

Erie County Public Library  
Library Advisory Board Meeting

Thursday, October 17<sup>th</sup>, 2019

Blasco Memorial Library – Admiral Meeting Room

AGENDA

1. Call to Order
2. Roll Call
3. Approval of Minutes –September 19<sup>th</sup>, 2019
4. Hearing of Citizens
5. Report of County Council Liaison
6. Friends of the Library Update
7. Review of Financial Report
8. Report of Executive Director
9. Statistical and Other Reports
10. Report of District Consultant
11. Report of Committees
  - a. Board Committees
  - b. Staff Presentations
12. Petitions and Communications
13. Board Development and Activities
14. Unfinished Business
15. New Business
  - a. Discuss Recommended Changes to By-Laws (in writing): President/ Vice-President/  
Executive Director
  - b. Internet Policy Revision
16. Adjournment

### 3. Approval of Minutes

## MINUTES of the MEETING of the ERIE COUNTY PUBLIC LIBRARY ADVISORY BOARD

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**THURSDAY, September 19<sup>th</sup> 2019**  
**Admiral Room, Blasco Memorial Library**

### **CALL TO ORDER:**

Felix Lohitai called the meeting to order at 12:03 p.m.

### **MEMBERS PRESENT:**

Liz Allen, Heather Canfield, William Conway, Martha Knuth, Felix Lohitai, Trevor Pearson, Mary Ann Tempestini

**MEMBERS ABSENT:** Kristin Bowers (excused)

### **OTHERS PRESENT:**

Blane Dessy (Executive Director), Sheryl Thomas (Assistant Director), Alyssa Johnson (Administrative Officer II), Deana Cooper (Business Office Manager), Shane Donaldson (Youth Services Manager) Peg Shenefelt (President of the Friends).

### **APPROVAL OF MINUTES:**

**August 15<sup>th</sup>, 2019**

Trevor moved to approve, Mary Ann seconded. All Aye. Minutes approved.

### **HEARING OF CITIZENS:**

None

### **REPORT OF THE COUNTY COUNCIL LIAISON:**

None

### **FRIENDS OF THE LIBRARY UPDATE (Peg Shenefelt):**

Peg relayed that Fall Book Drive held September 14<sup>th</sup> was a success. There were 35 volunteers that worked from 9am to 3pm (breaking the previous record). The Friends group will continue to work towards improving the flow and process of the drive-thru. The members of Delta Kappa Epsilon at Gannon were a great help.

### **REVIEW OF THE FINANCIAL REPORT (Deana Cooper):**

See attached Monthly Library Fund Report—September 12th.

Deana remarked that the inconsistencies due to a processing error in last month's report have been largely corrected. The library is doing well and on target for all expenditures. There are some anticipated savings ahead in the 4<sup>th</sup> quarter due to staffing vacancies. We are awaiting final amounts from the finance department regarding the impact of wage adjustments due to the new AFSCME Pay Plan. Blane remarked that the Pay Plan has been a recent major change and asked Deana to explain for the board. The AFSCME Pay Plan brings all clerical and professional employees onto one singular pay matrix, resulting in a higher starting wage for incoming employees. Existing employees are being placed on the matrix and will receive back pay dating to January 1<sup>st</sup>. It is this back pay that will affect the library's Wages & Fringes budget the most for 2019. Deana stated that for the 2020 year alone, our wages & fringes budget will incur an additional \$350k obligation. Blane remarked that this is a fixed

cost, there is nothing the Library can do about it. Deana reiterated that this back pay is an unknown variable that will affect library budget in Q4.

### **REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR (Blane Dessy):**

- 2020 Budget
  - For years the ECPL has presented a status quo budget—keeping the budget requests fairly even from year to year.
  - In talking with staff, he uncovered a number of needs to address for the 2020 budget
  - The library has asked for the following increases in the upcoming budget year:
    - \$350k for wages and fringes (as previously discussed)
    - \$400k for the addition of 2 new bookmobiles. Our current 38' bookmobile is in a sad state—it looks bad, the generator just broke, and it will need \$40k in repairs in order to pass inspection next April. Blane is optimistic that the County will be able to approve the purchase of 1.
    - Increase of 8% overall to the acquisitions budget. This will allow for:
      - Expansion of ever popular e-resources
      - Addition of traditional library materials
      - Upgrade of outdated categories, especially Science material
    - 25 additional wifi hotspots. The library currently loans 26 units with an average waitlist of 60-70 at any given time.
    - New Public facing computers. The staff computers are purchased through County IT budget, but public-facing ones are the responsibility of the library. In partnership with Library IT, ECPL will institute a 5 year technology plan, replacing roughly 20% of the tech every year.
    - Requesting the addition of 2 positions:
      - Heritage Room Specialist
  - Total increases equate to roughly \$1 million.
  - Kathy Dahlkemper will present the budget to County Council October 1<sup>st</sup>.
  - Library's Budget Hearing will happen on October 21<sup>st</sup> at 4:30pm at the County Courthouse. All are encouraged to attend and advocate.
- Minerva
  - A local plaster worker has been found who is able to complete the repair work.
  - Friends of the Library has agreed to raise funds for the repairs
  - Planning to restore her to original state. Peg added that the scope of work is dependent on the quotes and availability of funds.
  - October 1: Minerva will be placed in the display case outside the Heritage Room.
  - October 7: Press Conference
  - Peg announced that the Friends will have their board meeting on Monday. Trevor mentioned that CAM could host a Q&A session if we like. Jake is the person responsible for scheduling studio time. Blane asked Alyssa to follow up with this.
  - Fundraising discussion ensued.
- Master Plan Updating:
  - Phases I & II are complete, Blane was tasked with completing Phase III when he was hired. Phase III plans are now 4 years old, hence the need to do some updating to cost estimates and evaluating the original plans—not scrapping them. Admin commissioned Bostwick to do an abbreviated update.
  - Blane brought the plans to show the upcoming changes of Phase III

- 1<sup>st</sup> Floor: Bring Fiction collection to first floor, bring internet lab to first floor, minor adjustment to JUV.
- 2<sup>nd</sup> floor: relocate non-fiction collection to 2<sup>nd</sup> floor, adding public restrooms, more meeting space.
- Sheryl added there will be some more rearranging in the Heritage Room as the digitization initiative unfolds and Microfiche readers are removed. Shane relayed there will be reworkings to make additional storage room for Children's Dept and the Friends. Blane added there are plans for the Admiral Room and Lobby spaces.
- These phases will require upwards of \$2,000,000.
- Blane sent an invite to all 3 boards for a collaborative working meeting to meet each other and really discuss the library's plans for 2020. The meeting will take place on November 20<sup>th</sup> at 12:30pm in the Admiral Room.
- Board discussion followed on subject of purchasing bookmobiles.

**STATISTICAL AND OTHER REPORTS (Sheryl Thomas):**

The statistic reports were sent in the advance agenda packet.

Sheryl shared that circulation was down 2% last month, but that there were a large number of increases, in such categories as: Bookmobile, Millcreek, eResources, Iroquois, Interlibrary Loan, and programming. Blane mentioned the programming is "brought to you by" the Friends of the Library. Sheryl divulged that the library programs will now feature labels to the 5 PA Forward literacies, enhancing our ability to report.

**10. REPORT OF THE DISTRICT CONSULTANT (Marcia Wilking):**

Marcia out of office, Blane provided update.

The SNOE region (Seneca, New Castle, Oil Creek, Erie library districts) just signed a MOU to provide support services between the 4 districts of NWPA. This is especially helpful as our district consultant is expected to be on leave for part of the coming year, and will be beneficial to reach out to other consultants. It is the first time that any PA Library Districts have come together formally.

**REPORT OF COMMITTEES:**

None

**STAFF PRESENTATIONS:**

Shane Donaldson, Youth Services Manager.

- Shane reviewed the results of our Summer Library Challenge. It was a great year, and the staff may have discovered their threshold for programming! New this year: Shane structured a week 1 that included more contractors and big events as an introduction week. This strategy helped to increase overall program attendance. Large numbers were seen during the Elephant & Piggie Costume Character visits. This year ECPL had the added benefit of employing 2 branch managers with Children's Programming backgrounds. That allowed the Children's Librarians more flexibility. Attendance overall increased, and Shane was particularly proud of his staff's ability to raise August numbers above last year's—where a 400+ attendee event was held that was not replicated this year.
- To cut costs this year, Shane worked with partners in house to make and print our own flyers/forms versus sending to a designer.

- Shane compared our Summer Library Challenge to the state’s Summer Quest model, and relayed some of the more rigorous differences we embrace.
- Sheryl expressed what a great job was done by not only the staff, but by Shane in managing the entire summer event.

**PETITIONS AND COMMUNICATIONS:**

There are several news releases included.

**BOARD DEVELOPMENT AND ACTIVITIES:**

None

**UNFINISHED BUSINESS:**

None

**NEW BUSINESS:**

- Officer Change—Felix Lohitai to assume office of President per bylaws upon the vacancy left by Julie Thiess-Boam’s resignation. Blane stated that Julie resigned to focus on her health and that the Library wishes her well.
- Vice President Vacancy—Vote to fill vacancy left by Felix Lohitai. President asked for any volunteers or nominations. Trevor Pearson nominated himself. Put to vote, all Aye.
- Approve Library Calendar for 2020—Sheryl explained the changes and library operating hours during each holiday. Trevor motioned to approve, Liz seconded, all Aye.

The majority of County employees will celebrate **HOLIDAYS** for the year **2020** on the following dates:

**DESIGNATED COUNTY HOLIDAY**

**DATE CELEBRATED IN 2020**

1. NEW YEAR’S DAY	Wednesday, January 1
2. MARTIN LUTHER KING DAY	Monday, January 20
3. PRESIDENT’S DAY	Monday, February 17
4. GOOD FRIDAY	Friday, April 10
5. <b>EASTER SUNDAY</b>	<b>Sunday, April 12</b>
6. <b>SPRING STAFF TRAINING DAY</b>	<b>Thursday, May 14</b>
7. MEMORIAL DAY	Monday, May 25
8. FLAG DAY ( <b>Library is open</b> )	Monday, June 15
9. INDEPENDENCE DAY	Friday, July 3
10. LABOR DAY	Monday, September 7
11. <b>FALL STAFF TRAINING DAY</b>	<b>Monday, October 12</b>
12. VETERAN’S DAY	Wednesday, November 11
13. <b>THANKSGIVING EVE</b>	<b>Wednesday, November 25 close at 5pm</b>
14. THANKSGIVING DAY	Thursday, November 26
15. DAY AFTER THANKSGIVING DAY	Friday, November 27
16. DAY AFTER CHRISTMAS/CHRISTMAS EVE	Thursday, December 24
17. CHRISTMAS DAY	Friday, December 25
18. <b>NEW YEAR’S EVE</b>	<b>Tuesday, December 31 close at 5pm</b>
19. EMPLOYEE’S BIRTHDAY	Floating holiday; must be used 14 days before or after birthday

- d. Discuss: Review of By-Laws (President/ Vice-President/ Executive Director)  
The bylaws are due for revision in 2019. Discussion to begin in September, revisions will be presented at the October board meeting, and the board will vote on revisions at the November meeting.
- e. President to appoint nominating committee to prepare a slate of officers.  
Felix asked for volunteers. Mary Ann, Bill, and Trevor all volunteered.
- f. The next Advisory Board meeting is October

**ADJOURNMENT:** The meeting adjourned at 1:03 pm.

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- 4. Hearing of Citizens**
- 5. Report of County Council Liaison**
- 6. Friends of the Library Update**
- 7. Review of Financial Report**
- 8. Report of Executive Director**

## 9. Statistical and Other Reports

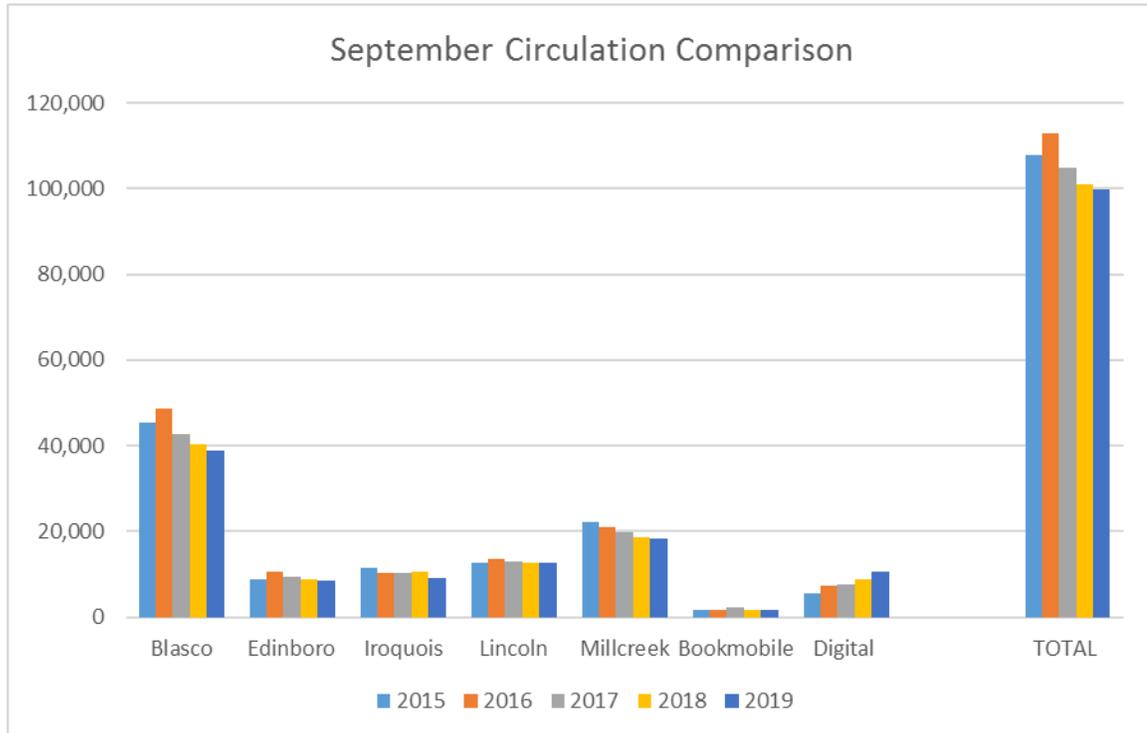


September 2019 Statistics

### Numbers Snapshot

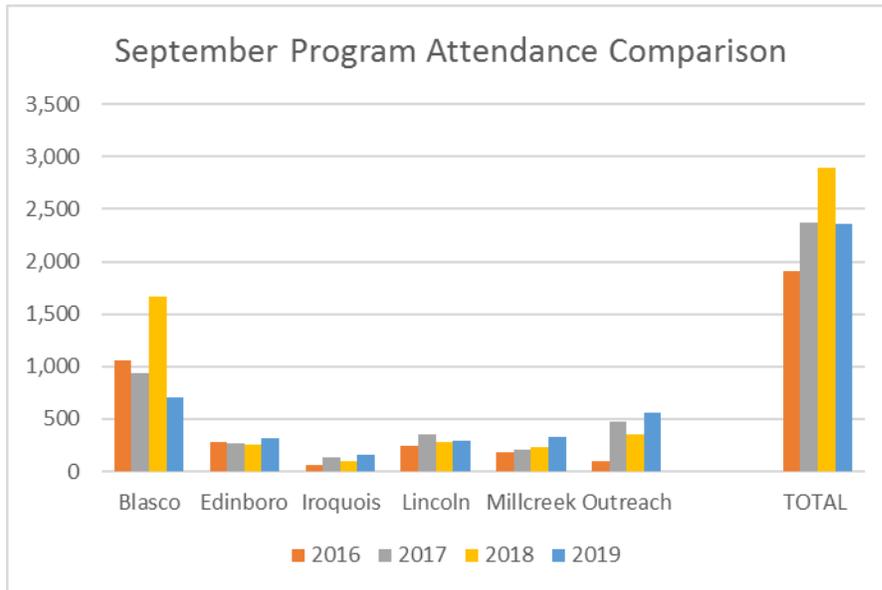
- **131** programs offered, down 3.7%
- **10,716** digital checkouts, up 20.4%
- **45,218** visits, down 6.6%
- **20,241** Wifi logins, up 19.8%

### Circulation

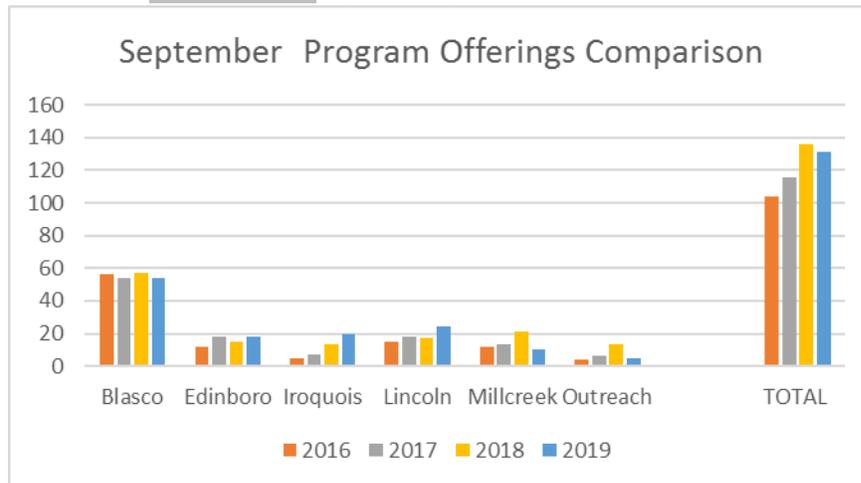


	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
<b>Blasco</b>	45,456	48,739	42,775	40,287	38,850
<b>Edinboro</b>	8,874	10,481	9,248	8,684	8,527
<b>Iroquois</b>	11,493	10,187	10,359	10,450	9,040
<b>Lincoln</b>	12,535	13,500	12,876	12,537	12,805
<b>Millcreek</b>	22,215	20,900	19,864	18,498	18,247
<b>Bookmobile</b>	1,790	1,731	2,327	1,799	1,553
<b>Digital</b>	5,595	7,318	7,580	8,898	10,716
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>107,958</b>	<b>112,856</b>	<b>105,029</b>	<b>101,153</b>	<b>99,738</b>

### Programs



	2016	2017	2018	2019
<b>Blasco</b>	1,062	941	1,670	701
<b>Edinboro</b>	275	272	256	320
<b>Iroquois</b>	55	138	100	155
<b>Lincoln</b>	248	347	282	291
<b>Millcreek</b>	176	202	234	326
<b>Outreach</b>	98	469	357	562
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1,914</b>	<b>2,369</b>	<b>2,899</b>	<b>2,355</b>



	2016	2017	2018	2019
<b>Blasco</b>	56	54	57	54
<b>Edinboro</b>	12	18	15	18
<b>Iroquois</b>	5	7	13	20
<b>Lincoln</b>	15	18	17	24
<b>Millcreek</b>	12	13	21	10
<b>Outreach</b>	4	6	13	5
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>104</b>	<b>116</b>	<b>136</b>	<b>131</b>

## 10. Report of District Consultant

- DLC
  - The District Consultant will be presenting on Monday 10/14 with a panel of library directors on the District's Shared Educational Programmer. Currently, we are the first and still the only program of its kind in the State.
- State
  - Application for State Aid have been turned in for all district libraries, the 2<sup>nd</sup> step of applying for state aid is expected to open in the next 2 weeks and close sometime in November.
  - County Coordination Aid plans are due the end of the month. Both Erie and Crawford are nearly ready to go.
  - [House Bill 1355](#) & [Senate Bill 752](#) would ensure a certified school librarian in every public school. [Contact](#) your representatives to ask them to support these complementary bills today! And share the petition on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#).
- District Library News
  - Stone Library in Conneautville has a new director
  - The inaugural Crawford Gives day was October 2<sup>nd</sup>. It was a success for participating libraries! **Meadville Public Library, Saegertown Area Library, Benson Memorial Library, Stone Memorial Library, Cambridge Springs Public Library, and Shontz Memorial Library.** Over \$10,000 was donated to libraries that day!

## 11. Report of Committees

### a. Nominating Committee to present slate of officers

The appointed Nominating Committee presents the following slate of officers for consideration:

Trevor Pearson, President  
Heather Canfield, Vice-President  
Bill Conway, Secretary

### b. Staff Presentations

## 12. Petitions and Communications

News Articles Attached

## 13. Board Development and Activities

## 14. Unfinished Business

## 15. New Business

- a.) See attached recommended bylaw revisions (emailed Friday October 11<sup>th</sup>)

## b.) Internet Policy proposed revision

**Summary: no longer requiring to present an ID to obtain guest pass.**

### Erie County Public Library Policy Manual

SECTION:	INTERNET USE
NUMBER:	640
REVISED:	October 3, 2019
EFFECTIVE DATE:	July 21, 2011
PAGE:	1 of 2

In support of the mission of the Erie County Public Library, the Library provides access to the Internet as a source for current and historical information, communication and recreation.

**Use of the Library's computers implies acceptance of the Library's Internet Policy. A copy is available upon request and on the library's website: <http://www.erialibrary.org/how-to-2/policies/>**

To use a computer at the Erie County Public Library Erie County residents may:

- Use their own current Erie County Public Library card,
- Use their own current PLEC Library (Albion, Corry, McCord, Rice Avenue, Union City or Waterford Library) card
- Request a guest pass.

Non-Erie County residents have the following options:

- Register for an ECPL card through the Access PA Program if a PA resident.
- Request a guest pass.

### General Rules

- ECPL uses Time Management Software in order to ensure the opportunity for access for as many patrons as possible.
- Children age 12 and under must be accompanied by a parent or guardian while using the Internet.
- FTP, Telnet or similar communication functions are not permitted.
- Patrons are not permitted to download, install and/or save any software or files on library computers. Personal storage devices are allowable. The Library accepts no responsibility for damage to any personal disks, data or computer equipment or software.
- Brief cell phone conversations are permitted in the Computer Lab, however phone use is subject to staff discretion.
- There is a limit of two people at each computer; however, at some outlets, the limit will be one person per computer due to space limitations.
- Listening devices' volume must not be so loud as to distract other patrons.
- Manipulating or bypassing any security features in use on the library's public computers is prohibited and will result in the loss of the internet use.

Erie County Public Library  
Policy Manual

SECTION:	INTERNET USE
NUMBER:	640
REVISED:	October 3, 2019
EFFECTIVE DATE:	July 21, 2011
PAGE:	2 of 2

Internet sites provide additional sources of information that supplement print and other electronic sources available in the library. Please be advised, however, that the Internet is unregulated and may contain material that is incorrect, outdated or personally offensive. The Library assumes no responsibility for contents found on the Internet. The user is solely responsible for selection of access and assumes all risk related to or arising out of such use, including the posting of personal and financial information. The availability of information on the Internet does not constitute endorsement by the Erie County Public Library.

**Internet use is a privilege and carries with it the responsibility of using it in an appropriate manner.** All patrons, including minors, must obey all Internet rules. Inappropriate behavior will result in termination of these privileges.

Inappropriate behavior includes, but is not limited to:

- Violation of copyright or software license agreements
- Viewing of texts, photos, movies or sound bites of an obscene or pornographic nature as defined in Pennsylvania Obscenity Statute – 18 Pa.C.S. 5903
- Placing unlawful information on a system
- Use which damages equipment and/or software
- Any behavior that is disruptive to the operation of the Library

The Library will report illegal use to the appropriate local, state or federal law enforcement agency and cooperate fully with those authorities.

The Library reserves the right to use logging software to monitor use of library computers. Computer and Internet and/or other library privileges may be revoked for up to six months or longer depending on infraction.

The Library reserves the right to use filtering and/or blocking software to enforce this policy and any other applicable laws.

For legitimate research purposes, blocked web sites may be accessed upon the request of the patron provided the patron is over 17 years of age. Patrons are highly encouraged to try their research on our regular Internet PC's before requesting unblocked access. A form to request access to a blocked web site is available if a patron feels that the library has incorrectly blocked a site.

Even though the Erie County Public Library employs a TPM or Technology Protective Measure, certain sites may slip through. No TPM is 100% effective.

The Erie County Public Library is in compliance with the federal Children's Internet Protection Act (CIPA) and the Pennsylvania Child Internet Protection Act.

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## 16. Adjournment

# Library eyes a modern bookmobile - Erie Times-News (PA) - October 15, 2019 - page 8

October 15, 2019 | Erie Times-News (PA) | Page 8

The issue: Library parks its bookmobile

Our view: Time to update vital service

Library stacks still rightly claim a nostalgic lure. There is a unique satisfaction in taking a book from

a shelf and thumbing through the pages to unleash a narrative that opens new horizons.

That said, the future — for both residents and the Erie County economy — lies in digital fluency

given the technology's reach. It gathers, analyzes, leverages and conveys information and connects people to insights, opportunities and each other.

The Erie County Public Library, not a staid backward-looking institution, has been on the frontlines of that digital revolution. Blasco Library remains a rich repository of print material but it is also a vital community hub that offers all residents, regardless of their means, access to digital tools that power modern life. Thanks to recent renovations, Blasco Library now features an Idea Lab and a Teen Space. The Idea Lab offers innovators, entrepreneurs and artists a Makerspace featuring technology such as 3-D printing and sewing machines. The Media Lab component allows residents to record music or craft stories for a podcast.

This community long has recognized the vital role that reading plays in the fight against poverty. The Erie County Library's Bookmobile sprang from a similar recognition of the power of reading.

The bookmobile service dates to 1949. Following a hiatus in service in the late 1980s, Dr. Raymond Blasco donated funds to purchase a new bookmobile. Michele Ridge, then the library director, said in 1990 that Blasco, who was educated in a one-room schoolhouse in the Wattsburg area, was concerned about the availability of books for young people in rural areas. Blasco went on to make a \$2 million bequest to the Erie County Library System and Blasco Library was named after him.

The Bookmobile, which packs thousands of books into shelves on a 32-foot Bluebird bus, circulates about 1,700 items each month at its more than 30 stops around the county, serving young people and older residents alike. But it has suffered expensive mechanical problems in recent years and was off the road for much of 2014. Now, it will park for good.

Library director Blane Dessy said the bus is no longer safe. Smaller vehicles will continue to provide the service for a time. But Dessy plans to request \$200,000 in his 2020 library budget proposal to Erie County Council to fund a new, smaller bookmobile decked out with new technology and library services.

That price tag likely will give some people pause. However the funding is obtained, the transformational potential of an updated, high-tech bookmobile should remain the sharp focus. It is not a luxury but a critical outreach tool that helps all citizens, regardless of zip code, access knowledge, spark their imaginations and maximize their own and their community's potential.

CITATION (MLA STYLE)

"Library eyes a modern bookmobile." Erie Times-News (PA), ET D ed., sec. PA Opinion, 15 Oct. 2019, p. 8. NewsBank: Access World News – Historical and Current, [infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=WORLDNEWS&docref=news/17695D758E919570](http://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=WORLDNEWS&docref=news/17695D758E919570). Accessed 15 Oct. 2019.

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## **Library to request funding for new Bookmobile - - Erie Times-News (PA)**

**- October 12, 2019 - page 3**

October 12, 2019 | Erie Times-News (PA) | [sg\\_rabski@timesnews.com](mailto:sg_rabski@timesnews.com) | Page 3

The Erie County Library Bookmobile is shifting gears.

The county's bookmobile has been retired because it's no longer safe to operate, Blane Dessy, director of the Erie County Public Library said on Friday.

"We did it because it's simply so old that it's not safe to use on the road any longer," Dessy said.

The bookmobile is a mobile library that makes more than 30 stops across Erie County and circulates around 1,700 items per month. The county is using a smaller vehicle, a van already in its fleet, to continue bookmobile operations.

"We want to make sure that the public knows the bookmobile is still up and running," Dessy said. Dessy said the library will request \$200,000 for a new vehicle in its 2020 budget that he will present to Erie County Council on Oct. 21.

"That's slightly high, but that's what you do," he said. "It will not be the same configuration as our current bookmobile."

The library wants to purchase a smaller vehicle that would allow patrons to utilize more on-board technology and which will "configure new types of library services," Dessy said.

The old vehicle was out of commission for nine months in 2014 when it underwent \$30,000 in repairs. It will be disposed of by the county, Dessy said.

There will not be a lapse in the bookmobile's service, he added.

"The bottom line is that the bookmobile is not going away," Dessy said. "We are still committed to providing the same quality service that we have in the past."

Sarah Grabski can be reached at 870-1776 or by email. Follow her on Twitter at [www.twitter.com/ETNgrabski](https://www.twitter.com/ETNgrabski).

CITATION (MLA STYLE)

[sgrabski@timesnews.com](mailto:sgrabski@timesnews.com). "Library to request funding for new Bookmobile By Sarah Grabski." Erie

Times-News (PA), ET D ed., sec. PA News, 12 Oct. 2019, p. 3. NewsBank: Access World News –

Historical and Current, [infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=WORLDNEWS&docref=news/1768603F90586AF0](http://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=WORLDNEWS&docref=news/1768603F90586AF0). Accessed 14 Oct. 2019.

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## **PA News - Erie Times-News (PA) - October 4, 2019 - page 1**

October 4, 2019 | Erie Times-News (PA) | Page 1

More Minerva

- Watch a video about the statue's return to Erie County: [GoErie.com/Videos](http://GoErie.com/Videos).
- The Erie County Public Library is celebrating Minerva's return with a number of events and will seek the public's input on where to place the statue. For more information:

[www.eriecountypa.gov](http://www.eriecountypa.gov).

CITATION (MLA STYLE)

"PA News." Erie Times-News (PA), ET D ed., sec. PA News, 4 Oct. 2019, p. 1. NewsBank: Access

World News – Historical and Current, [infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=WORLDNEWS&docref=news/1765BD5CC9E21338](http://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=WORLDNEWS&docref=news/1765BD5CC9E21338). Accessed 10 Oct. 2019.

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# History recovered as statue returns to Erie - By - Erie Times-News (PA) -

October 4, 2019 - page 1

October 4, 2019 | Erie Times-News (PA) | ed.palattella@timesnews.com | Page 1

Minerva is back, ending a tale whose plot turns are worthy of myth.

A statue of the Roman goddess of wisdom has been returned to the Erie County Public Library's art collection after disappearing for 77 years.

Erie County Executive Kathy Dahlkemper and other officials on Thursday unveiled the plaster sculpture, now stored temporarily in a large glass display case on the second floor of Blasco Library, near the Heritage Room.

"We are excited to have her back," Dahlkemper said.

The figure is formidable, in keeping with the image of Minerva and Athena, her Greek counterpart, in ancient myth. The helmeted sculpture — Minerva was also the goddess of war — stands 5 feet 8½ inches high, is 2 feet 2 inches wide and 16 inches deep, according to the Erie County Public Library. It weighs 150 to 200 pounds.

Dahlkemper and the other officials did not know precisely how or when the statue went missing, only that it vanished from public view in the early 1940s, long after the symbol of learning and culture first graced the rotunda of original Erie Public Library building on Perry Square.

It was placed there in 1899, two years after the grand building opened, as a donation from J.F. Downing, a prominent Erie judge. The statue was located on a pedestal in the rotunda until 1924, when, to make room for a new circulation desk, it was moved to what was then the public museum in the library's basement.

In 1942, the statue went missing, county officials said. That was the year that public museum moved to its current location, the Erie Historical Society's restored Watson-Curtze Mansion and Museum, at West Sixth and Chestnut streets. County officials have long speculated that the statue ended up in the Erie Technical High School building at West 10th and Sassafras streets, which closed in the 1960s and was demolished. At the time, the Erie School District ran the library system and owned the original library building, now part of the federal courthouse complex, which opened in 2004.

Wherever the statue was hiding, the public had an interest in getting it back to the library. Its disappearance was the subject of an article in the Erie Daily Times in 1982 and another in the Erie Times-News in 1996, when the Raymond M. Blasco, M.D., Memorial Library opened on the bayfront as the Erie County Public Library's new main building.

"The new library is Erie's bayfront Parthenon and we'd really like to put Minerva back where she belongs — in the public art collection," Judy Lynch said in a 1996 interview.

Lynch, who served as county executive from 1981 to 2002, was at Thursday's unveiling.

"I really believe the whole community is delighted in having Minerva back," she said.

Erie lawyer David Ungerman helped in the statue's journey.

He is a second cousin to a woman in Colorado who contacted Erie County in 2018 about the statue, which Ungerman said was then located in North Carolina at a residence of a person who knew his second cousin. Ungerman said he believes the statue might have ended up in North Carolina in the late 1980s or early 1990s after being sold at an antique store in Erie County. Ungerman said his second cousin picked up the statue in North Carolina and stored it at her second home in Erie County. Ungerman facilitated the process that allowed his second cousin to give the statue to Erie County for free. She was present on Thursday but declined to be interviewed or identified.

Ungerman marveled at the statue's circuitous route.

"It is fascinating," he said. "People are suddenly realizing Minerva is a major force."

Ungerman said the statue's appraised value is about \$4,000.

It will remain in the display case until the library system relocates it to another spot in Blasco Library based on public input, said Blane Dessy, director of the Erie County Public Library. The Friends of the Erie County Public Library, a nonprofit, hopes to raise \$8,000 to \$10,000 to restore the statue, which is missing its right arm. That arm once held a spear. How the arm disappeared is another part of the puzzle of the statue's extended vanishing act, Dahlkemper said.

"She has a mystique about her, a mystery," she said of Minerva. "If she could only tell us what happened."

Ed Palattella can be reached at 870-1813 or by email. Follow him on Twitter at [www.twitter.com/ETNpalattella](https://www.twitter.com/ETNpalattella).

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## Booking an Erie County Library Tour

### A local trail penned for wanderlust readers

by **Liz Allen** October 9, 2019 at 10:30 AM Erie Reader



NICK WARREN

In our own backyard, we have tours and trails for those who relish local wine, craft beers, Erie foods, haunted spaces, and historical places.

It would be cool if someone followed in the footsteps of Maitham Basha-Agha, a former refugee from Iraq who organized tours of new-American food businesses this summer (before he moved away), and it might be sweet if some shops from Erie were added to [VisitPa's](#) "Pursue Your Scoops Ice Cream Trail," which just wrapped up its second season. But I have a modest proposal for a new tour you can do on your own, with or without an entry ticket — i.e., a library card.

Maybe it sounds like a tour for word nerds, but bear with me, because I've also discovered that libraries and libations can go together.

I hatched the idea for a local library trail after spotting the September banner on the Erie County Library's homepage, [erielibrary.org](http://erielibrary.org), inviting patrons to visit the library's six locations: Blasco, which is the main library downtown; the Iroquois Avenue, Millcreek Mall, Edinboro, and Lincoln Community Center branches; and the Bookmobile.

When I research freelance stories, I often use the Heritage Room at Blasco Library, but I didn't know about the delightful offerings and unique atmospheres of the county's four branches until I became a per-diem library clerk earlier this year.

Thanks to my part-time job, I've also come to learn about the extensive resources of Erie's six independent libraries: Rice Avenue Community Public Library, in Girard; Albion Area Library; Waterford Public Library; Union City Public Library; Corry Public Library; and McCord Memorial Library in North East.

I wanted to tout local libraries for several reasons.

First, I'm impressed by the breadth and depth of what Erie people read. Patrons keep up with The New York Times Best Seller List and they track favorite authors anticipating their new releases. They read classic literature and tomes on arcane topics. They like romances and westerns, biographies, and graphic novels.

They borrow audiobooks, music CDs, TV and film DVDs, jigsaw puzzles, they utilize Wi-Fi hotspots, museum passes — and even *fishing gear*. They stock up on light reads for vacation and devour books on current events and historic eras.

They participate in a host of activities at the library, for young and old alike. They access the aforementioned free Wi-Fi and computers for many reasons — to print out their car registration and insurance forms, to log their hours as home health aides, and to apply for government programs such as Social Security and heating assistance, according to Susan Osborn, director of the Waterford Public Library.

"A gentleman wanted to apply for a job but he didn't know how to use the computer. We walked him through it and he got the job," said Osborn, who has helped her library evolve into a business center with the help of generous locals such as Peggy and Duane Lehr, who donate baskets of goodies for monthly raffles.

Osborn also points out that the library's fax machine is the only public one in town.

Erie will get to show off our commitment to libraries, literacy, and community engagement when the Pennsylvania Library Association holds its [annual conference](#) and expo at the Bayfront Convention Center Oct. 13-16. This is the first time in 30 years that the conference will be in Erie. With the theme "Shine On," it's a great opportunity to show off Erie in its finest fall glory.

"There's local pride in that we have a lot of Erie librarians who will be presenting," said Sheryl Thomas, assistant Erie County Library director.

We can also celebrate the news that a long-lost statue of Minerva, the Roman goddess of wisdom, has been returned to the library after a mysterious 77-year absence. It's on display in the case outside Blasco's Heritage Room.

And if you are a leaf peeper as well as a bookworm, you'll love a leisurely drive to the local branches and the independents, but don't do it all in one day. You can divide your tour into different legs. There's west county, with Lincoln Community Center, Rice Avenue, and Albion. Then there's south county, with the Millcreek Mall and Edinboro; southeast county, with Waterford, Union City, and Corry; and the east county, with Iroquois and McCord.

You can try it alone but it's more fun with a friend or two in tow to suggest spontaneous stops — at a farm stand, pumpkin patch, mom-and-pop business, museum, or natural wonder. During lunch breaks at work, I've driven from Lincoln Center, which reminds me of a New England cottage with its blue-green shake shingles, down to Manchester Beach to watch Lake Erie crash onto the shore.

On my solo tour, I wish I had popped into the quaint Kennedy Hardware in Cranesville. I also spied a sign advertising the Cranesville Fire Department's wing fundraiser, held on the first and third Fridays of the month. A new flavor, citrus chipotle, will be featured Oct. 18.

At the town square in Waterford, an Amish man who had tethered his horse to a tree was selling cider. On North Center Street in Corry, I spotted a pocket park with an inviting bench. Several independent libraries feature homemade quilts, on permanent display or up for sale to raise money. [The Loose Threads Quilters](#) in Albion have donated a piece called "Weave it Be," to be raffled off Dec. 19. McCord's children's room has a patchwork quilt sewn in 2006 by the Girl Scouts. Library staffer Autymn Maas pointed out that her sister Summer's photo is on the quilt. Yes, she said with a laugh, the sisters were named after the seasons but only Autymn's name has an unusual spelling.

Whether the buildings are old or new, libraries are designed with children in mind. Union City has a cool castle room for kids, and many of the libraries have colorful murals by local artists. The Millcreek branch library is in a modern plaza but children love to gaze at the fish tank, whose inhabitants include Jerome, a catfish who has been in the aquarium since 1974. "I enjoy reading historical fiction and travel books," a sign about Jerome jokes. At least three local libraries are geared toward train buffs.

The [Union City library](#) has an extensive collection of train books, donated by former resident Dave Spencer, an engineer on the Chicago and South Bend electric line. The Iroquois library is designed in the style of a train station, with an arts-and-crafts interior and an exterior clock tower, in tribute to the GE locomotive workers in Lawrence Park.

The [Albion library](#) is in the former rest quarters for the Bessemer and Lake Erie Railroad Company, whose house rules — still posted — prohibit vulgar language, playing cards, and games of chance.

But if you like taking chances to support a good cause, buy a ticket for the raffle baskets used as fundraisers. Some libraries feature basket raffles every month. Rice Avenue does big raffles twice a year; right now, 53 enticing baskets are on display, to be raffled off later this month. At each library, I met friendly, knowledgeable librarians and staffers who are more than willing to talk about the unique features of their respective libraries. Some always knew they wanted to become librarians. Others reinvented themselves to become the town librarian and the keeper of local lore.

Blane Dessy, executive director of the Erie County Library, patronized one of the Carnegie libraries, in Pittsburgh's Oakland neighborhood, when he was a kid. "There was this complete

freedom to wander this space," he recalled. "I could read history one day or sports the next or something about sociology the next day. It was the most liberating place to learn," he said. "You could travel anywhere through books, to ancient places or to space," said Sheryl Thomas, assistant library director for Erie County. Her parents home-schooled her in Anaheim, Calif., where the local library served as her school library. She started volunteering there at age nine, shelving books. The librarians were always helpful, so she decided that's what she wanted to be, rather than pursuing her earlier ambition to be a dentist.

During middle school in Franklin, Marcia Wilkins, district consultant for the Erie County Library, also volunteered at the library, as a story-time assistant. "They needed an extra person to walk around with the scissors and the glue," she joked. She thought about a career as a creative writer or as a laser eye surgeon until she pivoted to libraries.

Ronda Nicholes, who has an accounting degree, met her husband, Bill, at the Country Fair at 705 Rice Avenue in Girard at age 18, when she was the assistant store manager. Now the former convenience store is the library and she's the main librarian.

"We are one of the hubs for Girard," she said. "If you want to learn about Girard, you come here. We try to make our [library](#) a community center. We're proud of that," she said. "It's a place where kids come after school and hang out."

People also drop off Girard memorabilia there — circus planters, fashioned to honor Dan Rice, and a baseball bat, made at a factory down the street years ago, for example.

Osborn, the Waterford librarian, is a retired teacher, the former owner of a lawn-care business and a self-published author. She draws on her journals, which she started at age nine, for her stories. She also teaches patrons how to self-publish. She designed a ruled school notebook, featuring Fort LeBoeuf history on the cover, for sale as a fundraiser. She also turned an 1887 journal by a Waterford woman, donated to the library by someone from Minnesota, into a book, *A Journal for Mary*.

Wilkins, the district consultant, said there is a genre of fiction known as "cozy mysteries," where the writer focuses on the whodunit instead of a gory murder, and libraries offer perfect settings to not only check out those books but to get comfortable.

Albion, the old railroad rest house, has a brick fireplace, decorated with local memorabilia. Thomas, the assistant Erie County director, said that while the snow is falling, it's delightful to sit by the gas-burning fireplace at the Edinboro branch, a former barn for Culbertson Farms. If you like to stock up on books at the Great American Book Sale sponsored by Friends of the Library for the Erie County system, check the websites for the independent libraries, too. They have regular book sales and they also sell used books inside the libraries.

Of course, if you have a thirst for more than just book knowledge, here are some other things I learned on my tour.

[The Corry Public Library](#), 117 W. Washington St., was built in the 1990s and is an impressive 5,800 square feet. Corry's former library at 203 N. Center St. has been transformed into the Library Bar & Grill. Old wooden shelves are stacked with books, but one of the big draws is its large selection of draft beers, according to Alexis Martin, the day manager.

The façade says "Library" in big letters and she said sometimes people who still "walk in here and want to return books."

Similarly, Wilkins, who has worked at the Corry library, remembers people calling the real library and asking about the nightly menu special.

I also learned that McCord Memorial Library was built on the site of a former tavern. That nugget of information allows me to segue into my final chapter of recommendations. Take the North East version of the Erie Food Tour, as I did after visiting McCord. You'll leave sated with the food and drink and satisfied with the lovely, engaging storytelling by tour guide Cassidy Wyman.

### **Did you know?**

Library cards for the Erie County system and for the six independent libraries are good at all of the institutions. The Albion Area Library helped to spur the decision to adopt a uniform computerized circulation system in 2005; state funding covers the cost of the shared system. Erie County's Blasco Library is open Monday through Thursday, 9 a.m. to 8:30 p.m.; Friday and Saturday, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.; and Sunday, 1 to 5 p.m.

The four Erie County Public Library branches are open Monday and Tuesday, 9 a.m. to 8 p.m., and Wednesday through Saturday, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Check [eriecountylibrary.org](http://eriecountylibrary.org) for Bookmobile stops, for the monthly calendar of events at Blasco and the branches, and for the catalogue of holdings and new books.

Visit the websites for Erie County's six independent libraries to learn about their history, hours, activities, fundraisers, and book sales. The independents are Rice Avenue Community Public Library, Girard; Albion Area Library; Waterford Public Library; Union City Public Library; Corry Public Library; and McCord Memorial Library, North East.

### **Eerie County Boo(k)s!**

Looking for a spooky book or a Halloween event?

Erie's county and independent libraries have great displays of scary books and videos for patrons of all ages, and there are lots of fun events to heighten your frights.

Highlights include:

"Exploring the Paranormal," by the Eerie Voices Paranormal Society, Iroquois Library Community Room, Saturday, Oct. 12, 12:45-2:45 p.m. No registration required.

"Mystery at the Library," a murder mystery theater production, for ages 14 and up, at the Corry Public Library, Friday, Oct. 18, 6 to 8 p.m. Pre-registration required. Patrons should wear costumes. Call 814-664-7611 for more information.

"Escape the Haunted Mansion," for ages 13-18, Lincoln Community Center, Tuesday, Oct. 29, 6:15 and 7 p.m. Registration required at [events.erialibrary.org](http://events.erialibrary.org) or by calling 814-451-7085.

Favorite picks at this time of year by Erie County Library staff members include *Murder at the Library of Congress*, by Margaret Truman; anything by Agatha Christie; *Lirael* by Garth Nix; and the *National Treasure* film with Nicolas Cage. For kids, try *Arthur Locked in the Library*, by former Millcreek resident Marc Brown.

### **Make a U(niversity) Turn**

If you love libraries, check out the local college ones, too.

Pennsylvania residents are eligible to apply for library cards for the Penn State library system. Pressed for time? Visit [psu.short-edition.com](http://psu.short-edition.com) to read very short stories by Penn State writers. You can also print out stories, pegged as one-minute, three-minute or five-minute reads, at the Short Edition kiosk in the lobby of the John M. Lilley Library at Penn State Behrend.

Residents from Erie, Crawford and Warren counties can apply for borrowing privileges at the Baron-Forness Library at Edinboro University of Pennsylvania. Guest Wi-Fi access is available

throughout the building, and the library has collections of student, faculty, alumni and community art displayed.

The Edinboro library is also the site of the "Uncomfortable Conversations" panel discussions. Mercyhurst University celebrated the grand reopening of its library on Oct. 7. The renovations include a collection of nine built-in glass display cases featuring historic documents, photographs, and other items from the collection of Gov. Tom Ridge and his wife, Michele Ridge, former Erie County library director. The public is welcome to visit the display. Gannon University's Nash Library was rededicated in January 2018. The Urban Brew Coffee Shop inside the library is open to the public.

*Liz Allen — a retired newspaper editor — says the only drawback to working in a library is that she doesn't have enough time to actually read. You can reach her at [lizallenerie@gmail.com](mailto:lizallenerie@gmail.com).*

## **Mysterious Minerva is back in Erie - By the Editorial Board**

Newspaper October 4, 2019 | Erie Times-News (PA)

Section: PA Opinion

454 Words | Readability: Lexile: 1110, grade level(s): 9 10 11-12

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### **WEB STORY**

Long time gone: The full tale of her journey remains a mystery, perhaps unsolvable. But it's good to see Minerva back at the **Erie County Public Library** where she belongs.

The statue of the Roman goddess of wisdom — just over 5 feet, 8 inches tall and weighing 150 to 200 pounds — had been missing for 77 years. First installed in 1899 in the original Erie Public Library building on Perry Square, it vanished in the early 1940s.

As Ed Palattella reported, no one seems to know precisely how or when the statue disappeared, which has been the source of much speculation over the years. But Minerva was found in North Carolina and returned to Erie with the assistance of Erie lawyer David Ungerman and a relative who knew the person in whose residence it was stored.

The statue is worse for the wear and is missing its right arm. It's on display for now in a glass case on the second floor of Blasco Library. The nonprofit Friends of the **Erie County Public Library** hopes to raise money to restore it.

NEWS

# Library Will Offer Social Worker Help to Patrons

Peer navigators and interns will help connect patrons to social service providers.  
Monday, September 30th 2019, 5:29 PM EDT by Jonathan Skinner



The Erie County Public Library will be offering peer specialists and interns in-house to provide social worker services to patrons. The peer navigators will connect patrons with service providers that can assist with their needs, such as food insecurity, finances, housing, and more.

"They'll be able to speak to trained individuals who can connect them to housing services, food services, mental health, counseling, and connect them into the system so they can get the best information that they need," Sheryl Thomas, the assistant director of the library, said. "Because that's what libraries are really about, connecting to information and services, so it's just a way of enhancing what we do."

Patrons will also have the chance to develop Wellness Recovery Action Plans and learn more about community resources. The interns will come from the Department of Social Work at Edinboro University, which has opened an internship opportunity to students pursuing a bachelor's or master's degree in social work.

The services will be offered six days per week from 9 a.m. to 8 p.m., Monday through Thursday, and 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. Friday and Saturday.

## **The Minerva Statue is back at the Blasco Library after more than 50 years**

### **LOCAL NEWS**

**Posted: Oct 3, 2019 / 10:48 AM EDT / Updated: Oct 3, 2019 / 02:23 PM EDT**

The Minerva Statue is back.

The historical statue that vanished from the Erie Public Library in the 60's is now back in Erie County's possession.

The Minerva Statue was donated to the Erie County Library in 1899. She was a prominent feature in the library that attracted many people.

In the 1960's, Minerva disappeared and no one knew where she was. More than 50 years later, Minerva is finally back in Erie County in the Blasco Library after a family decided to donate her.

Due to the wear and tear on the Minerva Statue, library officials are asking the community for donations to help with the restoration.

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## Statue from Decades Ago Returns to Erie's Blasco Library

About a year ago, a local family called the library, saying it had the statue and wanted to donate it back.

Thursday, October 3rd 2019, 6:52 PM EDT



Erie's Blasco Library on Friday welcomed back a statue that disappeared decades ago.

A statue of the Roman goddess Minerva stood in Erie's downtown library from 1899 until 1942 when it disappeared.

About a year ago, a local family called the library, saying it had the statue and wanted to donate it back. After tracing Minerva's history and figuring out how to move her, librarians created a special display and showed off the centerpiece.

Minerva is right at home at the library; she's the Roman goddess of wisdom.

The Friends of the Erie County Library plan to fix the statue. They are looking into having the repair work done on-site, so the public can watch the repair process.

"The original statue had a spear [and] had a snake around her feet," said Andrew Miller, librarian at the Blasco Library. "You can see those pieces are missing. We'll be thinking about how we can keep it preserved the way she is or maybe recreate those pieces."

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:** October 11, 2019

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## **Erie County children’s librarians to receive awards at Library Association Conference**

Erie, PA – Three Erie County Public Library children’s librarians will receive a Carolyne L. Smith Best Practices Award in the category of Design & Display at the Pennsylvania Library Association Annual Conference taking place at Erie’s Bayfront Convention Center, Oct. 13-16.

Margaret Ignasiak, Elizabeth Martin and Amberlee McGaughey will accept their award Monday, Oct. 14, at 9 a.m. at the Carolyne L. Smith Best Practices Awards Program session. The winning display, featured at Blasco Memorial Library in November 2018, encouraged civic engagement and voting.

The conference will be hosted in Erie for the first time in more than 30 years and is anticipating more than 400 attendees. The library community will receive a variety of continuing education, supplier resources and networking opportunities at the four-day event.

Eight Erie County Public Library staff members will be presenting, and Blasco Library is providing a registration-only lunch and tour of the Idea Lab, which is sold out.

“The Library staff is very excited to participate in this conference and to act as hosts,” said Erie County Public Library Executive Director Blane Dessy. “In addition, the Library’s Friends and Foundation are also engaged in making this a memorable experience for everyone visiting Erie. The Erie County Public Library is a leader in many ways, and we’re happy to share that with conference attendees.”

The Erie Conference Planning Committee, led by staff from the Pennsylvania Library Association – which includes six Erie County Public Library staff – is working to highlight Erie-area attractions by offering several excursions for attendees, such as a breakfast tour of Presque Isle on the Victorian Princess, the Erie Art Museum, and a wine trail.

“We welcome the Pennsylvania Library Association and its 400-plus attendees with open arms and are thrilled the conference is taking place in our bountiful Erie County,” said Erie County Executive Kathy Dahlkemper. “I am proud of our Erie County Public Library and the services it provides. Congratulations to the award winners.”

The Pennsylvania Library Association is the oldest professional library organization serving all types of libraries throughout the Commonwealth.

###

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:** October 3, 2019

**CONTACT:**

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## **Erie County Public Library celebrates Minerva's homecoming**

Erie, PA – The Erie County Public Library and County Executive Kathy Dahlkemper announced today that after 77 years, the statue of Roman mythology's Minerva has finally returned home. Minerva resided in the original Erie Public Library location (what is now the federal courthouse on South Park Row) from 1899 until 1942. The statue was a prominent feature, greeting patrons and standing as symbol of all the wisdom the library contained.

Several renovations and location changes led to her whereabouts being lost to history. A series of local newspaper articles in the 1980s ignited public interest in her case, but no answers were unearthed.

In 2018, an individual in possession of Minerva contacted the library and expressed interest in donating the statue. Today, Minerva is displayed in its rightful place, the Erie County's Blasco Memorial Library.

To celebrate the statue's return, Erie County Public Library will host a series of events, programs and reading initiatives tied to Minerva's purview. Each month features a different topic attributed to Minerva:

- November: Commerce
- December: Wisdom
- January: Strategy & War
- February: Medicine
- March: Arts & Crafts
- April: Poetry
- May: "Goddess of 1,000 Works"

The homecoming celebrations will include a Roman festival unique to Minerva – the Quinquatria – to be held in March.

To involve the community in "wisdom's return," the library will solicit input on the future placement of the statue within the library, open a call to artists for design of the statue's pedestal, and hold public art installations.

Minerva's 100-plus years of traveling have left the statue in a state of wear. The library is planning to work with a local conservator to complete work on the statue and conduct much-needed repair. To support this conservation work, the Friends of the Library group will undertake fundraising efforts. Individuals looking to contribute toward Minerva's restoration, or become more involved with the celebration, are invited to contact the Friends of the Library.

For more information, contact Andrew Miller, adult services manager at the Erie County Public Library, at amiller@eriecountypa.gov or 814-451-6932.

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