



 COLUMBUS METROPOLITAN LIBRARY

2026

Financial Summary



April 2026

**To the Citizens of the City of Columbus and Franklin County,
The Board of Trustees and Chief Executive Officer of Columbus Metropolitan Library**

As Financial Officer of Columbus Metropolitan Library (CML), I am pleased to present CML's 2026 Financial Summary. This report highlights CML's budget, financial activities, and key investments that support our mission and reflect our ongoing commitment to fiscal sustainability and community impact.

This unaudited summary was developed in collaboration with CML staff and executive leadership and is presented on a non-GAAP (Generally Accepted Accounting Principals) basis. CML's most recent audited Annual Comprehensive Financial Report is available at [columbuslibrary.org](https://www.columbuslibrary.org).

At CML, we inspire reading, share resources and connect people. Every financial decision we make is guided by our responsibility to serve the community and respond to evolving needs. From early literacy and educational support to workforce development and digital access, the library remains a vital and trusted resource for customers of all ages. Visit our website to learn more about our offerings and stay connected with us on social media ([Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), [TikTok](#)) for regular updates.

CML, along with public libraries across Ohio, delivers significant value to taxpayers by strengthening communities, supporting education, and promoting economic opportunity. Statewide, Ohio libraries serve 7.4 million cardholders and welcome more than 48 million visits annually. Protecting library funding means protecting access to these essential services. Recent statewide research shows overwhelming, bipartisan support for Ohio's public libraries. Ninety percent of Ohioans say their library is important to their community, and nearly 70% can recall a specific time it helped them personally.

Our strategy of fiscal sustainability ensures that CML remains in a strong financial position today while responsibly planning for the future. We do so through long-term financial projections, disciplined budgeting and thoughtful investment in facilities, technology and mission-critical services.

The 2026 budget supports these priorities and provides the flexibility needed to adapt to changing conditions while continuing to invest purposefully in the communities we serve. We are committed to generating the greatest possible impact from every dollar of public investment.

The Finance Team has worked diligently to present the most relevant financial information in a clear and accessible format. If you have any questions concerning any of the information provided in this report, please contact me at (614) 849-1037.

Sincerely,

Jamie Lang

Financial Officer / Fiscal Officer

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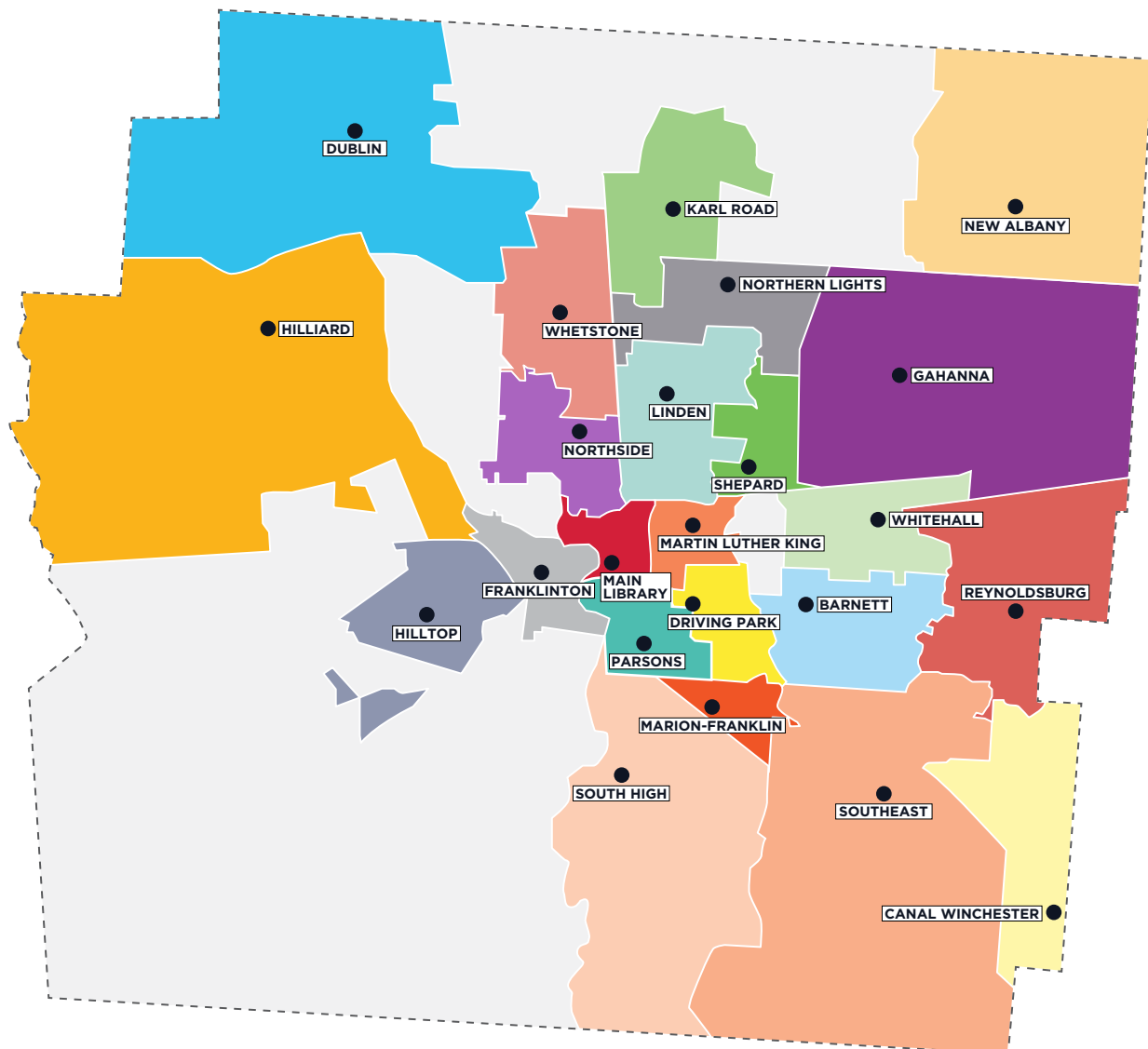
Overview and Structure

CML is a county district library with boundaries including all the land area within Franklin County, Ohio, except for the land area lying within the boundaries of six other public library districts in the County. CML was formed in 1872, and the Public Library and Reading Room opened on March 4, 1873 in the old City Hall. CML has since expanded to 22 branches and Main Library.

CML is governed by a Board of Trustees appointed by the Judges of the Court of Common Pleas and the Franklin County Commissioners. The Board of Trustees is the policy-making body for the institution and is responsible for approving strategic direction, short/long term budgets and financial direction. CML is a political subdivision as defined by the Ohio Revised Code, and therefore financially and operationally independent from the City of Columbus and Franklin County.

Locations

CML has 23 locations serving Franklin County, 22 branches and Main Library. The West Case Branch project is paused. Due to financial uncertainty, the Board of Trustees voted at its October 2025 meeting to pause the planned construction of the West Case Branch, CML's 24th location. Check CML's [website](#) for updates.



THE FACTS 2025

See how our community used their library in 2025.



OPEN TO ALL
5.5 million visits to
library
locations

660,000
Cardholders

24,000
Kids Cards Issued



13.9 million
Circulation



Facebook



X



Instagram



TikTok



YouTube



LinkedIn

294,500
Social Media Followers

2.9 million
Computer & Wireless Sessions

11 million
Website Visits



4.7 million
eContent Use



Helping Children Succeed

School Help & Reading Buddies

73,000 Visits

10 School
Districts
Served

After-School Snack & Summer Lunch

103,600 Snacks and Meals Served



**SUMMER READING
CHALLENGE**

54,000
Customers Joined



Book Delivery Service

75,000 Books Checked
Out to 34 Schools

Providing Community Support

Job, Technology & Social Services

30,900 Customers
Helped

English Language Learning

24,100 Customers
Helped

1 of 18 Library Systems Sharing Materials

OPEN TO ALL

Library Programs and Services¹

Libraries are public spaces valued and used by individuals and organizations for access to information, print and digital reading materials, meeting space, technology and numerous other resources. CML's collection contains 2.5 million items: 1.7 million physical items including books, music CDs, DVDs, magazines and sheet music and 900,000 digital items such as eBooks, eAudiobooks and digital magazines. The collection contains adult and children's materials in over 35 languages including Spanish, French, Somali, Arabic and Chinese.

CML is a member of the Central Library Consortium (CLC), consisting of 18 library systems throughout central Ohio. As a member of CLC, CML shares an online catalog and select online resources with 17 other systems to offer customers a collection of over 4 million items with over 825,000 unique titles.

Public computers at all library locations provide access to the internet and Microsoft Office products. CML's website, columbuslibrary.org, allows you to search our online catalog, download and stream your favorite eContent and access digital resources for research and learning anytime, anywhere. Below is a sample of digital library resources available.

Digital Resources²

eContent	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• eBooks• eAudiobooks• Digital Magazines
Research	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ancestry• Consumer Reports
Learning Tools	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Mango Languages• LinkedIn Learning• HelpNow
News	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Columbus Dispatch Digital• PressReader• Access World News

¹Programs and services are free with a library card.

²Digital Resources list is not complete, full list of resources available on CML's website.

What You Can Do At CML

Check out books, eBooks, eAudiobooks, CDs, DVDs and stream films and documentaries

Reserve items online and pick up at any location

Use public computers

Access Wi-Fi

Reserve meeting rooms to gather

Access tools and resources to learn new skills or get information

Get help with technology and job skills

Explore genealogy and local history with our experts at Main Library

Attend programs and special events

Access resources for businesses and nonprofit organizations at Main Library

OPEN TO ALL

Library Programs and Services¹ *Continued*

CML offers programs and services for customers of all ages. The programs below illustrate CML's commitment to helping children build a foundation for a successful life. The Kids & Teens page on CML's website offers more details and helpful resources such as Activity of the Month for ages 0-5.

We Help Children and Teens Succeed

Ready for Kindergarten Storytime	Engaging with books, stories and caregiver tips to help build early literacy skills and a love of reading	Reading Buddies²	Helping K-3 students with reading skills and connecting them to great books
Ready for Kindergarten Classes	Helping children and families get ready for kindergarten through hands-on practice	School Help	Assisting K-12 students with schoolwork and academic practice
Reading Challenge	Promoting reading and engagement with the library all year long through Winter and Summer Reading Challenges	School Delivery	Providing students with regular access to high-interest books at select schools
Play to Learn	Helping children be better prepared for school both academically and socially through hands-on activities and child led playtime	Teens Create: Open Studio	Helping teens acquire and develop skills in creative pursuits

¹Programs and services are free with a library card.

CML is committed to helping the community reach its full potential by offering programs and services that provide adults access to opportunities that improve their lives. In collaboration with community partners, CML provides help in areas of workforce development, social services, adult education and digital inclusion. CML continues to review the programs, services and resources available to ensure we are meeting the community's needs. The Adults page on CML's website includes the full list of offerings in these areas.

Follow CML on social media ([Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), [TikTok](#)) and check columbuslibrary.org for updates and a list of current library services and programs.



Left: student working on reading skills in the Reading Buddies program

Right: children playing in the children's area at the MLK Branch

Strengthening Impact Through Partnerships

Like many libraries built with seed money from Andrew Carnegie, Columbus Metropolitan Library has Open to All inscribed on its Main Library. This principle guides our work through a three-pronged approach focused on partnerships, community resources, and library fundamentals. By collaborating with local organizations and cultural institutions, **CML expands its reach and deepens its impact.** The list below highlights programs made possible through partnerships.

Nutritious meals and snacks: In partnership with Children’s Hunger Alliance, we provide in-library summer lunch and nutritious super-snacks (a fruit, vegetable, protein, grain and milk) year-round for our young customers.

Culture Pass Program: Customers can use their library card to access free admission to 18 central Ohio institutions, including the Columbus Zoo & Aquarium, the Columbus Museum of Art, Columbus Clippers, Columbus Crew.

Museum-quality exhibits: Exhibits paired with programming and collections transforms the library into a destination for learning and discovery. Past exhibits have included animatronic dinosaurs and bugs, large-scale LEGO displays, and museum-sponsored presentations on human migration and the Holocaust.

License Reinstatement: In partnership with the county justice system, eligible residents received support to regain driving privileges, improving access to employment and essential services.

Job and Resource Fair: CML hosts large-scale job and resource fairs serving approximately 2,000 job seekers and featuring more than 70 employers. Partners such as Fifth Third Bank and Columbus State Community College offer workshops on financial wellness, resume writing and educational pathways.

Barbershop Books: In partnership with Urban Libraries Council, we place books in barbershops to reach young boys in a trusted community setting. The program includes free book giveaways, haircuts and ongoing support to foster a culture of reading.

Life Skills: Through partnerships with organizations such as Goodwill, The Ohio State University, and Columbus Public Health, we provide education, workforce development, and social services support. Many locations offer Community Support Center hours with access to ESOL classes, career services, and one-on-one assistance.

Digital Skills: Our Digital Skills Hub addresses digital inclusion by providing training and devices to underserved populations. More than 550 customers have completed the program and earned a Chromebook or iPad. The initiative has grown from four founding organizations to 16 community partners, evolving into a cross-sector collaboration to close the digital divide.

Service-in-Action: In partnership with National Veterans Memorial and Museum, the Service-in-Action Nook invites visitors of all ages to explore, create, and be inspired to make a difference. Guests can engage with stories of Veterans and community changemakers, browse curated books on service and military experiences, and participate in hands-on learning activities. Visitors are also encouraged to write meaningful thank-you letters to Veterans. The Nook features storyboards highlighting Veteran narratives, interactive educational materials, and guided prompts that lead participants through a service design challenge – empowering them to turn inspiration into action.



The Service-in-Action Nook at the Whitehall Branch

2026 Operating Budget

Revenue and Expenditures

The General Fund is the library's primary operating fund, supporting its core functions and operations. It accounts for all revenue not required to be recorded in other funds, as well as all operating expenditures. The expenditures include facility and technology projects, staffing, library materials, programs, services, furniture and equipment. The table below summarizes the revenue and expenditure budget for the general operating fund.

The annual budget provides the framework for financial planning, informed decision making and expenditure control. In 2026, CML's General Fund revenue (\$121M) exceeds the expenditures (\$90M). For government organizations with a tax levy, it is not unusual to see revenue exceed expenditures in the first several years of the levy allowing the general fund balance to grow. In the second half of the levy cycle, expenditures typically exceed revenue, and the fund balance is drawn down.

CML's general property tax revenue is provided from 2.8 mill and 1.5 mill continuing property tax levies approved by Franklin County voters in 2010 and 2023. Property tax revenue does not increase at the same rate as property valuation. In accordance with House Bill 920, as property valuations increase during countywide property reappraisals, the voted millage is reduced to generate the same amount of tax revenue as was received when the levy was approved by the voters. Therefore, CML's current effective mill rates are 1.64 mills and 1.13 mills.

Public Library Fund (PLF) revenue is received from the State of Ohio's Public Library Fund. In 2025, the funding model for PLF changed from a percentage of the General Revenue Fund's tax revenue to a lump sum (line-item appropriation).

General Fund

Revenue (in thousands)	2026 Budget	Expenditures (in thousands)	2026 Budget
General Property Tax	\$95,976	Salaries & Benefits	\$61,569
Public Library Fund	\$27,853	Operational Services	\$14,696
PLF Debt Service Transfer ¹	\$(6,991)	Library Materials	\$8,636
Net PLF Total	\$20,862	Capital Outlay	\$1,395
Customer Fees	\$200	Supplies	\$2,102
Charges for Services	\$1,676	Other	\$1,530
Investment Revenue	\$1,823		
Miscellaneous	\$300		
Total	\$120,836	Total	\$89,928

¹Approximately 25% of PLF is used to support the Debt Service Fund annually



Left: Tweens enjoying the game room at the new Barnett Branch

Right: Hands-on practice at Ready for Kindergarten class at Southeast Branch

Outstanding Debt

The library has taken on moderate debt levels to replace or renovate aged, high-maintenance and inefficient buildings. The Debt Service Fund provides for the retirement of the current year principal and interest on CML's long-term debt obligations and payment of any trustee fees associated with administration of the debt.

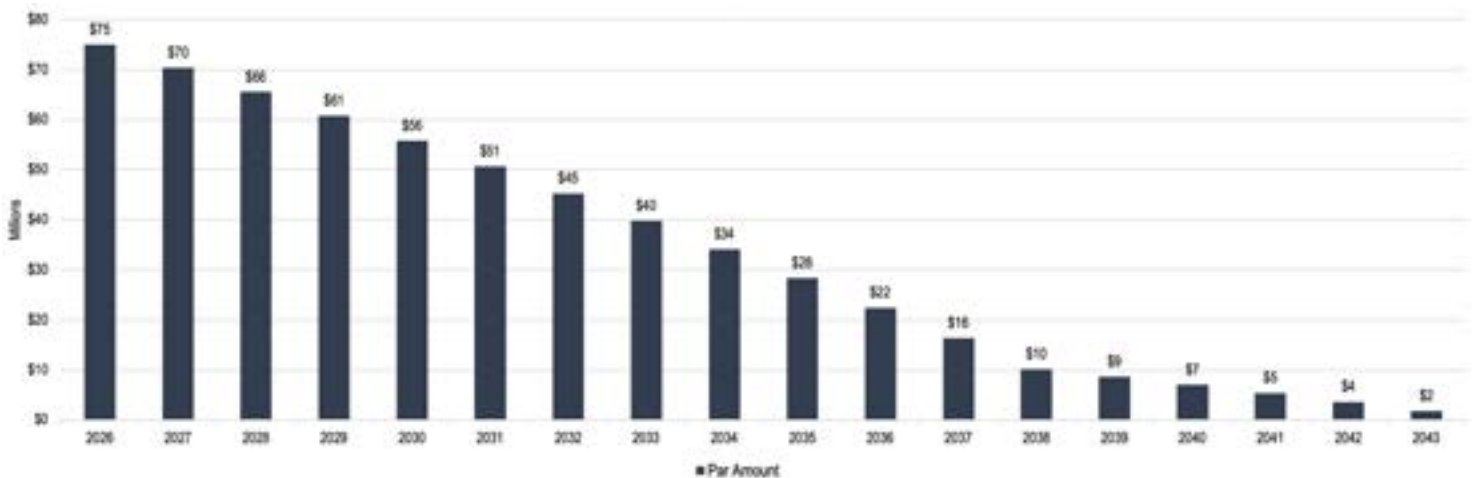
The library's credit rating from Moody's Investors Service (Moody's) is Aa1. The rating provides an independent view of the library's overall financial well-being. Moody's rating rationale cited CML's strong financial management and stable management team as underlying reasons for the strong credit rating.

CML had \$75 million in debt outstanding as of January 1, 2026, the majority of which is related to the 2019 and 2020 Public Library Fund (PLF) Notes. The PLF Notes are special obligations and secured by a pledge of CML's allocation from the Public Library Fund and reach maturity in 2027, 2037 and 2043.

In 2012, CML issued \$92 million of PLF Notes to fund a portion of the 2020 Vision Plan* Phase I projects. CML issued \$33 million of Public Library Notes in 2019 to fund a portion of the 2020 Vision Plan Phase II projects. CML also issued Public Library Fund Refunding Notes, which represent debt issued to refinance previous debt at a lower interest rate. CML saves money by reducing payments over the term of the debt.

CML refinanced a portion of the Series 2012 PLF Notes in 2016 and 2017 and refinanced the remainder in 2020. By refinancing, CML achieved nearly \$13 million in net present value savings on the three series of refunded notes. A portion of PLF receipts are deposited annually in the Debt Service Fund to cover debt repayment. Detailed debt service schedules are included in CML's Annual Comprehensive Financial Report located on CML's website, columbuslibrary.org.

Outstanding Par Amount



*The 2020 Vision Plan is discussed in more detail on page 11.



Facilities Plan

CML's facilities plan is aligned with CML's long-term financial and operational strategy. The long-term facilities plan is essential to protecting our buildings, managing costs responsibly and the plan ensures our facilities support the organization's needs well into the future.

Projects are identified based on several criteria including, but not limited to, building age, building size, population served, growing needs of the community, and usage statistics. New or renovated facilities address space constraints, improved technology and the changing dynamics of the library service model.

The final 2020 Vision Plan project, Linden Branch, opened in February 2026. The 2020 Vision Plan was a multi-phased comprehensive capital improvement plan that included replacing or renovating 18 new libraries over two Phases (Phase I and Phase II). The new libraries were funded through a combination of debt, operational savings, fundraising and savings from refinancing debt at lower interest rates. Additional details on the new libraries and source of funding can be found on CML's website.

In addition to the 2020 Vision Plan projects, we made updates to our Franklinton, New Albany, Southeast, South High, and Whetstone branches. Maintaining and investing in our buildings is essential to providing the best possible experience for our customers. Continued investment helps ensure our spaces are accessible, reliable, and equipped to meet the needs of our customers.

The planned 24th library branch, West Case Branch, on the city's northwest side has been paused. The Board of Trustees voted at its October 2025 meeting to pause the planned construction of the West Case Branch. Check the library's [website](#) for updates.

2020VP Projects Phase I

CML completed Phase I of the aspirational building program with the opening of the Dublin Branch in 2019. Additional details on Phase I can be found on CML's website [here](#).

2020VP Projects Phase II

Projects & Year Opened

Karl Road Branch: 2021

Hilltop Branch: 2021

Gahanna Branch: 2023

Reynoldsburg Branch: 2024

Marion Franklin Branch: 2025

Barnett Branch: 2025

Canal Winchester Branch: 2026

Linden Branch: 2026

New 24th Location

West Case Branch:
project paused



The new Canal Winchester Branch offers a larger interactive Children's area, dedicated space for tweens and teens, learning center, study rooms and meeting rooms.



Operating Improvements

Projects Completed In 2025

In 2025, \$2.3 million was committed to facility improvements and technology projects. The following projects were completed:

- Replaced end of life multifunction public printers at each location. The new modern printers will ensure reliability, enhance efficiency and improve print quality for customers.
- Enhanced South High Branch teen and children's spaces. Added interactive elements, games, makers tables and additional furniture. The updates improved accessibility and created engaging and inclusive environments for customers.
- Refreshed Southeast Branch teen and children's spaces. The project optimized the space, increased engagement and enhanced accessibility. Added new furniture, maker tables, an interactive Pixel Peg, book rails and display rails were installed to highlight high interest books and customer's artwork.
- Upgraded CML's network security, enhancing security and protecting data privacy for our customers.
- Enhanced Northside Branch children's spaces. Added a designated 0-3 crawl and play area for children, space for story time and programming, a Tween makerspace and a ball wall as added to the existing magnetic wall.
- Replaced end of life computers and equipment in Local History & Genealogy. The upgrades include larger monitors in the scanning room, increased storage capacity and new equipment to better support various media formats.
- Replaced and upgraded security radios across all CML locations. The upgraded radios have a stronger signal and expanded coverage providing more reliable communication.



Projects Planned For 2026

The funds appropriated for operational projects includes a contingency for unplanned projects. The following projects are scheduled for 2026:

- Replace end of life wireless access points. The new equipment will be faster, more reliable in high-use spaces and provide stronger security protection for customers. The cost is expected to be \$390,000 and is eligible for reimbursement through the E-Rate program for libraries.
- Replace audio visual equipment in meeting rooms at several branches. This will improve the user experience for customers and enhance functionality. The cost is estimated to be \$150,000.
- Add business centers to Dublin and South High branches. The cost of the enhancements is estimated to be \$100,000.
- Improve signage and wayfinding at Main Library to eliminate confusion around specific destinations in the three-story building and improve signage clarity for locations such as restrooms, elevator and computer area. Cost to be determined.
- Upgrade emergency call boxes in the parking garage at Main Library, providing faster and more reliable assistance to customers. The cost is estimated to be \$35,000.
- Install solar panels at Shepard Branch through a partnership with the City of Columbus, Ohio. The solar panels will reduce utility costs, greenhouse gases and other pollution emissions.



2025 Accomplishments and Highlights

CML's accomplishments, initiatives and highlights are listed below.

- Opened two new libraries in Marion Franklin and Canal Winchester. After providing library services from former school buildings, we brought the southside neighborhood and southeast suburb its first standalone library. Both libraries feature engaging spaces for children, tweens and teens, plus meeting and study rooms.
- Launched a partnership with Columbus City Schools to welcome second graders on field trips to Main Library. Nearly 5,000 students will experience the library as part of their curriculum, embedding the library into the academic journey.
- Hosted the first eSports Extravaganza in partnership with Game Arena and Esports Foundry. Nearly 80 teens engaged in casual and high-energy tournaments. Teens meet with mentors to explore scholarships and career opportunities.
- Partnered with the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame to bring pinball machines, iconic photos of music legends and more to Main Library. Customers experienced an exhibit of real, working rock pinball machines, a drum set used by KISS and photos of rock stars, including a collection of images by legendary Rolling Stone photographer and Columbus native Baron Wolman.
- Welcomed over 800 Columbus City Schools students for a college fair with Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU). Students connected face-to-face with representatives from more than 20 national HBCU's.
- Rushed to support the Kelton House Museum & Garden after the tragic November 2025 fire, moving hundreds of historic books to Main Library to be cleaned and dried. All the historic books were saved despite fire and water damage.
- Greeted 100 attendees to the first Stronger Together event hosted by the Business & Nonprofit Resource Center at Main Library. The event focused on connecting small nonprofits to the expertise and support needed to deliver on their missions.
- Renewed a partnership with United Way of Central Ohio to offer free tax assistance services to customers who meet eligibility requirements. The service was expanded and over 308 households were served at 3 locations.
- Digitized the Columbus Call & Post photograph archive owned by the Kings Arts Complex with funding from the Council for Library and Information Resources through the Digitizing Hidden Collections: Amplifying Unheard Voices program. The project will result in nearly 20,000 images being freely accessible to customers.
- Expanded free basic notary service to all locations.
- Introduced decodable kits for checkout at all locations. Decodable books support the Science of Reading, and each kit includes 10-15 decodable books to build core reading and language skills.
- Employed 38 teens and young adults who participated in our paid, eight-week summer community intern program that builds work readiness through real world experience, group projects and career workshops.
- Delivered over 75,000 high interest books to 622 classrooms, directly providing books to over 19,000 students at select elementary schools through the library's School Delivery program.
- Introduced a new pop-up library, Poppy. The pop-up library expands library access, removing barriers, and deepens community engagement. In 2025, the pop-up library visited 48 local events and engaged with nearly 9,000 customers



Opportunities for 2026 and Beyond

- Promote the wide variety of library programs and services available to customers
- Remove barriers to information and technology for our customers to learn and connect
- Pursue deeper partnerships, collaboration, advocacy, and community relationships to support community needs and achieve shared goals
- Advance knowledge of artificial intelligence and assess its impact
- Commit to fostering a workplace and community where everyone belongs and thrives
- Partner with library leaders to shape and strengthen the libraries' evolving community role
- Use data to adapt or improve service demands to meet changing customer and community needs
- Develop cost-effective, innovative approaches to enhance operations, efficiency and adaptability
- Support staff to meet evolving community demands

