

**Boulder Public Library**

**2021**

**Annual Report**

**BOULDER**  
PUBLIC LIBRARY



# HIGHLIGHTS

## Director's Page



The idea of the public library has been with us for over two hundred and sixty years. But it was in the west – Denver specifically – where the public library as we know it today was invented. John Cotton Dana was a visionary. He oversaw opening the stacks for the public to browse. He opened the first children's library – complete with appropriately sized furniture. He stressed the importance of staff training. He initiated the first circulating collection of something other than books.

Boulder Public Library opened its doors in 1907 after a couple of decades of different “reading rooms” around town that had been run by various Women's groups equally invested in the idea of “public

good.” It was a time referred to as the Progressive Era. And it is a time inextricably tied with Women's suffrage, antitrust laws, and social activism. If you read some history, you will remark that it was a time when people felt they could fix everything – from the quality of our individual lives to the manner in which we lived and worked together. It was a time of prodigious hope.

Today we circulate wireless hotspots, pair tutors with learners, assist people with starting a business or finding a new career or hobby. We connect folks through programming on everything from knitting to coding to vaccination clinics. We preserve our community's history. We gather neighbors together to read books and discuss the importance of critical issues facing our everyday lives – like racism and climate change. We offer free public computing and teen spaces and access to 3D printing and laser cutters. We are a crossroads and a gathering place where all members of our community come together if only for a moment in a shared appreciation of a common good – a commitment to learning. Oh, and we also have lots of books.

Contrary to popular belief, libraries have never been about the books. As you will note in our following annual report – we are about reading and learning, and literacy in all its forms. And yes, we are about public happiness. The past two years have been hard for many reasons. But the library persists in creating a public place that is free and open to all – so that everyone, no matter their background or beliefs or current lot in life can have access to information and the potential to grow into a lifelong learner.

Hope to see you at the library soon,  
David Farnan  
Library Director

---

*“Libraries are foremost about happiness, and secondarily, education.”*

— John Cotton Dana [Denver Librarian 1889-1897]

# HIGHLIGHTS

## PATRONS AND USE

**15,044**

NEW PATRONS

**15,044 new patrons joined the library in 2021**, bringing total patrons served to over 133,000.

**1,534,866**

CIRCULATIONS

**Total circulations of library materials.**

**400,219**

DOWNLOADABLE AND  
STREAMING COLLECTIONS

OverDrive, hoopla, and Kanopy circulated **400,219 eBooks, audiobooks, videos, music, and magazines were loaned**. An increase of almost 140,000 more items loaned than in 2019!

**3,161**

ASK A LIBRARIAN QUERIES

More than 5 times the amount of Ask A Librarian questions than were received pre-pandemic! **14,876 phone calls from patrons were answered. More than any other year on record!**

A 4-year-old boy asked, “How many books do we have at the Main Library?” The answer – approximately 97,000 items!!

# HIGHLIGHTS

## THE TOP FIVE MOST CHECKED OUT TITLES IN 2021



### Fiction

1. The Four Winds by Kristin Hannah
2. The Midnight Library by Matt Haig
3. The Vanishing Half by Brit Bennett
4. Klara and the Sun by Kazuo Ishiguro
5. The Searcher by Tana French

### Non-Fiction

1. All We Can Save edited by Ayana Elizabeth Johnson & Katharine K. Wilkinson
2. Caste by Isabel Wilkerson
3. Breath by James Nestor
4. Keep Sharp by Sanjay Gupta
5. Untamed by Glennon Doyle

2

## WEBSITE

The library online catalog was used the most as compared to the library's other webpages.

# 2,610,756

[boulderlibrary.org](https://boulderlibrary.org) &  
[boulder.flatironslibrary.org](https://boulder.flatironslibrary.org)  
combined page views

## BPL NEWSLETTER

# 49,000+

 NEWSLETTER  
SUBSCRIBERS

24 Newsletters sent with 21% open rate.



# HIGHLIGHTS

## STUDENT 1 PROGRAM



13,228

ACCOUNTS CREATED

760

ACCOUNTS UPGRADED

1,566

STUDENT ID USED

BVSD students who attend school within Boulder city limits are eligible to use their student IDs to gain access to the library's online research databases. Students can visit any library location and have their accounts upgraded to check out books and other materials.

- **13,228 Student 1 accounts created** in the 2020-2021 school year.
- **760 accounts upgraded to regular library accounts** since Oct. 2019. This is an **increase of 417 from last school year**. About 6% of all Student 1 accounts have been upgraded since the program began Oct. 2019.
- **1,566 students used their student ID to access library resources** during the 2020-2021 school year: 12% of all Student 1 accounts.

# HIGHLIGHTS

423

VOLUNTEERS



**423 volunteers gave 14,017 hours in 2021.**

**95 volunteers registered 4,000 participants in the Summer of Discovery program.**

95

4,000



Volunteers re-opened and managed day-to-day operations of the Paper & Spine Used Bookstore.

1,035

**Volunteers led 1,035 hours of Conversation in English sessions online.** Participants from a least 15 countries joined the discussion groups, some who were as far away as Libya and Brazil.

4,200

**Boulder Reads Program volunteers provided 4,200 hours of tutoring support to 50+ adult literacy and language learners.**

**100 Home Delivery program volunteers gave over 2,100 hours distributing library items directly to community members who are unable to leave their homes due to their age, illness, or disability reason.**

2,100

# HIGHLIGHTS

## BOULDERREADS LITERACY FOR ALL

# 3,000

TUTORING PAIR HOURS

**4 adults** received their high school diplomas through Career Online High School, with another **6 adults** enrolling in the 18-month program.

Conversations in English continued to grow, with **10 sessions weekly**. Participants practiced their conversation skills for more than **1,035 hours**.

Tutoring pairs worked together for **nearly 3,000 hours**, with volunteer tutors spending an additional 1,200 in preparation time. Tutors devoted 140 hours to training.

5

*“I believe the work that BoulderReads does can be considered community care. In reflecting on our pair-up, it’s clear that our sessions were pretty vital in maintaining a sense of community and combating isolation in a tumultuous year.”*

— BoulderReads Tutor

BoulderReads celebrated 35 years of providing language literacy services



# HIGHLIGHTS

## MARIA ROGERS ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

*“The oral history of a specific individual may be five percent of what we produce in a year at the Carnegie Library for Local History, but for the family, it’s everything—one hundred percent.”*

— Cyns Nelson,  
MROHP Program Manager

**27,427**

ORAL-HISTORY INTERVIEW  
WEBPAGE VIEWS

**3,074**

TOTAL ORAL HISTORY  
INTERVIEWS IN THE COLLECTION

**477**

HOURS  
CONTRIBUTED  
BY VOLUNTEERS

**19**

ACTIVE  
VOLUNTEERS

**14**

NEW ORAL  
HISTORY  
INTERVIEWS  
CONDUCTED

**25**

INTERVIEWS NEWLY  
AVAILABLE VIA THE CARNEGIE  
LIBRARY WEBSITE

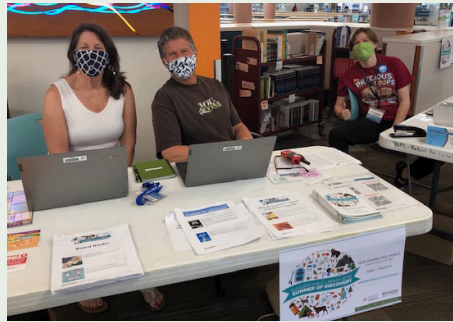
*“It makes me tear up because it means so much to have this transcript. My Dad moved to assisted living in Lakewood in January of this year. It’s close to me, which is good, but he’s having a tough time adjusting. This transcript will certainly brighten his world. Thank you for this gift.”*

— Family member  
of an interviewee



# HIGHLIGHTS

## SUMMER OF DISCOVERY



In 2021, Summer of Discovery included both in-person and online events with the help of teen and adult volunteers. The theme “Our Connected World” focused on our story of flexibility and resilience. **The community surpassed the library’s reading goal of 500,000 minutes by reading over TWO MILLION minutes!**



**3,047 more people participated in 2021 Summer of Discovery compared to 2020, an increase of 274%**

**95 volunteers gave 1,422 hours of service to the program.**

**Overall participant completion of the program increased by 165% compared to 2020.**

**64 programs were held, 10 in person, 53 virtual and 1 live simulcast program. In-person programs attracted 244 participants and the online simulcast, summer concert finale with Jeff & Paige drew an audience of approximately 500 viewers!**

**4,160** PARTICIPANTS



**2,088,234**  
MINUTES READ



# HIGHLIGHTS

## ONE BOOK ONE BOULDER



“All We Can Save”, edited by Ayana Elizabeth Johnson and Katherine Wilkinson, was the 2021 book selection, a compilation of essays, poetry and artwork related to the climate crisis. The November finale of the two-month program was a community discussion with the editors.

**The book was checked out over 1,000 times in multiple formats**

The program expanded in 2021 with Book Circles. A grassroots initiative to encourage community dialogue.



24

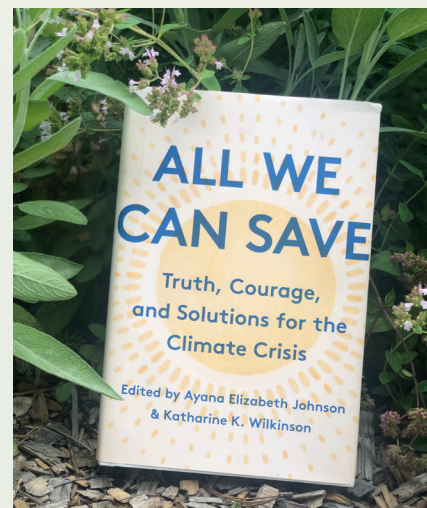
BOOK CIRCLES WERE FORMED  
13 private and 11 public

20

PROGRAMS HOSTED  
12 in-person and 8 virtual

733

PARTICIPANTS  
online and in-person programs



*“It was a great excuse to get to know some of my neighbors better, and it was fascinating to see how people from similar circumstances had vastly different knowledge of climate change. I think we will continue to meet, maybe as a book circle, and maybe just for socializing.”*

— Book Circle leader



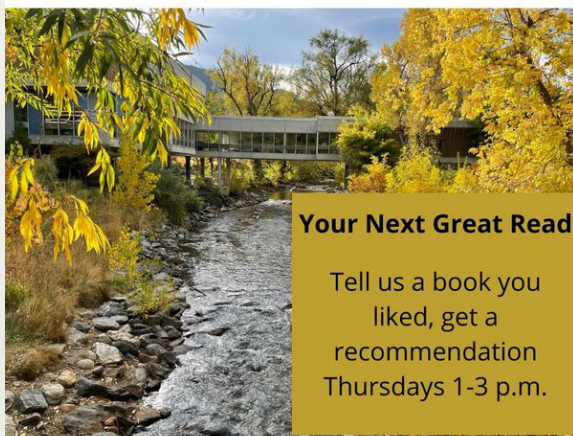
# HIGHLIGHTS

## WINTER READING PROGRAM

# 548,000

MINUTES READ

Participants read more than 548,000 minutes.



## YOUR NEXT GREAT READ

# 300

BOOK  
RECOMMENDATIONS

Thursday afternoons on Facebook and Instagram, librarians provided personalized recommendations to patrons for what to read next.

Librarians always recommend at least five titles per request (most of the time it's a lot more).

*"Thank you so much! This was the highlight of my week and I've recommended your service to all my friends. I am constantly impressed at how helpful and innovative you all are in this library system and am very grateful for all your hard work."*

— A Your Next Great Read Participant

# HIGHLIGHTS

## COVID-19 VACCINE CLINIC



2,533

COVID-19 VACCINE DOSES  
WERE ADMINISTERED AT  
THE MAIN LIBRARY



In partnership with the State of Colorado, the City of Boulder and Boulder Public Library hosted 29 vaccine clinics. The free clinics offered a quick and convenient way to get vaccinated against COVID-19.



# HIGHLIGHTS



## HOTSPOT PROGRAM BRIDGING THE DIGITAL DIVIDE

### September-December 2021

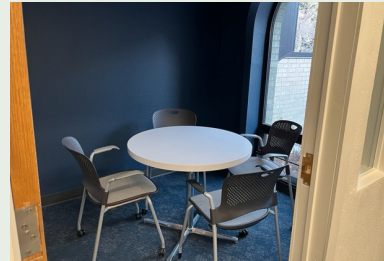
With a \$100,000 Corona Virus Relief Funds Grant and continued grant support from the Boulder Library Foundation for the data plans, Wi-Fi hotspots and other mobile devices were distributed to school-aged children and older adults, ages 55+.

Devices Distributed			
	Older Adults	Families	TOTAL
CHROMEBOOKS	85	195	280
IPADS	42	36	78
WIFI HOTSPOTS	77	97	174

In 2020, Wi-Fi hotspots with free data plans were distributed to keep people connected as we were all advised to keep our distance from one another during the pandemic.

# HIGHLIGHTS

## GEORGE REYNOLDS BRANCH REMODEL



The George Reynolds Branch Library made some big changes in 2021! New spaces were created for children, study rooms and a computer space were added. The interior was painted, new carpet, and furniture was installed throughout the building giving the branch library a cozy, neighborhood living room feel.

12



## PAPER & SPINE USED BOOKSTORE

# 28,610

In 2021, the Main Library's bookstore received a major remodel funded by the Boulder Library Foundation and renovated by staff from BLDG61 makerspace. Wood from trees cut down due to the Emerald Ash Borer infestation was used to create the beautiful shelves. More than 125 creative ideas were submitted in a contest to rename the bookstore. The "Paper & Spine Used Bookstore" was ultimately chosen as the store's official name.

BOOKS WERE KEPT OUT OF LANDFILLS and put them back into the hands of readers.

# HIGHLIGHTS



## BOULDER LIBRARY FOUNDATION

The Boulder Library Foundation (BLF) granted \$947,000 to the library in 2021 — an all-time high in its 47-year history.



**\$500,000 for the new north Boulder branch library construction.**

**\$259,000 to fund 90% of library programs and events.**

**\$46,000 in grants to library staff members furloughed or laid off because of budget cuts due to COVID-19 pandemic.**

BLF also funded Wi-Fi hotspot program data plans to community members who had no access to the internet during the pandemic, the Library District YES campaign, Arts in the Park new Short Story Dispensers.

**BOULDER** PUBLIC LIBRARY



[boulderlibrary.org](https://boulderlibrary.org)