



# Library Advisory Board Meeting Monday, January 22, 2024 Via Zoom

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/83819780963?pwd=OFkraXEyamdRL2tEbFNXcDJZOWswZz09>

District 1- Vacant	District 4- Howells	District 7- Aoh (President)
District 2- Rosenthal	District 5- Almorsy	At-Large- Murphy (Secretary)
District 3- Tempestini	District 6- Vacant	At-Large- Groves (Vice-President)

## AGENDA

1. **Call to Order**
2. **Approval of Minutes – December 21, 2023**
3. **Public Comment- (limit to 15 minutes)**
4. **Library Reports**
  - a. Report of the Director- John Euliano
  - b. Review of Financial Report- Deana
  - c. Statistical and Other Reports- John
  - d. Report of District Consultant-Jessica Church
5. **Board and Committee Reports**
  - a. Report of County Council Liaison- Councilman Horton
  - b. Report of Friends of the Library- Karen Miller
  - c. Report of Erie Regional Library Foundation- Patrick Miller
6. **Unfinished Business-**
  - a. Board Work Session Agenda
7. **New Business**

None
8. **Adjournment**
9. **Appendix**
  - a. Announcements
  - b. News Articles

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### **Connections-**

**Outreach Social Media Campaign-** Outreach Services is conducting a social media campaign this January related to New Year’s resolutions. Each day, a potential “New Year’s Resolution” is featured accompanied by three ways that an ECPL Library Card can help the reader achieve their resolution. From outreach services manager Alyssa Johnson, “I want to share with patrons the very specific ways that a library card can help them achieve their goals, in ways that are likely surprising to the reader. There is truly something for everyone here at ECPL but with the volume of services we offer, it’s almost an insider secret to know all the ways our library card can help; we are so much more than books on a shelf. I hope that potential patrons will see these posts and read about the surprising benefits that are free with an ECPL library card.” The long format posts have had multiples of engagement over prior short-format posts and have been well received by our followers. We invite all board members to please follow our page and engage with our posts, as it helps new social media users discover our content and (hopefully) become new library patrons.

**Career Online High School-** The Career Online High School (COHS) program that offers library users an opportunity to earn a high school diploma from an accredited institution via online coursework has seen a recent uptick in interest. We have a new student who completed the prerequisite work and is enrolled in a field of study and other users have expressed an interest in signing up to work on the prerequisite classes.

### **Youth Services Update**

- The Youth Services Department has been looking at the Children’s Library spaces with a critical eye and moving things around to create age-friendly “neighborhoods” where children can more independently interact with age appropriate resources without fear of small hands finding their way to heavy, fragile items.
- The Children’s Library team is working on creating a collaborative community art space where children will be able to contribute to the creation of a mural-sized piece of artwork. We plan to change this mural seasonally.
- The public computers in the Children’s Library have been relocate to a space within easy view of the Youth Services manager office and the Children’s reference desk. We believe this will allow for safer independent computer usage for our young patrons.
- Plans for the Summer Library Program are underway. This year, the Y.S. department will be developing their own SLP theme which promotes literacy, community connection, and healthy habits – Step Out And Read! (S.O.A.R.). Partnerships with other county departments (the health department, for example) as well as outside organizations will be leveraged to reach as many community families as possible. A grant application in partnership with the Friends is currently in progress which will hopefully fund some larger community events.
- Jessica, the new Youth Service Manager, is currently reviewing the Children’s Library offerings for DEI potential and gaps, with plans to introduce new diversity-related programming such as bi-lingual storytimes, expanded languages and cultural representation on the library’s Dial-A-Story line, and funding possibilities to provide ASL interpreters for larger summer events. A review of current policies and procedures in Y.S. department to identify gaps and inefficiencies is also underway.

## **Collections-**

Nothing new to report.

## **Capacity-**

### **Idea Lab Shutdown and First Quarter 2024**

Every year the Idea Lab closes for the first two weeks of the year, in order to give staff time to work on new skills, share ideas with coworkers, do in depth machine maintenance, and develop new projects and classes. This year staff worked on:

- A reboot of the Cricut classes
- Dual color 3D printing (and a significant retraining on the 3D printing software which has changed drastically since the Lab's inception)
- Launch of the print and cut machine
- Photo editing, vector file conversion, and Serger training and practice
- Clerk trainings for Canva and the Print and Cut machine

Staff also reflected on the first full year of private programs, updating material prices, and establishing 2024 goals.

2024 will bring a refresh of the Media Lab space, which hasn't been significantly updated since the Idea Lab started. In consultation with Community Access Media, we'll be assessing and updating our equipment and classes, while collaborating on some hands on recording and photography programs (taught by CAM experts). Our first Maker in Residence for 2024 will offer classes and staff trainings for music production and will occur in the spring.

**Library Director-** The position is in the final stages of approval. Once approved at the executive level, the position will post. As all positions, the search extends across multiple job search platforms to help reach qualified candidates.

**Keystone Grant Project-** work continues on the security camera upgrade at Blasco. To date, 23 of the 30 camera cables have been installed. Estimated installation of cameras is first or second week of February. The estimated completion date is February 23. Once installed, Blasco will have a complete updated camera system on both floors in addition to exterior cameras.

b. [Review of Financial Report- Deana](#)

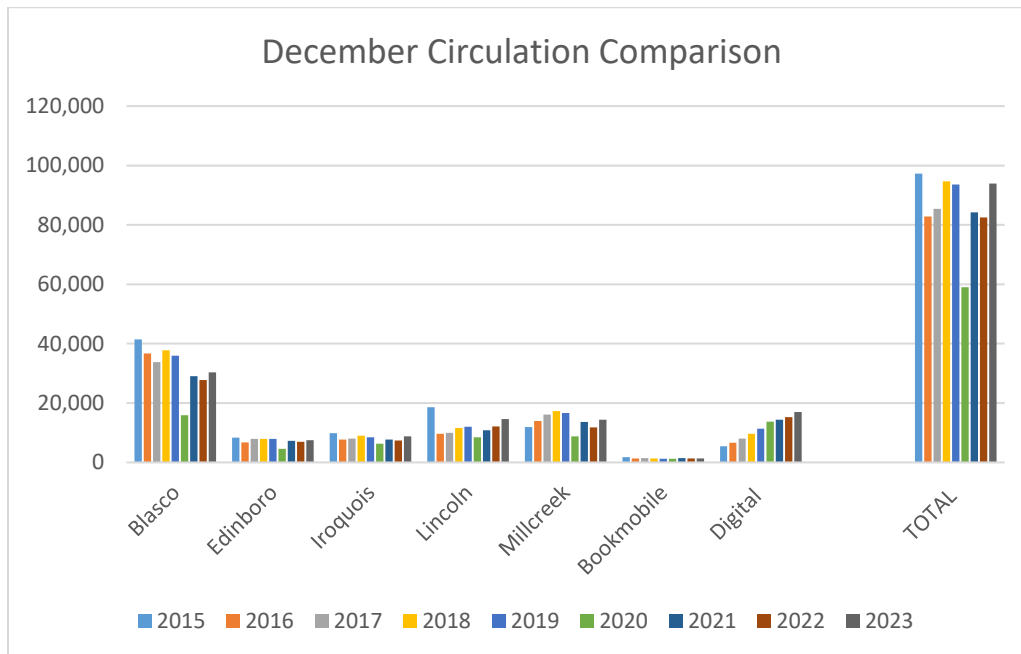
No report this month

c. [Statistical and Other Reports- John](#)

December 2023 Statistics

Numbers Snapshot

- **381** new cards issued (↑18%), including **61** e-cards
- **93,917** Circulation is (↑12%) from December 2022
- **2023** circulation statistics for December exceeded **2019 Pre-Pandemic** statistics.



	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
<b>Blasco</b>	41,436	36,711	33,776	37,808	35,942	15,909	29,008	27,702	30,335
<b>Edinboro</b>	8,298	6,743	7,949	7,933	7,960	4,538	7,295	6,917	7,492
<b>Iroquois</b>	9,903	7,654	8,039	8,995	8,423	6,330	7,727	7,358	8,788
<b>Lincoln</b>	18,606	9,648	9,926	11,617	12,028	8,473	10,788	12,077	14,641
<b>Millcreek</b>	11,863	13,980	16,095	17,297	16,645	8,808	13,614	11,825	14,339
<b>Bookmobile</b>	1,745	1,391	1,502	1,315	1,226	1,252	1,444	1,354	1,360
<b>Digital</b>	5,389	6,647	8,066	9,666	11,337	13,718	14,369	15,250	16,962
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>97,240</b>	<b>82,774</b>	<b>85,353</b>	<b>94,631</b>	<b>93,561</b>	<b>59,028</b>	<b>84,245</b>	<b>82,483</b>	<b>93,917</b>

d. Report of District Consultant-Jessica Church

**District Services Report as of January 16, 2024**

**Updates for ECPL LAB Report**

**Submitted by Jessica Church, District Consultant**

**State Aid**

Last week, the District received its State Aid allotment. Local libraries and County Coordination Aid should come soon hopefully, but we have yet to receive word on a specific date.

**Interlibrary Loan Delivery**

We continue to move ahead with changes in interlibrary loan and interlibrary delivery services. With the increasing costs of shipping, we are solidifying plans to initiate a test run of delivery in Crawford County and continue to work on the changes needed to continue services for the libraries of the Public Libraries of Erie County.

**Annual State Reports**

The Office of Commonwealth Libraries intends on opening the platform for 2023 data in early February to submit figures for the annual State report. Data will be due to District Consultants for review by mid-March. Directors and applicable staff are encouraged to attend the trainings and review all resources. District Consultants and System Administrators will work with their libraries to navigate this year's round of changes.

**District Liaison**

Abbey Lukiewski will replace Ed Lupico as our District Liaison to the Office of Commonwealth Libraries. She will now be liaison to all 29 districts in the state. OCL continues to restructure communications, and it is their hope that if all district-related business works through one person, they will receive the same information. We are also encouraged to go to the topic-specific contact for other OCL guidance, such as State Aid or Keystone grants.

**DAC( District Advisory Council) Board Representative Needed**

**5. Board and Committee Reports**

- a. Report of County Council Liaison- Councilman Horton
- b. Report of Friends of the Library- Karen Miller
- c. Report of Erie Regional Library Foundation- Patrick Miller

**6. Unfinished Business-**

- a. Board Work Session Agenda

The Library Advisory Board workshop is scheduled for Saturday, February 10 from 9am-12pm. Workshop agenda was sent for review and discussion.

**7. New Business**

None

8. Adjournment

9. Appendix

a. Announcements

-Next meeting is Monday, February 26, 2024 at noon via zoom

b. News Articles

Macaronikid.com articles- Kara shared a nice article from macaroni kid from December 14, 2023  
<https://erie.macaronikid.com/articles/5e85070a12d3fd2016334250/5-picks-for-free-library-fun-this-week>.

ARTICLES

## 5 Picks For Free Library Fun This Week

Erie County Public Library branches offer programming for kids of all ages

By Kara Murphy  
December 14, 2023



# Letters to the editor - Gannon water research project is a good fit for Blasco



January 14, 2024 | Erie Times-News (PA)

Page: B2 | Section: News

623 Words | Readability: Lexile: 1130, grade level(s): 9 10 11-12



Read News Document



I am a regular **library** patron. It all started when my daughter (now 11) discovered the joy of reading. I quickly realized my house and my budget could not keep up with her ravenous reading. We not only use the **library** for books. We have attended classes involving the Cricut, a photography class, a block party and my daughter loves the 3-D printer. Modern libraries need to supply books, of course, but they need to inspire too.

I think the Gannon University water research endeavor is a perfect fit for an institution that should educate and inspire the general public. One critic said that fish tanks do not belong in the **library**. You better tell that to the Millcreek branch because they have a fish tank.

Do sewing machines, Cricut machines, and a Glowforge belong in a **library**? You can find all that in more in the Makerspace. I believe only 3.5% of space will be taken up by Gannon. I have visited the **library** at various times — weekdays, weekends, evenings — and there has always been ample space for patrons, so I think the **library** can afford to lose 3.5% of their space.

Change is scary but it can be inspiring too.

# Gannon president: Public will benefit from water research center at Blasco Library

December 21, 2023 | Erie Times-News: Web Edition Articles (PA)

Author/Byline: Walter Iwanenko | Section: Opinion

1529 Words | Readability: Lexile: 1220, grade level(s): 11-12

[Read News Document](#)

The Blasco **Library** is a community treasure. I think we can agree on that.

I also believe a Great Lakes Research and Education Center in Blasco **Library** will be an exceptional community asset. It is an ideal fit for Gannon, for Erie, for our bayfront, and for our **library**.

The educational value and added benefits of our project go well beyond the research and learning for our students. This center and Gannon's Environaut docked just yards away, will serve as an addition to the **library**, enhance programming for families and children, offer tourism ventures, and support the core values of Blasco **Library** — Responsiveness, Partnership, Diversity, and Dialogue.

Some may not currently agree, but I've learned in the past two months that opinions turn positive once someone understands the true scope and intent of this partnership.

A community learning asset

The idea of our bayfront educational center originated more than a year ago as a way to connect our \$24 million Project NePTWNE initiative to the research our faculty and guests (including many regional high school students) do aboard our Environaut research vessel.

The vision then — as it remains now — is to create a lab near the vessel for researchers to quickly begin their analysis without having to transport fresh materials. Our experience with welcoming young students aboard the Environaut led to the idea of making interpretive displays and the practical relevance of the research accessible not only to them, but to the broader public for greater positive impact. The new interactive center will accelerate the understanding of the interconnectedness of our lives and the environment around us for our Erie residents and those that visit Erie and the center, and act as a tourism touchpoint on a burgeoning bayfront.

The Blasco **Library** did not initially present itself as a site option. The original plan was to locate the center in the old Union Fish Co. building, however that turned out to not be a viable long-term option.

Upon hearing this, Erie County Executive Brenton Davis suggested the **library** as a potential location. That idea triggered several meetings that began in June 2023 and stretched into fall involving Blasco **Library** personnel, county officials and County Council

members, and members of the library's advisory board and others to determine the interest and feasibility of such a partnership. Many individuals and groups were brought into the dialogue and had the opportunity to share enthusiasm, guidance, concerns, and support.

Then-Erie County Library Director Karen Pierce discussed the potential partnership at the Erie County Library Advisory Board on Sept. 28 and the Erie Times-News/GoErie.com published a story about it on Oct. 5.

About this time, Gannon and the county completed a lease agreement that was presented to County Council. It was first heard at County Council's finance committee on Oct. 12. Historically, County Council utilizes a resolution to approve agreements between the county executive and other entities. When questioned by a councilman, County Council's solicitor said this was the appropriate process to follow for a lease. Resolutions like this one are customarily reviewed at a finance meeting and then advanced to the full council for public discussion and a vote, which can happen in a single meeting.

The finance committee on Oct. 12 advanced it to County Council's regular meeting on Oct. 17, where it was approved by a 5-2 vote.

My point:

- \* Gannon simply observed the county's process.
- \* This was discussed openly in advance. Stories were published about it.
- \* An extensive series of meetings were held with the resounding support of the leadership of the Blasco Library and others across the community to determine feasibility.
- \* Several groups were engaged on the subject.
- \* This will add programming to the library, and Gannon is unaware of any plans for reductions in programs.
- \* The library was suggested after the initial proposed location was deemed unviable and is a better fit.

Gannon is not 'taking over the library'

Though I hear the concerns that have been voiced, it seems there are other issues underpinning the opposition and feelings, and the voices being heard the loudest. Based on the realities we know, we are confident this partnership with the library is good for Erie, our neighbors and families, and our region. We intend to prove this in the years ahead.

The idea that Gannon "is taking over the library" is untrue and stated to create concern

and opposition.

We are renting 3,280 square feet of a 90,000-square-foot facility — about 3.5%. The lease provides Gannon the occasional use of the auditorium and other spaces, which is the same access that any other county citizen or organization has at their request. We all can use the public space of our library equally and fairly.

Additional statements are being made that Gannon is supplanting the children's library and other programming. This is also absolutely not true. Our plan is to add children's programs and partner with the children's librarians to create additional programming and learning opportunities.

The location of the education center's interpretive exhibits will be where the internet lab's answer desk is currently located. That desk and the internet lab are returning to their original location on the second floor, where they were before the pandemic and the need for social distancing.

Our future lab space will create no functional loss to the library or loss of public access or programming. That space is currently closed off to the public behind a steel door and is used for offices and storage. The offices are not being removed and have no connection to other decisions that may be made regarding library staffing.

Our lab area and its adjoining space will be open to the public. For free. And additional programming for community members, families, citizens, and visitors will be offered — not less.

My point: We are adding to the public's usable space in the library and enhancing opportunities to ignite, excite, and inspire learning, which is in step with Blasco Library, not separate from it.

We will bring programming to the library for children and families at no cost to the county. This will include more than just environmental, or science programs associated with the research and education center. For example, we have the county's most advanced makerspace in our I-HACK building. Our faculty and students could become invaluable resources for those using the existing makerspace at the Blasco Library. Partnership opportunities are many and just in their infancy.

We've heard the questions about the cost of the lease, which pays the county \$22,956 a year plus water and utility costs. This space does not generate income for Gannon. We are offering services to the community by providing free education to the public, which is core to our mission. The lease amount reflects this while also reducing the county's cost of operating the library.

Public libraries are under stress, and Blasco, like many others, is working to regain patron attendance following the COVID-19 pandemic. We believe our education center, which is estimated to cost about \$1.6 million, will help in this regard.

Even before the pandemic, library visits were wavering — totaling 344,545 in 2018 and dropping to 337,256 in 2019. Then came COVID and social distancing and forced shutdowns. Visits fell to 124,664 in 2020 and in 2021 they increased slightly to 134,251. In 2022, with life returning to normal, visits rose to 206,551. Through October of 2023, visits have reached 213,557.

We humbly believe a selective partnership with a strong national higher education institution is a benefit to the future of our beloved library and in meeting its vision to connect the community with resources and opportunities to discover, learn, and innovate to positively transform our community.

Why downtown on the bayfront?

Our answer lies in the original intent of this project: create a location close to our vessel on the bayfront that is aligned with our efforts to facilitate growth in the bayfront constellation of tourism and economic development assets, contributing to the transformation of our Erie community.

We believe the Great Lakes Research and Education Center will augment the library and will in no way negatively impact it or the value to our community, only positively add to it. We understand and defend individuals' rights to be heard. We continue to meet with those who have questions and concerns and want to discuss them respectfully, honestly, openly and with accurate information at hand. We've found that respectful conversation leads to common understanding. The greater majority of those we've heard from are in support of the partnership. If you support it, we ask that you speak up about it.

We will embrace and listen to the input and opinions of our neighbors as we move forward with this critically important project. The lease has been executed. We have RFPs out to architects, and we look forward in the new year to hearing the public's thoughts on what they'd like to see in the learning center. We expect to have the research center open by the end of 2024 and to welcoming you all to enjoy the space and programs.

In the long run, we believe everyone will see this as good for the community. Thank you for facilitating the dialogue and for listening to all sides of the story.

Walter Iwanenko, Ph.D., is president of Gannon University. Learn more about Project NePTWNE at: <https://www.gannon.edu/about-gannon/project-neptwne/>

# Murky process and misuse of a public asset - why we oppose Gannon's Blasco Library lease

December 22, 2023 | Erie Times-News: Web Edition Articles (PA)

Author/Byline: Anna McCartney | Section: Opinion

1154 Words | Readability: Lexile: 1260, grade level(s): 11-12

[Read News Document](#)

On behalf of scores of citizens fighting to preserve our public **library**, I sincerely apologize to anyone disturbed by our appeals on two Sundays outside of St. Peter's Cathedral and St Patrick's Parish.

Peacefully passing out information before Mass, we let people know that Gannon University, owned by the Catholic Diocese of Erie, is embroiled in controversy because of the university's stealth plans to lease space at Blasco **Library**.

We never intended to offend or inconvenience anyone.

But our government leaders have repeatedly shown no inclination to listen to the people or, it turns out, even to **Library** Advisory Board, as emails released after a Right-to-Know request reveal.

Government at all levels must be transparent. That is not the case with Gannon's lease with Erie County. Nor is it the case according to recent public statements that Gannon President Walter Iwanenko, Ph.D., and Bishop Lawrence T. Persico have released.

The voices of Erie people, including churchgoers, are critical to change this disturbing trend of leaving the public out of such decisions.

Along with other concerned **library** patrons, I helped to create Keep Our **Library** Public. The issue goes beyond Gannon's agreement with Erie County to move into public space at Blasco **Library**. We believe the very future of our public **library** system is at risk.

Across the country, state legislatures are introducing bills to cut **library** budgets or ban certain books or categories of books — or all of the above.

Erie County government is following suit. First, Erie County Executive Brenton Davis meddled in a book display at Blasco.

He then silenced **library** employees, making them afraid they'd be fired if they spoke out about the **library** director's decision to move a Pride Month display to a less prominent position. He even tried to impose a gag order on members of the all-volunteer **Library** Advisory Board, several of whom resigned in protest after news about

the display became public.

At the same time, the county executive was secretly negotiating to lease part of Blasco Memorial **Library**, a public trust, to Gannon, a private, sectarian institution, for Gannon's Great Lakes Research & Education Center, part of Project NePTWNE.

Davis further demoralized **library** staffers and patrons by proposing to eliminate **library** jobs.

Dr. Iwanenko has written that "opinions (about the project) turn positive once someone understands the true scope and intent of this partnership."

Dr. Iwanenko is wrong, in my opinion. More citizens are being galvanized to fight against the Blasco lease, as more details emerge about the ongoing lack of transparency.

We have made clear that an research center focused on the Great Lakes has merit.

But placing Gannon's research center inside a public **library** is at odds with why public libraries exist — for members of the public, not for private institutions.

After World War II decimated our town in Italy, my family left to come to Pittsburgh for economic opportunities, education and safety.

Our grandfather, who had come from Italy years earlier, insisted that education was vital for our survival as a free people. Visiting the public **library** and reading newspapers played a huge role in helping us achieve those goals.

With a degree in science education, I followed a career that would make him proud. One was serving as Newspaper in Education Literacy coordinator at the Erie Times-News. Putting newspapers in the hands of students and actively involving them in issues that affected Erie made them better readers and citizens. As part of my effort, I wrote the Tuesday "Learn About Your Environment" page in the Erie Times-News for 15 years. I was also an environmental educator for 10 of those years with Pennsylvania Sea Grant.

What really disturbs me about this project is the lack of opportunity for public feedback before Erie County Council approved the lease Oct. 17. Neither County Council nor Gannon set up public forums to explain the project, including details about terms of the 25-year lease.

Dr. Iwanenko contends that there was extensive public notice about Gannon's plans and plenty of time for the public to ask questions.

He is not looking at the same timeline I've documented.

On Oct. 5, the Erie Times-News ran its first story about the lease, "Will a water research center be built in Blasco **Library**?"

Reporter A.J. Rao quoted Karen Pierce, **library** director, who was enthusiastic about the project but claimed, "We're still in a preliminary stage." She also said the project was "not set in stone."

Gannon spokesperson Doug Oathout said the university was "still exploring the idea."

Who could fault us from assuming that there would be plenty of time to learn more about the project's scope?

Yet 11 days after that story, newspaper and GoErie.com readers read this story by Rao: "Only one vote away. Council to decide on adding water research center at Blasco **Library**."

Questions also remain about whether County Council violated Pennsylvania's Sunshine Act by bringing the lease to council's finance committee at the last minute of Oct. 12. Again, as Rao reported, "Not only was the resolution introduced at a finance committee meeting held just three business days prior to the vote but the resolution was not listed on the committee meeting's published agenda. Indeed, it was added to the agenda during the committee meeting itself."

Some people did have advance knowledge of the project, including the **Library** Advisory Board, as Dr. Iwanenko correctly points out. He does not say, however, that the chair of the Advisory Board is a biology professor at Gannon (who abstained from voting on the project) or acknowledge that the **library** board was in flux after three members resigned to protest the relocation of the "Read with Pride" display.

More damning, in my view, Iwanenko doesn't reveal that two advisory board members wrote to Davis on Oct. 13 with their concerns regarding the proposed establishment of the Great Lakes Research & Education Center within the Blasco **Library**. They indicated they thought further communication and discussion was important before going forward and that gathering public input was needed.

Dr. Iwanenko says that members of the community will be involved in helping to craft plans for the Great Lakes Center.

Too little, too late.

He boasts that the center will be open to the public, for free, but fails to note that Gannon, which owns the second-largest amount of tax-exempt property in the city of Erie, received \$1.3 million in federal aid from the American Rescue Plan to pursue this project.

More: Gannon president: Public will benefit from water research center at Blasco **Library**

More: Liz Allen: What price can we put on our public **library**'s Erie values and heritage?

We are happy to introduce Dr. Iwanenko to local people with impeccable environmental

credentials who can help Gannon find the ideal spot for the Great Lakes Research & Education Center at a place other than Blasco **Library**.

Keep Our **Library** Public is collecting signatures daily from Erie people and Gannon alums who would like Gannon and Erie County to gracefully but quickly terminate this lease and find a new location for the research center.

Sign our petition at [change.org/wronglocation](https://change.org/wronglocation).

Anna McCartney is a resident of North East.