



GEORGIA PUBLIC
LIBRARY SERVICE

2023 YEAR IN
REVIEW





**Georgia's libraries
are a model of
collaboration,
innovation,
and excellence.**

***A message from Julie Walker,
state librarian and vice chancellor for Libraries and Archives***

Georgia Public Library Service (GPLS) is proud to highlight some of the life-changing impacts of the 2023 fiscal year state and federal funding.

In partnership with GPLS, the state's 407 public library facilities have played essential roles in post-pandemic recovery, competitiveness, and resilience throughout Georgia.

Our libraries are the heart and soul of their communities. They are vibrant and relevant to users with a wide variety of needs, hopes, and dreams, and they serve everyone in their communities. Libraries are a key partner in improving literacy and supporting education at all levels.

This Year in Review highlights some of our most impactful work in technology, early literacy, and library construction, all of which were made possible by the financial support of the State of Georgia and the Institute for Museum and Library Services.

In addition to the services highlighted here, GPLS also provides a broad range of consulting and technical assistance to libraries, such as resource sharing, finance, communications, emerging technology, and adult programming for workforce development, as well as training library boards of trustees, assistance recruiting and hiring administrators, and leadership in advocacy and governmental relations. We offer a diverse menu of continuing education courses, from integrating technology into library services to techniques for attracting more teen readers.

We are good stewards of the funding we receive, and we are honored to create and support programs and services that empower libraries to improve the lives of all Georgians.

I am incredibly grateful to the dedicated staff of GPLS, public library directors, librarians, and all our state's library employees. Georgia's libraries are a model of collaboration, innovation, and excellence.

**More Georgians are
using public libraries**

**↑ 8% circulation
of materials**

↑ 10% cardholders

**46% of Georgians
have library cards**

Serving All Georgians

Strong public libraries are essential to a prosperous state.

They are the heart of every community and open to everyone. Libraries are essential to literacy, lifelong learning, and the healthy functioning of our democracy.

Georgia's 407 public library facilities provide social benefits of \$562.1 million and economic impacts of \$170.7 million annually, according to a study published in 2020 by the University of Georgia's Carl Vinson Institute of Government and funded by Georgia Public Library Service.

Georgia's public libraries also provide tremendous value in return for the investment of public dollars and private donations. For each dollar funded to libraries, society receives an estimated \$3.21 in goods and services plus indirect economic benefits, according to the study.

Libraries have reimagined their spaces, collections, and services to meet their community's needs.

Many libraries partner with local organizations to provide innovative services, like addressing food insecurity by donating library garden produce or leading job search workshops at area homeless centers. Groups gather at the library to discuss books, learn STEAM skills (science, technology, engineering, arts, and mathematics), and much more.

Public library services extend beyond their walls to integrate into the communities they serve, as well as online.

The value of a library to its community is significant. As the one community institution that welcomes people at every age and stage of life, meeting their diverse needs and educational aspirations, the library symbolizes a community's commitment to future generations.

Local and state elected officials in Georgia have long recognized this value by building and maintaining libraries in every county and supporting them generously.

407 Library Facilities

Georgia's public libraries provide value each year

\$1.00
funded
to libraries
=
\$3.21
in value



Leading in Technology and Internet Access

Students, families, workers, and job seekers are checking out technology devices from libraries and using them in their daily lives.

In 2023, Georgia Public Library Service (GPLS) provided more than 7,000 Chromebooks and 2,800 Launchpad learning tablets to public libraries with support from the Governor's Emergency Education Relief (GEER) funds.

GPLS shipped the equipment directly to all 60 library systems to ensure fast deployment where it was needed most, preloading the Launchpads with applications to encourage language and literacy development. GPLS also provided supporting equipment, such as charging carts, bags, and replacement parts, and continues to provide device management and support.

All of Georgia's public libraries offer free high-speed internet access, including in rural and underserved areas that lack basic connectivity.

GPLS assists libraries in securing discounts through the federal E-Rate program, enabling all 407 public library facilities in Georgia to provide free high-speed internet not only to their patrons, but also to the communities they serve.

With this access, patrons can use a personal mobile device or public access computer to search for jobs, apply for retirement benefits, stay connected to friends and family, and more.

By making it possible for patrons to check out devices for at-home use and offering high-speed internet access, public libraries are bridging the digital divide and helping people across Georgia access critical learning resources and online services.



60 Library Systems

Georgia's public libraries provide connectivity

100% Provide high-speed internet

77% Offer technology classes

9,730 Public access computers

GEER-funded technology

7,000 Chromebook laptops

2,800 Launchpad learning tablets

6,063 Launchpad checkouts



Building Strong Foundations for Early Literacy

Utilizing diverse sources of funding, Georgia Public Library Service is building strong foundations for early literacy across several initiatives.

GPLS encouraged economically and educationally vulnerable families to engage in early literacy activities through Prime Time Family Reading, a Library of Congress Literacy Award-winning program. Participating families enjoy a weekly meal together and a facilitated reading session that models deeper conversations about the themes and lessons of books.

To further encourage families to read at home, GPLS also distributed 120 Prime Time Family and Preschool Spark Box early literacy kits across 12 public library systems, with the support of LuluMa Foundation funding. Families keep their Spark Boxes, which contain books, additional learning and art supplies, and a guide with discussion prompts and activities.

“I am overwhelmed by the good books and activities in the Spark Box. It is my go-to resource as I prepare my child for his reading and learning journey,” said Robin, a parent from Lee County.

For the youngest Georgia community members, 1,000 Books Before Kindergarten encourages families to read with their child to develop the pre-reading skills that are critical to speech and language development. A grant from the LuluMa Foundation enabled GPLS to supply all 60 library systems with materials to launch a rebranded and robust 1,000 Books Before Kindergarten. Currently, 77% of Georgia’s library systems offer the program and there are more than 8,000 children registered.

Libraries also encouraged students of all ages to read and prepare for the next school year through the Institute of Museum and Library Services-funded Summer Reading Program.

“We are forever grateful for the library staff who go above and beyond to instill a love of reading in children,” said Sandhya, a parent from Forsyth County. “We have particularly enjoyed the music, movement, puppet shows, and most importantly the community that all of this has helped to build.”

Year-round, young readers in pre-k to fourth grade can find books to read with eRead Kids, a digital library available through all Georgia public libraries with over 40,000 electronic and audiobooks, funded by the State of Georgia.



I am overwhelmed by the good books and activities in the Spark Box.

It is my go-to resource as I prepare my child for his reading and learning journey.

Robin, a parent from Lee County



1,139,121

Youth participated in children's programming at their local library

40,000 eRead Kids digital books

77,655 eRead Kids checkouts



“

We are forever grateful for the library staff who go above and beyond to instill a love of reading in children.

Sandhya, a parent from Forsyth County

Strengthening Libraries from the Ground Up

Georgia Public Library Service helps communities build new libraries and revitalize existing structures.

GPLS serves as an advisor between communities and state funding agencies, helping libraries navigate the funding process and assisting with planning and budgeting for new construction or renovation.

The following examples are a snapshot of the 63 facilities that benefited from Major Repair and Renovation (MRR) or Capital Projects funding this year.

At the Talbot County Public Library, a \$315,000 MRR grant empowered the library to better serve its community through improvements to the physical structure.

The library is located in the county seat of Talbotton, Georgia, a small town in a rural county west of Macon. Costs to repair the leaking roof, which had been patched multiple times through the years, exceeded the county's budget, and a blue tarp was mounted permanently in parts of the space.

"The renovated building is much healthier and more attractive," said Pine Mountain Library director Cynthia Kilby. "No more mold, no more blue tarps, and no buckets catching water. For the first time in years, it looks like someplace you would want to linger and enjoy. I believe our patrons and staff will feel a sense of pride and want to visit more often."

The Oconee County Library in Watkinsville, Georgia, received Capital Projects funding to move to a bigger and reimagined space.

Though in a small town of 3,002, the library serves a growing Oconee County population. The project was made possible by \$3.3 million in Capital Projects funding, \$1.3 million in SPLOST funds, and the donation of a building from Duke Gibbs of Gibbs Capital, LCC.

The new facility will offer residents a wide variety of programs and services that were not available in the cramped conditions of the previous facility, built in 1975. The library will include two large meeting rooms, a story room, four study rooms, a genealogy space, self-checkouts, outdoor space, 3D printers, and much more.

"The library is a popular location in our community, and everyone is eager to see the improvements," said Valerie Bell, director of the Athens Regional Library System.



The renovated building is much healthier and more attractive...

For the first time in years, it looks like someplace you would want to linger and enjoy.

Cynthia Kilby,
Pine Mountain Library
Director

\$22,015,170

Total Capital Projects Expenditures

(includes State Funding and Local Match)

\$10.5 million in Capital Projects expenditures (state funded)

\$11.5 million in Capital Projects expenditures (locally funded)

Major Repair and Renovation Projects

\$1.99 million in reimbursements

26 Library Systems



Improving Lives and Transforming Communities

Georgia Public Library Service - Impact by the Numbers - FY2023



The PINES network connects 300 libraries covering 146 counties.

12,023,365 checkouts

44 school systems with PLAY student card



Georgia Library Service for the Blind and Print Disabled provides accessible materials.

638,592 talking book checkouts **↑ 2%** increase in usage



Strategic partnerships provide opportunities to visit great places around the state.

12 Experience Passes **54,000** checkouts

estimated **\$5.58** million in savings

GPLS also launched new partnerships with the Atlanta History Center, Computer Museum of America, and Shakespeare Tavern.



Archival Services and Digital Initiatives funds and manages the digitization of materials.

14 public library collections of local history or newspapers digitized

47,896 pages of materials

added to the Digital Library of Georgia, allowing free online access to primary sources of history.

Georgia's Public Libraries - Quick Look - FY2023

60 Library Systems

407 Facilities

45 Bookmobiles and Outreach Vehicles

860,625 Hours Open

2,855 Library Staff (FTEs)

583 State-Certified Public Librarians

\$7,751,300
Federal 3%

\$44,976,314
State 17.6%

\$202,719,754
Local 79.4%

\$255,447,368
Total Funding for Public Library Services



↑10%

4,906,161
Library Cardholders



↑14%

42,766,468
Total Library Visits
17,812,965 In person
24,953,503 Website



↑8%

32,340,137
Total Checkouts
14,182,457 Youth Materials Checkouts



↑46%

1,812,979
Program Attendance
In-person and Virtual



↑13%

3,915,095
Computer Sessions
9,730 Public-Access Internet Computers



↑28%

7,069,133
Wireless Sessions
100% All of Georgia's public libraries provide free wireless internet access



↑22%

1,127,393
GALILEO Sessions

Scan to learn more about the impact of Georgia's public libraries.





GEORGIA PUBLIC
LIBRARY SERVICE

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Georgia Public Library Service empowers libraries to improve the lives of all Georgians.

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Source: Georgia Public Library Service statistics
Fiscal Year 2023 (July 1, 2022 - June 30, 2023)

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Page 2: B. Carter/GPLS

Page 3: top, Piedmont Regional Library System;
bottom, Patrick Yost

Page 4: Chattahoochee Valley Libraries

Data subject to Institute of Museum and Library Services
(IMLS) review during Spring 2024 Public Libraries Survey

Page 5: top, Chattahoochee Valley Libraries; middle, Flint River Regional
Library System; bottom, Mountain Regional Library System

Page 7: top and bottom D. Hakes/GPLS;

middle Communities In Schools of Catoosa County

Page 9: top, F. Munive/GPLS; middle, Pine Mountain Regional Library System;
bottom, Athens Regional Library System

Page 10: top, F. Munive/GPLS; bottom left, Atlanta History Center;
bottom right, D. Hakes/GPLS