



Birmingham Public Library Volunteer Handbook

**A Guide Outlining
The History of BPL, Its Collections,
Departments, Programs and
Volunteer Service Opportunities**

“The mission of the Birmingham Public Library is to provide the highest quality library service to our citizens for lifelong learning, cultural enrichment, and enjoyment.”

A Message from the Director of the Birmingham Public Library



Dear Prospective BPL Volunteer:

Thank you for your interest in serving as a volunteer with the Birmingham Public Library (BPL). Volunteers are an essential part of our daily operations, making their contributions vitally important and very much appreciated. BPL adult volunteers assist with a number of functions throughout our system, most of which are outlined in this handbook. Through the Volunteer Program, we strive to meet two goals: identify system-wide opportunities for volunteers to contribute in an ongoing capacity, and to provide volunteers a meaningful and rewarding volunteer experience.

We feel strongly that our teenaged volunteers benefit from their collaboration with us—almost as much as we benefit from their participation. In the Teen Volunteer Summer Program, volunteers gain on-the-job experience, meet volunteer hour requirements, get an inside track on the fantastic resources offered at BPL, and make new friends.

As a volunteer you are a special and integral part of the BPL family. We will keep you abreast of upcoming events, operational changes, and other points of interest. I encourage you to consider joining the Friends of the Birmingham Public Library as an additional and rewarding opportunity to stay connected to your library.

Please don't hesitate to contact me if you have any questions or concerns at (205) 226-3610 or director@bham.lib.al.us. To apply for a volunteer position, please contact the Personnel Office directly at (205) 226-3612. Once again, thank you for your interest in joining our team!

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink that reads "Renee Blalock". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Irene S. "Renee" Blalock
Director

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Birmingham Public Library: An Historical Overview

From its humble beginnings in a room not much bigger than a closet, the Birmingham Public Library is now one of the largest and most respected library systems in the southeast. Over the years, it has grown in proportion to the city's population and serves a society diverse in interests, needs, and age. The history of the Birmingham Public Library demonstrates the essential role an adaptable, forward-thinking, and dynamic public library plays in our society. Here are a few highlights:

- In 1883 the Birmingham Public Library was established as part of Birmingham's public schools. John Herbert Phillips, then superintendent, set up a library in a room adjoining his office.
- In 1913 a public library board was established. The City of Birmingham assumed funding responsibilities.
- The library moved to City Hall, where both the structure and the collection burned in a great fire in 1925.
- A neo-classical building of Indiana limestone was completed in 1927 and served as the central facility of the Birmingham Public Library for fifty-seven years.
- In April 1963 the Birmingham Public Library integrated racially after almost fifty years of constructing duplicate buildings, acquiring duplicate materials, and serving the community in a climate of segregation.
- In 1977 funding was approved for the construction of a new central library and four regional libraries. The four regional libraries, built in the 1980s, are located in, and provide library service to, the immediate regions north, south, east, and west of the city center.
- In the late 1970s, BPL's Books-By-Mail service was inaugurated as the first of its kind in the country. It remains immensely popular for BPL's many patrons unable to access library materials in person.
- In 1982 BPL made the unprecedented decision to open a branch in Eastwood Mall, the first storefront library in the country, using a bookstore approach to marketing materials.
- In 1984, to accommodate the growing collection and demand for services, a contemporary-style structure containing 133,000 square feet of floor space was completed and connected to the original building by a crosswalk. The original 1927 building was extensively renovated in 1985 and renamed the Linn-Henley Research Library in honor of two of Birmingham's founding families. Together these two buildings comprise the Central Library of the Birmingham Public Library System.
- In the 1990s library administration worked to remove policy barriers preventing county-wide library service. The Jefferson County Library Cooperative became a reality, allowing patrons access to library materials in any Jefferson County library, and increased preservation efforts and public services.
- In 2009 BPL celebrated its 100th anniversary as a free library.

Birmingham Public Library: General Information

Motto

Adopted in 2006, the motto for the Birmingham Public Library is *Preserving the Past, Exploring the Future*. This slogan expresses the library's ideals and purposes and provides brand recognition for the library's products and services.

Mission Statement

The mission of the Birmingham Public Library system is to provide the highest quality library service to the community for lifelong learning, cultural enrichment, and enjoyment.

Vision Statement

The Birmingham Public Library, building on its tradition of excellence and professional leadership, will be indispensable in linking people with the universe of information.

Library Values

Promoting reading is a priority the Birmingham Public Library values. This begins with helping children become lifelong readers by acquiring materials that appeal to them, building physical and online collections that will help them in school, and maintaining them to hold their interest. Keeping children interested in reading as they grow is accomplished by acquiring materials that encourage teens to read both for pleasure and for schoolwork. Maintaining a community of lifelong readers is accomplished through building collections that are relevant to the recreational, educational, and cultural needs of the people in the neighborhoods and communities of this city. The collection management policy is intended to assist librarians in developing collections that support the value the Birmingham Public Library places on reading and on finding relevant information.

Library Roles & Services

The Birmingham Public Library is one of the largest library systems in the southeast and garners nationwide respect. It serves a society diverse in interests, needs, and age. Self-learners and scholars remain drawn to the unique archival materials and to the local and southern history resources. Students and other patrons expect current, broad-based information, and up-to-date popular materials.

BPL provides an extensive collection of materials with a broad base of appeal, written for audiences with diverse interests, and addresses the needs and interests of young and old alike. The materials in each location are consistent with the needs and interests of the community served. The Central Library offers an exceptionally large collection of materials and several specialty departments. The branches, while mirroring the philosophy and basic collections and services offered by Central, are community-focused in collections and offerings. Overall, BPL offers materials in a multitude of formats, including books, magazines, newspapers, microforms, DVDs, CDs, and downloadable audio books. Different formats serve a variety of purposes and may change to reflect the needs and

interests of the public as well as emerging technologies. While most materials may be borrowed, some specifically formatted materials are for in-library use only.

Online users factor significantly in the broader perspective of community, expecting the online library to be open 24/7 and supplying content that makes a visit worthwhile. This has been the biggest recent challenge and has resulted in the development of in-house blogs, wikis, databases, online sharing, and other Web 2.0 services. While providing information has always been the library's role, the new information landscape requires the library to identify content from its collection and develop it for online use. Not only does this preserve the original and provide the information to users, it enhances the reputation of this community as a solid information knowledgebase.

The cooperative agreement that the Birmingham Public Library shares with the other municipal public libraries in the county greatly increases the number of library materials available to each library member. In fact, the Jefferson County Library Cooperative is a model for how separate government entities can work together to provide a public service across city limits.

The Birmingham Public Library provides broad-based programming for patrons of all ages. All locations plan and provide children's programming, including age-appropriate story times, arts and crafts, puppet shows, movies, reading initiatives, and guest performers. Programs designed for teenage patrons are offered at many locations and may include arts and crafts, poetry slams, games, drama, and guest speakers and performers. For adults, the library hosts presentations and lectures by staff or guest speakers, arts and crafts, genealogy programs, and book groups. Large-scale annual events include November Children's Author event and the Local Authors' Expo. Ongoing programming includes BPL@Night, Brown Bag Lunch, and the summer reading program.

BPL also periodically hosts traveling exhibits. Many are provided by the American Library Association, the National Endowment for the Arts, and the National Endowment for the Humanities. These exhibits offer our community insight into historic events, engaging opportunities for children to experience school subjects in a new and different way, and exciting forays into science and other fields of interest. Exhibits include *Go Figure! An Interactive Math Exhibit for Children Ages 2-7*; *Benjamin Franklin: In Search of a Better World*; *Forever Free: Abraham Lincoln's Journey to Emancipation*; and *Pride and Passion: The African American Baseball Experience*. BPL has partnered with other local organizations and museums to showcase community-wide events such as *The Holocaust: Remembrance and Reflection*. This partnership included the Birmingham Civil Rights Institute, the Birmingham Museum of Art, the Birmingham Public Library, and the Birmingham Holocaust Education Committee.

Departments

The extensive collection of materials housed in the Central Library provide patrons both the expected, traditional departments of a large library, including fiction, arts, literature, sports, business science, technology, and social sciences—and several special collections. While no library system can operate without traditional collections, BPL's Special Collections attract an exceptionally large patron base and are utilized by those not only from the Birmingham Metropolitan area, but also from other states and countries. Following are brief descriptions of what these departments offer.

Archives and Manuscripts

The Archives and Manuscripts Department collects government records, business records, maps, photographs, letters, diaries, scrapbooks, and other primary materials documenting the history and development of the City of Birmingham, Jefferson County, and the surrounding area of Alabama known as the Birmingham District. The department also serves as the official archives for the City of Birmingham and as the archives for numerous local organizations and institutions. The collection contains more than 12,000 linear feet of archived material and over 400,000 photographs. Subject areas of particular strength include local government, urban and economic development, industry and the labor movement, women's history, religious history, art, music, literature, sports, and the largest collection in existence relating to the Civil Rights Movement in Birmingham.

Government Documents

The Government Documents Department houses a variety of documents and publications issued by federal, state, and local (Jefferson County and Birmingham) governments. BPL has been a Federal Depository Library since 1895, with the majority of the department's federal material supplied by the United States Government Printing Office. The department is also a Patent and Trademark Depository Library as well, containing resources relating to patents, trademarks, and copyrights. It is a cooperating collection of the Foundation Center of New York, which provides information on non-profit grant-making foundations in the United States. The Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance is another widely used funding resource. The department also is an affiliate agency of the Alabama Data Center, which produces demographic information.

Literacy Department

BPL is committed to literacy and outreach initiatives. The Literacy Department provides books, media, and special programs to support both adult learners and tutors. Literacy also develops and presents special literacy workshops for parents and emergent-literacy story times for children. BPL's outreach library-card campaign is designed to sign up as many children as possible as library users. Three campaigns actively encourage children and their families to sign up for library cards: Between the Lions (Head Start and preschools), Licensed to Read (elementary) and WILD Card (middle and high school). The programs partner branch libraries with the schools in their service areas.

BPL also partners with the Birmingham City Schools in the summer reading initiative. Staff works directly with Birmingham City School reading specialists to develop the annual Birmingham R.E.A.D.S. list. For convenience to the public, this list is posted on the Birmingham Public Library Web site.

Southern History and Literature Department

The Southern History and Literature Department provides genealogical research instruction to the public on a daily, monthly, quarterly, and semi-annual basis. Outreach programs are provided for genealogical and historical groups upon request. Four computer research classes are taught for genealogists annually. Pathfinders or bibliographies for various historical and genealogical research topics are provided. Various genealogical databases are offered online for patron use.

Youth Department

The Youth Department offers age-appropriate materials for the pleasure reading and informational needs of children from preschool through high school. The young adult fiction collection provides material for high school-aged patrons and is located adjacent to the area housing materials for younger patrons. All subject matters are covered in the Youth Department collection, but are

written for a younger audience. Fiction and non-fiction audio books, DVDs, and CDs are also for both children and young adults. A special collection of children's magazines is also available with the current month on display and past months available for checkout. The Dial-A-Story line offers the opportunity for children to hear a story at anytime. The stories change on a weekly basis.

Services

The Best Sellers Club

The Best Sellers Club offers patrons the opportunity to read just-published books by bestselling authors as soon as they are available. Members select authors whose books they want to read, specify a pick-up location, and receive notification when new books from their preferred authors have arrived. This service allows patrons an easy and quick method of obtaining popular materials.

Bibliographic Instruction

Staff offers instruction in the use of library resources such as the catalog, computers, computer software programs, Internet searching, e-mail usage, and databases. Some classes are offered in Spanish. Instruction in the use of the online catalog and the reference databases is currently conducted on a one-on-one, as-needed basis.

Bookstore

The Friends of the Birmingham Public Library operates a bookstore at the Central Library. The store is open Monday through Friday from 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. and on Saturday from 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. Items for sale include discarded and donated hardback and paperback books, cassettes, CDs, DVDs, audio books, T-shirts, book bags, magazines, and other items as they become available. The income from the bookstore supports library programs.

www.BPLonline.org

BPL provides services and information twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week, via the Web site at www.BPLonline.org. The Web site is a virtual branch for the online community it serves. This service includes information about the library and its programs, access to the library catalog, pages designed for children and teens, and a growing body of world-class online databases and full-text resources. BPL also provides online content and digital collections of local information. Users are encouraged to ask reference questions online via the "Ask a Librarian" service.

Children's Hospital Collection

An off-site collection is maintained at the Children's Hospital of Alabama. This collection is exchanged every six months with material from the children's collections and materials from the Best Sellers Club. Checkout and collection maintenance are the responsibility of the Comprehensive Health Education Center for Kids (CHECK Office) at the Children's Hospital.

Computers and Internet Access for the Public

BPL provides public-use computers at every branch, including Internet access, word processing programs, access to the library's online databases, and the online catalog. The number of computers available varies by size of library. PCs are filtered in compliance with the Child Internet Protection Act and the policies of the Birmingham Public Library Board. The Regional Library Computer Center (RLCC) is located in the Central Library and provides twenty computers for public use. Free

instructional classes on various software applications are available through the Center. Class schedules are published regularly. Some branches provide instructional classes as well.

Interlibrary Loan

Through Interlibrary Loan (ILL), patrons request books, photocopies of non-circulating materials (such as magazine articles), and government publications not already owned by the public libraries of Jefferson County. This service is usually provided without charge to the public.

Intralibrary Loan

Intralibrary loan is a service provided by the Jefferson County Library Cooperative. Requests may be made for books to be sent from one location in the cooperative to another for a patron's use or convenience of pick-up.

Local Databases

BPL offers an extraordinary in-house collection of local databases created in response to the specific needs of our patrons, or by opportunities presented by our holdings. These databases include, but are not limited to, the following: Alabama Coal Mine Fatalities, 1898-1938; Alabama Episcopal Church Registers; Alabama Inventors Database; Birmingham Public Library Digital Collections; Jefferson County Probate Court, Loose Records (1852-1936); Obituary Index: Birmingham Area Newspapers; Red Mountain Cemetery, Records of Interments, 1888-1906; WPA Index to Alabama Biography.

Voter Registration

BPL is committed to helping America vote. Every location of the Birmingham Public Library serves as a voter registration site. Voter registration forms are always available. Deadlines for voter registration do apply.

BPL Branch Locations & Hours

Avondale Branch

509 South 40th Street
Birmingham, Alabama 35222
Phone: (205) 226-4000
Mon-Tue 9am-8pm
Wed-Sat 9am-6pm
Sun 2pm-6pm

Birmingham Public Library, Central

2100 Park Place
Birmingham, Alabama 35203
Phone: (205) 226-3600
Mon-Tue 9am-8pm
Wed-Sat 9am-6pm
Sun 2pm-6pm

East Ensley Branch

900 14th Street Ensley
Birmingham, Alabama 35218
Phone: (205) 787-1928
Mon, Tue, Thu, Fri 9am-12pm & 1pm-6pm
Wed 1pm-6pm

East Lake Branch

#5 Oporto-Madrid Boulevard
Birmingham, Alabama 35206
Phone: (205) 836-3341
Mon-Sat 9am-6pm

Eastwood Branch

4500 Montevallo Road
Suites E-106 & E-107
Birmingham, Alabama 35210
Phone: (205) 591-4944
Mon-Sat 9am-6pm
Sun 1pm-5pm

Ensley Branch

1201 25th Street Ensley
Birmingham, Alabama 35218
Phone: (205) 785-2625
Mon, Tue, Thu, Fri 9am-12pm & 1pm-6pm
Wed 1pm-6pm

Five Points West Branch

4812 Avenue W.
Birmingham, Alabama 35208
Phone: (205) 226-4013
Mon-Tue 9am-8pm
Wed-Sat 9am-6pm
Sun 2pm-6pm

Inglenook Branch

4100 North 40th Terrace
Birmingham, Alabama 35217
Phone: (205) 849-8739
Mon, Tue, Thu, Fri 9am-12pm & 1pm-6pm
Wed 1pm-6pm

North Avondale Branch

501 43rd Street North
Birmingham, Alabama 35222
Phone: (205) 592-2082
Mon, Tue, Thu, Fri 9am-12pm & 1pm-6pm
Wed 1pm-6pm

North Birmingham Branch

2501 31st Avenue North
Birmingham, Alabama 35207
Phone: (205) 226-4025
Mon-Tue 9am-8pm
Wed-Sat 9am-6pm
Sun 2pm-6pm

Powderly Branch

3301 Jefferson Avenue SW
Birmingham, Alabama 35221
Phone: (205) 925-6178
Mon, Tue, Thu, Fri 9am-12pm & 1pm-6pm
Wed 1pm-6pm

Pratt City Branch

1100 Hibernian Street
Birmingham, Alabama 35214
Phone: (205) 798-5071
Mon-Sat 9am-6pm

Smithfield Branch

#1 Eighth Avenue West
Birmingham, Alabama 35204
Phone: (205) 324-8428
Mon-Sat 9am-6pm

Southside Branch

1814 11th Avenue South
Birmingham, Alabama 35205
Phone: (205) 933-7776
Mon-Sat 9am-6pm

Springville Road Branch

1224 Old Springville Road
Birmingham, Alabama 35215
Phone: (205) 226-4081
Mon-Tue 9am-8pm
Wed-Sat 9am-6pm
Sun 2pm-6pm

Titusville Branch

#2 6th Avenue SW
Birmingham, Alabama 35211
Phone: (205) 322-1140
Mon-Sat 9am-6pm

West End Branch

1348 Tuscaloosa Avenue SW
Birmingham, Alabama 35211
Phone: (205) 226-4089
Mon-Sat 9am-6pm

Woodlawn Branch

5709 1st Avenue North
Birmingham, Alabama 35212
Phone: (205) 595-2001
Mon, Tue, Thu, Fri 9am-12pm & 1pm-6pm
Wed 1pm-6pm

Wylam Branch

4300 7th Avenue Wylam
Birmingham, Alabama 35224
Phone: (205) 785-0349
Mon, Tue, Thu, Fri 9am-12pm & 1pm-6pm
Wed 1pm-6pm

Volunteer Information and Procedures

As a general rule, all volunteers must:

- Be eighteen years of age or older (with the exception of volunteers in our Teen Program.) Completion of at least two years of high school required. Retirees are welcome.
- Be able to work comfortably with the general public.
- Be neat in appearance and punctual.
- Be able to work independently and make decisions based on clear guidelines.
- Attend orientation and training as arranged by your supervisor.
- Check with your supervisor for clarification on any issues.
- Represent BPL positively at all times; be courteous to staff and patrons.
- Record volunteer hours.
- Wear BPL ID badge when on duty so that staff and patrons may identify you as a volunteer.
- Always report disruptions or security concerns to the nearest BPL staff member. Never attempt to resolve a matter yourself.

Please find general information and basic job descriptions below. If you are interested in becoming a volunteer with BPL, please contact the Personnel Officer at (205) 226-3612 for additional information and requisite forms and policies.

1, 2, 3 PLAY WITH ME RESOURCE PROFESSIONAL

Description/Responsibility: The Birmingham Public Library is a nationally certified member of Family Place Libraries™. The Parent/Child Workshop (1,2,3 Play with Me) is the signature program of this initiative. It is a five week program for children birth through age three and their parents/caregivers. Resource professionals provide information by circulating throughout the room talking informally to individuals or small groups of parents and children. These volunteers are qualified individuals knowledgeable in areas such as speech, play, child behavior, nutrition, physical fitness, music and movement, oral hygiene, medicine, or other related fields. Reports to the Literacy and Outreach Coordinator.

BOOKSTORE VOLUNTEER

Description/Responsibility: Assists with bookstore operations including book sales, record keeping, straightening of shelves, and sorting incoming materials. Other duties as assigned. Reports to the bookstore manager.

COLLECTION MANAGEMENT VOLUNTEER

Description/Responsibility: Includes work with the online catalog or other bibliographic resources; packing, unpacking, and sorting library materials; sorting discarded or donated materials; and various clerical tasks. Volunteer must be willing to work an established schedule, be able to organize work flow, and possess good clerical and computer skills. Reports to Collection Management staff member.

DATABASE ENTRY VOLUNTEER

Description/Responsibility: Requires working with fragile archival materials, specifically scanning local items of local interest into a database. Must be willing to learn how to use a digital scanner and scanning software. Attention to detail a must. Reports to Collections Management staff member.

DIGITAL SCANNING VOLUNTEER

Description/Responsibility: Work involves scanning documents selected for inclusion in the Birmingham Public Library's Digital Collection. Work is performed in accordance with specific procedures and inspected frequently for compliance to the standards and instructions. Must be willing to learn how to use a digital scanner and scanning software. Attention to detail a must. Reports to Collections Management staff member.

LIBRARY GREETER

Description/Responsibility: Welcomes and offers general directional assistance to patrons entering the Birmingham Public Central Library; maintains general library information flyers and provides them to patrons as needed; provides short, general tours of the library to individuals or small groups. Reports to Public Services Coordinator.

MERCHANDISE VOLUNTEER

Description/Responsibility: Work involves creating attractive displays of library materials including books, DVDs, and audio books. Displays may be created in conjunction with special library programs, seasonal or topical interests, or may highlight specific areas of the collection. Maintains library brochure displays. The purpose of the merchandising effort is to provide a pleasant browsing environment for the library customer and promote circulation of the library's materials. Reports to Library staff at designated location.

READY TO READ (ADULT LITERACY) VOLUNTEER TUTOR

Description/Responsibility: Provides assistance to adults needing to acquire or improve basic reading and writing skills, utilizing a one-on-one teaching and learning model. Tutor and learner materials are provided by the library. Completion of an adult literacy training program is suggested but not required. (The Literacy Council provides training on a continual basis.) Time Requirements: 1.5 – 2 hours per week at designated library locations. Reports to Ready to Read Volunteer Coordinator.

SPECIAL EVENTS VOLUNTEER

Description/Responsibility: Includes participating in a variety of activities throughout the Birmingham Public Library system or other off-site locations. Events are periodic in nature, but event opportunities will be published in advance so that volunteers may select activities that match their interest and abilities. Set-up and clean up at various functions include moving tables and chairs; manning refreshments stations; staffing registration desks; stuffing envelopes; applying mailing labels; working with various age groups in craft projects; providing directions and assistance to the public; distributing library information; distributing and gathering evaluation forms; escorting presenters and speakers; and other duties as assigned. Time Requirements: Volunteers must be able to commit to at least six events per year for a minimum of 24 hours per twelve month period. Reports to designated event staff member.

TEEN VOLUNTEER

Description/Responsibility: This position is designed to assist students in obtaining work experience within a library setting while serving their community. Work is performed under the general supervision of a professional librarian who assigns tasks to support services that libraries provide, especially regarding younger patrons. Assignments may include shelving books and other materials, reading shelves to ensure books and other materials have been properly shelved, pulling books for various projects, and assisting with all craft activities and other Summer Reading Programs as needed. Education and Age: Minimum requirement—completion of seventh grade and thirteen years old. Hours: A maximum of four hours weekly for first year volunteers.

Friends of the Birmingham Public Library: An Overview

The Friends of the Birmingham Public Library is a structured 501(c)(3) nonprofit association of individuals providing for various needs of the library. The mission of the Friends is to do for the library what individual friends do for each other. In other words, Friends strive to improve the quality and scope of services at the Birmingham Public Library.

To fulfill their mission, Friends assist with the operation of the bookstore at the Central Library; award an annual grant of \$1,500 to a BPL department or branch library for the purpose of funding new programs and equipment or materials not included in the Library's operating budget; financially support the Local Authors' Expo held annually at the Central Library; sponsor a guest speaker for the annual BPL Staff Day; and express appreciation to BPL patrons and volunteers.

If you would like to learn more about the Friends of the Birmingham Public Library or become a member, please contact the Friends at friends@bham.lib.al.us or 205-226-3610. You may also join the Friends online at <http://friends.bplonline.org/>.

If you are interested in becoming a volunteer with BPL, please contact the Personnel Officer at (205) 226-3612 for additional information and requisite forms and policies.

Birmingham Public Library Board

Gwendolyn B. Guster Welch, *President*

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Katrina M. Watson

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Administration

Irene S. Blalock, *Director*

Angela Fisher Hall, *Associate Director*