A look at the 2019 statistics confirms Elkhart Public Library has a valuable place in our community ... even during this age of Google and smartphones and social media.

We’re a gathering place for ideas and inspiration. We’re a distributor of information for research and empowerment. We’re a collector of local history and a teller of great stories.

Elkhart Public Library is helping every person develop their fullest potential. Elkhart Public Library is helping our diverse communities grow strong and connected.

Take a look at our 2019 accomplishments and consider how the library can help you in 2020 and beyond.
In the Community

The Extension Services department takes Elkhart Public Library beyond the walls of our buildings and directly to the people of our community.

In addition to delivering thousands of items to library users who cannot leave their homes, staff visits senior living communities and preschools to make connections and provide information on the many resources available.

EPL provides materials for the preschools, giving children access to new and different books than they already have in their classrooms. Staff also show their energy and passion for books with interactive storytimes.

“They do activities that bring a story to life,” says Paula Mumaw, executive director at Elkhart Child Development Center. “The kids can appreciate the story more by doing a craft or a game that goes along with the book.”

The visits fit with the library’s strategic initiative to have Every Child Ready to Read and Succeed by Grade 3.

“The library has taken a personal interest in the children. It’s not just a job to them.”

– Paula Mumaw, Elkhart Child Development Center executive director

Homebound Visits
2,292 items delivered to individuals not physically able to visit the library

Downloads and Streams
85,594 checkouts of digital books, audiobooks and other products (up at least 26% each of last three years)
Today's Elkhart Public Library offers more than books and storytimes. In fact, adults are finding the library to be a meeting place that can’t be replaced.

The members of the Elkhart Knitting Group have led the way. When Rona Tanger and Hester Dorsan started the group, they met in each other’s homes. The group quickly outgrew those spaces and parking became an issue, too.

They've been meeting weekly at the library for more than 20 years. Hundreds of community groups and businesses can reserve the lower level meeting rooms for free. Uses include club meetings, job fairs and interviews, staff training, and more. All that’s needed is a library card – check in at any EPL location for details.

For meetings on the fly or a quiet place to study, the second floor offers three on-demand conference rooms. Screens are being added, too, for distance learning, teleconferencing, and more.

“There’s no way we could meet the way we used to at people’s houses. The library is a lifesaver for this group.”

– Rona Tanger, Elkhart Knitting Group member
So much to do

Libraries can be quiet places to study, read, and reflect. They also can be places for murder mystery dinners, art showcases and music performances, thoughtful public discussions on hot-button issues, painting classes, free consultations with lawyers and tax pros, and plenty more.

In 2019, Elkhart Public Library was all of those things for the nearly 314,000 visitors and more than 40,000 event attendees.

A good number of EPL programs are conjured up and executed by staff. We also count on partners from local businesses and organizations to share expertise and join us as we inform, inspire and empower our diverse communities.

Sometimes, the results are achieved in one-on-one settings, like when the Volunteer Lawyer Network or Notre Dame Tax Clinic visits. Often, it’s in groups of five to 15 children for a storytime, 40 for a preschool party, or hundreds for an evening of music at Ox Bow Park or an interactive movie at the Lerner Theatre.

“I think a lot of the benefit comes in audience development,” says Kelby Rose, Elkhart County Parks deputy director of interpretive services.

“Partnerships give us the opportunity to reach people we wouldn’t regularly and showcase the services and opportunities we each have to offer.”

Presenting at the Elkhart Public Library gave me and my colleagues a unique opportunity to share our research and connect with the local community.

– Pamela Bilo Thomas, University of Notre Dame researcher
OxStock was high-quality and helped continue to change people’s expectations of what our two public agencies have to offer. We have extraordinarily talented staffs that can do the off-the-wall or unexpected and showcase our high-quality services.

– Kelby Rose, Elkhart County Parks deputy director

Must-See Programs
40,694 people attending events
(22.4% increase over 2018)

Information Source
9 percent increase in web users, with more than 6,000 per month

Initiative Support
$29,600 in sponsorships and grants from community partners
Ready to Read

The bread and butter of every library is the summer reading program. It’s a chance for kids to keep and expand their reading skills with books that aren’t classroom assignments.

Elkhart Public Library’s connection with Welch Packaging Group the last few summers has proven successful. In fact, thousands participated and more than double the number of students finished a full six weeks of reading in the summer of 2019.

Summer is only one season, though. EPL is committed to Helping Every Child Be Ready to Read and Succeed by Grade 3, a key strategic initiative in the ongoing work plan. That means all 12 months need to be built for literacy.

Elkhart Rotary Club supported the creation of bilingual flash cards for the earliest learners to get to know letters, words and more. An expanded 1,000 Books Before Kindergarten program is on the horizon, along with an even bigger community celebration of El día de los libros, featuring storytelling and cultural appreciation beyond the event’s traditional Latino roots.

“
I think summer reading keeps them on track at school. Their school requires them to read daily, so I think it keeps them in that habit. And I think they enjoyed the incentives the library has.

– Anatasia Glassburn, Elkhart

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Storytimes
750 outside the library in classrooms, daycares and public places

Summer Reading
433 youngsters completing six weeks of reading on vacation break (five-year average was 193.4)