Why do public libraries exist? Before the days of the Internet, the public library served three primary roles: to promote literacy, as an institution of self-education, and as a repository of information or reference source.

The first role was to promote literacy. Libraries have traditionally accomplished this by stocking a wide variety of fiction for all ages. Additionally, public libraries customarily host events and classes to promote reading, especially among the young. These events and classes often include children’s story times and summer reading programs.

The second role was as an institution of self-education. Public libraries accomplished this by acting as a community resource that collected tools people may use for self-empowerment. The patron saint of public libraries, philanthropist Andrew Carnegie, was the person who first conceived of public libraries as a place of self-education. According to Carnegie, public libraries aren’t hand-outs or entitlements, they’re a resource provided by the community so its residents might better their lives. Carnegie famously said “I choose free libraries as the best agencies for improving the masses of the people, because they give nothing for nothing. They only help those who help themselves.”

The third role played by public libraries was as a repository of information. Need a telephone number? You could get it from the library. Want to undertake a home repair or renovation? The library had a book to help. Thinking about getting a dog? You could research various breeds at the library. However, with the advent of the Internet, the purely informational role libraries played in our lives became less relevant, and less still in the age of Internet-enabled smartphones. Now that one carries the sum of all human knowledge in their pocket, the idea of calling the library for something as mundane as a phone number today seems quaint. This rapid advancement of technology has forced public libraries to evolve and change.

In my view, rather than serving as reference sources as they once did, libraries now act more as community centers. In addition to fostering literacy and providing people with the means for self-education, public libraries now connect people to the world around them, and to each other.

Over the past five years, Van Buren District Library has leaned into enhancing its three-fold role as a promotor of literacy, self-education, and community-oriented offerings. In recent years Van Buren District Library has:

- Introduced Princeton Online Tutoring, AKA Tutor.com to our offerings. Princeton Online Tutoring is an online platform students of all ages may use to receive help from live, credentialed tutors specializing in dozens of subject areas. Adult job seekers may also use Princeton Online Tutoring for help with their résumé, or for job search assistance. Princeton Online Tutoring is available via the library’s website, VBDL.org, from any Internet connected computer or mobile device, wherever our patrons may be, from noon to midnight, seven days a week.
- Added the Transparent Languages learning platform. Transparent Languages may be accessed by our customers remotely via the Internet from any computer or mobile device. Transparent Languages offers instruction in over 110 languages, including English as a second language.
- Expanded events, classes, and programming:
  - The library has increased funding for events and classes by 68%. In spite of the pandemic, event attendance has risen 29%.
  - VBDL added a District Program Coordinator position to its staff to enhance the quality and consistency of these efforts.
  - To better meet the needs of all, VBDL now offers Spanish language events and classes at our Covert branch.
- Made our meeting rooms available for public use at five VBDL locations: Antwerp Sunshine Library, Bangor Branch Library, Covert Branch Library, Lawrence Branch Library, and Webster Memorial Library in Decatur. In 2022 the public used the library’s meeting rooms a total of 288 times.
- Renovated our main branch, Webster Memorial Library, to make it more useful and inviting for the community. This included adding additional meeting rooms for public use, upgrading Webster Memorial’s Community Room to include a modern audio-visual system, lightweight furniture that is easily moved, and storage dedicated for our community partners, the Decatur Study Club and the Friends of the Library.
- Brought Internet connectivity to a community where not everyone has access to this necessary utility. According to the latest U.S. Census, over 14% of Van Buren County residents don’t have a broadband Internet connection. The library is attempting to bridge this gap in two ways:
  - Installing outdoor, Wi-Fi Internet access points at six of our seven locations: Antwerp Sunshine Library, Bangor Branch Library, Covert Branch Library, Gobles, Branch Library, Lawrence Branch Library, and Webster Memorial
Library in Decatur. These access points provide high-speed, broadband Internet access to the public via Wi-Fi, 24 hours a day, seven days a week, from the comfort of their vehicles.

- Adding 210 mobile Internet hotspots, 30 per library branch, to our collections. These mobile Internet hotspots may be borrowed for two weeks at a time by any adult resident or purchased library cardholder.

In support of its role to connect people to the world around them, and each other, what new services might Van Buren District Library add in the future? That’s something the Library Board and staff are always considering. Some ideas we are currently discussing include:

- Free delivery of Library materials to homebound or infirm individuals via post-paid mail.
- More Spanish language library events and classes, at more locations.
- More full-time staff at more library locations to better serve the needs of our community.
- Training library staff to aid our customers in the use of the Michigan Legal Help website https://michiganlegalhelp.org.
- An expansion of our popular mobile Internet hotspot lending initiative, with more devices and longer loan periods.

The world will continue to change at an ever-increasing pace, which will continually cause the library to reinvent how it serves the public. Whatever may come, the library will always strive to place itself at the center of community life, finding new ways to promote literacy, provide self-education opportunities, and to connect people to the world around them, and to each other.

Best,
Dan T Hutchins
Executive Director
Van Buren District Library

2022 VBDL VOLUNTEERS

Lisa Adams  Nancy Ford  Pam Knight  Linda Read
Jess Alburtus  Gail Galbreath  Char Kolon  Mary Redmon
Tyler Augst  Mike Galbreath  Paul Kolon  Jan Roeder
Cheyenne Benavidez  Debbie Gargus  Ava Kroll  Jim Sebree
Elaine Bloom  Bette Glindmeyer  Isabelle Kroll  Vera Sebree
Louie Bonamego  Joe Glista  Lawrence Cheerleaders  Nabi Shin
Sherryl Bosker  Julie Glista  Diane Lewis  Edward Sichterman
Sabina Boston  Phyllis Graham  Geri Lima  Katie Siple
Lucinda Boven & Emmie  Bob Griffin  Linda Marshall  Kristen Smith & Comet
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Denise Campagna  Theresa Heaton  Savannah McKinney  Nathan Stratton
Sal Campagna  Kayla Hill  Dawn Mergener  Bonita Suter
Bryan Casasanto  Carol Iverson  Hailee Mount  Marlene Suter
Deb Chandler  Karen Jensen  Elizabeth Newton  Jean Szczypka
Lorriane Crandell  Niki Juriga  Natalie Newton  Betty Usrey
Kristen Colgren  Steve Kaszar  Natalie Pausch  Kellie Vandermeer
Crista Cornejo  Clay Kessen  Joy Porter  Mary Webster
Ginny Drogula  Corinne Kessen  Anna Pride  LuAnn Wright
Wendy Estrada  Kira Kessen  Clara Pride  Tami Young & Lebowski
Chloe Fingas  Terra Klein  Sue Putt & Spencer  }
2022 VBDL IN PICTURES

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Friends of the Lawrence Branch Library
Friends of the Van Buren District Library
Dr. Craig Hermann
M & M Thomas Murow
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Rod Place
Robin Siegel
MOBILE INTERNET HOTSPOTS

It has now been over a year since VBDL first introduced mobile Internet hotspots as an item available for patrons to borrow from the library. During that time, it has easily become one of our most popular items. After securing a grant from the Federal Communication Commission’s Emergency Connectivity Fund, VBDL received approximately $27,350 to purchase hotspots for all seven of VBDL’s branches, and to fund the monthly data costs for those devices. After a few months of delays due to supply chain issues, VBDL added 210 hotspots to our collection in February 2022. Since then, these hotspots have been borrowed over 1,700 times, and they rarely stay on the shelves for long!

Over 14% of households in Van Buren County don’t have access to broadband Internet. For those County residents, the mobile Internet hotspots offered by VBDL often make all of the difference. With a two-week loan period and unlimited data, patrons can rest assured they will have reliable Internet access in their home. Because the hotspots use T-Mobile’s cellular towers, the hotspots may also be used to access the Internet in many other parts of the nation as well. The hotspots may be used to do homework, connect with medical professionals, work from home, talk with friends and family, and catch up on the latest season of your favorite show. We asked a few Library patrons for their thoughts about the hotspots, and the replies have all been extremely positive:

- “I live in the country; I have great service with the hotspots. I use it to watch Netflix.” – Kim, Van Buren District Library, Antwerp Sunshine Library patron
- “Wi-Fi is great and really helpful the way you guys do it.” – Hayley, Van Buren District Library, Antwerp Sunshine Library patron
- “It helps out in times of need, and it’s convenient. We should get more libraries like this one.” – Shailyne, Van Buren District Library Webster Memorial Library in Decatur patron

After offering the hotspots for a year, it has become clear these items are a valuable resource for many in the Van Buren District Library service area. The Library expects to receive an additional $25,200 in grant funding during the summer of 2023 to help cover the ongoing data costs of the program. However, future grant funding to offer this valuable service is far from guaranteed. Going forward, Van Buren District Library hopes it may continue to provide these Internet hotspots to its patrons, and perhaps expand the service in the future, so even more residents of the library’s service area may benefit from reliable Internet!

STATEMENTS OF ACTIVITIES FOR THE YEAR ENDED DECEMBER 31, 2022

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>REVENUES:</th>
<th>INDIVIDUAL LIBRARY MAJOR FUNDS</th>
<th>TOTAL-MODIFIED ACCRUAL BASIS</th>
<th>GASB NO. 34 ADJUSTMENTS</th>
<th>LIBRARY AS A WHOLE STATEMENT OF ACTIVITIES-FULL ACCRUAL BASIS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TAXES</td>
<td>$1,959,811</td>
<td>$1,959,811</td>
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<td>$1,959,811</td>
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<tr>
<td>STATE SOURCES</td>
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<td>42,949</td>
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<td>42,949</td>
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<tr>
<td>PENAL FINES</td>
<td>127,145</td>
<td>127,145</td>
<td></td>
<td>127,145</td>
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<tr>
<td>FEES AND BOOK FINES</td>
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<td>20,772</td>
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<tr>
<td>INVESTMENT INCOME</td>
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<td>10,101</td>
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<td>10,101</td>
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<tr>
<td>LOCAL CONTRIBUTIONS AND OTHER</td>
<td>213,395</td>
<td>4,532</td>
<td>219,927</td>
<td>219,927</td>
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<tr>
<td>TOTAL REVENUES</td>
<td>$2,376,173</td>
<td>$4,532</td>
<td>$2,380,705</td>
<td>$2,380,705</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
### Statements of Revenues, Expenditures and Changes in Fund Balance/Statements of Activities for the Year Ended December 31, 2022

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Expenditures/Expenses:</th>
<th>General Fund</th>
<th>Endowment Fund</th>
<th>Total-Modified Accrual Basis</th>
<th>GASB No. 34 Adjustments</th>
<th>Library As a Whole Statement of Activities-Full Accrual Basis</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Salaries</td>
<td>$1,145,068</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>$1,145,068</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>$1,145,068</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Payroll Taxes</td>
<td>85,854</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>85,854</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>85,854</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Insurance (Health, Life, Disability, W/C)</td>
<td>75,750</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>75,750</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>75,750</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pension</td>
<td>35,583</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>35,583</td>
<td>(149,707)</td>
<td>(114,124)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Office and Library Supplies</td>
<td>12,871</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>12,871</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>12,871</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Postage, Printing, Copying</td>
<td>21,683</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>21,683</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>21,683</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gas and Oil</td>
<td>4,547</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>4,547</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>4,547</td>
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<tr>
<td>Janitor Supplies</td>
<td>5,314</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>5,314</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>5,314</td>
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<tr>
<td>Professional Fees</td>
<td>77,666</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>77,666</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>77,666</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contractual Services</td>
<td>27,289</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>27,289</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>27,289</td>
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<tr>
<td>Utilities</td>
<td>72,575</td>
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<td>72,575</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>72,575</td>
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<td>Telephone</td>
<td>18,441</td>
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<td>18,441</td>
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<td>18,441</td>
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<td>Travel</td>
<td>7,403</td>
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<td>7,403</td>
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<td>7,403</td>
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<tr>
<td>Promotional and Reading Programs</td>
<td>49,586</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>49,586</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>49,586</td>
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<tr>
<td>General and Vehicle Insurance</td>
<td>6,112</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>6,112</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>6,112</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Continuing Education</td>
<td>6,307</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>6,307</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>6,307</td>
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<tr>
<td>Capital Outlay</td>
<td>85,635</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>85,635</td>
<td>(75,366)</td>
<td>10,269</td>
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<tr>
<td>Audiovisual, Books, and Periodicals</td>
<td>253,189</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>253,189</td>
<td>(187,732)</td>
<td>65,457</td>
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<tr>
<td>Internet Fees</td>
<td>59,933</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>59,933</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>59,933</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grant</td>
<td>30,000</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>30,000</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>30,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Depreciation</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>226,092</td>
<td>205,419</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Expenditures/Expenses</td>
<td>$2,104,393</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>$2,104,393</td>
<td>$ (195,740)</td>
<td>$1,908,653</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Excess of Revenues over Expenditures/Expenses**: $271,780

**Other Financing Sources (Uses)**

- Operating Transfers In/(Out) -

**Net Change in Fund Balances/Net Position**: $271,780

**Fund Balance/Net Position-Beginning of Year**: $1,866,326

**Fund Balance/Net Position-End of Year**: $2,138,106
LIBRARY LOCATIONS & HOURS

WEBSTER MEMORIAL LIBRARY DECATUR
District Administrative Offices
200 North Phelps Street, Decatur, MI 49045
Phone: 269.423.4771 | Fax: 269.423.8373
www.facebook.com/VBDLWebsterMemorial
Monday – Thursday: 9:00 a.m. – 8:00 p.m.*
Friday: 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.
Saturday: 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.
Webster Memorial Library closes at 7:00 p.m.,
Monday – Thursday, between Memorial Day and Labor Day.

ANTWERP SUNSHINE LIBRARY
24823 Front Avenue, Mattawan, MI 49071
Phone: 269.668.2534 | Fax: 269.668.5332
www.facebook.com/VBDLAntwerp
Monday – Wednesday: 10:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m.
Thursday & Friday: 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.
Saturday: 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

BANGOR BRANCH LIBRARY
420 Division Street, Bangor, MI 49013
Phone: 269.427.8810 | Fax: 269.427.0588
www.facebook.com/bangorbranch
Monday-Wednesday: 10:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m.
Thursday-Friday: 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.
Saturday: 9:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.

BLOOMINGDALE BRANCH LIBRARY
109 East Kalamazoo, Bloomingdale, MI 49026
Phone: 269.521.7601 | Fax: 269.521.7614
www.facebook.com/VBDLBloomingdale
Monday-Wednesday: 10:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m.
Thursday-Friday: 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.
Saturday: 10:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.

COVERT BRANCH LIBRARY
33680 M-140 Hwy, Covert, MI 49043
Phone: 269.764.1298 | Fax: 269.764.0433
www.facebook.com/covertbranch
Monday-Wednesday: 10:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m.
Thursday: 10:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m.
Friday: 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.
Saturday: 10:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.

GOBLES BRANCH LIBRARY
105 East Main Street, Gobles, MI 49055
Phone: 269.628.4537 | Fax: 269.628.0362
www.facebook.com/GoblesBranchVBDL
Monday-Wednesday: 10:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m.
Thursday-Friday: 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.
Saturday: 10:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.

LAWRENCE BRANCH LIBRARY
212 North Paw Paw Street, Lawrence, MI 49064
Phone: 269.674.3200 | Fax: 269.674.3704
www.facebook.com/lawrencecommunitybranch
Monday-Wednesday: 10:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m.
Thursday-Friday: 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.
Saturday: 10:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.

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