

ANNUAL REPORT 2020

“Connecting Our Community”

Avon Grove Library

117 Rosehill Avenue, West Grove, PA 19390

Phone 610-869-2004 / Fax 610-869-2957

www.avongrovelibrary.org

Lori A. Schwabenbauer, MSLS, Director

A Member of the Chester County Library System

What can you say about 2020?

OUR MISSION

We foster lifelong learning and deliver enriching experiences in a safe, welcoming environment accessible to all.

OUR VISION

We transform our community, connecting people with each other and the wider world.

For all of us, 2020 was a year like no other. . .

Dealing with a pandemic meant that Avon Grove Library had to adapt to new realities in order to serve our community. We are proud that we were able to keep our vision for community transformation at the heart of our work, fulfilling our mission to the best of our ability throughout the year. We closed the building for four months, March 13-July 13, and then re-opened carefully with limited capacity and an eye to keeping all our staff and customers safe.

Our top three accomplishments:

First, we **adapted quickly**, providing virtual services starting only one week after the shutdown began.

Second, we **expanded our online services** to include contactless book reservation and pickup, bigger collections of ebooks and other materials, and new virtual programs from online storytimes to crafting sessions to book club meetings to trivia nights.

Third, we **re-opened as soon as we safely could** to offer in-person as well as virtual services and resources, making sure to protect everyone with plexiglass barriers, extra cleaning routines, and regular use of masks and hand sanitizer.



PROGRAMS FOR OUR CHILDREN:

Where Avon Grove Library still truly excels

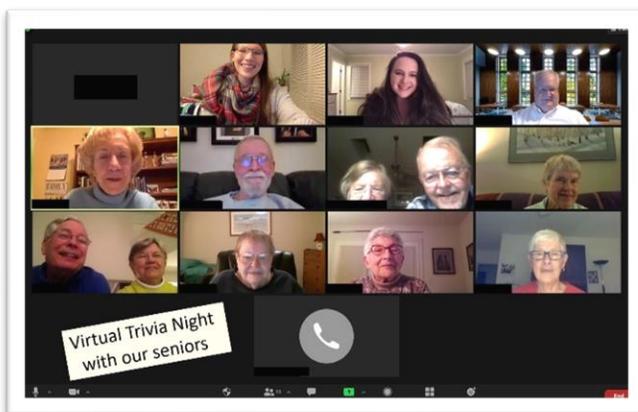
In 2020 we were among the **top libraries in Chester County** for total number of programs for children ages birth to 11, despite the four-month Covid-19 shutdown. Our 376 children's programs drew nearly 8,400 attendees over the course of the year.

We adapted quickly to pandemic conditions, offering our first virtual program only one week after the March 13 shutdown began. We saw several good outcomes from the transition to virtual programming: attendees were not limited by geography, so we began to get participants from outside our usual service area; we weren't limited by time of day, so we could experiment with ideas such as **Bedtime Storytime**; we provided a "virtual classroom" experience for younger children, who were proud to have their own "classroom" in imitation of their older siblings; and our programming staff members expanded and honed their range of skills.

Programs for our kids remained diverse. We branched out to offer not only **virtual storytimes**, but also online **crafting sessions**, **cooking classes**, **family trivia nights**, and other programs. Once we were able to begin easing restrictions, we started offering **outdoor programs** as well as weekly touch-free **grab-and-go craft projects**, alternating between crafts for children and for adults.



Our children's programs included STEM activities that focused on building science, technology, engineering, and math skills. As an example, the monthly **LEGO Challenge** continued during the shutdown by having children upload photos of their creations from home.



Our flagship **Summer Reading Program** was offered virtually in 2020, and we also included adults for the first time. It proved so popular that we organized an all-ages **Fall Reading Program** as a followup.

For teens, we created the **Teen Advisory Board** to allow students to earn volunteer hours by assisting with online programs and social media posts. We hosted **virtual book clubs for teens and adults**.

A SILVER LINING: KUDOS FROM THE COMMUNITY

Serving thousands of patrons in the middle of a pandemic was certainly a challenge, but it had its rewards. One of them was the gratitude and support we received from people all over our service area – from West Grove Borough to Avondale, from London Grove to Franklin Township, and everywhere in between. Comments were made by email, in person, even on Facebook...

"I just want to offer a great, BIG thank you for all the wonderful services that the Avon Grove Library provides to our community. During this time of Covid 19 and isolation, I honestly don't know what I would have done to occupy my time without the services of your library. Thank you!!"
- Marta B., London Grove Township

"During COVID is when we have realized how absolutely essential the library is. With two young readers at home in virtual school, the library has been the best resource for us. . . The best part of the library experience though is definitely the PEOPLE! So friendly, helpful and professional too. I can't say enough good things about how great it's been to have the library as a resource for our family. Thank you all so much for helping us teach our kids in these crazy times and beyond!"

- Larry A., New London

K [redacted] West Grove Area Message Board
2h · 🌐

The past year has been extremely challenging for almost all of us and there are many, many workers who deserve to be thanked, but I want to recognize one group that has made a difference for me and my family: the staff at the Avon Grove Library. Chester County Libraries are a federated system and they have their own governing board at each individual library. That means that each library has made its own decisions about services. The AG Library has been open since June. Some local libraries are still doing limited hours and curbside pick up only. Our library has done online storytimes, craft pick ups, promoted online services they have available and much more. The library has been a bright spot for us and I want to public express my appreciation to the board, staff, and volunteers who make it work even during challenging times.

Please note that I am not suggesting other workers not be recognized, but want to highlight one group. If there are others you'd like to thank, I'd encourage you to do that!!

👍👍👍 You and 87 others · 10 Comments

Love · Comment

All Comments

D [redacted] K [redacted] 🥰🥰🥰
Like · Reply · 1h

K [redacted] K [redacted] I am right there with you on this post!! I'm not sure what we would have done without the library this past year - a true lifeline! I especially love that I can go in and browse the shelves. There is no better feeling than being surrounded by books! ❤️
Love · Reply · 1h · 3

L [redacted] Amazing staff story time has been wonderful .. love them all
Love · Reply · 1h · 3

S [redacted] Yes, they are amazing!! 🥰❤️🥰 Thank you!!
Love · Reply · 39m · 3

L [redacted] I was just saying to my husband today that the AG Library and the Oxford Library have sustained us through this past year in so many ways!
Love · Reply · 7m · 3

L [redacted] It's a pleasure! Thank YOU! Miss Lisa
Like · Reply · 6m · 1

Lori Schwabenbauer
K [redacted] and everyone else commenting, thank you so much! It means the world to us (the library staff and trustees) to know that we're really making a difference to people. We're very happy to be open, and I can't say enough about each one of our brave, dedicated staff members who are on the front lines every day. Thanks again! ❤️❤️ - Miss Lori, Avon Grove Library Director

EDUCATION AND ENRICHMENT FOR ALL

Avon Grove Library is a vital educational institution. We provide equal opportunity for **self-directed learning, research assistance and instruction, and enriching experiences** for over 35,000 people of all ages in southern Chester County, Pennsylvania. Our mission is critical, because the public library is **the only American institution that provides lifelong learning and enrichment** that's free at the point of service to people of all backgrounds. We're working to help **develop the workforce, advance the economy, and improve the quality of life** in our community.

PROVIDING EQUAL ACCESS TO EDUCATION AND LEARNING RESOURCES

In 2020, Avon Grove Library provided 1,785 hours of open access to all residents of the eight municipalities making up our service area: Avondale Borough, Franklin Township, London Britain Township, London Grove Township, Londonderry Township, New London Township, Penn Township, and West Grove Borough. Even with the four-month shutdown, we were open many hours for the needs of our customers.

A total of **46,723 people entered the library in 2020**, which was a 55% lower figure than the year before, but still impressive given that we were closed or under pandemic restrictions for most of the year. With attendance at outreach programs (those outside the library) figured in, the **total customer count was nearly 50,000 in 2020**. Over **7,800** people had Avon Grove Library cards at the end of 2020.

The library loaned over 111,000 books, DVDs, periodicals, ebooks, and other materials throughout the year, a decrease of nearly 25% from 2019. Besides the effects of the pandemic, the ongoing trend of declining use of print and audio-visual materials contributed to this figure. However, the ever-growing popularity of electronic books, e-magazines, and streaming audiobooks—especially during lockdown conditions—helped offset lowered figures. Circulation of electronic materials increased in 2020 by over 36% from 2019. We are spending grant funds and other resources more and more toward increasing these vital virtual collections.

The **quality of our systemwide collections** is demonstrated by the fact that customer requests for titles from libraries outside our system were few: in 2020, only 50 items were received for Avon Grove customers from libraries outside the Chester County system, while we sent 34 items to non-member libraries.

Our PCs and wifi access are free to all, and they remain popular. **Users logged over 2,000 sessions on the library's Internet-connected PCs** in 2020, as well as **over 3,500 sessions using our wifi**.

GIVING RESEARCH ASSISTANCE AND INSTRUCTION

Avon Grove Library's knowledge experts assisted customers with research and information questions 1,236 times in 2020. Outreach and other classes taught literacy skills to hundreds of children and teens.

ASSISTANCE FROM LIBRARY SUPPORTERS

Our **Friends of the Avon Grove Library group** met the challenges of 2020 when they had to cancel the spring wine tasting they had planned, pivoting to virtual methods to raise funds for the library. They held online auctions and "no-bake bake sales," working faithfully to do what they could for us throughout the year. The Friends' financial support to the library totaled nearly \$4,250 in 2020. We are very grateful for all their dedication and hard work.

We were also served by an excellent group of adult and teen volunteers. **Teens and adults gave a total of 298 volunteer hours** to the library in 2020, doing everything from shelving books and DVDs to assisting with crafts at children's programs to stuffing envelopes for library mailings. Once the pandemic restricted our in-person options, our teen volunteers worked virtually as part of a Teen Advisory Council to help with online programs and other related tasks. Our volunteers are very active, and we really appreciate all that they do.

FUNDING: OUR VITAL SUPPORT

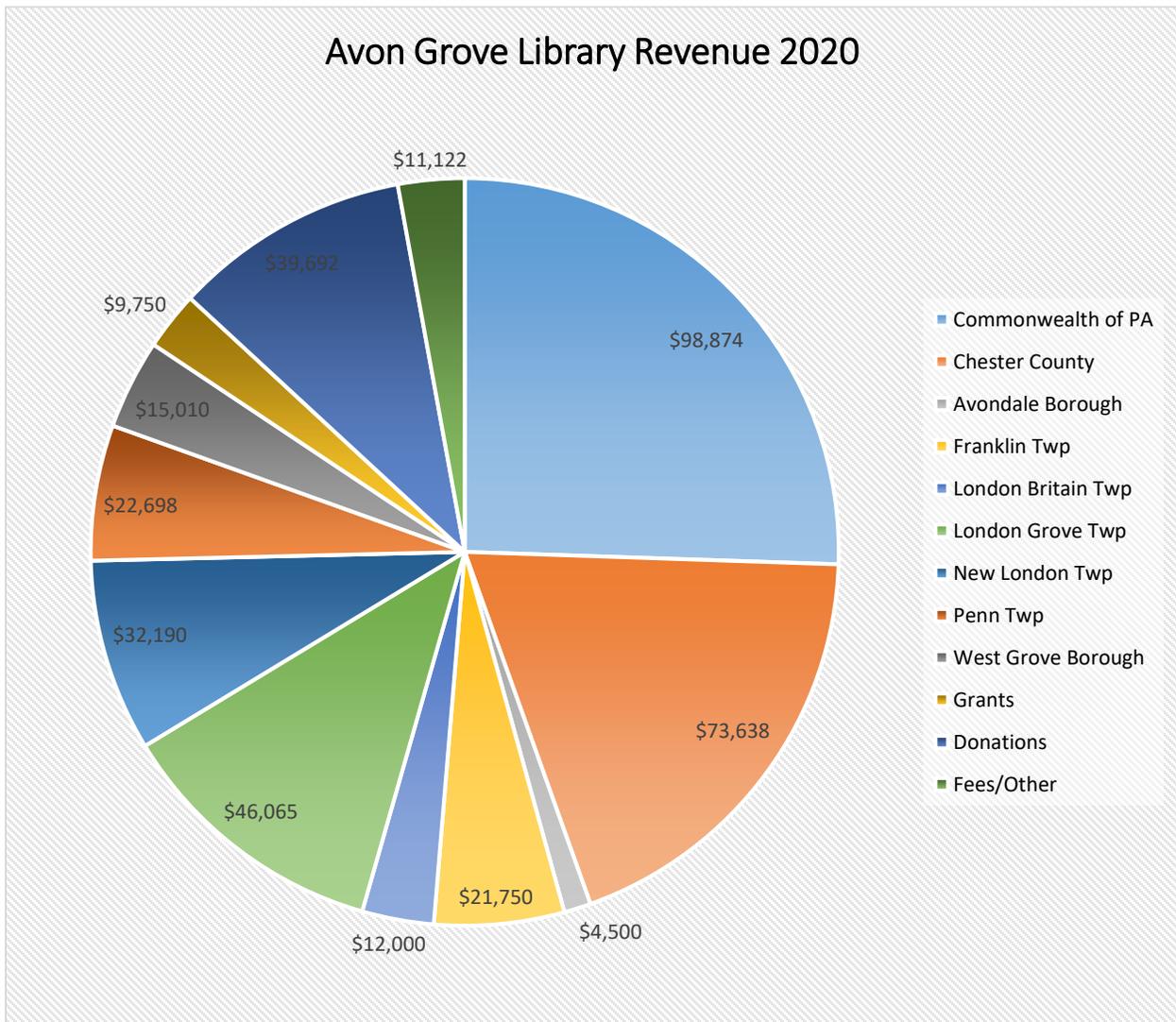
Avon Grove Library receives no federal funding directly. Rather, federal funds are channeled through Pennsylvania's Commonwealth Library via the Institute of Museum and Library Services. Our funding comes from the Commonwealth, from Chester County through the Chester County Library System, from the local municipalities we support, and from customers, donors, and grants.

In 2020, the library received a total of **\$387,289** in revenue:

Sources of 2020 Revenue

Municipal funding	\$154,213
State funding	\$98,874
County funding	\$73,638
Grants	\$9,750
Donations	\$39,692
Fees/Other	\$11,122
TOTAL	\$387,289

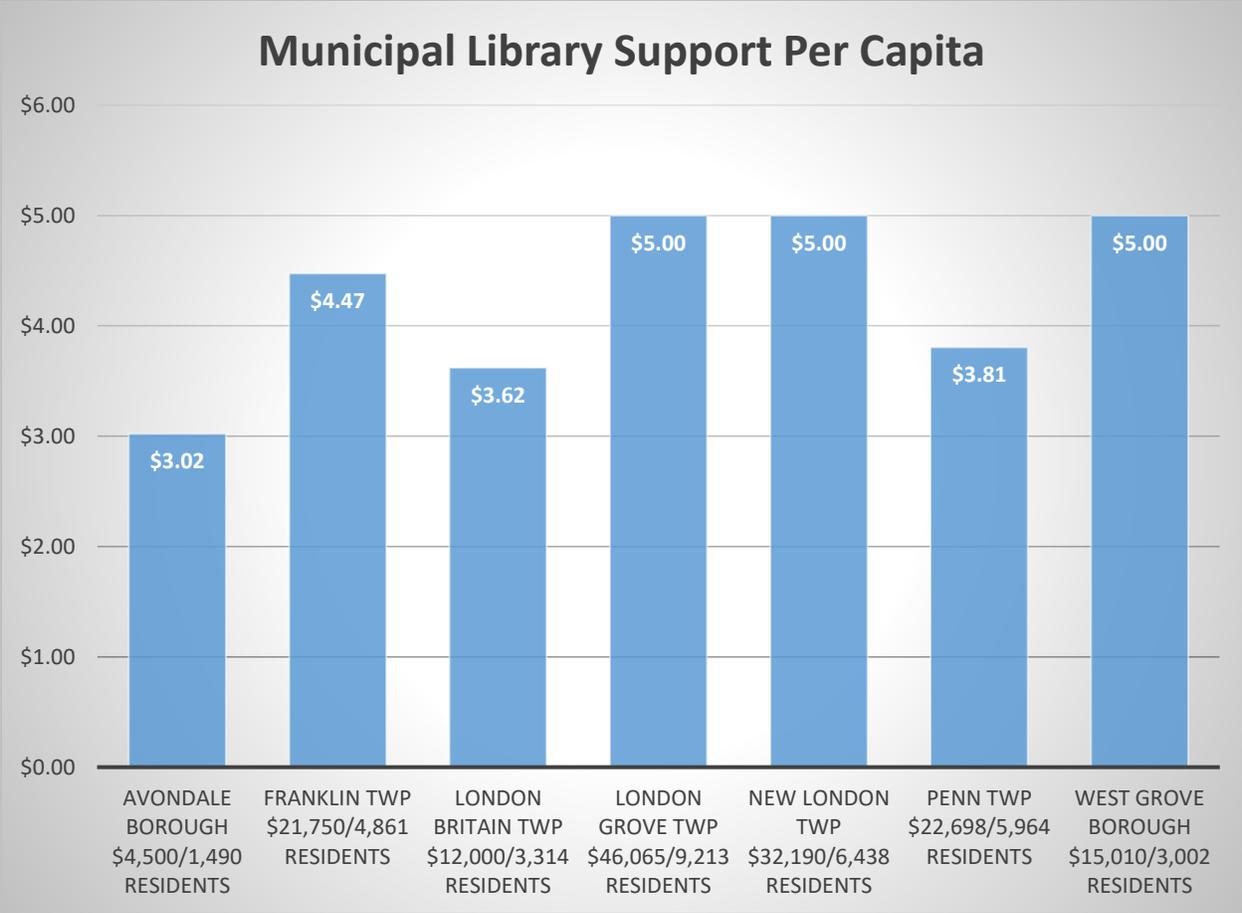
Our 2020 revenue with municipalities broken out separately was as follows:



The total population of our service area in 2020 was 35,562, including the portion of Londonderry Township just added to our service area. All population figures are taken from the Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission estimates.

Pennsylvania's Office of Commonwealth Libraries recommends a target figure for municipal support of \$5 per capita. Avon Grove Library's average municipal support per capita was \$4.50 in 2020 (not counting the newly-added Londonderry population). We are pleased to report that this figure represents a \$0.26 increase from 2019's per capita average of \$4.24.

As seen in the following chart, municipal funding ranged from \$3.02 to \$5.00 per capita across all contributing townships and boroughs. We are very grateful to those municipalities who generously followed through with their promised funding increases in 2020, despite the pandemic.



THE ROAD AHEAD

2020 brought many challenges and opportunities for Avon Grove Library, most notably the need to adjust to an international pandemic that required us to make a great many changes and adaptations so we could meet the needs of our community safely and effectively. I am very proud of our hard-working and accomplished library staff, volunteers, Friends of the Library, and trustees for doing all that they did to make the past year so successful.

Throughout 2021, our team of dedicated library instructors and specialists looks forward to advancing the library’s mission ever further, promoting equal access to learning resources and curricula, providing opportunities for self-directed education as well as enjoyment, delivering research assistance and instruction, and offering enriching experiences to people of all ages—no matter the conditions outside our doors.

*Lori A. Schwabenbauer, MSLS
Director, Avon Grove Library*

LIBRARY STATISTICS for 2020

In-House Door Count	46,723
Outreach Program Attendance	2,847
TOTAL CUSTOMER COUNT	49,570
LIBRARY CARD HOLDERS	7,806
Children's and Teen Programs	388
Attendance at Youth Programs	8,463
STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Math) Programs for Youth <i>(part of the 388 total above)</i>	15
Attendance at STEM Programs <i>(part of total above)</i>	65
Adult Programs	37
Attendance at Adult Programs	392
TOTAL PROGRAMS	425
TOTAL ATTENDANCE	8,855
RESEARCH & INFORMATION QUESTIONS	1,236
TOTAL PHYSICAL COLLECTIONS <i>(print books and magazines, music CDs, wifi hotspots, audiobooks on CD, and movie DVDs)</i>	43,527
TOTAL EBOOKS & E-AUDIOBOOKS <i>(collection shared with all Chester County libraries)</i>	56,911
Juvenile Print Book/Magazine Circulation	37,324
Adult Print/CD Book Circulation	27,309
OverDrive Circulation (Ebooks, E-audiobooks)	38,743
Print Magazine Circulation (Adults)	938
Online Magazine (Flipster) Circulation	4,767
Audio-Visual Circulation (music, movies)	2,244
TOTAL CIRCULATION	111,325
Library Computer Use – PC SESSIONS	2,042
Library Computer Use – WIFI SESSIONS	3,573