

2025

Annual Report



Guelph Public Library
Explore • Connect • Thrive



Explore. Connect. Thrive.

Vision

Empowerment is defined as “the process of becoming stronger and more confident, especially in controlling one’s life and claiming one’s rights.” This is what the Library strives to offer to the community—space, resources, and support to grow, overcome barriers, and craft lives of our own choosing. Our aspirational goal is that the community, staff, and partners have the expectation of empowerment every time they interact with us.

Mission

The library offers inclusive, sustainable spaces, and opportunities for people to engage their curiosity and create community.

Values



Trust



Belonging



Resilience



Curiosity

Above: Mad Science puts on a STEAM program for summer break at the East Side Branch, making use of the outdoor parking lot for experiments.

Front cover: The newly reorganized space at West End Branch centers the children’s area at the front entrance, enticing young kids to visit between swim lessons.

A letter from Dan and Bang



Dan Atkins
CEO



Bang Ly
Library Board
Chair

A vision that's grounded in empowerment – for everyone.

At the Guelph Public Library, we see every day how deeply a library matters to a community. Libraries are not optional amenities. They are essential public infrastructure. They provide free access to information, technology, learning, and safe gathering spaces.

Libraries are places where newcomers find support, entrepreneurs build ideas, children discover a love of reading, and neighbours connect. In a time of rapid change and growing complexity, the Library remains a steady, trusted presence in Guelph.

Our vision is grounded in empowerment. We believe the Library should open doors and help people build skills, explore interests, and participate fully in community life.

As we look ahead, we are committed to strengthening the Library's role as a pillar of public value. That means making thoughtful investments, planning for growth, sharing our impact more clearly, and ensuring our services reflect the evolving needs of our city.

We are building future-focused libraries, with spaces and services designed, not just for today, but for the generations that will follow.

None of this work happens without our staff. Their professionalism, care, and dedication are the foundation of our success, and we are deeply grateful for the work they do every day.

A storytime program underway by the programming team at Scottsdale Branch.



2025 By the numbers

806,302

in-person visits

Our highest in-person traffic on one day was April 29 at 4,064 visitors, which coincided with polling stations for the federal elections at Westminster Square and East Side branches.

1,854,421

online visits

Online visits are up 69 percent, a significant win in light of the recent launch of our new website and catalogue.

29,914

unique borrowers

Patrons active within the year increased by 17 percent from the previous year, accumulating 2,129,555 item checkouts.

2,129,555

item checkouts

Everything from books, e-books and e-audiobooks, accessible materials, and Library of Things items.

2,761

creators visited the Makerspace

The launch of new drop-in spaces has alleviated appointment wait times.

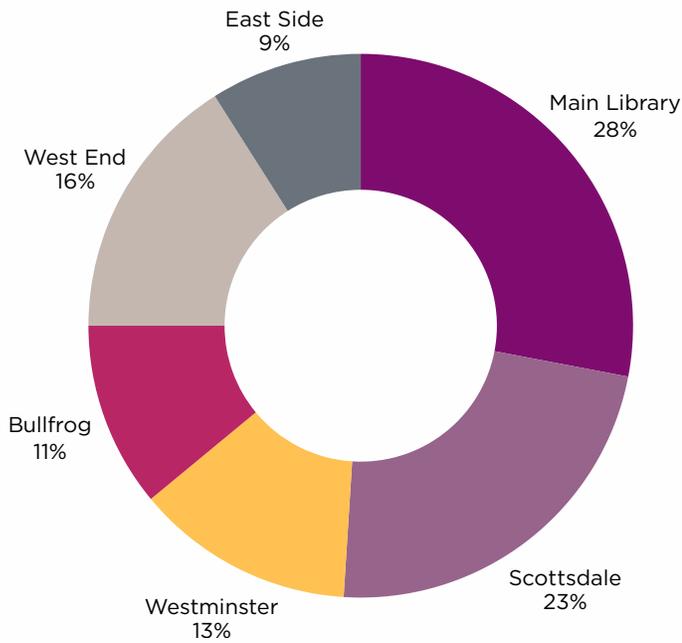


7,764

new Library card holders

This year, the Library welcomed new partnership card holders from Wellington-Dufferin-Guelph Public Health.





Branch visits

On average, we have 2,278 in person visits every day. The Main Library (our largest location) and Scottsdale Branch (one of our smallest locations) make up just over half of our in-person visits together.

The busiest days of the week are Mondays and Tuesdays between 12 and 4 p.m.

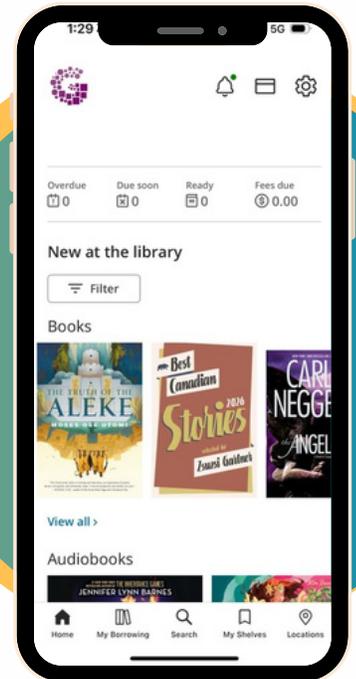
348
trees saved



3,475 damaged or out-of-date books have been recycled as we prepare for our move to the new Central Library.

620
app users

The new mobile app launched in December 2025 and was downloaded 620 times across Apple and Android users before the end of the year.



6,772

Bookmobile kilometres driven per year

The Library's Bookmobile is on the road for seven hours per day, five days per week with enough kilometres in one year to travel from Guelph to Montreal 10 times.



Top circulating materials

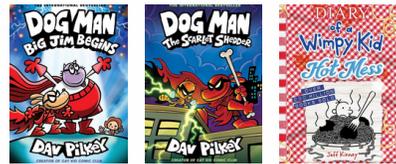
Top 3 Adult fiction



Top 3 Adult non-fiction



Top 3 Children's books



8%

increase in the number of e-Books in circulation

As we purchase less physical books for the Main Library in the lead up to our move, and increase digital copies, we've seen a rise in e-book use.

June 30, 2025

our highest date for circulation

We had 9,385 checkouts system-wide, our highest all year, which coincided with the first day of summer break for elementary students.

Top five favourites from the Library of Things

The Library of Things houses a collection of items that help patrons connect with practical tools, engage in fun activities, and discover new interests. Here are a few of our community's favourites:



Mobile hotspots

396 checkouts of our mobile hotspots, which provide wifi access to a number of devices.



Ontario Parks Passes

317 checkouts of our Ontario Parks passes, which provides access to one vehicle to any park in Ontario.



Binoculars

214 checkouts of binoculars for sports and wildlife watching.



Disc Golf

187 checkouts of our disc golf kits which can be used at local courses.



Samsung tablets

149 checkouts of tablets which provides access to the internet, Zoom or Teams, and direct access to our digital resource applications.



Worthy of note

16,000 seeds were distributed across all Library locations as a part of our partnership with Guelph Seed Library.

Programming

Library programs continue to be popular among community members. With 36,281 attendees in 2025, program attendance grew by three percent. Our most popular programs are for babies and toddlers.

Top five programs of 2025

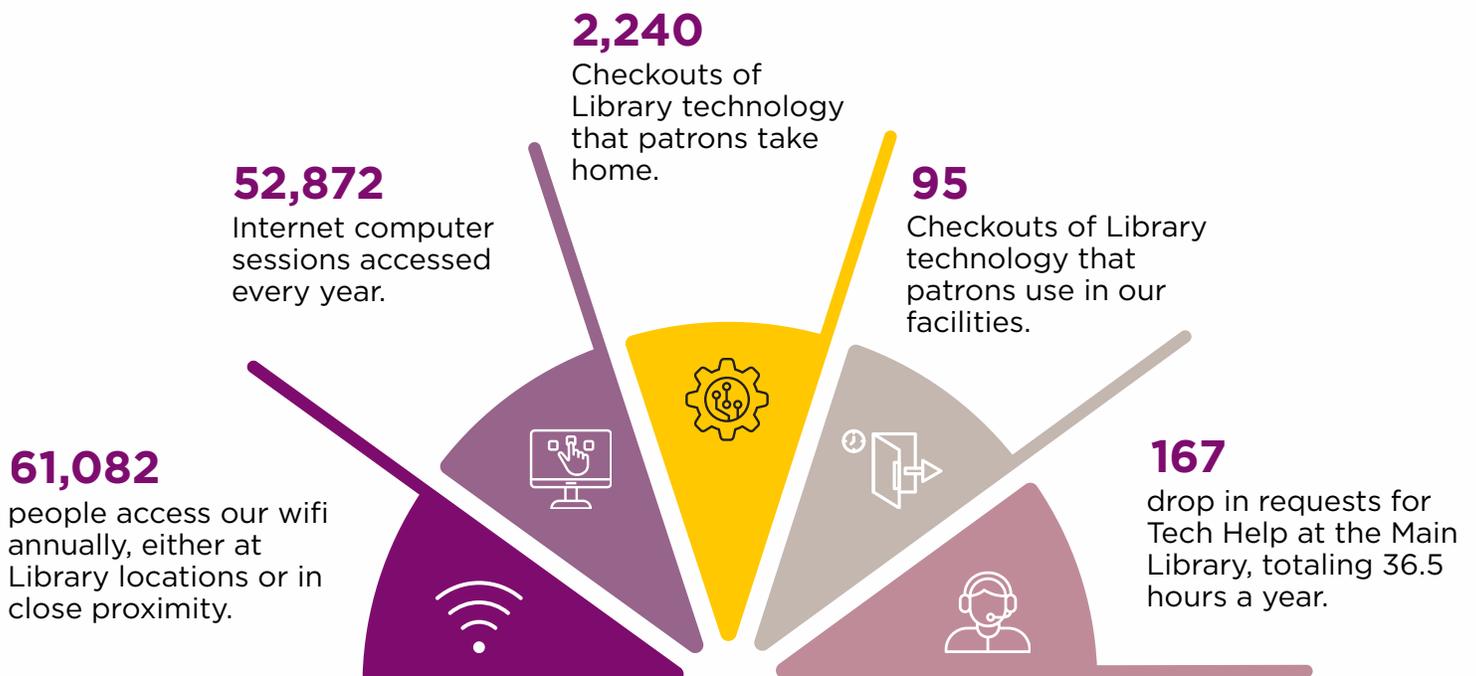


A baby participates in the Sensory Baby program at the Main Library.

- 1 Bouncing Babies**
4,192 attendees
- 2 Shake, Rattle, and Read**
3,237 attendees
- 3 Counting Contest**
1,797 attendees
- 4 Early ON**
1,181 attendees
- 5 Books and Hooks**
882 attendees

Digital equity

Digital access directly impacts our community's ability to find and trust reliable information. As champions of equitable access, we create pathways that help everyone connect with resources they need to learn, grow, and thrive.





Invest in our team

Patron Service Excellence

A collaboration with Service Canada provided staff with invaluable insights into the challenges patrons face when navigating federal services leading to the launch of monthly mobile clinics at the library.

Measuring engagement

We conducted a comprehensive employee engagement survey to assess staff satisfaction and identify key areas for improvement. The results informed targeted strategies to build a stronger and more engaged team.

Future-ready skill building

We invested in training on emerging technologies, including a comprehensive session on the applications of Artificial Intelligence to enhance workflows and public service.

Staff are pictured learning about the new website and catalogue at Staff Fest, an all day learning and development event in October 2025.



Amplify our stories

Developing the Youth Programming Strategy

The strategy outlines GPL's system-wide approach to serving youth across all locations, with particular focus on the expanded opportunities offered by the new Central Library.

Building new media partnerships

The Library participated in five different podcast episodes in 2025, recognizing the need to reach around our own audiences and share our story better with the whole community.

Making national news

The Munsch Archives news garnered national media coverage from outlets including CBC's The National and the Toronto Star and generated viral social media engagement, with one Facebook post reaching over 500,000 people.

A group of teens gathered at Bullfrog Mall, participating in a cookie decorating program. The Youth Programming Strategy will help develop more engaging programs targeted for youth in 2026 and beyond.



Build future-focused libraries

Modernizing our digital experiences

We executed a strategic overhaul of the library's core technology platforms to improve operational efficiency, streamline workflows, and enhance public access.

Early literacy through play

Keebee play stations were installed in the children's areas at all five branches, including the newly renovated West End Branch, creating more engaging and interactive spaces for our youngest patrons.

Preserving local history

Our new Archives and Records Management department completed a comprehensive inventory of our historical collections and is continuing a multi-year project to digitize vertical files, preserve Guelph's history, and improve access for future generations.

The new Keebee Play interactive activity equipment, pictured at Westminster Square Branch engages young patrons when they visit.



Looking ahead

Looking ahead to 2026 and beyond, the Library will continue to use our strategic plan, From Barriers to Bridges, to guide our work until 2028.

In 2026, we're focused on our move to the new Central Library which will mark a transformative change for centralized services and expansion of collections, programs, services, and archives.

Our branches will continue to evolve, with revitalization and renovations underway at our Scottsdale Branch to improve how patrons can use our physical spaces.

The Library is working to implement our new Youth Programming Strategy and preparing to participate in Guelph's 2027 Bi-Centennial celebrations.

Moving to the new Central Library, located on Baker Street, will be a large focus of the Library's strategic priorities in 2026. Construction pictured from February 2026.

2025 Milestones

January

From Barriers to Bridges, our 2025-2028 strategic plan, is launched to staff and the public and Dan Atkins is announced as the new Library CEO.



March

The Makerspace trials drop-in appointments, introducing 192 drop-ins without waiting months for an appointment, which builds skills for new and returning makers.



May

The Library and CUPE 1946 finalize a new collective agreement for Library staff that covers the next three years.



February

The Black Excellence in Teaching community display debuts at Main and Westminster Square in partnership with the University of Guelph's Office of Teaching and Learning.



April

The Library becomes a pick-up location for naloxone kits and installs an outdoor community sharps dropbox. To date, 16 kits have been distributed.



June

Summer Reading Club launched in June with our opening event at West End Branch drawing 103 program participants.

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July

Implementation of our new AODA tool to support patrons with communication challenges at our front desks to enhance customer service.



September

The Library partners with Indigenous community members for a display about Anishinaabe Clans ahead of National Day for Truth and Reconciliation.



November

Robert Munsch donates his personal archives to the Library. The news is viewed by more than 500,000 people in the news and social media.



August

Summer reading club wraps with 5,785 reading logs completed, 2,266 visits, and 2,019 program participants. 413 patrons attended our end of year foam party.



October

Library locations close for the day to host Staff Fest, with training on AI, de-escalation, and catalogue features. Feedback from staff indicates 81% were satisfied with the training offered.



December

The Library launches its new website, catalogue, app, events calendar, and room booking tool – critical digital infrastructure for a modern library.

Strengthening our Library with community generosity

The Guelph Public Library continues to grow as a vibrant hub for learning, creativity, and connection - and that growth is made possible by the generosity of our community. Every gift, no matter the size, helps expand services, modernize spaces, and ensure everyone in Guelph has access to resources they need to explore, connect, and thrive.

Ways to give

- One-time and monthly financial gifts
- Tribute and memorial donations
- Gifts in Will
- Gifts of securities
- Corporate and community partnerships
- Contributions to the Guelph Public Library Endowment Fund
- Gifts from Donor Advised Funds

Impacts of community generosity

- Expanded accessibility equipment
- Enhanced children's programming and early literacy learning opportunities through the Rosa Rattray Early Literacy Fund
- Upgraded technology and equipment
- Continued investment in Guelph's new Central Library capital projects
- Investments in future planning through gifts to the Guelph Public Library Endowment Fund.
- Built partnerships with community leaders

Invest in possibility at guelphpl.ca/donate

For more information or accessible formats

askus@guelphpl.ca
519-824-6220
guelphpl.ca



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