



# Annual Report

2023 –2024

## Overview of the past year

When looking back at 2023, we can say that the year has brought us yet more reason to be proud of what we have achieved as a team. Always striving to bring the best of library services to the communities we deserve, we have managed to accomplish ideas and projects aligned with our mission.

The list of initiatives, activities and programs that have been put into motion is varied. Statistics show that the level of operations as well as services is maintained and is on the rise. We have introduced new services and collections. This diversification is not an aim in itself – it is a way to comply with the goal of enriching children’s lives and creating a life-long love for learning and growth.



One thing deserves to be mentioned as a reflection of our progress - our 'BiblioQUALITÉ' score. The *Association des bibliothèques publiques du Québec* collected, for a second year in a row, statistics from Quebec public libraries. The same five indicators, as for the first study, were used to measure different aspects of library operations: acquisition expenses, opening hours, human resources, space, sitting capacity. Together with the Montreal West Public Library, we submitted consolidated data on the library services offered in Montreal West, and we are proud to report that Montreal West obtained the highest score of 5, or 97%, - based on 2022 data. The weak points are the lack of physical space, for which indicator we have the score of 2, and sitting places: 4. For comparison, 1042 public libraries have taken part in the study, and the average score of libraries deserving towns with population of less than 10 000 residents is 69%.

In 2023, we were impacted by the important renovations that took place in Elizabeth Ballantyne school. In the library, the radiators have been replaced. The Library was able to offer only a limited access to its collection in the summer. However, we found a way to make the use of resources possible, even if restricted, by reintroducing the 'Books in a Bag' service. The strike in the public sector at the end of 2023 compromised our services too, as we were forced to keep the Library closed for one week. In such cases, we are already accustomed to switching to online services and never fail to keep our patrons satisfied.

The library staff is dedicated to making the Montreal West Children’s Library a privileged place for the young from the neighbouring communities and from Elizabeth Ballantyne School. We partner with other community organisations to bring a more comprehensive service to the young patrons and their parents.

This annual report provides details on statistics and description of activities. The statistics cover the period April 20<sup>th</sup> 2023 - April 20<sup>th</sup> 2024.

**The last four years in numbers  
(April 20, 2023 – April 20, 2024)**

<b>PARAMETERS</b>	<b>2023-24</b>	<b>2022-23</b>	<b>2021-22</b>	<b>2020-21</b>
Active membership (Elizabeth Ballantyne community excluded)	<b>398</b>	<b>434</b>	<b>381</b>	<b>447</b>
New community member accounts created	<b>98</b>	<b>168</b>	<b>137</b>	<b>54</b>
Total loans <i>Community loans</i> <i>EB School loans</i>	<b>22 602</b> <i>16 986</i> <i>5 616</i>	<b>28 629</b> <i>23 478</i> <i>5 151</i>	<b>26 372</b> <i>24 110</i> <i>2 262</i>	<b>20 143</b> <i>18 970</i> <i>1 173</i>
Average daily loans	<b>69</b>	<b>84</b>	<b>78</b>	<b>68</b>
e-book loans (Tumblebooks)	<b>145</b>	<b>219</b>	<b>942</b>	<b>256</b>
Community visits	<b>7 026</b>	<b>8 337</b>	<b>5 989</b>	<b>1 840</b>
Participants in activities	<b>1 912</b>	<b>1 857</b>	<b>802</b>	<b>1 356</b>
Book bags requests	<b>59</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>67</b>	<b>249</b>
Acquisitions	<b>1 248</b>	<b>1 410</b>	<b>1 359</b>	<b>1 447</b>
Items weeded	<b>1 187</b>	<b>1 097</b>	<b>2 352</b>	<b>1 117</b>
Reference questions (Including EBS teachers requests)	<b>578</b>	<b>531</b>	<b>448</b>	<i>NA</i>

## Collection Development

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Collection development is ongoing through the year, as per the Collection Development Policy of the library.

Diversifying our collection is important, in order to expand the offer of items that patrons can borrow. We anticipate the needs of our communities and we try to include a new feature every year. The increased popularity of the visual arts, especially in the book world, makes comic books, graphic novels and manga of extreme interest. New manga series have been added to the collection, existing series have been completed, and the manga collection had been separated from the graphic novels in a special place.

In addition to the books in different formats, we also have developed the already existing Board Games, Costumes, Puzzle collections. Thanks to donations, we now have a total of 43 Board Games, 85 costumes, 18 puzzles.

The Collection Development Grant we receive from the *Ministère de la culture et des communications*, allows us to maintain an up-to-date collection, all by acquiring new titles and replacing old books at a comfortable pace. The application for the grant is done in partnership with the Montreal West Public Library and the assistance of the Town of Montreal West. The portion our Library received, in 2023, is \$23 250 toward collection development expenses for 2023 and 2024.

## Activities, Programs and Initiatives

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All through the year, we have maintained a stimulating array of services, programs and activities to educate and entertain the young. Our primary goal is to make sure every child receives a positive experience with the library not only by borrowing books, but by actively participating in our activities and programs.

### **StoryWalk®**

Our StoryWalks have become regular and well anticipated installations. Three StoryWalk® were presented last year. In the Spring of 2023, we presented the book '**Pas moi**' by **Elise Gravel**. The StoryWalk® in the Summer of 2023 was once again provided free of charge by TD Summer Reading Club. It featured the story '**Treasure**' by **Mireille Messier** – in English and French. In September-October, we installed the story '**Pikiq**' by the award-winning author/illustrator **Yayo** (in English). As the StoryWalk® was at the end of its presentation, Yayo visited the Library for an author's visit with the children.

### **Canadian Children's Books Week 2023**

Canadian Children's Book Week is a celebration of Canadian creators of books for the young readers. In 2023, we had the joy of welcoming Montreal author Sophie Casson who animated an entertaining event of exploring her writer's world. Children heard her stories, sang songs, tried some illustration techniques.



*Above: Sophie Casson explaining her creative process to the participants*

### **'Festilou' Storytelling Festival 2023**

Judith Poirier visited our Library as part of the 'Festilou' storytelling festival in May 2023. She captured children's attention with the captivating stories and the fabulous towel structures that accompanied the tales.



*Above: Judith Poirier holding a rabbit she made out of towels*

## **Bill Foster Writing Contest 2023**

From February to April 2023, children were invited to submit texts on a subject of their choice, in English or French, illustrated or not, as part of the Bill Foster Writing Contest. We received 19 entries. An independent jury composed of author Sarah Brunel, former Head Librarian Linda Wishart and author Dara Murphy selected the three winning texts in two categories: 6 – 8 years old, and 9 – 13 years old. The announcement of the winners took place at an Awards Ceremony in June. Joan Foster presented the prizes to the winners and honorary mentions. The winners were:

### **Age 6-8**

1<sup>st</sup> place: *Hide and Seek with Rac*, by Dhaanvith Badvelu (6 years old)

2<sup>nd</sup> place: *The Ugly Toad*, by Amélie Rocke (8 years old)  
(Only two entries in this age category)

### **Age 9-12**

1<sup>st</sup> place: *The Magicians' Rebellion*, by Dasein Oberon (11 years old)

2<sup>nd</sup> place: *Weather*, by Simon Kuchinsky (11 years old)

3<sup>rd</sup> place: *The Girl, The Witch, and the Clouds*, by **Anuva Shah and Amelia Bellows (in the picture)** (both 9 years old)

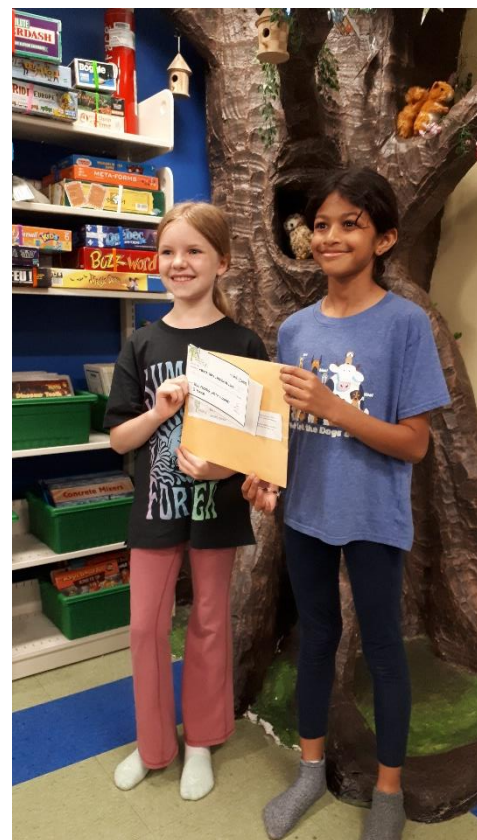
### **Honourable Mentions**

*The Treasures Around Us*, by Isaiah Harrigan;  
for outstanding artwork

*Happy Never After*, by Simone Bazinet (age 10);  
for exploring a scene

*Agent Polan*, by Fabian Arrowsmith (age 11);  
for artwork and exploring the mystery genre.

The Writing Contest was back in February 2024, entry submissions just closed on April 15th.



*Left: Joan Foster speaking to the participants; Right: Simon Kuchinsky's violin performance at the end of the event*

## **Flower Pounding**

Flower Pounding activity was a huge success. Children learned the craft of creating patterns on fabric using flowers and leaves, using the technique of pounding. They decorated the library tote bags and had a lot of fun exploring the different flower shapes and colors.



*Flower pounding involves using flowers and hammering them onto the fabric*

## **Origami Workshop**

Origami is a classic art and craft activity which has always been popular. We offered this activity in October, and helped the participants acquire new folding techniques using colored paper.

## **Halloween celebration**

For Halloween, the traditional 'Spooky Tales' attracted a big crowd of 30 participants – all wearing costumes and ready for fun. Story-time and pumpkin decoration were part of this much cherished event at the Library.



*The pumpkin decoration after the story-time*

## Riopelle art workshop



2023 marked the centennial of Jean-Paul Riopelle's birth – the Canadian artist and sculptor from Quebec. We invited 'Peek-a-Boo' activity center to animate a mixed media workshop on Riopelle's painting techniques. Here: Amélie, Benjamin and Louis Roche show their creations.

## Lego Challenge

Our Lego challenge has always attracted big crowds and we are invariably including it in our annual calendar of activities. Yet another year of interesting challenges and designs, big smiles and amusement.



*William Weymouth shows his creation made of one-color bricks*





### **Elf on the Shelf**

In December, we invited children to look for our own Elf who was hiding and changing places every day of the week. For 14 days, a total of 50 entries were made in the jar for the draw of eight books. The Elf on the Shelf was an entertaining activity that allowed children to look into every possible corner of our Library.

### **La lecture en cadeau**

The traditional annual initiative of the *Association pour l'Alphabétisation* was implemented in December of 2023. We organised the collection of new books donated by visitors to the Library. These books are distributed, by the Association, to children from disadvantaged communities in the following year. Montreal West patrons are taking this initiative to heart, and the donations were most generous.

### **Winter Holidays Tales and Songs with Shawny**

If the background in this picture is not familiar, this is because our Holidays Winters Tales did not take place at the Library.

The activity was scheduled on a date that happened to be during the week we had no access to the Library due to the Public Sector strike. Like on other occasions, 'Pâtisserie de la Gare' allowed us to hold the activity in the café.

Children listened to tales on all end-of-year holidays, sang songs and danced with Shawny. Shawny had composed new songs that he had the pleasure to play and sing, and let children play his guitar. Participants left with a bag of craft supplies to make the craft at home.



### **Quilling**

The art of quilling involves the rolling of strips of paper which then can be put together to form a pattern or picture. Children enjoyed learning the technique and create colorful designs during the workshop organized in January of 2024.

### **Lunar New Year art**

According to the Lunar calendar, 2024 is the year of the Dragon. 'Peek-a-Boo' activity center taught the participants of the multi-media art workshop how to make a beautiful dragon with many various art supplies.



*Sophia Risacher with her quilling dog and three dragons for Lunar New Year*

### **March Break**

In March 2024, we offered a week of engaging and entertaining activities for the Spring Break. We had a movie screening, a chess tournament, a cooking class, an art workshop. Daily projections of short movies offered by the national Film Board of Canada were being sent via our distribution list for home viewing.



### **Golden Egg Treasure Hunt**

A treasure hunt and a draw for prizes is something children cannot resist. In March 2024, for 10 days, a golden egg containing different clues every day, was being hidden among the shelves. Children were coming to search and find it, retrieve the code inside and locate the book on the shelf – this educational component permits children to find out about the collections and their locations. We had an impressive number of 59 entries for the five books that were to be won.

## **Solar Eclipse Projection Box – craft activity**

The exiting astronomical phenomenon – the solar eclipse – was expected by everyone with a lot of excitement. Solar eclipse glasses were in high demand, and we seized the opportunity to teach children how to make an observation tool with material at hand. Cardboard, tape, scissors and some colored pencils to personalise the box, and children could use it to safely observe the solar eclipse.



## **Programs**

In addition to the events and activities, we have maintained the following programs:

<i>Take and Make :</i>	monthly craft activity, replaced by 'Craft to Take' in January 2024.
<i>Craft to Take (NEW):</i>	monthly craft activity, 15 craft kits distributed per month.
<i>Child-Parent Book Club</i>	monthly meetings (Sept. to May ) on the last Friday of the month.
<i>Family Movies (RENEWED):</i>	monthly screening of a movie for the whole family.
<i>Board Game Mania:</i>	new formula of announcing the name of the game that is being played at the monthly meeting.
<i>Cubetto:</i>	monthly coding activity for 3-5 year olds.
<i>Mother Goose and Tales for Tots:</i>	weekly program running all year round
<i>Lego Club:</i>	weekly program running for five sessions per year.
<i>Scratch Club:</i>	weekly coding program running for five sessions per year.
<i>Chess Club (NEW):</i>	weekly program running for five sessions per year.
<i>Crochet Club:</i>	introduction to crochet for 7 – 12 year olds; we had two sessions.
<i>Ozobot programming (NEW):</i>	weekly coding program, started in April 2024.

We provide services to two daycares: 'Little Red Playhouse' visits the Library for their weekly story-time all year round; 'Curzon' daycare benefit from story-times at the Library for ten weeks in September through November.

## Summer Reading Program 2023

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The theme of the TD Summer Reading Club in 2023 was '*Check This Out*'. The implementation of the summer program in our Library was compromised by construction works in the school building. Nevertheless, we counted **38 registrations**. Only a couple of children submitted their reading passports that they kept at home. The program opened with a party - a concert with Shawny (see picture below)



The activities organised as part of the Summer Reading Program were all held in Strathearn park, provided the weather was appropriate. The list of those activities is as follows:

*Take and Make*: we were distributing craft supplies and video footage of how to make the project

*Mother Goose in the Park*: weekly story-time, songs, and nursery rhymes for the very young ones

*Therapy Dog*: one meeting with Rizzo to whom children read stories.

*Book talks*: bi-weekly meeting for presenting books read, and exchanging ideas for reading.

*Crochet classes*: two classes to learn the basics of crochet

*Board Game Mania*: bi-weekly meetings to play different board games

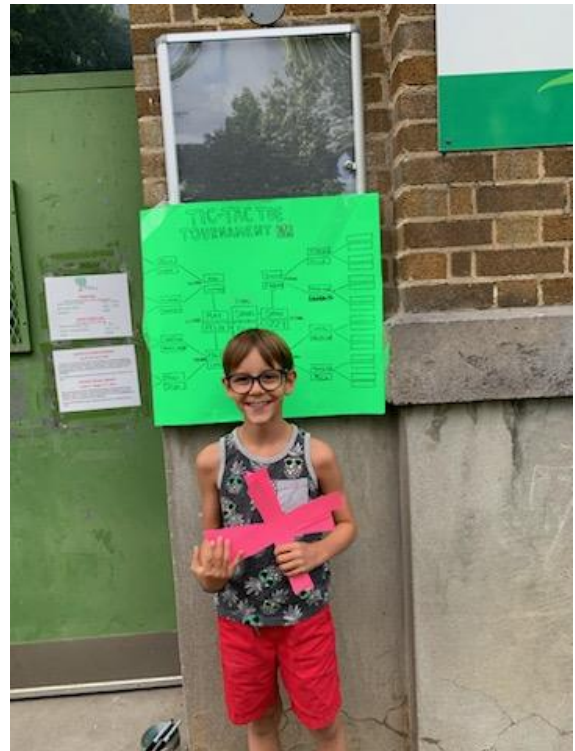
*Weekly Trivia Quizzes*: online quizzes sent via the distribution list

We also offered, together with the NFB of Canada through TD Summer Club, nine short films – the links were provided to our membership via the distribution list.

Our partnership with the Montreal West summer camps was once again maintained. Campers were coming to Strathearn park four times a week for story-time.

'Little Red Playhouse' daycare had a weekly story-time as well. Since the Library was closed, library staff was visiting the daycare for those sessions.

At the end of the Summer Reading Program, we organised a Tic-tac-toe tournament.



*The tic-tac-toe tournament and the winner – Felix Kuchinsky*

## Volunteering at the Library

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Volunteering is a vital part of our operations. We are happy to be assisted on regular basis by two dedicated volunteers who form the bindery team – Véronique Belzil-Boucher and Janet King. They are in charge of covering new books and repairing damaged books. A total of 535 books have been covered (119 volunteering hours), and 15 books have been repaired. Our accounting is expertly done by Sow Fun Lee, for a total of over 50 hours per year. Many students contact us with requests to complete volunteering hours as part of their mandatory community service. They assist us with various tasks. We counted on the help of a number of volunteers for the 'Lunch with the Library' at Art Etc Craft Fair. The total number of volunteering hours for the last year is **317**.



*Volunteers at the Art. Etc. 'Lunch With the Library'*

## Fundraising and Donations

We received a grant from Canada Summer Jobs toward one position for the Summer of 2023 and received \$4 760 toward salary expenses for the Summer Reading Program Assistant.

Our Library is given the opportunity to provide the lunch service at one of the days of the Craft Fair – Art Etc, and in 2023 we were once again invited to take part in this initiative. The Library’s Board members took active part in organising the event which involves offering a lunch menu, a raffle, toy and craft corners for the children, lunch service to the crafters at the Fair. We are happy to report that over \$2 000 was raised for the Library due to the effort and excellent work done by the Board and the many volunteers who joined to help out. Special thanks to Michelle Wyse for the ideas, organisation, and implementation of the

'Lunch with the Library', and to the many merchants who provide the food and beverages for our fundraiser.

The Vohra-Miller Foundation granted us \$7670 toward the implementation of a few projects outlined in our grant application: the purchase of Ozobot programming tools, a Movie license, the implementation of a non-resident encouragement initiative for library membership.

Two Birthday parties took place in our Library, which raised \$ 400.

We have received a donation from Joan Foster: \$1 000; The Golf Tournament: \$1500; Hay Foundation - \$2000.

Two book sales have been organised – in May and in November 2023, and raised \$295.

Our Library has an account with 'Mabel's Labels' and we receive 20% of the purchases parents make on the website.

## Elizabeth Ballantyne School

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Our ongoing partnership with the Elizabeth Ballantyne school is as active as usual. The class visits are integral part of the students' curriculum. The thirty-minute library period comprises of an English and French reading, selection of books to borrow, development of the students' library culture. The teaching personnel uses the Library as their resource center. Students and their families visit after the classes are over for the day. Elizabeth Ballantyne students are taking part in our after-class activities.

We organised the virtual author visit for grade 1 and 2 classes with author and illustrator Carey Sookotchev, as part of the Canadian Children's Book Week in May 2023. Students from the whole school attended a storytelling presentation as part of the storytelling festival 'Festilou', again in May 2023.

In May 2023, we held our first Trivia quiz for grade 6 classes. All through the year, we had been reading the book 'Holes' by Louis Sachar, and the three grade 6 classes competed by answering questions on the book. The class who answered the most questions was awarded with a pizza party.

The traditional Skate-a-Thon fundraising initiative did not take place in 2024 due to the construction of the Arena. Two teachers organised a Read-a-thon instead. The students were recording the number of pages read for one week in March, and the total amount for the school was 22 920 pages. The grades with the highest number of pages received gifts for the classroom – board games and books. We also treated the students to hot chocolate and cookies at the end of the fundraiser. The Library raised close to \$1 000.



*After the Trivia Quiz, students from grades 6 watch the movie 'Holes' based on the book we read through the year*

## Publicity and Outreach

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Carlton University's project's first phase came to an end in November. For 12 months, we have been answering 2 or 3 questions on a weekly basis. This project aims at providing an accurate, timely, and comprehensive information about the charitable sector in Canada. It offers an exhaustive overview of the trends, challenges, and opportunities facing the Canadian charitable sector. We had been randomly selected last year to participate in it.

We had an activity with the Girl Guides in November. The girls listened to a story, then created a new story by reading different books. They received a basic introduction into the library collections, and some Library operations.

Our Head Librarian – Ekaterina Valkova-Damova – participated in a panel discussion organised by the McGill University Student Chapter of the ABQLA, on the theme of Children's Librarianship.

Our Instagram account is kept up to date with information on upcoming events, reading suggestions, and spotlight on past activities. It is followed (as of April 20<sup>th</sup>) by 227 individuals and institutions.