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Brooklyn Public Library Served Over 9.3 Million People In Person and Online And Presented More than 72,000 Programs to the Public in 2018

*BPL Continues to Expand Role as a Catalyst for Civic Literacy and Engagement,
and as Resource for Self-Advancement for Brooklyn's Diverse Communities*

2018 Highlights Include the Launch of Culture Pass; Digital Materials Circulated Over 1.5 Million Times; Boroughwide Expansion of the Brooklyn Robotics League for Children and Teens; Over 1,000 community partnerships; the Inaugural People's Ball; and 30% More Schools Served with Expanded Programming

BROOKLYN, March 14, 2019 – Brooklyn Public Library (BPL), one of the largest and most diverse library systems in the country, released its second annual “State of the Library” today, highlighting the extensive impact, broad community engagement, myriad initiatives, and more than 72,000 free programs it presented in 2018 for the borough’s 2.6 million residents. With 59 branches in neighborhoods across Brooklyn, BPL welcomed members of the community through its doors and across its digital platforms over 9.3 million times in 2018, making it one of the most-utilized institutions in New York City and one of the busiest libraries in the country.

“In 2018, Brooklyn Public Library continued to redefine how 21st century libraries work,” said **Linda E. Johnson, Brooklyn Public Library President and CEO**. “While delivering many of the same top-quality services we have for over a century, BPL is constantly imagining new ways to ensure 2.6 million Brooklynites have access to the educational, cultural, career, and civic opportunities they deserve.”

During 2018, BPL spearheaded new initiatives and expanded its footprint across the borough. It led the launch of Culture Pass and presented immersive art installations, announced the addition of its first new branch in nearly 40 years, expanded its digital resources, and awarded grants to librarians to incubate new programs customized to meet the needs of library users in neighborhoods across Brooklyn. The Library continued to strengthen the traditional services patrons rely on, including storytime programs in 12 languages and access to nearly 4 million books and other materials. Through the popular Bookmatch program, BPL librarians made over 1,200 entirely hand selected book recommendation lists to individual patrons.

In 2018, BPL Increased total programming by nine percent and attendance by eight percent, including workshops for ESOL, after-school programs, and a range of services that address the needs and aspirations of its constituents. The Library also hosted presentations and public discussions with leading thinkers, writers, artists, and policy makers from around the corner and throughout the world. Through all its programs, services, and collections, the library continues to help the people of Brooklyn expand their intellectual horizons, build their own personal narratives, and contribute to their communities.

2018: BPL By the Numbers:

- Increased new library card sign-ups by nearly 13%
- Digital materials circulated 1,507,544 times
- Increased overall programming by 9%
- Increased program attendance by 8%
- 37,402 programs for children and teens that attracted 759,985 attendees
- 14,157 technology programs that assisted 97,173 attendees
- Nearly 1.4 million free WiFi sessions
- Increased ESOL classes by over 14% and volunteer-led citizen prep groups by over 17%
- Worked with over 1,000 community partners, including city agencies, camps, childcare centers, shelters, and more.

Cultural Offerings

BPL Presents spearheaded boundary-pushing programs connecting internationally recognized writers, scholars, critics, and artists with the broader public to discuss issues that are critical to Brooklyn's communities and to the nation, and provided new resources for patrons to access cultural offerings across the city. This past July, in partnership with New York Public Library and Queen's Library, BPL launched **Culture Pass**, the widely successful city-wide program that provides free admission to nearly 50 cultural institutions across the five boroughs to millions of library card holders, expanding BPL's mission to create cultural enrichment opportunities beyond the walls of the library.

BPL Presents' diverse array of lectures, talks, and performances by important figures in 2018 included discussions with New Orleans Mayor Mitch Landrieu and Planned Parenthood President **Cecile Richards**. U.S. Supreme Court Justice **Sonia Sotomayor** and **Chelsea Clinton** held events to present their new children's books; Harvard professor, poet, and essayist **Anne Carson**; and renowned authors **Arundhati Roy**, **Junot Díaz**, **Jonathan Franzen**, **Jennifer Egan**, and **Olga Tokarczuk** drew crowds to discuss their latest works. The Library also continued its biannual commissioned lecture series, **Message from the Library**, featuring author and MacArthur "Genius" **Edwidge Danticat** and renowned multi-disciplinary artist **William Kentridge**.

BPL Presents launched the inaugural **People's Ball**, a free event celebrating freedom of expression, which offered New Yorkers of all ages and backgrounds the opportunity to walk the red carpet and celebrate the daring and singular style of their neighbors from every corner of Brooklyn and New York City; and its first-annual **International Literary Film Festival**, celebrating films from around the world that focus their lenses on the great playwrights, poets, writers, and literary characters from the late nineteenth century through the present day.

BPL continued its significant partnerships to amplify its role as a cultural producer and presenter of artistic programs. In partnership with the Cultural Services of the French Embassy, BPL hosted and co-produced **A Night of Philosophy and Ideas**, to bring incisive minds together for conversation and performances at Central Library over the course of one night from 7 pm to 7 am. After launching in 2017 and running throughout 2018, BPL co-produced the two-year **Public Artist in Residence (PAIR)** residency of Bryan Doerries, Artistic Director of Theater of War Productions, with the NYC Department of Veterans' Services and Department of Cultural Affairs. As part of the PAIR residency, dramatic staged readings of classical Greek tragedies were presented across Brooklyn to engage with the borough's diverse audiences about gun violence, mental health, domestic abuse, and social justice.

Civic Engagement

This past summer, BPL presented its first **Democracy Lab**, in partnership with raumlaborberlin, Prospect Park Alliance, Storefront for Art & Architecture, and visitBerlin. Featuring a week of workshops, conversations, and music in an inflatable dome at Grand Army Plaza's Soldiers' and Sailors' Memorial Arch, the program broadened the library's outreach to engage with citizens and asked them to consider important questions of contemporary American public life.

BPL also offered new programs focused on the 2018 elections, including a weekly Midterm Explainer series which facilitated discussions around media coverage of the campaign season and Buckets and Ballots, a BPL hosted event at Brooklyn Bridge Park that brought together teens to both play basketball and encourage voter registration. Branch libraries also conducted voter registration drives, signing up nearly 600 new voters.

BPL's librarians distributed 20,000 pocket Constitutions in English and Spanish during the year in neighborhoods across the borough and the Library hosted an installation during the March 14th gun safety walkout of 17 empty desks in the Central Library lobby, in memory of the students who lost their lives at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School.

Innovative Programming

BPL introduced its fourth and fifth rounds of the BKLYN Incubator program, a cornerstone of BPL's efforts to tailor branch services to the neighborhoods in which they sit. The initiative supports innovative new library programs developed in partnership with community members. Branch staff are provided with professional development, mentorship, and resources to help implement initiatives in response to community needs. Having received more than 100 proposals to date, the 2018 projects ranged from a Brooklyn CookMobile, a mobile kitchen used to teach cooking programs for teens, a musical instruments lending library, the BKLYN Fashion Academy for aspiring designers, and a robotics league to introduce young people to careers in science and technology.

Through its popular BookMatch and BookMatch Teen programs, BPL librarians made over 1,200 book recommendations to readers in response to questions raised online and in-person queries at events throughout the borough.

Entrepreneurship

In 2018, PowerUP!, BPL's business plan competition celebrated 15 successful years of supporting over 1,070 business plans and awarding more than \$400,000 to Brooklyn entrepreneurs. PowerUP! winners such as Bogota Latin Bistro in Park Slope, Shipwrecked Mini Golf in Red Hook, Tinsel Experiential Design in DUMBO, and Greenlight Bookstore in Fort Greene have become local institutions, strengthening the fabric of the Brooklyn community.

Technology and Digital Resources

Individuals of all ages benefited from BPL's leadership bringing technology into public libraries. In 2018, technology resources grew by nearly 15%. The Library held over 14,000 tech programs for 97,179 attendees, provided nearly a million and a half WiFi sessions for Brooklyn residents, and circulated 1,507,544 digital materials (e-books, audio, and films).

Children and Young Adults

Children and young adults comprise a key constituency for BPL, and they enjoy access to far-ranging programming and educational enrichment opportunities throughout the library system. In 2018, BPL

organized 37,402 programs for children and teens that attracted nearly 759,985 attendees. Over 36,000 patrons visited BPL branches for its Summer Jam weekend in June to kick off the 2018 Summer Reading program.

BPL also expanded its offerings of story time programming for children of all ages and their families. Helping to establish a love of reading and learning at every age, BPL now offers story time programs in 12 languages throughout the borough, as well as Drag Queen Story Hour. Part of a national program, Drag Queen Story Hour provides an open environment for both children and adults while encouraging a love of reading and using one's imagination.

In addition, the Library moved forward with many new initiatives for Brooklyn's teens including its Librarians of Tomorrow program and Bookmatch Teen, and Kings Highway Library was selected to house New York City's first Best Buy Teen Tech Center. BPL's partnership with Bard College continues to grow with recruitment for the third class of students now underway. Bard at BPL is the only program in the nation in which a student can earn an associate in the arts degree from within the walls of a library. The first class is set to graduate in 2020.

Citizenship and ESOL Services for Immigrants

Throughout 2018, BPL served as a vital resource for Brooklyn's diverse immigrant communities, offering 1,858 ESOL classes, access to books in nearly 100 languages, and providing public programs in 14 different languages. The library held 775 volunteer-led citizenship prep groups, with over 4,000 attendees working toward obtaining U.S. citizenship. Through a partnership with the Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs, BPL brought in multilingual immigration lawyers to assist patrons with citizenship applications at four library branches.

Services for Older Adults

BPL offered inclusive programming and services for Brooklyn's older adults including reading and viewing materials in nursing homes, senior center, and adult day care centers, as well as its Books by Mail program for people of all ages who are homebound. Additional programs included the popular Library Lanes Bowling League for older patrons and a comprehensive series of art workshops through the Creative Aging program, available in 15 libraries and through a live video stream.

New Construction

While simultaneously providing resources for its constituents, BPL continues to move forward on its most ambitious capital campaign in over half a century, modernizing and enhancing one-third of its branches to better serve the growing needs of the community, which serve as vibrant town squares in every Brooklyn neighborhood. In early 2019, the Library reopened the Mill Basin and Marcy branches after both received upgraded interiors and new HVAC systems. In April, BPL welcomed residents to its interim Sunset Park Library, in a former courthouse on Fourth Avenue, as it prepared for a new expanded branch scheduled to open its doors in 2021, co-located in a residential building with 50 units of affordable housing.

In November 2018, the Library announced plans to add its first new branch since 1983. Scheduled to open in 2020, the new branch on Adams Street near the East River waterfront will provide library services to the residents of DUMBO, Vinegar Hill, and Farragut Houses. Work continues on the new Greenpoint Library and Environmental Education Center and refurbished Rugby Library, with both scheduled to open by the end of 2019. In 2018, BPL's flagship Central Library branch began its first major revitalization project in its 77-year history with the restoration of its plaza. Construction is continuing inside the Library, with

new spaces planned to include a civic commons, a new popular library, and the Major Owens Welcome Center.

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About Brooklyn Public Library

Brooklyn Public Library (BPL) is an independent library system for the 2.6 million residents of Brooklyn. It is the fifth-largest library system in the United States with 60 neighborhood libraries located throughout the borough. BPL offers free programs and services for all ages and stages of life, including a large selection of books in more than 30 languages, author talks, literacy programs and public computers. BPL's eResources, such as eBooks and eVideos, catalog information and free homework help, are available to customers of all ages 24 hours a day at our website: <http://www.bklynlibrary.org/>.