

Cambridge Public Library Strategic Framework Accomplishments



Over the past six years, staff, board members, volunteers and our community partners of the Cambridge Public Library have aligned our work with our strategic framework and advanced our mission of:

- Welcoming all
- Inspiring minds
- Empowering Community

Highlights

- From FY19 to FY25, the Library's **circulation** has grown by 42%; patron **visits** by 4%; **programs** by 39%; program **attendance** by 27%; **outreach** activities by 34%; outreach **participation** by 28% and total **open hours** by 21%.



Branch Hours Expansion

One of the top community requests has been to expand branch hours.

- We extended our branch hours by **54+** hours per week in the evenings increasing access to students and workers.
- We now offer **354+** hours of service per week across seven locations.
- In recognition of requests for contiguous Sunday hours, **Summer Sundays** began four years ago.



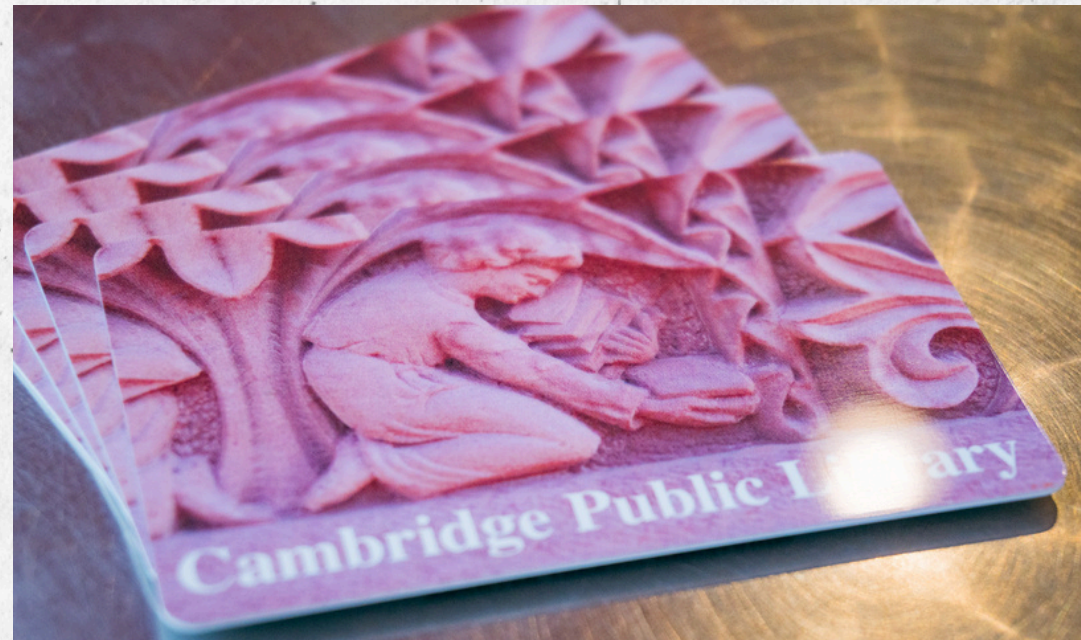
All Gender Restroom Installation

- With capital funding, the Library was able to study, design and construct an all-gender restroom that could be open all the hours that the Main Library is open.
- The project was featured in the Massachusetts Library System's Library Guide and video on Ensuring Accessibility and Inclusion for All.
- All libraries throughout the CPL system have all-gender restrooms available to the public during all open hours.



Fine Free

- After a yearlong pilot based on our commitment to equity, the Library went fine free in 2021 and no longer charge fines for late returns or renewals of library materials.
- The Library cleared past overdue fines and bills for lost or damaged Cambridge-owned children's and young adult materials to welcome back patrons with a fresh start.



STEAM at the Library



The City's STEAM Initiative ensures that through equitable access to high quality STEAM programming and resources, all Cambridge residents, regardless of social and economic barriers, are STEAM literate and possess the skills necessary to be successful, engaged, and responsible community members in a rapidly changing world.

- Between July 1, 2019 and June 30, 2025 CPL hosted **3,317** STEAM programs reaching **40,246** participants. Importantly, the number of STEAM programs has steadily increased.

The Hive Makerspace



A primary space for STEAM learning is **The Hive** makerspace at the Main Library.

- Features state-of-the-art digital and traditional maker equipment, podcast and audio recording studios, and an extended reality space.
- Since opening, over **5,600** patrons have trained in The Hive.
- On average, each month **40** classes are offered ranging from sewing, 3D modeling and printing, and video production.
- **120** hours is scheduled as Open Shop time for patrons.

STEAM Academy

In partnership with **Innovators for Purpose** and other community groups, we welcome middle school and high school students along with recent high school graduates to engage in immersive STEAM courses and internships.

- iFp Labs – Middle schoolers (grades 7–8) spark curiosity through hands-on projects in robotics, AI, and design
- iFp Studios – The flagship paid internship program for high school students, where students tackle real-world challenges year-round and grow as problem-solvers and leaders.
- iFp Next – Supporting STEAM Academy alumni through college and career with mentoring, internships, skill-building, and industry connections in Kendall Square and beyond.
- Since its inception, STEAM Academy has had close to **400** youth enrollments.



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STEAM Kits

Since 2019 we have made STEAM kits available to borrowers to encourage and support STEAM learning and habits of mind at home.

- Themed kits include: Family Logic Backpack, construction and building kits, Gear-Bots, Optical Illusions Backpack, K'NEX kits, Stargazing Backpack, and more.
- Many of these resources would be cost-prohibitive for patrons to purchase and several are custom-built. Today we offer **322** STEAM kits across our seven libraries!



Digital Equity



Through our Digital Equity Partnership of City, School, community-based and affordable housing providers, we aim to provide all community members with tools, learning opportunities, and tailored support not only to meet their most basic needs, but also to enable them to succeed in a connected world.

- Since 2023 through July 2025, the Library has offered **143** Basic Tech Classes and **636** Tech Help sessions for **1,775** patrons under Cambridge's Digital Navigator Program in partnership with CCTV, Just-A-Start, and others.
- From July 2024 to July 2025, CPL distributed **117** devices and assisted over **500** patrons with tech help, tech access, and referrals.



Takeout Technology



In 2020, we began circulating laptops and hotspots.

- Today we circulate Chromebooks, hotspots, Chromebooks with built-in hotspots, portable DVD players, and device chargers at all our libraries, as well as a GoPro at the Main Library.
- CPL's Takeout Technology program has grown to include over **700** items circulated more than **22,000** times.
- An additional **300+** technology items for in-library use have circulated more than **27,000** times.
- In 2025, CPL began offering **537** Take Home Chromebooks and hotspots.

Valente Branch Opening

- The new Valente Branch opened on **November 4, 2019** as part of the King Open and Cambridge Street Upper Schools and Community Complex.
- Valente is the largest building in Massachusetts to achieve Net Zero Emissions and earn a LEED v4 Platinum certification.
- In the past few years, it has welcomed more than **130,000** visitors and circulated more than **100,000** items annually.
- In addition, the Valente Branch has served as a safe space for the influx of immigrants and refugees housed by the City in a nearby municipal building that was doubling as an emergency shelter.



Social Work Services



- The CPL's first licensed social worker, the first social worker hired to work for a library system in Massachusetts, began working out of the Central Square Branch in March **2021**.
- The team provides direct supports to patrons across the library system and referrals to social service providers in the area as well as trains and consults with CPL Library staff.
- Our Social Worker is meeting regularly with **41** different patrons by appointment and has conducted over **35** street outreach sessions with community partners.

Central Square Branch Improvements

- With **\$570,130** in capital funding, we mounted new exterior Library signs, replaced furniture and created lounge zones and desktop work zones on the first floor.
- Improved children's room layout with new shelving, soft furniture replenishment, and a new rug.
- Lewis Room was renovated and opened in September 2024. There have been **260** library programs in this space since.



Art Installations

- Since the strategic plan in 2019, several significant art works have been on semi-permanent display at the Main Library and Branch locations including:
 - Ed Emberley Main Library Children's Room Mural
 - David Fichter Mural on Display at Valente
 - The Outdoor Mural at the Central Square Library Celebrates Knowledge and Learning
 - Kehinde Wiley "Young Girl Veiled" at Main
 - The Hive Mural



Presenting a Diverse Range of Authors and Speakers



Library program planners have presented an increasingly diverse range of authors and speakers, and these programs not only better reflect the diverse and intersecting communities served by the Library, but also expose patrons to new ideas and experiences. A few examples include:

- Tracy K. Smith (*To Free the Captives*)
- Michelle Zauner (*Crying at H Mart*)
- Louise Erdrich (*The Sentence*)
- Amanda Peters (*The Berry Pickers*)
- Celeste Ng (*Our Missing Hearts*)

Senior Programming

The Library's programming for seniors continues to expand with nature walks, meditation and wellness classes, art classes, writing workshops and more.

- Offerings include Beading Workshops, Meditation, Cooking, Improv, Zumba Gold, Botanical Drawing, Nature Walks, and Tai Chi.
- Over the past five years, we have hosted **2,726** events for **9,482** older adult participants.
- In FY25, approximately **540** deliveries were made to **59** individuals, who received nearly **8,000** items through our home delivery service.



Plain Language and Language Justice work

The Library has worked to advance Language Justice through multiple avenues.

- We have partnered with the City to offer and promote Plain Language training to staff to ensure that our written communications and promotions are accessible to the community.
- Staff participated in training on the Multilingual Helpline.
- The Library is currently implementing a new provision of the CPLSA Union Contract that allows for stipends to staff who speak a language other than English.
- We circulate Massachusetts RMV Driver's Manuals in 13 languages other than English, supplementing our existing collection of materials in seven languages other than English.
- Important written materials explaining core Library services and how to access them have been professionally translated into languages commonly spoken in Cambridge.



Supporting Sustainability



CPL continues to support sustainability efforts.

- In addition to opening the net-zero Valente Branch Library, as part of Participatory Budgeting in 2018 we partnered with the Department of Public Works and sustainability partners to install solar panels on the roof of the Main Library.
- We encourage sustainable commuting practices and host City partners who hold biking workshops and fix-it clinics.
- We've also installed water bubblers in all our libraries.
- Expanded branch library hours and Summer Sundays also provide an air-conditioned and warm learning and civic space for community members.



Summer Reading is for Everyone

Our Summer reading program has evolved from being just for kids, to a program for kids and a program for adults, to one program for *everyone* – BINGO! - with age-appropriate bingo cards for early childhood, school-age youth, teens, and adults.

- A total of **4,339** patrons participated in summer reading this year!
- One patron shared: “I also wanted to let you know that thanks to your bingo board it actually had me reading again in a substantial way for the first time in many, many years.”



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Friends and Foundation Two-Lane Approach

Over the past year, representatives of the Friends, Foundation, and Trustees met to explore how the Friends and Foundation could optimize their work to best support the Library.

- An agreement was reached for a two-lane approach:
 - The Foundation will do the primary fundraising on behalf of the Library and the Friends will provide additional support for specific services including purchasing museum passes for the public and professional development funds.

Looking Ahead

The Cambridge Public Library is a **community gathering place** of learning, connection and empowerment. Over the past six years, we have deepened our commitment to making our libraries more **welcoming, accessible** and **reflective** of the rich diversity of Cambridge.

During the 2025-2026 fiscal year, the Cambridge Public Library is entering a new strategic planning process coordinated by a new steering committee. We will review data and seek input from **staff, stakeholders**, and the **public**. We are excited to continue to support our beloved Cambridge community through the provision of excellent and inclusive library services.

