

ETNA LIBRARY TRUSTEE REPORT

Built in 1905 and included on the National Register of Historic Places, the original Hanover Town Library has long held a prominent place of pride and purpose for its patrons who refer to it with affection and distinction as the Etna Library. Jeff Metzler, as Library Director since 2021, meets with the three ballot-elected Trustees once monthly to discuss the collection, review past and plan future events and programming, and to share his vision for future growth while being grounded in our rural roots and traditions.



When our newest trustee joined us, he asked at his first meeting what the Etna Library had to offer someone new to the Hanover area. Seated at the large oak table original to the 120-year-old building without missing a beat, Jeff responded: being connected to history, immersed in nature, and tied to a sense of community belonging. We, as Trustees of this institution, could not agree more with this response. The Etna Library has been - and under the stewardship of Jeff and Assistant Librarian Sarah Molesworth, continues to be - a place where adults feel seen and children are warmly welcomed on their path to becoming lifelong readers and stewards of our natural environment, starting with the Hayes Farm Park and King bird sanctuary, right outside the library's doors.

While we embrace our history and traditions, no institution can survive without responding to the present and future needs and desires of its patrons and the library is no different in this regard. Seeing a clear need to foster the next generation of library users and recognizing a void of programming targeted to the tween age group, Jeff conceived of and implemented what is now an immensely popular multi-age LEGO building club which brings dozens of kids from age 5 to 13 together every week. Both the kids and their parents are thrilled with this creative-yet-structured after-school activity.

In addition to our many regularly scheduled groups (everything from Knitting to Storytimes), the library also hosted a diverse potpourri of special events in FY24. Highlights from this year's sampling included the total solar eclipse prep party, an apple cider press demonstration (complete with cider donuts), the ever-popular Alyx the Magician, a UNH science docent-led presentation on lobsters, and a NH Humanities-sponsored lecture, 'Live Free or Die', on the history of New Hampshire's iconic state motto.

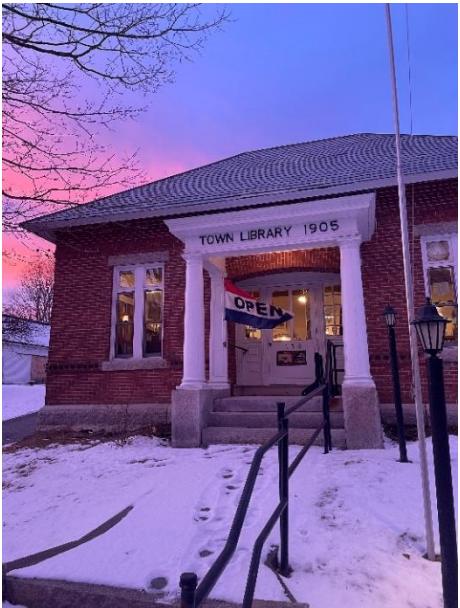
The success of these initiatives and programming efforts are not only reflected in the joy and engagement of our patrons, but they can also be objectively measured. For example, the Etna Library saw a 69% increase in patron visits and a 108% increase in event attendance in FY24 compared to FY23 (with FY23 numbers themselves having risen significantly compared to pre-Covid numbers). The number of patrons visiting continues to climb and, for the final quarter of FY24, the library was visited by between 800 to over 1,000 patrons each month. Despite being one of the smallest libraries in NH by square feet, the Etna Library also offers a greater number of programs and, according to the most recent NH State Library statistics, has higher program attendance than 126 (mostly larger) public libraries across the state.

In one very notable example of recognition of the library's importance to the community, the Birnie family has generously given a substantial gift in honor of their mother, Pietie, a long-term Etna resident, enthusiastic volunteer, and avid reader. The monies will be used to erect a gazebo near the library; further enhancing our ability to offer outdoor programming and reinforce our core values of land preservation and stewardship.



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The ‘Etna Library’ is legally named the ‘Hanover Town Library.’ We were established in 1898 as the first and official town-supported public library for all of Hanover. In 1905, our Classical Revival style building was constructed across from the Mink Brook, which once rushed past multiple mills, powering them and making Etna and Hanover Center the bustling heart of Hanover’s early days. Today, as in 1898, this library (regardless of which of its two names you choose) is overseen by three voter-elected trustees.



We offer an incredible return on investment for the Town of Hanover. With only two staff members, one full-time at 35 hours and one part-time at just 12 hours per week, the Etna Library had an exciting year that belied our small size and small staff. When looking at statistics across all NH public libraries, the Etna Library’s patron visits, event attendance, and number of items circulated are all impressive for its size. FY24 saw the Etna Library visited nearly 9,000 times. We had over 2,500 attendees at our frequent programs and events. And over 12,500 of our items were borrowed by the community. Throughout the Etna Library’s 126-year history, this is the most it has ever been utilized.

The library’s increased usage stems from a concerted effort to offer new ongoing programs like our afterschool LEGO Club, Arts & Crafts Club, Universal Yums group, and visits from Scooter the Therapy Dog, which have all made the Etna Library a frequent part of many families’ everyday schedules, and from the frequent special events we offer that can sometimes draw over 100 attendees. Our increased usage is also

helped by the enrichments we’ve made to our collections, blending classic elements of our circulating materials with newer offerings like TonieBox and Yoto audio players for kids, video games, and our free Seed Library.

This library owes both its historic charm and its modern vibrancy to its dedicated staff (the library’s two employees, Jeff Metzler and Sarah Molesworth love this library and constantly push what is capable within our small building and with our limited resources) and to an equally dedicated and passionate community. The Etna Library’s many volunteers and the unsolicited donations we receive from grateful patrons each year allow us to offer more services than we’d otherwise be able to. And the individuals and families who visit us each week for a new book or DVD, or to play in the children’s corner, or to read a magazine in an armchair with a cup of coffee in-hand, also make this library what it otherwise would not be – a treasured resource and a beloved destination.

2025 marks the 120th anniversary of the construction of the Etna Library’s building. We plan to mark this milestone with special celebrations of the Etna Library’s rich past, while also continuing to offer new circulating materials, new groups and programs, and new special events. The top of the Etna Library’s website states, ‘Where yesterday mingles with today, beneath one roof,’ and we mean it – we’re looking forward to bringing you the best of those days-gone-by and the most intriguing of those days-yet-to-come throughout 2025 and beyond!





The Etna Library

YEAR AT A GLANCE

JULY 1, 2023 – JUNE 30, 2024



2

Number of employees

- One full-time; one part-time

0.29%

Percentage of Hanover's total municipal budget spent on the library

%



12,517

Physical items checked out

8,927

Visitors to the library



210

Programs and events held

2,507

Program/event attendees



**The Etna Library
saved Hanover
\$242,621 in FY24!***

The Etna Library saves the community money and time, brings people together, expands perspectives, and enriches lives.



\$219,415

In Circulating items

\$23,206

In Programs for children and adults



*NH Library Association's 'Use Value Calculator':
<https://nhlibrarians.org/Pages/Index/225075/library-use-value-calculator>