

## Notable Achievements

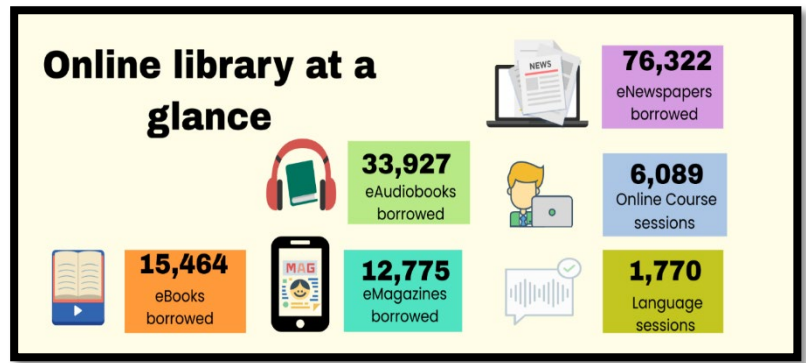
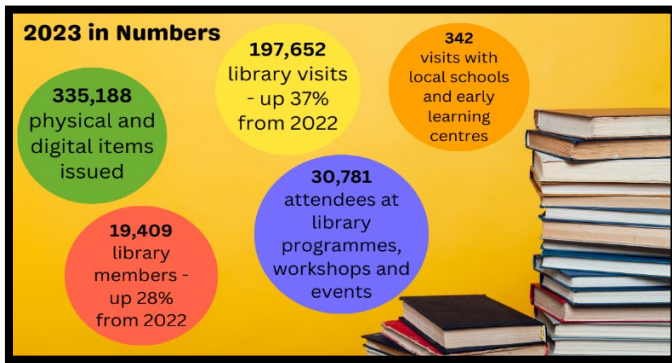
- We had an increase of **28%** on library memberships this year, which brought our total to **19,409**.
- **335,188** books, eBooks and eAudiobooks were borrowed throughout the year, reflecting an increase of **22%**.
- **197,652** library users came through our doors, reflecting an increase of **37%**

## Other Achievements

- **13,000** Bookville Activity Books were distributed to all 88 primary schools across Kilkenny as part of our annual Bookville Kilkenny Festival.
- Our opening hours to the public increased by **16%** across the network.

## New Developments

- Mayfair Library has progressed substantially in 2023, with an opening expected in Quarter 2, 2024.
- All 8 libraries and our mobile library have been awarded Age Friendly status.



## National Initiatives



**Right to Read:** This year, all of the "Right to Read" programmes proved highly popular, with 276 events and 9,758 participants across the five major programme areas-Ireland Reads, Spring into Storytime, Summer Stars, Children's Book Festival, and Family Time at Your Library. We hosted storytimes, teddy bear sleepovers and craft sessions as part of the My Little Library Bag and Bedtime Books initiative, where 2,438 Bedtime books and 1,166 My Little Library Bags with 5 books in each were given children aged 0-4 to encourage a love of books and reading.

We engaged with all our partner primary schools and Early Learning Centres with 308 class visits to the library and 25 library presentations in schools. To celebrate the Women's World Cup over two thousand FAI COYGIG activity books were distributed to children in Kilkenny through our branches aimed at children from 3<sup>rd</sup> to 6<sup>th</sup> class and proved very popular.

## Healthy Ireland At Your Library:

Kilkenny Library Service held over 30 Healthy Ireland events across our library branches in 2023 for both children and adults. We hosted talks and workshops on gut health, water safety, hill walking, mindfulness for children and adults, back health, blood pressure checks and healthy eating to mention a few. We collaborated with partners such as the Irish Heart Foundation, Mental Health Ireland, Alone, Healthy Kilkenny and UPMC Ireland to promote a healthy lifestyle.



## Age Friendly Programme

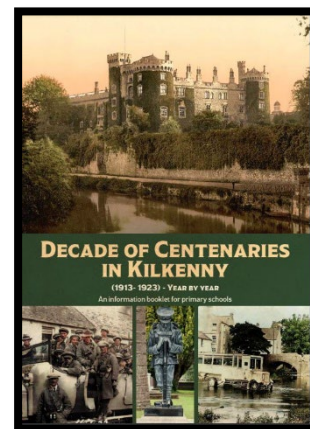
We were delighted to achieve Age Friendly status for all 8 libraries and the mobile library. We continued to provide a wide variety of Age Friendly programming including craft classes, languages classes and genealogy workshops. Our Mobile Library staff ran a very successful outreach programme with three nursing homes, facilitating craft workshops and bingo sessions at Tinnypark, Archersrath & Crosspatrick.



## Local Studies

Additions to the Kilkenny Digital Archive included a collaborative venture with the Deenside Players to record the longstanding tradition of local theatre & pantomime in the Castlecomer community. Over 30 programmes have been digitised to date along with some photos of various productions over the last 60 plus years. Genealogy workshops and talks by local historians were delivered in library branches during Heritage week.

**Decade of Centenaries** We produced an information booklet for primary schools and continued our podcast series covering significant local events on Small House' burnings, The final months of the Civil War, Everyday Life and General Elections in Kilkenny.



## **Creative Ireland:**

### **Bookville Kilkenny:**

Bookville 2023 had an audience of over 18,500 with 13,000 educational activity books distributed to every primary school child across the county, six online videos, a Bookville exhibition, 49 live events and, new for this year, five virtual workshops. 34 authors, illustrators and entertainers engaged with children, families and schools across the county.

**Storyteller in Residence:** A new initiative where Kilkenny native, Helena Byrne designed and ran a programme promoting literacy and fostering the habit of enjoyment of reading amongst children and young people. Part of this included “*The Magic of Local Lore*” exhibition of stories gathered by some 5th & 6th class students, representing the rich history and cultural diversity within their Communities. This programme was supported by Creative Ireland.

## **Sensory Resources:**

Our sensory services including a Toy & Sensory resource collection and a sensory book collection were available to all, along with social stories, ear defenders and a sensory box of toys to make visits to the library more comfortable. C-Pens are available in all libraries to help read text aloud. In 2023 we continued our pilot project of supplying TTRS licences to schools and families with children who experience difficulties in spelling, reading or writing.



**Climate Action:** We implemented a number of initiatives along three main themes in 2023— energy usage, biodiversity and sustainable living. Home energy Kits were loaned to help people monitor and improve their energy usage. In partnership with the Heritage Council, we offer access to ESKER (a Citizen Science Kit) which contains a variety of useful equipment, manuals and guides for biodiversity enthusiasts. We held events on seed saving, upcycling clothes and furniture, clothes swaps, food waste, soap making and GIY. We recognise the importance of aligning the 17 SDGs around our services and programming. We continue to work with the South East Energy Agency to develop a Community Energy Hub, which is expected to be launched in 2024.

**Programming:** We organised events with over 35,000 people of all ages enjoying storytimes, Lego workshops, chess, author visits, open mic night, crafts, bookclubs and much more. Our Virtual Book continues, with over 150 members. As part of our Booked Off Podcast, we released nine podcasts, covering a variety of topics from book recommendations to digital technology.

**Partnerships:** We actively collaborated and partnered with a range of organisations, agencies and community groups such as Kilkenny Carlow ETB, Kilkenny Education Centre, South East Energy Agency, The Heritage Council, Kilkenny Childcare Committee, Music Generation, HSE, and Calmast. We participated in national and local festivals such as Seachtain Na Gaeilge, National Poetry Day, Decade of Centenaries, Bealtaine, Heritage week and Science week.



## Information and Communication

We had **31,777** engagements and **120,166** video views across our social media and YouTube platforms.

Our virtual newsletter was sent to over **5,600** subscribers every month to keep library members, potential members, elected members and local groups informed of upcoming events, library services, programmes and resources.

## Reading Supports

**Schools Services:** We invested further in our class novel collection, sensory book collection, sensory book and toy collections, and Aistear collections this year, as well as Teacher's resource packs.

**Mobile Library Service:** Our mobile library network was expanded to include visits to approximately 60 schools, nursing homes and early learning centres across the county as well as 10 community stops which were open to all. Mobile library staff helped set up and run 3 community book clubs for adults in Freshford, Windgap and Mullinavat and organised a number of Age Friendly activities in local nursing homes. The mobile library also operated a door-to-door delivery service for those unable to visit their local stop or library.

## Income

We successfully applied and were awarded **€161,008** from a range of funding sources including Solas, Dormant Accounts Fund, Decade of Centenaries, Kilkenny Carlow ETB, Creative Ireland, LGMA and Dept. of Rural and Community Development.

## Service Development and Infrastructure

- Mayfair Library made significant progress towards completion, with plans to open in Quarter 2, 2024.
- Budget approved for new library in Thomastown
- Callan Feasibility study in progress.
- Carnegie Library Feasibility study completed and funding applied for.
- Replacement funding application submitted for new mobile library.
- Upgrades completed across the network include new carpet and information desk in Graiguenamanagh, painting in Ferrybank, upgrades to community room and WC facilities in Urlingford.
- New National Library Development plan was launched by Libraries Ireland, which will feed into our Kilkenny Library development plan, to be completed in 2024.

## Workforce



Library Staff member, Johanna Brennan was awarded the prestigious *Allen and Overy award* recognising talent in the field of librarianship and information management having completed her 2 year Library and Information Management postgraduate diploma in Ulster University.

Over **417** training sessions were completed by staff in a variety of areas, to help us enhance the service we provide to our diverse community. Specialised Library training courses were completed by a large number of staff, with 2 staff currently training for a professional qualification in Librarianship. Our workforce plan was completed in 2023.

