

2024 ANNUAL REPORT



ANTWERP/MATTAWAN
BANGOR - BLOOMINGDALE - COVERT
GOBLES - LAWRENCE - WEBSTER/DECATUR



From the Director

In 2025, the Van Buren District Library is celebrating its 35th anniversary. In actuality though, the Van Buren County system of libraries from which our current District Library originated is much older.

The Van Buren County Library was founded in 1934 and was originally located in the basement of the Van Buren County Court House in Paw Paw. The first branch to join was Covert in 1945. Bangor, Bloomingdale, and Gobles followed in 1946. Lawrence Library joined in 1947; then Antwerp Sunshine Library in 1957.

In 1959, the Decatur Township Library signed a joint operating agreement with the Van Buren County Library, and the two relocated to the newly constructed Webster Memorial Library in Decatur in 1960. For the next 30 years the Van Buren County Library and Decatur Township Library worked in tandem, with the County Library system using Webster Memorial Library as its administrative headquarters, with the chief executive of the County Library system also serving as the director of the Decatur Township Library. Funding for the joint venture was provided by both Van Buren County and the Webster Memorial Trust.

However, by the late 1980s it became apparent that this model was no longer sustainable. When times were good, the library system got by, but when the economy experienced a downturn, library funding from the County was sharply reduced.

To solve the problem, then Van Buren County Library Executive Director David Tate and library attorney Richard Butler had an idea – Rather than relying on an annual appropriation from Van Buren County, what if the library system could fund itself in a manner similar to a school district, by levying its own property tax millage? In order to accomplish this, legislation allowing for the formation of public library districts would need to be passed at the state level. With the blessing of the Van Buren County Board of Commissioners, Tate and Butler drafted the legislation and enlisted the aid of State Senator Harmon Cropsy from Decatur, who sponsored the bill. The District Library Establishment Act, Public Act 24 of 1989, was signed into law by Governor James Blanchard on May 22, 1989.


While Decatur Township Library and Van Buren County Library had been operating together from Webster Memorial Library in Decatur, both were still legally separate organizations with their own governing boards. On January 1, 1990, Van Buren County Library and Decatur Township Library became the first public libraries in Michigan to re-establish under the District Library Establishment Act,

dissolving their individual boards and merging into one. Subsequently, a millage was passed throughout Van Buren District Library’s service area to support the newly reorganized institution.

Since Van Buren County Library and Decatur Township Library led the charge to pass the District Library Establishment Act in 1989, approximately 150 of Michigan’s roughly 400 public libraries have taken advantage of this law to re-establish as district libraries, including much larger public library systems such as Kalamazoo Public Library, Kent District Library in suburban Grand Rapids, and Capital Area District Library in the greater Lansing area, to name just a few.

To me, as a public library professional, the conception and passage of the District Library Establishment Act was the most significant achievement of Van Buren County Library and Decatur Township Library, now known as Van Buren District Library. Very few, if any, public libraries in the State of Michigan may boast of an accomplishment which has benefitted so many of their peers, and by extension, so many library users across the state. Having said that, few are aware of the Van Buren District Library’s contribution to Michigan public library funding and governance. In honor of 35 years of the Van Buren District Library, I may think of no better way of celebrating than to share the inestimable impact that our public library system has had in the State of Michigan.

Best,
Dan Hutchins
Executive Director

The History of  LIBRARY VAN BUREN DISTRICT	
1934	Van Buren County Library founded. The VB County Library was located in the Paw Paw Courthouse.
1945	Covert Library (founded in 1923) joins the VB County Library.
1946	Bangor Library (founded in 1909) joins the VB County Library. Bloomingdale Library (founded in 1935) joins the VB County Library. Gobles Library (founded circa 1930) joins the VB County Library.
1947	Lawrence Library (founded in 1878) joins the VB County Library.
1957	Antwerp Sunshine Library (founded in 1911) joins the VB County Library.
1959	Decatur Twp Library (founded circa 1870) signs a joint operating agreement with the VB County Library. They remain legally separate organizations with their own governing boards, but agree to share resources and a single Executive Director.
1960	The Decatur Twp Library and the VB County Library begin operating together from the newly completed Webster Memorial Library building in the Village of Decatur.
1990	The VB County Library and the Decatur Twp Library are the first libraries in Michigan to reorganize under Public Act 24 of 1989 “The District Library Establishment Act” merging to become the Van Buren District Library.

Let's go outside!

Inspired by Ginny Yurich from Southeast Michigan and her movement encouraging families to spend more time outdoors, the Van Buren District Library decided to have a year of programs based on the 1000 Hours Outside Movement! We organized a variety of outdoor events throughout the year, including nature walks, science experiments, outdoor story times, and other fun activities—all designed to help our community spend more hours enjoying nature.

The cold didn't stop us from kicking things off in January with science experiments in the snow and hot cocoa served outdoors. As the weather warmed, we expanded our activities, enjoying sidewalk chalk art, Nerf battles on the library lawn, and even blending smoothies on a kid-powered smoothie bike! Across all branches, we hosted nearly 100 outdoor programs, giving our community countless opportunities to explore and enjoy the great outdoors.



Antwerp



Gobles



Bangor



Covert

2024 VBDL Volunteers

Key:







- ☼ = Friends of the Antwerp Sunshine Library
- ♥ = Jr Friends of the Antwerp Sunshine Library
- ◆ = Friends of the Lawrence Library
- * = Friends of the Van Buren District Library

Jack & Janet Abshagen*
 Lisa Adams◆
 Tyler Augst*
 Evelyn & Dale Avery*
 Elaine Bloom
 Sherryl Bosker☼
 Karol Buckner & Therapy Dog Emmie◆
 Sal & Denise Campagna◆
 Janet Cathcart☼
 Carla Chase◆
 Janet Clawson*
 Kristen Colgren◆
 Crista Cornejo◆
 Anne Cox◆
 Joan Cox◆
 James H. Creagan*
 Joan Dick*
 Leah Dearing♥
 Katie Dragan*
 Donald & Karolyn Drenth*
 Ginny Drogula◆
 Paul DeYoung*
 Decatur High School Wrestling Team
 Amelia Farrell♥
 First State Bank of Decatur
 Judy Fusko*
 Nora Galler♥
 Mike Galbreath☼
 Mike & Gail Galbreath◆
 Bill & Michele Gateley*

Seth Gasca
 Julie & Joe Glista◆
 Bette Glindmeyer◆
 Tim & Mary Grant*
 John W. & Pamela Grosvenor*
 Don & Sandy Hanson*
 Gabby Hayes♥
 Anne Hawkinson◆
 Theresa & Jeff Heaton◆
 Linda Henry*
 Gloria Houtman*
 Charles Hudson Jr.
 Cheryl Evick
 Carol Iverson◆
 Karen Jensen◆
 Niki Juriga
 Natalie J. Kelley*
 Eleanor Kemp*
 Steve Kaszar◆
 Paul Kolon◆
 Virginia M. Kosobucki*
 Pam Knight☼
 Nancy Kusmack*
 Matthew Kusmack*
 Tina & Joe Leary*
 Ann Legowicz*
 Roxanne E. Lovell*
 Robert & Nancy Longway*
 Kris Locke☼
 Katelin Makay*
 Pam Mayer☼
 Monique Mason*
 Barbara Mausen*
 Kinsley May♥
 Seth May♥
 Dan & Barb McKeeby*

Dawn Mergener◆
 Mary Louise Myrkle*
 Terry & Linda Newell*
 Diane Neumeier
 Denny Olsen◆
 Doug & Anne Olsen*
 Rich & Jeri Oxhandler*
 Natalie Pausch
 Glen Pollock*
 Tori Pomeroy♥
 Joy Porter☼
 Jean Porath*
 Anna Pride♥
 Clara Pride♥
 Edna Ralston*
 Mary Redmon◆
 Blaine & Roberta Rex*
 Louise Rigoni*
 Jan Roeder*
 Cheryl & Richard Rumery*
 Attorney & Mrs. Harold Schuitmaker*
 Jim & Vera Sebree*
 Edward Sichterman◆
 Florence C. Skoropad*
 Kelsey Smith
 Diane Taylor*
 David & Barb Tate*
 Karen Terrabassi*
 Betty Usrey☼
 Adiah VanHorn♥
 Kellie VanderMeer*
 Annette L. Wilkinson*
 Tami Young & Therapy Dog Lebowski◆
 VBISD Cosmetology Program Students
 Dale & Winifred Zimmerle*

2024 VBDL By-the-Numbers

<p>EVENTS & CLASSES</p> 	<p>EVENTS & CLASSES: 2,067 ATTENDANCE: 21,433 SUMMER READING PROGRAM ATTENDANCE: 2,726 SUMMER READING TAKE & MAKE KITS DISTRIBUTED: 640</p>
<p>PEOPLE</p> 	<p>SERVICE POPULATION: 44,230 NUMBER OF VISITORS: 131,086 TOTAL ACTIVE, REGISTERED CARDHOLDERS: 12,796 NEW CARDHOLDERS IN 2024: 1,972 PUBLIC MEETING ROOM USES: 334</p>
<p>ITEMS</p> 	<p>ITEMS LOANED TO BORROWERS: 316,308 ITEMS LOANED TO OTHER MICHIGAN LIBRARIES: 16,743 ITEMS BORROWED FROM OTHER MICHIGAN LIBRARIES FOR VBDL PATRONS: 12,279</p>
<p>COMPUTERS</p> 	<p>NUMBER OF PUBLIC COMPUTER USES: 11,360 NUMBER WIFI USES: 45,792 EBOOKS, FILMS, TELEVISION, AND MUSIC STREAMED OR DOWNLOADED: 49,665 ONLINE RESOURCE USES (TUTOR.COM, TRANSPARENT LANGUAGES, ANCESTRY.COM, FOLD3): 5,468 CELLULAR INTERNET HOTSPOT LOANS: 4,263</p>
<p>COLLECTION SIZE BY FORMAT</p> 	<p>TOTAL COLLECTION SIZE: 167,269 BOOKS: 93,469 OR 55.9% DIGITAL (EBOOKS, E-AUDIOBOOKS, STREAMING FILMS, ETC.): 56,600 OR 33.8% DVDS: 12,026 OR 7.2% AUDIOBOOKS: 2,779 OR 1.7% MAGAZINES: 2,063 OR 1.2% CELLULAR INTERNET HOTSPOTS: 332 OR LESS THAN 1%</p>
<p>CIRCULATION BY COLLECTION</p> 	<p>CHILDREN'S BOOKS: 133,617 OR 48.5% ADULT BOOKS: 72,650 OR 26.9% ADULT DVDS & AUDIOBOOKS: 30,862 OR 13.4% DIGITAL BOOKS, AUDIOBOOKS, FILMS, ETC.: 50,440 OR 16.5% SPECIAL COLLECTIONS: 14,100 OR 5.8% CHILDREN'S DVDS & AUDIOBOOKS: 9,722 OR 3.7% CELLULAR INTERNET HOTSPOTS: 4,263 OR 1.4%</p>
<p>COMPARATIVE BRANCH CIRCULATION</p>	<p>WEBSTER: 86,513 OR 28.1% ANTWERP: 74,055 OR 26.2% BANGOR: 33,445 OR 11.5% LAWRENCE: 31,883 OR 10.4% HOOPLA: 28,485 OR 9.0% GOBLES: 16,302 OR 6.3% BLOOMINGDALE: 16,527 OR 5.6% COVERT: 7,918 OR 2.9% TOTAL CIRCULATION = 316,308 ITEMS</p>

More Than Books: Reflections from a Decade at VBDL

Barb Insidioso August 2013 - Gobles

Sue Youngblood May 2009 - Bloomingdale/Webster

Emily Leestma August 2000 - Webster Memorial

A library is more than just a building full of books—it's the people who bring it to life. At the Van Buren District Library, our dedicated staff help create a welcoming, inclusive space for everyone in the community.

We're proud to recognize several amazing team members who have been with us for over a decade! Throughout the years, they've witnessed the library grow and adapt while staying true to the core values that make libraries such vital parts of our communities.

We asked them to reflect on their journeys—how they got started, how things have changed, and what keeps them inspired. Here's what they had to say:

Sue Y. at the Webster Memorial Branch

How has your job changed over the years?

- I started as a page [at the Bloomingdale branch] and progressed to clerk, assistant manager, and now I am the Technical Services Coordinator [at the Webster Memorial branch].

How has the library system changed since you started?

- Programming has expanded significantly. Our reciprocal locations have also expanded as well as our collections from physical items to digital items as well.

What's one of your favorite memories with our patrons?

- Just seeing the excitement patrons have when they see that we have an item they have been looking for.

Emily L. at the Webster Memorial Branch

What keeps you passionate about working in the library?

- The relationships I've built with our patrons and with the kids who visit me here at the library or who I see when I take the library on the road. [...]The passion to want to do right by those patrons and the ones I haven't met yet keeps me going.



What are some of your favorite or funniest patron memories?

- There have been so many patrons over the years that imprinted themselves in my mind. Sharon, when asked, "How are you today, Sharon?" would respond without fail, "Still fat, still sassy," and then laugh and laugh. The little girl who came with her class for a library visit in the morning and then saw me at the store later that evening and was so disappointed that "They let you go home!" Erika, who was new to town and spoke very little English but came to our preschool programs with her 3 yr old every week, showed up very pregnant and very much in labor one day but our group of moms took care of her and watched over her little one so she could safely get herself to the hospital. She brought the new baby the following week.

What do you hope to see in the future for VBDL?

- Near future: Continued growth in offerings to the public but still maintaining what the library is at its core -- a place of books and knowledge and learning, programs and activities and social gathering places. Far off future: Continued place to gather with warm and welcoming human interactions, welcoming staff and abundant offerings for everyone.

Barb I. at the Gobles Branch

How has your job changed over the years?

- The Branch Manager [at the Gobles branch] role has not changed much; however, due to some staffing changes several years ago I took on a role in Collection Development, selecting and ordering Adult Non-fiction titles for all seven VBDL locations. I love this part of my job; who wouldn't love to buy books as part of their job?!!??

What's something people might not realize about how libraries operate behind the scenes?

- We don't spend all day reading (but wow, I sure wish we could!)

What keeps you passionate about working in the library?

- Being able to put the right book into a reader's hands. I also appreciate so much the efforts of the Branch staff here for their programming ideas, and how hard they work to make the library a place that everyone wants to visit.



2024 Library Donors

Bloomingdale Communications - Laptop Donation
 Steve Shults - Laptop Donation
 Cheryl Jones - Kirk Chamness
 Decatur Study Club - Beuna Kraak
 The Snow Family - Andrew Wright
 Sandra Cochrane Memorial
 Friends of the VBDL
 Southwest Michigan Library Cooperative
 Watervliet District Library - SWMR
 Coloma Public Library - SWMR
 Dowagiac District Library - SWMR
 Paw Paw District Library - SWMR
 Harvey Beute
 Marcellus Library - SWMR
 Jan Roeder
 Larry & Carol Edinger
 Paw Paw District Library - SWMR
 Friends of the VBDL - SWMR
 Hartford Public Library - SWMR
 Dowagiac District Library - SWMR
 Watervliet District Library - SWMR
 Coloma Public Library - SWMR
 Friends of the Lawrence Library - SWMR
 Lawton Public Library - SWMR
 Marcellus Twp Memorial Library - SWMR



Gobles



Lawrence



Bloomingdale



Covert



Antwerp



Webster

Statements of activities for the year ended December 31, 2024

	INDIVIDUAL LIBRARY MAJOR FUNDS		TOTAL-MODIFIED ACCRUAL BASIS	GASB NO. 34 ADJUSTMENTS	LIBRARY AS A WHOLE STATEMENT OF ACTIVITIES-FULL ACCRUAL BASIS
	GENERAL FUND	ENDOWMENT FUND			
REVENUES:					
TAXES	\$2,172,822	-	\$2,172,822	-	\$2,172,822
STATE SOURCES	44,599	-	44,599	-	44,599
PENAL FINES	187,305	-	187,305	-	187,305
FEES AND BOOK FINES	28,351	-	28,351	-	28,351
INVESTMENT INCOME	153,588	9,708	163,296	-	163,296
LOCAL CONTRIBUTIONS AND OTHER	236,442	2,895	239,337	-	239,337
TOTAL REVENUES	\$2823,107	\$12,603	\$2,835,710	-	\$2,835,710

**Statements of revenues, expenditures and changes in fund balance/
statements of activities for the year ended December 31, 2024**

EXPENDITURES/ EXPENSES:	GENERAL FUND	ENDOWMENT FUND	TOTAL-MODIFIED ACCRUAL BASIS	GASB NO. 34 ADJUSTMENTS	LIBRARY AS A WHOLE STATEMENT OF ACTIVITIES- FULL ACCRUAL BASIS
SALARIES	\$1,402,666	-	\$1,402,666	\$ (18,624)	\$1,384,042
PAYROLL TAXES	106,488	-	106,488	-	106,488
INSURANCE (HEALTH, LIFE, DISABILITY, W/C)	93,807	-	93,807	-	93,807
PENSION	42,512	-	42,512	(56,385)	(13,873)
OFFICE AND LIBRARY SUPPLIES	10,421	-	10,421	-	10,421
POSTAGE, PRINTING, COPYING	4,253	-	4,253	-	4,253
GAS AND OIL	3,644	-	3,644	-	3,644
JANITOR SUPPLIES	5,753	-	5,753	-	5,753
PROFESSIONAL FEES	142,840	-	142,840	-	142,840
CONTRACTUAL SERVICES	26,703	-	26,703	-	26,703
UTILITIES	68,376	-	68,376	-	68,376
TELEPHONE	28,176	-	28,176	-	28,176
TRAVEL	14,192	-	14,192	-	14,192
PROMOTIONAL AND READING PROGRAMS	58,380	-	58,380	-	58,380
GENERAL AND VEHICLE INSURANCE	7,267	-	7,267	-	7,267
MAINTENANCE	73,140	-	73,140	-	73,140
CONTINUING EDUCATION	10,267	-	10,267	-	10,267
CAPITAL OUTLAY	101,561	-	101,561	(97,763)	3,798
VEHICLE REPLACEMENT	52,434	-	52,434	(52,434)	-
AUDIOVISUAL, BOOKS, PERIODICALS	277,890	-	277,890	(191,192)	86,698
INTERNET FEES	81,795	-	81,795	-	81,795
MISCELLANEOUS	29	-	29	-	29
DEPRECIATION	-	-	-	202,781	202,781
TOTAL EXPENDITURES/EXPENSES	\$2,612,594	-	\$2,612,594	\$ (213,617)	\$2,398,977
NET CHANGE IN FUND BALANCES/NET POSITION	\$210,513	\$12,603	\$410,660	\$ (213,617)	\$436,733
FUND BALANCE/NET POSITION-BEGINNING OF YEAR	2,536,864	220,972	2,347,176	960,226	\$3,718,062
FUND BALANCE/ NET POSITION-END OF YEAR	\$2,747,377	\$233,575	\$2,757,836	\$1,173,843	\$4,154,795



Antwerp



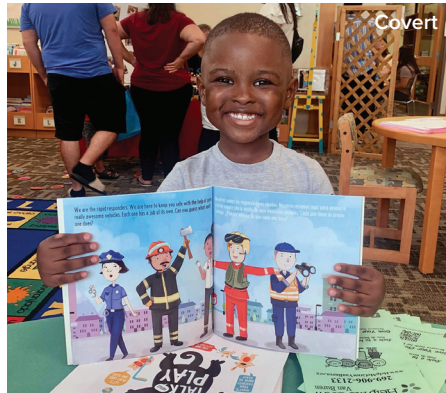
Webster



Bangor



Bloomingtondale



Covert



SWMI Reads!

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 MATTAWAN

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: 9:00 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, Bloomingtondale, MI 49026
Phone: 269.521.7601 | Fax: 269.521.7614
www.facebook.com/VBDLBloomingtondale
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.

BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Wayne Rendell - Covert Twp., Board Chair
Pam Dickerson - Village of Bloomingtondale,
Board Vice-Chair
Sandy Hanson - Van Buren County,
Board Secretary/Treasurer
Denise Campagna - Lawrence Twp.
Bruce Cutting - Antwerp Twp.
Betty Markel - City of Bangor
David Vlieg - Decatur Twp.

*Download or Stream eBooks, Audiobooks, Films,
and Television Series from the Libby or Hoopla apps.*

*It's easy to access downloadable content
from your phone, tablet, or eReader.*

www.vbdl.org

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.