



# BIGELOW FREE PUBLIC LIBRARY

## Annual Report July 1, 2022-June 30, 2023

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### Introduction

The Bigelow Free Public Library is a department of municipal government of the Town of Clinton, under the authority of an elected six-member Board of Trustees and has been since it was established in 1873. The board delegates responsibility for library and staff management, collection development, and general administration of public library services, to the Director of the Library. The Director is appointed by the Trustees.

The residents of the Town of Clinton are fortunate to have a vibrant and active library, which includes **Youth and Adult Services** areas, serving patrons of all ages. All programs, special events, presentation, and materials are organized, coordinated, or managed by the library staff, and offered *completely at no additional cost to the public*.

The library and trustees are fortunate to have the support of residents and other municipal officials to keep the library current and relevant in this fast-paced, digitally-driven world with **.9%** of the town's annual budget in FY2023.

Trustees and staff launched the fiscal year with a plan to update the library's Strategic Plan and to create a new logo that better reflects the library's services and rele-



vance. Both projects were conducted with input from the community and completed by the close of FY23.

A **Strategic Planning Advisory Committee** was created with Clinton residents, including one high school student, as well as representatives from the Selectboard and

Board of Trustees. The Committee met via Zoom three times, twice in October to discuss the vision of Clinton and then in May to share the results.

In addition, three Zoom-based focus groups delved deeper into the questions that were posed on the community feedback survey. The Strategic Plan was submitted to the MA Board of Library Commissioners in accordance with state statute.

The **Strategic Plan** can be read in its entirety online on the

town website, <https://clintonma.gov/397/Library-Trustees>

Some key data points from the Strategic Plan survey:

- **61%** of respondents visit the library at least monthly
- Physical books are important to **85%** of respondents
- **97%** of respondents rated staff helpfulness as good or excellent
- **90%** of respondents have library cards. **35%** of residents have library cards
- According to respondents, **Arts & Entertainment** are the most interesting programs for patrons

The results of the survey and focus groups were incorporated into the designer's proposals for a new logo. The Trustees wanted the logo to represent the library of the future and the changing nature of libraries and the services offered at the **Bigelow Free Public Library**. The consultant created many designs with elements that represented what the Trustees envision for the library of today and tomorrow and finally decided on the current logo. The mug represents the library as a welcoming place, the dvds and books represent some of the offerings, and the computer represents the library both as a digital resource (think of e-books, online courses, etc.) and as a place to study.

With these different elements, the **new logo** will fit most spaces, whether it be a shirt or professional letterhead. The vertical logo can be seen at the head of this report with a square logo also supplied for social media or t-shirts.

## Assessments

A **Preservation Assessment**, conducted by the NEDCC (New England Document Conservation Center), fully funded by a Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA) **grant**, resulted in a thorough analysis of the library's need for a long-range preservation plan and ways to preserve what we already have. This assessment is available online.

After many years of review, and with the strategic assistance of the **Friends of the Bigelow Library**, the library was able to clean out much of the old collection of books, many of which had no intrinsic or monetary value. The items deemed to be of value or of interest to Clinton residents were reserved for the local history collection.

BIGELOW  
FREE PUBLIC  
LIBRARY





## All Sorts of Fun Happenings at the Bigelow Library

**Fifty-seven children** under the age of twelve participated in the Bigelow Library's summer reading program, which supports ongoing literacy efforts and helps to prevent the "summer slide." In addition to reading, children were invited to participate in musical events, story times, crafts, and gardening clubs.



The most well-attended program of the summer was the presentation from **High Flying Dogs** in Central Park in partnership with Beaman Library with over 200 people attending at least part of the event.

The library continued its weekly **Library Laps in the Park** with a small, but loyal, walking group on Tuesday afternoons.

Patrons of all ages attended programs of all types during the summer, both in person and via Zoom. The library partnered with **SproutChange, Germinemos, Growing Places, Clinton Parks & Recreation, Lyme Public Library, Springfield Public Library, Tewksbury Public Library** for summer programs.



**Representative Meg Kilcoyne** held office hours once/month at the library. She or an aide was available at the library for questions, issues, or other concerns on the last Friday of the month throughout most of the year.

The Bigelow Library Youth Services staff offered an introduction to the library and story time to students from the **Clinton Elementary School** kindergarteners and first graders; students from all classes went home with library cards and books to read or share.

The library also offered tours and training to students from the **Clinton Adult Learning Center**. They, too went home with library cards and books and the knowledge that they could use their library cards throughout the greater Worcester area.

During the second quarter, the Bigelow Library hosted a history exhibit from the Commonwealth Museum, **Fire & Thunder: Massachusetts Blacks in the Civil War** and also an **art show** by Brenda Caldwell and Amy Steinmetz, "Free Your Creative Spirit."



Virtual programming for **Job Search Help, Financial Literacy,** and **Author Visits** in cooperation with other libraries restarted during October and continued throughout the year. Many of these co-hosted programs are on a monthly schedule, like **Armchair Travel via Zoom, Tuesday Night Book Club,** and **Adult Movie Nights.**

During FY23, the Bigelow Library really cemented its calendar with ongoing, repetitive programs, particularly in the Youth Service department. Teens met monthly for **Dungeons & Dragons** and bi-weekly for **Anime Club (recently re-organized as G.A.M.E.S.)**. **Family Game Night** was also added to the schedule on a monthly basis. The **Racial Equity Book Club**, in partnership with other libraries, also met monthly online to talk about difficult subjects.



The Friends of the Bigelow Library offered their first Veterans Breakfast on November 11. In March, the Friends and Bigelow Library hosted an indoor nine-hole **Mini-Golf**, free to the community, with opportunities for local businesses to sponsor one or more holes.



Both the **Adult Services** and **Youth Services** departments offered “Grab & Go” craft kits that patrons could take home and make themselves. These kits have proven to be wildly popular across all age groups.

The Bigelow Library continued to offer **Musical Performances**, outside when the weather was suitable, but also utilizing the renovated **Community Room** when not. Live music performances are generally popular events with patrons.



### Musical Performances

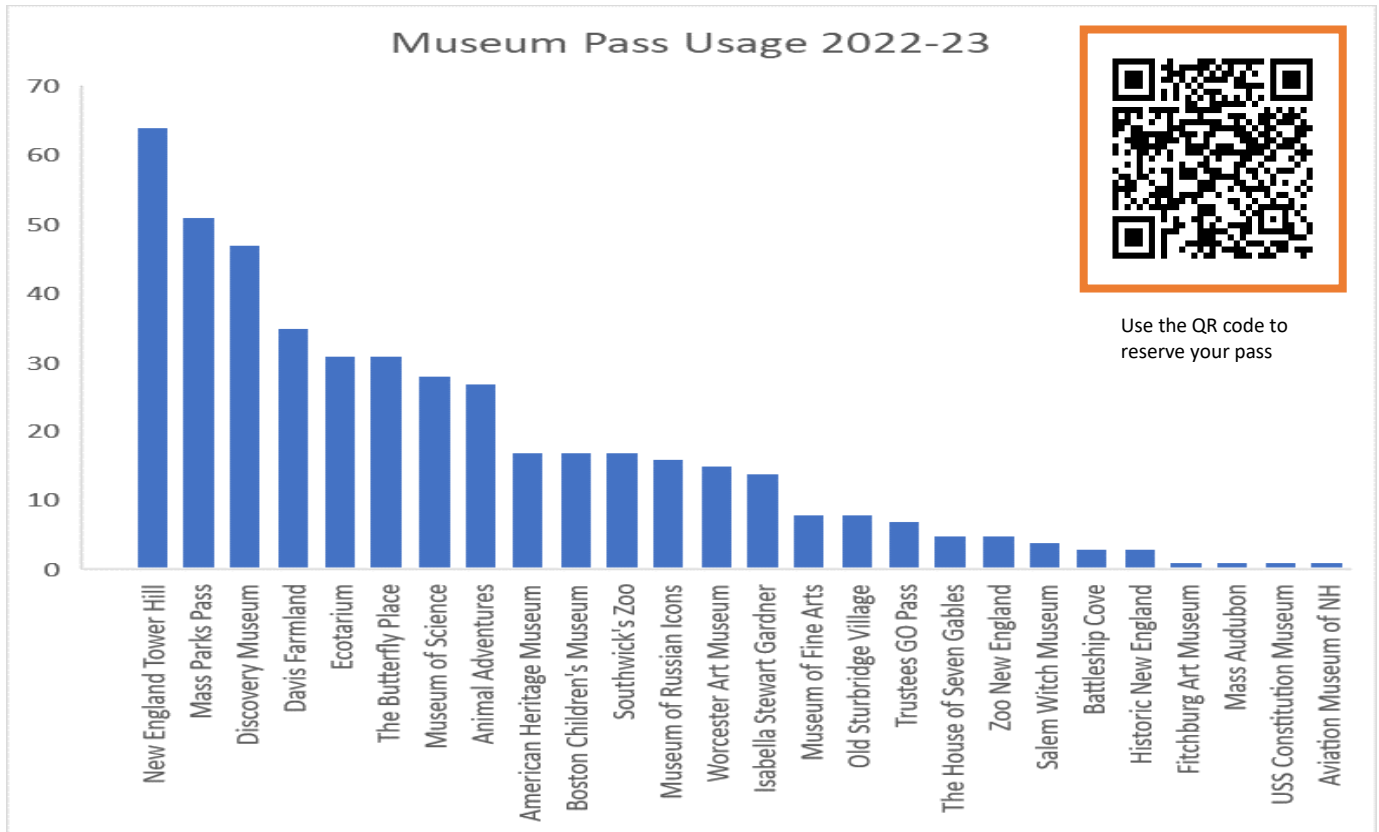
- **Elijah Grasshopper**—live & on YouTube, fun for kids\*
- **Knock on Wood** with Howie Newman
- **Sofia Talvik**—from Sweden, with a nice write-up in the *Worcester Telegram*
- **North Sea Gas**—from Scotland, with full house and their own groupies
- Jeff Snow—the **Softer Side of Celtic**, appropriately scheduled in March
- **Melodious Zach**—Clinton’s own, fun for everyone\*
- Matt York sings **Johnny Cash**\*
- **New Leaves**—popular music
- **African Harp** music by Sean Gaskell
- Steve Rudolph Trio—**Frank Sinatra & Big Band** music

\*Sponsored by the Cultural Council

Other events sponsored by the Cultural Council:

- **Dyeing to Wear it**
- **Chinese Acrobat**
- **Frances Perkins Live**

## Museum & Local Attraction Discount Passes offered by the Bigelow Library



The Bigelow Library continues to offer **discounted and free passes to museums and local attractions**; you can reserve your pass with a valid library card. Scan the QR code above for a list of passes and availability! In FY2023, there were **523 passes borrowed**. Did you know that many of our discount passes can be reserved and **printed at home**? As much as we would love to see you, we understand that things can get busy and it's nice to have the option to get tickets digitally, especially when the library is closed.

**Four out of the five most popular passes, however, must be picked up in the Bigelow Library.**

It isn't obvious, but the **Trustees GO pass** is good for free entry into **Fruitlands Museum** (right in Harvard!) and **de Cordova Sculpture Park in Lincoln**, if you're wondering why those sites aren't on the list. The **Mass Audubon** pass covers a number of sites in Massachusetts, including Wachusett Meadow in Princeton.

The Library Staff are always looking for more ways to support the residents of Clinton. If you can think of a museum pass you think we should buy, let us know! We'd rather spend money on passes that will be used.

The list of passes is available online but you can also pick up a list at the library.



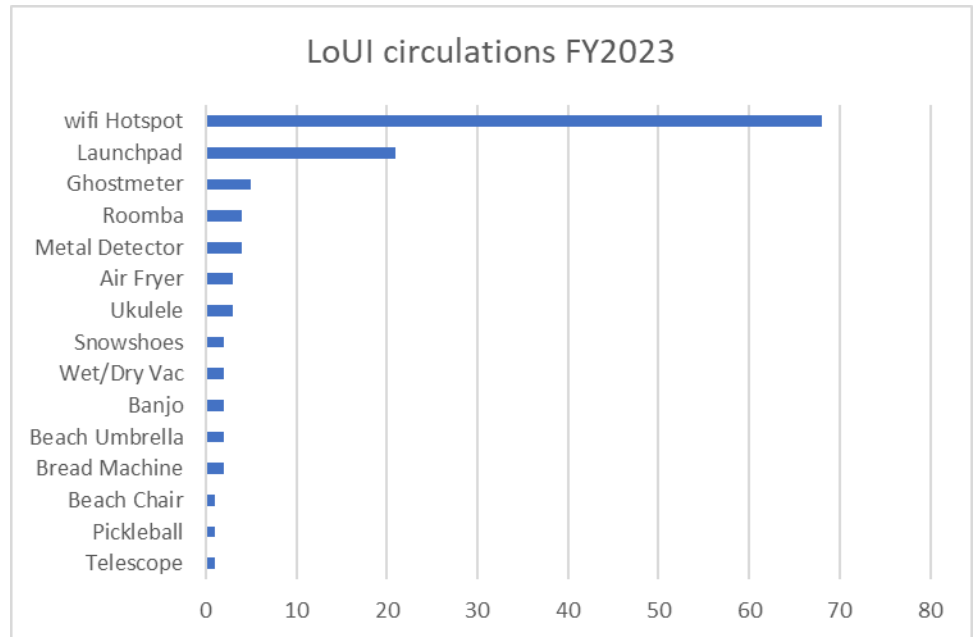


## Other Services offered by the Bigelow Library: LoUI (Library of Unexpected Items)

Did you know that—with a valid library card—you can borrow from our **Library of Unexpected Items**?

The LoUI includes

- Wifi hotspots
- Launchpads
- Ghost meter
- Electricity meter
- Beach umbrella
- Beach chairs
- Bread machine
- Air fryer
- Ukulele
- Banjo
- Metal Detector
- Telescope
- ..but wait, there's more!



A **perfect library package**: Borrow the Mass Parks Parking Pass for **Salisbury Beach**, borrow a beach umbrella, two chairs, and two body boards—**fun for a summer day!**



### Other Resources: Office services

**Printing, faxing, scanning, copying**—you can now print from your phone when logged into the wifi. Patrons and staff scan about fifty documents/month and library staff fax more than 600 documents per year for customers.



### Other Resources: Outreach Book Bike

In October, the Bigelow Library was awarded a grant from the Community Foundation of North Central Mass for a **mobile library book bike**. The bike was delivered in the spring; the grant allowed the library to hire an outreach bike rider, but as of June 30th, there had been no applicants.

Instead, the bike was poised outside the library with free books and flyers about upcoming programs. Look for the bike next summer!

## Other Services offered by the Bigelow Library: Community Use

- **4,300** uses of the **public computers** by members of the community
- **105** private uses of the **Community Room**
- **850 newspapers** and magazines were read at the library
- **2,500** free wi-fi logins
- More **6,200** people asked for help from library staff—including research questions, computer assistance, or microfilm search



## Challenges

Like many libraries across the commonwealth and the country, the Bigelow Library faced several informal challenges at the end of the fiscal year with five emails objecting to an online Zoom program, “Dishing Out Drag,” which occurred during Pride Month in June, in cooperation with many other local libraries. The program involved an anonymous Q&A session format for teens via Zoom.

Two people filled out the library’s formal Request for Reconsideration form. The director reached out to each individual, but only two of the seven people followed up for a further conversation. Despite the negative commentary on social media, the program was not cancelled, citing the library’s Program Policy, listed below

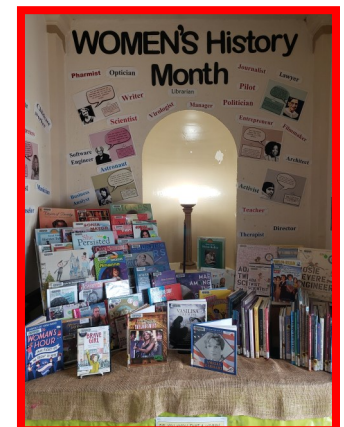


“The Bigelow Library does not promote particular views. Instead, it strives to be a resource for offering programs & presentations on a range of topics to appeal to a variety of opinions, interests, and preferences.”

In addition, a patron expressed an objection to a Pride Month display, which included a quote, “Ban bigots, not books.” The patron was provided with a copy of the library’s Request for Reconsideration form, but the patron did not fill it in. The display was replaced in July, at the end of Pride Month. The Bigelow Library’s display policy is similar to the programs policy.

Many more people expressed their gratitude and support to the library and the staff for offering such a variety of programs, including those controversial ones.

The Board of Trustees, in coordination with the Director, have procedures, policies, and forms in place to address these concerns. All policies and forms are available on the library’s web site and at the front desk.



## Activities of the Board of Library Trustees

- Revised and/or approved **nine library policies**
- Developed a five-year **strategic plan**
- Worked with a designer to create a **new logo** and templates
- Updated the library restrooms to be **gender-neutral**
- Installed security cameras
- In coordination with the Town of Clinton/Board of Selectmen, **filed an Intent to Apply** for a Mass. Public Library Construction Program Grant
- During Town Meeting, they **successfully** advocated for a town vote to pass an approval and appropriation for the **first phase in the grant process**, should the grant be accepted
- Created a new Library Trustee subcommittee for the building program grant
- In partnership with the director and Historical Society, a **timeline** of the Bigelow Free Public Library's past 150 years was created and launched in June, including some fun facts from before the library was public

The Board of Library Trustees and the staff of the library would like to thank Clinton residents for showing their support for the library throughout the year by their attendance to programs, usage of the collections, and appropriating the budget. As usual, we are here working for you, on behalf of the Town of Clinton.

We welcome you to stop by the library and see all of the good things we have to offer.

Library Board of Trustees

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