



**Tacoma  
Public Library**



# 2025 Annual Report and 2020–25 Review

# Introduction

Dear Tacoma Community,

As we wrap up 2025, we celebrate the incredible progress made under our 2020–25 Strategic Plan. This year marked significant achievements that strengthened Tacoma Public Library as a hub for innovation, equity, and community.

These accomplishments remind us why libraries matter—they are places of lifelong learning and connection. As we celebrate these successes, we also look ahead to our 2026–30 Strategic Plan, which will build on this momentum and continue our commitment to innovation and inclusion. Thank you for being part of this journey! Your support makes Tacoma Public Library a cornerstone of learning and belonging for all.



Amita Lonial, Library Director



## Strategic Plan 2020–25

Our Strategic Plan for 2020–25 was created with thorough engagement from staff, stakeholders, and community. The result of this process was clarity in a new mission, vision, and values, five Strategic Priorities, and direction for the work ahead. As this report illustrates, we achieved many of our objectives, and the momentum from the 2020–25 Strategic Plan and its work continues to carry us forward with determination and dedication to serve our community.



Cover image: Wayzgoose steamroller printing. Photo by Sierra Hartman.

# Strategic Priorities



**Equity and Access**



**Investment in Youth**



**Responsible and Resilient**



**Learning, Creativity, and Innovation**



**Cultivate and Engage Community**

## Mission, Vision, and Values

### Mission (Our purpose and why we exist)

We empower our community by bringing people together to discover, connect, create, learn, and thrive.

### Vision (Aspirations we have for our library)

We are radically welcoming: a trusted community hub where all people can find joy, compassion, and inspiration.

### Values (What we believe in)

#### **We work to break down barriers of access.**

Our commitment to racial equity and social justice guides our work, allowing us to learn about and respond to Tacoma’s diverse communities’ needs and opportunities.

#### **We believe that learning is a human right.**

We work to provide free access to information and ideas from diverse points of view and encourage our community to explore new ideas, perspectives, and experiences.

#### **We foster a culture of teamwork.**

We engage with our community, our partners, and one another to cultivate collaboration and innovation.

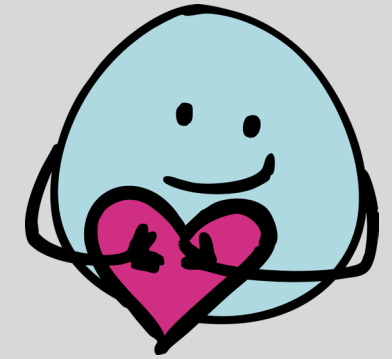
#### **We are committed stewards of our human, environmental, and financial resources.**

We practice equitable decision-making and resource allocation, and take an active, visible role in supporting sustainable and resilient communities.

# 2020–2025

	COMMUNITY GOALS	OPERATIONAL GOALS		
<b>Equity and Access</b>	Provide convenient access to library services, resources, and programs	Provide current and culturally relevant resources and services	Provide spaces that welcome all cultures, abilities, and communities	Provide inclusive, friendly, and expert customer service
<b>Learning, Creativity, and Innovation</b>	Expand learning opportunities for the community	Provide resources that optimize the potential to learn, create, and innovate	Equip staff with the skills and support to meet the needs of Tacoma’s diverse communities	
<b>Investment in Youth</b>	Expand learning opportunities for youth ages 0–24	Provide resources and services that address unique needs and interests of youth in our diverse communities	Grow alliances with educational partners	Prioritize resource allocation to support youth services
<b>Cultivate and Engage Community</b>	Identify successful partners to leverage and extend library services	Extend services beyond library walls by partnering with community-oriented organizations	Demonstrate the role of libraries in Tacoma’s thriving, multicultural communities	
<b>Responsible and Resilient</b>	Support the Tacoma 2025 vision of equity, economy, education, livability, and civic engagement	Provide services for culturally diverse and vulnerable communities	Grow strong public and private support that positions the library as a model of sustainability, collaboration, and equitable practices	Develop an Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Plan that addresses race and social justice and focuses on serving Tacoma’s marginalized communities

# From Our Patrons



*“As my child grew, the library always had an activity, story hour, or adventure to discover.”*

*“I just love the library! They offer so much for the community—classes for all ages, computer use, crafts and storytimes for the kids, multicultural events, book sales, and much more!”*

*“The staff go above and beyond for patrons, and the library gives folks from all walks of life a safe space to learn and play.”*

*“Thank you for the COVID tests that brought calm to a very anxious college student.”*

*“Thank you for making the storywalk. It allowed us to be outside and read together.”*

*“Thanks for all you do. I love your new 1000 Books Before Kindergarten.”*

*“I love to read and feel grateful there’s a place with endless books for anyone who wants to take part.”*

*“It aids everybody in gaining information + ensures continued growth + freedom.”*

*“Thank you for being a bright light even on gray days.”*

*“It offers so many different things to learn and make—from flower crowns, to junk journals, to a neon walk through Tacoma.”*

*“Public libraries are a foundational American equalizer for opportunity. Free information for all people... always.”*

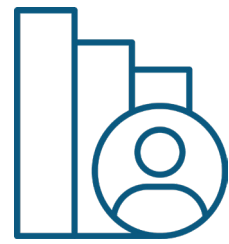
*“We love all the family friendly activities that are offered at our library.”*



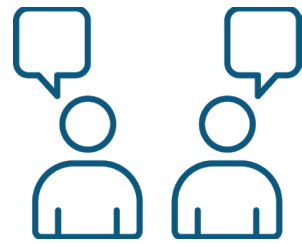
# 2025: The Year in Review



Total Visitors  
**532,907**



In-Person Checkouts  
**1,157,996**



Questions Answered by Staff  
**108,362**

Programs Offered  
**3,132**

Digital Checkouts  
**619,767**

Public Computer Sessions  
**79,520**

Program Attendees  
**55,055**

Total Checkouts  
**1,777,763**

Public WiFi Users  
**62,674**



Tacoma's "Living Room" in the refreshed Main Library.

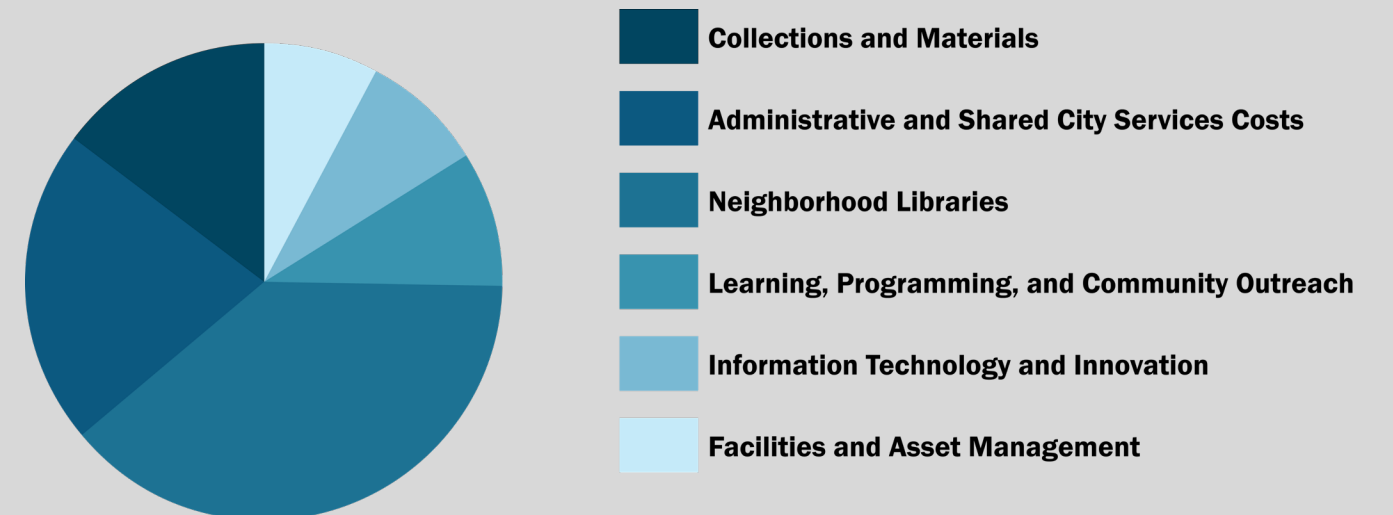
## Main Library Refresh

TPL's Main Library had not been improved in more than 30 years and was not equipped for modern library functions. The library closed for refurbishing and reopened in 2025 with new Children's and Teen areas, Maker Labs, the Community Hub, improved technology, and an overall safer, more efficient, and welcoming environment.



Flower making with Guma' Imahe. Photo by Brian Cox

## 2025 Budget Total: \$18,175,359



These allocations include salaries and benefits for Tacoma Public Library employees. Salaries and benefits typically represent 69% of overall expenditures.

# 2025: The Year in Review, cont.

## The Community Hub at Main Library

Tacoma Public Library's Community Hub, located on the second floor of the Main library, is a unique space that may be the first of its kind in the U.S. The shared space represents the partnerships between TPL and local organizations.

In 2025, these organizations included **Remakery, Tacoma Tool Library, Toolbox Laboratories, and Write253**. Hub partners offer free or low cost classes, drop-in sessions, and events, bolstering Tacoma's access to enriching programming and resources for all ages.



The Digital Media Lab at Main Library

## Maker Labs

The Maker Labs at the Main Library are a group of do-it-yourself studios where everyone can explore individual curiosity, engage in collaborative work, learn from instructors and fellow makers, and build community around innovation, creativity, the arts, and technology.



### Remakery Tacoma 2025 Highlights

- 45 paid programs with 458 participants
- 36 free programs with 2,529 attendees
- 3,000 pounds of donated materials went with participants at events, 2,500 were purchased, and 550 pounds were given away for free

### Tacoma Tool Library 2025 Highlights

- 99 free programs with 957 participants to programs at the hub
- 137 days tool lending was open
- 1,313 active members, a 76% increase
- 10,905 tools loaned, a 124% increase

### Write253 2025 Highlights

Write253 became the host of Tacoma Wayzgoose at Tacoma Public Library—a community letterpress, printmaking, and book arts extravaganza. This event brings artists and printers from across the Northwest and hundreds of visitors.

The Wonder Lab includes arts and craft supplies and equipment, robotic and coding materials, laser engravers, 3D printers, and more.

The Digital Media Lab provides instruments, audio equipment, software, and resources to create music, record podcasts, and more.

The Memory Lab helps preserve memories by providing a space and equipment to digitize pictures, documents, videos, and audio recordings.



Using the embroidery machine in the Wonder Lab.

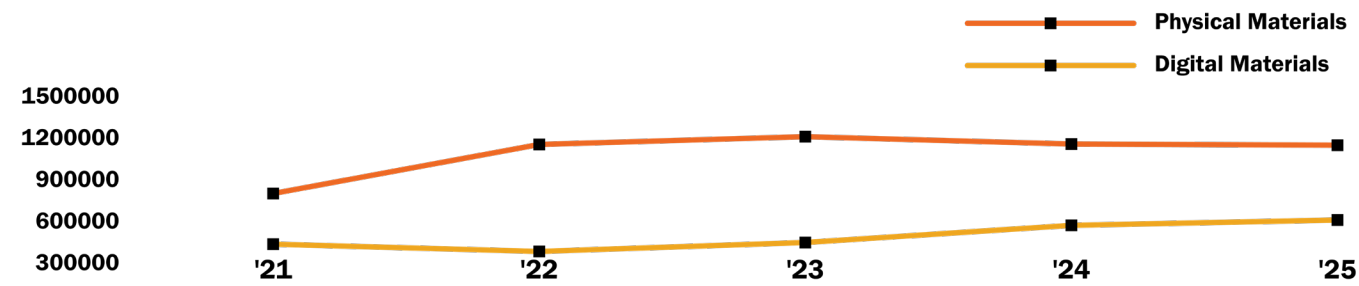
*Made possible by a grant from the Institute of Museum and Library Services with support from the Memory Lab Network, overseen by the DC Public Library.*

# 2020–25 Accomplishments

## Equity and Access

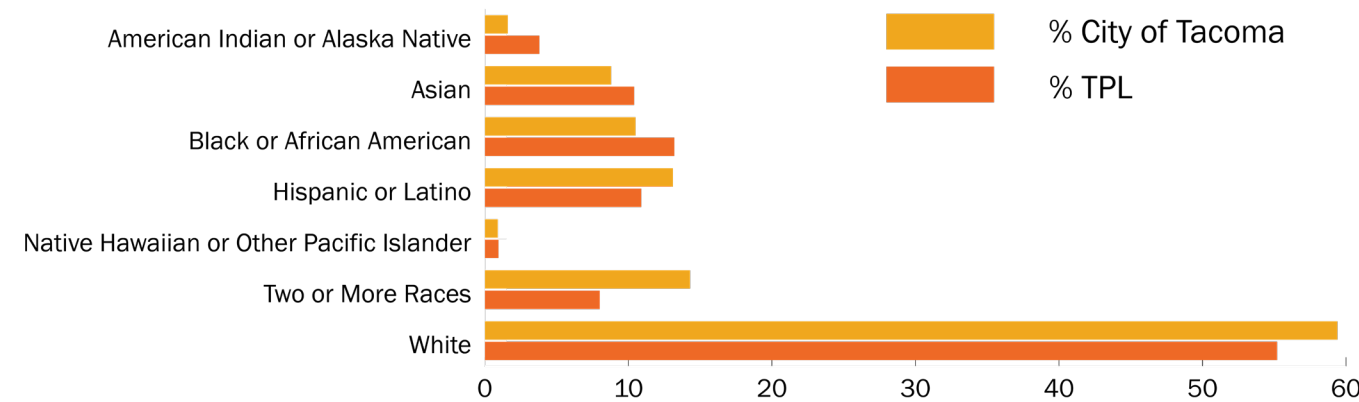


### Circulation



### Diversity of Hires: TPL workforce compared to City of Tacoma population, 2025 snapshot

TPL's workforce has become significantly more reflective of the community it serves. Representation broadened across many historically underrepresented groups, and overall diversity increased substantially, with the likelihood of employees coming from different racial and ethnic groups rising by 54% since 2019. Together, these shifts show a workforce that is increasingly inclusive and aligned with the community.



### World Languages

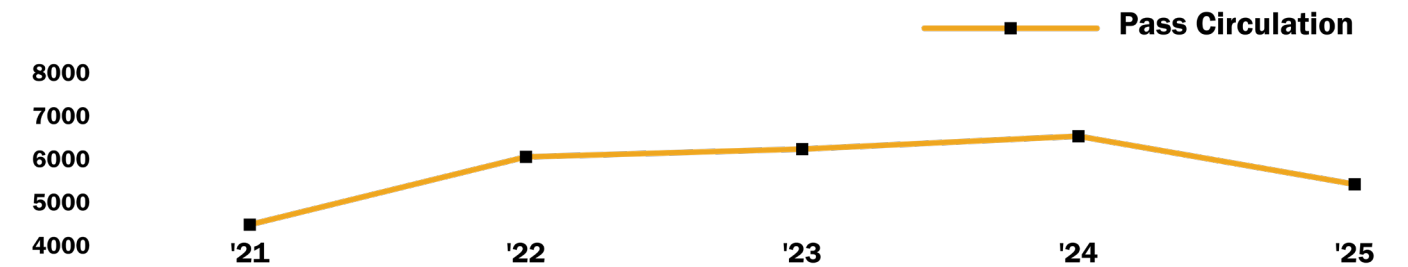
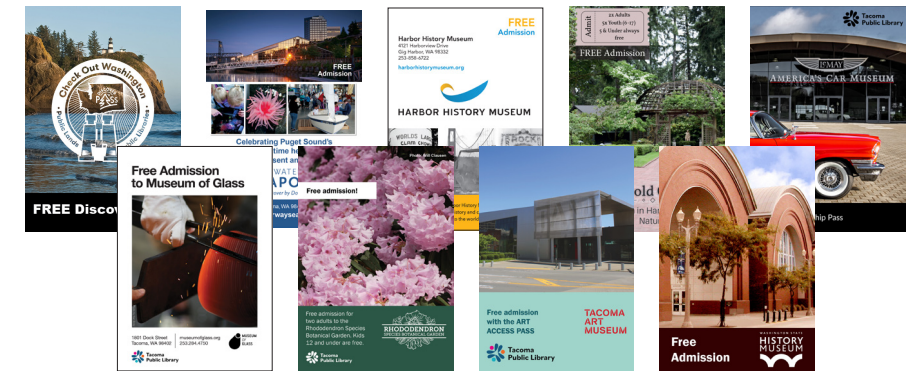
TPL's World Languages collection expanded to more than 7,300 items to better reflect the diversity of the Tacoma community. Materials for all ages are offered in five languages.



한국어 Korean • Español Spanish • Русский Russian  
Українська мова Ukrainian • Tiếng Việt Vietnamese

### Museum and Local Attraction Passes

TPL continues to expand partnerships and grow its collection of local attraction and museum passes.



### Sensory Accessibility Kits

These kits are available at each branch and are designed to help patrons of all abilities have a great experience while visiting the library.



# Equity and Access, cont.



## Storytime STEAM Backpacks

Backpacks with learning toys and activities began circulating in early 2022. The backpacks are designed to provide tools that focus on exploring science, technology, engineering, and mathematic concepts.



**Checkouts since the program began: 1,075**

## Podcast Kits

Podcast Kits were added to TPL's collection in 2020 and make it easy for patrons to record podcasts.



## Overdue Fines

TPL suspended overdue fines in 2020 and made the policy permanent in 2021, forgiving past fines totaling **\$517,836.**

## Free Printing

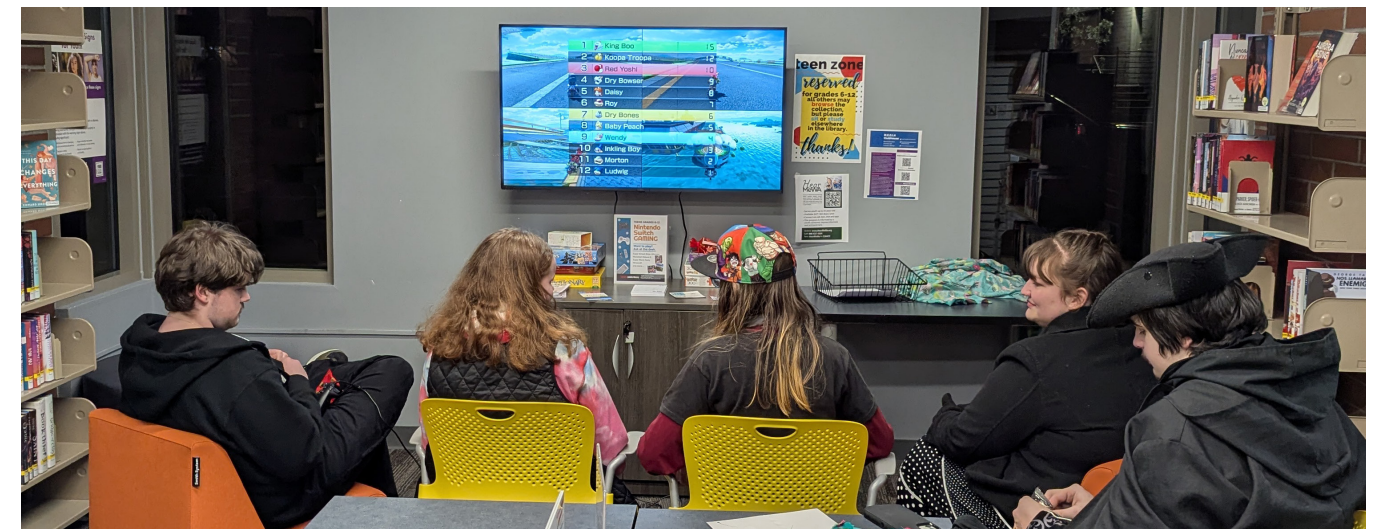
TPL launched free prints and copies for patrons with a quota of **\$5 per week.**

## Mobile Hotspots

TPL began offering Mobile Hotspots for checkout and partnered with community organizations to expand access.

## Video Games

TPL launched its video game collection and gaming stations in 2024. Video games are more than just entertainment—they are a powerful tool for learning and community building.



Above: Video game station at Kobetich Library.

## Race, Equity, and Social Justice (RESJ) Committee

TPL's Racial Equity and Social Justice (RESJ) committee is an internal, cross-functional team that creates curriculum exploring topics related to race, equity, disability and access, human rights, and social justice. Staff engage with the curriculum through independent learning and group discussion, building awareness of how to center equity in their work.

## Building Bridges

The Building Bridges committee is devoted to social justice issues and offers public programs designed to spark conversation and encourage empathy.



# Learning, Creativity, and Innovation



## The Northwest Room

The Northwest Room preserves and provides access to materials related to the history, people, places, and built environment of the Pacific Northwest, Tacoma, and the South Puget Sound region. The department houses vast collections of photographs, maps, newspapers, genealogy research materials, and other historical records.

Northwest ORCA is a digital discovery database that launched in 2022 and continues to grow as more of the historic collection is created and digitized.



Above: A newly-digitized photo of Son Deth, a Cambodian refugee, with two of her children dated May 31, 1975.

## Community Archives Center

The Community Archives Center (CAC) at Tacoma Public Library was established with funding from a \$250K IMLS grant to begin addressing the gaps and silences existing in the local history record. CAC partnered with the community to collect, preserve, and make content available through the Northwest ORCA digital collections platform.



Below: Recording oral history at Hilltop Story Fest. Photo by Mikayla Heineck



## Digital Literacy

The library is an incredible resource for building technological literacy. TPL hosts tech help programs, loans Mobile Hotspot Kits, and provides access to free WiFi and computers. Staff answer thousands of questions each year about technology topics ranging from setting up an email account, utilizing TPL eResources, filing taxes online, understanding cybersecurity best practices, and downloading apps to cell phones. Public libraries are often the first place that come to mind when community members need help navigating technology.



Below: Computer stations at the Main Library.

**Drop-In Tech Help Events** provide personalized assistance for patrons navigating technology and resources.

**Free Certifications** offered through the Washington State Library offer essential credentials for job seekers.

**Technology Programs** such as Podcast Cafe and film and sound production workshops provide opportunities for learning and collaboration.



Computer stations at the Main Library.

# Learning, Creativity, and Innovation, cont.



## Wayzgoose

Tacoma Wayzgoose is a community letterpress, printmaking, and book arts extravaganza hosted by Write253. Attendees can meet local printers and artists and view their wares, try hands-on letterpress, and print keepsakes. A highlight of Wayzgoose is steamroller printing, where local artists carve 2'x3' sheets of linoleum and a commercial steamroller prints onto giant paper.

Tacoma Public Library began hosting this annual event in 2023 in partnership with King's Books, Springtide Press, and Write253.



Above: all ages print-making activities. Below: print being readied for the steamroller. Photos by Sierra Hartman.

## Tacoma Creates

Tacoma Creates is a voter-approved City of Tacoma sales tax initiative that passed in 2018 to fund culture, arts, science, and heritage organizations and programs. In 2019, TPL and the City of Tacoma/Tacoma Creates formed a partnership. Through this partnership, libraries provide accessible public spaces, existing organizational infrastructure, and knowledgeable staff, while Tacoma Creates the funding and coordination of a wide range of programs delivered by arts, science, culture, and heritage organizations offered to the libraries free of charge.



Above: Children create Chinese lanterns during a Studio and Storytime program at Tacoma Art Museum. Below: Attendees at an event with Tacoma Boat Builders. Photo by Brian Cox.

**Since the partnership began in 2019, TPL has hosted 52 organizations who held 451 events at the library with more than 9,800 attendees.**

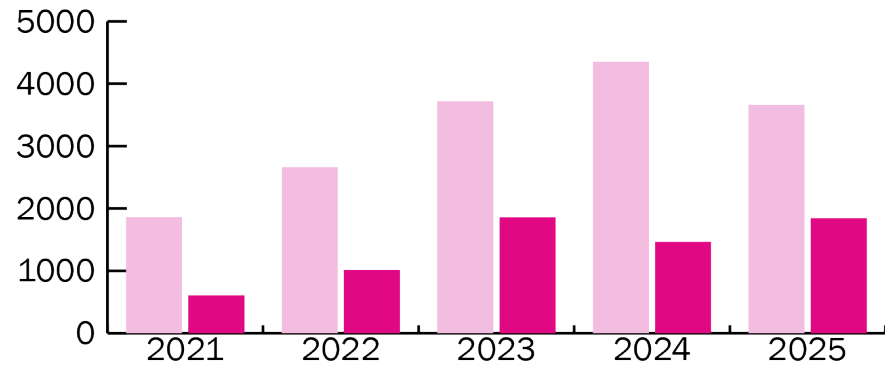


# Investment in Youth



## Summer Reading Challenge

The Summer Reading Challenge is designed for all ages and takes place each summer across Tacoma. Participants track reading, attend events, and earn prizes throughout the challenge.



■ COMPLETIONS  
■ SIGNUPS  
 Total Completed: **6,781**  
 Total Registered: **16,255**



A raffle prize winner and sibling.



Together in Nature at Alderwood Park with the Tacoma Nature Center.

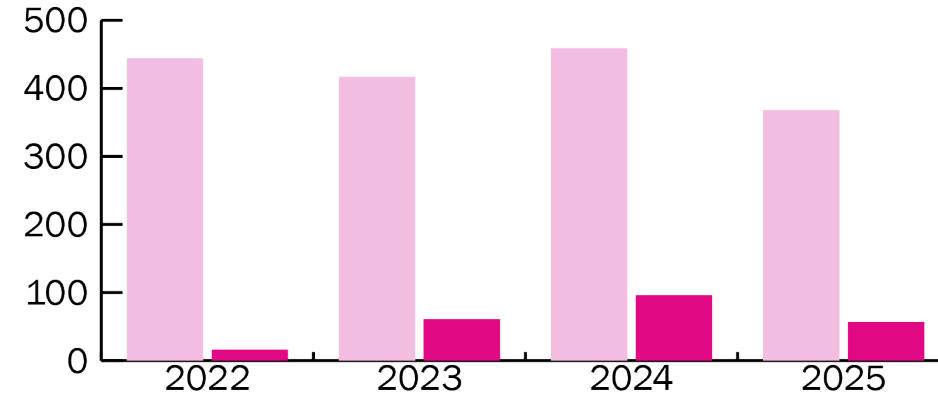


Building flower crowns with Rhody's Flowers.

## 1000 Books Before Kindergarten

This year-round reading program for preschool-aged children began in 2022 and continues to have strong participation and offers a fun way to develop early literacy skills.

**READ**  
**1000 BOOKS**  
 before kindergarten



■ COMPLETIONS  
■ SIGNUPS  
 Total Completed: **230**  
 Total Registered: **1,688**

## The Pathway Partnership

The partnership between Tacoma Public Library and Tacoma Public School District allows students (Pre-K-12) and educators to have Tacoma Public Library access using their student or employee ID card.



Baby Storytime at Swasey Library. Photo by Brian Cox



Author Josh Tuininga at Lincoln High School

# Investment in Youth, cont.



## StoryWalk at Alderwood Park

A partnership between the library, Parks Tacoma, and the Northeast Neighborhood Council, the StoryWalk began in 2023 and features a new title every month. Families can read along as they follow the trail at Alderwood Park next to Kobetich Library.



Tacoma Public Library offers storytimes for children and families in English, Russian, and Spanish.

Right: Russian Storytime with Natalia.



## Up and Atom S.T.E.A.M. Days

These science, technology, engineering, art, and math-based events take place weekly at each library location and offer hands-on activities for grades K-8.



## Youth Programs Outreach

- Primetime Family Learning at Mary Lyon Elementary and Amara Family Resource Center, funded by a grant from Humanities Washington
- Studio and Storytime at Tacoma Art Museum, funded by the City of Tacoma and Tacoma Creates
- Storytime at STAR Center, Teen Late Night, and activities at summer free lunch sites in partnership with Parks Tacoma
- Storytimes at Tacoma Housing Authority
- Up and Atom STEAM Days at Bay Terrace and Salishan with Tacoma Housing Authority
- Poetry in the Park with Tahoma Bird Alliance
- Outreach at the 6th Avenue Tiny Home Village

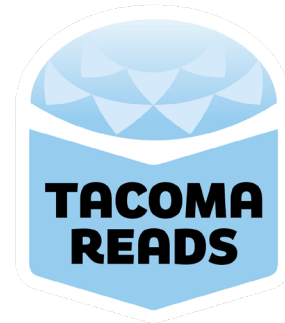
Right: Storytime at STAR Center



# Cultivate and Engage Community

## Tacoma Reads

Tacoma Reads is a longstanding partnership between the City of Tacoma's Mayor's Office and TPL. Tacoma Reads invites Tacomans to explore contemporary literature in community by reading, attending programs, and engaging in discussion.



## New Visual Identity for Tacoma Public Library

A new visual identity for the library was designed and deployed by TPL's Public Information Office using the Strategic Plan as a guide. The updated branding reflects the library's strategic direction, values, and intention to be a radically welcoming community hub.



Below: TPL staff at Tacoma Pride Festival



# Cultivate and Engage Community, cont.



You're due for a new adventure at Tacoma Public Library!

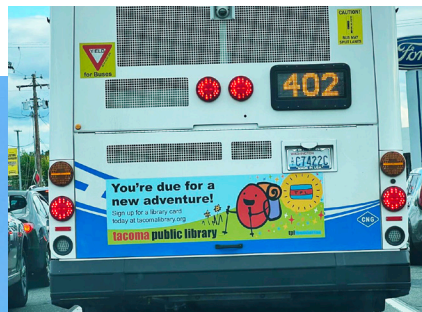
In 2023, TPL launched a campaign designed to raise awareness for the library and increase library card holders in Tacoma.

The TPL Foundation supported the campaign which included bus ads, billboards, a custom animation on social media and on screen at The Grand Cinema, a new library card design, community posters, and custom coasters distributed to local restaurants. **As a result, we saw an increase of 14% in library card sign ups.**



Above: Staff with new library cards and welcome brochures.

Below: A Pierce Transit bus ad and billboard display in South Tacoma.



## Partnerships Highlights

We are grateful to partner with and host community organizations that improve the health and resilience of those in our community.

**Associated Ministries** offers free tax preparation through the IRS-sponsored Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) program.

**Bloodworks Northwest** holds ongoing blood drives to help patients with treatments, procedures, and surgeries.

**Pierce County Human Services** offers a variety of events and workshops to help aging and disabled individuals.



Above: Tacoma Community Court at Main Library.

**Tacoma Community Court** offers case management, community partnerships, and treatment providers to reduce recidivism for those in the court system.

**Tacoma Community House** provides citizenship classes and other resources for immigrants, refugees, and long-time residents.

**Tacomaprobono and Housing Justice Project** host free, drop-in help for patrons needing assistance with landlord-tenant issues.

**Tacoma Needle Exchange** provides free naloxone and fentanyl test strips at branches.

## Donation Drives

The library regularly hosts donation drives, including:

- Communities in Schools Snack Drive
- St. Vincent de Paul Snack Drive
- Tacoma Community House Winter Weather Essentials Drive
- Tacoma Rescue Mission Back to School and Winter Clothing Drives
- Tahoma Indian Center Food Drive



# Responsible and Resilient



## Social Work Support

Library patrons can meet with the social worker at the library to consult about accessing social services, mental health resources, shelter or housing, and much more. Offered as an extension of our Social Work program, patrons can also drop-in for support with resource navigation with University of Washington Tacoma’s Social Work Practicum Students.



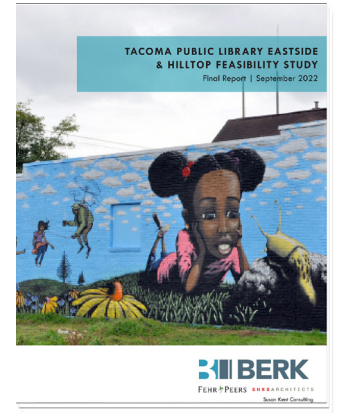
Above: Library Social Worker Samie Iverson offers regular drop-in consultations throughout the library system.

### Top Five Presenting Issues:

- Housing
- Behavioral Health Support
- Access to Shelter
- Employment
- Family Support Resources

## Feasibility Study for Hilltop and Eastside Library Services

The Tacoma Public Library once had libraries in the Eastside and Hilltop neighborhoods. This study looked at the feasibility of restoring library services to these neighborhoods. The study began in late 2021 and was completed in 2022.



## Facilities Condition Assessment and Level of Service Study

The library completed two studies in 2024. The Facilities Condition Assessment evaluated the state of TPL’s buildings and equipment and gave estimates of the cost to maintain our facilities to aid in capital and operating budget planning.

The Level of Service Study assessed our ability to meet patron needs across various categories including safety, technology, interior flow, and several other metrics. These documents are important tools in TPL’s effort to provide our community with the library services they deserve.

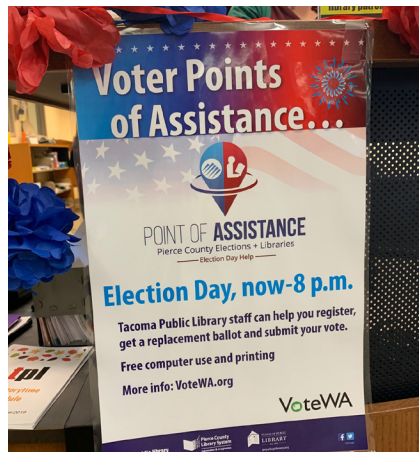


*“Libraries are often the first place people go when they need help,” stated Director Amita Lonial. “As our patrons’ needs are becoming more complex, and beyond the scope of library workers’ training, many public library systems have added social workers to their staff to be able to provide the level of help our patrons need.”*

## Voter Points of Assistance

Tacoma Public Library partners with the Pierce County Auditor’s Office, Pierce County Library System, and Puyallup Public Library to offer voter assistance on Election Days. At the libraries people may:

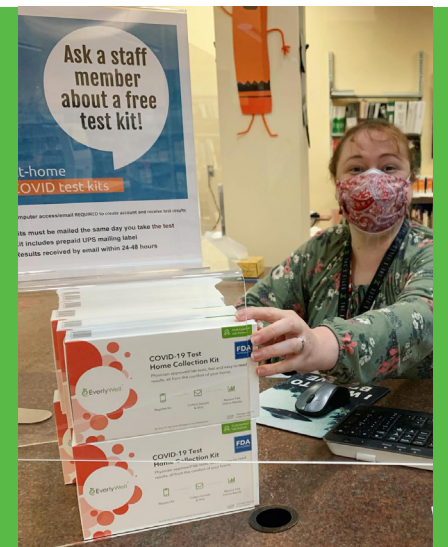
- Register to vote and update voter registration
- Get a ballot and vote
- Replace ballots that have been lost, damaged, or mis-marked
- Get a voter’s pamphlet



## COVID-19 Response

TPL kept community and staff safety at the forefront of operational decisions during the COVID-19 pandemic. The library partnered with the Tacoma-Pierce County Health Department to host COVID-19 Vaccine Clinics and distributed more than:

- 23,000 free COVID-19 Test Kits
- 3,000 COVID-19 Care Kits
- 1,900 N95 masks



# Responsible and Resilient, cont.



## Tacoma Public Library Foundation

The last five years saw the reformation of the 501c3 Tacoma Public Library Foundation. A library foundation is more than a financial supporter—it’s a bridge between the library and the community, empowering individuals and fostering growth through fundraising and advocacy.

## Foundation Board of Directors

- Wayne Williams, President, Board of Directors | President Emeritus, Tacoma Public Library Board of Trustees
- Bill Ryberg, Vice President, Board of Directors | Retired
- Jackis Coulibaly, Treasurer | Port of Seattle
- Archi Sharma, Secretary, Board of Directors | TAPCO Credit Union
- JR. Nobles, Board of Directors | Executive Director, Friends of the Children Tacoma
- Jennifer Wolbrecht, Board of Directors | Executive Director, Pierce College Foundation

Below: TPL Foundation Pickleball Tournament with Parks Tacoma.

## Past Foundation Board Members

- Yazmin Carretero Aguilar
- Erin Bethel
- Dominic Jay “DJ” Leon Guerrero
- Andrew Kouklis
- Cortney Leach
- Debbie Ranniger
- Rafael Saucedo
- Jamika Scott
- Megan Smedsrud



Above: Storytime on the Lawn at Wheelock Library complied with social-distancing requirements. Photo by Brian Cox

## Policy Development

All TPL policies are under continuous review as part of an effort to align policies with strategic priorities and industry best practices. TPL’s policy review process is embedded into a collaborative decision-making model that is designed to include input from the public and community partners, TPL staff and leadership, and final review from the Board of Trustees.

**In the past five years, the library has adopted 44 new and revised policies and rescinded 22 outdated policies.**



# Selected Grants and Awards

City of Tacoma Heritage Grant  
\$8,100



Humanities Washington Prime Time Family Reading  
\$25,000



Foundation for Tacoma Students  
\$18,000 for Mobile Hotspots



WA State Dept of Commerce, pass-through from Federal Institute of Museum and Library Services  
\$58,850 used for new public computing desks and chairs



National Endowment for the Humanities  
\$10,000 for senior programs



ALA Capacity Building  
\$10,000 for Decarcerated Patron Services



AMOCAT 2025 Award



Carnegie Libraries  
\$10,000



WA Secretary of State, pass-through from Federal Institute of Museum and Library Services  
\$3,000



TPL staff receiving the ALA John Cotton Dana Award in 2024.

Department of Commerce  
\$2,000,000 for Library Capital  
\$96,500 for Solar + Storage



Gates Foundation  
\$50,000



DC Public Library, pass-through from Federal Institute of Museum and Library Services  
\$10k for Memory Labs



Washington State Library Professional Development  
\$5,000



National Archives National Historical Publications and Records  
\$126,328



ALA John Cotton Dana Library Public Relations Award 2021 and 2024  
\$20,000



# 2025 Board of Trustees

Tacoma Public Library is governed by a five-member Board of Trustees appointed by the mayor, and confirmed by a vote of the Tacoma City Council.



**Andrea Cobb**  
President



**J. Manny Santiago**  
Vice President



**Elizabeth Bowman**  
Trustee



**Priya Saxena**  
Trustee



**Joel Zylstra**  
Trustee



## 2020-25 Past Board Members

- Joseph Colón
- Toni Craig
- John Hines
- Sara Irish
- Donna LaFrance
- Theresa Pan Hosley
- Wayne Williams