

Annual Report 2022-23

Post-pandemic, Willard Library has continued its positive trajectory, reinforcing its vital role within the community. In July 2022, Matt Willis was named the 16th Director of the Library. Shortly thereafter, he organized a team to revise the Library's strategic plan. This revitalized plan introduced a purpose statement: "Willard Library sparks discovery, growth, and connection," succinctly captured as "Discover. Grow. Connect." This foundational concept serves as the driving force for providing top-notch library programs, services, and resources for everyone in the community.



The Library launched a promotional campaign centered on its new purpose statement, capitalizing on the growing trend of people returning to the Library. The campaign resonated strongly, as reflected in the remarkable 23 percent increase in visitors. This surge underscores the Library's standing as an essential community hub.



Financial Report

The Library's administration continues to monitor property values and proposed legislation that would affect library funding at both the local and state level. Areas of potential financial concern include local tax-capture agreements and the elimination of the Personal Property Tax. Property values increased slightly. Library expenditures are regularly reviewed for potential cost-saving measures. Willard Library and the Helen Warner Branch continue to be popular destinations while operating at the same rate of 2.0 mills, which was adopted 20 years ago. With careful resource management, the Library's administration anticipates success at this funding level for many years to come.


A compelling aspect of growth was the 4 percent rise in total material circulation, totaling 648,817 items. The increase was largely driven by the circulation of physical items. Moreover, the popularity of programs soared, with program audiences experiencing an 88 percent increase. This surge was notably bolstered by a range of engaging children's programs, including the well-received Monday night series initiated in March 2023.

This expanded programming was a reflection of the Library's commitment to offering diverse and impactful experiences. The Library hosted an array of events, from crafting workshops and genealogy sessions to yoga classes, writer's groups, and financial literacy programs. Notably, "Book a Librarian" sessions saw an 80 percent increase in attendance, demonstrating the value of personalized assistance, especially in the realm of digital literacy.

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**Book a Librarian
@ Willard Library**

Call 269-968-8166
ext. 513 for one-on-one
help learning basic
computer skills with
one of our Librarians.



**WILLARD
LIBRARY**
willardlibrary.org • 269-968-8166


Yoga for Healthy Aging

Wednesdays, 10 a.m.
Oct. 18 and 25
Nov. 1, 8, 15, 22, and 29
Dec. 6
Downtown Lower Level



**Genealogy
Lock-In**

Sunday,
Oct. 22, 5-7 p.m.
Helen Warner Branch



Registration Required

**Finance Basics with
Goodwill Financial
Opportunity Center**

Wednesdays, 2 p.m., repeating at 6 p.m.
Downtown Lower Level


- June 7: Basics of budgeting
- June 14: Dealing with debt
- June 21: Understanding credit
- June 28: Setting financial goals
- July 5: Choosing banking products and services
- July 12: Understanding employee benefits
- July 19: Understanding large purchases
- July 26: Home buying basics



School Age
Children ages five through 12


Fantastic Fossils!
Fossils Rock! Join us in the library for a STEAM night with our friends from Kingman Collections to learn all about different kinds of fossils, how they are formed, and where they can be found. Participate in fun activities, view fossils up close, check out books, and even dig up a fossil of your very own!

Monday, Sept. 18, 6 p.m.
Downtown Programming Room
Register at tinyurl.com/WLFossils23



Graphic Novel Night
Do you love graphic novels like Dog Man, The Babysitter's Club, or Wings of Fire? Practice creating your own comic strip to show off. Learn the basics of developing a story, make buttons of your favorite characters, and try your hand at drawing your own comics.

Monday, Sept. 25, 6 p.m.
Downtown Programming Room




Pumpkin Party

Monday, Oct. 30, 6 p.m.
Downtown Programming Room



**Willard
Writers
Group**

Thursday, Sept. 14, 6 p.m.
Downtown Creative Space



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The Library’s commitment to fostering a love of reading was evident in events like “Battle Creek Reads,” which drew over 150 attendees for a hybrid in-person and virtual session featuring authors Victoria Christopher Murray and Marie Benedict. This unique format showcased the strides made in virtual programming, leveraging lessons learned during the pandemic. Similarly, the Summer Reading Kickoff saw a robust turnout of 300 participants, enjoying a range of outdoor activities.

Strategic partnerships played a pivotal role in outreach efforts. Collaborations with the Juneteenth Family Day Planning Committee inspired the Library to create an enriching week-long series of events. Collaborating with the Battle Creek Regional History Museum, the Music Center of Battle Creek, and other community stakeholders, a captivating event paying homage to Battle Creek’s historical music scene and its African American artists was presented to a full and engaged audience.

Willard Library took significant steps toward engaging a diverse audience. The Library’s revitalized online presence was highlighted by the introduction of a new library website featuring improved accessibility tools. Additionally, a newly launched online newsletter highlighted essential programs, services, and reading lists. The unveiling of the “Tours of Battle Creek” app, a local history digital platform, presents captivating guided tours throughout the city, rich in multimedia content.

With these endeavors, Willard Library remained steadfast in its commitment to providing a welcoming, vibrant, and inclusive space. The Library’s focus on nurturing a culture of literacy and building community has underpinned its recent growth and success.

