

# Annual Report

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# 2018

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# Message from Our Executive Director

Our libraries celebrated their 80th anniversary this year and they remain a vibrant, vital community resource. We hosted over a half-million visitors, and residents read nearly a half-million library books. In a recent public survey, 87% of library users told us that our libraries are essential places of learning for our county's children.

However, our Library District continues to struggle with revenue decline. In 2018, our annual revenue was \$2 million less than what it was a decade ago. Our library board and staff continue to explore all avenues in pursuit of financial sustainability. Yet despite these efforts, the loss of revenue means that library users experience reduced public service hours, cuts to the books budget, and the drastic reduction of educational classes and events.

I came on board in late 2018, and was delighted by our talented, welcoming staff and our quality services. With both a library and business background, I set to work with the staff and our library board to find a path forward to financial health and sustainability for this much-beloved library system. I will continue to engage with community members to learn more about what they most cherish about their libraries as well as work with the board, staff, and residents to secure the local funding needed to sustain our libraries for the next 80 years and beyond.

-Brett Lear, Executive Director



Your friendly library staff members have recipes for good food - and great communities.

# 80th Anniversary of Our Libraries

In 2018, we celebrated the 80th anniversary of public libraries in Garfield County. We displayed a photo exhibit showcasing the history of our libraries at the Glenwood Springs Branch, and we hosted events throughout the year including the Spring Lecture Series, cowboy poetry, an 80s escape room, the History Examined series, and birthday parties at each of our locations.



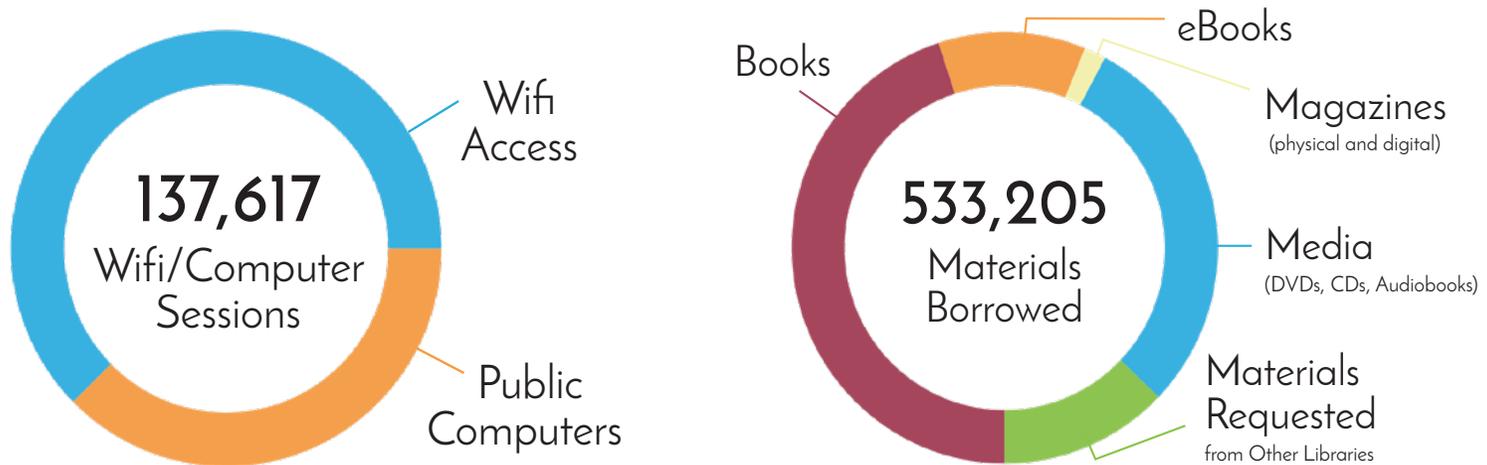
Our libraries have been in this valley a very long time, and we hope to be here for at least 80 more years. Our libraries, and public libraries in general, have seen innumerable changes over those 80 years. We have seen the advent of technology, new buildings, and budget growth and dips. Unfortunately, with budget dips like those we are currently experiencing, comes decreases and reductions to library programs and services. We are hopeful we will ride out this period of restriction and move into a period of more stable, locally controlled funding.



Local musicians perform for a packed Carbondale Branch Library.

# Maintaining Core Services

Our libraries continue to provide access to books, public computers, free wifi, meeting room space, and other essential services throughout this time of decreased funding. In fact, our meeting rooms were used for over 6,000 meetings by members of our communities in 2018, and those meetings were attended by almost 41,000 people! That is a 46% increase in meetings from the year before. We have achieved this growth despite shortened library hours by working with groups to provide after-hours access to our rooms. In communities like ours, with few publically-accessible meeting spaces, this is a critical service and partnership we provide in our communities.

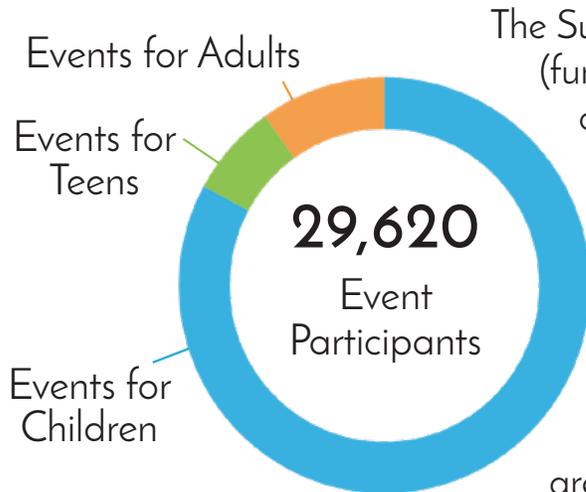




A local presenter leads the library's "Business and Breakfast" series at the Glenwood Springs Branch Library.

# Benefitting Our Communities

Our libraries pool resources so the community can benefit as a whole. This occurs through books, computer access, meeting spaces, and with interesting and educational events. Unfortunately, because our library district's budget remained near historic lows we were unable to fund any educational events at our libraries in 2018. We were, however, still able to host a handfull of events by leveraging partnerships with local community organizations and utilizing a grant from the Garfield County Libraries Foundation.



The Summer Reading Program (funded by the Foundation) continued to be our largest-scale event series with over 3,200 readers and over 6,600 event attendees. It helped children and teens avoid the “summer slide” by retaining reading skills that others lose when not reading during their break from school. Summer Reading also encourages adults to find their next great read, and helps families to bond while reading together.

**87%**  
of those polled locally  
said **libraries are**  
**“critical safe places and**  
**learning environments**  
**for our children.”**



Teens in Rifle enjoy a friendly game of chess.

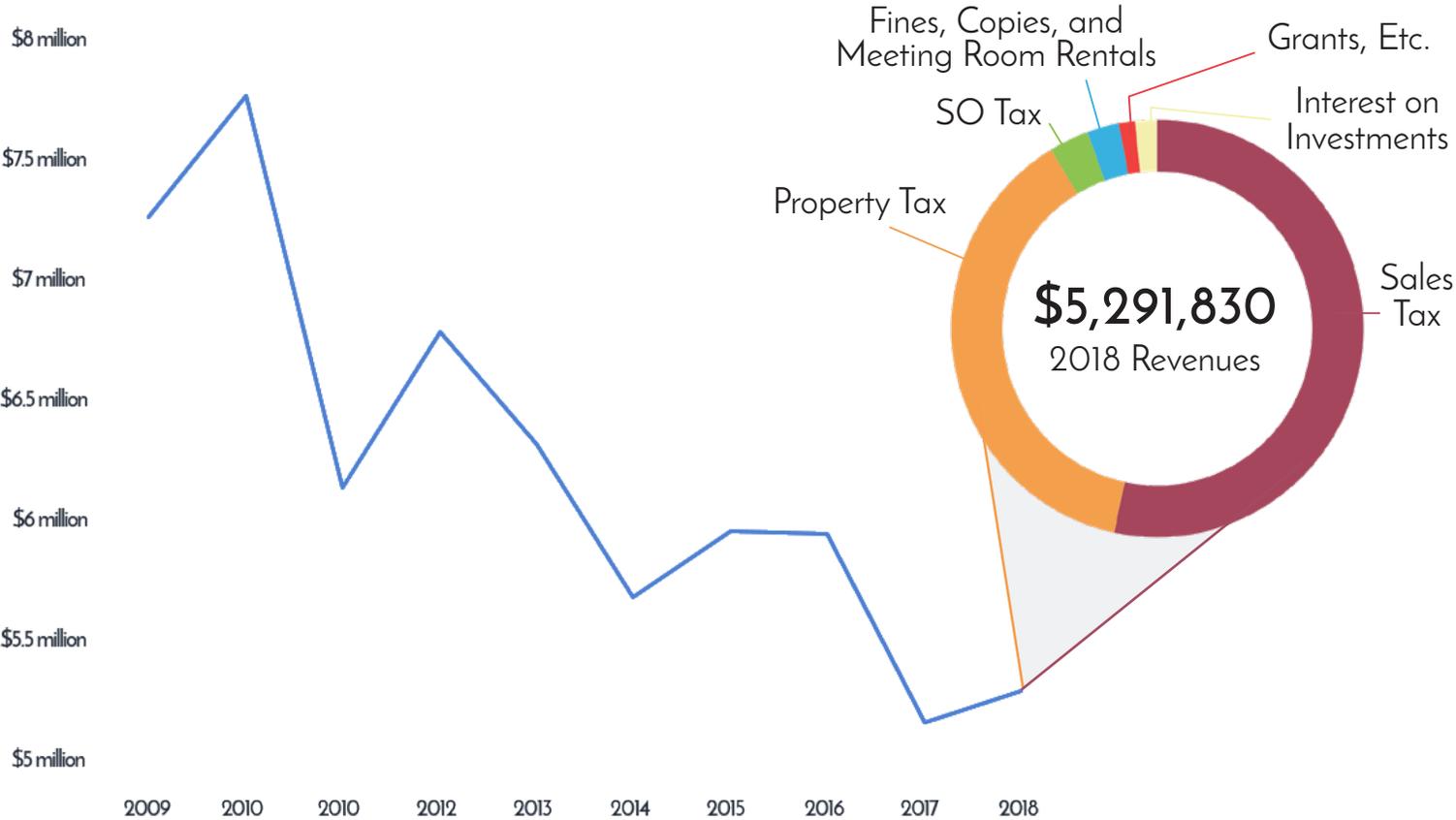
# Focusing on Financial Stability

We want to thank the voters of Garfield County for approving the Library's 2018 ballot initiative, 6A. The passage of 6A allows the Library to retain all tax revenue collected, without raising current tax rates. In 2019, any additional revenue generated through 6A will be used to buy additional new books, ebooks, audiobooks, movies, and other materials for residents throughout the county.

Overall, Library revenues have been steadily declining over the past 10 years. Most recently, the Library absorbed an additional \$1.2 million decrease in property tax revenue in 2017. This resulted in painful cuts to core library services, including a 50% reduction to the book budget, staff layoffs, and the elimination of morning, evening, and Sunday hours of service. In 2018, revenues remained flat and service reductions continued.

The Library's strategic plan calls on staff and library trustees to ensure the long-term financial stability of our library district. Meanwhile, county residents regularly express the need for the restoration of local library services. Looking ahead to 2019, the Board of Trustees and staff will continue to engage with the public around library priorities and continue to weigh options for sustainable funding in order to avoid additional cuts to library hours and services.

# A Decade of Revenue Declines



# Thank You 2018 Donors & Grantors



Children in Glenwood Springs enjoy grant-funded costumes and materials.

Jerry Baysinger • James Bell • Mariam Burden • Chapter AO PEO • City of Rifle • Laura Colby • The Colorado Health Foundation • Community First Foundation • William Crawford • Deborah Dawson • J M Delaney • Rich Dewyne Estate • David Durrance • El Pomar Foundation • Greg & Kathy Feinsinger • Garfield County Federal Mineral Lease District • Garfield County Libraries Foundation • Connie Geiman • Grand Valley/Parachute Kiwanis Club Foundation • Beck Hamilton • Andrea Holland • Greg & Sean Jeung • Nancy Kahn • Zella Kolber • Jon Leitzinger • William Lightstone • Ernst & Wilma Martens Foundation • Kathleen Molitor • Julie Nesbit • Demosthenes Pappas • Phat Thai • William & Jodi Pinkham • Ken Riley • Marilee Rippy • Ross Stores Foundation • Jan Shugart • Stephanie Stocking • Angela Strode • Shirley & Eric Williams • Ken Woods • Cecelia Zumwinkle

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