

Abington Public Library Annual Report - 2024

To the Inhabitants of the Town of Abington:



Bryson Lang performs in the Copeland Room on August 14, 2024.

Residents flocked to the Abington Public Library in 2024. Borrowing of books and eBooks surpassed prior years. Attendance at programs, use of study rooms by individuals and small groups, and use of the meeting rooms by community groups all saw significant upticks. The year concluded with the migration of the Library's Attraction Pass Reservation Software and website calendar from long-time vendor Plymouth Rocket to Assabet Interactive of Concord, MA. The Assabet software is more intuitive and significantly easier for patrons to use while reserving popular museum and attraction passes. The calendar has interactive features which will assist library users in committing to program attendance.

The competitive LSTA (Library Services and Technology Act) grant, "Civic Hub", focused on the need for residents to have a place to civilly discuss political and societal issues. The \$15,000 grant followed the federal fiscal year and programs were offered from October 2023 through September 2024. Please see the sections of this report dealing with

programs for children and teens for information about grant funded activities for these audiences. The funds come from the federal Institute of Museum and Library Services as administered by the Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners.

Grant programs for adults began in October 2023 and continued through September 2024. Offerings included a well-received monthly Banned Book Club for adults, facilitated by Patricia Pflaumer. Beginning in September 2024, the group switched topics from Banned Books to titles created by Native Authors, allowing readers to explore literary works by a frequently marginalized population. State Aid to Public Libraries funding was used for the Native Authors Book Club beginning in October 2024 after grant funding expired.

With funding from the Civic Hub grant, Abington Reads returned in March, following a multi-year COVID hiatus. Historian Stephen Puleo was the featured author and the book considered in this year's community read was Mr. Puleo's *The Caning: The Assault that Drove America to Civil War*. This title looked at politics through the lens of incivility in 1850's; Massachusetts Senator Charles Sumner was brutally beaten by South Carolina Representative Preston S. Brooks in a dispute over slavery on the floor of the United States Senate. Stephen Puleo discussed the historical event featured in his book. A program featuring historical re-enactor Jan Turnquist as Harriet Beecher Stowe was a companion to the reading and author program.



**Library Director Deborah Grimmiett with Abington Reads author Stephen Puleo.
March 14, 2024.**

Turning from history to contemporary politics, a component of the Civic Hub grant, State Senator John Keenan and State Representative Alyson Sullivan-Almeida visited the Library in May to discuss civility in politics. The program was moderated by Library Director Deborah Grimmiett and questions explored how both State Legislators work together to benefit the residents of Abington. Questions from residents followed the discussion and feedback from attendees was uniformly positive. The Library Director and Board of Library Trustees thank Representative Sullivan-Almeida and Senator Keenan for their time and thoughtful remarks.



New Children's Books in Brazilian Portuguese.

Major acquisitions secured through grant funding include a collection of more than 100 Brazilian Portuguese books for children, as well as access to LOTE4Kids which is a digital collection of picture books for children in a diverse range of world languages. The Public Library is committed to providing resources for English Language Learners, and these materials are a major addition to this collection. The library thanks Officer Vanessa Miranda of the Abington Police Department for translating the library card application form into Brazilian Portuguese. A mobile display unit was also purchased with grant funds; this unit allows staff to rotate displays in the front of the library which encourages readers.

With the support of the Griffin's Dairy Committee, the Library offered three StoryWalks® along the walking path at the Dairy. The StoryWalk® Project was created by Anne Ferguson of Montpelier, VT and developed in collaboration with the Kellogg-Hubbard Library. Storywalk® is a registered service mark owned by Ms. Ferguson. A StoryWalk® places the pages of a picture book in signs along a pathway, encouraging children to both exercise and read. In four years, the StoryWalks® have become a much-loved community summer tradition, enjoyed by children and adults alike. The books featured were *Seeds of Change* by Nian Laden, *How to Teach a Slug to Read* by Susan Pearson, and *Because of an Acorn* by Lola Schaefer.



Summer Story Walk Sign.

2,336 Abington Public School students participated in 150 class visits presented by Children's Librarian Amy Matejka. Kindergarten and Pre-K classes received monthly visits to their classrooms; all classes in grades 1, 2, 3 and 5 visited the Public Library once during the school year and received library instruction from Amy Matejka or Staff Librarian for Children's Services Heidi Hernandez. Kindergarten classes end the school year with a visit to the Public Library. The extremely popular Beaver Brook and Woodsdale Art Shows returned to the Library in May to celebrate our young artists.

The Non-Fiction Book Club, Popular Fiction Book Club, and Cookbook Club, met throughout 2024; the Popular Fiction group meets virtually, and the other book clubs meet in person. In September a Saturday Book Club for adults was added; this group is facilitated by Reference Librarian Rob Goodale. Rob's in-library Device Advice technology programs and individualized technology help visits to the Senior Center continue to be popular. Monthly adult Craft Nights began in April and have proved very popular. Crafts offered have included quilling, needle felting, holiday greens arranging, watercolor painting, and a traditional paint night. Historical lectures, author visits and a theatrical presentation were among the offerings for adults. Monthly passive activities, including Library Valentines requested by the Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners in February, were a huge hit with adults, teens, and children all year long. 113 live and virtual programs were offered for adults with 922 attendees. Subscriptions to the monthly newsletter, *All Around the APL*, continued to grow.

The Friends of the Library conducted fundraising activities with a Book Sale in April, as well as maintaining their popular "Everyday Sale Shelf" in the library. The Friends Membership Drive was held successfully in January 2024. The Friends also conducted successful fundraising raffles. The Friends book discussion groups, Book Talk and the Mystery Group, met throughout the year, with a hiatus during the summer. Friends fundraising supports attraction passes and programs for all ages.

The Abington Cultural Council provided funding to the Friends for the patron passes to the Museum of Fine Arts and the Boston Children's Museum, as well as for an adult needle felting program presented by Pop-up Art School in September. The Cultural Council directly funded a well-attended concert by musician Matt York in March; a large audience enjoyed the "Songs of Johnny Cash". In December, The Friends of the Library and the Abington Cultural Council jointly sponsored a coach bus trip to the Boston Pops.

Gifts were again received for children's programming in memory of long-time library trustee Melba Smith. A donation for the Story Garden was received from the Bailey's daylily sale. Memorial gifts were received in honor of Patrick Duffy, a long-time library user. Individual residents made donations for library materials, including additional memorial gifts. The Library Trustees and Library Director thank the many generous residents who donated to the Friends of the Library and provided direct financial support for Library services.

The Teen Advisory Board (TAB) continued to meet and to guide program offerings for teens. Barn Babies made their annual visit to the library and the teens spent an afternoon playing with baby farm animals. One after-hours event, the popular Chopped program, was offered in June, and we hosted a special Teen Advisory Board overnight at the library in August. One of the activities at the overnight was funded by the Civic Hub grant; teens were challenged to meaningfully decorate a folding chair for online submission to the Edward M.

Kennedy Institute for the United States Senate online exhibit, “A Seat at the Table.” The teens created a thoughtful chair and learned about Shirley Chisholm in the process. The teens’ love of needle felting was fostered with a great program with the Pop Up Art School in July, and many of these same teens discovered a love of photography when Miss Heidi hosted a teen photography program in July. A group of TAB volunteers supervised activities including a temporary tattoo station, crafts, and various games during the Summer Reading Program Kickoff, which was held indoors this year due to the extreme heat. Mr. Vinny graciously delayed his program and visited us in August when the weather was much better. Summer reading time continued to be recorded virtually using the READsquared software.



Musician Mama Steph performs on July 18, 2024.

In summer 2024, the library once again hosted several children’s cultural programs generously funded by the Anderson Foundation. Our audiences enjoyed musical performances by Hugh Hanley, Mama Steph, and Julie Stepanek. Otha Day and his “Drum to the Beat” drum circle returned to Abington to kick off our performer lineup as part of our “Let’s Talk” grant. Storyteller Motoko returned to the library to perform a few Japanese folktales and run an origami workshop, while storyteller Valerie Tutson visited us to perform a few African folktales-

all part of the “Let’s Talk” grant.

The Friends of the Library funded Talewise Jr. Presents: Science Heroes- a science show geared towards preschool-aged kids. Bryson Lang’s “Cure for the Common Show” was generously provided by funds in memory of Joyce Lee Bumpus. The fund in memory of Melba Smith sponsored Mama Steph. The Friends of the Library continued to provide for the library’s preschool and toddler story times, Lego Club, after-school story craft, the popular book discussion clubs for children and teens, additional performers, and the summer reading program. The Abington Fire, Police, and D.P.W. volunteered staff and many vehicles for the library’s “Touch-a-Truck” event in September. 121 children, teens and adults registered for the Summer Reading program on Read Squared and read for a total of 2,613 hours.



Children’s Librarian Amy Matejka enjoys Mama Steph’s performance.

Araujo Bros. Plumbing and Heating of Acushnet finished the boiler replacement project begun in fall 2023. The new boilers were fully operable by February and should provide the library with reliable heating for many years to come. The failure of the boilers in May 2023 made a unified HVAC replacement project impossible, due to the critical need to heat the building for the 2023-2024 winter. In 2024 the Trustees and Library Director worked with Town Manager Scott Lambiase to begin studying the replacement of the air conditioning system. The building's A/C completed a 27th summer of cooling in 2024 and is in dire need of replacement. The plan is to request funding for a project study at the spring 2025 Town Meeting.

Two Chromebook computers were added to the collection; there are currently four Chromebooks for patron borrowing and one reserved for the Reference Librarian to conduct in-house technology training. The Chromebook and hotspot borrowing programs cross the digital divide by giving library users without reliable home computers and/or Internet access the ability to work, access educational opportunities, conduct life business, and use the Internet for communication and leisure time pursuits. The hotspots also provide users with Internet access outside of the 53.5 hours per week that the library is open to the public.

Trustees Gail Bergin, Henry DiCarlo, and Mary Gillis were re-elected in the town's annual election in April. In November, Trustee Secretary Carrie Murray notified the Board that she was moving out of town and resigned.



Board of Library Trustees, 2024. From left: John O'Neill, Susan Crowley, Henry DiCarlo, Mary Gillis, Laura Brink, Gail Bergin, Barbara McLaughline, Gerry Haas. Not pictured: Carrie Murray.

The Trustees and Director recognize the dedication and professionalism of the Library Staff: Sandy Bumpus, Jonathan Gillis, Robert Goodale, Heidi Hernandez, Kerri Lohnes, Amy Matejka, Lynne Nickley, Colleen Phelps, Joanne Plunkett, and Linda Sampson. Circulation substitutes Ann Bunszell, Susan Donovan, Jill Monti, Kim Reid, Sarah Roberts, and Terry Taylor provide much needed assistance in covering the weekly schedule of open hours.

Selected 2024 Library Statistics

Circulation: 124,753. Up from 115,455 in 2023

89,823 physical items such as books, magazines, jigsaw puzzles etc.

34,930 digital items such as eBooks, eAudio, eMagazines, Streaming video and music.

Total programs/school classes offered: 604. Total program attendance: 9,554

Total patron visits: 62,728

Library Value Calculator

Are you curious about the value of library services? The Syracuse University School of Information Science provides a calculator to value library services. The calculator can be found here: <https://truevalue.ischool.syr.edu/> The calculator includes the value of things like books borrowed and includes services like programs, onsite computers and meeting room use. See the value of selected library services for

Books Borrowed: \$1,127,069

eBooks Borrowed: \$523,950

In-library computer use by adults (per hour): \$23,736

Museum passes borrowed: \$10,800

Interlibrary loan items borrowed: \$223,650

Adult programs attended: \$13,830

Children's/Teen programs attended: \$60,424

Meeting room use per hour: \$10,425

Total value of selected library services (excluding staff labor): \$1,993,884

Respectfully submitted,

Library Trustees

Henry DiCarlo, Chair

Gail Bergin, Vice Chair

Carrie Murray, Secretary (through November)

Laura Brink

Susan Crowley

Mary Gillis

Gerry Haas

Barbara McLaughlin

John O'Neill

Library Director

Deborah Grimmatt