



EAST BATON ROUGE PARISH  
**LIBRARY**

**2023**

## East Baton Rouge Parish Library Highlights for 2023

- Library Director Spencer Watts retired in March 2023. Following a national search in the fall, Katrina Stokes was selected to become the new Library Director.
- The Library began implementing tasks included in its Strategic Plan in 2023. Thousands of patrons participated in the Facilities Master Plan Survey in summer 2023. Work will continue into 2024.
- The Library broke ground for Phase 1 of the renovation/additions to the Scotlandville Branch Library in November 2023 and broke ground for the new South Branch Library in October 2023.
- The Library's Collections remain stable, comprising more than 2 million items. New additions to the collection included special online resources such as Mometrix Test Prep, Washington Post, CQ Researcher, HiveClass, Medici.com, the Proquest Louisiana Collection, Legal GPS, StoryTime PODS, Mango for Kids, Comics Plus for Teens and Kids, Scholastic Go, National Geographic for Kids, and Gale in Context-Elementary. Special Collections materials were used by researchers and writers, such as for The Baton Rouge Gallery's "*And We Went: 60 Years After the Baton Rouge Swim-In*" exhibition, and documentary producers, such as LPB's *A Tall Order* and WAFB's *Buckskin Bill Special*.
- The Library increased the collections within the "Library of Things" with more circulating Wi-Fi Hotspots, Games, and Family Activity Kits. 725 Wi-Fi 2 Geaux Hotspots were checked out 5,332 times in 2023.
- The Library issued 27,449 new library cards in 2023. The total Patron Count increased to 337,943, or 74 % of the parish population. Over 1/3 of these patrons had used their cards within the last 12 weeks.
- The overall visitor Gate Count rose to 1,704,452, an increase of 9.74%. Staff report that people are staying longer and taking advantage of more services when they do visit.
- Overall circulation is up 8%. Digital Circulation leveled out at 1,254,672, which is less than half of the circulation total of 2,769,116. Many "digital" patrons are returning in-person for physical items.
- Reference/information questions leveled off at 878,095, reflecting the ability for patrons to come in person to any location to ask for assistance or self-serve.
- Recording 919,008 logins, the Library's Wi-Fi usage showed modest gains of 2.3%. Wi-Fi was enhanced throughout the system.
- Library staff produced 8,542 programming events and activities, with an estimated 360,153 people participating. Of these, 713 were Virtual programs with 6,277 viewers. 24,808 patrons participated in 753 Self-Directed Activities such as Grab and Geaux Bags. Highlights for the year: One Book One Community featuring *The Blues by Chris Thomas King*; the Mid-City Micro Con; the 10<sup>th</sup> Annual BR Mini-Maker Faire®; the 46<sup>th</sup> Annual Author Illustrator Program featuring author Carole Boston Weatherford and her son, artist Jeffery Boston Weatherford. The summer Genealogical symposium focused on the records of enslaved people in Louisiana. The Library partnered with LSU to produce Saturday Science and the Sounds of Science series. The Library was selected as a partner for the IMLS Makerspace Research Proposal with Chicago Public Library and the River Center Branch hosted the SPARK Single Moms Grant with Capital Area STEM Network. As use of Maker Spaces in several branches increased, a Badging system rolled out throughout the system. Makerspaces were used by 3,848 patrons.
- Continuing its focus on literacy, a new cohort of children "graduated" from *1,000 Books Before Kindergarten*, which enrolled 646 new participants and logged 49,496 books. The *Reading is Elementary* program enrolled 511 children, and the Literacy Calendar expanded to Spanish. The *Press Start! Ready, Set, Read! Initiative* continued at all branches. Library staff continued the Home Library Pilot Project working with at-risk 3<sup>rd</sup> graders at six schools. Beanstack's virtual Summer Reading Challenge platform extended activities throughout the year. Staff presented 2,392 story times to more than 53,000 attendees.
- Outreach Service visits recorded 2,358 stops at pre-schools and day care centers, retirement centers, schools, and events. Three Ford Vans and a Ford Expedition were deployed in May 2023.

- Database use remained strong. Financial and business news sources, local and family history, platforms for life-long learning, and homework help were heavily used by card holders.
- Began participating in the Baton Rouge U.S. Flag Retirement Program with the Mayor’s Advisory Council on Veterans Affairs.
- BR City Key Website was revised in 2023 to include updated ALICE and County Health Rankings. The Career Center continued to engage patrons in-house, in outreach, and via its robust YouTube channel.
- An RFP for a new website was issued in late fall 2022 and work began on the new website in fall 2023. Hundreds of patrons participated in usage surveys to help design the new site.
- “We Care Bags” continued with distribution of 5,043 shelf-stable bags of food to youth in five branches; additionally, the Carver Community Pantry served residents weekly. The Library partnered with Forum 225 to host the Delmont Gardens Pantry, which will open in 2024.
- Meeting Rooms were used 4,858 times with an estimated 111,354 in attendance. This reflects a 37% increase in bookings.
- Study Rooms at Main, Baker, Bluebonnet, Delmont Gardens, Fairwood, Greenwell Springs, Jones Creek and River Center Branches were used 29,110 times.
- Library patrons reserved 172,772 items in 2023. In preparation for the new ACT 436, the Collection Development Policy was revised, new card categories were added, and the Library went Fine Free.
- The Red Stick Writers group published their first book, and local author Karen Ullo won the 2023 Louisiana Indie Author Project Contest; items are published on the Library’s Biblioboard platform as well as through other publishing channels.