



Your Story

STARTS HERE

2025 ANNUAL REPORT

CLEVELAND PUBLIC LIBRARY
CLEVELAND PUBLIC LIBRARY FOUNDATION

A man with short dark hair, wearing a bright blue button-down shirt, is captured in a moment of genuine laughter. His eyes are squeezed shut, and his mouth is wide open, showing his teeth. He is seated, and the background is a blurred indoor setting with warm lighting. The overall mood is joyful and positive.

*“Every day, we empower people
through knowledge, connection,
and opportunity.”*

Dear Friends,

At Cleveland Public Library, *Your Story Starts Here*. Every day, our mission is to empower people through knowledge, connection, and opportunity. Whether you're sharpening your digital literacy skills, attending an author talk, exploring our rich history collections, or helping a child discover the joy of reading, the Library is here to support your journey. From workforce development and educational programs to arts, culture, and technology, our resources are designed to open doors, no matter where you are in your story.



We believe that by learning, creating, and engaging together, we become better Clevelanders. Our city is stronger when we all have access to the tools to grow, like career training to build stability, books and conversations that spark empathy, and programs that encourage curiosity and civic participation. The Library invites you to take part in our sustainability initiatives and community dialogues on important issues such as diversity, incarceration, and censorship. Together, we can foster understanding and create positive change.

As we look toward the future, Cleveland Public Library remains committed to being a place where stories begin, grow, and thrive. We will continue to evolve our spaces, services, and programs to meet the needs of our community and to inspire a more informed, compassionate, and connected Cleveland.

Thank you for being part of our story.
Let's keep writing the next chapter, together.

Be Kind. Be One Cleveland.

FELTON THOMAS, JR.
Executive Director & CEO

To Our Dedicated Patrons,

2025 was a year of celebration for Cleveland Public Library. Our historic Main Library celebrated its 100-year anniversary. A historical marker was installed to commemorate the milestone and acknowledge the Library's great impact on the downtown Cleveland landscape. We celebrated the occasion with over 3,000 Greater Clevelanders with "The Curious Garden Party" – an Alice in Wonderland theme inspired by our Lewis Carroll Room, the original name of the Main Children's Department when it opened in 1925.



A single day of festivities wasn't enough for a century of service, so Cleveland Public Library carried the Main 100 celebration throughout the year with 100 awe-inspiring programs. Engaging author talks, intimate book clubs, our biggest summer reading program yet, diverse musical performances, community block parties, and more helped us honor our history while also recognizing the ways the Library has adapted to meet the changing needs of our Cleveland community over the years.

Our Martin Luther King, Jr. and Glenville Campuses reopened their doors to excited patrons who immediately fell in love with the reimagined spaces with thoughtful touches honoring Dr. King's legacy and Glenville's unique community history. As we head into 2026, we thoughtfully continue our work on the Facilities Master Plan to ensure these new buildings deliver centuries of essential services to more Cleveland neighborhoods, just as Main Library has. We hope you'll join us for our next thrilling chapter.

MARITZA RODRIGUEZ
President
Board of Trustees

Closing the Gaps

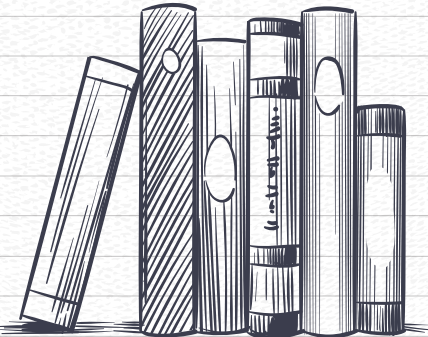
EARLY LITERACY



Cleveland Reads

This summer, Cleveland Public Library held its most successful Cleveland Reads summer reading challenge yet, with 8,464 readers registered, logging 1,195,866 minutes read, 1,120 completions, and 8,526 program attendees. Themed *100% Curious* in celebration of the 100th anniversary of Main Library, the challenge encouraged scholars to stay curious and question, explore, and discover. In partnership with the Cleveland Browns’ Stay in the Game! Attendance Network, the Library expanded its reach and offered an exclusive Cleveland Browns library card. The Book Boogie kicked off the summer by encouraging young readers, and the Jurassic Jam finale celebrated a roaring success.

MINUTES READ	REGISTRATION	PROGRAM ATTENDANCE	COMPLETION
1,195,866	8,464	8,526	1,120



EARLY LITERACY PROGRAMMING AT CLEVELAND PUBLIC LIBRARY IS POWERED IN PART BY GRANTS FROM PARKER HANNIFIN FOUNDATION AND THE TREU-MART FUND.

Rock & Read

In partnership with The Rock & Rock Hall of Fame, Cleveland Public Library welcomed rock icons **Pat Benatar and Neil Giraldo** to the new Martin Luther King, Jr. Campus. The couple showcased their new children’s book, *My Grandma and Grandpa Rock*, and shared stories from their long career as musicians and collaborators. The evening demonstrated the powerful connection between music and storytelling and its ability to foster connection.

BOOKS DISTRIBUTED
8,825
COMMUNITY MEMBERS SERVED
8,581

Young Scholars Academy

In 2025, Cleveland Public Library expanded Young Scholars Academy from our Martin Luther King, Jr. and Eastman Campuses to Wade Park School and Halle School in collaboration with the Cleveland Metropolitan School District. Participation totaled 609, with 557 attendees at the MLK, Eastman, and Mt. Pleasant campuses and 52 attendees at Wade Park and Halle Schools.

MILES TRAVELED
2,574
OUTREACH VISITS
251

On the Road to Reading

Cleveland Public Library’s *On the Road to Reading* van was road-ready in 2025. The van attended outdoor Library events and community partner resource fairs, and made stops at various daycare centers and schools. Staff gave away books and connected with children through storytimes and play designed to promote literacy and learning.

STORYTIMES
153
STOPS
110

Merry Maker Fest

Over 1,000 families and Library friends joined the Library’s Merry Maker Fest before heading to the outdoor tree lighting at Public Square. In partnership with Downtown Cleveland, Inc.’s WinterLand celebration, the Library hosted a special Storytime with author Derrick Barnes and celebrated with treats, crafts, and interactive activities for the entire family.

CLEVELAND READS REGISTRATIONS COMPLETED
103

DIGITAL LITERACY PROGRAMMING AT CLEVELAND PUBLIC LIBRARY IS POWERED IN PART BY GRANTS FROM PNC, PWC, HUNTINGTON BANK, AND PARKER HANNIFIN FOUNDATION.

Digital Literacy



Golden Gala

Cleveland Public Library hosted its 2nd Annual Golden Gala, sponsored by AT&T and McGregor, celebrating older adults through programming focused on technology, digital literacy, and navigating today’s evolving world.

TechXpress Van

The TechXpress Van, the Library’s mobile technology lab, has had a busy inaugural year, attending over 30 events, including the Library’s Word on the Street Block Parties, Wade Oval Wednesdays, the Lee-Harvard Community Festival, and more.

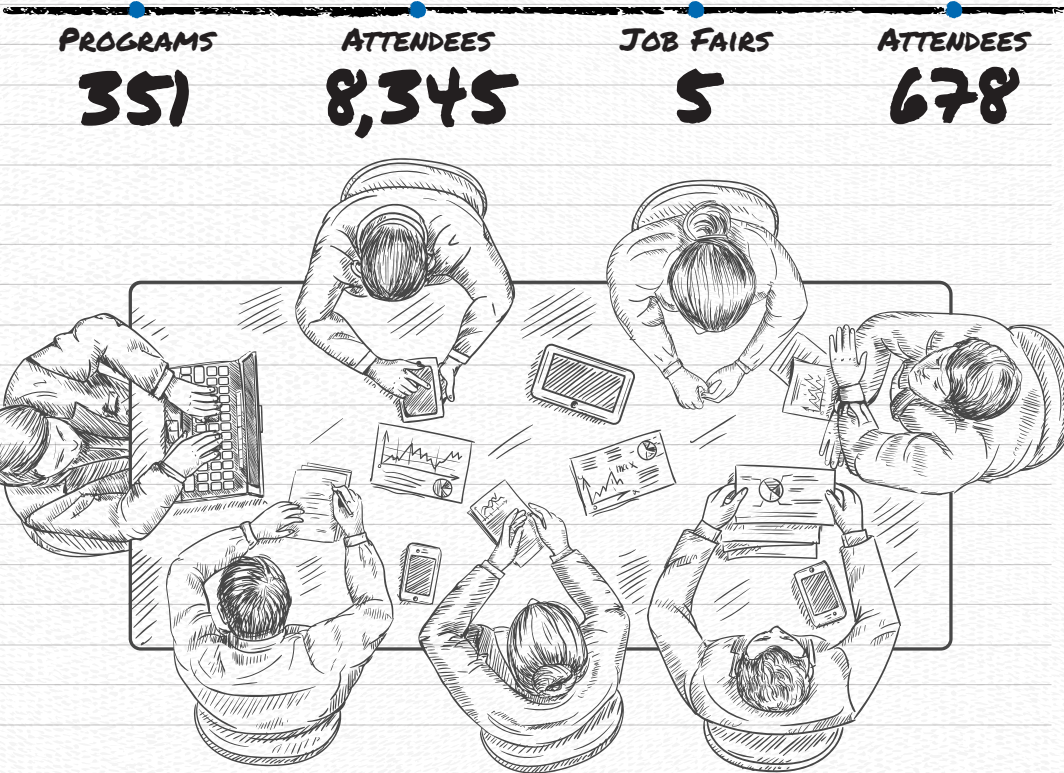
Content Creator Camp

With support from the PwC Foundation, Cleveland Public Library’s Studio 525 Capstone event marked the conclusion of its STEM initiative, connecting high school students and adults with careers in gaming, digital media, and technology. Attendees explored projects, joined breakout sessions, and heard from guest speakers Stefan Johnson, voice and screen actor and viral social media creator, and Peabody Award-winning game developer Jarryd Huntley about pathways into tech careers.

Workforce Development

CAREER CONNECT

Cleveland Public Library launched Career Connect, a collection of workforce development services aimed at helping Clevelanders connect to job opportunities, gain skills to find or advance in a job, and start their own business. The partnership with Aspire, the City of Cleveland, Goodwill, and JumpStart Inc. helped the Library deliver **351 workforce programs**, serving **8,345 attendees**, including five job fairs that connected **678 job seekers** to opportunities.





Cleveland Public Library welcomed patrons for its annual Young Adult Book Festival, which featured YA fiction authors Nick Brooks, Maggie Tokuda-Hall, Quartez Harris, DeAndra Miller, Ellen Oh, Justin A. Reynolds, and Tony Weaver, Jr. The keynote featured author, podcast host, and producer Amanda Knox, who was wrongfully convicted of murder in 2009. Moderated by Nick Brooks, the intimate discussion explored how writing and media shape truth, justice, and legacy.

Writers & Readers

Cleveland Public Library hosted four Writers & Readers author events in 2025.

1. In partnership with the Ohio Library for the Blind and Print Disabled, author Christine Ha, known as the “Blind Chef” and winner MasterChef shared her remarkable journey while conducting a cooking demonstration.
2. A dynamic panel featuring Emmy Award-winning producer Nneka Onuorah, author Ronald Olivier, and legendary music artist, Project Pat, explored the relationship between artistic expression and healing for those affected by the criminal justice system.
3. Author Omar Tyree joined the Library for a special conversation on the re-release of his iconic book *Flyy Girl*.
4. In celebration of the 80th anniversary of the Cleveland Buckeyes’ 1945 Negro League championship, Larry Lester joined the Library to explore the lasting impact of Black baseball in Cleveland and beyond.

Literary Collaboration

The Library hosted regional and national literary events:

- Literary Cleveland’s free, Inkubator Conference, featured dozens of authors at Main Library.
- Great Lakes African American Writers Conference, celebrated African American literary heritage and contemporary voices; and
- The 90th anniversary of the Anisfield-Wolf Book Awards, honored 2025 winners George Makari and David Livingstone Smith with author panels and signings at the Martin Luther King, Jr. Campus.

Arts Impact, and Belonging:

WORLD-CLASS EXPERIENCES



Cleveland Public Library continued to be a vibrant, free destination for arts and culture, showcasing the Library as a dynamic space where the community can experience culture, creativity, and history at no cost.

Groove with The BAND

Developmental Disabilities Awareness Month came alive at Cleveland Public Library in partnership with the Cuyahoga County Board of Developmental Disabilities during Groove with *The BAND*.

In Brett Hall, patrons experienced a sensory-friendly visit with **FriendsWithYou**'s furry robotic performers, plus adaptive CPL Play gaming, face painting, balloon art, and more.

Still, We Belong

Still, We Belong, a photo series and exhibit by photographer **Bridget Caswell** went on display at Main Library in May. In partnership with The LGBT Community Center of Greater Cleveland, the series captured transgender people in portraits as their true selves for the first time.



The Superhero Project

The Superhero Project debuted at Main Library, showcasing comic-book-style artwork and stories that honored children, including those with illnesses or disabilities, and celebrated the qualities that make each of them unique.

Relay Cleveland

Main Library's Brett Hall hosted Relay Cleveland, an interactive art experience tracing the journey of school desegregation in Cleveland. The exhibit highlighted the lived experiences of students, educators, and leaders who fought systemic racism to achieve educational equality.

Welcome Card: A Card for Everyone

To reduce barriers and expand access, Cleveland Public Library introduced the Welcome Card, allowing patrons without a permanent residence to borrow items and utilize digital resources and printing services. By offering Welcome Cards, the Library ensured that more people in our community have the opportunity to learn, grow, and thrive.



Major Initiatives

A Superhero Homecoming: The Land of Heroes

A Superhero Homecoming celebrated Cleveland's role in the newest Superman film with workshops, live conversations, and opportunities to learn from award-winning writers and illustrators. The event honored Superman's legacy, highlighted Cleveland's creative community, and brought fans together for an unforgettable celebration of comics and imagination.

Science of Reading Conference: The Path to Book Joy

Cleveland Public Library hosted the Science of Reading Conference: The Path to Book Joy, bringing together librarians, educators, and community partners to share strategies that help every child become a confident reader. The Path to Book Joy was presented in part through the support of Parker Hannifin Foundation, Bruening Foundation, and Thomas H. White Foundation.



MAIN LIBRARY
100TH
ANNIVERSARY

Cleveland Public Library proudly celebrated the 100th anniversary of Main Library, a landmark of architectural beauty and civic pride. Designed by Walker and Weeks and opened in 1925, Main Library has served generations of Clevelanders as one of the largest public research libraries in the nation and a hub for learning and inspiration. The Library honored this milestone with the dedication of a state historical marker to recognize Main Library's cultural significance and its enduring role as The People's University.

The centennial celebration came to life with the Curious Garden Party, which welcomed nearly 3,000 visitors to Main Library for a day of joy and imagination. Inspired by Alice in Wonderland, guests explored whimsical exhibits, live performances, crafts, and hands-on activities, including pop-up displays like "Alice in All Languages" and "Library Love Letters." The event captured the magic of Main Library's centennial and invited the community to celebrate a century of stories, ideas, and discovery together.



Creating Campuses

MARTIN LUTHER KING JR. CAMPUS

The opening of Cleveland Public Library's Martin Luther King, Jr. Campus marked a defining moment for the Library. Unveiled in January 2025, the grand opening brought together civic leaders, civil rights advocates, families, and neighbors to celebrate not only a new building, but a shared commitment to equity, access, and possibility rooted in Dr. King's enduring legacy.

Designed as a welcoming gathering place, the two-story campus features flexible meeting spaces, dedicated areas for children and teens, exhibit galleries, technology resources, and 24-hour access points to meet the needs of a modern, diverse community. At the heart of the building is the Table of Brotherhood, a central gathering space designed to spark dialogue, creativity, and collective experience, which welcomed 73,513 visitors and hosted 1,173 community events, conversations, and programs in its inaugural year. Building on a legacy of preserving Black history, literature, and lived experience, the anchor campus features rich collections, thought-provoking exhibits, and innovative programming that connects past struggles to present-day conversations.

Glenville Campus

The Glenville Campus reopened with a renewed focus on workforce development and digital access through the Jack, Joseph and Morton Mandel Workforce and Senior Digital Innovation Lab. Designed by Bialosky Cleveland, the transformed campus features inviting gathering spaces, enhanced technology, and flexible learning environments tailored to the needs of the surrounding community, and earned an Honor Award at the AIA Ohio Design Awards.

At the heart of the campus is the Digital Innovation Lab, made possible by the generous support of the Jack, Joseph and Morton Mandel Foundation. The Lab expands access to emerging technologies, STEM learning, and workforce and career development opportunities for adults and seniors.

Cleveland Public Library broke ground on the Walz Campus, which will feature a three-story residential building providing 51 affordable apartments for seniors 55 and older.

TechCentral: Innovation in Action

The Library unveiled the next chapter of TechCentral, featuring more space and new state-of-the-art tools. The expanded department introduced sewing and embroidery machines, a recording studio, and enhanced makerspace areas while continuing to provide free access to computers, Wi-Fi, research databases, and learning apps.

Mold Remediation

Cleveland Public Library relocated 650,000 books to downtown Main Library, carefully cleaning each volume to remediate past mold exposure. The climate-controlled space, equipped with remote monitoring, will preserve the collection and improve public access to the vast collection.



2025 By The Numbers



VISITORS

1,608,412

WEBSITE VISITS	PUBLIC COMPUTER SESSIONS	MEETING ROOM BOOKINGS	HOTSPOT CHECKOUTS
1,482,092	266,639	27,990	7,547

TOP VISITED CAMPUSES



MAIN CAMPUS VISITS
335,651



CARNEGIE-WEST CAMPUS VISITS
66,535



RICE CAMPUS VISITS
123,782



STERLING CAMPUS VISITS
66,073

REIMAGINED CAMPUSES



MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR. CAMPUS



GLENVILLE CAMPUS



TECHCENTRAL REVAMP



Operating With Excellence



Leadership

Executive Director and CEO, Felton Thomas, Jr., was named one of 2025's Most Influential Leaders by Who's Who in Black Cleveland. He was also named to Cleveland Magazine's 2025 CLE 500 for his leadership, impact, and influence in the Cleveland community.

Organizational

Cleveland Public Library received the Bruce G. Kriete Community Award from PFLAG National's Cleveland chapter, recognizing its commitment to creating safe and inclusive spaces across all campuses.

MILESTONES

CPL.org

In fall 2025, Cleveland Public Library launched a redesigned CPL.org, improving access to information, services, and resources for its patrons and staff. Designed with inclusivity at its core, the new website reflects the Library's commitment to serving a wide and diverse audience through clear language, accessible design, and a welcoming user experience.



Trustee Corrigan 40 Years of Service

Cleveland Public Library recognized Board Trustee Thomas D. Corrigan's 40 years of dedicated service to the Library with a special proclamation and the unveiling of the newly named Thomas D. Corrigan Board Room.

Letter from Cleveland Public Library Foundation

Dear Friends,

Your interest in and support of Cleveland Public Library and the Cleveland Public Library Foundation are testaments to the deep, durable bond that has connected this institution and its local community for more than a century and a half. Thank you for being such an integral part of a remarkable bond!



The Cleveland Public Library Foundation exists to raise philanthropic funds that amplify the Library's impact. By supplementing state and local tax dollars, which provide critical funding for traditional library services, philanthropic dollars raised by the Foundation enable the Library to do more. In this way, gifts and grants made to the Foundation serve as vital investments, catalyzing accessible opportunities for lifelong learning within a community whose needs, although great, are no match for its potential.



Time and again, we have been reminded of two enduring truths: Cleveland Public Library changes lives, and the individuals and institutions across our region who generously support the Foundation exponentially increase the Library's capacity to do so. In our respective roles as the Foundation's president and board chair, it is our pleasure to share the updates that follow and our honor to express our heartfelt gratitude to you. With sincerest appreciation,

DR. SHENISE JOHNSON-THOMAS
President

LARESE PURNELL
Board Chair

Library Shop

EST. MAY 2025



The Cleveland Public Library Foundation launched a new retail venture, The Library Shop, in May. Located in a Superior Avenue storefront on the first floor of the historic Arcade, the shop officially opened its doors in conjunction with the 100th anniversary celebration of Cleveland Public Library's Main Library Building.

The Library Shop is a dynamic storefront, a meaningful extension of the Library's mission, a celebration of Cleveland's creative community, and a growing source of earned income for the Foundation. It was created to reach new audiences, highlight Cleveland Public Library collections through rotating displays, and showcase the work of local entrepreneurs. Supported by 23 active volunteers in 2025, including partnerships with John Carroll University, Cleveland State University, and Tri-C, the curated selection features handcrafted goods by local artisans, including jewelry, prints, soaps, woodwork, stationery, and more. Inventory also includes secondhand books and DVDs from Library collections, Library-inspired merchandise, and locally screen-printed apparel bearing The People's University logo.

Come see us at The Library Shop! Hours and more at cpl.org/shop!



2025 Black, White, and REaD Celebration

Amanda Knox, author, podcaster, and executive producer, headlined the Foundation's BLACK, WHITE, and REaD annual celebration on October 9. The evening brought together supporters for an engaging program alongside food, drinks, and entertainment.

Steve and Loree Potash, digital content innovators and co-founders of OverDrive, received the **inaugural Linda Eastman Trailblazer Award** for advancing equitable access to reading and information. Greg Stefani was presented with the Robert Pincus Outstanding Service Award in recognition of his transformative service and leadership on the Foundation's Board of Directors. The award is named in honor of Foundation Director Emeritus Robert Pincus, its inaugural recipient.

Board Members

Cleveland Public Library Foundation

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CLE Consulting Firm

Allen Dengler
Clearstead

Eric Gordon
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Positive Education Program

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TREE Fund

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Community Volunteer

Gregory Stefani
Past President
Federal Reserve Bank
of Cleveland – Retired



Notable Grants:

A YEAR OF GENEROSITY

We are deeply grateful to every benefactor whose support made an impact in 2025. Together, individual and institutional donors contributed **more than \$5 million** in pledges and gifts, providing vital resources to advance the Cleveland Public Library Foundation mission and sustain the Library's impact in the year ahead. This outstanding support funded key priorities, including:

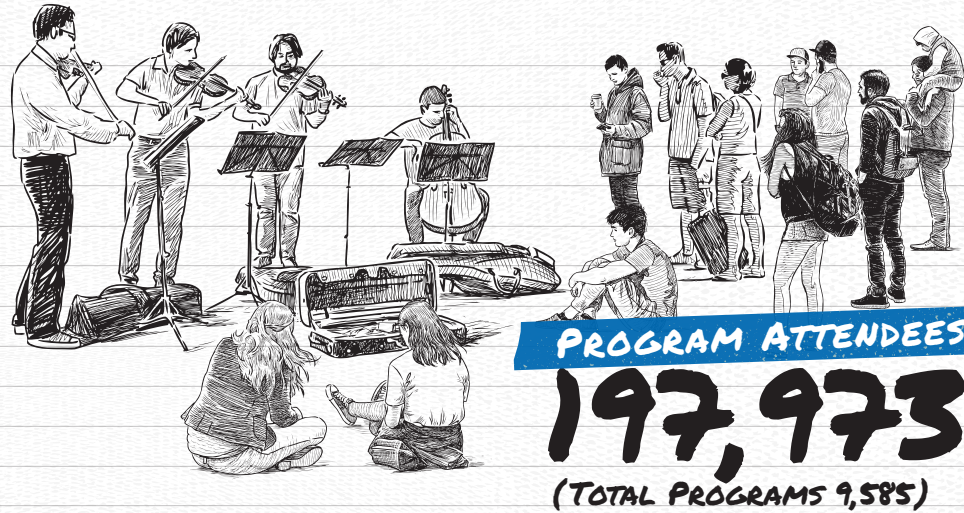
- Advancing a core group of strategic Library priorities: Closing the gaps in reading and digital literacy; Creating campuses; Exposing our community to arts and culture; Preserving Cleveland Public Library collections; and Responding to real-time Library needs.
- Facilitating sound Foundation operations.
- Establishing an endowment dedicated to securing the Foundation's long-term sustainability.

Among the highlights of these awards were:

- Two leadership gifts from the **Jack, Joseph and Morton Mandel**

Supporting Foundation:

- **A \$3 million grant** to support vital capital enhancements to the Fleet Campus in Cleveland's Broadway-Slavic Village neighborhood in conjunction with Cleveland Public Library's Facilities Master Plan.
- **\$1 million challenge grant** for the Library's Northeast Ohio Broadcast Archives (NEOBA) initiative.
- **An unrestricted bequest of more than \$1 million**, which has been allocated to the establishment of a Cleveland Public Library Foundation endowment.
- **A \$100,000 grant** from **Parker Hannifin Foundation** directed to the ongoing rollout of the Library's Cleveland READS campaign.
- Grant support from the **George Gund Foundation**, which provided critical leadership funds for the launch of the One Cleveland campaign.
- Planning grant funds from the **Cleveland Foundation**, which will support the development of the design for a proposed outdoor plaza adjacent to the Martin Luther King, Jr. Campus in University Circle.
- **Corporate partnership contributions totaling more than \$120,000** received from a combination of first-time and returning sponsors led by **RPM International** and **Medical Mutual of Ohio**.



**CLE READS
BOOK FEST**
475

**ROCK
+ READ**
850

**JURASSIC
JAM**
3,000+

**ISLAND OF MISFIT
LIBRARIANS**
3,206

PHYSICAL ITEMS IN COLLECTION
11,431,043



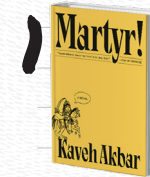
**DIGITAL
CIRCULATION**
3,232,626

**TOTAL LIBRARY
ITEMS CIRCULATED**
6,422,977

**TOTAL
CARDHOLDERS**
324,676

PATRON FAVORITES

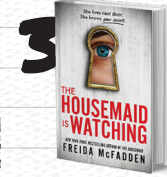
MOST BORROWED ADULT TITLES



1 Martyr!
By Kaveh Akbar



**2 The God Of
The Woods**
By Liz Moore

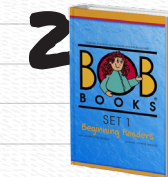


**3 The Housemaid
Is Watching**
By Freida
McFadden

MOST BORROWED YOUTH TITLES



1 Big Jim Begins
By Dav Pilkey



**2 Bob Books:
Set 1**
By Bobby Lynn
Maslen



**3 Bluey. Swim
School.**
By Penguin
Young Readers
Group

MOST BORROWED MOVIES TITLES



1 Wicked: Part 1
2025

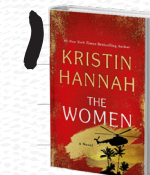


2 Gladiator II
2025



**3 Deadpool
& Wolverine**
2024

MOST BORROWED AUDIO BOOKS TITLES



**1 The Women:
A Novel**
By Kristin
Hannah



2 Onyx Storm
By Rebecca
Yarros



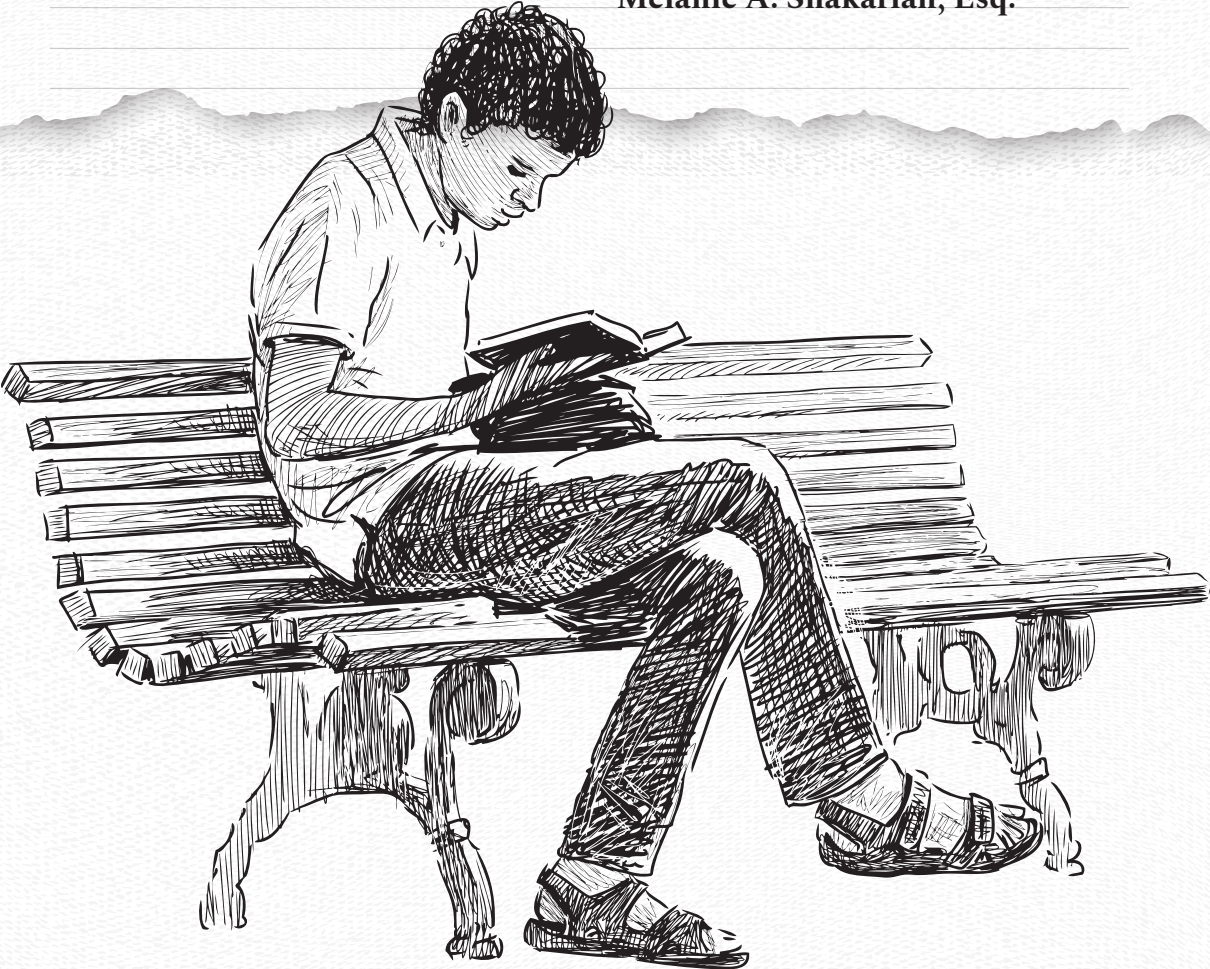
**3 The Wedding
People:**
By Alison
Espach



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Cleveland Public Library

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Executive Leadership

Cleveland Public Library

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Dr. Shenise Johnson Thomas Chief, External Relations & Development	Anna Carter Chief Talent Officer
Carrie Krenicky Chief Financial Officer	John Skrtic Chief, Special Projects & Collections
John Lang Chief Operations Officer	Bryan Szalewski Chief Legal Officer
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Harriette Parks Chief, Public Services	Stephanie Jansky Senior Director, Board & Executive Operations



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