

Brooklyn Public Library – Central Library
Five Year Plan of Service (2022-2026)

Background: Brooklyn Public Library’s (BPL) landmark Central Library serves as a resource and cultural center for Brooklyn’s nearly 2.6 million residents. Central Library’s mission is to provide excellent customer service, support BPL’s 60 neighborhood libraries, and fulfill the information, recreation and educational needs of all BPL patrons.

At 352,000 square feet, Central Library contains over 1.5 million items, including books, periodicals, multimedia, and a library of “things” which includes telescopes, musical instruments, and vinyl records. It offers over 100 public computers and free access to high-speed wireless networks throughout the building. Specialized services and collections include the Adult Learning Center, a provider of adult basic education, ESOL and pre-HSE training; the Shelby White and Leon Levy Information Commons, a center containing co-working space, public meeting rooms, a training lab, and advanced computer workstations; and the Business & Career Center which focuses on job and career help, financial literacy and entrepreneurship. In FY22 we had nearly 408,000 visitors, a 220% increase over FY21. While still recovering from our service interruptions due to COVID-19, we are working toward a return to our pre-COVID visits of over 1 million people in FY23. Central Library provides access beyond its walls through services including interlibrary loan; digitization projects and electronic database subscriptions; and remote telephone, e-mail, and chat reference.

Objective: This document will examine how New York State Library (NYSL) aid programs support Central Library’s collections, services, and spaces, and how that support aligns with Central Library’s mission and BPL’s overall Plan of Service. The Central Library Five Year Plan of Service is the result of collaboration between BPL’s Chief Librarian, the Central Library director and staff, and the Strategy Department.

Central Library Book Aid (CLBA) and Central Library Development Aid (CLDA): NYSL’s CLBA and CLDA funding are essential to maintaining a current and comprehensive collection at Central Library. Items from Central Library’s collection circulated over 1.24 million times in FY22, demonstrating the desirability and relevance of the collection. Brooklyn is an ethnically and socioeconomically diverse borough of nearly 2.6 million residents from all walks of life, including each of the special client groups outlined in BPL’s Five-Year Library System Plan of Service. Central Library’s collection seeks to reflect this by providing books for all interests and literacy levels, and its Languages & Literature division offers materials in over 30 world languages.

Each year, these funds purchase new books and replace outdated ones. This serves visitors to Central Library as well as patrons throughout BPL’s neighborhood library system, who can request items from Central Library collections through BPL’s speedy and efficient interchange system. Unsurprisingly, Central Library is the largest fulfiller of holds at BPL. Additionally, NYSL funding establishes a depth to the Central Library collection that makes it a net lender of materials through its Interlibrary Loan service. CLBA funds also help purchase print and digital reference materials that support in-person and virtual reference services.

In May 2021, a newly renovated Business & Career Library opened at the Central Library. As an additional recipient of NYSL funding, the Business & Career Center bolsters the small business, personal finance, and job search collections at Central Library through print and digital

resources. As part of Central Library, B&CC now offers expanded hours (66 a week) and can leverage the building's technology and meeting room space to augment programming. BPL expects that Central Library's 1.3 million annual visits will also translate to increased use and awareness of B&CC collections and services.

Central Library staff collaborate with BookOps (BPL's shared technical processes organization with New York Public Library) to leverage its increased buying power using CLBA and CLDA funds. It also takes advantage of the efficiencies in its selection, acquisition, and processing operations to ensure materials purchased are quickly and efficiently made available to BPL patrons. The Central Library staff also analyzes circulation statistics and collection development tools like CollectionHQ to strategically allocate funds among subject divisions and formats.

Public Library Construction Program: BPL's Central Library is 82 years old, and its aging infrastructure demands a number of capital projects. Fortunately, Central Library has been the recipient of NYSL's public library construction program grants. Funding from NYS helped with Phase One improvements at Central including the new Business and Career Center, a new Civic Commons and upgrades to our heating, cooling and lighting systems. As we progress through our future phases and apply for additional grant funding, these grants will help Central Library become a more functional and accessible space for research and public programs.