In a few short days, following the unprecedented closure of all Brooklyn Public Library branches due to the COVID-19 pandemic, frontline librarians, book selectors, IT technicians and administrators transformed BPL into a fully-accessible digital library.

Remaining funds for collections were immediately shifted towards purchasing more eBook and audio titles, particularly those in high demand such as: Essential Yoga: An Illustrated Guide to Over 100 Yoga Poses and Meditation; SAS Urban Survival Handbook: How to Protect Yourself Against Terrorism, Natural Disasters, Fires, Home Invasions, and Everyday Health and Safety Hazards; The Ultimate RPG Character Backstory Guide: Prompts and Activities to Create the Most Interesting Story for Your Character; The 5-Minute Brain Workout: Games and Puzzles to Keep Your Mind Sharp and Supple; and T’ai Chi for Seniors: How to Gain Flexibility, Strength, and Inner Peace.

Purchases also include popular children’s and teen titles in digital format. Historically, eCollections for kids have represented only a small part of digital circulation, but since the shutdown that has increased by 68%. BPL has also invested in a live online tutoring service for K-12 students and is working with educational database providers to provide unlimited at-home access.

Accessing online learning resources and checking out eBooks or audiobooks has never been easier. BPL staff revamped our digital content webpages to make them more user friendly and discoverable. The registration form for a BPL eCard, which provides access to our eBooks, audiobooks and online databases, is now prominently displayed on the front page of our website. March saw a 291% increase in eCard sign-ups. The eBooks page provides step-by-step instructions on how to browse and check out titles on various eReader platforms. Not surprisingly, March also had a record high for eBook and eAudio use, with 178,781 total checkouts for the month and daily totals as high as 7,778.

BPL’s rapid response to this historic crisis aims to meet the changing and varied challenges faced by residents across the borough. The Library will continue to provide resources and services to people wherever they are. As the need for learning never stops, neither can we.
The many obstacles created when Brooklyn Public Library closed its branches were no match for BPL’s intrepid staff, who quickly mobilized to ensure that the public would retain access to vital programs and services.

Jessica Harwick, a children’s librarian at McKinley Park Library, was one of those who sprang to action. We spoke with Jessica on April 9 to find out more about her experience.

As Jessica notes, the transition to virtual programming happened extremely quickly. As soon as staff was alerted to the impending closure (less than a week prior) a group of enthusiastic librarians and staff immediately began brainstorming virtual programs, deciding which programs would translate to an online format, designing a programming schedule and figuring out the best way to broadcast. For children’s programming such as virtual storytimes, it was determined that the Library’s existing Family Facebook page would provide the best platform.

The first virtual storytime took place on March 13 and was attended by 5,200 viewers. As storytimes and other programs have continued, library staff have figured out how to address common issues and pitfalls with the virtual format. One helpful innovation was assigning a monitor for each program, usually also a librarian, who can support the presenter and troubleshoot behind the scenes. Today, storytimes average over 800 viewers, are offered in multiple languages (English, Spanish, Urdu and Tibetan/English) and have generated cumulative weekly viewership averages of nearly 11,000.

A particular challenge that Jessica and her peers have encountered with kids and family programming is determining what materials to use for craft activities, as this involves guessing what people might have in their homes (normally, BPL provides all the supplies). In order to make the programs as accessible as possible, she usually suggests several alternatives. For instance, for a collage activity using magazines, Jessica made sure families knew they could use junk mail, empty food boxes or old calendars, and if kids didn’t have glue they could take pictures of their assembled collage with a phone.

Using remote video technology has also been a learning experience for Jessica. She has been figuring out how to best film her programs and, since she is doing it all on her own, there have been a lot of improvised camera stands and practice sessions. She has also posted technical questions through the Library’s internal communication channels, and many staff have jumped in with suggestions and ideas. Of course, some issues are very specific to Jessica’s personal circumstances, such as when her cat is an uninvited guest during filming!

One of the greatest challenges Jessica has faced is not having children present to participate, especially for school-age programs. Normally there is a lot of interaction between students and the presenter which often informs how the activity unfolds. Online programs require an entirely different kind of preparation, anticipating questions or concerns and preparing answers, and Jessica devotes significant time to respond to these potential issues.

Jessica notes, “This is definitely challenging my skills in new ways!”

Adapting programs, interacting with the community and supporting my colleagues all look a lot different now.

JESSICA HARWICK

“I’ve had to get more comfortable with technology and learn to think and plan differently. I’m learning to be patient with myself, to ask for help when I need it and to be adaptable in new ways.”
The trustworthy information and reliable resources that libraries provide are even more important when we face uncertain times. One of the best ways we can take care of each other is to stay informed. This reading list, created by BPL Librarian Emma Carbone (Central Library), offers basic information about germs and viruses and also provides historical perspectives about previous pandemics.

**BookMatch** is a readers' advisory service that uses what readers like (and dislike) to create customized reading recommendations based on the interests or needs of patrons. You can request your own BookMatch list here.

**More Deadly Than War: The Hidden History of the Spanish Flu and the First World War** by Kenneth C. Davis
More than 100 years later, the Spanish Influenza outbreak in 1918 is known as the worst in modern history. This story explores the outbreak’s intersection with WWI through stories, photos, firsthand reports from medical professionals and survivors.

**Terrible Typhoid Mary: A True Story of the Deadliest Cook in America** by Susan Campbell Bartoletti
This book tells the story of Mary Mallon, more widely known as Typhoid Mary, and explores who she really was before becoming synonymous with disease.

**Guns, Germs, and Steel: The Fates of Human Societies** by Jared M. Diamond
Diamond explores the geographical and environmental factors he feels helped shape the modern world.

**Inside the Outbreaks: The Elite Medical Detectives of the Epidemic Intelligence Service** by Mark Pendergrast
Since its founding in 1951, the Epidemic Intelligence Service has waged war on every imaginable ailment. This book explores the EIS’ history and their quest to eliminate threats to world health.

**The Ghost Map** by Steven Johnson
The story of London’s most terrifying epidemic—and how it changed science, cities and the modern world.

**The End of Epidemics: The Looming Threat to Humanity and How to Stop It** by Jonathan D. Quick
A leading doctor offers answers on one of the most urgent questions of our time: How do we prevent the next global pandemic?

**How to Survive a Plague: The Inside Story of How Citizens and Science Tamed AIDS** by David France
The definitive history of the successful battle to halt the AIDS epidemic, and the powerful, heroic stories of the gay activists who refused to die without a fight.

Get your own Bookmatch list at [bklynlibrary.org/bookmatch](http://bklynlibrary.org/bookmatch)

The Library’s online programs and resources are available wherever you are! Borrow eBooks and audiobooks, attend a virtual storytime, learn a new skill, research a school project and much more at [bklynlibrary.org](http://bklynlibrary.org).

**Borrow eBooks & Audiobooks**
[bklynlib.org/ebooks](http://bklynlib.org/ebooks)

**Get Personalized Reading Recommendations**
[bklynlib.org/bookmatch](http://bklynlib.org/bookmatch)

**Listen to the Library’s Podcast**
[bklynlib.org/podcasts](http://bklynlib.org/podcasts)

**Explore BPL’s Online Resources**
[bklynlib.org/online-resources](http://bklynlib.org/online-resources)

**Attend a Virtual Program**
[bklynlib.org/virtual-programming](http://bklynlib.org/virtual-programming)

**Get Resume and Career Help**
[bklynlib.org/business-career](http://bklynlib.org/business-career)

**Take Online Classes**
[bklynlib.org/adult-learning](http://bklynlib.org/adult-learning)

**Read BPL’s Blogs**
[bklynlib.org/blogs](http://bklynlib.org/blogs)

**Discover Brooklyn History**
[bklynlib.org/brooklyncollection](http://bklynlib.org/brooklyncollection)
It's hard to know which of these things is more unexpected: that in a time of health crisis and desperate need for accurate information, my first instinct is to read the newspaper from 100 years ago; or that said news coverage has proved oddly comforting.

It began in a familiar way: folks felt unsure about things. On September 18, 1918, writing about “Influenza and Sports” the Brooklyn Eagle reported that “Whether the influenza will flourish is a question that no one can answer.”

Things changed quickly, though. By October 4, 1918, there were 421 cases of the flu in Brooklyn. Quarantines and shutdowns were soon imposed. On October 10, Camp Mills, a military installation in Long Island, was quarantined, and more distantly, Pennsylvania’s coal mines were shut down because, as workplaces, they were serving as points of high contagion.

Notably, while the whole coal industry was alarmed by the huge drop in production, it mobilized medical workers to support sick employees.

According to the Eagle, New York City had an estimated half a million cases by October 20, 1918! The Health Department was quick to mobilize new strategies: they divided Brooklyn into 24 “influenza districts” with health workers assigned to support each area. Each of these districts also provided low-cost prepared meals to residents who were ill. In addition, the State Food Commission set up operations to distribute food from an empty storefront in downtown Brooklyn.

Unfortunately, just as now, there was a swirl of misinformation around the epidemic.

A local swimming coach suggested that overeating was in part to blame for the epidemic and an ad from the “Chiropractors of Brooklyn” suggested that spinal adjustment would help prevent infection. Public health mistakes abounded as well. Even after the peak of the epidemic had passed, a new outbreak sprang up in Eastport, Long Island after the Red Cross hosted a ball for 500 people but served lemonade and fruit punch to all the guests using only 15 glasses!

A fascinating element of the 1918 flu was the timeline: while September 18 saw uncertainty that an epidemic would even hit and October 4 saw a sudden spike in cases, by October 25 the local health authority declared that the worst was over and by November I rates of infection were dropping significantly. While we can’t confidently look to news reporting from 102 years ago for a clear indication of how our current health crisis will unfold, if pandemics do follow patterns then history reinforces some of the tips we’re receiving right now: avoid large gatherings, follow public hygiene standards and be careful about the sources of health information you receive.

There’s no way to compare our current moment with 1918’s health crisis, but it’s heartening to see how early 20th century employers closed down workplaces and, in the midst of major revenue losses, provided healthcare to impacted employees. Health departments of yore rethought structures of community care provision in times of crisis and understood the value of trying out new mechanisms for supporting their most vulnerable populations. Hopefully, the Brooklynites of 1918 would be heartened to know that Brooklyn today can learn from and be inspired by the ways they endured a pandemic.

To learn more, sign up here for the Brooklynology blog.

All images are scans of article clippings from the Brooklyn Daily Eagle circa 1918-1920
The Brooklyn Collection, BPL’s premier local history archive, is home to an array of rare holdings including newspaper clippings, manuscripts, photographs, atlases, maps and ephemera. While some are only available to view in person, the Collection does host a wide range of resources that you can access without even getting up off the sofa.

DIGITAL COLLECTIONS

BPL’s online catalog offers a selection of more than 20,000 historical photographs from the Brooklyn Collection and audio and video recordings created by BPL and other sources. The catalog is fully searchable by keyword and there is an online tutorial available that provides searching tips. The Brooklyn Daily Eagle Photograph Collection (c. 1900-1955) is the source of many of these images, documenting change and development in Brooklyn throughout the first half of the 20th century. Examples of the Brooklyn Daily Eagle photographs include bridges, churches, Coney Island, neighborhoods, parks, schools and the Eagle itself. The collection also includes smaller photography collections by commercial and amateur photographers. Ranging from family photographs to images of street life to official municipal photographs, these collections capture a broader range of borough history spanning the 20th century to the present day.

BROOKLYN NEWSSTAND

Brooklyn Newstand is a collection of digitized Brooklyn newspapers made possible through a partnership between Brooklyn Public Library and Newspapers.com. The titles represent various Brooklyn neighborhoods and each newspaper provides a wide variety of coverage and includes information on politics, business, education, church events, sports, entertainment and community happenings. Some papers provide coverage of international events while others are exclusively devoted to events in Brooklyn. Since no two titles are identical in scope, the individual descriptions should be consulted to discover the precise contents of each paper. An online tutorial describes easy ways to search for names or terms.

BROOKLYN HIGH SCHOOL NEWSPAPERS

These digitized news publications from Brooklyn high schools focus mainly on school news, sports results and academic prizes, but community events, as well as matters of national and international interest, are reported on as well. The bulk of the papers in the collection span the mid-1950s to the mid-1960s. Many famous Brooklynites appear in the pages of these publications, such as Bobby Fischer (Erasmus Hall High School), Janet Yellen (Fort Hamilton High School), and Bernie Sanders (James Madison High School).

DIGITIZED CITY DIRECTORIES

Digitized Brooklyn City and Telephone Directories from 1856–1967 provide a wealth of information about individuals, businesses, occupations, advertising and social class status, as well as practical neighborhood information such as street maps, public services, shopping and restaurant guides, maps of rapid transit systems and more. The earliest city directories list names, addresses and occupations of Brooklyn residents, while later directories include telephone numbers for individuals and businesses.

BPL recently announced plans to combine with another storied Brooklyn institution, the Brooklyn Historical Society (BHS). BHS will join BPL as a distinct center for students, scholars, researchers and the public. Bringing together the unparalleled collections of BHS with the resources of the Library’s own local history archive, the Brooklyn Collection, this merger will provide Brooklynites with an exceptionally comprehensive storehouse of our borough’s unique and storied history.

From the Brooklyn Collection photo archives, legendary Brooklyn Dodgers player Jackie Robinson reading to his children. Image originally from the Brooklyn Daily Eagle.

These resources are merely a click away. Just head over to the Brooklyn Collection page on the BPL website bklynlibrary.org/digitalcollections and get ready to explore!
WITH MANY COMPANIES CLOSED AND JOBS AT RISK, BROOKLYN’S LOCAL BUSINESSES AND WORKERS ARE FACING CHALLENGING TIMES.

In response, BPL’s Business & Career Center (B&CC) has mobilized to ensure jobseekers, entrepreneurs and small businesses have access to useful and critical business-related information.

Members of B&CC’s Career Team—librarians who provide resume and career help in the branches and at Central Library—are now offering resume help via email and promoting free online access to Lynda.com, a learning platform for gaining business, software, technology and creative skills to achieve professional goals. B&CC is also setting up virtual classes on how to utilize Zoom and other video platforms to conduct online interviews.

Staff members have created an online COVID-19 Resource Listing for the numerous avenues for support and resources from government agencies and partner organizations available for small businesses, job and career searches and personal finance. Staff have been working to establish at-home access to online resources, such as SimplyAnalytics (demographic, business and marketing data), Morningstar (financial planning and investment advice) and Mergent Intellect (advanced business research database), that normally require usage of computers at BPL locations, along with tutorials for accessing the data.

PowerUP!, B&CC’s annual business plan competition that offers free courses for entrepreneurs on topics such as marketing, financial projections and market research, is continuing despite the shutdown, thanks to continued lead support from Dime Community Bank. The PowerUP! team set up virtual orientations, accepted online applications and are holding virtual classes.

As Maud Andrews, Manager of B&CC, notes, “Our users are some of those hit hardest by the order to shelter in place. They are individuals who’ve lost their jobs or entrepreneurs whose businesses are struggling to survive. B&CC is committed to offering them support, encouragement and assistance in sorting out and responding to the impact COVID-19 has had on the economy and their own financial well-being.”

To learn more, sign up for B&CC’s bi-weekly newsletter at: bklynlibrary.org/business
Even before this time of social isolation, online connectivity was a critical resource, providing access to necessary information, educational opportunities as well as social and cultural engagement. Altice USA, a communications and media company that provides high-speed broadband and ultra-HD video, local news, telephone and wireless offerings through its Optimum and Suddenlink brands, has been instrumental in ensuring that BPL can provide internet access at its libraries throughout the borough.

Altice USA has provided its support to the Library since 2013 and currently powers WiFi for patrons with free high-speed internet at every BPL branch within its service area (42 locations) as well as additional dedicated internet service for BPL’s Best Buy Teen Tech Center at the Kings Highway branch, which requires extra bandwidth capacity to support the high activity at this location.

During the COVID-19 crisis, Altice USA has offered Optimum broadband options at no cost to students and their families, as well as schools in the New York Tri-State area to help them remain connected, and BPL has utilized its contacts throughout the Brooklyn educational community to raise awareness of these services. As part of its partnership with BPL, Altice USA has also generously donated airtime to broadcast a PSA that promotes BPL’s extensive roster of digital programs developed to respond to the COVID-19 crisis. To date, the PSA has aired over 170 times with more than 50k impressions.

Altice USA’s community interests extend to STEM education, digital wellness, access to technology, and diversity and inclusion, among others. Beyond suppling vital online connectivity, Altice USA has provided its support to the Library in a variety of areas since 2016, including Bike the Branches community building events and the Library’s Today’s Teens, Tomorrow’s Techies (T4) teen technology training and community volunteer program.

As Lee Schroeder, Altice USA’s Executive Vice President of Government & Community Affairs and Chief Diversity Officer states,

“Altice USA is proud to partner with Brooklyn Public Library, supporting programs for teens and ensuring internet connectivity for patrons as they visit and participate in the Library’s many vibrant programs.”

Brooklyn Public Library is a neighborhood cornerstone, connecting people and providing valuable educational and cultural resources and programs, access to technology and other important services to the community. Through the help of Altice USA, BPL continues to be powerfully positioned to serve all Brooklynnites in times of crisis as well as year-round.

To learn more about opportunities for corporate partnerships, contact Samantha Dodds, Director of Corporate Relations, at sdodds@bklynlibrary.org

“The 28th Amendment

October 2020
In the spring, BPL hosted 30 online town hall forums where residents voiced the most important concerns facing their communities and discussed how the Constitution supports or is silent regarding contemporary society.

Each discussion was transcribed by law students and the ideas sent to our Framers, (a diverse panel of local scholars, journalists, artists and activists) who will draft this newest amendment over the summer. BPL will release the 28th Amendment on behalf of the people ahead of the November elections. While not a legal document, the amendment will reflect the aspirations and collective will of the people.

VISUAL ARTS PROGRAMMING

I Wish to Say

October 16, 2020
Participating BPL locations
On 10/16 participating branches will host artist Sheryl Oring’s civic engagement project I Wish to Say.

Patrons can dictate messages to the next President that will be typed on postcards and sent to the White House after the 2020 Presidential election as well as added to the project’s archive, giving patrons a chance to air their concerns, hopes and dreams for a continued democracy.

Visit bklynlib.org/exhibitions/i-wish-to-say
ART & SOCIETY CENSUS:
A PROJECT ON THE STATE OF ARTS AND CULTURE
Organized by BPL Presents and curator Laura Raicovich, launched in partnership with Hyperallergic, this new project invites Brooklynites and beyond to talk about where art and life intersect and what they believe is crucially missing from culture right now. In the same ways this year’s Census surveys the needs for resources nationally, we will launch an online questionnaire and a series of working groups at BPL to investigate the changing role of the arts in personal and public life.

LITFILM
A BPL FILM FESTIVAL ABOUT WRITERS
Thursday, September 24 – Sunday, October 4
Get an inside look at writers’ lives, artistic processes and political struggles through these inspiring documentaries and films. LitFilm is made possible by support from WarnerMedia.
Visit bklynlibrary.org/litfilm this summer for details.

2020 KAHN HUMANITIES LECTURE WITH ACLU PRESIDENT SUSAN HERMAN
Tuesday, September 15, 7 pm
Given the threat to our health in the time of the COVID-19 pandemic, ACLU President Susan Herman argues that our 28th Amendment should be the adoption of Article I of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, declaring our commitment to one another: to treat all with dignity and as members of our family.
Visit bklynlibrary.org/bpl-presents for details.

BPL’S 2020 POET-IN-RESIDENCE
The Library, in collaboration with Brooklyn Poet Laureate Tina Chang, is accepting applications for the 2020 Brooklyn Public Library Poet-in-Residence project beginning on June 15. The newly established BPL Poet-in-Residence project will serve as a creative force to enhance the Library’s current poetry offerings while supporting BPL’s mission to provide a space where patrons of all backgrounds and every economic standing can participate in a wide range of educational, literary and cultural programs.

The residency offers time, space, resources and mentorship to a Brooklyn-based poet. The resident will receive a stipend of $3,000, office space (social distancing rules permitting), computer use, access to BPL’s catalogue and reserves, support from BPL staff, mentorship from the Brooklyn Poet Laureate and opportunities for civic engagement with the Brooklyn literary community via workshops and collaboration on a National Poetry Month event.

The submission period is June 15 to July 20, 2020, with the residency beginning September 15, 2020 through May 1, 2021.
Visit bklynlibrary.org/poet-in-residence for details.

EVENTS FOR YOUTH & FAMILIES

University Open Air
September 2020
University Open Air (UOA) is a space for foreign-born scholars to share their knowledge and experience with fellow community members, neighbors and friends. The third semester of University Open Air kicks off later this summer with a wide-ranging curriculum offering a diverse array of topics within the arts, humanities and sciences. While UOA courses aim to equip students with valuable skills, they are non-accredited. Presented by Prospect Park Alliance and Brooklyn Public Library.
Visit bklynlibrary.org/university-open-air later this summer for information.

IMAGINE YOUR STORY
SUMMER READING 2020
To get started, visit bklynlibrary.org/summer
Major support provided by the New York Life Foundation, the 2020 city-wide sponsor for the Summer Reading Program. Lead support for Brooklyn Public Library’s Summer Reading 2020 program is provided by the National Grid Foundation. The program is also generously supported by Con Edison and Macy’s.
Brooklyn Public Library gratefully acknowledges the many donors who have provided generous support for BPL Presents programs, including: Cheryl and George Haywood Endowment for Cultural Diversity, The Kahn Endowment for Humanities Programs, Dr. Beverly S. Jacobs, Janet Anderson, Todd Ferguson, Jane Brody Enquist, The Miriam Katowitz and Arthur Radin Fund, Los Blancos, Mapleton Endowment, National Endowment for the Arts, New York State Council on the Arts, Stavros Niarchos Foundation (SNF), Sandra and Peter Schubert Endowment Fund, The Morris & Alma Schapiro Fund, The Weissman Family Foundation, Inc., City Point, WarnerMedia, the Emily Hall Tremaine Foundation’s Innovation Fund, the Estate of Pearl S. Reuillard in memory of her parents Yetta and Louis Schwartz and many other generous supporters.

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WNYC is a media partner of Brooklyn Public Library.

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

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Brooklyn Public Library gratefully acknowledges the generous support of our corporate donors (fiscal year 2020).

EVENTS FOR YOUTH & FAMILIES

VIRTUAL FAMILY EVENTS

AFRICAN DANCING AND FOLKTALES WORKSHOP
July 1 at 2 pm
Participants become the storytellers in a series of African folktales as our facilitator guides them through an African Dance workshop. Accompanied by live percussion music.

For complete listings visit: bklynlibrary.org/bpl-presents

ANANSI THE SPIDER: A WEST AFRICAN FOLKTALE
July 16 at 2 pm
A Celebration of West African Folktales performed by Nadine Grisar. Puppetry in Practice uses the creative arts to enhance literacy, spark curiosity and imagination and engage in cultural immersions.

CARA’S CATERPILLARS
July 21 at 11 am
Clap, dance, sing and party along with Cara Samantha and her magical musicians as they crawl their way into your hearts with a variety of pop, Motown, Disney and family favorite songs.

These programs are made possible by the generous support of Sawyer. Sawyer is an online platform with a wonder-filled world of kids classes, camps events and activities.

Visit hisawyer.com for more information.

STOMP, CLAP & SING
Tuesdays in August at 11 am
Virtual Programming

ESTHER CROW
August 4
Esther Crow’s online show is an eclectic mix of original acoustic guitar songs, and backing tracks of Thunder & Sunshine songs which she sings both independently and as duets with her handmade felt puppets (created by Jeff Lewonczyk).

JAM I AM
August 11
Singing guitarist Will Leet and jazz singer/pianist Sammy Rae Bowers will sing an exciting mix of children’s songs and contemporary pop songs, and foster exploration with musical instruments and fun movement activities.

CARRA SAMANTHA
August 18
Clap, dance, sing and party along with Cara Samantha and her magical musicians as they crawl their way into your hearts with a variety of pop, Motown, Disney and family-favorite songs.

ROCK’N’LOLO
August 25
It is full of singing and dancing, while learning Spanish, and most importantly, having fun!

For complete listings visit: bklynlibrary.org/bpl-presents