Birmingham Public Library Annual Report, 2012

In the Birmingham Public Library’s 126 year history, 2012 might be described as transformative. On the heels of severe budget and staff cuts implemented over the past three years, BPL worked to renew attention and support for the library’s basic programming while planning for substantial special projects to be realized in the coming years.

In August, BPL launched a media campaign with the help of Big Communications and Six Branding and Design to remind Birmingham citizens about the library’s meaning to the community. The campaign introduced a new, contemporary logo; placed high quality spots and advertisements featuring Olympian Vonetta Flowers on local television and in print media; and increased the library’s presence on social media sites including Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest, YouTube, and Instagram. One of the most delightful surprises of 2012 came with BPL staff winning the Alabama’s Brightest Company Trivia Contest—at both the local and the state levels. The combined knowledge of our team of librarians garnered a total of $20,000 in prize money for the media campaign and an abundant sense of pride among employees and the public.

Simultaneously, BPL introduced a grass roots campaign to encourage community residents to advocate on behalf of the library before Birmingham’s City Council, appealing to our local officials to reverse the severe budget cuts of the last two years. Councilmen and women heard library supporters’ persuasive voices and not only halted further cuts to our materials budget, but raised the budget slightly over last year.

While protecting the library’s fundamental services—books, magazines, DVDs, and other resources—BPL began a multi-year project to renovate the Central Library’s East Building and Linn Henley Research Library. A conceptual design completed in 2010 illustrates great possibilities for re-envisioned spaces, upgraded systems, and more accessible facilities that reflect how city residents use their public library in the 21st century. The renovation will provide more spaces for programming, dedicated areas for children and teens, and larger storage and reading areas for special collections. The City of Birmingham has agreed to support this important project by allocating $460,000 to develop the design, which should be complete near the end of 2013.

Behind these strategic initiatives are BPL’s governing and support boards: a governing Board of Trustees; the Friends of BPL that work on advocacy and volunteerism; BPL’s Foundation Board which is the library’s philanthropic arm; and a brand new BPL Young Professionals group that brings the talent of 40 of Birmingham’s emerging leaders to the library. With each of these boards focusing on different aspects of BPL’s programs and services, the library becomes a stronger organization that touches each part of the city and county.

All of these ambitious and visible initiatives mean very little without the programs and services that are implemented in our 19 locations every day: computer classes, lectures and storytelling, free Wi-Fi, after school activities, reading initiatives, special performances, and the hundreds of programs listed in the appendices in this report.

The work of our 302 staff members is our greatest resource, resulting in the creative programming that serves individuals of all ages in the neighborhoods where they live and work. Whether through large initiatives or daily programming, BPL’s work is transformative on an individual and community level.

Please, find attached to this report a comprehensive list of our grants, awards, and special projects for this past year, which complement and enhance the library’s most basic function—to provide access to information through books, magazines, newspapers, databases, DVDs, CDs, the Internet and more to meet the needs of citizens of Birmingham.
Birmingham Public Library Annual Report
2012 By the Numbers

Hours Open to the Public: 44,125
Number of People Visiting our Libraries: 1,798,940
Number of Items Checked Out: 1,217,148
Number of items (resources) used in the library: 1,316,016
Number of Items in BPL Collection (Archives and Manuscripts not included.): 816,848
Active BPL Library Card Holders: 165,351
New Library Cards Issued: 12,189
Public use of Meeting Rooms: 2,876
Number of Public Computers: 292
Number of Uses of the Public PCs: 545,763
Total Minutes Public PCs used: 21,048,556
Reference Transactions: 556,556
Programs and Events for the Public: 2,328
Number of Program and Event Attendees: 59,784
Participation in BPL’s Summer Reading Programs
  Number of Children: 4,565
  Number of Teens: 1,250
  Number of Adults: 1,066
  Total Participants: 6,881
  Number of Programs Offered: 446
  Attendance at Programs: 16,016

New Services and Programs:
- Freegal, a free music download service provided to residents of the City of Birmingham
- BPL Architecture and Design Collection in the Archives Department
- Pinterest and Instagram were added to BPL social media

Total Square Footage of BPL Libraries: 380,643

Personnel
Full time professional librarian positions (One part time): 62.5
Full time staff positions (All, including librarians): 170
Part Time Staff positions: 132
Total positions: 302 Total FTE: 230.5
Staff Reclassified: Neighborhood Branch Heads were made the same grade as Community Branch Heads. 6 positions were affected and will result in a salary cap that is 15% higher.
Selected Programs, Classes, and Events Presented by BPL in 2012

The programs listed below are in addition to the regular story times, family events, and afterschool activities provided by all BPL locations. All branches have weekly or biweekly story times. Most locations plan special events and programs in addition to those listed below, and in the summer months, the average number of programs rises to two or three a week. Thousands of children and adults benefit from the many educational and entertaining programs presented at BPL locations including zumba classes, chair yoga, health and fitness information programs, gardening, trunk or treat, Easter egg hunts, etc.

- Archives staff reached a milestone by pulling more than 1,105,022 files for researchers in the last decade from 2002 to 2012.
- MLK Lecture—Writing African American History for Youth
  - Larry Dane Brimner, *Birmingham Sunday*
  - Jo Kittenger, *Rosa’s Bus*
  - Evelyn Coleman, *Freedom Train and White Socks Only* (multiple branches)
- The Art of Science—System wide afterschool programs funded by the Kresge Foundation in partnership with the Cultural Alliance of Greater Birmingham and presented by Elinor and Winfred Burks.
- Brown Bag Lunch Programs—Central Library and in some cases other locations.
- Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Scavenger Hunt—All locations.
- Author Cynthia Levinson signed and spoke about *We’ve Got a Job.* Adaptations: Read the Book, See the Movie, and Talk About It—a series presented at Avondale Library throughout the year.
- 1, 2, 3 Play With Me/ Family Place Library—presented two 5-week programs held at Springville Road, Avondale, Smithfield, Central, North Birmingham and Five Points West—this is a weekly program that offers opportunities for children to play with developmentally appropriate toys in a play group atmosphere and for parents to meet and question community experts in the areas of child development, speech and language, nutrition, play, movement and music.
- Bards & Brews—poetry slam and beer tasting presented at Central, Avondale, and for the first time the Birmingham Botanical Gardens.
- Let’s Talk About It: Making Sense of the Civil War—Reading and discussion series presented at Central Library in the spring and funded by the Alabama Humanities Foundation.
- Special Programs Celebrating the 50th Anniversary of Word Up!—”The Art of Spoken Words Series”:
  - M. Avodela Heath, well known slam poetry champion
  - Kevin Young, poet and winner of best poetry book 2011
  - Irene Latham, local poet and author
  - Eliz Hughey, poet and winner of the Iowa Poetry Prize
- Mamie “Peanut” Johnson, one of three women to play in the Negro Leagues, visited BPL and shared her story with Birmingham school children and the Birmingham City Council.
• “Voices from the Storm” encouraged victims of area tornadoes to write poetry about their experience, and BPL published them online—a printed document is in the works.

• Genealogy Instruction Series: (Southern History Department Staff):
  ✓ 40 is the New 30: Using the 1940 Census
  ✓ Bring out Your Dead: Cemeteries in Genealogical Research
  ✓ Getting the Good Dirt: Land Record in Genealogical Research
  ✓ It’s a Big Web out There: Sites and Strategies for Internet Genealogy

• Staff has produced a wide range of online video tutorials on resources at the library. These are available on YouTube.

• Adult Summer Reading Club

• BCAP after school programs on genealogy and family history for 240 students by the Southern History Department staff.

• “The Golden Record” dance performance at three libraries presented by Birmingham’s Sanspointe Dance Company.

• “Score Big” with the Cotchery Foundation—Reading program including “Club 89” Teen Tailgate party at the Central Library in June.

• Rachel Swarns speaks about her book *American Tapestry: The Story of the Black, White, and Multiracial Ancestors of Michelle Obama*.

• Poetry workshops for teens

• Student Enrichment—Math at West End twice a week with volunteer tutors Willa McNeal and Tamara Wilson.

• Historic House Research Workshop—presented by a partnership of BPL, the Jefferson County Historical Commission and the Birmingham Historical Society.

• Researching your Family Roots—“Family History Resources on the Internet” presented by Frazine Taylor.


• Poetry workshop series for adults.

• Real Life Poets

• School supply giveaway with Rotoract at Avondale, Wylam, and Southside branches.

• “Both Sides of the Lens” exhibition opening lecture by Dr. Dsyche Williams-Forson and gallery talk by Andrew Nelson and members of the Shackelford family.

• Annual youth storyteller visit—Dave Holland, performances at BPL branches.

• “Barber of Birmingham”—14 screenings of the Academy Award nominated documentary with foot soldiers of the movement leading discussions for all ages (a “50 Years Forward” program).

• Eat, Drink, Read Write:
  ✓ Storytelling/crafts at Pepper Place Market with Katie Elkins and DISCO
  ✓ “The World in a Skillet” by Paul and Angela Knipple in partnership with Birmingham Foodie Book Club
  ✓ Food storytelling in partnership with DISCO
  ✓ “Eating Alabama” with discussion by filmmaker Andrew Beck
  ✓ Bards and Brews with a food theme
✓ “Bring your own ingredients” cooking class by Tamar Adler, author and local chef at European Kitchen

- Monthly adult poetry workshops conducted by John Paul Taylor of Real Life Poets.
- Book signing with one of the authors of The Color of Christ, Edward J. Blum.
- Computer classes at Central and across the system.
- Quilting group meets monthly at Inglenook Branch.
- West End Branch Library celebrated its 100th Anniversary.
- Wylam’s organized and presented monthly Spelling Bees.
- Springville Road’s presented a Gardening Series and planted raised beds with teen volunteers.
- “The Life You Save: How to Keep a Journal you Won’t Throw Away” a seminar presented by author Phyllis Theroux.
- Author Paul Tough lectures and signs How Children Succeed: Grit, Curiosity and the Hidden Power of Character.

- Halloween Events
  ✓ Ghouls’ Ball
  ✓ Birmingham Noir: a nighttime walking tour of notorious Downtown Birmingham led by Jim Baggett
  ✓ “Trunk or Treat” events

- Family creative arts nights in partnership with Birmingham Education Foundation, Parents University, and Real Life Poets—series of free workshops at Five Points West, North Avondale, North Birmingham, and Powderly.
- Table for runners in Susan G. Komen Race for the Cure—distributing freeze pops and signing participants up for the BPL e-newsletter.
- Anti-bullying forums at four branches in October in partnership with the David Matthews Center for Civic Life.
- Fashion Friday with Alexis Barton of www.samechicdifferentday.com fashion blog.
- City of Birmingham Annual Christmas Parade
- Birmingham news and Al.com presented a tech seminar for readers in the RLCC.
- From Page to Stage Series—This is a children drama workshop presented in partnership with Junior League and Birmingham Children’s Theater at several BPL branches.
- Holiday Events were presented across the library system. These included Christmas cooking with Chef E at 7 locations, an open house and tablescapes contest at Springville Road, musical events such as a Gospel concert with Katrina Pigler at North Birmingham, East Ensley, and Ensley, and much more.
- Computer classes on social media for staff and the public.
- Annual publications produced by library staff:
  o Seasons Readings 2012
  o African American Booklist 2012
  o Weekly eNewsletter
• BPL Web Site was redesigned as part of the logo roll out.

Selected Training and Development

Almost all staff meetings include aspects of training and cover such topics as library policies and library services and resources conducted by library staff. The following is a sampling of training done by non-library staff presenters.
• Staff Day 2012 at Boutwell Auditorium (Full Day Schedule) with speakers including Damita Hill, Jefferson State Community College addressing “Stress Management in the Workplace.”
• Workshop on planning for renovation of the Central Library by Alex Lamis for the Library Board, the Friends Board, the Foundation Board, and administrative staff on April 14 from 9-1 at the Avondale Library.
• Regular training at the bimonthly Joint Branch and Department Heads Meeting including Peggy Polk, City Personnel Director on the BPL Grievance Policy and Honest Evaluations and the Importance of Documentation. Other topics include the Americans with Disabilities Act and laws regarding discrimination and personnel matters by a representative of the EEOC among others.
• PLA Virtual Conference, March 15-16 for the BPL staff.

Major Building Improvements in 2012

• Inglenook renovation began with conceptual drawings from Architect Creig Hoskins.
• Parquet floor replaced with laminate flooring at Smithfield.
• North Avondale received newly paved parking lot.
• Installed speed breakers on parking lots at Avondale and Springville Road.
• Replaced 3 AC units which were vandalized at Woodlawn.
• Pratt City rebuilding program began with a redesign by Herrington Architects. The construction is being carried out by Monumental Contracting Service.
• Major painting at Central Library—entry hallway and several offices.
• Central’s fire alarm system received upgrades.
• Replaced condensing unit on one air handler in Linn Henley.
• North Birmingham roof and HVAC replacement was completed.
• Planning for Central Library renovations begun through allocation of $460,000 from the City of Birmingham.
Exhibitions

Fourth Floor Gallery, Central Library
- “African American History Makers” Quilts by Aisha Lummba 1/3-2/24
- “Simpler Times: The Paintings of Maurice Cook” 2/28-4/13
- “Four Decades: Photography from the University of Montevallo” (faculty and students) 4/17-5/25
- “Eudora Welty: Exposures and Reflections” June 5-July 20 (History Museum of Mobile)
- “Both Sides of the Lens: Photographs by the Shackelford Family, Fayette County, Alabama 1910-1935” July 23-September 14 organized by BPL Archives staff and scholar Andrew Nelson of the University of Maryland featuring 40 photographs from the library’s collection and supported by a grant from Alabama Humanities Foundation. Reception and Lecture by Dr. Psyche Williams-Forson (also of the University of Maryland) and a Gallery Talk by Andrew Nelson and Annie Shackelford. The exhibit has traveled to two museums beyond BPL (Fayette Art Museum and Troy University, Dothan) and is on view in February and March at the History Museum of Mobile. Following its de-installation from those venues, it will travel to the Rosa Parks Museum in Montgomery; the Columbus-Lowndes County Public Library in Columbus, Mississippi; and the University of Maryland, College Park (tentative). Our goal is to continue to travel the exhibit throughout the region and beyond.
- Members Showcase, Water Color Society of Alabama 9/23-10/23

Five Points West Regional Library Exhibitions
- Artwork by Students at Lawson State Community College (each February)
- Common Bonds: Birmingham Snapshot Photography, 1900-1950
Special Supporters/Partners

Birmingham Public Library Foundation
Friends of the Birmingham Public Library
Birmingham Public Library Young Professionals

Community Partnerships that Helped BPL To Do More

6 Branding and Design
AARP Tax Prep Assistance (AL)—Avondale
African American Genealogical Study Group
Alabama Department of Revenue (Tax Forms)
AL.com
Alabama Chapter of the Society of Professional Journalists
Alabama Genealogical Society
Alabama Health Info-Net
Alabama Holocaust Education Committee
Alabama Public Television (PBS Kids—Raising Readers Corner)
Alabama School of Fine Arts
Alabama Sports Hall of Fame
Alabama Symphony
Alys Stephens Center, UAB
American Graduate
Association for the Improvement of Minorities IRS
Avondale Brewing Company
Back Forty Beer Company
Barnes and Nobles Booksellers
BCAP (Birmingham Cultural Alliance Partnership—Since 2000)
Bell’s Brewery
Better Basics
BIG Communication
Birmingham City Schools
Birmingham Botanical Gardens
Birmingham Children’s Theater
Birmingham Civil Rights Institute
Birmingham Education Foundation
Birmingham Foodie Book Club
Birmingham Genealogical Society
Birmingham Historical Society
Birmingham Holocaust Education Center
Birmingham Metro NAACP
Birmingham Museum of Art
Birmingham Originals
Birmingham Pledge Foundation
Chick-Fil-A
The Children’s Literacy Guild
Church of the Highlands
Cotchery Foundation
Cultural Alliance of Greater Birmingham
The David Matthews Center for Civic Life at Montevallo University
DaVita, Inc. - Health programs
DISCO (Desert Island Supply Company)
Elinor and Winfred Burks
Encyclopedia of Alabama
European Kitchen of Alabama
Family Violence Center
Federation of Genealogical Societies
Friends of Rickwood Field
Highland Brewing Company
Impact Alabama—Save 1st Initiative at Smithfield, West End, and Woodlawn Libraries
Internal Revenue Service (Tax forms in Libraries)
Jason’s Deli
Jefferson County Health Department
Jefferson County Historical Commission
Junior League of Birmingham
League of Women Voters of Greater Birmingham
LINKS, Incorporated (Birmingham and Magic City Chapters)
The Literacy Council
McWane Science Center
Mix Bakery and Café
Mayor’s Office Division of Youth Services
Rally’s
Reach Out and Read Alabama
Reading with Ringling Brothers
Real Life Poets (John Paul Taylor)
The Rotoract Club of Birmingham
Sloss Furnaces—Cultural Programs
Southern Women’s Show
St. Vincent’s Health Systems (Programs on Healthy Living)
Stand Up for Kids
Susan G. Komen Race for the Cure
Volunteer Income Tax Assistance—Five Points West
Vulcan Park and Museum
Whole Foods Market
Awards, Honors, and Gifts

- BPL named a Star Library for 2012 by *Library Journal*.
- BPL named Community Education Organization of the year by NAACP of Metro Birmingham.
- BPL named a top ten library in the US for children by Livability.com.
- BPL was winner of Birmingham’s Brightest Company Charitable Trivia Competition and Alabama’s Brightest Company State Trivia Competition, garnering winnings of $20,000. The competition was sponsored by Impact Alabama and Protective Life.
- Legends of the Iron Bowl Pratt City 5K Commemoration of the April 27, 2011 Tornado in Pratt City—event raised $4,000 for BPL’s Pratt City Branch Library.
- Friends of the Birmingham Public Library gave funds totaling more than $35,000 for the BPL Volunteer Luncheon, Beyond the Budget Grants, Brown Bag Programs, the Logo Rollout—Big Communications, Staff Day, Eat Drink Read Write, and journaling program with Phyllis Theroux.
- Gwendolyn B. Guster Welch, BPL Library Board president, was presented with the United For Libraries National Citation Award for Distinguished Service as a Library Trustee.
- Library Director Renee Blalock was named one of Birmingham’s 10 Smart Women in a fundraiser for the Women’s Fund of Greater Birmingham.
- North Avondale librarian, Saundra Ross Forrest, was named one of Birmingham’s Top 40 Women of Influence.
- State Representative Patricia Todd gave the library $10,000.
- State Representative John Rogers gave the West End Branch $4,000.
- PALS (Vestavia Hills Public Library Support Group) donated $500 in support of BPL’s collections.
- The Eastwood Neighborhood Association gave Eastwood Branch $1,500.
- The Crestline Neighborhood Association gave Eastwood Branch $3,000.
- The Smithfield Neighborhood Association gave Smithfield Branch $1,000.
- The Glen Iris Neighborhood Association gave Southside Branch $500.
- The South Roebuck Neighborhood Association gave Springville Road Branch $750.

Grants

- Alabama Power Company gave $5,000 for Summer Reading.
- Kresge (Foundation), Arts in Birmingham—Cultural Alliance provided $10,000 for after school programming for children.
- Alabama State Council of the Arts awarded $1,000 for Bards & Brews and $1,000 for Word Up!
- “Let’s Talk About It: Making Sense of the Civil War”, ALA and NEA, Alabama Humanities Foundation. (Books and discussion materials)
• Establishment of BPL Architecture and Design Collection through grant from Philip Morris--$30,000.
• Through the $15,000 LSTA grant for FY2013 which started in 2012, BPL has been able to digitize more civil rights material, including our Martin Luther King, Jr. Scrapbooks and our George Wallace Scrapbooks; FBI reports on the Sixteenth Street Baptist Church Bombing, the Freedom Riders and the Alabama Christian Movement for Human Rights; jail and court dockets recording arrests of civil rights demonstrators; and documents relating to the 'Letter from Birmingham Jail.'
• Junior League in support of Family Place Libraries and 1,2,3, Play With Me--$3,125.
• Joseph S. Bruno Foundation gave $32,000 for children’s furnishings for the Pratt City Branch Library.
• The Daniel Foundation of Alabama gave $50,000 for furnishings for the Pratt City Branch Library.
• Pete M. Hanna Charitable Foundation--$500 in support of summer reading at Wylam Branch Library.
Researched in the BPL Archives and Published in 2012

Books


*Recipient of the California Reading Association’s “Eureka! Gold Award”
*Finalist for the YALSA (Young Adult Library Services Association) Award for Excellence in Non-Fiction for Young Adults.”

Linn, Julius E., Katherine M. Tipton and Marjorie L. White (editors). The Jemison


*Selected as one of the New York Times “100 Notable Books of 2012”*


**Articles and Conference Presentations**


Baggett, James L. “Miss Fancy, Queen of the Avondale Zoo.” Alabama Heritage, No. 106 (Fall 2012).


Memory, and the Meaning of Soul Food in Gee’s Bend, Alabama.” *Food and Foodways,* No. 20 (2012).


Campbell, Donald C. “Rickwood Field: A Brief History of America’s Oldest Baseball Stadium.” Presented at Alabama Association of Historians Annual Meeting, University of Montevallo, February 2012.


“Race and Class and American History.” *Black History and the Class Struggle,* No. 22 (July 2012).


**Theses and Dissertations**


**Motion Picture Productions**

*Alabama Art Scene.* University of Alabama for WVUA (Tuscaloosa), 2012.

*Anne Braden: Southern Patriot.* Applashop, Inc. for Public Broadcasting System (PBS), 2012.


*Finding Your Roots, Episode Four: Condi Rice.* Ark Media for the Public Broadcasting System (PBS), 2012.

*Historically Black.* Nerjyzed Film Studios for Public Broadcasting System (PBS), 2012.

*Slavery by Another Name.* Twin Cities Public Television for the Public Broadcasting System (PBS), 2012.

*Official Selection, 2012 Sundance Film Festival*


Exhibitions

“Beyond Barbecue and Baklava: The Impact of Greek Immigrants on Birmingham’s Culture and Cuisine” at Vulcan Park and Museum, April to August 2012.


“Jazz Families” at Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts (New York), May 2012.

Library Board

Gwendolyn B. Guster Welch, President
Gwendolyn R. Amamoo, Vice-President
Samuel A. Rumore, Jr., Parliamentarian
Nell Allen
Georgia Morgan Blair
Dr. Monique Gardner-Witherspoon
Dora Sims
The Honorable Judge Scott Vowell
Katrina Michelle Watson

Irene S. Blalock, Birmingham Public Library Director
Angela Fisher Hall, Birmingham Public Library Associate Director