



Brooklyn Public Library Welcomed Over 8.1 Million Visitors in 2017 And Presented More than 66,000 Programs to the Public

*BPL Expands Role as a Resource for Self-Advancement and
Catalyst for Civic Literacy and Engagement
For All the People of Brooklyn*

BROOKLYN, March 15, 2018—Brooklyn Public Library (BPL), one of the largest library systems in the country, released its first annual “State of the Library” today, highlighting the extensive impact, community engagement, and achievements of the institution and its staff in the past year.

With 59 branches in neighborhoods throughout Brooklyn, BPL welcomed members of the community through its doors over 8.1 million times in 2017, surpassing the number of visits to The Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Statue of Liberty, or the combined attendance of the New York Yankees, Mets, Giants, Jets, Knicks, and Nets. Throughout the year, BPL continued to strengthen and grow its offerings, presenting more than 66,000 programs for the borough’s 2.6 million residents – more than fifty percent of whom live within a half mile of a library branch.

“Brooklyn Public Library is a partner in neighborhoods throughout the borough, responding to the aspirations and needs of our communities and addressing issues vital to us all,” said **Linda E. Johnson, Brooklyn Public Library President and CEO**. “We are proud to provide a democratic space where patrons from all walks of life can participate in cultural and educational programs in a broad range of disciplines and reflecting a diverse range of voices.”

With nearly all of its services and events free to the public, BPL offers educational, career, cultural, and civic opportunities for all, providing a democratic space where citizens can engage in programs of the highest quality, receive guidance and skills training, and learn how they might address the challenging personal and civic issues of our day.

Serving as vibrant town squares in every Brooklyn neighborhood, BPL libraries provides resources that support personal advancement, build civic engagement, and strengthen the fabric of community. BPL collections are filled with millions of voices spanning different experiences, geographies, and generations and serve as a much-needed source of credible information at a time when distinctions between fact, opinion, and disinformation are not always clear.

In 2017, BPL offered over 66,000 programs, including workshops for ESOL, after school programs and a range of services that address the needs and aspirations of its constituents. The Library also hosted presentations and public discussions with leading thinkers, writers, artists and policy makers from around the corner and throughout the world. Through these and the hundreds of other programs and services it provides, BPL helps the people of Brooklyn build their personal narratives and contribute to their community.

In 2017, BPL activities included:

- 13,202,081 books and physical materials, and 1,274,709 digital materials circulated
- 34,887 programs for children and teens that attracted 703,937 attendants
- 12,085 technology programs that assisted 81,677 attendees, and 510,000 WiFi sessions
- 1,622 ESOL classes that were attended by 19,759
- 662 volunteer-led citizenship prep groups, helping over 3,500 individuals obtain U.S. citizenship
- 11,482 cultural programs attracting over 248,266 attendees

In 2017, BPL introduced its third and fourth rounds of the BKLYN Incubator program a cornerstone of BPL's efforts to better tailor branch services to its neighborhoods, a goal articulated in [Now/Next](#), the Library's recently released Strategic Plan. The initiative supports innovative new library programs developed in partnership with community members. Branch staff are provided with professional development, mentorship, and resources to help implement initiatives in response to community needs. [Projects](#) range from a journalism boot camp for young women to a robotics league to introduce young people to careers in science and technology.

Children and Young Adults

Children and young adults comprise a key constituency for BPL, and they enjoy access to far-ranging children's programming and educational enrichment opportunities throughout the library system. In 2017, BPL organized 34,887 programs for children and teens that attracted nearly 703,937 attendees and 327,127 school-aged now have their own library cards. In 2017, BPL released its first ever Where The Wild Things Are library card with images from the iconic Maurice Sendak book. This past year, BPL forgave library fines for all cardholders under the age of 17, enabling tens of thousands of children and teens with suspended privileges the opportunity to re-engage with the BPL's collection and resources. Among its many BKLYN incubator programs for teens was [Girls Report Now!](#)

Through the expansion of the Telestory program, now available in a dozen branches, BPL provided additional opportunities for children to videoconference and read with their incarcerated parents. Other children have benefited from the many deposit collections in homeless shelters, including the Rose McCarthy Family Residence in East New York where staff from the New Lots Library introduced [pajama parties](#) at the shelter.

Citizenship and ESOL Services for Immigrants

Throughout 2017, BPL expanded its role in serving as a vital resource for our diverse immigrant communities, offering 1,622 ESOL classes that were attended by 19,759 participants, as well as access to books in nearly 100 languages, and public programs in 14 different languages. The library held 213 naturalization courses and over 662 volunteer-led citizenship prep groups, helping over 3,500 individuals obtain U.S. citizenship. Through a partnership with the Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs, BPL brought in multilingual immigration lawyers to assist patrons with citizenship applications at four library branches.

In response to the national dialogue on immigration, BPL librarians have taken steps to make clear that library doors are open to all. In Bay Ridge Library, staff placed a poster that read ["You are welcome here, You are loved"](#) and initiated programming to support the many New Americans who visit the

branch. BPL has since produced posters, bookmarks and buttons with the message “Everyone is Welcome Here” translated into 12 languages.

Services for Older Adults

BPL offers inclusive programming and services for patrons over the age of 50 including reading and viewing materials in nursing homes, senior center and adult day care centers as well as its books by mail program. Twenty-four branches now offer Library Lanes bowling league for older patrons while art workshops through the Creative Aging program are available in 15 libraries and two teleconference sites where older adults participate through live video.

Digital Literacy and Engagement

Individuals of all ages benefited from the BPL’s leadership in the integration of technology into public libraries. In 2017, BPL held over 12,085 technology programs that assisted 81,677 attendees and provided free digital resources, including nearly 1.8 million computer sessions and nearly 510,000 WiFi sessions recorded. In a new partnership with Kanopy streaming service and the launch of its new eBooks app, SimplyE, 1,274,709 digital materials (e-books, audio, and films) were checked out from BPL, supplementing the library’s robust circulation of 13,202,081 physical materials in 2017. Through its [BookMatch](#) program, BPL librarians made 572 book recommendation to readers in response to questions raised online and in-person queries at events throughout the borough.

Expanded Cultural Programming and Civic Engagement

BPL has spearheaded boundary-pushing programs that connect internationally recognized writers, scholars, critics, and artists with the broader public to discuss issues that are vital to the Brooklyn community and to the nation as a whole. In the past year alone, BPL held 11,482 cultural programs drawing over 248,266 attendees.

The diversity of programming BPL offered during 2017 included lectures, talks and performances by important figures and groups such as Harvard professor **Sarah Lewis**, who led a free course on photography’s role in the invention of race in America; **FLEXN**, an all-male street dance group; and **Sherrill Roland** with “The Jumpsuit Project,” giving visitors an early opportunity to experience his performance ahead of his fall presentation at The Studio Museum in Harlem. The fall 2017 season presented leading thinkers and practitioners in the arts, humanities and sciences in direct dialogue with the people of Brooklyn, including **Salman Rushdie**, **Isabel Allende**, and **Muhammad Yunus**, leading standing-room-only talks and audience Q&As on their newly published works. The Library also inaugurated a biannual commissioned lecture series, ***Message from the Library***, in which renowned Israeli writer **David Grossman** discussed the visceral power of the creative process and the role of narrative in today’s global conflicts.

This past year, BPL also embarked on significant partnerships to amplify its role as a cultural producer and presenter of artistic programs. Launched in 2017 and continuing through 2018, BPL is co-producing the two-year **Public Artist in Residence (PAIR)** residency of Bryan Doerries, Artistic Director of Theater of War Productions, with the NYC Department of Veterans’ Services and Department of Cultural Affairs, made possible through a grant from the Stavros Niarchos Foundation. As part of the PAIR residency, Theater of War has staged dramatic readings of Greek tragedies across Brooklyn, from Brownsville and Crown Heights to Prospect Heights and Fort Greene, to engage the borough’s diverse audiences in

discussions about gun violence, mental health, domestic abuse and social justice. BPL also initiated a partnership with Cultural Services of the French Embassy to host and co-produce **A Night of Philosophy and Ideas**, which recently concluded its second successful Brooklyn edition, attracting nearly 8,000 visitors for a 12-hour, overnight philosophy marathon.

New Libraries, Upgrades and Enhancements throughout Brooklyn

BPL has been engaged in its most ambitious program to upgrade and enhance its branches in over half a century, including the building of six new spaces that will come online over the next three-years: Southside in downtown Brooklyn, Vinegar Hill, Brower Park, Brooklyn Heights, Greenpoint, and Sunset Park. It is also has begun projects to fully renovate and enhance existing branches including Rugby , East Flatbush, Borough Park, New Utrecht, Canarsie, Eastern Parkway, New Lots, and Brownsville libraries. BPL also continues to add outposts around the borough—now numbering over 300—that extend collections and services beyond the branches to other locations, including jails, senior centers, and homeless shelters.

In 2017, BPL reopened the renovated Brighton Beach Library, established the Spectrum Learning lab in Bushwick Library, opened the Park Slope Library Garden and added its second IDNYC Enrollment Center, at New Lots Library. In addition, groundbreaking were held for the Greenpoint and Brooklyn Heights library buildings and BPL secured land use approval to move forward with its Sunset Park Library expansion. In early 2018, BPL reopened the Marcy and Mill Basin libraries, following the completion of HVAC projects and other improvements in both locations.

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About Brooklyn Public Library

Brooklyn Public Library (BPL) is an independent library system for the 2.5 million residents of Brooklyn. It is the fifth-largest library system in the United States with 60 neighborhood libraries located throughout the borough. BPL offers free programs and services for all ages and stages of life, including a large selection of books in more than 30 languages, author talks, literacy programs and public computers. BPL's eResources, such as eBooks and eVideos, catalog information and free homework help, are available to customers of all ages 24 hours a day at our website: <http://www.bklynlibrary.org/>.