



ANNUAL REPORT

2025



BOOKS ARE JUST THE BEGINNING!

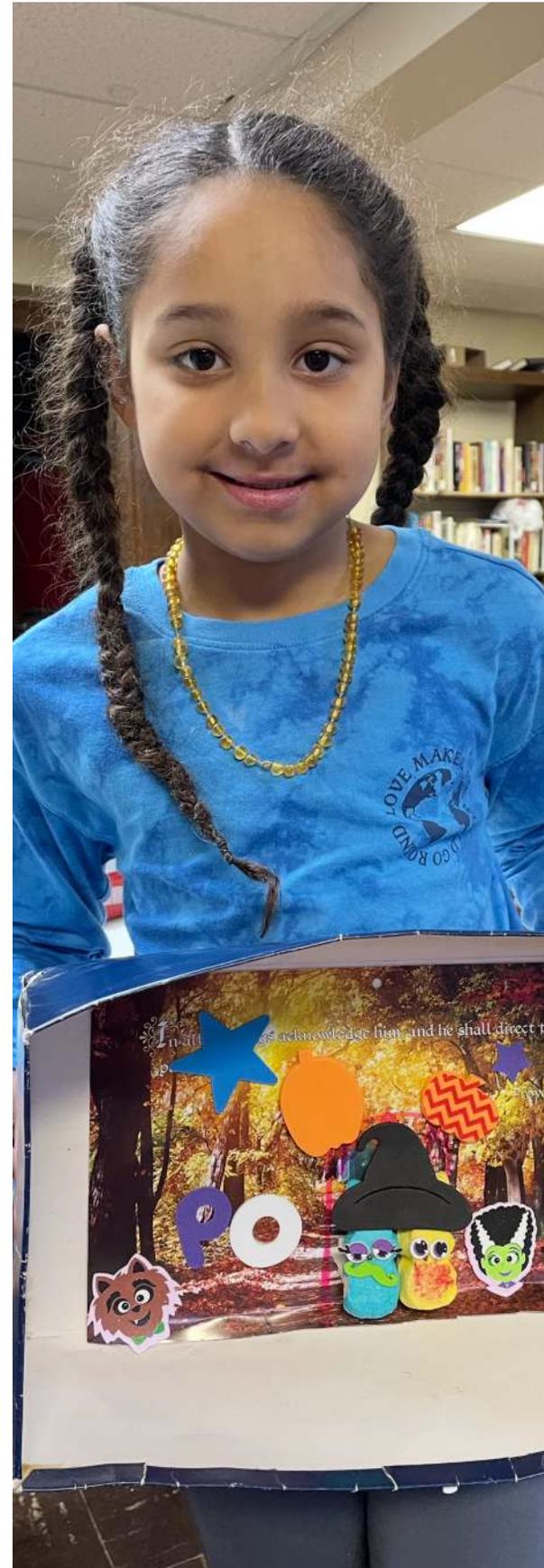
BranchDistrictLibrary.org

About BDL

Formed in 1991, Branch District Library (BDL) serves more than 46,000 residents of Branch County and neighboring Allen Twp. of Hillsdale County in south central Michigan. The Library is comprised of six locations around Branch County. BDL, an independent unit of local government under Michigan law, is governed by a seven-member Board of Trustees, appointed by the Branch County Board of Commissioners and the City of Coldwater.

BDL has more than 15,000 active cardholders with a collection of over 110,000 items housed in our six branches, along with a digital collection of over 2 million items. The library also offers a variety of services to our patrons: access to computers, wireless Internet, mobile printing, free notary and fax service, great programs and events for all ages, and so much more.

Branch District Library, where books are just the beginning!





ANNUAL REPORT 2025

2025 was a year that brought many changes to our facilities: improved restrooms at the Coldwater Branch, a new StoryWalk®, fiber optic Internet access at the Sherwood Branch, and the relocation of the Algansee Branch after more than 80 years in its prior location. For the first time ever, a wedding was held in one of our libraries, at the Bronson Branch.

There were changes outside our walls, too: a bookmobile was on the roads of Branch County again, something not seen since 1966!

Read on for more...



Highlights from our Patron Comments

“ Thank you for maintaining employees who go the extra mile to make my visit a moment worth remembering.

*Patron comment received at the
Coldwater Branch, October 2025*

“ I love it! There are very nice people and workers there. AMAZING! I love going there when I am stressed or need a break! They are great!

*Patron comment received at the
Union Twp. Branch, February 2025*

“ I have been going to our library since I was old enough to ride my bike. I love the feeling of the old building and all the books. Our librarians are so very helpful and kind.

*Patron comment received at the
Bronson Branch, April 2025*

“ Friendly atmosphere, the patrons are nice, as well as the staff. I like the programs and crafts.

*Patron comment received at the
Alganssee Branch, April 2025*

“ The Sherwood Library is a safe place for people of all ages. They are extremely active within the community and try their hardest to make the library one of the best parts of Sherwood, if not the best. It would not be the same without them.

*Patron comment received at the
Sherwood Branch, April 2025*

“ The library is a very fun place to go!

*Patron comment received at the
Quincy Branch, April 2025*



Our 2025 Team

BDL BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Oversight of BDL is provided by a Board of Trustees, representing all the communities of Branch County. Board meetings are always open to the public, the third Monday of each month.

President

Benjamin Jewell
Representing the City of Coldwater

Susan Brooks
Representing the County-at-Large

Vice President

Susan Smith
Representing Quincy Twp.

Robert Hostetler
Representing the City of Coldwater

Karen Smith
Representing Bronson Twp.

Secretary

Kimberly Langworthy
Representing the County-at-Large

Joseph Lynch
Representing Union Twp.

BDL MANAGEMENT TEAM

Director

John Rucker

Assistant Director

Kimberly Feltner

Dir. of Public Services

Jessica Tefft

LIBRARY STAFF BY THE NUMBERS

9

Staff at BDL 10 Years or More

41

Library Staff

4

Staff with MSLIS Degrees

22

Full-Time Equivalents (FTEs)

2

Staff Working on Their MSLIS Degrees

The Most Popular Items of 2025

One third of the over 110,000 physical items on our shelves were checked out last year. With nearly 150,000 total physical and digital checkouts last year, many thousands of items are checked out only a small number of times, or even just once. These are the highly popular items that stand out in that list.

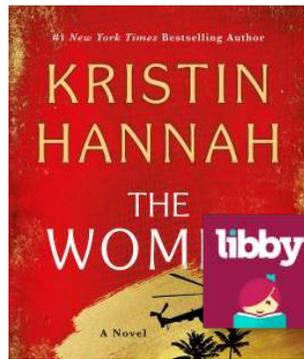
Our WiFi hotspots remain a very popular item in our Library of Things, with 318 checkouts; but our new Tonies characters took the trophy with a collective 884 checkouts! Mo Willems took most popular picture book, but that doesn't tell the whole story: he had 34 out of the top 50 picture books at BDL last year!



MOST POPULAR

People

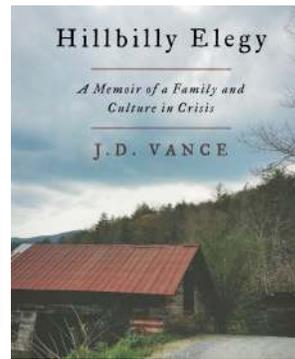
371 checkouts



FICTION

The Women

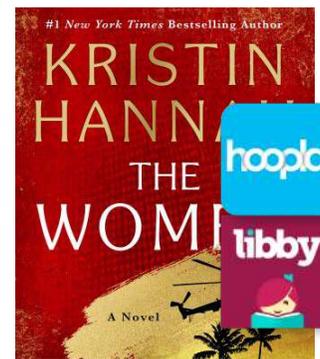
90 checkouts



NON-FICTION

Hillbilly Elogy

23 checkouts



AUDIOBOOK

The Women

71 checkouts



MOVIE

Wicked, Part 1

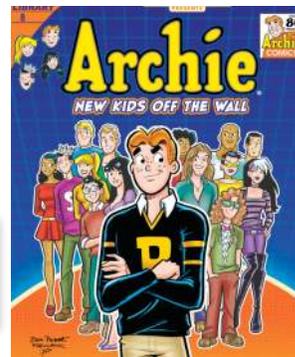
53 checkouts



DIGITAL MAGAZINE

The New Yorker

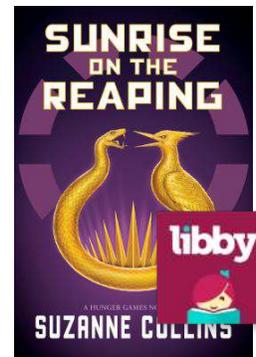
142 checkouts



GRAPHIC NOVEL

Archie

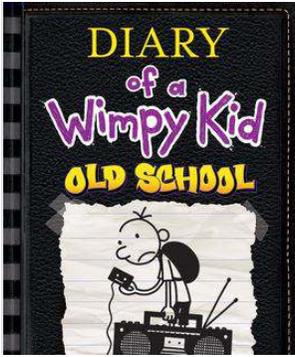
235 checkouts



YOUNG ADULT

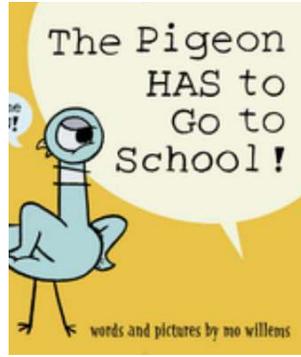
Sunrise on the Reaping

30 checkouts



KID'S BOOK

Diary of a Wimpy Kid: Old School
24 checkouts



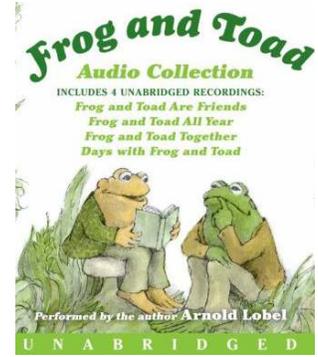
KID'S PICTURE BOOK

The Pigeon Has to Go to School!
34 checkouts



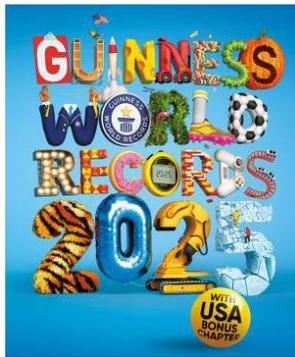
KID'S GRAPHIC NOVEL

Dogman: Big Jim Begins
52 checkouts



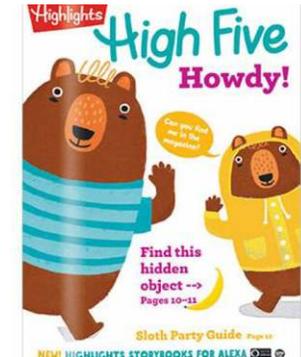
KID'S AUDIOBOOK

Frog and Toad Collection
6 checkouts



KID'S NON-FICTION

Guinness Book of World Records, 2025
14 checkouts



KID'S MAGAZINE

Highlights High Five
23 checkouts



KID'S MOVIE

Despicable Me 4
46 checkouts



KID'S VIDEOGAME

Mario Kart 8 Deluxe
37 checkouts



LIBRARY OF THINGS

WiFi Hotspot
318 checkouts



KID'S LIBRARY OF THINGS

Tonies
884 checkouts

BDL's New Bookmobile

Branch County library users last had access to a bookmobile from 1938-1966. In 2018, not long after a successful millage campaign, the Branch District Library (BDL) embarked on a strategic planning process to ensure that the Library was meeting the needs of everyone in its service area. During the community conversations around the county, a number of people talked of their fond memories of the last bookmobile when they were younger and how they felt a new bookmobile could make a positive impact on the county in modern times.



Circa 1940

One of the overarching goals in the final 2018 BDL Strategic Plan was to offer our library users wide-ranging and convenient access to library services, while breaking down barriers to access whenever possible. Another goal was to increase the visibility of the Library in the community and go beyond the walls of our branches. The BDL Board decided that a bookmobile would be a part of addressing both goals, along with Library by Mail services, more digital services, and many other improvements we have made as part of that Strategic Plan.

BDL originally planned on fundraising for the purchase of a bookmobile; instead, budget surpluses during the Covid-19 pandemic made it possible for the Library to purchase the vehicle with no additional fundraising needed. In the Fall of 2021 the BDL Board approved the project, and the following January Cheryl Lawrence was promoted to her new role at the Library: Outreach Manager. Cheryl spent the next several months learning all she could about bookmobiles and their operation. In Spring of 2022 we took bids, selected a winner, and in May placed the order for the new vehicle.

After that order was placed, Cheryl established pop-up libraries at places where we planned on having future bookmobile stops. BDL also sought fundraising to help fill the vehicle with books. And the community really came through to help! Generous donations from Coldwater Twp. Sunrise Rotary, the Branch County Community Foundation, Coldwater Solar, the Friends of the Union Twp. Library, and many small donations ensured that on opening day our bookmobile would have full shelves.

All around the country, other libraries were also ordering bookmobiles with their Covid surplus funds. Because of this high demand, the year we were initially told it would take to get our vehicle became three. We finally took delivery in February of 2025, when we began outfitting the vehicle with materials and technology.

We launched regular services in the beginning of May 2025, slowly ramping up to about a dozen regular stops at schools, assisted living centers, and rural townships by the end of the year, with additional seasonal stops throughout the year. The bookmobile could also be seen in parades and other special events throughout the county.



Dedication and Ribbon-Cutting in August



Memorial Day Parade in Union City

Just like in the 1930s through the 1960s, there are people in this community who are unable to get to our brick-and-mortar locations but still deserve full access to library services. They are guaranteed it, in fact, under the Michigan Constitution. This mobile library is part of our efforts to lower barriers to those services and to reach as many people as possible, to bring BDL to those people, to increase awareness of the Library and what we do.

Nearly everything you can do at one of our branches you can do on the bookmobile. This 27-foot vehicle has over 2,000 items in the collection for a variety of ages. We offer free notary service right on the vehicle, free faxing, and free WiFi. You can print from your mobile device or use a laptop for a quick computer session.

Follow our progress or request the vehicle to make an appearance at your event by visiting BranchDistrictLibrary.org/bookmobile.



Students visit in May

The Year in Photos: Bronson, Quincy, Sherwood, District





Your Hometown Library

**YOU'RE NEVER
MORE THAN A
FEW MINUTES
AWAY FROM
YOUR LIBRARY.**

BDL has six branches conveniently located around the county to serve you. And with our new bookmobile, the library has indeed left the building to take our great services and collections far and wide!



Facilities Improvements



COLDWATER BRANCH

All restrooms renovated,
new porch railing, soffit repair.

Your Library by the Numbers



110,319

Physical Items
On Our Shelves



2,178,202

Digital Items
Available for Checkout



150,211

In-Person Visits
to the Library



4,737

Programs Put On
For All Age Groups



112,671

Uses of Physical
Items



37,013

Uses of Digital Items
and Databases



446,271

Total 1-Hour Sessions
On Our Free WiFi



28,638

Attendance at
All Programs



33,090

Reference Questions
Answered



7,900

Free Prints for
Students and
Job Seekers



1,796

Checkouts of
Library of Things
Items



\$1,976,525

Estimated Amount Users
Saved By Using Library
Materials and Services

For even more, visit
BranchDistrictLibrary.org/stats

MORE THAN JUST BOOKS



Moving the Alganssee Branch

In 2025, Alganssee Township decided to build a new township hall next to the old hall. Recognizing the space needs of a modern library, the Township generously offered to let the library use the old hall. BDL and the township then partnered to renovate that old hall—which dated from 1877 with a 2008 addition—into a vibrant new library space. BDL contributed \$60,000 towards the renovation and dedicated another \$30,000 towards interior furniture, shelving, and equipment. After all was finished, the old hall was transformed into a vibrant, open space—ready for books and people!



Inside the old township hall



The old hall during renovations

Branch Manager Teresa Shilling and other library staff stayed involved with the renovations while planning the move. That move was originally supposed to be finished months earlier, but it was a frigid day at the end of December when the entire library was finally moved two miles up the road. Longtime BDL partner Mulder's Moving and Storage expertly emptied our rooms at Safford's Store, where the library had resided since 1938, and moved us to our new home all within the same day.

With the aid of our wonderful Friends of the Library to help unpack, we were open to the public a couple of days later. An open house and celebration is planned for the end of National Library Week, Friday, April 24, 2026. Hope to see you there!



The old hall after renovations



The Year in Photos: Alganssee, Coldwater, Union Twp., Outreach



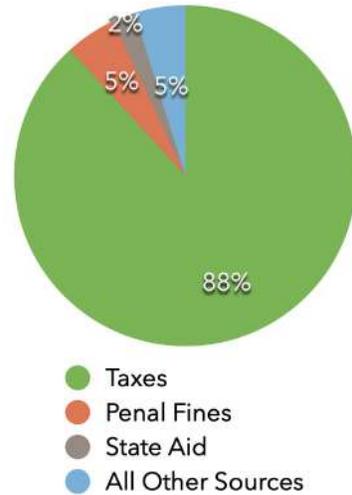


Finances

2025 REVENUE	
TAXES	\$ 2,223,432
PENAL FINES	\$ 122,117
STATE AID	\$ 53,106
ALL OTHER SOURCES	\$ 121,375
TOTAL	\$ 2,520,030

*In 2025, the average residential household in Branch County paid about **\$96** in library taxes.*

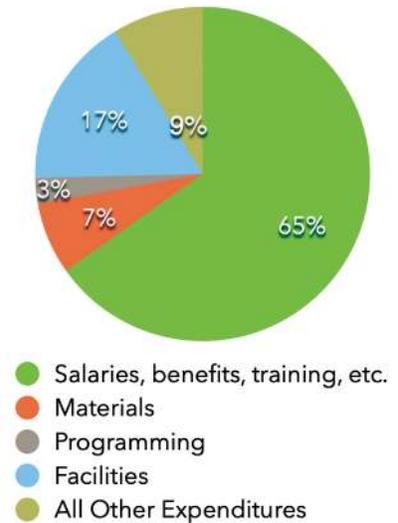
2025 Operating Revenue



2025 EXPENDITURES	
SALARIES, BENEFITS, TRAINING, ETC.	\$ 1,698,610
MATERIALS	\$ 181,670
PROGRAMMING	\$ 65,223
FACILITIES	\$ 433,530
ALL OTHER EXPENDITURES	\$ 227,695
TOTAL	\$ 2,606,728

*In 2025, the average residential household in Branch County received about **\$324** of value from library materials and services.*

2025 Operating Expenditures



UNASSIGNED FUND BALANCE	
2024 YEAR END	\$ 1,080,496
2025 YEAR END	\$ 1,049,299





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