



**Tacoma
Public Library**

**2024
Annual
Report**

Introduction

Tacoma Public Library had a busy and exciting 2024 that included me stepping into the Director role in October after serving as Deputy Director for the last five years.

One of the best and hardest parts of my job is describing all the incredible ways Tacoma Public Library serves our community. From adding a social worker to our staff to serving entrepreneurs and small businesses, we are always striving to profoundly care for and meet the needs of every person who walks through our doors.

I hope as we look back on 2024 you'll feel as inspired and empowered as I do about the ways we collaborated and uplifted our community. Partnership and innovations continue to be a major theme of our work as we fulfill our mission: to empower our community by bringing people together to discover, connect, create, learn, and thrive.



Amita Lonial, Library Director



Mission, Vision, and Values

Mission (Our purpose and why we exist)

We empower our community by bringing people together to discover, connect, create, learn, and thrive.

Vision (Aspirations we have for our library)

We are radically welcoming: a trusted community hub where all people can find joy, compassion, and inspiration.

Values (What we believe in)

We work to break down barriers of access.

Our commitment to racial equity and social justice guides our work, allowing us to learn about and respond to Tacoma's diverse communities' needs and opportunities.

We believe that learning is a human right.

We work to provide free access to information and ideas from diverse points of view and encourage our community to explore new ideas, perspectives, and experiences.

We foster a culture of teamwork.

We engage with our community, our partners, and one another to cultivate collaboration and innovation.

We are committed stewards of our human, environmental, and financial resources.

We practice equitable decision-making and resource allocation, and take an active, visible role in supporting sustainable and resilient communities.



Equity and Access



Learning, Creativity, and Innovation



Investment in Youth



Cultivate and Engage Community



Responsible and Resilient

Equity and Access



We are committed to racial equity and social justice. It guides our work in serving Tacoma's diverse communities, especially the most vulnerable and under-served.

Digital Equity

The library is an incredible resource for building technological literacy. We host tech help programs in libraries, loan mobile hotspots, and provide access to free WiFi and computers. Beyond that, staff answer thousands of questions each year about technology topics ranging from setting up an email account, utilizing our eResources, filing taxes online, understanding cybersecurity best practices, and downloading apps to cell phones. Our public libraries are often the first place that come to mind when community members need help navigating technology. **In 2024, around 19,000 technology-related questions were answered by staff and the library offered more than 150 drop-in technology events.**



Decarcerated Services

Tacoma Public Library has expanded access to technology and digital resources for individuals reentering society after incarceration thanks to the support of the ALA Building Library Capacity Grant.



Building Library
Capacity Grant

ALA American Library Association

Through partnerships with local reentry organizations, we have provided essential digital literacy support by circulating 17 Chromebook kits (Chromebook, Wi-Fi hotspot, and accessories) along with three standalone Wi-Fi hotspots. By prioritizing equitable access, TPL is helping to bridge the digital divide and empower returning community members with the skills and resources necessary for successful reintegration.



Memory Lab

The Memory Lab at the Tacoma Public Library helps preserve memories by providing a space and equipment to digitize pictures, documents, videos, and audio recordings. Memory Labs opened at Moore and Wheelock Libraries in 2024.

Made possible by a grant from the Institute of Museum and Library Services with support from the Memory Lab Network, overseen by the DC Public Library.

Equity and Access, cont.

World Languages

Tacoma Public Library added more than 1,580 items to its World Languages collection, in order to better reflect the diversity of the Tacoma community. Materials for all ages are now offered in five languages.



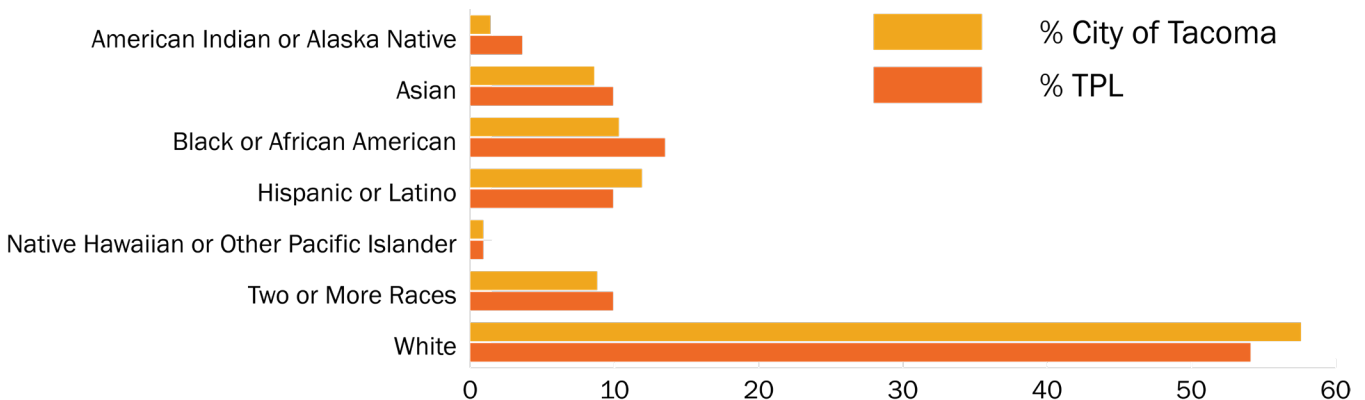
**한국어 Korean • Español Spanish • Русский Russian
Українська мова Ukrainian • Tiếng Việt Vietnamese**

In 2024 Tacoma Public Library offered 70 bilingual storytimes for children and families in Russian, Spanish, and Vietnamese with more than 400 attendees.

Right: Russian Storytime with Natalia



Diversity of Hires: TPL workforce compared to City of Tacoma population



Learning, Creativity, and Innovation



We will be the place for learning, discovery, and innovation.

Northwest Room

The Northwest Room continued to provide a range of services while the Main Library was being renovated. During construction, staff offered in-person one-on-one research appointments in the Northwest Room. They also worked with library IT to launch Memory Lab stations at the Moore and Wheelock libraries, allowing patrons to digitize their own collections of photos, documents, video, and audio materials.



The Northwest Room's Community Archives Center hosted the Eastside Story Fest at Salishan.



"Tacoma in Motion" film screening at The Grand Cinema.

With funding from the National Historical Publications and Records Commission, the Northwest Room began digitizing the photo archive from The News Tribune. With support from the City of Tacoma's Heritage Grant we digitized items from our Richards Photography Studio collection, the City of Tacoma collection, and Tacoma Municipal Television collection, which was screened as a film called "Tacoma in Motion" at the The Grand Cinema. Finally, we were awarded a prestigious grant from National Endowment for the Humanities to continue the work of our Community Archives Center to collect stories and primary source materials focused on climate change in the region.

Learning, Creativity, and Innovation, cont.

Video Game Collection

Tacoma Public Library launched its video game collection in December 2024. Video games are more than just entertainment—they are a powerful tool for learning and community building. The collection was made possible in part with funding from the Tacoma Public Library Foundation’s 2024 Library Giving Day campaign. Patron feedback has been positive and titles are circulating quickly.



Video game collection displayed at South Tacoma Library.

Serving Small Businesses

Pierce County’s business survey in 2021 indicated that of respondents, 77% of the businesses were small businesses and 38% of respondents’ businesses were located in Tacoma.

In 2024, the library offered support to small businesses by highlighting electronic resources, such as databases, items in our collections that are relevant to entrepreneurs and small business owners, and programming in partnership with key community organizations that provided additional support.



SCORE South Sound/Tacoma is a group of experienced business professionals who volunteer to one-on-one mentor other small business entrepreneurs. SCORE held 12 mentoring sessions at Swasey Library, with 31 patrons participating.



The Data Axle database, free with a library card, allows patrons access to demographic information to inform business decisions. Staff attended training sessions and held public presentations for patrons on how to utilize this resource.



Library staff attended meetings for Proctor, South Tacoma Way, 6th Avenue, and Downtown Business Districts, sharing library resources for small business owners.

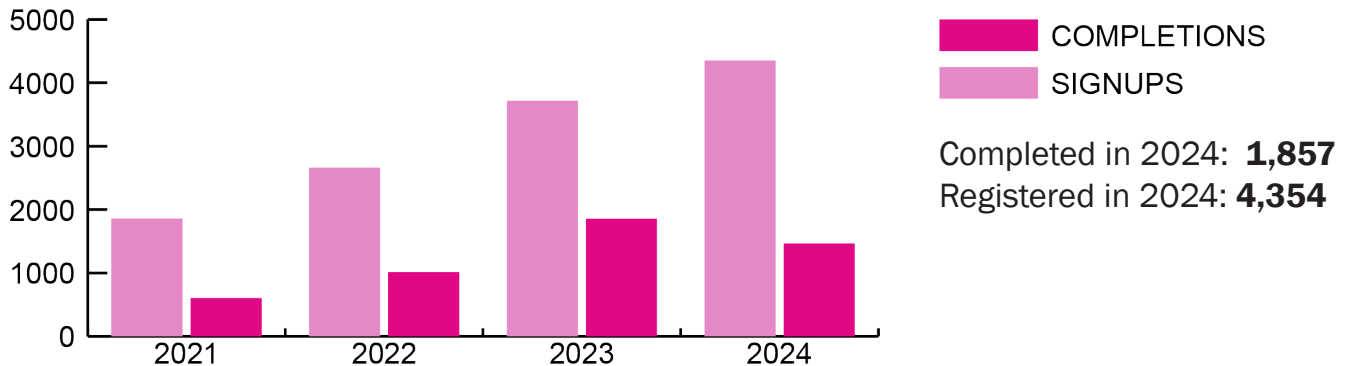
Investment in Youth



We believe that youth are the future and we will prioritize services, programs, and partnerships that nurture and develop young minds.

Summer Reading Challenge

The 2024 Summer Reading Challenge (SRC) for all ages took place June 22–August 17. This year’s theme was “Adventure Begins at Your Library!” Participants tracked progress, attended events, and earned prizes throughout the reading challenge.



A 2024 SRC raffle prize winner and their siblings.



Together in Nature at Alderwood Park with the Tacoma Nature Center.

The Summer Reading Advisory Committee was formed in 2024 to help shape the program. The committee members’ input gave the library valuable insight into community priorities around summer reading.

Summer Reading Challenge presented 208 programs with more than 6,000 participants.

Investment in Youth, cont.

Teen Services

Teens are an important part of our community. To support teens in feeling radically welcomed, in 2024 we expanded teen spaces and collections. As part of this effort, we introduced video game stations in libraries and also added a video game collection.

- Awarded \$400 Tabletop Roll Playing Games grant from Washington State Library to support teen Dungeons & Dragons programs
- Awarded \$1,852 grant from Foundation for Tacoma Students for Summer Teen Late Night participation
- Hosted 185 teen programs system-wide from January-October 2024, a 146% increase from 2023.



New gaming station at South Tacoma Library.



Tinkercad for
Minecraft and 3D
Printing with Fablab
Education at Moore
Library.

Funded by Tacoma Creates.
Photo by Brian Cox.

Investment in Youth, cont.

1000 Books Before Kindergarten

Now in its third year, this reading program for preschool-aged children continues to have strong participation and offers a fun way to develop early literacy skills.

Participants in 2024: 460 (with 62,677 books read!)

Top 12 most popular titles:



Winter Reading Challenge

This counterpart to the Summer Reading Challenge was introduced in 2024 and was designed for grades K–8 to stay engaged in reading during winter break.

Total Registered 743

Total Completed 339

Total Minutes Read 158,347



Below: Baby Storytime on the Lawn. Photo by Brian Cox



Cultivate and Engage Community

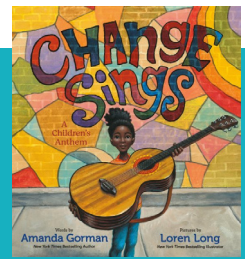
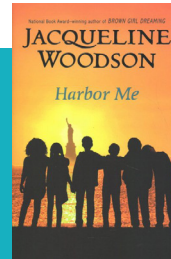
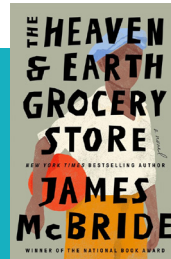


We will be the center for connecting people, ideas, and places.



TACOMA READS

Tacoma Reads is a longstanding partnership between the City of Tacoma’s Mayor’s Office and Tacoma Public Library, with wide community support and collaboration. The theme of Tacoma Reads 2024 was Rhythms of Resilience, and we invited the community to explore this theme together by reading, attending programs, and engaging in discussion.



Tacoma Reads hosted 30 programs at libraries and around town with a total of 954 attendees. A total of 450 readers attended the culminating event with author James McBride in conversation with Mayor Victoria Woodards. Community partners at the University of Washington Tacoma Library sponsored the event, hosting it in the beautiful William W. Philips Hall.

Having celebrated, award-winning, bestselling author James McBride seemed to have had a positive effect on circulation rates for Tacoma Reads. “The Heaven and Earth Grocery Store” was offered in physical book, eBook, and audiobook format and was checked out 2,746 times, a 137 percent increase over the 2023 main title.

Mayor Victoria Woodards and author James McBride.
Photo by Brian Cox.



Cultivate and Engage Community, cont.

More Author Events

Tacoma Public Library held more than 15 author events throughout 2024. Below are just a few highlights.



Tacoma Public Library, Tacoma Online Elementary, and King's Books partnered to host author Jan Brett in Tacoma as part of her "Alice in a Winter Wonderland" Tour.

Left: TPL staff with author Jan Brett.



Marissa Meyer celebrated the release of her new book "Let It Glow" at Swasey Library.



Local author Peter Bacho led two memoir writing sessions at South Tacoma Library.



Author Andrea Pons joined Moore Library for an interview and Q&A session about her cookbook, "Mamacita."



Author of "I Am Bunny: How A 'Talking' Dog Taught Me Everything I Need To Know About Being Human," Alexis Devine visited Wheelock Library for a Q&A session.



Nico Lang, author of "American Teenager", visited the Fern Hill Library. Presented by Queer Northwest, funded by Tacoma Creates, and hosted by TPL.



Author Renee Beauregard Lute visited Wheelock Library to make apple nachos inspired by a character in her book, "Dinner at the Brake Fast."

Cultivate and Engage Community, cont.

Social Work Support

In 2024, Tacoma Public Library became the latest public library system to add a social worker to its team. Library patrons can meet with the social worker at a library to consult about accessing social services, mental health resources, shelter or housing, and much more.

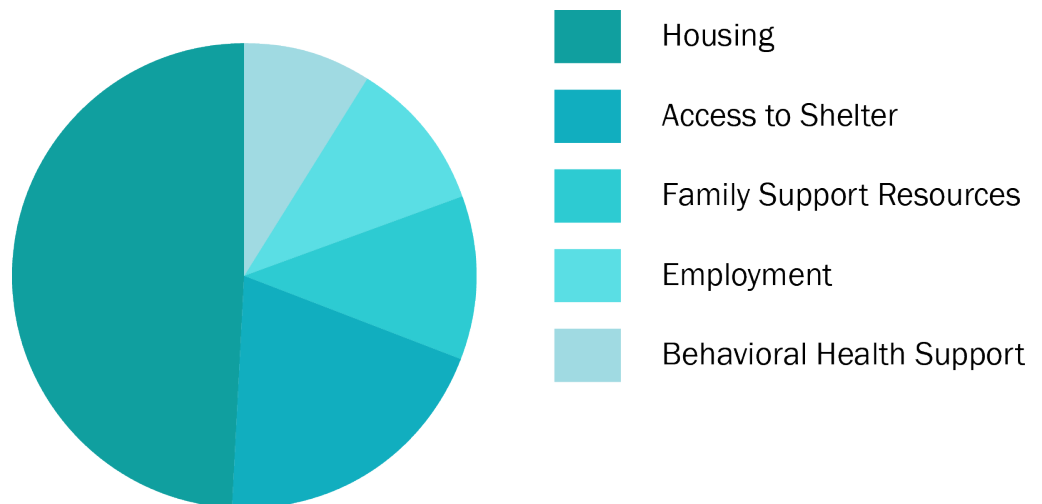
83% of all interactions were patron-led—meaning patrons initiated connection with the library social worker on their own.

Community collaboration is vital. The social worker utilizes connections with **Tacoma Needle Exchange, Tacomaprobono, Salvation Army, St. Vincent De Paul, Tacoma Detox Services (through Metropolitan Development Council), the Tacoma Pierce County Coalition to End Homelessness, and advocates with Common Good Tacoma.**



Social Worker Samie Iverson offers regular drop-in consultations throughout the library system.

Top Five Presenting Issues



“Libraries are often the first place people go when they need help,” stated Director Amita Lonial. “As our patrons’ needs are becoming more complex, and beyond the scope of library workers’ training, many public library systems have added social workers to their staff to be able to provide the level of help our patrons need.”

Cultivate and Engage Community, cont.

Outreach

Library staff participated in more than 74 outreach events with 12,800 attendees and issued 185 new library cards.



Library staff at the Lunar New Year Festival in the Lincoln District.

Voter Points of Assistance

The Pierce County Library System, Tacoma Public Library, and the Puyallup Public Library partnered with the Pierce County Auditor's Office as Points of Assistance on Election Day. Individuals could vote, register to vote, update voter registration information, get replacement ballots, and more. Through this partnership more than 1,200 voters received assistance.



The library hosted **Prime Time Family Reading** after receiving a Humanities Washington Grant. One program was hosted at Mary Lyon Elementary and another at Amara Family Resource Center. The six-week program engages families in literature discussions in a supportive environment to build critical thinking and reading comprehension skills for elementary schoolers.

Cultivate and Engage Community, cont.

Program Partners

Collaboration, resource and knowledge sharing, and strategic partnerships are a consistent theme throughout TPL's work and help us to meet our mission.

Community Hub Partner Tenants

One example of strategic partnership was integral to reimagine Main Library. The remodel included a vision of our second floor as a hub of mission-aligned organizations that would provide free and low-cost classes, events, and learning opportunities. Prior to 2024, TPL had secured the Tacoma Tool Library and Write 253 as tenants. In 2024, we conducted a public process to identify additional partners. We received eight applications from qualified organizations and selected Remakery Tacoma and Toolbox Learning Laboratories as the remaining partners in the Community Hub.



Remakery Tacoma provides access to education, tools and resources on the remaking, repair and reuse of post-consumer materials and waste. They offer workshops and classes for sewing, fiber arts, paper arts, and plastic recycling using natural materials. remakerytacoma.org



Tacoma Tool Library provides low-cost access to shared tools and other durable goods and encourages re-use, repair, and reduced consumption. They host a safe community space for learning and empower local residents to care for their homes and neighborhoods. tacomatoollibrary.org



Toolbox Learning Laboratories provides space, tools, materials, teaching artists, and inspiration for community to create, explore and grow. Activities and classes are centered in science, technology, engineering, arts and math (STEAM). toolboxlaboratories.com



Write253 is a literary arts and printmaking organization whose mission is to provide meaningful and transformative writing, publishing, and artistic opportunities that cross boundaries and create community for teens and young adults in Tacoma. write253.org

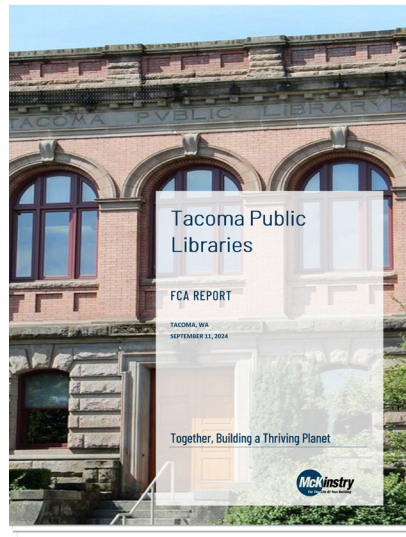


Responsible and Resilient



We will be an integral partner in a sustainable network that supports a thriving Tacoma.

Facilities Condition Assessment and Level of Service Study



The library completed two studies in 2024. The first study is the Facilities Condition Assessment, which evaluates the state of our buildings and equipment and gives estimates of the cost to maintain our facilities to aid in capital and operating budget planning. The second is the Level of Service Study which assesses our ability to meet patron needs across various categories including safety, technology, interior flow, and several other metrics.

Reimagining Main Library

From 2020-22, Tacoma Public Library worked to secure a combination of federal, state, and municipal funds totaling \$6 million, with \$2 million from the Department of Commerce, a \$2 million match from the City of Tacoma, and the rest from the library's savings and trust funds. After additional costs incurred for supplies and unexpected work through the construction process, the project totaled around \$8.6 million, with TPL covering the overage from its 2023 fiscal year savings and trust funds.



BuildingWork redesigned the library floorplan and worked with TPL staff in choosing carpet, furniture, fixtures, signage, and other features. Neeley Construction won the bid listed in an RFP through the City of Tacoma for the facility upgrades. The library fully closed in September 2023 so the work could begin. By the end of 2024, most work was completed and TPL prepared to reopen Main Library in early 2025.

Responsible and Resilient, cont.

New Director Search

In March of 2024, Kate Larsen declared her intent to resign as the director of Tacoma Public Library after six strong years of leadership. The Board of Trustees engaged in succession planning and helped to ensure a smooth transition to a new director.

The search committee started the search internally to tap into the wealth of talent and experience that already existed at the Library. They moved forward with one candidate, then Deputy Director Amita Lonial, and invited the Tacoma community to join them for a forum to provide feedback and ask questions in a moderated setting. The Board of Trustees selected Amita Lonial to become TPL's next director, with her role beginning in October 2024.

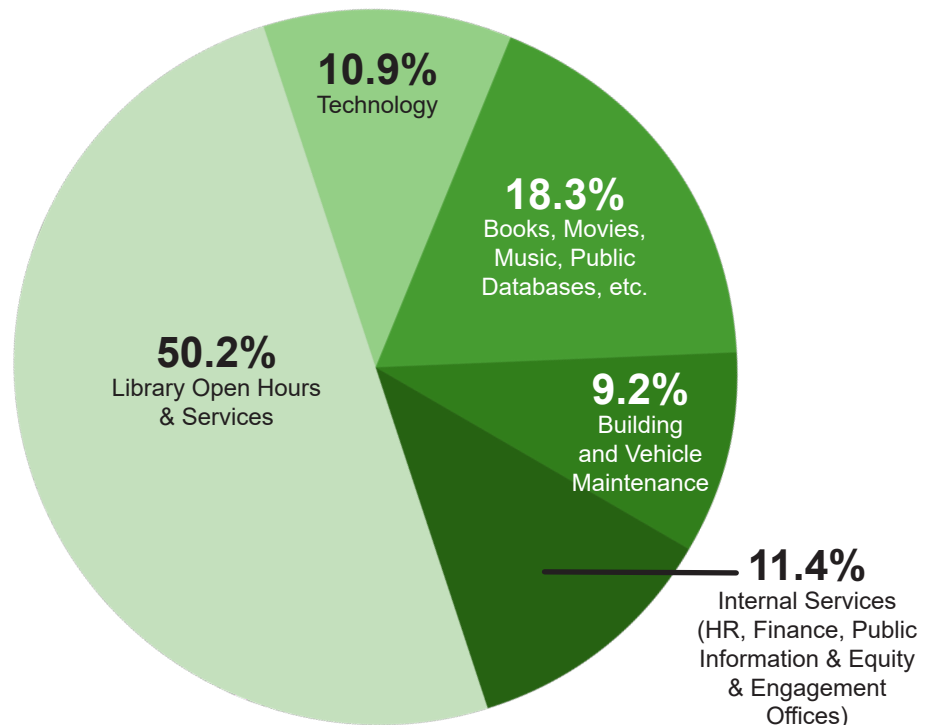


Kate Larsen (L) and Amita Lonial (R).

“The Library Board of Trustees firmly believes in the strategic direction that outgoing director Kate Larsen and Amita Lonial have led together. The Board is confident that Lonial’s depth of experience, track record of community and staff engagement, and demonstrated commitment to and understanding of Tacoma will ensure this work not only continues but expands into the future,” stated TPL Board of Trustees President Andrea Cobb.

2024 Budget

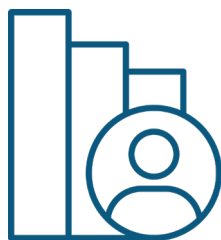
Total: \$18,147,296



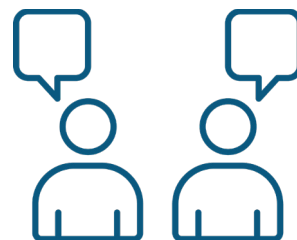
Data Snapshot



Total Visitors
465,851



In-Person Checkouts
1,166,401



Questions
Answered by Staff
63,051

Programs Offered
2,809

Digital Checkouts
580,485

Public Computer
Sessions

58,571

Program Attendees
50,324

Total Checkouts
1,746,886

Public Wifi Users
45,648

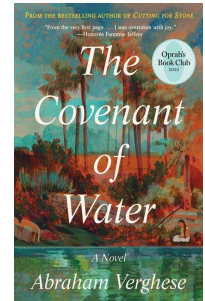
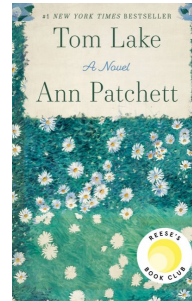
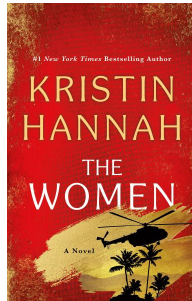
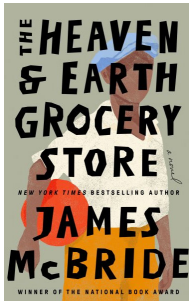
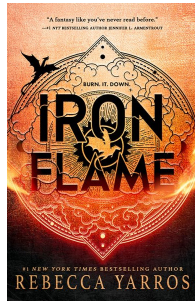
Below: Blue Heron Tai Chi on the lawn at Wheelock Library.



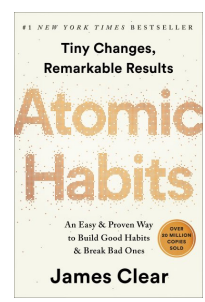
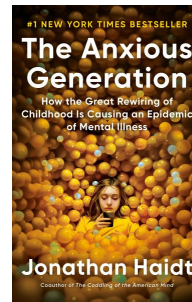
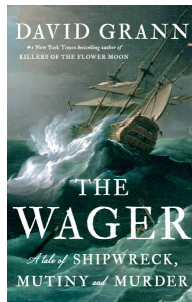
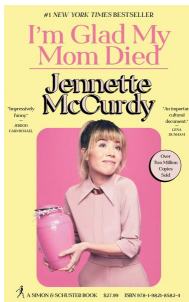
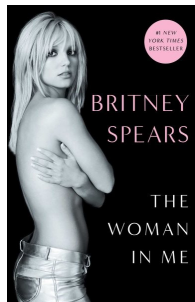
Data Snapshot

Top circulating titles of 2024

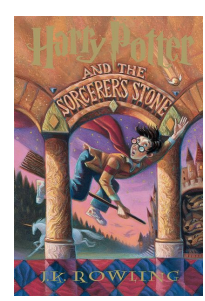
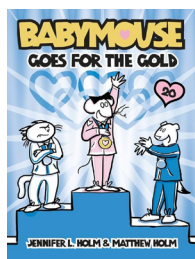
Adult Fiction



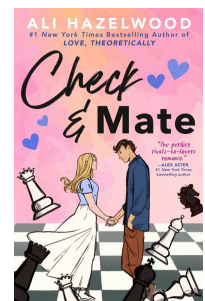
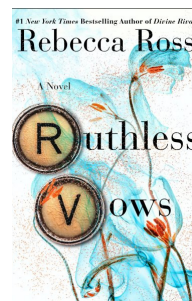
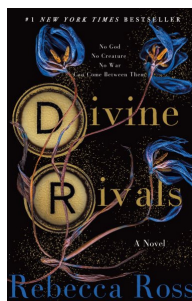
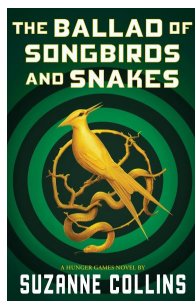
Adult Non-Fiction



Childrens

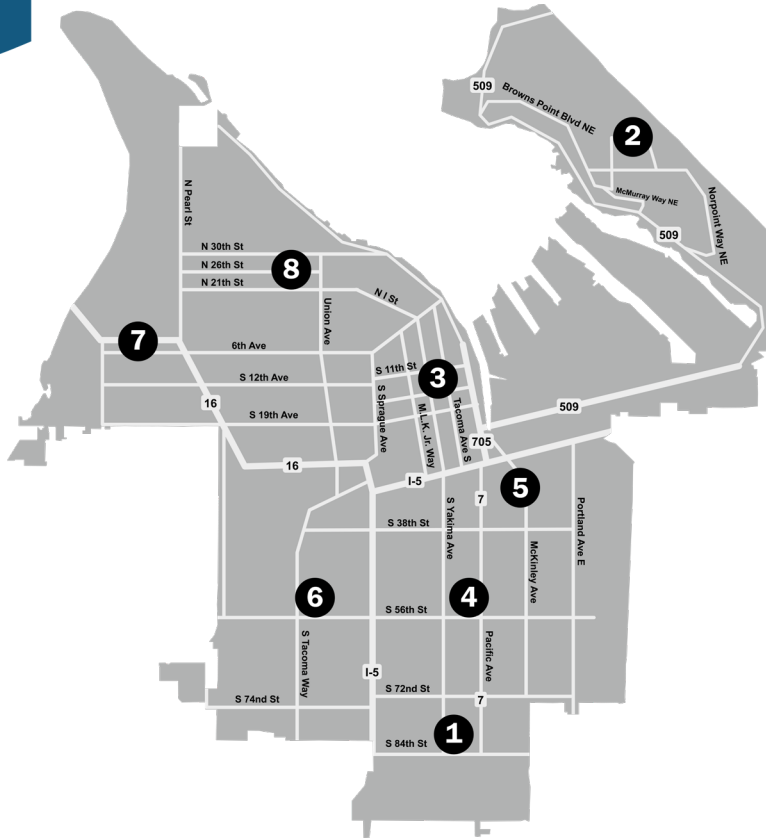


Teen



Data Snapshot

Tacoma Public Library at a Glance



1
Fern Hill Library
765 South 84th Street



2
Kobetich Library
212 Browns Point Blvd NE



3
Main Library
1102 Tacoma Avenue South



4
Moore Library
215 South 56th Street



5
Mottet Library
3523 East G Street



6
South Tacoma Library
3411 South 56th Street



7
Swasey Library
7001 6th Avenue



8
Wheelock Library
3722 North 26th Street

Below: Family Storytime at Mottet Library

founded in
1903

locations
8

staff
111



Tacoma Public Library Foundation



For the first time, Tacoma Public Library Foundation teamed up with neighbors at Pierce County Library Foundation and Puyallup Library Foundation for Library Giving Day, a national fundraiser for public libraries. The three foundations launched a combined campaign for their libraries on a new website: librarygiving253.org.

Library Giving Day

Wednesday, April 3
librarygiving253.org

Pierce County Library Foundation

Puyallup Library Foundation

tacoma public library foundation

The banner features a photograph of a woman reading a book to a young child. The text is arranged in a clean, modern layout with a green and blue color scheme.

Library Giving Day highlight

Tacoma Public Library Foundation’s focus was raising funds to support a video game collection and video game programs. The campaign was called “Game On” and gifts totaled more than \$10,000.

GAME ON!
EXPANDING GAMING
AT TACOMA PUBLIC LIBRARY

**LIBRARY
GIVING DAY**

tplfoundation Library Giving Day

The graphic has a dark blue background with a grid pattern. The text is in a bold, white, sans-serif font, with "GAME ON!" in a larger, stylized font.



TPL Foundation cont.

Board of Directors

Wayne Williams, President, Board of Directors | President Emeritus, Tacoma Public Library Board of Trustees

Bill Ryberg, Vice President, Board of Directors | Retired

Jackis Coulibaly, Treasurer | Port of Seattle

JR. Nobles, Board of Directors | Executive Director, Friends of the Children Tacoma

Megan Smedsrud, Board of Directors | Senior Program Officer, Greater Tacoma Community Foundation

Archi Sharma, Board of Directors | TAPCO Credit Union

Dominic Jay “DJ” Leon Guerrero, Board of Directors | University of Washington

Mission, Vision, and Values

Mission

The Tacoma Public Library Foundation strengthens Tacoma’s thriving communities by fueling our library system through philanthropy and outreach.

Vision

We believe libraries are vital to building strong, compassionate, and prepared communities, and that learning is a human right. Through outreach and philanthropy, the Foundation strengthens Tacoma Public Library’s vision to be a radically welcoming, trusted community hub where all people can find joy, compassion, and inspiration.

Values

- Accessibility
- Social Justice
- Literacy + Learning
- Sustainability
- Creativity + Innovation
- Compassion

Board of Trustees

Tacoma Public Library is governed by a five-member Board of Trustees appointed by the city's Mayor, and confirmed by a vote of the Tacoma City Council.



Andrea Cobb
President



Sara Irish
Vice President



Elizabeth Bowman
Trustee



Theresa Pan Hosley
Trustee



J. Manny Santiago
Trustee

Below: Mural by artist Dionne Bonner at South Tacoma Library
Photo by Jacob Durham.

Our Board of Trustees bring a wealth of experience, community involvement, professional skills, and connections to the governance of Tacoma Public Library. They make key decisions for the Library regarding policy, budget, and governance as we strive to become the library system Tacoma deserves.

