



the Phoebe

OLD LYME LIBRARY



Annual REPORT

2023–2024
+ Summer 2024

2 Library Lane | Old Lyme, CT 06371
oldlymelibrary.org | 860.434.1684

ABOUT THE LIBRARY

Dedicated in 1898, the Old Lyme–Phoebe Griffin Noyes Library is a private, independent 501(c)(3) charitable organization. It is owned by the Old Lyme-Phoebe Griffin Noyes Library Association, Inc., and governed by its Board of Trustees. The day-to-day operations of the Library are managed by the Library director and 11 staff (total FTE 8.5).

As the Town of Old Lyme's designated public library, the Old Lyme-Phoebe Griffin Noyes Library receives some funding from the municipality (44% of budgeted FY23-24 income). This municipal funding combines with income from the Association's Endowment, the proceeds of the Library's annual fund drive, income from the Friends of the Library, and various grants to fund the Library's annual operating budget. The Library is a long-standing member of the Libraries Online, Inc. Consortium (LION).

From developing fun, interactive story times for infants and toddlers to hand-delivering books to homebound patrons, the Library continues to provide opportunities for residents of all ages to learn and grow. Our core services include providing access to a variety of print and digital books, audio-visual media, and research tools; assisting with technology and encouraging the development of information literacy; supporting the public school curriculum; conducting early literacy training and fostering an enduring interest in learning and reading among our youngest patrons; and offering programming that informs and engages the community.



OUR MISSION

is to inspire lifelong learning and discovery in a welcoming place with exceptional resources, programs, and services.

OUR VISION

is to be the community's vibrant hub for engagement, discovery, and creativity.

OUR GUIDING PRINCIPLES

- Promote literacy and a love of learning
- Support intellectual freedom
- Protect patron privacy
- Advance racial, gender, and social equity
- Support civil discourse and democracy
- Model kindness and compassion
- Strive for excellence

OUR TEAM

2023–2024 LIBRARY STAFF

Katie Huffman	<i>Director</i>
Linda Alexander	<i>Substitute Librarian</i>
Julie Bartley	<i>Children's Librarian</i>
Nike Desis	<i>Teen Librarian</i>
Kristine Ferguson	<i>Patron Services Librarian</i>
Tessa Grethel	<i>Page</i>
Katy Klarnet	<i>Information Services Assistant Librarian</i>
Allie Lang	<i>Community Engagement Librarian</i>
Meg McKenney	<i>Children's Librarian</i>
Evelyn Morgen	<i>Administrative Assistant</i>
Kathy Sharp	<i>Youth & Patron Services Assistant</i>
Jessica Steding	<i>Information & Technology Librarian</i>
Mary Talbot	<i>Administrative & Patron Services Assistant</i>

2023–2024 BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Skip Sibley	<i>President</i>
Barbara Hack	<i>Vice President</i>
Claire Griffin	<i>Secretary</i>
Thomas J. Britt	<i>Treasurer</i>
Stephen Bates	
Wil Bradford	
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Martha Grossel	
Heather Richardson	
Liz Rubitski	
Eddie Vautrain	
Jean Wilczynski	

VOLUNTEERS

The Library depends on countless volunteers throughout the year—too many to name here. Friends of the Library operate the BookCellar, help maintain the gardens, and assist with hospitality, while many others help shelve, assist with programs, and clean. We're tremendously grateful for the many helping hands that help keep The Phoebe bustling!

STAFF NOTES

After 18 years of service, Linda Alexander semi-retired in June 2024. We're delighted that she has elected to remain on the staff roster as a substitute.

After 7 years of service, Julie Bartley bid farewell to the Library in October 2023.

Tessa Grethel joined the staff in June 2024.

Meg McKenney joined the staff in February 2024.

After 9 years of service, Evelyn Morgen bid farewell to the Library in February 2024.

Part-time assistant Mary Talbot was promoted to full time Administrative & Patron Services Assistant in June 2024.



pictured opposite: teens collaborate on a D&D campaign; pictured above, Pfizer volunteers gather after a fall cleanup day

2023-2024 YEAR IN REVIEW

2023–2024 was an exciting year at the Library as board and staff members worked together to implement goals outlined in the Library’s new Strategic Plan finalized in 2023. Patron use of the Library continued to grow too, with total checkouts exceeding pre-pandemic 2019 numbers by 4%!

We invite you to explore the following pages to discover the full breadth of the progress made toward our plan and continued service to the community. We’re so very grateful for all of the many people who, directly or indirectly, contributed to our work this year. But most of all we’re grateful for our patrons and many supporters, who inspire us to keep moving onward and upward—THANK YOU!



↑ 45%

STUDY ROOM USE

↑ 42%

COMMUNITY ROOM USE

↑ 37%

PROGRAMS OFFERED

↑ 10%

CHECKOUTS

↑ 89%

TAKE & MAKES OFFERED

pictured, top: adults socialize at the Mini Golf party; bottom: young patrons enjoy fort building after hours

2023–2024 STRATEGIC FOCUS



BUILDING COMMUNITY

We focused on improving community outreach and support by developing new, and strengthening established, partnerships and collaborations with local organizations.



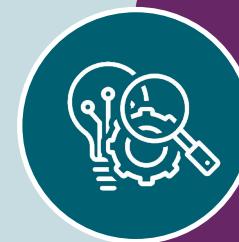
BUILDING ACCESS

We focused on improving patron access to technology, services, and collections while streamlining behind-the-scenes workflows.



BUILDING CURIOSITY

We focused on delivering relevant, diverse, and fun programming for all age groups and communities with a particular focus on hands-on, active learning and interpersonal communication.



DEVELOPING THE ORGANIZATION

We focused on improving financial stability and maintaining and developing sound policies, procedures, and operations.

BUILDING COMMUNITY

"A perfect local library"

STORYWALK®

In late June, the Library, in partnership with the Roger Tory Peterson Estuary Center, celebrated the opening of a new StoryWalk®. The StoryWalk® promotes early literacy, physical activity, and family time together in nature and is dedicated in memory of Agnes O'Connor, a beloved Old Lyme resident and volunteer who loved reading and nature.



2ND ANNUAL MINI GOLF CELEBRATION!

In February 2024, the Library hosted its 2nd Annual Mini Golf Event! Members of the community were invited to gather at the Library for a day of play and festivities. Over 250 community members joined in on the fun made possible by the generous support of 20 local businesses.



OLD LYME WITNESS STONES

The Library is honored to continue to participate in this partnership tasked with commemorating the lives of enslaved persons in historic Lyme-Old Lyme. In late May, the Library hosted the 4th Annual Installation Ceremony for community members and partners. 10 new plaques were installed for a total of 48 placed in the Old Lyme & Lyme communities to date.



pictured, top-bottom: Friends of Agnes gather around the new StoryWalk®; participants enjoy mini golf; community gathers on the lawn to honor those once enslaved; pictured opposite, top-bottom: Norma DeGrafft speaks at an art reception; middle school students hang out after school; Teen Librarian Nike assists a young screen printer at the 2024 Midsummer Festival.

GALLERY WALL

In August 2023, the Library unveiled a new exhibit space for temporary art shows featuring the work of local artists and organizations. The 2023-2024 year featured art from individual artists Tony Donovan, Fred Verillo, Eddie Lopez, and Norma DeGrafft plus community shows from the Lyme Art Association, the Senior Center, and a Library photography workshop.



LYME-OLD LYME SCHOOLS

Children's Librarian Meg and YA Librarian Nike continued to strengthen the Library's partnership with the local schools. 2023-2024 items of note include: Monthly Pre-School Visits, Annual Mile Creek Pep Rally in advance of the summer, 7th Grade Year-End Class Visits, and the amazing Annual Bookies Awards.



OLD LYME ARTS DISTRICT

The Library continues to participate in this wonderful community partnership! Events of note include *Make Music Day* in June and the *Annual Midsummer Festival* in July.



PROGRAMMING PARTNERSHIPS

The Library hosted a variety of events and activities in collaboration with local organizations and businesses throughout the year, including:

Alliance for Living
Balleks Garden Center
Dance Dynamics
DarkSky International
Denison Pequotsepos Nature Center
Duck River Garden Club
FIRST® LEGO® League
Ledge Light Health District
Lyme Land Trust Astronomy Group
Lyme-Old Lyme Food Share Garden

Old Lyme Carousel
Old Lyme Conservation Commission
Old Lyme Fire Department
Old Lyme Land Trust
Project Paws
Rediscovering History
Shell & Bee Studio
Solar Eclipse Activities for Libraries
War Resisters League

BUILDING ACCESS



NEW ONLINE RESOURCES

The Library began offering two new digital resources—Hiveclass, an online collection of Phys Ed courses and activities, and Heritage Quest, an online genealogy research database.



IMPROVING TECHNOLOGY

The Library installed a new, up-to-date computer and printing management system. This new system allows for fair use in the event of a wait and ensures all patrons are treated equitably in relation to paying to use the printer.



UPDATING ADULT NONFICTION

Work on a multi-year project to improve the quality and currency of the adult nonfiction collections began.

pictured: Community Engagement Librarian Allie hands out Adult Summer Reading prizes.

“This library is as patron-oriented as you can get.”



IMPROVING ACCESSIBILITY

In an effort to better serve our patrons with mobility challenges, we've started shifting our adult collections off of the lower, most hard-to-reach shelves.

And we continue to support and grow our 24/7 curbside locker service for those who can't visit during business hours.

BUILDING CURIOSITY

Children's Services



DISCOVER & EXPLORE

There's always something to explore in the Children's Room! From great books to interesting activities, 2023–2024 highlights include *Hatch the Chickens!* in October—patrons were able to track the hatching and early development of live chicks over a 5 week period—and the roll out of monthly *Scavenger Hunts* in the spring.

GATHER TOGETHER & LEARN

Regular story times provide opportunities for our youngest patrons to develop early literacy skills and socialize. *Wee Readers* met weekly on Thursday mornings throughout the year, and a new weekly *PJ Family Story Time* was added to the rotation in the spring. Special events like the LEGO® Robotics & Cool-ology STEAM Workshops provide additional opportunities to learn and connect.



HANDS-ON CREATIVITY

Children are invited to explore their creative side when visiting the Library. Hands-on crafts are available throughout the year, and all creations are proudly displayed in the Children's Room each month. Plus, special events, like *Build a Leprechaun Trap*, art studio with *Shell & Bee*, and regular family LEGO® building days provided chances to create something new while having fun and learning.



pictured, top-bottom: a young patron reads with her dad, Story Time patrons gather together to build box creations, a participant shows off his flying fish creation.

BUILDING CURIOSITY

Teen
Services

TEEN ADVISORY BOARD (TAB)

This group, established in early 2023, provides opportunities for those in grades 10+ to work creatively with their peers. The group brainstorms improvements to Library offerings, implements programs collectively, works on self-directed projects, and mentors younger volunteers. Highlights of the year include:



LOLHS SENIOR PROJECT

Long time volunteer Stella chose to focus her Senior Project on the Library! Not only did she organize the YA Zine Library, she developed *Books & Banter*, a books and media centered discussion group for teens with hands-on creative opportunities.

ITALIAN CONVERSATION GROUP

Senior Giovanna planned, developed, and hosted a series of programs for patrons of all ages to learn conversational Italian! The three sessions were immensely popular, with nearly 20 regular participants.

HOMEWORK HELPERS

High School Teens provided weekly homework help to younger patrons after school.

pictured, above: Stella (right) celebrates at her planned event with Natalie. pictured, right, top-bottom: planning for Goth Night, two artists with their painted records, Cara and Islam create the infamous top hat.

GATHER & CREATE

Opportunities to socialize and learn from one another—both peer-to-peer and cross-generational—were plentiful and often featured a hands-on creative component. Highlights include:

After Hours Movies, Swifty Night, Goth Night, Visible Mending, Pop-tart Plushies, & Album Listening Party



DUNGEONS & DRAGONS

In late 2023, the Library began hosting a monthly D&D group for teens. This new offering was a huge success!

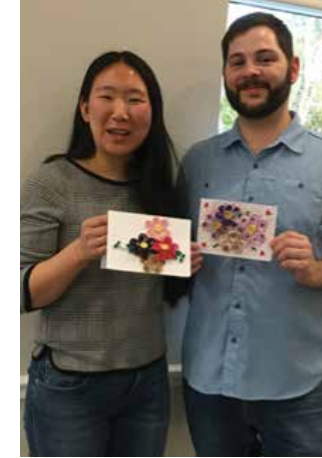
HAUNTED BOO-k CELLAR

This beloved teen-designed and managed offering was back with *Malice in Wonderland* as the 2023 theme. Over 1,400 visitors braved the spooky, live-action installation!



BUILDING CURIOSITY

Adult
Services



HANDS-ON LEARNING & FUN

Creative workshops for adults to develop a new hands-on skill or just have fun were offered seasonally. Opportunities included: Fall Flower Arranging, Spring Loop-yarn Wreath Making, Mother's Day Card Paper Quilling, & iPhone Photography

Plus, the Library distributed 2,000 free solar eclipse glasses in advance of the April 8, 2024 eclipse!



pictured, top: participants work on their quilling techniques and share their creations. pictured, bottom: participants display their newly created wreaths.

MAKING CONNECTIONS

The Library continues to develop small group opportunities for community members to meet and get to know one another—both to foster connection and to broaden perspectives and understanding.

This year, we rolled out 2 new groups for adults. These new groups complement our already well-established book groups, *Contemporary Classics Book Discussion* and *Phoebe's Morning Book Chat*.

FARAWAY FICTION BOOK CHAT

Embark on a new adventure with each book! This new group features a book chat for lovers of Sci-Fi and Fantasy.

DARK NONFICTION BOOK CLUB

This new book club is designed for the morbidly curious. Participants explore dark topics such as true crime, natural disasters, war stories, death and dying, man-made disasters, forensic science, burial and funerary practices, and cults.

"I just love our group—it's the best and I can't wait to start reading our upcoming books!"

DEVELOPING THE ORGANIZATION



SUPPORTING OUR STAFF

We updated job descriptions, developed a new organizational chart, and researched health insurance options.



PROTECTING OUR FUTURE

We continue to explore ways to diversify our fundraising endeavors—stay tuned for spring 2025!



RESPECTING OUR PAST

Thanks to support from our donors, we engaged *Fallon & Wilkinson* to restore the historic Reading Room clock.



MAINTAINING OUR SYSTEMS

We focused on maintaining our infrastructure and planning for a near-future roofing project.

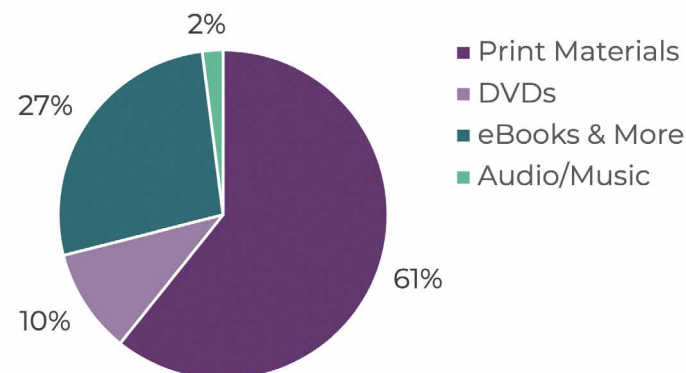
OUR COLLECTIONS & SERVICES

The Library's Collections contain 38,000+ physical items and 29,000+ digital items. In addition, our membership in Libraries Online, Inc. (LION) grants patrons access to over 2 million physical titles across the region. LION delivered nearly 6,000 items to Old Lyme patrons for local use this year.

USE OF COLLECTIONS

Over 72,000 items were checked out by patrons.

% USE OF COLLECTION BY FORMAT



Nearly 3,500 residents have active library cards plus an additional 300 out-of-town patrons. The Library issued over 500 new cards in 2023–2024.



The Library's 8 public computers were used 2,365 times for a total of 4,236 hours of use.



Library staff assisted patrons 2,345 times with research assistance and hands-on technology help. Staff placed nearly 3,000 holds for patrons.



The Library's three study rooms were booked 2,076 times, and local groups gathered in the community room for meetings 125 times.

PROGRAMS & EVENTS STATISTICAL SNAPSHOT

CHILDREN

2,200+ patrons attended nearly 100 in-person events

Over 1,800 Take & Make activity kits were distributed

TEENS

800+ patrons attended 53 programs.

Teens completed nearly 500 volunteer shifts.

TAB met 11 times.

180 patrons participated in self-directed activities.

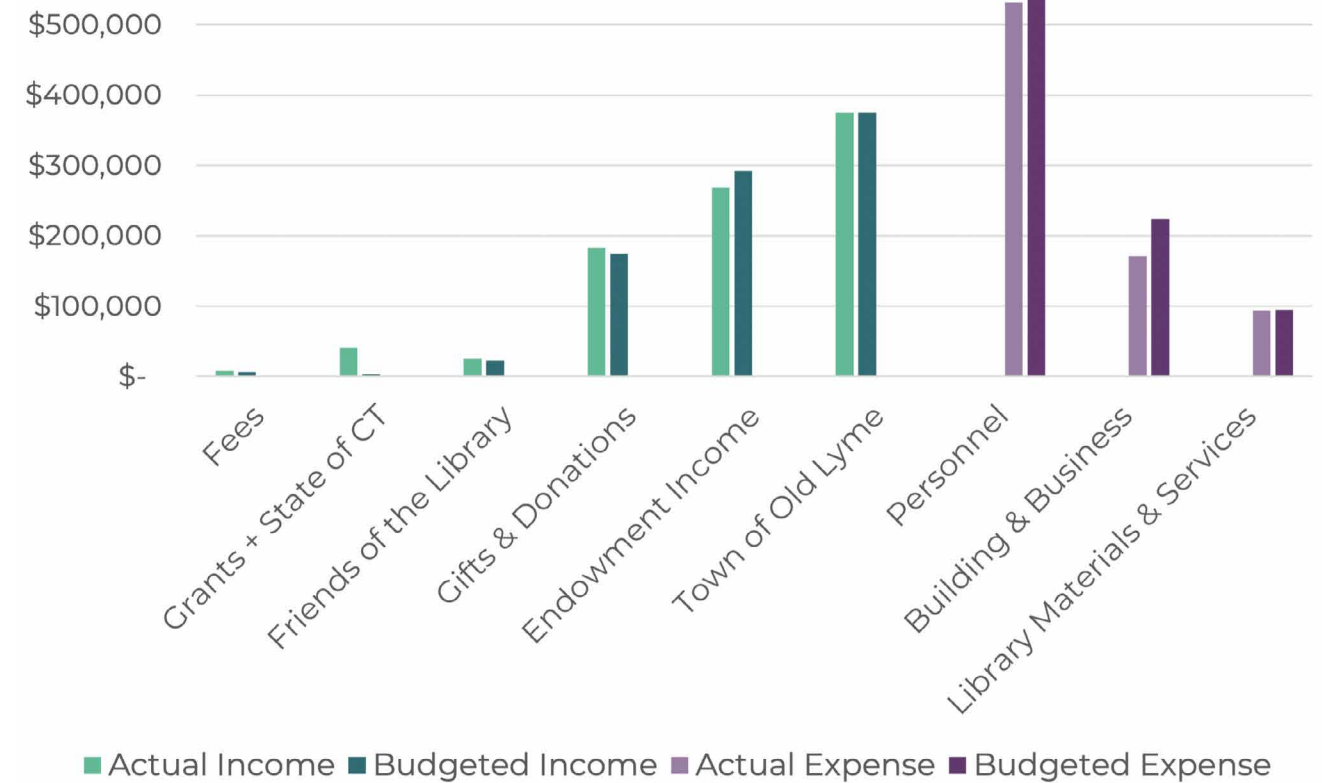
ADULTS

1,400+ patrons attended 183 in-person events

44 live, virtual programs were attended by 368 patrons

36 on-demand events were viewed nearly 5,000 times

OPERATING INCOME & EXPENSES 2023–2024: BUDGETED VS. ACTUAL



ENDOWED FUNDS REPORT The Library Endowment was established in 1899 with \$10,000 in gifts from the Ludington & Noyes families. Over the next 125 years, additional funds were contributed by Old Lyme residents committed to supporting the long-term success of the Library. Today, the funds comprise a variety of investments; some are restricted funds, designated to be spent on particular categories of books, materials, & services, while some are unrestricted and are used to cover a portion of annual personnel and building expenses.

For the fiscal year ending June 30, 2024, withdrawals from the Endowment represented 30% of the Library's total operating actual income. Contributions from the Town of Old Lyme accounted for 44% of the actual operating income and donations and gifts represented 22%. During the fiscal year, the Endowment investments portfolio returned 15.49%.

ADVENTURE BEGINS HERE! 2024 SUMMER PROGRAMS

BONUS
CONTENT!

FOR CHILDREN

Summer offers time to explore and have fun! This year's program featured a variety of special events and challenges, including:

CHALLENGE BOARDS!

198 Challenge Boards were distributed to eager readers! The boards challenged kids to read, explore, and create.

ADVENTURES IN ART!

This new (and popular!) weekly series featured a picture book story time followed by a hands-on art project inspired by the artists' work.

LET'S GO!

23 young participants took Phoebe's Griffin on an adventure and shared their pictures at the Library!



FOR ADULTS

Summer 2024 featured our first successful adult summer reading program with over 50 adults joining in on the fun! Participants submitted 38 book reviews and earned 74 raffle tickets toward these amazing prizes: Kindle, portable phone charger, hiking poles and CT hikes book, tabletop s'mores maker, gourmet popcorn kit, margarita making kit, CT cutting board, & a camping hammock.

"These are perfect, I am planning a hiking group next weekend and already found a great hike to try in this book."

FOR TEENS

VISITING ARTISTS

Hands-on summer activities for teens were made possible by support from the Lymes Creative Arts & the Katharine Forest Crafts Foundation. Artists lead leather working, sewing, and ceramics making workshops. Teens also met weekly for a Summer Stitch Club.

SUMMER CHALLENGE!

51 teens participated in this year's reading and activity challenge!

LIMITED EDITION TEES

Back by popular demand, the teens hosted their annual custom screen printing booth at the Midsummer Festival. An open call for design submissions went out in early summer.



pictured, clockwise: Phoebe's Griffin at Legoland NY; teens learn from visiting artist Sophia DeJesus-Sabella; adults celebrate at the End of Summer Patio Party

THANK YOU!

We are grateful to acknowledge all those who supported the Library from July 2023-June 2024

Marie Abraham
Linda & Mark Alexander
Hollis & Nancy Allen
Jamie & Curt Alpha
Greg Andersen
George Anderson
Stephen & Evelyn Anderson
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The Favello Family
Candy & Ira Feinberg

*These loyal donors support the Library with a sustaining monthly donation.

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Anonymous (38)

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Old Lyme Library

We are grateful for the continued support of Phoebe's Friends of the Library and Phoebe's BookCellar. All donations to the Friends and all purchases in Phoebe's BookCellar directly support the Library's collections and services.

IN MEMORIAM

We are honored to help remember these loved ones

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Marc & Nancy Bazilian

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IN MEMORY OF ADELA BARTHOLOMEW WILMERDING
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Roger M. Smith (center) with wife, Marcia (right) and Board Treasurer, Tom Britt (left) at the Renewal Project Ground-breaking Ceremony in 2019.

Prior to moving out of state in 2022, Roger served multiple terms on the Library Board of Trustees and provided significant leadership during the Library's 2019 Renewal Project and Capital Campaign. We dearly miss his wisdom and enthusiasm and Marcia's steady support.

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