

**Rochester
Public Library**

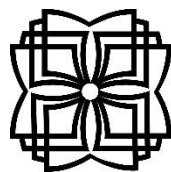
More Than You Think

115 South Avenue | Rochester | New York | 14604

**Rochester Public Library Board of Trustees Meeting
Kusler-Cox Auditorium, Rundel Memorial Library Building
November 26, 2025, 9:00 a.m.
Agenda**

- | | | |
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| 1. Liaison Reports | | |
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| 2. Staff Reports | | |
| a. Director’s Report | Clasper | |
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| c. Community Libraries | Scanlon | |
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| 1. President Appoints Chair of Nominating Committee for 2026 | Benjamin | |
| IX. ADJOURNMENT | | |

**Next Meeting
January 29, 2026
Rundel Memorial Building, Central Library**



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**Meeting of the RPL Board of Trustees
Arnett Branch Library, 310 Arnett Blvd., 14619
October 29, 2025
Minutes**

RPL Trustees Present: Donna Benjamin (President), Gary Brandt (MCLS Liaison), Ellen Brenner (VP), Elizabeth Call, Marcus Cooper, James Kraus, Matt McDermott, Sarah Murphy Abbamonte Sharon Salluzzo (Reynolds Liaison), Jeffrey Tucker, Mark Wyand (Treasurer) (quorum present)

RPL Trustees Excused:

Staff and Guests: City Council Liaison Mitch Gruber, City Administration Liaison Tammy Mayberry, City Law Department Liaison Allison Bartlett; FFRPL Liaison Donna Borgus; staff members, Emily Clasper, Brie Harrison, Katy Hasselwander, Sarah Lehman, Debi Mansour, BJ Scanlon, Ana Suro

President Benjamin called the meeting to order at 9:10 a.m., welcomed trustees, staff, and guests, and confirmed a quorum was present.

WELCOME

Carol Kramer welcomed the Board to the Arnett Library on behalf of the Friends group and described the branch as an essential part of the 19th Ward. She said it offers a safe place for children, important services for adults and strong connections to the neighborhood. She highlighted resources such as computer access, notary services, and digital literacy support.

She noted the murals and outdoor book art that make the branch distinctive and encouraged visitors to view them. She described the Friends as a small but active group that supports staff programs, maintains the memorial garden for Helen Martin and helped plan the library's 100th anniversary. She mentioned ongoing traditions such as donating bicycles for the summer reading program and providing volunteer story time readers at both the library and School 16.

Lastly, she explained that the Friends sponsor a free annual music series and recently exceeded a fundraising goal for new preschool toys. She praised the staff and leadership, including Bruce Tehan and Ginger Brewer, and expressed appreciation for their work in keeping the library welcoming and well loved.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

No members of the public were present who wished to address the board.

MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the September meeting were approved as presented.

PERSONNEL CHANGES

Personnel Manager Suro called attention to the personnel changes and staffing levels for September 8–October 10, 2025, and offered to answer questions. Director Clasper added that Ana Suro will be retiring at the end of the year. Ms. Suro's position has been reclassified to an HR Coordinator and has been offered to Geraldine Scott, who is currently working in the HR Department at the city. Scott will be joining the library in mid-December. Trustee Brenner MADE A MOTION to approve the personnel changes. THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

FINANCIAL REPORTS

Library Finance Manager Hasselwander reviewed the financial reports with the trustees and offered to answer questions. President Benjamin thanked Hasselwander for the recent improvements to the reporting formats and data presentation. Trustee Wyand MADE A MOTION to approve the monthly financial reports as presented and approved by the RPL Finance Committee. THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

None

NEW BUSINESS

Maplewood Library Temporary Operations Lease Extension

Deputy Director Scanlon reviewed the item and offered to answer questions. Trustee Kraus MADE A MOTION to approve a temporary lease extension with Providence Housing through January 31, 2026, for \$2,975.10 per month. THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

Branch Tutoring Agreement, Laura Robinson

Deputy Director Scanlon reviewed the item and offered to answer questions. He explained that the board had previously approved an agreement with a different tutor who is unable to fulfil that agreement, therefore, this agreement will replace the previous one. Trustee Salluzzo MADE A MOTION to approve an agreement with Laura Robinson to provide tutoring services at the Phillis Wheatley Community Library for an amount not to exceed \$4,930 with a term through May 31, 2026. THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

Election of Nominating Committee

President Benjamin reviewed the item and offered to answer questions. Trustee Call MADE A MOTION to elect Ellen Brenner and Sarah Murphy Abbamonte to the Board Nominating Committee as specified in the bylaws. THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY. President Benjamin appointed Trustee Cooper as the additional member and Trustee Brenner as the chair of the committee.

2026 RPL Board Meeting Schedule

Director Clasper reviewed the proposed meeting dates and offered to answer questions. Trustee McDermott MADE A MOTION to approve the proposed schedule of 2026 RPL Board meetings. THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

2026 Holiday Schedule

Director Clasper reviewed the proposed schedule of closed days. In response to a question, Personnel Manager Suro clarified that the dates are not aligned with the school calendar but are derived directly from the employee union contracts. Trustee Murphy Abbamonte MADE A MOTION to approve the 2026 holidays as proposed. THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

Northeast Branch Operations Budget Endorsement

Director Clasper reviewed the item and offered to answer questions. After discussion and suggestions to modify the presented budget amounts, Trustee Krause MADE A MOTION TO POSTPONE the item until the November meeting to give staff time to make the proposed changes. THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

Northeast Branch Buildout Agreement Amendment

Finance Manager Hasselwander reviewed the item and offered to answer questions. Capital Manager Harrison responded to a question that she is confident there will not be any further requests for increases. Trustee Salluzzo MADE A MOTION to approve an agreement amendment with Edge Architecture for an additional amount of \$85,000 and a revised total amount not to exceed \$235,000 for Northeast Branch Library buildout services. THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

Author Visit Agreement, Children’s Book Festival

Finance Manager Hasselwander reviewed the item and offered to answer questions. Trustee Salluzzo MADE A MOTION to approve an agreement with Tracey Baptiste for an Author Visit on November 7, 2025, for an amount of \$2,500 as part of the Children’s Book Festival. THE MOTION PASSED with Trustee McDermott ABSTAINING.

Grant Acceptance and Budget Amendment

Finance Manager Hasselwander reviewed the item and offered to answer questions.

Trustee Wyand left the meeting at 10:05 a.m.

After discussion, Trustee Murphy Abbamonte MADE A MOTION to accept a Rochester Area Community Foundation grant for \$112,000 and amend the RPL budget to reflect the grant. THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY. The board asked to have a Raising a Reader presentation at an upcoming meeting.

Capital Improvement Program Request, Fy 2027–Fy 2031

Capital Improvements Manager Harrison reviewed the item and offered to answer questions. She called attention to urgent infrastructure needs at Central Library, including east terrace repairs for the Rundel Memorial Building, especially after recent inspections revealed serious deterioration in crucial support beams. This repair had placeholder, estimated costs as a \$5.5 million project, but recent investigation into conditions and needs have updated estimates to approximately \$10 million. She further detailed the complexity of staged repairs and budget constraints imposed by the city for FY27. The board discussed the prospect of needing creative, alternative funding sources for future major projects which could include state and federal grants, philanthropic donations, and potentially a capital campaign.

Trustee Murphy Abbamonte left the meeting at 10:11 a.m.

After discussion, Trustee Brandt MADE A MOTION to approve the FY27–FY31 Capital Improvement Program submission as described. THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

REPORTS & DISCUSSION

Liaison from the Monroe County Library System (MCLS) Board

Trustee Brandt explained that he was called away from the last MCLS meeting. He handed out a copy of the agenda from that meeting and asked Director Clasper to help answer any questions. There were none.

Liaison from the Friends & Foundation of RPL (FFRPL)

Executive Director Borgus reported strong recent fundraising success and community support. She highlighted a recent fundraiser for toys at the Arnett Branch, which not only met but surpassed its \$2,000 goal by raising at least \$2,100, with additional donations still arriving.

She reported that for "ROC the Day," FFRPL is focusing its supplemental support on the Maplewood Branch, requesting \$22,233 to fund key needs including utility shelving, display cases, and AV carts. She underscored the importance of board members making pledges or gifts themselves, as this leadership helps attract greater support from other donors and qualifies the library for matching opportunities. She discussed the use of compelling marketing, such as images and stories showing the community impact of donations, rather than just highlighting purchased items. In addition, she mentioned that a newsletter and additional promotional materials are being developed to further energize fundraising.

Executive Director Borgus concluded by offering transparency regarding recent purchases, stating she would provide contracts or itemized details to board members if requested.

Director's Report

Director Clasper reported that she has been remarkably busy this month and listed multiple special events she attended in October, including movie screenings and meetings with legislators.

Trustee Wyand left the meeting at 10:41 a.m.

Director Clasper was also asked to testify before the New York State Assembly's Committee on Libraries and Technology regarding e-books and advocacy for state-level assistance. During her testimony she highlighted the MCLS's Wired for Opportunity Program, which focuses on bridging the digital divide. She also noted that the RPL Staff Day was held, providing library staff members the opportunity to network, share best practices, and have fun together.

Lastly, she reminded everyone to attend the Rochester Regional Library Council (RRLC) Member Celebration event the next day at noon.

Central Library

Associate Director Lehman reported that she has been visiting divisions throughout Central to meet staff and reacquaint herself with their work after seven years in a branch. She has spent time in the Teen Center, worked at the circulation desk, and plans to spend time in the Arts and Literature Division next.

She highlighted new initiatives in the Teen Center led by Jeff Bostic, including an Esports team that recently received its first income check through an affiliated Amazon account, which the teen committee will use for snacks and other needs. She noted the start of an Esports curriculum in September that introduces teens to the history of video games, streaming, and business planning. She also described an art project with the Ninth Floor Art Collective, where teens are creating digital artwork that will be printed and mounted on ceiling tiles to transform the Teen Center's ceiling. She encouraged everyone to attend a celebration of the project's progress on October 31, at 1:00 in the Kate Gleason Auditorium.

Community Libraries

Deputy Director Scanlon reported on recent branch training closures. Frederick Douglass Community Library closed on October 3, Arnett Branch on October 10, Charlotte Branch on October 16, and Winton Branch on October 17. Sully Branch held its training without closing because its staff had been working at other branches. Monroe Branch conducted its training on the day of the report and focused on a major clean out. Sully Branch also reopened this week after two months of HVAC and electrical work.

Scanlon noted that the family who created the Winton Branch sticker book was featured in a Spectrum News story and that their project continues to receive positive attention. He also shared a new book created through the Writers and Books summer workshops at Lincoln Branch, which will be published as part of the Lincoln Libraries collection.

He highlighted a Monroe Branch program offering patrons surprise horror movie bundles with popcorn and Halloween stickers. He described upcoming Arts Bloom partnerships that will bring twenty-nine workshops to the Central Library, Lincoln Branch, and Frederick Douglass Community Library, including programs with Grupo Latina Cultural and Spanish speaking story times. Another Arts Bloom grant recipient, puppeteer Kasim Wallace, will lead adult puppet making workshops followed by STEAM workshops in all quadrants.

Scanlon reported on a series of high demand community assistance events led by the Chisel Collective and partners in the social care network. Services support housing, utility assistance, food access, transportation, and other needs. Attendance has grown significantly, with a recent event drawing about 750 people. Due to overwhelming demand, the current event at the Arnett Branch is capped at 40 assessments and 250 prescreens. Another event will take place at Lincoln Branch tomorrow. Staff are assisting with logistics while qualified screeners handle eligibility and service questions. Scanlon emphasized the scale of community need and the library's role in providing space and coordination.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

President Benjamin announced that she will be reaching out to trustees about officer elections and committee assignments for 2026. Trustees Salluzzo and Call volunteered to serve on an ad hoc Bylaws Review Committee with President Benjamin also including Ms. Mansour and Ms. Bartlett as advisors. She then reminded everyone that the next meeting will be on November 26 at the Central Library.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 10:59 a.m.

Debi Mansour

October 11–November 7, 2025

NEW HIRE

Johnson-Bell, Wanda	Security Guard/PT/Security Division/Central	10/20/2025
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PROMOTIONS

Sharma, Manju	FROM: Librarian I/PT/Lyell Branch	10/20/2025
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TO: Librarian I/FT/Arnett Branch

Sirmons, Cormel	FROM: Clerk Typist/PT/Lincoln Branch	10/27/2025
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TO: Clerk III/Typing/PT/Lincoln Branch

Soto, Natalie	FROM: Clerk Typist/PT/Lincoln Branch	11/03/2025
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TO: Early Learning Specialist/FT/Bilingual/Lincoln Branch

STAFFING

Full-Time Positions

Budgeted

Central

80

Community

31

Filled

80

31

Vacancies

0

0

Part-time Positions

Budgeted

Central

96

Community

136

Filled

76

108

Vacancies

20

28

CENTRAL FINANCIAL REPORT, OCTOBER 2025***SALARY & BENEFITS***

Salaries, wages, and overtime are projected within budget. Minor travel expenses occur for staff attendance at Association of Public Historians and NY Library Association annual conferences (\$1,490).

EQUIPMENT & SUPPLIES

Materials expenses within budget (\$64,363), includes the annual renewal of A-to-Z Database (\$18,540). Equipment and supplies within budget, includes annual barcode order (\$3,100), multiple cleaning supply orders (\$3,884) and maintenance tools/equipment (\$1,587).

SERVICES & CHARGES

Services & Charges expenses are within budget. Includes: Print & copy machine monthly maintenance and lease payments (\$5,874); utility invoices (\$54,073); telephone service (\$4,462); supplemental security services (\$1,170); mail machine maintenance contract renewal (\$1,296); fire alarm repair (\$4,232); programming expenses (\$3,098).

CASH CAPITAL

Emergency elevator repair complete (\$20,120).

COMMUNITY FINANCIAL REPORT, OCTOBER 2025***SALARY & BENEFITS***

Salaries and wages are projected within budget. Overtime budget will be adjusted, as necessary.

EQUIPMENT & SUPPLIES

Materials expenses within budget (\$31,374). Equipment and supplies within budget, larger orders include Sully Branch book trucks (\$1,211); Wheatley Branch office chairs (\$917); multiple maintenance supply orders (\$3,866). Wheatley Branch water fountain installed (\$1,559).

SERVICES & CHARGES

Services & Charges expenses are within budget. Print & copy machine monthly maintenance and lease payments (\$1,289); utility invoices (\$13,010); FTAC invoices (\$8,000); programming expenses (\$1,020).

CASH CAPITAL

Children's furniture purchased for Douglass Branch (\$3,006). NE branch design invoice processed (\$22,637).

Central Financial Report, Fiscal Year 2025-26 <i>Fiscal YTD (through October 31, 2025)</i>						
Category	Description	Original Budget	Revised Budget	Expenses Fiscal YTD	Remaining Balance	% of Budget
Salary & Benefits						
	Full-Time Salaries	5,226,800	5,226,800	1,610,467	3,616,333	30.8%
	Part-Time/Temp Salaries	1,664,200	1,664,200	435,062	1,229,138	26.1%
	Overtime	19,000	19,000	1,848	17,152	9.7%
	Employee Benefits	3,642,600	3,642,600	583,465	3,059,135	16.0%
	Employee Development	34,100	40,320	6,496	33,825	16.1%
	Other	67,200	67,200	10,162	57,038	15.1%
	Sub Total	10,653,900	10,660,120	2,647,499	8,012,621	24.8%
Equipment & Supplies						
	Materials Budget	511,800	519,313	129,585	389,728	25.0%
	Other Furnishings & Equipment	10,100	10,100	1,517	8,583	15.0%
	Office Supplies	60,100	69,384	20,470	48,914	29.5%
	Other Materials & Supplies	59,800	68,487	15,867	52,620	23.2%
	Sub Total	641,800	667,284	167,439	499,845	25.1%
Services & Charges						
	Utilities	467,500	468,300	157,983	310,317	33.7%
	Facility Maintenance	109,300	123,869	26,611	97,257	21.5%
	Professional Services/Fees	236,600	241,647	126,810	114,837	52.5%
	Chargebacks	89,700	89,700	3,669	86,031	4.1%
	Service Charges - Other Gov't	51,400	51,400	12,564	38,836	24.4%
	Telecommunications	14,200	14,200	4,762	9,438	33.5%
	Other Expenses	172,300	177,367	17,710	159,657	10.0%
	Sub Total	1,141,000	1,166,482	350,109	816,373	30.0%
TOTAL EXPENSED						
		12,436,700	12,493,886	3,165,047	9,328,839	25.4%
Central Cash Capital						
		FY26 Budget	Prior Year Carryover	Expenses YTD	Remaining Balance	
	Facility Maintenance Allocation	50,000	171,850	20,120	201,730	11.7%
	Rundel Loading Dock Assessment	120,000	0	0	120,000	0.0%
	Cash Capital Total	170,000	171,850	20,120	321,730	11.7%
REVENUE RECEIPTS						
		11,736,100	11,736,100	1,253,294	10,482,806	
		Original Budget	Revised Budget	City Prorate Share + Revenue YTD	Outstanding Revenue	

Community Financial Report, Fiscal Year 2025-26 Fiscal YTD (through October 31, 2025)						
Category	Description	Original Budget	Revised Budget	Expenses Fiscal YTD	Remaining Balance	% of Budget
Salary & Benefits						
	Full-Time Salaries	2,157,700	2,157,700	614,847	1,542,853	28.5%
	Part-Time/Temp Salaries	2,022,700	2,022,700	616,309	1,406,391	30.5%
	Overtime	2,000	2,000	1,563	437	78.1%
	Employee Development	19,600	22,309	4,449	17,860	19.9%
	Other	27,400	27,400	3,078	24,322	11.2%
	Sub Total	4,229,400	4,232,109	1,240,245	2,967,541	29.3%
Equipment & Supplies						
	Materials Budget	536,600	543,840	88,722	455,118	16.3%
	Office Supplies	37,700	39,851	8,536	31,316	21.4%
	Other Materials & Supplies	41,200	56,519	19,439	37,080	34.4%
	Sub Total	615,500	640,211	116,697	523,513	18.2%
Services & Charges						
	Utilities	229,500	230,513	59,056	171,457	25.6%
	Facility Maintenance	39,700	48,306	4,357	43,949	9.0%
	Professional Services/Fees	402,000	464,846	26,905	437,942	5.8%
	Chargebacks	26,400	26,400	1,881	24,519	7.1%
	Service Charges - Other Gov't	7,500	7,500	0	7,500	0.0%
	Telecommunications	17,100	17,206	4,462	12,744	25.9%
	Other Expenses	50,900	58,788	14,769	44,019	25.1%
	Sub Total	773,300	853,759	111,428	742,130	13.1%
TOTAL EXPENSED						
		5,618,200	5,726,078	1,468,371	4,233,185	25.6%
Community Cash Capital						
		FY26 Budget	Prior Year Carryover	Expenses YTD	Remaining Balance	
	Library Furnishings	12,000	39,042	21,899	29,143	56.1%
	Library Facilities	40,000	112,133	29,497	122,635	27.1%
	Library Technology	0	108,664	44,371	64,293	40.8%
	Library Capital Projects*	0				
	Cash Capital Total	52,000	259,839	95,767	216,072	36.9%
REVENUE RECEIPTS						
		277,000	277,000	171,174	105,826	
		<i>Original Budget</i>	<i>Revised Budget</i>	<i>Receipts Fiscal YTD</i>	<i>Outstanding Revenue</i>	

* Projects administered by City DES

Trust Funds Financial Report, Fiscal Year 2025-26						
Fiscal YTD (through October 31, 2025)						
	Allocation	Carry-forward	TOTAL	YTD Expenses	% of Total	
Fenevessy (Central + Branch bal)*	4224	\$81,871	\$26,256	\$60,127	\$8,674	14.4%
Gleason Fund	4225	\$16,362				
Gleason Fund (FFRPL)*	4225	\$12,572	\$15,976	\$24,910	\$4,777	19.2%
Taylor Fund	4226	\$3,723	\$13	\$3,736	\$367	9.8%
Beeney Fund (FFRPL)	4227	\$5,042	\$4,246	\$9,288	\$197	2.1%
Carnahan Fund	4228	\$1,604	\$818	\$2,422	\$0	0.0%
Reynolds Fund - RPL	4229	\$148,267	\$112,797	\$261,064	\$58,786	22.5%
Purton Fund	4231	\$17,543	\$11	\$17,554	\$976	5.6%
Boland Fund	4232	\$1,589	\$2,504	\$4,093	\$0	0.0%
Kenyon-Jeffries Fund*	4233	\$20,827	\$1,497	\$10,324	\$0	0.0%
Poletto Fund	4234	\$1,604	\$363	\$1,968	\$0	0.0%
Gervickas Fund	4235	\$6,236	\$7,823	\$14,059	\$808	5.7%
Craig Fund (FFRPL)	4236	\$2,803	\$2,642	\$5,445	\$274	5.0%
Lee Fund (FFRPL)	4237	\$1,524	\$1,365	\$2,889	\$150	5.2%
Vietnam Veterans Fund (FFRPL)	4238	\$701	\$1,896	\$2,597	\$110	4.2%
Holtzman Fund (FFRPL)	4239	\$1,604	\$330	\$1,934	\$444	23.0%
Tummonds Fund (FFRPL)	4241	\$103,307	\$52,168	\$155,475	\$34,598	22.3%
TOTAL		\$427,180	\$230,704	\$577,884	\$110,160	19.1%
*Support for staffing expenses removed in total column.						
Fenevessy \$48,000 for literacy aides; Gleason \$20,000 for SHH staff; and Kenyon-Jeffries for LHG staff.						
Gift Fund Financial Report, Fiscal Year 2025-26						
Fiscal YTD (through October 31, 2025)						
Fund	Allocation	Transfer In	TOTAL	YTD Expenses	% of Total	
Gift Fund	4230	\$33,188	\$3,300	\$36,488	\$2,645	7.2%

November 2025

UNFINISHED BUSINESS (ACTION ITEMS)

NORTHEAST BRANCH OPERATIONS BUDGET ENDORSEMENT (CLASPER)

Board Action Requested: A motion to endorse the FY28 operating budget of approximately \$500,000 for the Northeast Branch, subject to adjustment during the budget planning process for that budget year.

Details: In 2022, RPL, Rochester Housing Authority (RHA), Home Leasing, and Edgemere Development partnered to develop a proposal for a library branch co-located with affordable housing. RPL then prepared a preliminary budget for the proposed branch operations. The partnership is intended to create a neighborhood anchor, similar to successful branch libraries co-located in affordable housing projects in New York City.

The Fernwood Avenue Apartments project supports several local planning documents with significant investment by the City of Rochester, New York State, and RHA. It aligns with the recommendations in our Facilities and Operations Plan and is within our highest priority need area. The redevelopment of 100 Fernwood Avenue is a critical component of the Group 14621 Community Association's '14621 Revitalization Strategy' Master Plan. The project site was a former Brownfield Cleanup Program with Certificate of Completion in 2009.

The proposed operations mirror other RPL branches with a focus on digital literacy and job seeking services. With the current project schedule, we anticipate a FY28 start based on July/August 2027 opening projections. RPL may seek partial funding for Q4 of FY27 to support the preliminary hiring of a Branch Manager and Librarian I to establish community contacts and collection development. The preliminary budget recommendation for FY28 operations is roughly \$500,000, not inclusive of undistributed (benefits) costs. This does include salary, wages, programming, materials, and the annual Common Maintenance and interest payments for the building. The cost is equivalent to the Phillis Wheatley Community Library operations.

The Sunset Park Apartments and Brooklyn's Branch Library, as well as the New York Public Library's relocated Inwood Branch at the Eliza Apartments, serve as models to how neighborhoods are transformed by co-locating vibrant community services. While maintaining the library's existing services, such as early literacy and story-time programs, technology classes, and bilingual resources, additional spaces will be provided for computers, classes, and community needs. These types of joint ventures are the future of community-centered affordable housing development.

RPL administration acknowledges that the upcoming budget cycles may pose challenges similar to the 2008-2010 City fiscal crisis, with co-dependence on New York State financial health. We are open to innovative approaches to deliver branch library services as well as solving long-term capital needs of our aging facilities more efficiently.

NEW BUSINESS (ACTION ITEMS)

APPOINTMENT AND REAPPOINTMENT OF TRUSTEES (BRENNER)

Board Action Requested: A motion to recommend Ellen Brenner and Sharon Salluzzo to the mayor for reappointment to the RPL Board of Trustees for full 5-year terms from January 1, 2026–December 31, 2030.

Trustee Ellen Brenner's term expires on December 31, 2025. She has expressed interest in being reappointed. The Nominating Committee recommends that her name be submitted to the mayor for reappointment to the RPL Board for a full 5-year term from January 1, 2026–December 31, 2030.

The Rochester Public Library Board reserves one voting membership for a trustee from the Reynolds Library Board. That board has appointed Sharon Salluzzo. The Nominating Committee recommends that her name be submitted to the mayor for reappointment to the RPL Board for a full 5-year term from January 1, 2026–December 31, 2030.

ELECTION OF OFFICERS (BRENNER)

Board Action Requested: A motion to appoint the slate of officers for 2026 as presented and recommended by the Nominating Committee.

Details: The Nominating Committee recommends that the following trustees serve as officers for 2026:

President– Ellen Brenner (first term)

Vice President– Matt McDermott (first term)

Treasurer– Mark Wyand (first full term)

Secretary– Sarah Murphy Abbamonte (first term)

MCLS–RPL SERVICE AGREEMENT (CLASPER)

Board Action Requested: A motion to approve the RPL–MCLS Services agreement for January 1, 2026–December 31, 2027

Details: This agreement provides details regarding the expectation of service provided by Rochester Public Library to the Monroe County Library System. This includes the employment of a shared Library Director, funding of the Central Library, interlibrary loan, Outreach services, delivery, and IT services. The term of the agreement is January 1, 2026, through December 31, 2027.

EARLY CLOSURE OF RPL ON NEW YEAR'S EVE (CLASPER)

Board Action Requested: A motion to approve early closure of all RPL locations at 5:00 on December 31, 2025.

Details: New Year's Eve falls on a Wednesday. We request the Board consider closing all RPL locations at 5:00 p.m. on December 31. Central and eight of the ten branches normally close between 6:00 and 8:00 on Wednesdays. The other two branches close at 5:00.

TEMPORARY CLOSURE OF MAPLEWOOD COMMUNITY LIBRARY (SCANLON)

Board Action Requested: A motion to approve the temporary closure of the Maplewood Community Library from January 17, 2026–March 16, 2026, or a similar period to align with the construction schedule.

Details: The Maplewood Community Library (1111 Dewey Ave.) closed for renovation in summer 2024, and the staff and collection were moved to a temporary location in the former Holy Rosary Church (414 Lexington Ave.) which is now owned by Providence Housing. Rochester Public Library entered into a lease agreement with Providence Housing, which was extended by the Library Board through January 30, 2026. With construction finishing at the 1111 Dewey Ave. location, the Maplewood Community Library will close operations to the public starting on January 17, 2026, to allow staff time to pack materials and ready for the move to the permanent location. During February 2026 and the beginning of March 2026, the finishings and furniture will be installed. Staff will also ready the space for operations, with an anticipated soft open on or around March 16, 2026. We are seeking approval to close the Maplewood Community Library to allow staff time to pack, move, and unpack in the 1111 Dewey Ave. location, with flexibility granted to the Director to adjust closure dates to align with construction. During the closure, some staff may temporarily be assigned to other libraries.

TEMPORARY CLOSURE OF PHILLIS WHEATLEY COMMUNITY LIBRARY (SCANLON)

Board Action Requested: A motion to approve the closure of Phillis Wheatley Community Library for up to two days in January to align with HVAC work and shelf replacement, as determined by the Director or Deputy Director.

Details: The City's term HVAC contractor will install new equipment, and library staff is awaiting confirmation from DES on the delivery and installation schedule. The shipment has been delayed twice, and the date remains unconfirmed. Based on the expected January timeline and the absence of a December Library Board meeting, we request approval to close Phillis Wheatley Community Library to the public for up to two days in January, with proper public and board notification once the dates are set. Although the HVAC work may take several days to a week, the building can remain open for most of it, and staff can continue reporting to work. During the closure days, staff will work with Facilities to replace unstable shelving using available units from storage.

PROFESSIONAL SERVICE AGREEMENT, MASON DIGITAL (HASSELWANDER)

Board Action Requested: A motion to approve a professional service agreement with Mason Digital for website maintenance for an amount not to exceed \$7,000 and a term of December 1, 2025–June 30, 2026.

Details: Through this agreement, the vendor will assist LAS staff with ongoing maintenance and upgrades needed on the backend of our public websites, including roccitylibrary.org, libraryweb.org, ffrpl.libraryweb.org, and rochestervoices.org. The vendor will collaborate with LAS staff to improve user experience, including navigation updates, functionality enhancements, and more. The term of the agreement will be December 1, 2025–June 30, 2026, for an amount not to exceed \$7,000. The agreement is funded through the operating budget.

PROFESSIONAL SERVICE AGREEMENT EXTENSION, FATHER TRACY (HASSELWANDER)

Board Action Requested: A motion to approve an agreement extension with Father Tracy Advocacy Center to continue family crisis support services through June 30, 2026.

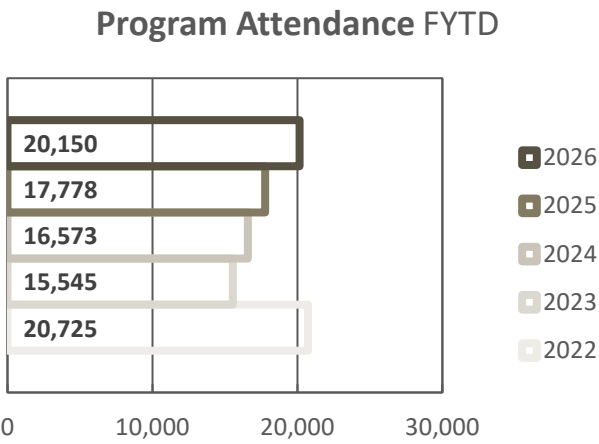
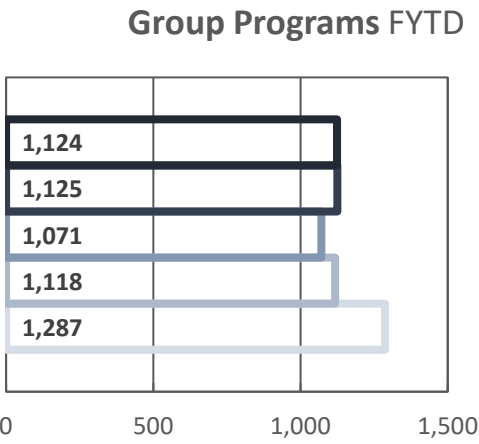
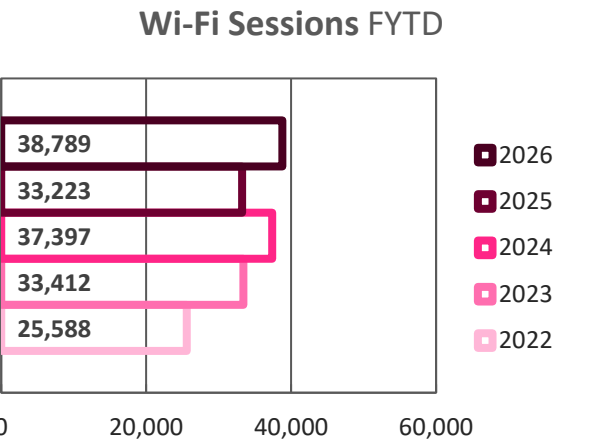
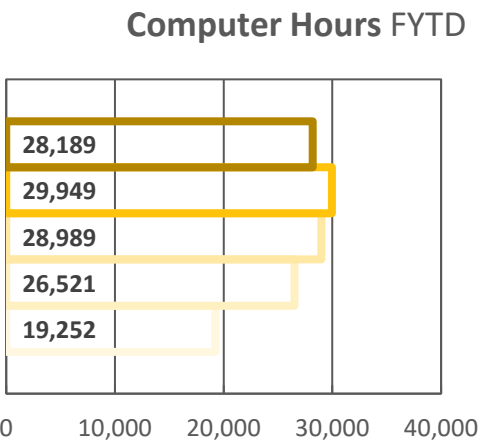
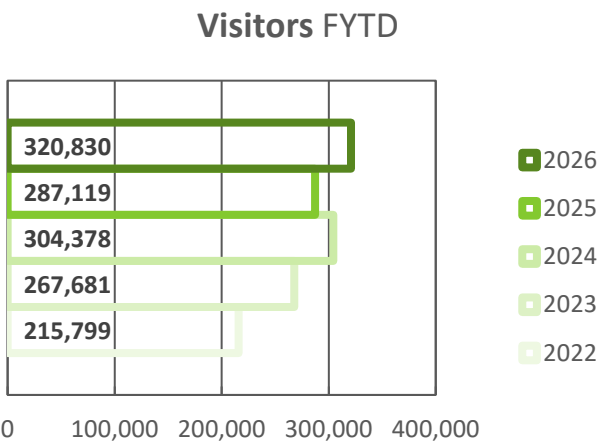
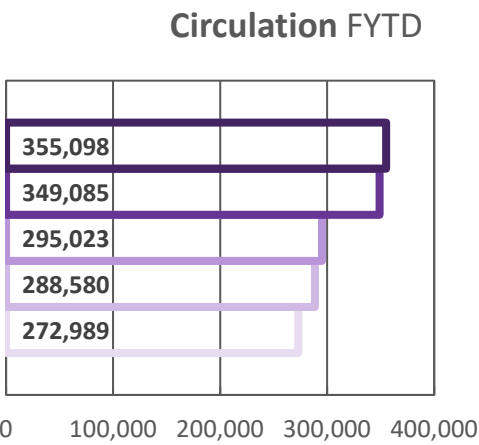
Details: At the March 26, 2025, meeting, this Board approved an agreement with the Father Tracy Advocacy Center (FTAC) for family crisis support services for an amount not to exceed \$54,000, with a term through December 31, 2025. This was a result of the Rochester City Council's legislation to transfer the funds and amend the Library budget by that amount. FTAC provides on-site services for \$100/hour and on-call/after-hour services for \$50/hour. The library wishes to extend the agreement through June 30, 2026, to expend the remaining funds.

PROFESSIONAL SERVICE AGREEMENT, CLARISSA STREET LEGACY (HASSELWANDER)

Board Action Requested: A motion to approve an agreement with Renee K. Long DBA Clarissa Street Legacy for a term of December 1, 2025–March 15, 2026.

Details: At the end of the last calendar year, the operation of the Clarissa Street Uprooted exhibit transitioned from Teen Empowerment to Clarissa Street Legacy. The agreement has since expired, and a new agreement needs to be executed for the exhibit to continue operations. Through this agreement, Clarissa Street Legacy is responsible for maintaining the exhibit, installing any equipment for the purpose of the exhibit, providing security and theft deterrents for the exhibit's displays, developing curricula, signage, and promotional materials for the project, and relocating the exhibit at the end of the agreement term. RPL is responsible for providing the exhibit space on the second floor of the Rundel Building, network connections, and supporting the project through promotional and programming services, as requested.

RPL AT A GLANCE (FISCAL YEAR 2026 JULY–OCTOBER)



PATRON STORIES

STORIES IN MOTION

While driving home from work, Phillis Wheatley Community Library Branch Manager Lori Frankunas, stopped at a traffic light at Dr. Samuel McCree Way and Ford Street and noticed an unusual demographic, two teenage boys, happily playing hopscotch on the StoryWalk mural – it's always exciting to see people of any age unleash their childlike spirit. Frankunas wished she had her camera to capture the moment, as the boys perfectly embodied the joyful spirit and intended use of the StoryWalk.

CONNECTIONS THAT COUNT

Adult Services Librarian Stephanie Knapp has been assisting a legally blind patron at the Arnett Branch with reading her mail, creating greeting cards for special occasions, setting up her cell phone with accessibility features, and selecting audiobooks. Other staff have joined in: Clerk Colleen Murray ensures the individual's holds are ready for pickup, and security guard Curtis Jackson, escorts her safely in and out of the building. The patron has shared that she feels truly welcome at Arnett and is deeply grateful for the staff's support.

FROM FAN TO CREATOR

Longtime Comic Club member and *Avatar: The Last Airbender* fan Rowan took his passion to the next level this fall at the Winton Branch. Inspired by October's book selection, Rowan asked Youth Services Librarian Emily Quevedo Smith if he could design a themed game for the group—and he did just that. After weeks of work, he created a detailed, turn-based role-playing game complete with custom moves and characters. When Comic Club met, Quevedo Smith surprised Rowan with laminated character sheets of his game. The program was a hit, and Rowan's creativity and leadership showed the powerful ways libraries can inspire and empower young patrons to take the lead.

*LOCAL ARTIST SPOTLIGHT*

The Frederick Douglass Community Library is featuring beautiful sculptures by local artist and library patron Virginia Cassetta on display for the next few weeks. Stop by to see these stunning works; they are not to be missed!

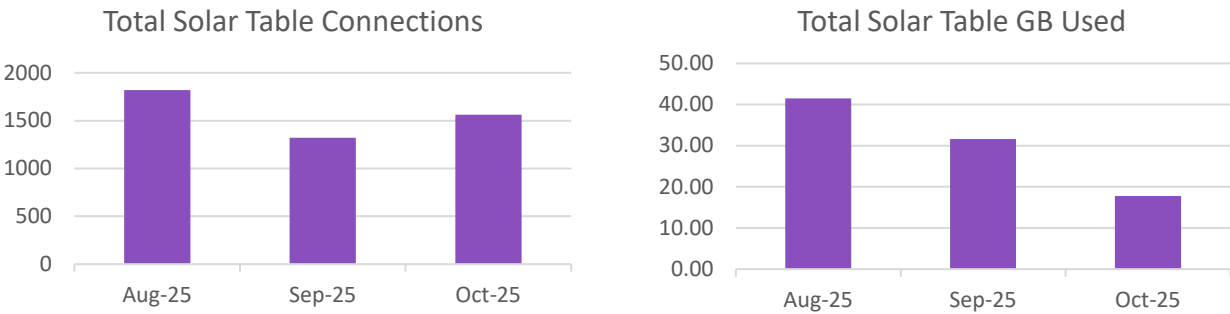
SPECIAL INITIATIVES

WIRED FOR OPPORTUNITY (MCLS)

PROGRAM STATISTICS

Month	Classes	Attendance	Class Topics	
Jul	25	170	Intro to Computers	Library Resources
Aug	23	146	Applying for Benefits	Intro to Google
Sept	26	175	Computer Catch-Up	Online Job Search
Oct	23	161	Scams and Security	

SOLAR TABLE USAGE



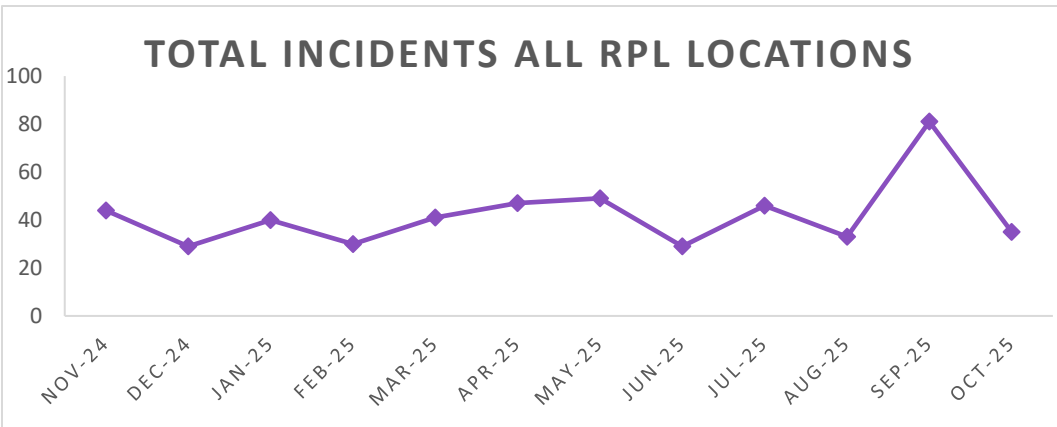
ARNETT TOY FUNDRAISER REACHES GOAL

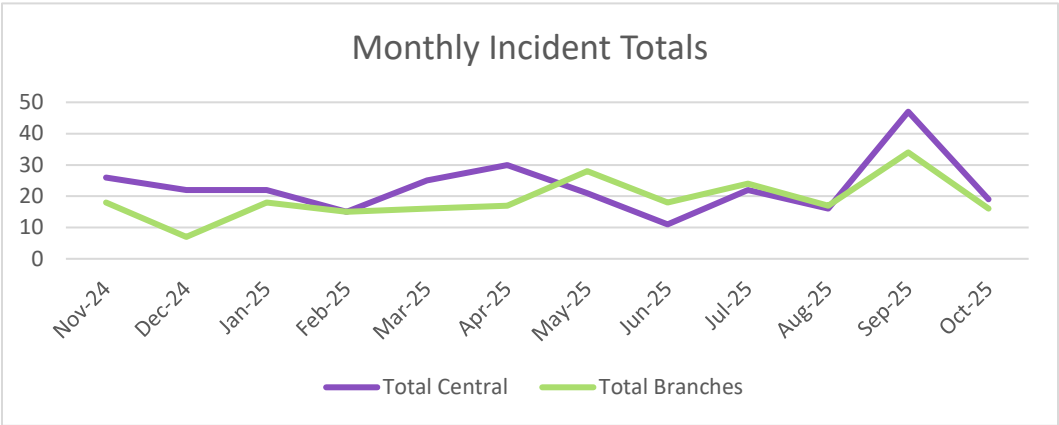
The Friends of the Arnett Library, along with former Youth Services Librarian Nancy Cholewa, launched a toy fundraiser this fall to upgrade the children’s area with new toys and improved storage, including sturdy shelves and bins. The goal was to create a welcoming space where families could play, learn, and connect with one another. Branch Manager Ginger Brewer helped design flyers and promoted the fundraiser on social media. Donors contributed online and in person. The fundraiser officially launched on October 8, and by October 23, the \$2,000 goal was met. This effort united the community, giving patrons, families, friends, and volunteers the opportunity to support the library in its ongoing mission to meet the needs of all who visit.

PATRON INCIDENT TRACKING SYSTEM (PITS)

October 31 marked one year since RPL began using the Patron Incident Tracking System to log incidents, follow up on them and maintain accurate records. During that year, staff logged 504 incidents in the system. Fifty five percent took place at the Central Library, with the remaining incidents occurring across the branches. The reported incidents ranged from serious safety and security concerns to medical emergencies and minor situations recorded for documentation.

Implementing this system has significantly improved how quickly staff can follow up on incidents, has increased the accuracy of reports, and has helped us track recurring issues over time. Staff note that communication has improved because they receive email alerts about incidents that affect them, and they can look up details for any incident in the system. The system has also helped management identify connections between incidents that initially appeared unrelated. In several cases, this allowed us to recognize a larger pattern and address the underlying problem. We are currently gathering staff feedback on the effectiveness of this system so that we can identify strategies to improve it even further.





PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

UNIVERSITY STUDENTS GET HANDS-ON WITH HISTORY

Historical Researcher Emily Morry and Librarian Brandon Fess welcomed eleven Nazareth University students from Professor Phillip Guingona’s Historical Methods class to the Local History and Genealogy Division. They introduced the students to the division’s research tools and shared a selection of artifacts from the collections. Each student selected one artifact to study for a class assignment modeled on the ROCArtifact feature in the *Rochester History* journal, which asks writers to examine the historical context and significance of a specific item. The assignment gave students direct experience working with primary sources and strengthened their understanding of local history. Exceptional student essays will be considered for publication in the journal, where Morry serves as Assistant Editor, helping to deepen the connection between academic study and the broader Rochester community.

TEENS HAVE THE MAYOR LOOKING UP

Digital Media Specialist Jeff Bostic held the Tiles of Culture celebration in the Kate Gleason Auditorium and Media Lab. The art of forty students was displayed on the ceiling including the logo of the Mario Kart World Champion and the AI image of a young Liberators member as a king. Mayor Evans stopped by to see the art. The artists and other teens enjoyed celebrating with candy, pictures, painting, and food.



LONG LOST SCRAPBOOK

While reorganizing a storage space for special collections in the Local History and Genealogy Division, Clerk Sheila Pietrowski and Librarian Brandon Fess discovered a long-forgotten scrapbook created by Grace Louise Flemming documenting her life as a teacher at Livingston Park Seminary in Rochester in the 1890s. Pietrowski will be tracing the provenance of this object for a post on the *Local History ROCs* blog.



FUN WITH LETTERS SPARKS JOY

MCLS Children's Services Consultant Tonia Burton and the Raising a Reader team brought their Fun with Letters early literacy workshop to the Charlotte Branch and Phillis Wheatley Community Libraries. The program helps Rochester families develop foundational skills for school and reading. The Raising a Reader team set up a variety of activity stations where children fished for letters, used crayons and watercolors to decode secret messages, created letters from shapes, and more. One participant at the Charlotte Branch was so excited that he exclaimed, *"This is the best day of my life,"* and even signed up for his first library card.



RPL SERVES UP SPOOKY FAMILY FUN

RPL delivered a vibrant Halloween season across the Rochester community that brought families together and strengthened neighborhood connections. The Lyell Branch partnered with the Lyell Otis Community Association for a joyful pumpkin painting and planting event that highlighted neighborhood pride. Maplewood Community Library transformed its final Halloween party in the temporary church location into a lively gathering, supported by Literacy Aide Fardosa Muse whose outreach lifted attendance and helped create an afternoon of stories, scavenger hunts, and hands-on creativity.



The Monroe Branch contributed to the season with two popular efforts. The branch revived its well-liked Scary Movie Night bags filled with films and popcorn, a program enjoyed by many including Deputy Director BJ Scanlon. In addition, Youth Services Librarian Kassady Lewis led

a Halloween-themed story time at the Upper Monroe Neighborhood Association's Fall Social at Wide Water Gardens, where she also shared information about upcoming library programs and resources.

Charlotte Branch welcomed a record forty-seven attendees at its Halloween celebration, including a three-generation family who stayed for the full event. When Jennifer Cherelin later notified raffle winners, the grandmother from that family expressed how much they enjoyed their time at the library.

RPL staff also had a major presence at Halloween at the Public Market. Chad Cunningham and Rayna Mandara from Central Circulation, Melissa Manczuk from Central Arts and Literature, and Alex Haehn from the Phillis Wheatley Community Library distributed books, stickers, bookmarks, temporary tattoos, candy, and helped more than two hundred children and adults make buttons.

Together, these activities demonstrate how imaginative programming and dedicated staff created memorable experiences and community joy throughout the holiday season.



MEET YOUR COMMUNITY FIRE FIGHTERS

Phillis Wheatley Youth Services Librarian Alex Haehn and Library Assistant Katy Rebholz hosted the Rochester Fire Department for a "Meet Your Community Firefighters" program. Firefighters brought a fire truck that kids and teens could explore while learning about fire safety and prevention. It is never too early to teach children how to stay safe!



OUTREACH & PARTNERSHIPS

RPL GO! LAUNCHES NEW PARTNERSHIP WITH VOA DAY CARE

RPL GO! visited the Volunteers of America Day Care for the first of what will become recurring outreach visits. Staff distributed Halloween craft kits, and visitors enthusiastically browsed carts of free and circulating books.



PARTNERING WITH LAUNCHNY

Jen Byrnes formalized a relationship with LaunchNY, whose mission is to drive innovation, job creation, and regional growth by equipping founders with the resources to turn bold ideas into thriving businesses. BIC is now the official provider of market research and intellectual property prior art searches. She presented to their portfolio companies and entrepreneurs in residence on October 22nd. She received the following comments: *"Jen, it was one of the most useful webinars I have attended recently—my sincere appreciation."* *"Excellent presentation today. Thank You so much!"* *"Thank you for a great session this afternoon."* Their companies and entrepreneurs kept Byrnes remarkably busy this month.

CELEBRATING CULTURE, CONNECTING COMMUNITY

Librarian Amy Discenza (Branch Administration) and Page Jeannie Colie (Monroe Branch) represented the Rochester Public Library at the City of Rochester's Hispanic Heritage Month celebration at the International Plaza. The event featured live music from Mariachi and 5 Con Swing, performances by the Borinquen Dance Theatre, art displays, Zumba, and free food, attracting a steady crowd throughout the afternoon. Between performances, Discenza and Colie engaged with community members, sharing library information and distributing children's books and mini cans of Play-Doh.



DOUGLASS BUILDS CONNECTIONS AT FALL FEST

Frederick Douglass Community Library Branch Manager Evanna DiSalvo represented the library at Anna Murray Douglass Academy School No. 12's Fall Fest. The event drew a large crowd of families, volunteers, and staff. Each time the library participates in school events, staff meet many familiar faces while also introducing new families to the library's services. Many attendees are surprised to learn that Douglass is a public library, not part of the school. One teacher, after chatting with DiSalvo, was excited to arrange regular visits for her second-grade class.



SAFE PLACE IN ACTION

A tutor from the Rochester City School District brought a teen to the Winton Branch Library seeking help. The young woman, a student at MCC, shared that she was facing an unsafe home situation, was pregnant, and had no access to transportation or funds. Librarian Mary Fraser immediately reassured her that the Winton Branch is a designated Safe Place and contacted the Center for Youth for assistance. Within minutes, a representative

arrived to meet with the teen and provided her with bus passes. Afterward, Clerk Kimberley Robillard offered directions and helped her determine when her bus would arrive. The young woman left visibly relieved and told staff she planned to return after her baby is born.

COLLECTION UPDATES

LIBRARY OF THINGS GETS A REFRESH

Staff in the Arts and Literature Division updated the Clerk office to create a dedicated workspace for the Pages and a new office for Division Supervisor Erin Clarke. During this process, they found several projects at various stages of completion and brought them to a close. This included linking four sewing machines so they could circulate, sending weeded items to the Friends and Foundation for the book sale, and identifying materials that needed to be mended or discarded.

Many thanks go to Librarian Melissa Manczuk for helping determine the status of each project and for working with Librarian Assistant Don Hyatt, Circulation Specialist Melisa Miranda, and Librarian Dee Mrak to link the sewing machines. The division's circulating sewing machine collection increased from two to six. Once the newly linked machines were added to the system, they were immediately shipped out to fill waiting holds.

Arts and Literature staff are also preparing additional library of things items for countywide holds, including ukuleles and a Cricut machine.

MI-FI UNITS MAKE THEIR WAY TO THE SUBURBS

The Reynolds Media Center (RMC) collection now includes nearly one thousand MiFi units, yet there is still a backlog of eleven hundred holds. To help address this, staff began a trial in which MiFi units circulate directly from another library, starting with the Seymour Library in Brockport. Twenty units were processed and linked so they would be picked up and returned at Seymour. Stephanie Lane, RMC Supervisor Joseph Born, and Circulation Supervisor Chad Cunningham developed the procedures for Seymour staff to follow. At the time of this report, seventeen of the twenty units are checked out and the remaining three are on the hold shelf.

NEW WAYS TO LEARN AND PLAY

The Frederick Douglass Community Library added two new "Beyond Books" items to its collection: a Kids' Telescope and Astronomy Kit and a Yoto Mini Player with starter packs for both big and little kids. These items join the library's growing collection of non-traditional items, such as jigsaw puzzles, board games, and a metal detector, which are available for the community to borrow.



NEW TEEN NONFICTION COLLECTION LAUNCHES

The Winton Branch Library debuted its refreshed Teen Nonfiction collection this month. Originally focused on SAT and Regents study guides and college prep materials, the collection has been thoughtfully expanded to include topics more relevant to today's teens. Youth Services Librarian Emily Quevedo Smith curated new and existing titles covering mental health awareness, sex education, and political activism—creating a dynamic, inclusive collection that speaks to the diverse interests and needs of Winton's teen readers.

STAFF HIGHLIGHTS

RPL'S GOT TALENT: STAFF DAY 2025

RPL Staff from across all locations gathered at the Central Library for our annual Staff Day celebration. The day included a delicious breakfast buffet, greetings from Mayor Evans, awards for staff, a Rock, Paper, Scissors tournament, an Appreciative Inquiry mini workshop given by the Gandhi Institute, and an afternoon of fun activities run by RPL colleagues as a chance to share their many hidden talents. A survey afterwards showed overwhelmingly positive feedback, with one anonymous staff member commenting, *"The best staff day since working with the library!"*



COMMUNITY BUILDS A PLAYGROUND

Sully Branch Manager **Maria Heeks-Heinlein** and Youth Services Librarian **Steven Shon** joined more than 150 volunteers to help build a new playground at the Thomas Ryan Community Center. Though the work was challenging, seeing children enjoy the finished playground made it all worthwhile. The Sully team is exploring the idea of hosting a story time at the new playground next summer.

RHYME TIME CONNECTIONS

Winton Branch Manager and Children's Librarian **Kathy Wolf** was touched to be invited to longtime Rhyme Time attendee Samantha's 2nd birthday party. Wolf has watched Samantha grow from a six-month-old baby into a lively toddler. The party drew more than thirty guests, and Wolf was amazed to discover that everyone outside Samantha's family had met through Rhyme Time. Many of the families now meet weekly at each other's homes, the zoo, or the Strong Museum of Play – proof that Rhyme Time is helping to build lasting friendships and strengthen the community.



FIRST-CLASS SERVICE

Historical Researcher **Emily Morry** received an excellent service award for providing outstanding customer service presenting comprehensive and highly informative local history tours. The patron letter that inspired the award said of Morry: *"Quite apart from her positively encyclopedic knowledge, her presentation was flawless and her management of such a large group (over 60 people, I believe) was first class...The library is blessed to have such a competent and diligent person with wide ranging skills to represent it."*

SULLY BRANCH REOPENS

After a two-month closure for HVAC and electrical upgrades, the Sully Branch Library reopened on October 28, 2025! The Sully team is thrilled to welcome patrons back and reconnect with their community. During the closure, a new mural by local artist Francheska Diaz @francheskathesun was added in partnership with WALL/THERAPY (@walltherapyny). The artwork was made possible through support from the New York State Council on the Arts and the Office of the Governor. Stop by to see the new mural and rediscover everything Sully has to offer!



LIBRARY DIRECTOR'S CORNER: EMILY CLASPER

TRUSTEE CALL TO ACTION

If not already done, please complete your two hours of required Trustee Training for 2025. Links to training sessions can be found on the MCLS website [HERE](#).

Please complete the [ILS SURVEY](#) for Trustees.

RECOMMENDED READING

American Libraries: [Baker & Taylor to Cease Operations](#)

The Atlantic: [America Is Sliding Toward Illiteracy](#)

1,000 Libraries Magazine: [These Bats Are Keeping Hundreds of Books Safe](#)

RochesterFirst.com: [‘We just think it’s cruel’: NY detention facility first to ban book deliveries to detainees](#)

IMPORTANT DATES

November 27: RPL Closed for Thanksgiving

December 16, 6:00: City Council Meeting, City Hall

December 24–25: RPL Closed for Christmas

December 25: Ana Suro’s retirement

January 1, 2026: New Year’s Day, all MCLS libraries closed

January 19: RPL Closed for MLK Jr.

UPCOMING LIBRARY PROGRAMMING

[Find Upcoming Library Programming Here](#)

DIRECTOR’S SITE VISITS

October	July	March
Gates Public Library	Newman Riga	Penfield Public Library
East Rochester Public Library	June	Henrietta Public Library
September	Fairport	Rush Public Library
Scottsville Free Library	May	Sully Branch
Lincoln Branch	Brighton Memorial Library	Arnett Branch
August	Mendon Public Library	Chili Public Library
None	Parma Public Library	February
	Pittsford Community Library	Charlotte Branch
	Winton Branch Library	Maplewood Community Library
	April	January
	Ogden Farmers’ Library	Frederick Douglass Comm. Library
	Irondequoit Public Library	Lyell Branch
	Phillis Wheatley Community Library	Monroe Branch

DIRECTOR’S UPDATES

October was an active and productive month filled with opportunities to represent both the Rochester Public Library (RPL) and the Monroe County Library System (MCLS) in a variety of community, advocacy, and professional settings. Some of the notable events and activities included:

Community and Literacy Engagement

I participated in the ROC the Future Alliance convening, connecting with organizations across the region engaged in literacy and youth development initiatives. These conversations continue to strengthen collaborative efforts around early learning and educational equity.

State Advocacy

I testified before the New York State Assembly Committee on Libraries and Technology, using MCLS’s Wired for Opportunity initiative as a model for how libraries are bridging the digital divide. My remarks emphasized the need for sustained and increased state funding to support programs that advance digital equity across communities.

RPL Staff Day

We celebrated RPL Staff Day with an inspiring program honoring the unique talents and dedication of our staff.



Mayor Evans joined us for opening remarks, and the day featured an Appreciative Inquiry mini workshop that focused on recognizing the positive aspects of our workplace culture and the powerful impact our staff have on the community.

Public Outreach and Education

I spoke to the local chapter of the American Association of University Women, offering an overview of current issues facing public libraries and encouraging members to become active advocates for library services. The group was engaged and eager to lend their support.

Legislative Meetings

Throughout the month, I attended in-district meetings with Assemblymembers Jensen, Bronson, Clark, Bailey, and Senator Cooney. MCLS staff also met with Assemblymembers Lunsford and Manktelow, and we have an upcoming meeting scheduled with Senator Brouk. Additionally, the New York State Library has requested a follow-up discussion with Assemblymembers Bronson and Lunsford to address State Library funding and the local impact of State-supported services.

Community Representation

Eight spirited competitors from MCLS participated in the Rochester Brain Game, defending last year's title and proudly supporting our friends at Literacy Rochester. Though we did not take home the trophy this year, it was a fantastic event that highlighted the strong partnership with our organizations.

City Budget Process

The City of Rochester's FY 2026–27 budget development process is underway. I joined the Mayor's senior leadership panel for a Budget Telephone Town Hall that drew more than 5,000 participants. The session generated valuable feedback from residents about city priorities, and I had the opportunity to highlight the library's essential role in youth development.

Celebrating Libraries in the Community

I attended the Gates-Chili Chamber of Commerce Awards Ceremony, where retired Chili Library Director Jeff Baker was honored as Citizen of the Year and the Gates Public Library was recognized for its 65th anniversary.

Defending Intellectual Freedom

I attended a screening of *The Librarians* at the Little Theatre, followed by a panel discussion on book bans, featuring Henrietta Library Director Adrienne Pettinelli. I will participate in a similar event in Avon in November, and plans are underway for a Central Library screening during National Library Week in April.

Northeast Branch Progress

The Rochester City Council approved funding and the lease agreement for the new RPL branch in the Northeast quadrant. Excitement continues to build as we prepare for the groundbreaking ceremony planned for December.

Regional Collaboration

I attended the Rochester Regional Library Council's Annual Member Celebration, which brought together legislators and representatives from academic, school, and public libraries throughout the region, underscoring the strength and diversity of our library community.

After such a busy month, I am looking forward to shifting focus toward policy review and laying the groundwork for the next phase of strategic planning for both MCLS and RPL. These efforts will help guide our priorities and position both organizations for continued growth and impact in the year ahead.

~Emily

CENTRAL LIBRARY ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR'S UPDATE: SARAH LEHMAN

Exam Proctoring

Currently, Arts and Literature is the only division offering proctoring services at the Central Library. Over the past five months, the Arts and Literature division has hosted sixty-six proctoring appointments from across the county. I have been working with staff in Arts and Literature and Circulation to train additional employees in administering proctored exams, and with LAS to develop an online form that will make scheduling appointments more convenient for patrons. Since there is currently only one staff member serving as a proctor and Central has several meeting rooms available across both buildings, expanding training will allow us to offer this free service to more students.

Library Assistant Hired

I am also pleased to share that Callise Wiley, currently a Library Assistant in our Circulation Department, has been hired to fill the new Library Assistant position in the Central Library Administration Office. Callise brings a background as an executive chef and event coordinator, with experience managing community events. This new role will focus on developing private, paid rentals and use of Central Library spaces such as Harold Hacker Hall and the Reading Garden. It is a unique position, dedicated to initiatives that will directly generate revenue for the Central Library. Callise will also assist with other projects within the CLA office, and I am very much looking forward to having her as part of the team.

Legislative Meetings

In October, the MCLS office coordinated several meetings with legislative representatives throughout Monroe County to advocate for libraries. I attended the meeting with representatives from Senator Cooney's office, where we had a productive discussion about library priorities and community impact. I look forward to continuing our advocacy efforts in the months ahead.

Community Partnership & Advocacy Tools

Over the past several months, I have also participated in a statewide group of librarians through the New York State Alliance of Library Systems (NYALS) to develop a resource focused on community partnerships as an advocacy tool. This work will be part of NYALS's 2025–2027 Advocacy Action Plan. The group included representatives from all types of libraries and addressed a wide range of topics. While my involvement was limited due to my parental leave from late May through early August, I was able to participate in the final two meetings as the document was completed and presented to the governing committee for inclusion in the action plan.

~Sarah

COMMUNITY LIBRARIES DEPUTY DIRECTOR'S UPDATES FROM BJ SCANLON

Social Care Networks

With community needs continuing to rise across the region, FLIPA has been selected to coordinate the Finger Lakes Region Social Care Networks through their WeLinkCare.org platform. Through this effort, Medicaid-eligible individuals can access a wide range of services, including rental or utility assistance, first-month rent and security deposits, transportation support, food resources, and other stabilizing services shown to reduce long-term health costs.

During a recent series of community-based enrollment events, several libraries served as host sites. Once information about these events circulated widely, turnout far exceeded expectations and libraries quickly became inundated by need. The earliest sign of this surge came at the Phillis Wheatley Library, where an event expected to run from 1–4 p.m., had a line wrapped around the building at 10:00 AM. Past events typically saw between 30–100 attendees; this one ultimately brought more than 1,000 community members through the doors, with 750 applications completed.

Although the response initially overwhelmed the organizer, a crisis was prevented thanks to group of women who had arrived seeking help, and as it would turn out they helped others. These women, alongside Branch Manager Lori Frankunas, Librarian Alex Haehn, Area Coordinator Bruce Tehan, and myself, coordinated the flow of participants and restored order to a very high-volume event.

Two additional events—one at Arnett Branch and one at Lincoln—each drew more than 500 attendees, however prior to these meeting Branch Administration (Amy Discenza, Bruce Tehan, and I) met alongside Branch Managers and the community organization to develop a plan pre-event, allowing these events to run smoothly despite increasing library attendance by 400%.

Of note, Mayor Evans recognized the extraordinary community spirit demonstrated at Wheatley, awarding certificates of Mayoral Appreciation to the volunteers who stepped up to help.

Amerks Power Play at Arnett

I also joined Mayor Evans and the Rochester Americans to launch the Amerks Power Play reading initiative at the Arnett Branch Library. This MCLS system-wide program rewards young readers with raffle entries for every three books they complete. At the kickoff event, children had the opportunity to try on hockey equipment, answer trivia, and enjoy a story read aloud by an Amerk. They Mayor also shared a proclamation celebrating the 20th Anniversary of the Amerks Power Play event.



Health + Safety Committee Updates

The Health + Safety Committee met this month to review progress on fire drills at Central, we will be working to start fire drills in the branches in the new year. The Health + Safety Committee has implemented an online form allowing staff to share safety concerns, health issues, and suggestions for improvement. We also met with the City's new Safety Coordinator, who will be joining us for building walk-throughs across the library system.

Ever Closer to a New Maplewood

Speaking of walk-throughs, Maplewood staff recently participated in a hard-hat tour of the renovation underway at 1111 Dewey Ave. A video of this tour, narrated by Maplewood's own Sharon Kunkle, has been shared on the branch's Facebook page, offering the community an inside look at the progress.

Advocacy Efforts

This month I participated in statewide library advocacy meetings alongside Emily Clasper, Jennifer Smathers, and leaders from both branch and member libraries. Together, we are advocating for steady state funding for capital projects, improved e-book cost structures, legislation to support the safety of library workers, and investments in the New York State Library.

~BJ

**MONROE COUNTY LIBRARY SYSTEM
ROCHESTER PUBLIC LIBRARY
SERVICE AGREEMENT
January 1, 2026–December 31, 2027**

THIS AGREEMENT is made on the ____ day of _____, 2025, between the **Monroe County Library System** (hereafter referred to as the “MCLS”), a library system established by the County of Monroe and chartered by the Board of Regents of the University of the State of New York, and the **Rochester Public Library** (hereafter referred to as the “RPL”), chartered by the Board of Regents of the University of the State of New York, located in Rochester, New York.

Whereas, the MCLS desires the RPL to provide services on its behalf to the public libraries located in Monroe County; and

Whereas, the RPL is designated as the official Central Library of the MCLS and recognizes its role in providing countywide library services;

Therefore, it is resolved that the RPL and the MCLS hereby agree as follows:

1. The RPL shall employ a Library Director to: jointly oversee the operations of the RPL and the MCLS at the Department Head Level (Bracket 36) of City of Rochester salary schedule; provide administrative services necessary to fulfill MCLS responsibilities to its member libraries; advise and consult with member libraries in matters of library management, programs, and services; serve as liaison with the New York State Department of Education’s Division of Library Development, keep member libraries informed of the laws, regulations and pending legislation related to libraries at all levels of government and; provide individual assistance and group training as appropriate and as specified in the attached document of understanding.

MCLS will reimburse RPL one-third (1/3) of the cost of the Library Director’s Office. Payment will be made at the end of each RPL fiscal year.

2. The RPL’s Central Library shall serve as the central resource library for the MCLS.

Monroe County will reimburse the City of Rochester for Central Library operations as agreed to in a 1968 intermunicipal agreement. Total amount requested from Monroe County annually will be determined through annual budget negotiations. MCLS will redistribute annually to the RPL the MCLS’ Central Library Services Aid Program through New York State Aid.

3. RPL will fund interlibrary loan activities for the MCLS.

The MCLS will reimburse the RPL annually for a not-to-exceed amount for the cost of interlibrary loan services at \$74,000 for FY2025-26, \$76,000 for FY2026-27, and \$78,000 for FY2027-28.

4. The RPL shall provide Library Automation Services as required to meet the terms of the agreement between MCLS and its member libraries, including database maintenance, management, and operations support in accordance with regulations of the Commissioner of Education of the State of New York and as necessary to meet standards established by member libraries and MCLS.

The amount of such services to be reimbursed by the MCLS to the RPL shall be mutually determined on an annual basis.

5. The RPL shall, through its Outreach Department and other service outlets, provide Outreach Services on behalf of MCLS, consistent with the requirements of Section 273(h) of State Education Law and any appropriate Commissioner's Regulations.

In return for these services, the MCLS and RPL shall mutually agree to pay the RPL an amount established annually from the Coordinated Outreach Services Program.

6. The RPL shall provide regular delivery service between the Central Library and all MCLS member libraries and their branches. The minimum of such delivery shall not fall below four pickups and deliveries per week, except for holidays, emergencies and upon request by member library.

The MCLS will reimburse the RPL annually for 100% of the cost of providing such delivery service.

7. A schedule of total annual reimbursement for all services to be provided under this agreement for the upcoming fiscal year beginning July 1, shall be adopted in an annual budget by the MCLS and RPL Boards of Trustees in February of each year.

Effective Date and Termination

This agreement shall cover the period January 1, 2026, through December 31, 2027. It shall supersede the previous service and automation agreements between MCLS and RPL and shall complement the basic member library contract between MCLS and all its member libraries covering the same period. This agreement may be terminated by either party upon written notice to the other, no later than nine (9) months prior to the end of any calendar year.

President, MCLS Board of Trustees
Marjorie Shelly

Date

President, RPL Board of Trustees
Donna P. Benjamin

Date