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Berks County Public Libraries Expand Digital Collection with American Rescue Plan Act Funds

For immediate release—The Berks County Public Library (BCPL) System recently purchased 864 new eBook and eAudiobook titles which were added to the countywide digital collection on OverDrive. The newly acquired titles represent the first of two significant purchases to increase the number of electronic materials available using federal American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds from the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS).

The library system received approximately \$100,000 of ARPA funds which were made available through the Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE) Office of Commonwealth Libraries (OCL) to support long-term work and library recovery in Pennsylvania.

“The library directors met and discussed the best application of ARPA funds. Where did they see a need? What would serve as a long-term benefit to the community?” said BCPL System Administrator Amy Resh. “They considered a number of factors and ultimately decided the community would receive the most benefit by expanding our shared digital collection with permanent titles.”

While interest in digital content resulted in a year-over-year increase in digital circulation for Berks County cardholders prior to 2020, pandemic-related closures directed many avid library patrons along with new users to further explore the digital library collection.

In 2019, nearly 112,000 books were borrowed through the OverDrive platform. That number increased by more than 50% the following year, resulting in over 175,000 checkouts of electronic materials, and in 2021, Berks County cardholders consumed nearly 182,000 digital titles.

Stephanie Williams, the deputy administrator and outreach services coordinator for BCPL, curated the list of digital titles that would further develop the collection, focusing primarily on diverse experiences and themes in literature.

“We’ve increased the number of books available in our digital platform over the last several years, but patrons are hungry for more,” said Williams. “The ARPA funds will go a long way to helping grow our already robust collection of electronic materials. We’ve added books for various audiences so that patrons will be able to browse more than 28,400 titles to find something they can enjoy and connect with.”

eBook and eAudiobook readers alike will find titles by new and favorite authors such as:

- *Beasts of a Little Land* by Juhea Kim
- *Inside Out and Back Again* by Thanhà Lai
- *How to Draw Manga!* by Tadashi Koda
- *The Butler* by Danielle Steele
- *And the Mountains Echoed* by Khaled Hosseini

Berks County Public Library cardholders can borrow these and other books on desktop or through the Libby app for mobile devices and tablets. Instructions on getting started with your library’s digital collection are available online at www.berkslibraries.org/ebooks-more.

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This project is made possible by American Rescue Plan Act (LSTA) funds from the U.S. Institute of Museum and Library Services administered by the Pennsylvania Department of Education, Office of Commonwealth Libraries.

If you would like more information about this topic, please contact Stephanie Williams at stephanie.williams@berks.lib.pa.us or by calling 610-378-5260 ext. 2502. Additional information about digital library services is available at all Berks County Public Library locations and online at www.berkslibraries.org/ebooks-more.

About the Berks County Library Systems: The Berks County Public Library (BCPL) System is a department of the County of Berks, serving 411,442 county residents across 866 square miles and 72 municipalities since 1986. Through the support of the Berks County commissioners, BCPL staff aids in strengthening the Berks County community by providing centralized support for the 19 full-service member libraries and four branches. For more information, please visit www.berkslibraries.org.