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November 16, 2020

Berks County Public Libraries Receives Grant from County CARES Grant Program to Expand Access to Electronic Materials

For immediate release—Berks County Public Library cardholders will find a large increase of new book titles from their digital library thanks to a \$50,000 grant funded by the Berks County CARES Grant Program. Beginning November 17 and continuing every Tuesday and Friday through the rest of the year, library patrons should look for additional eBook and eAudiobook titles to appear in the [countywide digital lending library](#).

The Berks County CARES Grant program seeks to assist organizations that have been negatively impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. Back in March, public libraries in Berks County and across Pennsylvania closed their doors in compliance with state guidelines. While unable to provide access to the 900,000 items in their combined physical collections during the shutdown, libraries focused their resources on providing books where patrons could reach them—online.

“Public interest in digital library books has increased since the start of the pandemic,” said Amy Resh, system administrator for Berks County Public Libraries. “In light of the limitations set by COVID-19, Berks libraries made it a top priority to provide increased digital access to library materials.”

Berks County libraries provide a wide selection of downloadable electronic media through the OverDrive platform. Library patrons can access these items for free with a library card by visiting their library’s OverDrive website or downloading the award-winning Libby app directly to their mobile device or tablet.

“We saw an increase of 53% in OverDrive checkouts during the first 10 months of 2020,” said Resh, comparing numbers from the same period in 2019. “From March to June alone, cardholders borrowed over 48,000 electronic books from Berks libraries.”

The CARES grant will help satisfy the high demand for digital library items, said Resh. Funds will go towards expanding the digital collection by purchasing additional copies of popular books and adding

new titles. There will be a focus on authors, viewpoints, and genres that might be underrepresented in library physical and digital collections.

The Berks County CARES Grant program is administered by the County of Berks with funds made available to the County under the COVID-19 County Relief Block Grant through the Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development.

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If you would like more information about this topic, please contact System Administrator Amy Resh at amy.resh@berks.lib.pa.us.