



A COMMUNITY OF READERS

Tools for Tomorrow's Workforce

Searching for a job in today's market requires prospective employees to navigate a labyrinth full of pitfalls, from online application forms and ghost jobs to automated resume screening and more. Even individuals with well-established careers are encountering new roadblocks as AI reshapes the workforce.

Fortunately, the library is here to help residents strengthen their career outlooks and prospects.

"The library has long been a place for job seekers and people looking to build their career-related skills," said Digital Services Supervisor Carolyn Levardsen, MLIS. "Recently, more and more community members have been coming in for help with online job searching and applications."

The library is responding to that increased interest by adding a series of resume workshops and a job interview class to its existing range of career development services.

"Many patrons have questions about the content of their resume or cover letter, but we didn't previously have a good way to offer that kind of support in person," Levardsen said. "Our goal with occupational services is to help patrons gain or improve their skills, find employment, and advance their careers."



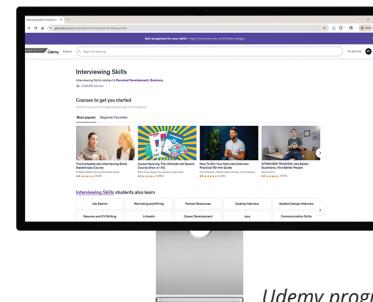
Digital Services Supervisor Carolyn Levardsen and Digital Services Aide Robbie Pluta facilitate regular technology and resource workshops in the Main Library's Community Commons.

Resources for Job Seekers

- **For in-person technical assistance**, such as formatting your resume, searching for a job, and using online application forms, book a tech tutoring session at the Main Library.
- **For in-person content assistance**, such as organizing and writing your resume or preparing for job interviews, register for one of the new in-person Resume Workshops or a Job Interview Class.
- **For content and technical assistance from home**, use Brainfuse HelpNow. Upload your resume to receive personalized, detailed feedback within 24 hours. Access this eResource from the library's website using your library card, then select the "Adult Learners" tab to explore career resources, live tutoring, and more.

Resources for Skill-Building

- **Learn software, creative, and business skills on-demand** with Udemy. This library eResource offers thousands of video courses taught by industry professionals. Courses are helpful for trying new career paths and building confidence in your skills. Access this eResource from the library's website using your library card.
- **Build your graphic design skills** and create content for personal or professional use at the library's monthly Canva Club for access to Canva Pro and knowledgeable staff. *Registration is required.*
- **Discover additional hands-on courses** across basic and intermediate technologies from email and smartphones to 3D Printing, AI, and more. Check the library's online calendar or talk with staff to learn more and register.



Udemy program on computer, Brainfuse app on tablet

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

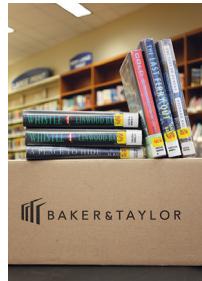
Book Delays Page 2 | Romance on the Rise Page 3 | Donor's Legacy Page 4 | Black History Page 5

Library News

Possible New Book Delays

A major change in the library world is affecting how quickly some new books arrive at libraries nationwide. On October 6, Baker & Taylor, the leading supplier of library content, announced it was ceasing operations immediately and closing offices, resulting in widespread cancellations of preordered materials.

Baker & Taylor had long been West Bloomfield Library's primary supplier, but staff had already set up backup vendors following supply chain disruptions last year. While this proactive, smart precaution has helped lessen the impact on the collection, the library's alternative vendors are experiencing delays while adjusting to increased demand.



If you experience a delay for an item, here's what you can do:

- **Be patient** as wait times for popular titles may grow.
- **Download the CloudLibrary and hoopla apps** to explore trending titles, with many new eBooks and eAudiobooks available for immediate download.
- **Discover hidden gems** while you wait for your holds by visiting library displays, browsing online book lists, or asking for personalized suggestions.
- **Shop local.** The library has developed a partnership with Schuler Books, so when bestsellers are delayed, the library will work with Schuler to get them on our shelves. We encourage library members to support independent bookstores, too.

As fellow readers, we understand the frustration of waiting for a book you're excited about. We hope you'll continue to explore, discover, and read with us while we navigate this industry-wide challenge together.



Community Engagement Librarian Wins National Award

West Bloomfield Library Community Engagement Librarian Emily Tobin is the recipient of the 2025 Rising Star Award through the Association of Bookmobile and Outreach Services (ABOS). This award recognizes an individual who has worked in library outreach for five years or less and demonstrates a passion for the profession.

As West Bloomfield's Community Engagement Librarian since 2022, Emily represents the library on local committees, builds community partnerships, facilitates the home delivery service, and maintains relationships with senior living facilities across the community.

Emily has spearheaded countless additional initiatives at the library, from large-scale events like the **Local Author Fair** and **Shop Small Saturday** to wildly popular programs like Book Drop subscription boxes and Adult Craft Nights. Emily also launched the library's Storybook Trail in partnership with West Bloomfield Parks, established new collections like the Health & Wellness Kits, and more.

Whether she's providing customer service at the desk, representing the library beyond the building, or shaping national conversations, Emily is a passionate rising voice in the field of library outreach.



Emily Tobin, Community Engagement Librarian

Library Welcomes New Staff

Meet the newest faces of the library! Last year brought internal promotions and staff transitions, allowing the library to welcome 10 new team members and 3 new substitute librarians who are ready to help at service desks across the library.

From left to right: Adult Programming Librarian Chris, IT Specialist Andrew, Information Services Librarian Jamie, Circulation Clerk Amelia, Westacres Branch Manager Ashley, Circulation Clerk Simone, K-5 Outreach Librarian Anna, Outreach Aide Courtney, and Circulation Assistant Kate.

Falling for Romance

Romance Writers of America defines romance novels as books with “a central love story and an emotionally satisfying and optimistic ending.”¹

The genre has long been lampooned as “low quality,” “cheesy,” and “unrealistic,” but romance stands out from other genres for its vast scale and wide-ranging subgenres.^{2,3} In fact, the market for romance books has been hot since 2021—when the release of screen adaptations like *Bridgerton* and the influence of BookTok rocked the industry.^{4,5} Learn more about this booming genre just in time for Valentine’s Day.

Who's Reading Romance



Female: 82%

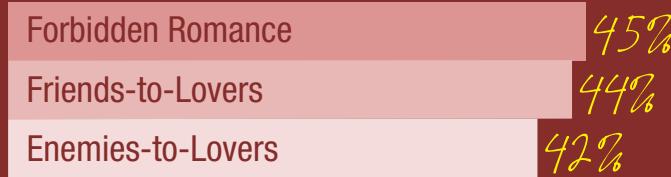
Male: 18%¹

63% of male romance readers & 60% of female romance readers consider themselves die-hard romance enthusiasts.⁷

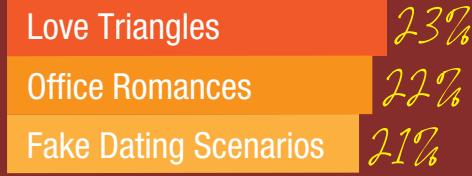
The average romance reader finishes a novel in **7 days**⁶



3 most liked romance tropes⁷:



3 least liked romance tropes⁷:



Romance on the Rise

2X

Print sales of romance books more than doubled in recent years, from 18 million copies in 2020 to 39 million copies in 2023.⁸ Romance remained the leading growth category in the 2025 print book market.⁴

3X

Subgenres like romantasy and sports romance have tripled in sales in the first half of 2025. Romance with dark subject matter is also seeing significant growth.⁴



Physical books by the top 10 romance authors in the genre circulated **2,364 times** in 2024 across the Greater West Bloomfield community.



Judge a Book by its Lover, the library's romance book club, discusses a different romance novel each month. Join one of their upcoming discussions:

Love Walked In
by Sarah Chamberlain

Tuesday, January 13 at 6:30 PM

People We Meet on Vacation
by Emily Henry

Tuesday, February 10 at 6:30 PM

—Look for more meetings at wblib.org.

(1) Romance Writers of America. "About the Romance Genre." (2017). (2) Martucci, Andrea. "Romance Reader Stereotypes." (2021, June 6). *Shelf Love Podcast*. (3) Porter, J.D. et al. "Genre Juggernaut: Measuring 'Romance.'" (2023, November 10). *Public Books*. (4) Connor, Brenna. "Another Year of Romance, with a Dark Twist." (2025, June 10). *Circana*. (5) Bussel, Rachel Kramer. "2021 Book Trends Show the Power of BookTok and Rise of Audiobooks." (2021, December 31). *Forbes*. (6) Romance Writers HQ. "A Deep Dive into the Romance Genre's Unstoppable Rise and the Statistics to Prove It." (2025, February 1). *Romance Writers HQ*. (7) Sheldon, Ashly Moore. "Romance Revealed: Our Newest Survey Uncovers the Secret Lives of Romance Fans." (2025, January 28). *ThriftBooks*. (8) Alter, Alexandra. "A Romance Bookstore Boom." (2024, July 7). *The New York Times*.

Spotlight on Community

Honoring the Elbling Legacy

Ruth Elbling served on the West Bloomfield Library board from her election in November 1972 through the end of her term in November 1992, including several terms as President. Over 20 years of dedicated service, Elbling saw the library through its move from its location at Orchard Lake Road to Walnut Lake Road, as well as the construction of an addition.

The West Bloomfield Library was an important place to Ruth and her



Ruth Elbling, photographed during her 20-year tenure on the library's board.

husband, Stanley—so much so that they left a generous bequest of \$215,000 to the library and, by extension, the community. These funds were partially disbursed over the last two years, enabling the library to invest the gift across three community-centered initiatives: the Reflection Room, the Community Commons, and the library's first outreach van.

While the community's continued support of the library through millages helps it continue to operate at a high standard, bequests and donations enable the library to pursue special projects that enrich the community in meaningful ways. Gifts like the Elblings' demonstrate how deeply a donor's legacy can shape the library's future. The library is committed to stewarding contributions with care and creating an enduring impact for generations.



A generous bequest from Ruth and Stanley Elbling has made three special projects possible. The Reflection Room (open since 2024) is a space for quiet contemplation, reading, and study breaks. The Community Commons technology (available since 2024) enables the library to offer cutting-edge tech workshops. A new outreach van (acquired November 2025) is expected to expand the library's presence beyond the building this spring, supported by an additional donation from Gary Davis in memory of Sally Davis. Other recent donor-funded projects include construction and furniture for the Commons (a generous gift by Jane Maximovich and friends in memory of Dr. Alex Maximovich) and new youth terrace furniture (a bequest from the estate of James H. Neubacher).



Local Author Fair

Sunday, March 22 from 1-4 PM

Main Library Meeting Room

Your next great read might be written by your neighbor! Readers of all ages are encouraged to drop by, chat with writers, and support the stories being created in our community.

Interested in being featured as an author? Visit wblib.org/local-author to complete an application by Friday, February 7.



Winter Programs

Celebrate Black History

A World of Music & Stories with Ms. Audrey

Monday, January 19

at 10:30 AM

Main Library Youth Activity Center

Join Ms. Audrey for a family-friendly show that provides hands-on interaction with small percussion instruments. She will tell enlightening stories that emphasize and align with Dr. King's dream and provide audience involvement.

For ages 5 and up.



Dr. King Storytelling with Larry Castleberry

Monday, January 19 at 7 PM

Main Library Meeting Room

Join Larry Castleberry as he discusses Dr. King's "Letter from the Birmingham Jail" and how the involvement of youth changed a nation. For ages 13 and up.



The Movement of Freedom with Anthony Lucas and Ernestine Worford

Thursday, February 19

at 10:30 AM

Main Library Meeting Room

History comes alive in this interactive program led by Anthony Lucas, storyteller from The Henry Ford Museum and Greenfield Village. This program will focus on the Civil Rights Movement to provide insight on African Americans' fight for freedom and equality. It includes excerpts from two of Dr. King's most famous speeches, "I Have a Dream" and "I've Been to the Mountaintop."

For all ages.



WINTER READING PROGRAM

Saturday, December 6 - Friday, February 20

Take the first step toward building healthy reading habits and stave off the winter blues! Cozy up with a good book during the library's annual Winter Reading Program. From audiobooks to graphic novels, all forms of reading count! Log your time spent reading since December 6 to earn rewards as you advance towards your goals.



READ TO ME

- Registration reward: winter plushie
- Book for 1 hour read
- Book for 3 hours read
- Book for 5 hours read

TEEN

- Registration reward: library swag
- Book for 5 hours read
- Book for 15 hours read
- Book for 25 hours read

YOUTH

- Registration reward: winter plushie or pop it
- Book for 5 hours read
- Book for 15 hours read
- Book for 25 hours read

ADULT

- Registration reward: library swag
- Friendshop gift certificate for 25 hours read



Note: Please update your child's age and grade on Beanstack before registering for Winter Reading. Sign up on the Beanstack app or at westbloomlib.beanstack.org anytime while the program is open.

Family News

Kindergarten Field Trips

Kindergarten field trips to the West Bloomfield Township Public Library are a beloved outreach tradition that celebrates early literacy and community partnership. Through a strong collaboration between the West Bloomfield Library and the **West Bloomfield School District**, young learners are introduced to the endless opportunities their library offers.

The highlight of the trip is the 100 Picture Books to Read in Kindergarten program (K100)—developed by public librarians to inspire strong literacy habits and a lifelong love of reading. During their visits last fall, students enjoyed a special storytime where they read two engaging K100 picture books, took a guided tour of the library, and created their own colorful bookmark to take home. This partnership ensures that every kindergartener begins their reading journey surrounded by stories, exploration, and community support.

"Scotch Elementary Kindergarteners were so excited to take their first field trip ever! [...] We're so fortunate to have such a great partnership with our public library and library staff. Their kindness and enthusiasm make this partnership such a special part of our school year."

—Andrea Hill, iCenter Specialist at Scotch Elementary

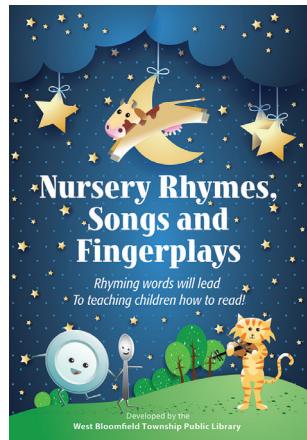


Nursery Rhyme Brochure Supports Families in Early Literacy

For new parents and caregivers, knowing how to engage with a baby can feel overwhelming. Rhymes, songs, and fingerplays provide an easy place to start; they build early language pathways, soothe and entertain, and create joyful bonding moments.

In the recently refreshed *Nursery Rhymes* brochure, the library's early childhood specialists collected a wide range of beloved activities to weave early learning into everyday routines. **Ask at the Youth**

Desk for the latest copy. Join the library's storytime programs to see staff read, sing, and model more early literacy practices your family can replicate at home.



Puzzle & Game Swap

Sunday, February 1 from 1-3 PM

Westacres Activity Center

Drop off your gently used puzzles and board games to swap with other community members between Monday, January 26 and Friday, January 30 at the front desk of either branch. Then, join us at the Westacres Branch on Sunday, February 1 to shop the swap! All items must have all pieces and be in good condition. You don't need to bring an item to take an item. Participants can take home up to 3 items. *For all ages.*



Ready for more?

The library hosts over a thousand sessions of programs each year. Explore more exciting events in the months to come, including visits from animals and characters! See the full lineup and register online at wblib.org.



From Your Friends

Talkin' Broadway

Main Library Meeting Room

Enjoy an excerpt of a popular play or musical performed by local actors and singers, as well as a discussion with visiting Broadway veterans. Prepare for the evening by reading the script or viewing the movie—or just come to listen! *Generously organized and sponsored by the Friends of the Library and Michigan Stage.*

Once Upon a Mattress – Sunday, January 18 at 2 PM

Back to the Future – Sunday, February 15 at 2 PM

A Little Night Music – Sunday, March 15 at 2 PM

Annie – Sunday, April 19 at 2 PM

Gypsy – Sunday, May 17 at 2 PM

M@M MUSIC AT MAIN

A SUNDAY MUSIC SERIES SPONSORED BY THE FRIENDS OF THE LIBRARY

Main Library Meeting Room

Generously organized and sponsored by the Friends of the Library.

Kitty Donohoe

Sunday, January 11 at 2 PM

Dave Boutette & Kristi Lynn Davis

Sunday, February 22 at 2 PM

Jack Kennedy

Sunday, March 29 at 2 PM

Finvarra's Wren

Sunday, May 10 at 2 PM

WHAT'S COOKING?

Main Library Meeting Room

"What's Cooking?" features local chefs and other food and beverage experts as they give demonstrations with generous samples.

Generously organized and sponsored by the Friends of the Library.

At Anano's – Wednesday, February 25 at 6 PM

Aurora Italiana – Wednesday, March 18 at 6 PM

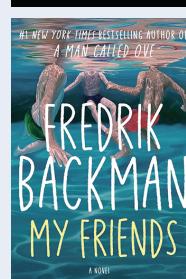
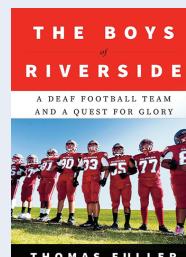
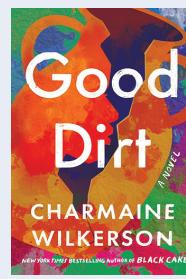
Mitten & Boot Cafe – Wednesday, April 15 at 6 PM

Vive Restaurant – Wednesday, May 20 at 6 PM

BOOK Talks

Main Library Community Commons

Generously organized and sponsored by the Friends of the Library.



The Optimist

by Keach Hagey

Facilitator: Cathy Russ

Thursday, January 8 at 7 PM

Friday, January 9 at 10 AM

Good Dirt

by Charmaine Wilkerson

Facilitator: Jaema Berman

Thursday, February 12 at 7 PM

Friday, February 13 at 10 AM

The Lion Women of Tehran

by Marjan Karmali

Facilitator: Ann Finn

Thursday, March 12 at 7 PM

Friday, March 13 at 10 AM

The Boys of Riverside

by Thomas Fuller

Facilitator: Naomi Frenkel

Thursday, April 9 at 7 PM

Friday, April 10 at 10 AM

My Friends

by Fredrik Backman

Facilitator: Ann Finn

Wednesday, May 13 at 10 AM

Thursday, May 14 at 7 PM

SAVE THE DATE:

Spring Used Book Sale is April 10-12



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Donor Leaves Community Legacy

Learn more on Page 4



DIRECTOR'S LETTER

As the Associate Library Director, I focus on maintaining the library buildings and technology infrastructure. With library facilities now 25 years old, this work is substantial as we plan for significant replacements.

The library receives many compliments on the comfort, cleanliness, and functionality of its buildings. Staff feel fortunate to serve a community that takes such pride in its library. One of my favorite things to hear is when library members bring out-of-town guests in for a visit —what a compliment! I still remember my first visit to the Main Library 22 years ago, hoping I'd be lucky enough to work here. Today, I'm striving to be a good steward of community tax dollars.

Many factors go into maintaining our spaces. At the heart of it is our small but mighty maintenance team, who work hard to keep everything clean and safe and expect the same from our contractors. Another key piece is the capital plan for building and technology replacements, which ensures equipment is replaced at the end of its lifespan.

Thanks to the approval of last year's millage, we can continue to maintain the buildings to the high standard you expect. Recent upgrades include the Main Library's air conditioning system and roof, as well as updates to exterior weatherproofing, the WiFi network, firewall, public computers, self-checkout stations, phone system, and security cameras at both branches.

Looking ahead, we are midway through a two-year project to replace carpet and ceiling tiles at the Main Library. At the Westacres Branch, we will be increasing accessibility, replacing the roof, and installing outdoor pickup lockers for 24/7 convenience.

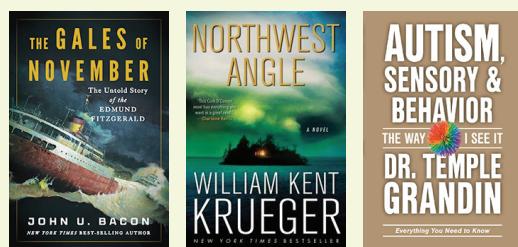
If you haven't visited recently, I hope you'll stop in and see what's new; if you have, thank you for continuing to enjoy your award-winning local library!

Jeff Crocker

Associate Library Director



From the Director's Shelf



MAIN LIBRARY

4600 Walnut Lake Road
(248) 682-2120
TDD: (248) 232-2292
Email: wbref@wblib.org
Text: (248) 648-3368

WESTACRES BRANCH

7321 Commerce Road
(248) 363-4022
Email: wacrref@wblib.org

HOURS OF SERVICE

Monday – Thursday: 9 AM – 9 PM
Friday & Saturday: 9 AM – 6 PM
Sunday (Main): Noon – 6 PM
Sunday (Westacres): Noon – 5 PM

wblib.org



THE LIBRARY WILL BE CLOSED:

Sunday, April 5
Friday, May 15

eNewsletters:

Get monthly library news delivered directly to your inbox at wblib.org/library-communications

Cathy Russ, Executive Library Director
Jeff Crocker, Associate Library Director

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