



SUBMISSION FORM

All submission forms must include the following information. Separate submission forms must be turned in for each eligible program. **Deadline: July 1, 2025.** Please include this submission form as the first page of your electronic entry. If you do not receive an email confirming receipt of your entry within 3 days of submission, please contact [Gage Harter](#).

PROGRAM INFORMATION

County: Prince William County
Program Title: Engaging the Community Through a Webcam
Program Category: Customer Service & Community Outreach

CONTACT INFORMATION

Name: Jennifer Patterson
Title: Library Director
Department: Prince William Public Libraries
Telephone: 703-792-4727 Website: https://www.pwcva.gov/department/library
Email: jpatterson2@pwcgov.org

SIGNATURE OF COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR OR DEPUTY/ASSISTANT COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR

Name: Christopher J. Shorter
Title: County Executive
Signature:

Executive Summary

Prince William Public Libraries (PWPL) develops new marketing, public relations, and outreach strategies to connect more people to library resources. In 2023, PWPL initiated a marketing project rarely found in public libraries: a webcam. The “Squirt the Turtle Webcam” allows people to tune in 24/7 to see the beloved turtle from Chinn Park Library.

PWPL’s Office of Communications and Marketing (OCM) conducted extensive research to determine the best equipment and streaming service, working closely with the Prince William County Department of Information Technology (DoIT) to ensure the service met their standards and procedures.

The live stream was launched in December 2023 and quickly gained popularity. It has since been viewed more than 7,000 times for 2,129 hours. Moreover, the live stream is now used in schools, it is listed on an international website that offers an extensive collection of wildlife and pet webcams from around the world, and it caught the attention of the “Library Animals” podcast in Canada.



Program Description

In 2023, PWPL launched a webcam to reach new audiences. PWPL serves a community of over 530,000 people in Prince William County (PWC) and the City of Manassas in Virginia. At least 150,000 residents do not have a library card and do not visit libraries. PWPL's vision is to be the hub connecting residents to the power of information. Therefore, it has expanded its activities to reach non-library users and connect them to library resources. Community building and engagement are key strategic goals for PWPL. The Strategic Plans 2019-2023 and 2024-2028 both focus on expanding efforts to connect people to library resources and engage them in library activities. Communications and marketing campaigns are a vital part of this effort. PWPL recognizes that effective library marketing is essential to helping everyone access information and resources.

PWPL's OCM continuously innovates to present strategic deliverables that resonate with the public and reach new audiences. In 2023, OCM seized the opportunity to engage new library users with one of PWPL's most famous assets – Squirt, the beloved turtle at Chinn Park Library, one of PWPL's 12 branches. Squirt the Painted Turtle, a rescue from a pond that was being drained in Manassas, has been delighting library visitors of all ages for more than 20 years. His popularity extends to PWPL's social media, where posts mentioning Squirt are among the most successful. In 2023, Chinn Park Library staff conceived the idea of enhancing Squirt's digital presence and shared the concept with OCM.

Live streaming is a powerful marketing tool that enables real-time interaction, fosters authenticity, and cultivates a sense of community. It's a versatile format that can be used for various marketing activities. Although it's a relatively cost-effective way to reach a broad audience, it has not yet been widely adopted by libraries. PWPL embarked on this marketing campaign and hopes to inspire other libraries and county agencies.

OCM conducted extensive research to determine the best equipment and streaming service and worked closely with the PWC DoIT to ensure the streaming service met their standards and procedures and was approved by their Architecture Review Board.

The project was funded by PWPL's marketing budget and implemented by PWPL's marketing and technology services specialists. The web camera was installed on Squirt's tank in Chinn Park Library. While the video feed is live, the audio is a looped recording of his tank during the library's quiet hours to present a tranquil, calming ambiance for viewers. PWPL's existing YouTube site was chosen as the streaming service. The video can be viewed at <https://www.youtube.com/@PrinceWilliamPublicLibraries/streams>.

PWPL launched the live stream in December 2023, and it quickly gained popularity. The social media posts from December 22 announcing the service had almost 5,000 Views. The stream has since been viewed more than 7,000 times for 2,129 hours. The live stream even found its use at schools. A Prince William County Public School librarian shared how she streams the webcam throughout the day at school. As students enter, the audio plays as white noise to help transition them into the class.

Moreover, the livestream found its viewers outside Prince William County. While most people watch Squirt through PWPL's YouTube site, 24% of the camera traffic originates from external sites, including an international website, <https://www.mangolinkcam.com>, which offers an extensive collection of wildlife and pet webcams worldwide. Squirt is included in the "Reptiles Around the World" category.

The Squirt live stream also reached Canada, where the Cold Lake Public Library hosts the "Library Animals" podcast, where library staff share stories about the animals living at their community libraries. They were so impressed by Squirt's life at Chinn Park Library that they invited a member of the OCM team to discuss Squirt's stories as well as other interesting facts about PWPL in their podcast episode, available on <https://open.spotify.com/show/4kpZD0CO0bNonXpYDCw76I>.

The increased visibility of Squirt also helped PWPL secure professional volunteer care for Squirt's tank from a local animal clinic. The webcam even caught Santa's attention, who had visited him the previous Christmas with a gift of dried shrimp.

The webcam helps market PWPL as a modern and innovative library system that utilizes new marketing channels to connect with people of various ages, backgrounds, interests, and needs.

The webcam has brought PWPL into the spotlight in other ways. It created more buzz and conversation about PWPL in the community. As people visit the PWPL website and YouTube to view Squirt, they also learn about the services and resources PWPL offers, leading to increased

library visits and checkouts, and more people being connected to the power of information.

Thanks to this, PWPL brings more people, information, and ideas together, enriching more lives.




Prince William Public Libraries

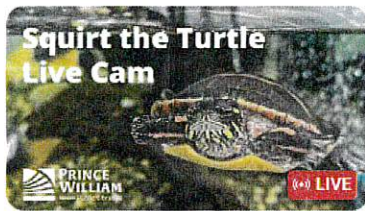
@PrinceWilliamPublicLibraries · 996 subscribers · 884 videos

Prince William Public Libraries consists of 12 branches serving Prince William County [...more](#)

pwcva.gov/library and 3 more links

Subscribe

Home Videos Shorts **Live** Podcasts Playlists 



Squirt the Turtle Cam at Chinn Park
Library