BROOKLYN PUBLIC LIBRARY IS THE FIFTH-LARGEST PUBLIC LIBRARY SYSTEM IN THE UNITED STATES, SERVING THE BOROUGH'S 2.5 MILLION RESIDENTS AND OFFERING THOUSANDS OF PUBLIC PROGRAMS, MILLIONS OF BOOKS, FREE WIFI AND MORE THAN 1,100 INTERNET-ACCESSIBLE COMPUTERS.
THE TECHNOLOGY ISSUE

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Celebrating 75 years of world-class collections and wide-ranging programs at Central Library.
IT’S BEEN 20 YEARS SINCE THE CARD CATALOGS WERE REMOVED FROM THE LOBBY OF CENTRAL LIBRARY, supplanted by a computerized system that augured the end of an era. A new millennium approached, and revolution was in the air.

Bill Gates personally delivered a dozen internet-ready computers to Brooklyn Public Library, as Microsoft’s $2.2 million “Libraries Online” grant inspired the city to invest millions more for World Wide Web access in all 60 of our branches. “Indeed,” Mayor Giuliani announced, “the city recognizes the potential power of the internet.” Mr. Gates predicted that “libraries will play a pivotal role as we enter the 21st century in providing access to knowledge and opportunities for everyone.”

And so we have. Far from diminishing their role in society, the digital age has made libraries more essential than ever to the communities they serve. The benefits of technological progress have not been shared equally by all New Yorkers, and libraries, for more than a century the city’s most democratic institutions, have embraced their role as equalizers.

Last year alone, Brooklyn Public Library hosted more than 4,300 free technology classes and workshops. We are the borough’s largest provider of free wireless internet access, and our 60 branches boast more than 1,100 computers for public use. Every BPL branch is home to at least one technology resource specialist who provides hands-on, personalized assistance to patrons.

Mr. Gates noted in 1996 that the book and the screen could and would co-exist. As of this writing, Brooklyn Public Library’s catalog holds 3.9 million materials, the vast majority in print. In fact, with the city’s increased investment in libraries in this year’s budget, we plan to acquire even more materials, both print and digital.

The years ahead promise breakthroughs beyond the contemporary bounds of our imagination. New technologies and means of communication will continue to emerge at an astonishing pace. Whatever the future brings, BPL will be there to help our patrons find their way—and I am confident that 20 years from now, as we look back fondly on the antiquated tools that amaze us today, the Library will remain a point of departure for Brooklynites who wish to engage more deeply with the world around them.

Very truly,

Linda E. Johnson
President & CEO
TELL CITY LEADERS: CONTINUE TO #INVESTINLIBRARIES!

Longer hours, more classes and happier patrons—thanks to supporters like you, we succeeded in securing budget increases from the mayor and city council last year, allowing us to offer universal six-day service for the first time in nearly a decade. Despite these increases, our branches are still operating with less money for collections and programs than they received in 2008, and they are straining in the face of record demand for library services.

Now, the mayor and city council are planning the budget for the coming year, with hearings beginning this spring. Let’s make sure our leaders hear our call to preserve last year’s gains and increase the budget for Brooklyn’s libraries.

Send your message now to Mayor de Blasio and the New York City Council: Stand up for the branches, and keep investing in our communities!
Visit bklynlibrary.org/standup
The focus in classrooms across the country is science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) programming, and BPL is doing its part to support students. For more than a decade, the Library’s T4 program has helped high school students develop the technological and professional skills they’ll need to get ahead in their careers.

Today’s Teens, Tomorrow’s Techies was launched in 2004 to provide high school students with access to computers and cutting-edge technologies. Approximately 100 Brooklyn high school students are selected each year for an eight-day summer training session in which they develop valuable customer service skills and complete intensive coursework in Microsoft Office, Adobe Creative Suite and other programs.

After training, each T4 student devotes more than 100 volunteer hours to helping patrons utilize Library technology.

Program director Jackson Gomes stresses that T4 participants don’t just receive free training and workshops—the students are mentored by tech professionals who teach them how to prepare and market themselves for college and the workplace. The T4 program also hosts field trips that allow participants to experience the tech sector in person.
“Our graduates go on to great opportunities in college,” says Gomes, who has led the program for five years. “And many continue to have a relationship with BPL, either by running a program or computer class, or by motivating their peers to explore STEM opportunities.”

As they volunteer, the students continue to develop marketable skills, such as teaching experience, Java programming, coding, animation and more.

Gomes is encouraged to note an increase in T4 applications from young women. “Initially a lot of the girls signed up solely for the volunteer opportunity,” he says, “but lately, girls apply to the program with the goal of becoming engineers.”

A psychology major in college, Gomes grew up in BPL libraries and admits a fascination with how things work—from human brains to advanced machinery. “I enjoy teaching myself technology; it means I’ll never stop learning.”

Gomes believes that the Library must continue to make technology accessible to all. “We are the bridge; we are the doors,” he says. “When I walk into the Information Commons at Central Library on a Saturday, or visit Sunset Park Library on a weekday, I know our young patrons are going to walk away having learned something, for free. The fact that the Library has so much to offer any teen who’s thirsty for knowledge—that’s a big deal.”

Equally important to Gomes is making sure that each branch has access to the tools and technology the community needs.

A lot of people use the public library as a resource, something they need to be available and accessible. Where it can’t be, technology bridges that gap.

T4 teens learn to work with and give back to the community. They are among the Library’s youngest and most enthusiastic ambassadors. As Gomes puts it: “Once you hook a teen into the Library for the right reasons, you have them for life! They’ll come back and tell their friends.”

For more information on the T4 program, visit us at bklynlibrary.org/support/volunteer/t4
Bike
the
Branches

Brooklyn Public Library

May 7 2016

The Best Excuse for an All-Day Bike Ride
Our annual bike extravaganza is a fun way to support the Library’s 60 neighborhood branches. Cruise to as many branches as you can from 10 am – 5 pm to qualify for prizes.

Tour the Borough on Two Wheels
This year’s bike routes include a Brooklyn Waterfront Tour, Brownstone Brooklyn Tour and the Dora the Explorer Family-Friendly Tour Around Prospect Park.

Celebrate a Job Well Done
The Bike the Branches Block Party, 3–7 pm at Central Library, features live music, food vendors, drinks and activities for all ages.
LIBRARY LANES  
BOWLS OVER BPL PATRONS

Take what’s great about traditional bowling (friendly competition, a fun group activity, those sweet moves), subtract the not-so-great (smelly bowling shoes, heat lamp nachos, the always-jamming ball return), and what do you get? Library Lanes!

Launched at Central Library and Macon Library just a year-and-a-half ago, BPL’s virtual bowling league has become one of the Library’s fastest-growing social programs. Since expanding to eleven branches throughout the borough, bowlers are preparing for an East Brooklyn versus West Brooklyn competition in the spring.

Library Lanes is managed by BPL’s Services for Older Adults team and is geared toward the over-50 crowd. The league brings together senior citizens with a piece of equipment that’s probably more familiar to their grandkids: the Microsoft XBox One. The video game system is easy to use—no prior experience necessary—and allows teammates to practice against each other or take on an opposing team from another library. “It’s an amazing way for older adults to form friendships, get exercise and gain familiarity with gaming technology,” according to Taina Evans, BPL’s coordinator of services for older adults.

Games are held every Thursday morning, with monthly tournaments to determine branch bragging rights. Thus far, Team Macon has dominated the competition.

Interested in giving virtual bowling a whirl, but don’t quite qualify as an older adult? Fear not: Library Lanes is open to everyone. “Different age groups peek into the Info Commons Lab at Central and it becomes naturally intergenerational,” says BPL Director of Outreach Services Nick Higgins. Just don’t expect your comparative youth to be an advantage. “Teens get beaten by 80-year-olds all the time. The seniors are competitive; they come to play.”

To find out more about Library Lanes and BPL’s many other programs for older adults, visit www.bklynlibrary.org/seniors.
Brooklyn Public Library hosts cultural events throughout the borough, including special series and programming at Central Library’s Dr. S. Stevan Dweck Cultural Center. Join us to ignite your curiosity and immerse yourself in art and ideas.

SPRING SERIES SPOTLIGHT

AUTHOR TALKS

Cokie Roberts: DC Women During the Civil War
*Wednesday, April 20*

Gotham: New York City’s Best Writers: Rob Spillman
*Saturday, May 7*

Geoff Dyer
*Thursday, May 12*

Patrice Nganang & Mukoma wa Ngugi
*Thursday, May 19*

Yaa Gyassi with Tracy K. Smith
*Monday, June 13*
EXHIBITIONS

CELEBRATING AGWE: PAYING HOMAGE TO THE VODOU GOD OF WATER IN BROOKLYN
BY GARRY PIERRE-PIERRE

Pulitzer Prize-winning multi-media and entrepreneurial journalist Garry Pierre-Pierre exhibits 20 hauntingly beautiful photographs of Haitian immigrants practicing their religion in Brooklyn. The images are a peek into an African religion that remains a source of mystery and misunderstanding to many.

Grand Lobby, May 1 – 31

THE 30TH ANNUAL EZRA JACK KEATS / NYC DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION BOOKMAKING COMPETITION

An exhibition curated by award-winning children’s book author and illustrator Pat Cummings, featuring her original artwork and illustrations by artists she has mentored, many of whom are the creators of successful and well-known children’s books.

Foyer Cases, April 14 – June 5

UNTITLED, FEATURING AND CURATED BY PAT CUMMINGS

April was the month Rissman’s mother passed away. This ongoing project is the photographer’s attempt to connect with her mother and explore her own feelings of abandonment and yearning through images that examine her identity and document her past.

Lobby Gallery, April 14 – June 5

APRIL IS THE CRUELEST MONTH
BY ILISA KATZ RISSMAN

An exhibition curated by award-winning children’s book author and illustrator Pat Cummings, featuring her original artwork and illustrations by artists she has mentored, many of whom are the creators of successful and well-known children’s books.

Foyer Cases, April 14 – June 5

PLUS

> Another round of creative talks with Dialogues in the Visual Arts (April 20 & May 25)
> Randy Weston celebrates his 90th birthday with programs at the Dweck (April 26 & 30)
> Pinkalicious returns to BPL in a production based on the popular book by Victoria Kann (April 9)

Visit the online calendar for full details and more.

Hours: M – Th 9 – 9 | F 9 – 6 | Sa 9 – 6 | Su 1 – 5

Photo: Garry Pierre-Pierre
Started Decades Ago, Library Opens Today

Will Be No. 1 Institution of Kind by 1951,
Boro President Cashmore Says at Ceremony

Clamoring plans which first took definite form as far back as 1899, the new Brooklyn Central Library at Grand Army Plaza officially opens to the public today following a brief ceremony yesterday during which Borough President Cashmore envisioned the institution as "the number one library of the United States in 1951."
HERE ARE ENSHRINED
THE LONGING OF GREAT
HEARTS AND NOBLE
THINGS THAT TOWER
ABOVE THE TIDE,
THE MAGIC WORD
THAT WINGED WONDER
STARTS, THE GARNERED
WISDOM THAT
NEVER DIES.

ROSCOE C. BROWN
Nothing’s worse than being stuck without a book—but with BPL’s extensive collection of downloadable eBooks, audiobooks and online resources, you’ll never have to face that bleak fate again. Even if you love print, give BPL’s digital catalog a try, and say goodbye to lugging Tolstoy and Trollope all over the city. (Or, indulge your guiltier literary pleasures; with digital books, no one needs to know!)

Hauling cookbooks to the store is no fun, but shopping without inspiration or a list can be expensive. Ebooks give you the best of both worlds. Carry popular, common-sense cookbooks on your handheld device and you’ll always know what to pick up for dinner!

Never find yourself without a book again, no matter how many flights are delayed or how small your suitcase is. Take BPL with you wherever you go.

Check out the selections to the right and find the full list of recommendations at bklynlib.org/bookmatch
To learn more about TeleStory and other outreach programs, visit bklynlib.org/prison-libraries.
Since its opening in 2013, Central Library’s Shelby White & Leon Levy Information Commons has been one of the borough’s most popular destinations for freelancers, students, jobseekers and lifelong learners.

“It was pretty busy from the start,” says Melissa Morrone, the Commons’ supervising librarian. “What we offer is very appealing to a broad group of people, which is what I imagined the space would be used for.”

Three years on, patrons are making use of the Information Commons’ reservable meeting rooms, free workshops and workstations loaded with sophisticated design software. Of the programs offered in the Commons, Morrone’s favorites include the Brooklyn Transitions series, which chronicled the effect of gentrification on borough neighborhoods. “It was standing room,” she says. “I felt we were really connected with the community on a topic that mattered to them.” Although patrons can access the latest software and technology in the Commons—including a recording studio with a green screen, editing software and high-quality microphones and cameras—Morrone stresses that it is not just a tech space: “The Information Commons is a place where people can collaborate and create and learn.” She notes that patrons can sign up for programs that range from Photoshop tutorials to language classes to beekeeping seminars. “We provide an opportunity for people to tap into their own potential, with tools that you can’t get in other parts of the system.”

The Information Commons model has expanded on a smaller scale to Coney Island, Kings Highway, Kensington and Park Slope libraries, and at the new technology lab at Crown Heights. “We’ve made connections with a lot of community partners since we opened,” Morrone says. At Coney Island, for instance, BRIC Arts Media, which has hosted classes like Capturing Your Poetry and Stop-Motion Animation in the Information Commons, has opened a small TV studio that can be reserved by patrons.

More on the Information Commons is available at bklynlibrary.org/locations/central/infocommons
INFORMATION COMMONS
THREE YEARS OLD AND GOING STRONG
INTRODUCING JESSE MONTERO, BPL’S DIRECTOR OF CENTRAL LIBRARY

It’s only fitting that the tech issue of Off the Shelf feature Jesse Montero, a staff member who has long championed innovative technology at Brooklyn Public Library. Recently promoted to director of Central Library, Jesse talked to us about how he got his start at BPL, Central’s 75th birthday and what he hopes to accomplish in his new role.

Jesse’s experiences as a patron inspired him to become a librarian himself. “I was using the library a lot as a researcher and came to enjoy being in libraries and working with librarians. I thought I could make an interesting career out of it.”

Nearly a decade later, it’s safe to say he succeeded. A major project Jesse worked on is now one of the Library’s biggest draws: The Shelby White & Leon Levy Information Commons. Jesse was responsible for planning the public service model for this hybrid technology lab/meeting area/co-working space and developing the policies that govern its usage. He and his colleagues crafted the partnerships that continue to attract classes and workshops to the Commons.

After the launch of the Info Commons, Jesse helped train clerical workers to become technology resource specialists, staff members who troubleshoot issues and provide technical assistance and training to library visitors. “I admire how responsive the Library is to our patrons’ needs. Technology has made libraries relevant in new ways,” Jesse says. “WiFi in libraries transformed us into an office and co-working space. Not everyone has access to computers or broadband, so it’s important that we provide access to digital technologies and services.”

As director of Central, Jesse looks forward to creating new partnerships and services that meet the needs of BPL’s patrons. One of his first duties, however, was to look to the past—February 2016 marked the 75th anniversary of Central Library’s opening.

“It’s really exciting to become the Central Library director during its 75th birthday. This library is a Brooklyn icon, and it’s changed so much with the borough itself. I’m happy to be leading it through more changes: later this year, the Business & Career Library will be relocated to Central and we’ll be able to provide more services to entrepreneurs and jobseekers.”

When Jesse’s not at work, he spends time with his family—and these worlds often intersect. “I’ve got two young boys who keep me busy, but luckily they love coming to the library.”
BPL DONOR MAKES TECHNOLOGY MORE ACCESSIBLE IN CROWN HEIGHTS

MEET JAY LEWIS: Erasmus Hall High School alumnus and BPL donor.

Brooklyn native Jay Lewis recently donated laptops for a learning lab at Crown Heights Library to help meet the evolving needs of his old neighborhood. “The purpose of the Library has changed from when I was a kid,” Lewis says. “It has broadened its scope as a learning and safety center.”

Lewis makes it a point to support non-profits that help children from economically-distressed neighborhoods. “Often times, kids are struggling, and extracurricular activities can be a motivating factor for them to stay in school.” He hopes that children from every neighborhood in Brooklyn benefit as he did from the influence of the Library: “I vividly remember walking from my apartment to my local branch with my books. My travels in life were based on dreams I had from the books I read growing up.”

As a co-founder and retired CEO of a securities firm, Lewis knows firsthand how important it is to be tech-savvy.

“Now more than ever, I see that if a person doesn’t have skill sets in technology, he or she is going to be left behind.” Lewis believes that children who are introduced to digital resources at an early age will be better prepared for success in school and in the workplace. “Donors need to provide that bridge to technology resources in the Library that lower-income families often don’t have access to.”

Crown Heights Library children’s librarian Cristina Rapisardi has seen the positive impact of the new laptops on the community she serves. “The laptops help in so many ways to assist patrons with job searching, writing their résumés, finding apartments, even making medical appointments. So much of life these days requires computer access that having the laptops is practically a necessity.”

Rapisardi notes that the laptops serve patrons from every walk of life, including the residents of local family shelters. “A mother was able to apply for a seat in pre-kindergarten for her son. She was even able to help her older son apply for a gifted program within his current school—an opportunity afforded her by the laptops,” Cristina says.

To discover how you can give back to Brooklyn Public Library, visit us online at bklynlibrary.org/support.

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HELP PROVIDE FREE LIFE-TRANSFORMING RESOURCES TO ALL BROOKLYNITES

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