina, Green Township Branch staff



# Fostering a Healthy Culture

## Building a Stronger Workforce in Hamilton County

Each month, CHPL supports hundreds of people in their pursuit of meaningful careers through **free job software, materials, and coaching**. The Library strengthens our county's workforce with free resume building, space for volunteer tutors and partners, adult new-reader materials, High School Equivalency study guides, digital literacy and weekly English literacy classes. Programs developed just for kids and teens help them prepare for in-demand careers.



“

*We had a customer ask for assistance with applying for jobs and building a better resume. Staff member Katie at the Clifton Branch helped the customer and referred him to CHPL partner Ohio Means Jobs. The customer said because of Katie's kindness and recommendation he was 'in a much better place' in his job search.*

*- Emily, Clifton Branch Staff*

”

Read more:  
[CHPL.org/job-seekers](http://CHPL.org/job-seekers)



**200**

Job seekers at CHPL career fairs

(partners included Workforce Council of Southwest Ohio, OhioMeansJobs, Eastern Personnel, and Easterseals Redwood)

**1,300**

People helped at 513 Relief Bus visits to CHPL branch libraries

**\$1,147,783**

Refunds claimed as a result of tax assistance  
(partners included United Way and AARP)

**47,783**

Job and Family Services scans and faxes

**232**

Community members registered to vote

**128,189**

Free meals and snacks for youth distributed

(includes 64,575 funded through the USDA's Child Nutrition Program and 63,614 funded by The Library Foundation)

**16**

CHPL branch libraries served as polling locations

**2,076**

People received passport renewal service at 5 CHPL locations

**535**

Attendees at CHPL grants resource classes

**12,120**

Homework help sessions

(funded by The Library Foundation)





# Connecting to Useful Resources

## Supporting Innovators at MakerSpace

The Library is committed to serving minds of all kinds through **MakerSpaces at six Library locations**. Customers create pretty much anything they can imagine with 3D printers, laser cutters, professional design software, and other tools – supported by CHPL's knowledgeable staff.

This **hands-on STEM equipment is available at no cost** other than the price of supplies, thanks to private funding from The Library Foundation.

MakerSpace equipment use increased by 17.6% compared to 2024, which is no surprise given its value in education and community-building!

“

*I knew this was where my life was going to change. MakerSpace helped rebuild my confidence and create my business with cheaper materials. I eventually launched my company, Commercial Wraps, and it wouldn't exist today without the MakerSpace.*

– Megan, customer at the Downtown Main Library

”



Make a MakerSpace reservation:  
[CHPL.org/makerspace](http://CHPL.org/makerspace)



**49%**  
Business founders across the US used library resources in their start-up process  
(Urban Library Council)

“

*Our Daisy troop had a ball making custom t-shirts on the direct-to-garment printer. The process was so engaging that it felt like play!*

– Anna, customer at the Forest Park Branch

”

## Top MakerSpace Machines Powering Projects in 2025



Vinyl Printer

**7,389 sessions**



Digital Design PC

**6,834 sessions**



Media Conversion Station

**1,746 sessions**



3D Printer

**1,406 sessions**



Laser Engraver

**1,185 sessions**



*I needed a phone number, and I don't have the technology that can let me get on the internet. Your staff member was so kind and empathetic. She helped me feel better and took care of me in the best way she could!*



*- Judy, Ask a Librarian customer*

Ask a Librarian:  
[CHPL.org/ask](http://CHPL.org/ask)

Help is always open, just a chat window away. CHPL's **Ask a Librarian service** can help you find materials, access resources, or answer any of your questions.

**115,054**

Ask a Librarian questions answered

**5,885**

Catalog searches per day

**82,803**

CHPL.org pageviews per day



# Creating Welcoming Spaces

## Where Communities Gather, Work, and Learn

More people are enjoying the Library's new and updated meeting spaces than ever before. In 2025, **CHPL room reservations topped 177,503 hours** — the equivalent of 20 years. These spaces, large and small, are vital hubs for book clubs, non-profits, students, and remote workers.



Reserve a meeting space online:  
[CHPL.org/meeting](http://CHPL.org/meeting)



The Catherine C. and Thomas E. Hunefeld Story Center Turns One!

- 4,658 Exhibit views
- 956 Community stories recorded



In year seven of CHPL's **Facility Master Plan** implementation, we also invested in these inclusive and accessible spaces so the Library can welcome all:



**Cheviot Branch Library** saw increased accessibility through a refreshed interior: an elevator with access to all levels, a newly accessible entry, and a meeting room on the main level. The mid-century modern branch has an expanded kids' area, an adult reading area, and upgraded shelving and furniture.

**Oakley Branch Library** reopened with an updated meeting room, expanded kids area, dedicated teen area, and new furniture throughout the branch. The building's end-of-life 35+ year old mechanical and electrical systems were also replaced.



*“There are places where you can read, places where you can sit, where little kids can play. It's really good!*

*- Youssef, customer at the Cheviot Branch*



Read more:  
[CHPL.org/next](http://CHPL.org/next)



## Facility Master Plan by the Numbers

**14%**

Increase in meeting and study space reservations  
(compared with prior year)

**22**

Completed Facility Master Plan projects

**339**

New technology items added in 2025  
(Includes PCs, laptop kiosks, clocks, and monitors)

**5**

Drive-thrus added since 2019

**61**

New meeting and study spaces

**59,584**

Square footage added since 2019

**13**

Kids' play features added

### Improved Spaces Countywide

CHPL's **Facility Master Plan** outlines improvements to our 41 library locations with input from more than 3,000 community members.



# Creating Welcoming Spaces

## Next Generation Libraries

### Under Construction



**Avondale**  
Scheduled Maintenance and Strategic Investment 2027



**Mt. Washington**  
Scheduled Maintenance and Strategic Investment Feb. 2026



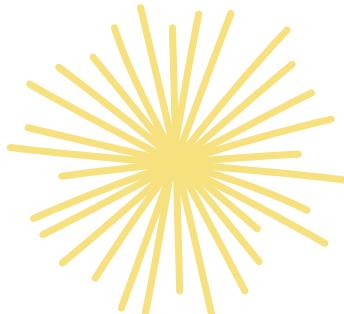
**Symmes Township**  
Replacement and New Build Early 2026



**Main Library**  
Maintenance - Chillers and Cooling Towers Replacement Early 2026



**Mariemont**  
Scheduled Maintenance Jan. 2026



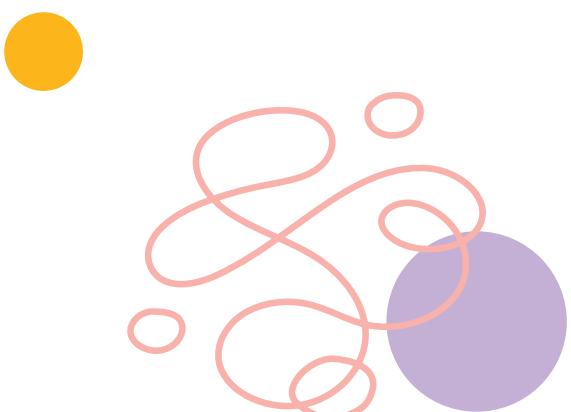
### In Design/Planning



**Delhi Township**  
Renovation or Replacement Late 2026

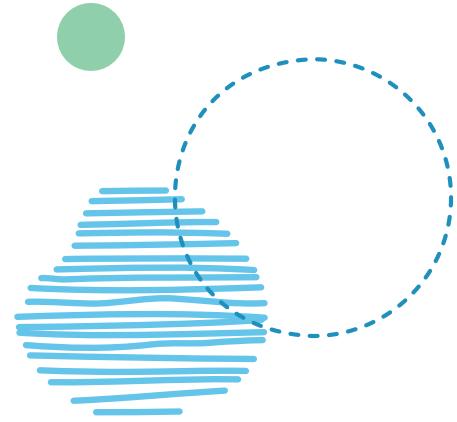
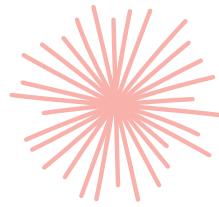


**Miami Township**  
Relocation with New Building 2027



## Completed County-Wide Improvements

			
2025	<b>Cheviot</b> Accessibility Improvements	<b>Oakley</b> Strategic Investment	
2024			
	<b>Main Library</b> South Building and Plaza Renovation	<b>Forest Park</b> Relocation and New Build	<b>Hyde Park</b> Improved Accessibility
2023			
	<b>Corryville</b> Scheduled Maintenance	<b>Madisonville</b> New Branch	<b>Mt. Healthy</b> Relocation with New Building
2022			
	<b>Green Township</b> Interior Update	<b>Mariemont</b> Exterior Update	<b>Pleasant Ridge</b> Scheduled Maintenance
2021			
	<b>Anderson Township</b> Renovation	<b>Deer Park</b> Relocation and Expansion	<b>Walnut Hills</b> Renovation and Expansion
2020			
	<b>College Hill</b> Interior Update	<b>Elmwood Place</b> Interior Update	<b>Price Hill</b> Renovation and Expansion
2019			
	<b>Main Library</b> Energy Retrofit		<b>Groesbeck</b> Interior Update
			
			<b>Madeira</b> Interior Update





# Recognition



## Excellence in Financial Reporting

The Government Finance Officers Association Certificate of Achievement was awarded to the Library for carefully tracking CHPL's use of taxpayer funds and providing transparency to taxpayers.



**Career Achievement Award**  
from the American Society for Public Administration - Greater Cincinnati Chapter to Eva Jane Romaine Coombe Director Paula Brehm-Heeger



**AIA Ohio Design Honor Award**  
for Newly Completed Buildings for the Forest Park Branch Library



**Engineering News-Record's Award of Merit** in Midwest Best Projects for the Downtown Main Library



**Library Journal 2025 Movers & Shakers Change Agent Awards** to Community and Employee Engagement Director Michelle Matthews and West End Branch Manager Keloni Parks





# Financials

## General Fund

2025 REVENUE		2025 DISBURSEMENTS	
Public Library Fund, State of Ohio	49,421,234	Salaries	36,148,368
Tax Levy	55,521,644	Benefits	12,262,585
Customer Fees	381,414	Supplies	2,332,079
Earnings on Investments	3,169,025	Purchased Services	13,290,458
Contributions	343,677	Library Materials and Information	12,932,792
Miscellaneous Revenue	1,326,043	Capital Improvements	537,636
	<b>\$110,163,037</b>	Other Objects	761,920
		Transfers Out	30,000,000
			<b>\$108,265,838</b>



## All Funds

2025 REVENUE		2025 DISBURSEMENTS	
Public Library Fund, State of Ohio	49,421,234	Salaries	36,148,368
Tax Levy	55,521,644	Benefits	12,310,085
Customer Fees	381,414	Supplies	3,267,993
Earnings on Investments	3,747,342	Purchased Services	14,364,759
Contributions	1,340,657	Library Materials and Information	13,013,529
Miscellaneous Revenue	1,329,796	Capital Improvements	23,168,144
	<b>\$111,742,087</b>	Other Objects	761,920
			<b>\$103,034,798</b>



# The Power of Summer Reading

Encouraging literacy is at the heart of CHPL's mission. For more than 50 years, the Library's summer reading program has been a popular, well-loved tradition for kids and teens in Hamilton County.



**29,990**  
Summer Reading participants



**79,560**  
Attendees at 2,548 CHPL summer programs



**41,427**  
New books distributed to kids and teens



**18,853**  
Meals and snacks distributed in June and July  
(includes 9,202 funded through the USDA's Child Nutrition Program and 9,651 funded by The Library Foundation)



**1,081**  
Attendees at 48 camp and daycare visits in summer



**Our Sponsors:** Friends of the Public Library, The Library Foundation, Charles H. Dater Foundation, H.B., E.W. & F.R. Luther Charitable Foundation, PNC Charitable Trust, Ed and Joann Hubert Foundation, Wohlgemuth Herschede Foundation

**In-Kind Support:** Cincinnati Reds, Raising Cane's, Gold Star Chili



# Foundation, Friends, and ATLA

The Library relies on both public and private support to serve our community. Private support comes to CCHPL through the following dedicated organizations.



## The Library Foundation

Provided more than 12,120 in-person homework help sessions for K-8th grade students at branches.

Supported a program in 10 local barbershops to encourage literacy among young Black boys and reluctant readers.

Brought Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist and bestselling author Nicholas Kristof to Cincinnati for the 2025 Mary S. Stern Lecture Series.

Hosted Booked for the Evening, an after-hours fundraiser with a behind-the-scenes tour of the Downtown Main Library.



## The Friends of the Public Library

Supported Library programs through sales of donated books, DVDs, music, and other materials at the Friends Warehouse shop in Hartwell.



## Anderson Township Library Association

Hosted two successful book sales with funds supporting programs at the Anderson and Mt. Washington Branches.





# Thank you!

The Library is deeply grateful for the generosity of our community. The following gifts were received between Jan. 1 and Dec. 31, 2025 by the Library and The Library Foundation of Cincinnati & Hamilton County. These donations are essential to ensuring delivery of excellent library services and the availability of the widest possible range of resources for all ages.

For more information about donating to The Library Foundation, visit [SupportCHPL.org](http://SupportCHPL.org).

## \$50,000+

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