



Hello 2026!

Last year ELPL grew in many ways, and our community has been more engaged than ever, proving every step of the way that libraries are still essential and beloved cornerstones. Going into 2026, we're excited to build on our momentum and deliver on the promises of our new strategic plan!

2025 By The Numbers

In FY25:

(July 2024 - June 2025)



\$3,433,320 total budget responsibly allocated to provide collections, technology, and expert staff

Items checked out 169,803 times



739 programs



18,167 active cardholders



205,898 library visits

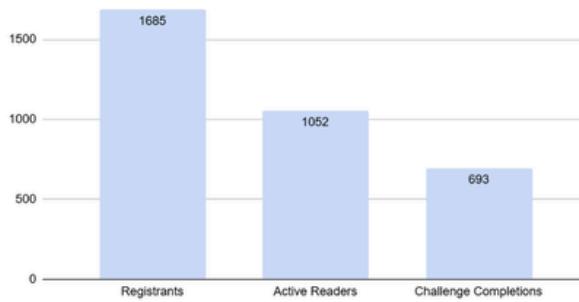


Summer Reading Challenge:

We had record participation in the 2025 challenge!



1,221,879 total minutes read (500% more than last year)!



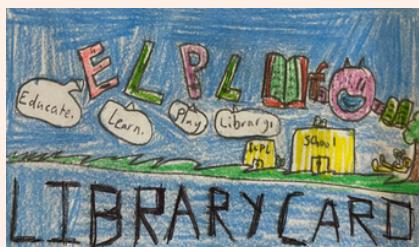
Return on Investment:

Based on the value of these services, we estimate that for every dollar invested in the library, our community receives \$1.79 in direct value.

(Calculated using the Ohio Library Council Local Return on Investment Calculator, as recommended by Michigan Library Association)

New Library Cards!

We're thrilled to reveal the winners of our library card design contest: congrats to Hamza, Queenie, and Laura! Now you'll be able to choose whichever design you like best when you sign up for or renew your card! You're welcome to renew your library card early to get one of the new designs.



Strategic Plan Updates:

Our new strategic plan launched July 1, 2024, and focuses on three core priorities. Here are some of the ways we've put these priorities into action in the last year!

Igniting Collaborations, Partnerships, & Community Engagement

- We established 22 new partners and counting!
- We participated in five outreach events on campus for MSU students!
- Last summer, we created a travel series highlighting our nearby partners through the Michigan Activity Pass, which allows Michiganders to get free or discounted access to cultural and recreational spots with their library card!
- In September, we helped launch the inaugural "One Grand Read" program, in partnership with Capital Area District Library, MSU, City of East Lansing, Hooked, and Schuler Books. Christian Cooper even came to our birding club meeting!
- In September, we also partnered with local businesses to offer discounts to library card holders, to celebrate National Library Card Sign-Up Month!
- In October, we held a library card design contest to showcase local artistic talent!
- In November, we hosted a food drive with the Friends of ELPL in response to the pause of SNAP benefits; together, we were able to drop off 339 lbs of food and other household essentials to the Greater Lansing Food Bank!



Expanding Mindset, Spaces, & Operations

- We're installing a musical children's garden! The first phase of construction was completed this fall; we installed durable outdoor musical instruments, improved water drainage, added better lighting by the stairs, and welcomed a new statue to the library grounds, courtesy of Diana Tarpoff and her family, in loving memory of her daughter, Sarah. Construction is paused for the winter; when we return in the spring, we'll install a special play surface and plant a pollinator garden to attract bees and butterflies!
- We began the process of becoming a certified Sustainable Library through the Sustainable Library Initiative!

Fostering a Shared Sense of Purpose and Belonging

- Staff have joined various committees and boards, including the Kiwanis Club, Rotary Club, MSU Writing Center Advisory Board, and Age-Friendly Steering Committee, to represent the library in our community.
- Staff received a \$300 Friends Grant to purchase new controllers and supplies for the library's primary gaming console, popular with the teens through our regular Super Smash Bros League.
- Staff were awarded a \$2,500 Teen Science Cafe fellowship.
- Staff were awarded a \$399.95 Friends Grant to purchase a Robotics Kit for inclusive programming.
- Dr. B was recruited for a "Spark of Science@ My Library" advisory position to both the Flight Path (Birding) and Science Across America (America's 250th) projects!

The Year in Photos

Here are some of our favorite photos from each month of 2025!



January - Peek Box



February - LEGO Thursday: The Grammys



March - Strategic Plan Unveiling Party



April - Author Talk with Michigan Notable Books award-winner Curtis Chin



June - Summer Reading Challenge Kick-off Party

May - Spring Wonders

More Progress Notes:

Any library staff can join a committee they're passionate about, bringing together workers from all departments to create a better library. Here are some of the biggest achievements and aspirations of our committees in 2025:

Safety and Security Committee: We updated all of our emergency and safety supplies, consistently scheduled safety drills, trained all staff in Stop The Bleed, and updated nearly all of our library procedures! Going into the new year, we're ready to finish our revisions of procedures, and provide new training and resources for staff.

Whole Person Library Committee: This committee works to ensure our library is accessible and trauma-informed. We're currently working on replacing our Empathy and Equity (E2) box, with a new design to better protect the contents, especially during hot weather. The Friends of ELPL have generously approved a grant for funds to pay for the building materials, and the new box will be built with help from local prospective Eagle Scouts.

Readers Advisory Committee: The Readers' Advisory committee was re-established in August to help connect readers to good books. The committee has worked hard to revamp the library's approach to book displays to create a welcoming and inclusive environment. We also created an ongoing Staff Picks display so all staff have the chance to share their favorites. In the coming year, the committee will look at providing additional training to public-facing staff to build their active reader's advisory skills.

After-School Mitigation Plan Committee: The After School Mitigation Plan Committee (AMP) is proud of the progress made this year to strengthen the library environment during the busiest after-school hours. Key accomplishments include launching CHAMP CHAT, a real-time internal communication tool that keeps staff informed of emerging situations and supports consistent responses. The committee also met with essential community partners, including ELPS Superintendent Dori Leyko and administrators from East Lansing High School and MacDonald Middle School, to discuss shared challenges and identify opportunities to better support one another and the teens we serve. Staff watched webinars, read articles, and connected with peer libraries across the state to gather effective strategies for supporting teens after school. AMP is also developing a Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) initiative to acknowledge and reward positive behavior in the library, with plans to launch the program in early 2026. We are encouraged by the positive results so far and look forward to building even stronger relationships with our tweens and teens.

Sustainable Libraries Committee: The new Sustainability Committee has made great strides in working toward certification with the Sustainable Libraries Initiative, completing about 10% of the action items required for certification so far. The Second Generation Sustainability Team continues to tackle dozens of other action items in order to help the library become more environmentally sound, equitable, and economical. Some achievements in the last year include adding live plants throughout the library, starting a propagation station, completing a trash audit, and improving our storm water runoff during the construction for the Musical Children's Garden.

The Year in Photos, Continued:



July - Shark Day



August - End-of-Summer Party with Cameron Zvara



September - Dr. B and One Grand Read keynote author Christian Cooper at the ELPL Birding Club



October - Library Staff Halloween!



November - Dino Day



December - Dropping off supplies from the food drive to the Greater Lansing Food Bank

A Brief Note on IMLS and State Funding

We were encouraged by a federal court's decision in early December to reinstate critical Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) grants after they were unexpectedly terminated earlier in the year. This is positive news, though the long-term federal funding picture for libraries remains part of an ongoing national conversation. We are thankful for the advocacy of library supporters across the country who have championed these essential resources.

Here in Michigan, the state budget for 2026 signed this past October, provides stable and even enhanced funding for key library services. This means vital programs like State Aid to Libraries and the Michigan eLibrary (MeL) have been preserved. In fact, the state demonstrated its commitment with a special one-time increase of \$900,000 for MeL, which directly supports the vast digital collections and the beloved MeLCat interlibrary loan system that our patrons use every day.

What does this mean for us here at ELPL? The state's support allows us to maintain our essential services with confidence. The federal situation reminds us that advocacy is always important. The best way you can support libraries is to continue championing them by checking out materials, attending programs, and sharing your stories about why the library matters to you. Your engagement is the most powerful signal of our value to decision-makers at every level.



Director's Corner: Moving Forward, Together

As we close 2025, I find myself reflecting not just on the year, but on a period of significant transition for our library. When I stepped into the role of Interim Director this summer, I did so with a deep sense of responsibility to our community and to the dedicated ELPL team. My predecessor's energy and vision set a powerful course, culminating in the launch of our new Strategic Plan this past July. We are grateful for his leadership and wish him well.

Now, our collective focus is on the work ahead: bringing that plan to life for you.

This second half of 2025 has been a period of purposeful action. With our Strategic Plan as our roadmap, we've begun translating the community's hopes (expressed by over 1,500 of you!) into tangible services and programs. The internal groundwork laid earlier this year is proving its worth, allowing us to adapt our resources with agility towards our key priorities: fostering lifelong learning, strengthening community connections, and ensuring the library remains a vibrant, accessible hub for all.

While navigating this leadership transition, the ELPL team has never wavered in its commitment. I am consistently inspired by their professionalism and passion. Together, we've maintained our momentum, launching new initiatives rooted in the plan while ensuring our day-to-day services remain excellent. From our popular Library on the Go stops to the dynamic programs within our walls, our mission continues uninterrupted.

Looking to 2026, our path is clear. We will continue to implement the Strategic Plan with intention, measuring our progress and refining our approach based on your feedback. The "prep work" has transitioned into the main event, and we are fully engaged.

Thank you for your unwavering support, your patronage, and your trust during this year of change. This library is, and always will be, yours. My interim role is a privilege because it allows me to serve alongside a phenomenal team, for an extraordinary community. The final words of my predecessor's last report were an enthusiastic "Let's go." Today, with that work firmly underway, I say with equal confidence and gratitude: Let's keep going, forward, together.

I look forward to seeing you in the library soon.

Warmly,
Chrissie Evaskis-Garrett
Interim Director, East Lansing Public Library