



**20
23**

**ANNUAL REPORT FOR
ACCESS BOOKS BAY AREA**



**LETTER FROM
OUR FOUNDER**





This has been quite a year to be in the business of school libraries. More than ever before, we believe that equitable access to high quality reading material, especially material that students get to choose for themselves, that reflects their own interests and experiences, is of the utmost importance. But that access is now under fire on multiple fronts. The first, and most important, remains the inequitable distribution of funds in California schools. The schools serving the lowest income students in the San Francisco Bay Area still receive the smallest amount of funding, and none of that funding is dedicated expressly to the school library. This is the most important reason for our work.

The second front now, however, is the ongoing attempts by a small percentage of the population to censor and restrict what students are allowed to access in the school library. While it might seem that this would be less of an issue in California, and certainly in the Bay Area, the movement to censor library materials in schools has happened here as well.

In the face of these obstacles, Access Books Bay Area remains committed to our mission and values – providing high quality, engaging, culturally relevant pleasure reading materials to the students who most need them. This year we continued our work in the south bay, refurbishing and restocking school libraries at three schools. Our projects have revitalized spaces that were often neglected before, and increased investment by the school community in maintaining a vital and nurturing library space long after our project is finished.

When we witness the excited faces of the students who come into the library after one of our projects and see all of the new books proudly on display, the murals on the walls, and the revitalized space, that tells us all we need to know about how incredibly important our work continues to be. Thank you to all of the individuals and sponsors who have supported our work in 2023! There is more work to be done going forward.

Sincerely,

Amanda Collins, M.L.I.S.
Executive Director and Founder



WHO WE ARE

BOARD

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Social Media Manager

MEERA NAIR

Fundraising & Corporate Outreach



MISSION

OUR MISSION IS TO LEVEL THE LITERACY PLAYING FIELD FOR STUDENTS LIVING IN POVERTY BY PROVIDING HIGH QUALITY, HIGH-INTEREST, CULTURALLY RELEVANT BOOKS, AND A TRANSFORMED LIBRARY SPACE THAT INVITES STUDENTS TO SPEND TIME AND READ.

We believe a quality school library can change the life of a child living in poverty. Access Books Bay Area works to remediate the lack of funding for school libraries in California by providing books, furnishings, facility upgrades, and the coaching of a credentialed school librarian to schools where at least 80 percent of students live at or below the poverty line. We also partner with local service organizations, businesses, families and individuals to improve classroom libraries with donated books. And in the absence of access to school libraries, we work to get books into the hands of children who need them by any means possible.

WE BELIEVE #BOOKSCHANGE LIVES

OUR VALUES

LITERACY IS A FUNDAMENTAL RIGHT

We believe that all children, regardless of race, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status, have the right to an educational environment that fosters a love of reading. Study after study has shown that students who read more do better. And not just academically, but in life. This benefit should not be reserved only for the children of the affluent and well-educated.

SCHOOL LIBRARIES MATTER

In schools with high quality, well-stocked school libraries, children do better. Yet California provides no dedicated funding for school libraries. This is a crisis in low-income communities especially. We believe that every child has the right to have access to a high quality school library space and collection that will help foster their love of reading.

DIVERSITY & REPRESENTATION MATTER

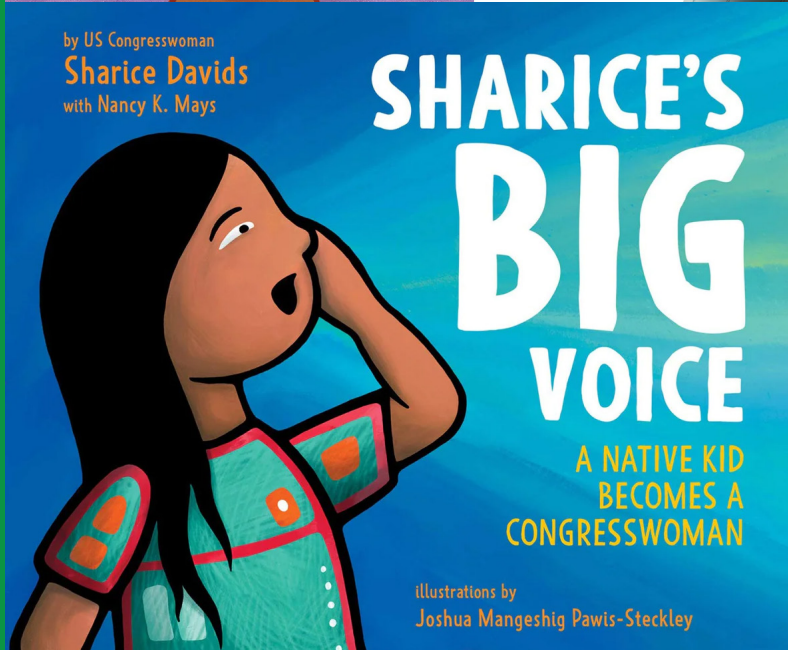
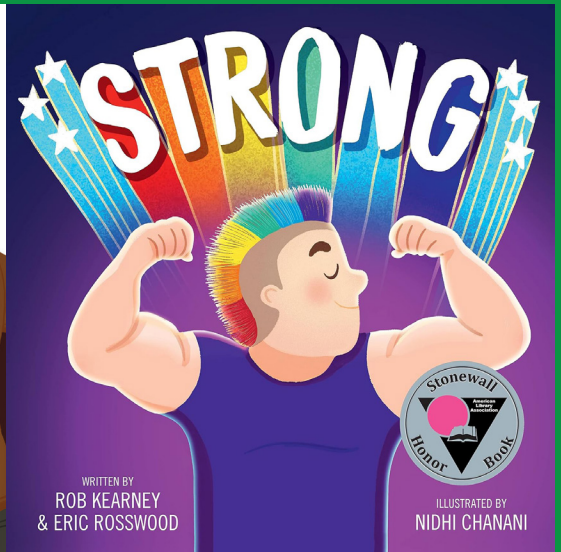
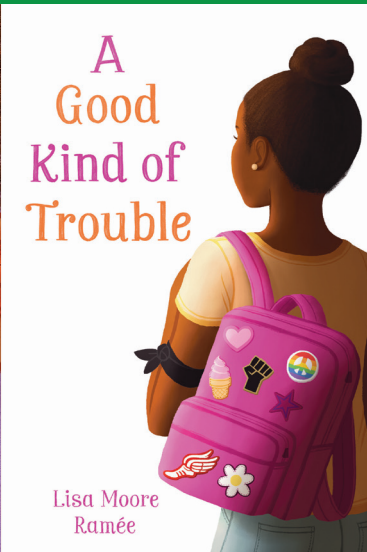
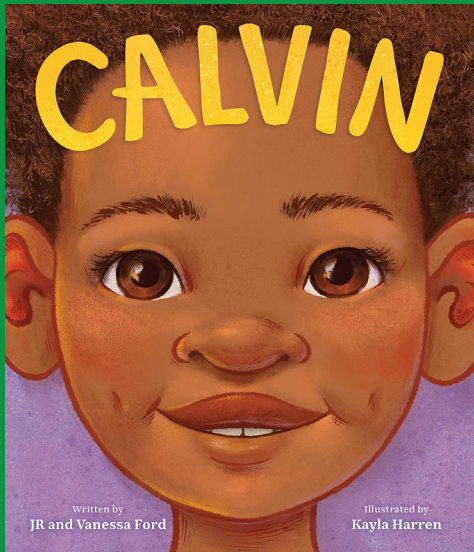
When the books in a school library do not reflect the lives and reality of the students at the school, or are full of outdated information and harmful stereotypes, children are not inspired to read. We believe that every child has the right to see themselves in the books they read, as well as to become inspired, and gain empathy by walking in the shoes of others.



DIVERSE BOOKS AND BOOK BANNING IN 2023

In 2022 book banning in public schools came onto our radar as an issue that schools we were serving might be facing. These attempts to censor library materials did not stop in 2023, and the increase in book banning nationwide has had a chilling effect on library staff, even in California. Many librarians are scared to include diverse books in their elementary school collections particularly, not wanting to face backlash, legal action, losing their job, or being accused of being radicals, pornographers, or pedophiles, simply for including a book about a child with two mommies.

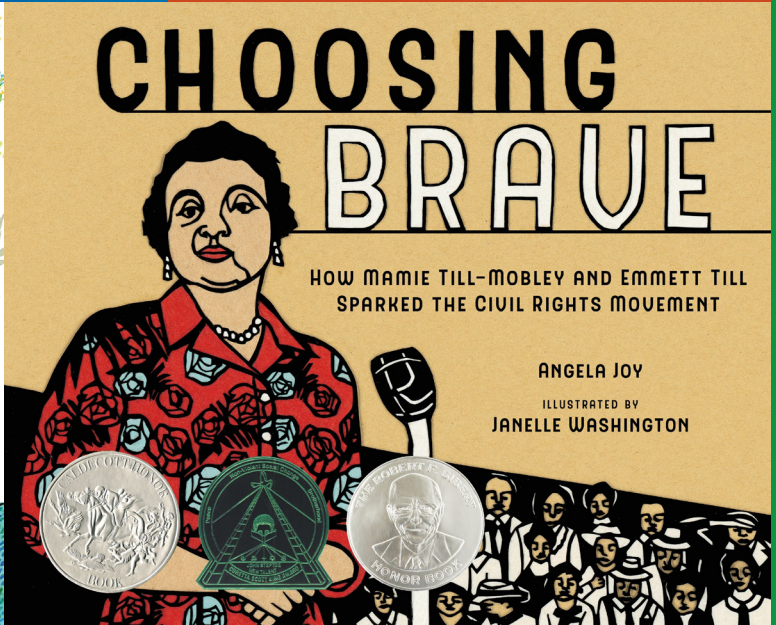
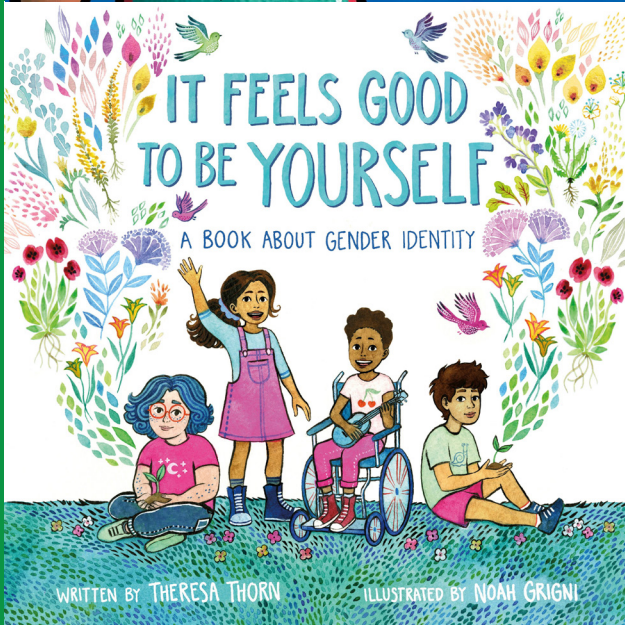
In the face of this, Access Books Bay Area remains committed to providing high quality, age-appropriate books that reflect the diversity of our communities and our children. That includes books about alternative family structures, different gender identities, and the history of communities of color. We believe that books can be windows into the experiences of others, and that the best books are the ones that start conversations. We do our best to provide books that will provoke those conversations and affirm identities, all while doing so in a way that is appropriate for the elementary and middle school aged children we serve.



KEY ARTICLES:

<https://www.npr.org/2023/09/20/1200647985/book-bans-libraries-schools>

<https://www.gov.ca.gov/2023/09/25/california-bans-book-bans-and-textbook-censorship-in-schools/>





2023 PROGRAMS

Access Books Bay Area has been working full steam to bring books to children who need them, and 2023 was a productive and impactful year.

We completed three full library refurbishments, fulfilling our mission to focus on the most important access point to literacy for children living in poverty: school libraries. We also expanded and refined the work that we do with each school, providing more targeted library collections for each community, working with staff to reorganize library spaces to increase access, and providing higher quality books to the teachers at the schools for their classroom libraries thanks to our wonderful book drive volunteers.

We expanded and deepened our Little Free Libraries program, recruiting and training a dedicated crew of Little Free Library Stewards and two Repair Technicians.

We continued our partnership with Amigos de Guadalupe, providing a Little Free Library as well as books for a summer program for San Jose's most vulnerable children, children who are experiencing homelessness.

While remaining an extremely low-overhead organization, relying almost exclusively on volunteers, we've also 'leveled up' our operations in several ways this year. We've focused on improving our marketing, believing the more people that find out about our work, the more financial support we will get, and the bigger the impact we can have. To that end we've redesigned our website to launch in early 2024, and with pro bono support from A Bigger Room we've improved our social media usage, and codified our branding in our first Brand Style Guide.

All of our efforts and programs are focused on promoting and supporting reading for pleasure, children being able to choose their own books and immerse themselves in reading, which allows them to develop into readers. We know that readers have better outcomes across their lives, from academics onward. This is why we do the work we do, and why so many community members were inspired to work with us this year.





LIBRARY REFURBISHMENTS: LAIRON COLLEGE PREPARATORY ACADEMY

Lairon College Preparatory Academy is a school in San Jose serving children in grades 4-8. When the school's Library Media Assistant, Del, began working at Lairon, the vast majority of the books in the library were decades old and very tattered due to lack of funding for school libraries in California. We were excited to work with her because she was already an advocate for improving her school library and there was a great need to revamp the outdated book collection.

Most of the student population at Lairon is considered to be socioeconomically disadvantaged by federal guidelines, and based on the high cost of living in the Bay Area all of the students are living in very low-income households. The majority of the Lairon families don't have the means to buy non-essentials like books, thus relying on the school library to be their main source for pleasure reading literature for their children. The existing collection of books did not reflect the diverse population of students at this school (see stats below), so we focused on purchasing books that reflected the current diverse student body.

Ahead of the project day, Del weeded out over 3500 books from the library collection that were old, irrelevant, or damaged. This library was already well-furnished with cozy seating and rugs, as Del is very resourceful and bought furniture with DonorsChoose funding, so we were able to focus solely on purchasing new books and one new book display carousel.

On February 4, 2023, the staff of Access Books Bay Area and Lairon along with 50 additional volunteers came together for an all-day work project to refurbish the Lairon school library. This was a project where we had a fabulous partner who had already been working hard to improve her library, but with paltry resources. We were so grateful to be able to provide the 1200 new books to make this a truly exceptional library for the students at Lairon.

"Everyone is a reader. Some people just haven't found their favorite book yet." Because of the generous donation of engaging fiction titles which speak to their heritage & nonfiction books that pique their interest, many of our students have found their favorite book. They can now say they are "readers!" The inside & outside murals painted by volunteers young & old have whimsically transformed the beige walls. Access Books has made a substantial long-term difference."

-Delia (Del) Fujino, Library Media Assistant, Lairon College Preparatory Academy



Project Completed: February 2023

Number of Students: 315

English Language Learners: 54%

New library books + processing materials donated: 1200

Socioeconomically Disadvantaged: 83%

Grades: 4-8

Black: 3%

Hispanic/Latinx: 85%

Vietnamese/Asian: 11%

Homeless: 1%



LIBRARY REFURBISHMENTS: MCKINLEY ELEMENTARY

Daniel Dennedy-Frank was a new principal at McKinley when he applied for the Access Books Bay Area library refurbishment grant. Daniel came from another school district that had more resources to allocate to the school library, so he was quite surprised to learn that the McKinley library was full of old and damaged books that did not represent the current diverse student body and had furniture and bookshelves that were in disrepair. An opportunity unique to this library was that there was a whole section of the library that was cluttered with classroom teaching resources and not being used by the students. Access Books Bay Area staff worked with the McKinley principal and Library Media Assistant (LMA) to get the teacher resources moved to a storage room, so that the space could be reclaimed for the young readers to utilize.

Over several months we worked alongside the LMA to remove the oldest and most damaged books from the collection, and then move the whole picture book collection to the area that formerly held the teacher resources, creating a beautiful and exclusive area for the youngest students. We also created signs for each section so the children can find the books they are seeking. We wanted to make the library a more cozy place for students to be inspired to read in so we purchased soft seating for the children to sit on and collaborated with a Scout doing his Eagle Project to provide a brand new reading rug, two exquisitely handmade bookshelves and a handmade custom bench.

On Saturday, April 29, 2023, the staff and board of Access Books Bay Area, members of the administration and staff of McKinley, and 50 additional volunteers came together for an all-day work project to refurbish the school library. Volunteers added spine labels and barcodes to the brand new books and painted colorful murals inside and outside the library to make it more bright and exciting for the students. In all, we donated over 1120 brand new books to the library, donated 1500 gently used books to the classrooms, painted five large murals inside the library and one large mural outside the library, and provided lunch to the 65 volunteers. This library in particular underwent an immense transformation and we are so thankful for the collaboration of donors, Access Books Bay Area board members and staff, McKinley's principal and LMA, the Scout who donated the beautiful handmade bench and bookshelves, and all the volunteers who donated their entire Saturday to transform this library!

"Thanks to our collaboration with Access Books Bay Area, McKinley Elementary has a transformed school library. Our library used to be outdated and unorganized. It stored obsolete curriculum and other unneeded items, and was not a welcoming place for students or staff. Access Books Bay Area helped us reimagine the space. They provided an abundance of high interest and culturally relevant texts, helped paint beautiful murals, and even assisted with updating our furniture. Our library is now vibrant, and students absolutely love being in this space and discovering new worlds in their books. Every student deserves a school library like this. Thank you, Access Books Bay Area, for helping bring this wonderful change to our school!"

-Daniel Dennedy-Frank, Principal McKinley Elementary School



Project Completed: April 2023

Number of Students: 230

English Language Learners: 63%

New library books + processing materials donated: 1120

Socioeconomically Disadvantaged: 80%

Grades: K-6

Hispanic/Latinx: 87%

Vietnamese/Asian: 9%



LIBRARY REFURBISHMENTS: CAPTAIN JASON M. DAHL ELEMENTARY

Captain Jason M. Dahl Elementary is located in Southeast San Jose and serves children in grades K-6. The student population at Dahl is similar to all the schools we work with, a vast majority of whom live in very low-income households that do not have extra resources to buy their children many (if any) books, and with the public library not always easy for these children to access, the school library is the primary place for these children to get books to read. Unfortunately the library at Dahl was overflowing with outdated and tattered books. At first glance one might just see the full shelves and assume that they had plenty of good books, but upon closer inspection one could see that the books were primarily over twenty years old, tattered and not representative of the mostly Latinx and Vietnamese population at the school.

We worked with the Library Media Assistant (LMA) and principal closely to remove over 3000 outdated and damaged books, rearrange bookshelves, create a brand new graphic novel section, improve the flow of the library, and provide new directional signage. On Saturday October 14, 2023 we worked alongside 60+ volunteers to prepare the brand new books for the library and paint colorful murals inside and outside the library to make it a brighter and more comfortable place to read. In all, we donated nearly 1200 brand new books to the library, donated 1000 gently used books to the classrooms, painted four large murals inside and outside the library, and provided lunch to the 60+ volunteers.

“Access Books Bay Area has completely transformed our aging library. The beautiful mural outside our library welcomes and encourages our students to come and visit the library. Inside the murals represent our school’s history and the importance of reading. We are so grateful for the donations of new books. The book selection has been dramatically improved to meet our students’ needs. I am forever grateful for these additions because it provides our students with relevant literary works that properly represent the students we serve. Students are more engaged during our trips to the library each week. They are excited for all the new additions and enjoy admiring the beautiful murals each time we visit. Thank you for supporting our library.”

-Erin Brummett, 5th Grade Teacher at Dahl Elementary



Completed: October 2023

Number of Students: **419**

English Language Learners: **54%**

New library books + processing materials donated: **1170**

Grades: **K-6**

Socioeconomically Disadvantaged: **81%**

Hispanic/Latinx: **70%**

Vietnamese/ Filipino/Asian: **25%**

Homeless: **1.9%**



PRINCIPALS & LIBRARY STAFF SAY:

"Working with Access Books Bay Area has been amazing! Their mission and vision on supporting students with literacy engagement and providing diverse reading materials directly aligns with our district and school's visions. It was great to have a partner in providing our students with more meaningful reading materials.

Everything was great about the library grant process from working with the Access Books Bay Area team to the painting of our library and book processing. The joy that the students had on their first day back in the newly renovated library was unlike anything I have ever seen. Students loved seeing their beloved mascot and school namesake on beautifully crafted murals that truly represent the heart of the Captain Jason M. Dahl school community. Many students have commented to me how they enjoy the new reading materials, especially the updated graphic novels section. I am so glad that Access Books Bay Area understands the need for reading materials that will engage students and foster a love of reading.

On behalf of the Dahl School Community, I thank Access Books Bay Area for the generous contribution to our school community. The impact of the library grant will have a profound effect on our students for years to come!"

-Michelle Quilantang, Principal, Captain Jason M. Dahl Elementary School

"I appreciated how responsive Amanda was to the needs I expressed for more graphic novels, more exciting chapter books, and really diverse titles that would reflect our population. We needed sports books that would excite the students, new books on art and drawing to replace the old, tired titles that were crumbling, and exciting biographies to catch student interests. I could go on and on, and the books that arrived a few months later didn't disappoint me. When our students walked into the library the following week, they were so excited by all the beautiful artwork, and immediately began checking the new books out. We now have books to tempt the most reluctant readers."

-Kari Skouson, Library Media Assistant, Captain Jason M. Dahl Elementary

STUDENTS SAY:

"One reason why I love the new library is because we have new books. The new books look very interesting." -Cassie, 3rd grade Dahl student

"I love our new library! The books are amazing." - Henry, 2nd grade Dahl student

"One reason I love the new library is the new books. It gives me a chance to read something new." -Angel, 3rd grade Dahl student

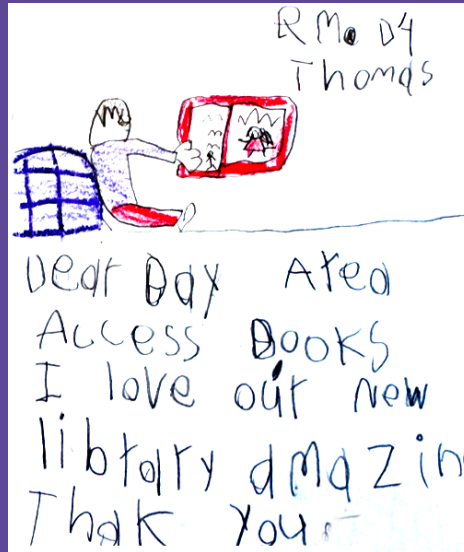
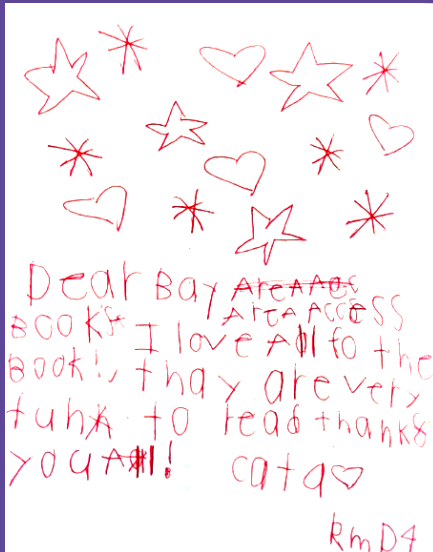
"What I like about the new library is the new pictures in our library." -Damian, 3rd grade Dahl student

"One reason why I love the new library is the three new seats." -Alexander, 3rd grade Dahl student

"I like the new area for Captain Jason M. Dahl." -Felipe, 3rd grade Dahl student

"I like the murals because they remind me of positive things." -Anessa, 3rd grade Dahl student

HANDWRITTEN STUDENT NOTES:



"I wanted to extend our deep appreciation for the generous book donation and the beautiful artwork. I was amazed by the number of volunteers and their families that came to Lairon to help on a Saturday. They were so dedicated to helping our school and students."

-Cathy Yuen, 5th Grade Teacher, Lairon College Preparatory Academy

"I am impressed by the transformation that Access Books gave our school library. I love how inviting the McKinley library is now, especially with the vibrant colors and murals, comfortable furniture, and updated books. Our students now have an amazing place to look forward to discover current, culturally-relevant, and interesting texts. Thank you for doing this for our community!"

-Melody S., Kinder Teacher, McKinley Elementary

"I am so proud to take my students to the library weekly! The library is so welcoming with how colorful everything is. Our students are excited to browse through all the new books and enjoy reading them on the new comfortable furniture. I feel grateful that I can also have access to culturally-relevant, diverse, and fun books. Thank you for being a great supporter of our McKinley community!"

-Thanh T., 2nd grade teacher, McKinley Elementary

"My 2nd graders and I are absolutely thrilled with how you were able to transform our once old and dated library into one filled with beautifully written books covering a range of topics, genres and reading levels. My kiddos have always been excited to check out library books, but now more than ever, they are truly enjoying the vast selection of books which you so generously donated."

As for me, every now and then, I run across a book that calls to me. Just last week, our librarian, Kari, set aside a book for me - 'Love in the Library' written by Maggie Tokuda-Hall. As I sat reading the story in my classroom, I immediately connected with the words. I am a third generation Japanese American. My late father, George, was interned during WWII in Wyoming at the Heart Mountain concentration camp. I could not help but think of him. So many questions and feelings. After reading 'Love in the Library,' I bought two copies - one for me and the other for my cousin. Thank you for giving me the gift of remembering."

-Mrs. Ogata, 2nd Grade Teacher, Dahl Elementary

DIRECT BOOK GIVEAWAYS: AMIGOS DE GUADALUPE

This was our second year partnering with Amigos de Guadalupe, a wonderful San Jose nonprofit that provides temporary housing and other services to families with children who are experiencing homelessness. Due to their situation, they have even more limited access to books than the average students we serve.

Access Books Bay Area provided a Little Free Library to be installed at the Amigos tiny home village, along with a large supply of books. Now the temporary residents can select a book to read anytime, books that they can keep and take with them when they move on to permanent housing.

We also supported the summer academic enrichment program run by Amigos for their resident children, by providing high quality, carefully selected books at a variety of reading levels to help the children engage with the empowering theme of social justice. The teachers reported that the children absolutely loved the books, which they could select and keep after the program.

500 books to 150 children experiencing homelessness



LITTLE FREE LIBRARY BOOK BOXES

Our program to provide access to mini-libraries began in 2020 as a response to school closures, and has expanded each year since then. This year we've continued our partnership with Little Free Library's Read in Color program and San Francisco's African American Parent Advisory Council to provide access to diverse books to children of color.

We've stayed committed to supporting the many Little Libraries we have established. The books fly off the shelves, and need constant re-stocking, as they are extremely popular among young readers! The Little Libraries also get some wear and tear, as they get heavy use and are outdoors exposed to the weather and elements. In 2023 we engaged a crew of volunteers to be Little Free Library Stewards and Little Free Library Technicians. These wonderful volunteers have been busy tending to the mini libraries and keeping them in good working order, and full of engaging and age-appropriate books for children to select from!

45 volunteers engaged, 44 Little Free Library Boxes~9,400 books, ~18,000 children and their families given access to books!



WHAT'S NEXT?

Looking ahead to 2024, we are excited to have a long queue of schools who have applied for projects. On January 27th, we will refurbish the library at Robert F. Kennedy Elementary in San Jose. We also are making plans with Stonegate Elementary in San Jose for April, and another school for the Fall, tbd.

We are also working on increasing our capacity by adding wonderful new staff members and raising more money to be able to serve as many schools as we can. School funding for libraries in low income areas of the Bay Area has not improved in the last year, so we remain focused on our primary program offering, school library refurbishments. We will also continue to support and restock our little libraries around the Bay Area. With the support of our generous donors and corporate partners, we look forward to giving the gift of becoming an engaged, lifelong reader to even more children in the year ahead!

**20
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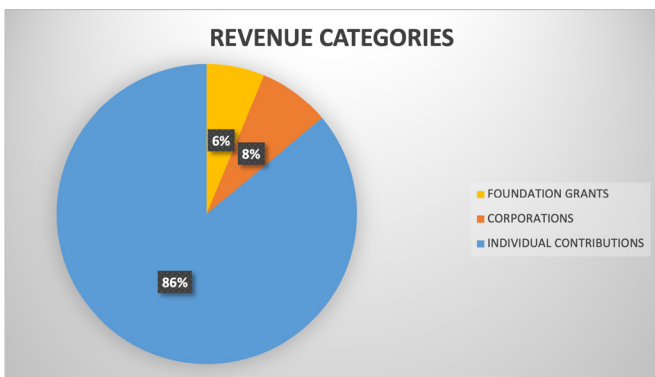
FINANCIAL STATEMENT

2023 FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

Access Books Bay Area raised \$44,737 in funds in 2023 which is a decrease of 45% over 2022. This decrease was primarily driven by a reduction in corporate donations and foundation grants partially offset by an increase in individual donations. The decrease in corporate donations is largely driven by the overall macro economy and changes in the organization's goals for charity. The quick pivot to focus on raising funds from individual donations ensured the completion of all three planned projects. The expenses totaled \$39,909 (lower than usual since the books for the first project were purchased in the prior fiscal year) with 98% of expenses related to library refurbishments and 2% related to book giveaways and book boxes.

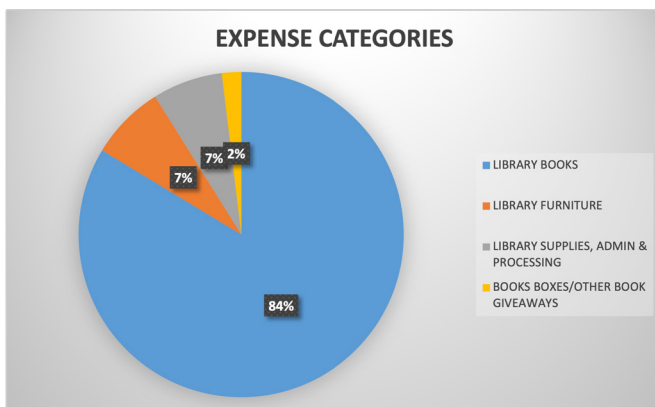
REVENUE

REVENUE CATEGORIES	2022	PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL
FOUNDATION GRANTS	\$2,785	6%
CORPORATIONS	\$3,453	8%
INDIVIDUAL CONTRIBUTIONS	\$38,499	86%
TOTAL	\$44,737	



EXPENSES

CATEGORIES	2022	PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL
LIBRARY BOOKS	\$33,387	84%
LIBRARY FURNITURE	\$2,972	7%
LIBRARY SUPPLIES, ADMIN & PROCESSING	\$2,782	7%
BOOK BOXES/OTHER BOOK GIVEAWAYS	\$768	2%
TOTAL	\$39,909	





SPONSORS & PARTNERS

THANK YOU TO OUR CORPORATE SPONSORS WHO SUPPORTED OUR WORK IN 2023.





INDIVIDUAL DONORS

INDIVIDUAL DONORS MAKE UP A SUBSTANTIAL PORTION OF OUR FUNDING EVERY YEAR.
THANK YOU SO MUCH TO THESE GENEROUS INDIVIDUALS WHO SUPPORTED OUR WORK IN 2023.

\$100 – \$499

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AMANDA COLLINS

VANESSA ING

THERESE PASQUESI IN MEMORY OF
BOB PASQUESI

KAVITHA PENDYALA

MARGARET SELIGSON

\$1000 – \$4999

CATHY & HAO CHENG

ERIK & JULIA MURPHY-CHUTORIAN

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SOFIYA MELNYKOVA & MHER HAKOBYAN

MARY MURPHY

>\$5000

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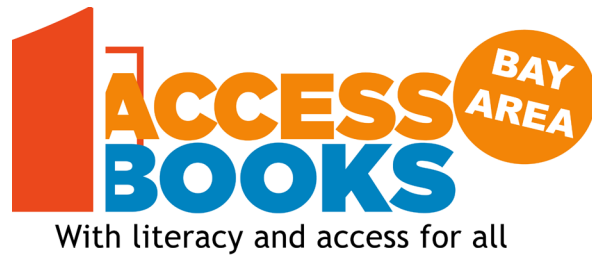
\$20 - 1 BOOK	\$100 - 5 BOOKS
\$40 - 2 BOOKS	\$1,000 - 1 SHELF
\$20,000 - REFURBISH A SCHOOL LIBRARY	

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

Amanda Collins, Executive Director

amanda@accessbooksbayarea.org





Our Mission

To level the literacy playing field for K-8 students living in poverty by providing high quality, high-interest, culturally relevant books, and a transformed school library space that invites students to spend time and read.

