OFF THE SHELF
A LOOK INSIDE BROOKLYN PUBLIC LIBRARY
A MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

This summer, Brooklyn Public Library restored in-person library service across the borough. We welcomed patrons back to browse the millions of books on our shelves, use vital technology from laptop loans to printers, and ask questions of our greatest resource—our librarians and library staff.

We opened the newly renovated and restored Central Library, where readers can peruse a specially curated collection in New & Noteworthy, and entrepreneurs, freelancers, and job seekers can build new businesses and hone their resumes in the Business & Career Center. Brooklynites can also enjoy library services outside their local branch. Several outdoor reading rooms offer amplified WiFi and programs for all ages, from multi-lingual puppet shows to Open Air Ask a Tech sessions. Outside the Center for Brooklyn History, the exhibition Brooklyn Resists traces the long history of Black activism in Brooklyn from the 17th century to the present.

As we safely expand in-person service, we’re also working hard to sustain the virtual services thousands of Brooklynites grew to depend on over the course of the pandemic. As you’ll see in this issue, incarcerated patrons continue to access services such as BookMatch via tablet, and students continue to meet virtually with our BPL College Connect counselors.

Brooklyn Public Library is determined to meet our patrons where they are, whether it’s in their neighborhood library, on the sidewalk, or online. As one patron put it, “there is nothing in this world more available than a library, nothing more democratic, nothing more empowering.”

Linda E. Johnson
President & CEO

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All photos, unless indicated, by Gregg Richards
Cover: Black Movement Library by LaJune McMillan co-presented with A Blade of Grass.
Inside front cover: Walt Whitman outdoor library

BLACK AMERICAN LIBRARY CARD

In January 2021, BPL, in partnership with Brooklyn Borough President Eric Adams and Brooklyn’s Community Boards, put out an open call for artists to submit their designs for a Black American Library Card to celebrate and raise awareness of the African American Heritage Center at Macon Library. The Center contains material on African American history and culture as well as the “Preserving Footsteps” archives collection, which focuses on the history of Bedford-Stuyvesant.

Over 400 submissions were reviewed by a panel of BPL staff and community members and the finalists had their works displayed virtually on the BPL website. The winning design is by local artist and college student Jneyde Williams, who received a $2,000 stipend for her work. The limited edition Black American Library Card was introduced in June as part of the Library’s celebration of Juneteenth and is now available at libraries throughout the borough.

Williams’ winning illustration uses bright colors common in African art to create a feeling of warmth, security, and rebirth and depicts historical figures—ranging from Brooklyn Dodger Jackie Robinson, the first African American to play Major League Baseball, to Astronaut Mae Jemison, the first Black woman in space—along with a young girl representing the hope of a new generation. Noted Williams, “The inspiration behind my design is to show that the key to success is through education and to encourage access to literature for those of impoverished Black communities. The young brown girl is me; since elementary school, I could never keep my head out of a book.”

All the works submitted by the contest finalists can be viewed at bklynlibrary.org/black-american-library-card. For more information on the African American Heritage Center at Macon Library, visit bklynlibrary.org/locations/macon/aahc. BPL is particularly grateful to Wendy A. Robinson and other Community Board 3 members for their work developing the idea for a new library card.

Jneyde Williams with her winning design
Brooklyn Public Library turned its branches inside out!

In the Spring of 2021, library branches introduced creative outdoor programming and invited Brooklynites to enjoy BPL’s services in the fresh air.

More than 30 library locations began offering new or expanded outdoor seating over the course of the summer, including new furniture and shelters, secured in part through a grant from the Charles H. Revson Foundation. Seven branches have offered laptops specifically for outdoor use.

For families, we’ve been offering outdoor storytimes as well as Storywalks, printed pages of picture books mounted outside libraries to read as you stroll. For a different kind of storytelling, the Whispering Libraries program at 10 branches presents curated playlists of music, poetry, oral history and spoken literature, audible via hidden speakers.

Additional outdoor activities have included sessions of our Team Up to Read interactive reading series designed for children ages 5-9 and their caregivers, Open Air Ask a Tech technical assistance sessions, DIY crafting outdoors for kids and teens, yoga for adults, and live musical performances, including a Friday night jazz series outside Clinton Hill Library supported in part by a grant from the J.M. Kaplan Fund.

Your neighborhood libraries are delighted to welcome you back! Make use of our laptop loan at several branches al fresco, sign up for a library card right from the sidewalk and then browse and borrow materials in the sunshine.

Explore BPL’s outdoor programming calendar: bklynlibrary.org/outdoors

Clockwise from left: Patrons at Central Library’s outdoor plaza, BPL Outdoors signage, Display page from an outdoor Storywalk, Outdoor reading room at Kensington Library, The Parts, an exhibition at Central Library by Chloé Bass, Katowitz Radin Artist in Residence, Teen Cookmobile program at Central Library
Recognizing that many Brooklyn high school students do not have access to personalized college counseling, in 2020 BPL began offering online one-on-one college guidance for anyone looking to explore post-secondary education.

Volunteer counselors can help students find the right college program, explore non-college options such as technical certificates, assist in completing CUNY, SUNY or private school applications and apply for financial aid (FAFSA, TAP).

The program recruits BPL staff from departments including Adult Learning, the Business & Career Center, Youth & Family Services and from library branches across Brooklyn. These staff received training from The Options Institute of Goddard Riverside Community Center, a local leader in training volunteers in counseling to increase college access for low-income students.

“I’m delighted with the enthusiasm and passion that our College Connect staffers have shown for working with high school students on their post-high school plans,” said BPL’s General Counsel Chloe Wasserman, who came up with the initial idea for the program.

“During this particularly challenging year, we hope that we’ve been able to provide an additional trusted source of information for teens, with an easy-to-use platform and personal connection to a counselor.”

Appointments take place over Zoom and are generally offered on weekday mornings and during afternoons after school, as well as Saturdays.

Over 50 students initially registered with the website and have used it to schedule over 90 counselor appointments.

If you or someone you know are thinking about applying to college or another post-secondary educational program, you can book an online appointment with a BPL staff member who will help you with the admissions process.

For more information on College Connect visit: bklynlibrary.org/college

BPL is committed to providing library services and resources to everyone—including individuals who are currently inside New York City’s justice system—thanks to the Virtual Library for All program sponsored in part by the Charles H. Revson Foundation and the Robert M. Schiffman Foundation.

Prior to the pandemic, BPL’s Justice Initiatives team spent their days bringing collection materials and programming to six city jails, including Rikers Island. Not only did staff bring books and answer reference questions, they also created and fostered relationships—getting to know inmates’ interests and histories.

When the pandemic forced the end of in-person services, New York City’s Department of Corrections allowed BPL to create and share video content that can be accessed through electronic tablets available to a large majority of the people being held at city facilities.

The tablets contain a variety of content developed by Justice Initiatives staff in partnership with other organizations, including Queens Public Library. Some examples include a screenwriting workshop that was adapted in partnership with BRIC Media, a drawing tutorial led by a local artist, ASL classes taught by an American Sign Language Instructor, and ‘Astrology 101’ courses conducted by a local astrologer.

To date, 24 online classes have been conducted with a combined viewership of over 2,600. Staff have also created a survey to help identify the specific needs of these patrons and will use the information as a guide to create future content.

In addition, the Justice Initiatives team adapted BPL’s popular BookMatch program. Patrons submit their reading request online, whether it’s an exact title or suggestions for different genres. Once a patron has selected at least two titles for the month, staff mail the books to them along with responses to any reference questions they submitted.

The BookMatch program has become extremely popular. “Thank you sooo much!” wrote one user, who is in a correctional facility. “I know your services are much in demand because I see practically the entire facility reading and they received their books from you! Thanks again!”

For more information on BPL’s services for incarcerated individuals, visit: bklynlibrary.org/outreach/justice-initiatives
Brooklyn Resists at BPL’s Center for Brooklyn History

If you passed by BPL’s Center for Brooklyn History (CBH) over the summer, you may have seen an outdoor photography display that is at the heart of the ongoing Brooklyn Resists, a multi-faceted exhibition that illustrates the long history of Black protest and resistance in Brooklyn.

Brooklyn Resists explores racial protest in Brooklyn from the civil rights era to the present. Mounted in response to the killing of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, and the long history of Black Brooklynites experiencing persistent racism and state violence, including police brutality, the project is one of CBH’s first major initiatives since joining with BPL. The exhibition tells the story of the activists’ efforts in Brooklyn resistance movements through four distinct themes: putting their physical bodies on the line; promoting education as activism; turning celebration into political demonstration; and forming alliances and allyship.

The exhibit’s images and narrative connect moments of racism and resistance throughout four centuries of Brooklyn’s history, tying together these histories from the colonial period, the 19th century, the mid-20th century through to the present.

The Brooklyn Resists exhibition had its launch on Juneteenth 2021 and runs through late September. There is also an ongoing virtual exhibition that digs deeper into its important themes, with educational resources and contemporary collections that document Brooklyn’s Black Lives Matter protests in 2020. The online exhibit showcases existing archival materials, including primary and secondary sources, ephemera and oral histories. There is also a community collecting initiative powered by Urban Archive, providing Brooklynites an opportunity to share their stories and experiences around resistance and protest in Brooklyn, and an educational curriculum under development funded by National Grid Foundation.

In addition, an exciting interdisciplinary project with Brooklyn’s Medgar Evers College this fall will bring together creative writing students and professional playwrights to respond creatively to historical materials through written poems or short monologues. A selection of these creative works will be performed in early 2022. Additional public programs with other partners will explore issues of race and racism in our borough, city and country. From a look at the state of reparations today, to an examination of expressions of protest through the arts, to discussions with activists and change-makers and a look at the history of racism in America, these free panels and discussions shine a light on what is perhaps the most urgent issue facing our country.

For more information about Brooklyn Resists and other happenings at CBH, visit us online at bklynlibrary.org/cbh or follow us @brooklynhistory on Twitter and Instagram.
Every June, BPL selects the recipients of its annual staff awards: The Dr. Lucille C. Thomas Award for Excellence in Librarianship and The Feder Leonard Family Award for Excellence in Service to the Library’s Public. Both awards are determined through nominations by colleagues, making this recognition especially meaningful.

The Dr. Lucille C. Thomas Award recognizes librarians who provide exemplary service to the public and uphold the highest ideals of the profession. The award is named for Dr. Thomas, the first African American to serve as president of the New York Library Association and the New York City School Librarians Association. This year’s recipient is Adwoa Adusei, Senior Librarian at Brownsville Library. In addition to her duties as Senior Librarian, she co-writes and co-hosts BPL’s weekly podcast Borrowed, served on the Brownsville Youth Council, was part of a team focused on alleviating staff burnout, and pioneered a podcast club for teens.

In the words of Paulette Silvera, Library Circulation Supervisor at Brownsville Library and one of many staff members who nominated Adwoa, “I believe that Adwoa is more than deserving of recognition for the vital role she plays in both the quality of service that Brownsville Library provides to our community and the consistent support that she provides library staff as they have sought new ways to serve the neighborhood.” In her acceptance speech Adwoa spoke about the meaning of her work. “If I can create new narratives through a less fearful lens [by subverting perceptions and expectations] with the programs and work that I’m doing, then I am truly doing my job.”

The Feder Leonard Family Award for Excellence in Service to the Library’s Public recognizes non-librarian staff who have done outstanding work in advancing and strengthening BPL’s public services. This year’s recipient is Merita Shehu, Library Circulation Supervisor at Bay Ridge Library. “She is an essential part of the Bay Ridge Library team as well as the community,” said Rita Meade, Senior Librarian at Bay Ridge Library. “Merita goes above and beyond with every interaction and always maintains a positive attitude. Our patrons love her and our branch depends on her.”

Merita immigrated from Albania and has devoted a great deal of passion to advocating for and supporting immigrants. She designed a BPL library user guide in multiple languages and has participated in immigrants’ rights rallies. In her acceptance speech, Merita made reference to her own journey. “If you ask a newcomer in what language they dream, we dream in our mother tongue. But we make the dream come true in the language in which we’re welcomed.”

Congratulations to our 2021 award winners!
New & Noteworthy

In May 2021, BPL was thrilled to unveil exciting renovations to Central Library, including the Major Owens Welcome Center, the Civic Commons, the refurbished Grand Lobby and the new Business & Career Center. One of the gems of the renovation is New & Noteworthy, a beautiful new space made possible through the generosity of Susan and David Marcinek.

New & Noteworthy provides patrons an inviting space to browse and discover

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BKLYN BOOKMATCH
SUMMER READING EDITION

BookMatch is a readers’ advisory service that uses what readers like (and dislike) to create customized reading recommendations for patrons. This year, a new kid-friendly BookMatch form launched just in time for 2021 Summer Reading. Designed to encourage kids of all ages to request a personalized booklist, the new form features straightforward multiple-choice questions, such as:

- I like books:
  - ☐ that have adventure
  - ☐ with magic
  - ☐ that take place in the past
  - ☐ have a mystery
  - ☐ have real animals
  - ☐ have talking animals
  - ☐ are science fiction
  - ☐ that teach me things
  - ☐ other:

- I’m curious about:
  - ☐ dinosaurs
  - ☐ space
  - ☐ animals
  - ☐ history
  - ☐ science
  - ☐ crafts
  - ☐ interesting people
  - ☐ making the world better
  - ☐ current events
  - ☐ other:

- I like to:
  - ☐ draw
  - ☐ play sports
  - ☐ craft
  - ☐ dance
  - ☐ play video games
  - ☐ use the computer
  - ☐ do experiments
  - ☐ cook
  - ☐ play music
  - ☐ build
  - ☐ be outside
  - ☐ other:

You can request your own BookMatch list here: bklynlibrary.org/bookmatch

PLAZA PERFORMANCE: EMELINE MICHEL

Haitian songstress Emeline Michel performs on the Plaza on July 22 as part of a summer-long concert series that featured performers from around the globe, including Guinean singer and guitarist Natu Camara, Brazilian singer and percussionist Davi Vieira, and Moroccan collective Innov Gnaoua.

For more information or to register visit: bklynlibrary.org/bplpresents
BEGINNINGS, MIDDLES AND ENDS
First Unitarian Church of Brooklyn
119 Pierpont Street

Beginnings, Middles and Ends presented by Brooklyn Art Song Society, explores the moments that make up our lives in song. Works that bookend careers, meditate on mortality, and follow the course of a lifetime to show us what it means to live a life.

Friday, Nov 5 / 7:30 pm
REMEMBERING
Two monumental British song cycles explore the fleeting wonder of youth. Finzi’s A Young Man’s Exhortation is filled with the tenderness of first love, while Vaughan Williams’ Songs of Travel looks back at youth with bittersweet wisdom.

Friday, Dec 3 / 7:30 pm
MORTALITY MANSIONS
Two titans of American vocal music, Tom Cipullo and Herschel Garfein, explore the final stages of life through some of their most ambitious and poignant works.

YOUNG COMPOSERS FESTIVAL
Saturday, December 11 / 4 pm
Sarah Goldfeather and Sugar Vendil
Sunday, December 12 / 4 pm
Nailah Nombeko and Simon Brown
Dweck Center

In collaboration with the ETHEL Foundation, BPL presents the young composers from the fourth round of ETHEL’s Homebaked competition, whose works will be performed by the ETHEL Quartet. From its founding, ETHEL has collaborated with and commissioned a long list of composers and musicians, recognizing the importance of being part of current compositional thought and practice, and of supporting the work of emerging artists. ETHEL’s Foundation for the Arts was created with this purpose in mind. In 2010, ETHEL named its emerging artist commissioning initiative HomeBaked.

ETHEL’s HomeBaked initiative is made possible, in large part, by the generosity of the Jerome Foundation.

OFF THE SHELF FALL 2021
EVENTS FOR YOUTH & FAMILIES

THE THREE LITTLE PIGS | LOS TRES COCHINITOS
Saturday, October 16 / 1 pm, Cooper Park
The Three Little Pigs is a fable about three pigs who build their houses of different materials. In contrast, A Big Bad Wolf blows down the first two Pigs’ houses, made of straw and sticks, respectively. However, the wolf cannot destroy the third pigs’ house made of bricks. Presented by Eduardo Navas & his Scaramouches Puppet Theatre

CITY OF TRASH
Saturday, October 30 / 1 pm, Workshop in-person at Central Library’s Plaza
Help! Help! City of Trash residents do not know what to do—their beloved city is overrun with waste! Watch the virtual performance in advance and on October 30th at the live workshop, audience members ages 7 and up will be guided through a found object puppet building workshop to build their own puppet superheroes and help us finish our story and save the city.

Materials needed:
You and your ideas; Scissors; Glue/tape; Marker; and a variety of found/recyclable objects that are interesting to you. Make sure these objects are safe, no sharp edges, or cleaning fluid containers. Some examples include: cardboard, boxes, plastic bags, egg cartons, milk cartons, salad containers, take-out containers, recycled paper/magazines, food scraps, or items in the giveaway pile (knick knacks, old shoes, etc.).

STOMP, CLAP & SING
Every other Tuesday / 11 am
BPL’s Facebook
FLOR BROMLEY
October 5
Celebrate Hispanic Heritage Month with storyteller Flor Bromley

ROLIE POLIE GUACAMOLE
October 19
Halloween Special
ROLIE POLIE GUACAMOLE

Author Reading & Activity

Wednesdays / 3:30 pm
BPL’s Facebook page

October 13
SLED FOR GABO
Emma Otheguy

October 20
RONDA NOCTURNA
Cynthia Alonso*

October 27
AND THEN CAME HOPE
Stephen Savage

November 3
GRANDPA ACROSS THE OCEAN
Hyewon Yum

November 10
LOS CABALLITOS DE MAR SE MUDAN DE CORAL
Sandra Rivera Sanchez*

November 17
EDDA: A LITTLE VALKYRIE’S FIRST DAY OF SCHOOL
Adam Auerbach
* Estos programas están en español

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Call or visit bklynlibrary.org/support to learn about the many ways you can support Brooklyn Public Library.

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General Inquiries
givinginfo@bklynlibrary.org

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* These programs are in Spanish.

For complete listings: bklynlibrary.org/event-series/events-for-youth-and-family

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