

Annual Report

April 1, 2024 – March 31, 2025



West  **rn Counties**
Region  **Libr**  **ry**

From Our Board



Western Counties Regional Library's annual report highlights the crucial role libraries play in serving the 11 diverse communities that we are part of.

Libraries supply lifelong learning opportunities, access to books, newspapers, entertainment and programs for all ages. They give people digital access via free Wi-Fi networks and computer/Internet access stations.

Equally importantly, they provide physical public spaces for community engagement and connection. These are much needed in rural areas where opportunities for people to gather, socialise and learn from each other are limited.

Public library services are only possible with the financial support from our municipal and provincial governments and the dedication and hard work of our library staff and board.

Partnerships and collaborations with governments, municipal and provincial, and community organizations require staff. Without adequate funding, the essential services that result from these partnerships are lost.

As we look forward to the year ahead and beyond, it is with great discomfort that we prepare to begin reducing our services in response to deficiencies in library funding. Despite these immediate challenges, we remain hopeful that library supporters and stakeholders will rally to help establish sustainable library funding well into the future. As the saying goes, "you can't get back what you've lost".

Sherry Thorburn Irvine
Chair

From Our Executive Director

We are pleased to share our report for the activities that took place in our libraries over the last year.

Together, staff in our 10 branches and library headquarters continue to provide valuable services to people in Digby, Shelburne and Yarmouth counties. As our societies change, so do our services.

By combining the knowledge and skills of our staff with those of our partners, we have succeeded in providing a variety of programs that help meet the needs of our communities. Some highlights include our annual Community Volunteer Income Tax Clinics, children's science clubs and technology skills training for seniors. We were also fortunate to receive generous support from our library users in the form of donations during our Adopt-a-Book campaign, which takes place every other year.

Public libraries are rather unique in that they serve all members of society, regardless of age, background, or socioeconomic status. Our doors are open to all, no appointments are necessary, and services are free. Where else can you find LEGO club for children, English language conversation groups and dementia support programs for caregivers all in one location? We have been entrenched in our communities for 56 years growing alongside them and responding to their changing needs. We thank all who have helped to support our continued operations whether it be by participating on a committee or board, volunteering at a program, donating to a local library branch, or supporting funding initiatives.



Erin Comeau
Executive Director

Library as Space & Place

“This was a fantastic opportunity!
Thank you so much for providing
engaging educational opportunities
for all”

— Tiffany Trefry about **Discovering
Dinosaurs** at Weymouth Waterfront
Library, Aug. 28, 2024

“I want to participate (in the
Summer Reading Club) again next
summer!” Annie-Claire Boudreau, 9.



10,902
Active Members



199,459
Items Borrowed



109,649 In-Person
Visits
72,952 Virtual Visits

That's 746 Visits Per Day



56,212
Digital Loans

509,854 Digital loans and articles read



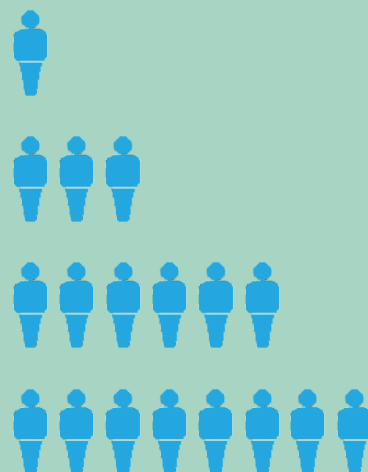
Library as Space & Place



Author Carol Bruneau read from her 2020 novel 'Brighten the Corner Where You Are' on May 9 at the Digby library.

1,139
Children's &
Adult
Programs.*
Enjoyed by

10,666
People



* Includes passive programs

We help people connect digitally

Older adults in Barrington, Clare, Digby, Shelburne, Weymouth, and Yarmouth participated in basic technology skills workshops. They learned to use settings on their tablets and mobile devices and about ways to connect with services in the community. They also received tips on Internet safety.



Breanne Muise, Manager of Programs and Services provides tablet training to older adults in Yarmouth on Nov. 8. Technology training programs took place in branches in Digby, Shelburne and Yarmouth counties.

Library as Space & Place

We welcome everyone and share interactions that people have enjoyed over the year

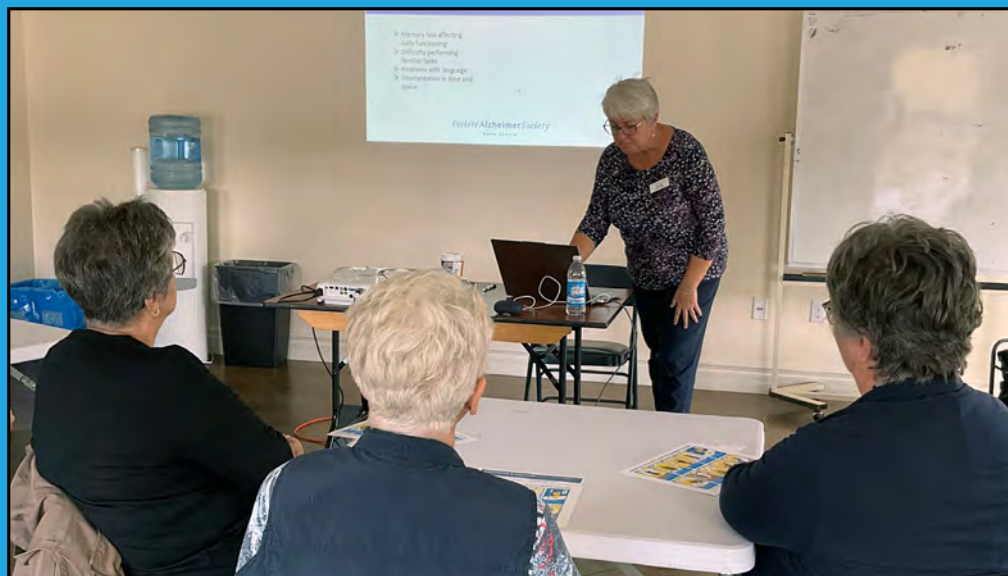
Author readings, paint nights, science clubs, group meditation, art exhibits, LEGO clubs, puzzle exchanges and drop-ins, needle craft afternoons, book clubs, story and play times, travel and historical presentations.



Passive programming such as a monthly drop-in craft program in Clark's Harbour library are very popular. They also attract newcomers by providing an opportunity to work on their English and socialize.



Jennifer Spencer of Yellow Brick Road Farm led a workshop All About Canning at Barrington Municipal Library on Oct. 16. The program was part of the library's food security initiative, funded by a Nova Scotia Provincial Library grant.



Sandra Hubbard-LeBlanc from Alzheimer Society of NS shared information about the society's programming and services and answered questions about dementia at Weymouth Waterfront Library on Oct. 16, 2024. The program was held at six library branches.

Branches by the Numbers

Barrington

	1,173 Members
	1,129 Program Participants
	13,936 Visits
	19,802 Items Borrowed
	510 Computer Bookings
	9,695 Wireless Connection






Outreach & Book Deposits:

Bay Side Home
Home Away From Home Family Day Care
Ocean View Christian Academy



Library clerk Kathleen MacIsaac, upper left, leads a group of children through the program Candy Chemistry on Nov. 27. The program was in partnership with Scientists in School.

Clark's Harbour

	247 Members
	386 Program Participants
	4,838 Visits
	2,457 Items Borrowed
	124 Computer Bookings
	2,524 Wireless Connections

Clare

	629 Members
	473 Program Participants
	8,694 Visits
	12,143 Items Borrowed
	740 Computer Bookings
	2,619 Wireless Connections

Outreach & Book Deposits:

École Stella-Maris
Foyer Celeste



A huge crowd attended the Craft Swap at the Clare library from Jan. 23 to 25. The program allows people to donate craft items they don't need and swap them for ones they do need. Leftovers are given to local organizations.

Digby

	1,605 Members
	3,003 Program Participants
	17,582 Visits
	29,128 Items Borrowed
	856 Computer Bookings
	3,529 Wireless Connections

Outreach & Book Deposits:

Digby Preschool Co-Op

Lockeport



293 Members
762 Program Participants
4,488 Visits
8,314 Items Borrowed
398 Computer Bookings
3,580 Wireless Connections

Outreach & Book Deposits:

The Fox and the Hare Daycare
Lockeport Elementary School Pre-Primary



On Feb. 28, Lockeport library clerk Catherine Henneberry reads to a class visiting from Lockeport Elementary School.



Shelburne summer technology trainer Chrissy teaches a youngster how to use the library's Sphero robots on Aug. 2.

Shelburne



1,513 Members
3,696 Program Participants
12,315 Visits
26,478 Items Borrowed
919 Computer Bookings
6,015 Wireless Connections

Outreach & Book Deposits:

King Street Family Centre
Mary's Abide Awhile Home Limited
Roseway Manor Inc.

Pubnico



261 Members
3 Program Participants
2,777 Visits
4,221 Items Borrowed
162 Computer Bookings
1,301 Wireless Connections

Outreach & Book Deposits:

Nakile Home for Special Care



Argyle MLA Colton LeBlanc, left, meets Interlibrary Loan Clerk Karen Comeau during a tour of library headquarters by Executive Director Erin Comeau, centre, on Feb. 24.



Members of the Brier Island Board Game Club meet during the winter months at Westport library.

Westport









124 Members
184 Program Participants
2,239 Visits
2,845 Items Borrowed
20 Computer Bookings
1,347 Wireless Connections

Outreach & Book Deposits:

Old School Stop & Shop in Freeport
Islands Consolidated School

Weymouth

	801 Members
	357 Program Participants
	7,732 Visits
	13,094 Items Borrowed
	552 Computer Bookings
	4,669 Wireless Connections
<u>Outreach & Book Deposits:</u>	
Maison Jerome	
Weymouth Consolidated School	









On Oct. 1 at Weymouth Waterfront Library, families created scarecrows for the library entryway and around the village of Weymouth.



Delivery driver clerk Ken Henry loads up books, movies and other material from headquarters for a delivery to the branches.

Yarmouth

	4,154 Members
	2,294 Program Participants
	39,536 Visits
	75,913 Items Borrowed
	4,063 Computer Bookings
	12,006 Wireless Connections
<u>Outreach & Book Deposits:</u>	
9 local seniors residences	



The library's partnership with Aidaen's Place, a youth support organization, has resulted in creative programming such as ZomBarbies on Oct. 29.



Jordan Chown of Canada Revenue Agency provides information on tax credits and other benefits during a presentation on May 21, 2024.

Meeting the Needs of the Community

We work with community members and organizations to provide valuable programs and services. Here are some highlights:

Bettering the Community

- Community members in Clare participated in a craft supply swap and all leftover supplies was given to a local senior home.

- Local businesses send people to the library to set up an email address to access benefits such as an app to receive points and rewards.

- There are adult children of parents in palliative care who borrow material from the library for their parents to provide them with comfort, entertainment and mental stimulation during a difficult time.

- All library branches offer free menstrual products in the washrooms.

Diversity

The library continued to offer a place for creativity, socializing and friendship through its Create with Pride program for 2SLGBTQ+, friends and allies.

Exhibit Space

The library provides space and publicity for local artists to exhibit their artwork. The exhibits bring people to the



Matthew Roy of Coastal Grove Farm shares his knowledge about the relationships among insects, bacteria, and fungal communities in your soil and provided manageable plans on how enhancing your soil on Feb. 11 at Shelburne library.

library and raise awareness of the talent in the community.

Food Security

The library offered a variety of programs at its branches to help address food insecurity. Make Pasta from Scratch, All About Canning, and Sourdough 101 provided people with the tools to make their own food and meals. Programs such as Optimizing Greenhouse Growing taught people how to improve their food production and overcome possible challenges.

Discover Mushrooms and

Herbs showed people on how to grow and harvest mushrooms and herbs.

Dietitians Jane Cunningham & Heather Baillie gave a presentation on food insecurity in Nova Scotia. They defined food insecurity and its root causes. They led a discussion on what we can do to mitigate the effects.

Dietitian Kaitlyn Comeau did two separate programs in our Clare branch. One about building healthy habits and the benefits of habit-stacking and micro-habits.

Working with the Community

Helping, training, providing and discovering

Home for Homeschoolers

The library is a valuable resource to homeschoolers. They receive all kinds of information and guidance on a wide range of resources from library clerks.

Life-Long Learning

Library branches host a range of informative programming on topics such as Learn About Mi'kmaw Language, Archaeology and Climate Change, mining in Nova Scotia, history and travel. Many of these programs are presented in-person and remotely via Zoom, allowing people to join from across the region.

Meeting Space and Room Rentals

Library branches provided a valuable meeting space to clubs, organizations and businesses.

Outreach

Library staff delivered books monthly to seniors at residential facilities throughout the Tri-Counties in addition to book drops at various locations.

Partnerships

- The library's partnerships allowed people of the region to experience things such as Clean Foundation programs relating to environmental topics and the Halifax Discovery Centre's Fueling Our Future science show for kids and families at the library.
- The library worked with Aidaen's Place Youth Wellness Centre to offer programming such as ZomBarbies for tweens and teens.
- The library partnered with Service Canada to introduce people to the many programs and services available.



Semise'l Sa'n, left, presented on the origins of the Mi'kmaw language and how it relates to the broader Algonquin language family at the Digby and Yarmouth libraries on May 1.

- Waste Check worked with the library to host community Halloween costume swaps in Digby and Yarmouth. The swap provided free shopping for those needing new costumes and diverted gently used costumes from the landfill.
- The Kespu'kwitk Métis Council celebrated National Indigenous Peoples Day and shared indigenous cultures through drumming, singing and fire-free smudging.
- Volunteers from Canada Revenue Agency (CRA) Community Volunteer Income Tax Program helped older adults and low-income earners file their income taxes in Digby, Shelburne and Yarmouth.
- Shelburne County Family Resource Centre, Barrington Municipal Recreation Department, and Parents Place (Yarmouth) delivered preschool story times and hosted community playgroups.
- SuperNOVA Dalhousie University led a week-long summer science camp in Shelburne.

Working with the Community

Partnerships (continued)

- Sou'West Nova Transit provided free rides to and from library youth and family programs in Shelburne Counties in April and May of 2024.
- Sandra Hubbard-LeBlanc from Alzheimer Society of NS shared information about the society's programming and services and answered questions about dementia at seven library branches.

Safe Space

The library continued to be a safe space for those who live in difficult situations. There are people at all library branches who find daily shelter and warmth at the library, make use of the washrooms, and talk to the library clerks. During a time when homelessness is on the rise, libraries provide a daily sanctuary for some. There are social service caseworkers who bring their charges to the library as a safe place to spend time. It is a role that the library plays in each of its communities, but it is not listed as a service.

Social Hub

- The library acts as a social hub for older



Children learned how to make a lava lamp during the Science Club program at the Digby library on May 16, 2024.



Children aged 5 to 11 worked with simple tools to build, paint a fairy door, and take their project home at the Shelburne library in April 2024. The woodworking project was one of several skills-related programs developed in partnership with Skills Nova Scotia at the library's 10 branches.

adults attending regular programming such as Scrabble, board games, book clubs and knitting groups. Participants value the social interaction and challenges which are important for mental health and maintaining cognitive function.

Technology

The library offered training and support for people to help them learn how to use a variety of technology, including smartphones, tablets and laptops. They also received tips on Internet safety. There is a range of programming allowing people to experience new technology from robots controlled by tablets to programmed gadgets created with specialized LEGO.

Welcoming Newcomers

Regular programming such as board game nights, drop-in craft and regular programs attracted newcomers, who find the programs give them a chance to socialize and practice speaking English.

Behind the Scenes

Lots of work getting books on shelves

Are you surprised to see newer books in library book sales? How do library staff make room on the shelves for all the new books and bestsellers that come out every year? The answers to these questions are all part of maintaining the library's collection.

"People would be surprised by the amount of time and steps to get materials on the shelves," says Bonnie Doucette. Doucette is the clerk in headquarters who helps maintain the catalogue and collection.

The collections librarian chooses the books. A clerk in headquarters orders the books. The bookkeeper ensures the library pays for the books. Once the books arrive, clerks add protective covers, bar codes and other identifiers. A clerk enters them into the library catalogue. The librarian chooses which books go to each branch, and a clerk delivers them.

Because a book can be very popular, the available copies are in people's hands and not on the shelves, says Lydia Hunsberger. Hunsberger is the librarian in charge of the collection and digital services. "That contributes to why you're not seeing them at your branch."



Acquisitions clerk Karen Doucette prepares newly arrived books for use in the library.

Book sellers offer libraries selection plans. Hunsberger also chooses books and other material based on many sources. These include reviews by readers, trade publications and websites.

Making space on the shelves is one way that bestsellers end up in library book sales. The library orders a lot of copies of a bestseller to meet reader demand for the books. After an early rush, demand for the book goes down and not as many copies are needed.

"Another reason a new book ends up in book sale is we get a donation of a book that we have

enough copies of, so it goes into a book sale," says Hunsberger.

Sometimes older books that are still popular get moved to the library's backup collection. This creates space for new books in the branch. The backup collection is in Yarmouth.

If people can't find what they're looking for on the shelves, they can ask a library clerk for help tracking it down. It might be in the backup collection or at another one of our branches.

There are also times when people walk in the library and see empty shelving and wonder what is happening.

"Accessibility requirements change how we store things on our shelves," says Hunsberger.

Shelves might be empty because sections are being reviewed and updated. They may also be empty to create space for items shifting from one library branch to another.

A book may be removed from circulation for repairs. Headquarter clerks conduct minor repairs and clean material.

Maintaining a library collection is never-ending work by a lot of library staff. But, it is important work to keep the collection fresh and user-friendly.

Library Support

The 2024 Adopt-A-Book campaign ran from Oct. 1 to Nov. 30, raising \$21,362.75 adding 690 new books to library shelves. The goal was \$20,000 to purchase 750 books, but books prices rose significantly since the last campaign in 2022.

In March, 100 Women Who Care Yarmouth County donated \$5,500 to the library. The funding will be used for programming in 2025-2026.

Businesses continued to support the library's Summer Reading Club, providing prizes for the children's, teen and adult club.

Book sales and regular giving continued to help the library meet its annual fundraising goals.

Regional Library Finances

Expenditures

	2023-2024	2024-2025
Salaries and Benefits	\$1,462,493	\$1,532,073
Library Materials	\$ 200,434	\$ 196,278
Other Expenses	\$ 299,759	\$ 332,008
Total Expenditures	\$1,962,686	\$2,060,359

Revenues

	2023-2024	2024-2025
Province of Nova Scotia	\$1,462,500	\$1,426,500
Municipalities	\$ 447,800	\$ 460,700
Other Revenues	\$ 203,783	\$ 220,958
Total Revenues	\$2,078,083	\$2,108,158



Lillian B. Benham Library in Lockeport received a new coat of paint to brighten up the library's interior in October. Funds for the new paint were provided by Friends of the Lockeport Library.



Library staff received training on administering Naloxone to people overdosing on fentanyl during an inservice on Nov. 15 at library headquarters. Such training is critical to keeping staff prepared, informed and able to provide the level of service required to meet the needs of library users.