



**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  
April 30, 2025, 9:00 a.m.  
Agenda**

**I. PUBLIC COMMENTS**

Benjamin

**II. ACTION ITEMS**

- |  |              |         |
|--|--------------|---------|
| 1. Minutes of Previous Meeting   | Benjamin     | page 3  |
| 2. Personnel Changes   | Suro         | page 7  |
| 3. Financial Reports   | Hasselwander | page 9  |
| 4. NYS Annual Report   | Clasper      | page 13 |
| 5. Central Library Shoulders to Stand On Special Event Hours               | Clasper      | page 13 |
| 6. RPL Special Event Extended Hours  | Clasper      | page 14 |
| 7. Occupancy & Service Agreement Amendment,<br>Empire Justice CASH Program | Hasselwander | page 14 |

**III. REPORT/DISCUSSION ITEMS**

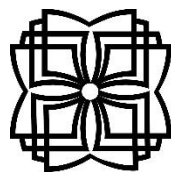
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|--------------------------------------|------------------|
| 1. Liaison & Committee Reports       |                  |
| a. Liaison from the MCLS Board       | Stockman/Clasper |
| b. Liaison from the FFRPL            | Borgus           |
| 2. Staff Reports                     |                  |
| a. Director's Report/Central Library | Clasper          |
| b. Community Libraries               | Scanlon          |

**IV. OTHER BUSINESS**

**V. ADJOURNMENT**

**Next Meeting  
May 28, 2025  
Central Library, Rundel Memorial Building**





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**Meeting of the RPL Board of Trustees  
Central Library, Rundel Memorial Building  
March 26, 2025  
Minutes**

**RPL Trustees Present:** Donna Benjamin, Ellen Brenner, Elizabeth Call, Daniel Karin, James Kraus, Sarah Murphy Abbamonte, Suzanne Stockman, Jeffrey Tucker (quorum present)

**RPL Trustees Excused:** Alinda Drury, Sharon Salluzzo (observed online)

**Staff and Guests:** City Law Department Liaison, Allison Bartlett; City Council Liaison, Mitch Gruber; FFRPL Liaison, Donna Borgus; staff members, Emily Clasper, Katy Hasselwander, Debi Mansour, BJ Scanlon, Ana Suro

**Call to Order**

Ms. Benjamin called the meeting to order at 9:06 a.m., welcomed trustees, staff, and guests, and confirmed a quorum was present.

**Welcome Guests**

Ms. Benjamin welcomed Marcus Cooper and introduced him as a prospective trustee.

**Public Comments**

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

**Meeting Minutes**

The minutes of the February meeting were approved as presented.

**Personnel Changes**

Ms. Suro called attention to the personnel changes and staffing levels for February 10, 2025–March 7, 2025, and offered to answer questions. Mr. Kraus MADE A MOTION to approve the personnel changes. THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

**Financial Reports**

Ms. Hasselwander reviewed the financial reports with the trustees and offered to answer questions.

Ms. Stockman MADE A MOTION to approve the monthly financial reports as presented and approved by the RPL Finance Committee. THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

**Central Library Special Event Hours, Sept. 18**

Ms. Clasper reviewed the item with everyone. Ms. Call MADE A MOTION to approve keeping the Rundel Building open until 9:00 p.m. on Thursday, September 18, 2025, to accommodate a RPL sponsored Fringe Festival special event. THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

### **Central Library Special Event Hours, May 7**

Ms. Clasper explained that the Board had previously approved this item for a different date. Due to a schedule conflict, the date was moved. Ms. Brenner MADE A MOTION to approve keeping the first floor of the Bausch and Lomb Library building open until 8:00 p.m. on Wednesday, May 7th, 2025, to accommodate the “It’s Your America” special event. THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

### **Acceptance of 2025 Tummonds Funds**

Ms. Clasper reviewed the item. Ms. Brenner MADE A MOTION to accept the 2025 Tummonds fund allocation of \$103,307.25. THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

### **Agreement, Taylor Thomas**

Ms. Hasselwander reviewed the action item and explained the contractor will be working on the Shoulders to Stand On archive. After a brief discussion, Ms. Call MADE A MOTION to approve an agreement with Taylor Thomas for an amount not to exceed \$7,500 through March 1, 2026. THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

### **Trustee Appointment Recommendation**

Mr. Karin stated that the Nominating Committee recently interviewed Marcus Cooper. The committee was impressed with Mr. Cooper’s qualifications and enthusiasm for libraries. Mr. Kraus MADE A MOTION to approve the forwarding of Mr. Cooper’s name to the mayor for recommendation to the City Council for appointment to the RPL Board of Trustees to the vacant term ending December 31, 2029. THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

### **Liaison to the Monroe County Library System (MCLS) Board**

Ms. Stockman reported that the MCLS Board had no action items at their last meeting. She mentioned that the MCLS will be looking at library cataloging systems. She noted that the MCLS is the only user of CARL in New York state. She also shared that a Fairy Houses exhibit will be coming soon to the Mascioli Gallery at the Central Library.

### **Liaison from the Friends & Foundation of the Rochester Public Library (FFRPL)**

Ms. Borgus offered to answer questions about her written report. She reported on the various distributions for the FFRPL grants for circulating materials, upcoming Harold Hacker Grants for the Advancement of Libraries, selected campaign contributions, and FFRPL legacy programming.

### **Director’s Report/Central Library**

Ms. Clasper offered to answer questions about the written report. She reported that recently retired Library Director Patty Uttaro received formal recognition of her years of dedication and service at the Rochester City Council meeting the night before.

She reminded everyone that National Library Week is coming up in early April and the Central Library will be hosting some banned book readings and staff will be treated to ice cream at Central and other sweet treats at the branches on National Library Workers Day.

She shared that the recent Executive Order from the Trump administration to reduce services from the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) to only those mandated by law has resulted in more questions than answers. In New York State, the state library receives approximately \$8.1 million. The State library then provides services to libraries. The monetary impact to MCLS and RPL is unknown at this time, however, construction funding is likely to be directly impacted by this change. Stakeholders are all monitoring the situation carefully. The IMLS Board sent a letter to the recently appointed acting director, U.S. Deputy Secretary of Labor Keith Sonderling. In it, the board members outlined the programs and services that have been mandated by

Congress—which is most of their current work— and therefore must be continued. In response to a question, she clarified that the IMLS is its own agency and is not within any other federal agencies.

### **Community Libraries**

Mr. Scanlon provided a brief introduction and pointed out the numerous ways in which he has worked with many of the RPL trustees over his career in municipal government. He thanked everyone for their warm welcome to RPL and specifically praised Amy Discenza and Bruce Tehan for running the Branch Administration office prior to his hiring.

He reminded everyone that in 2023 the RPL approved the closing of branches to the public twice each year for staff development. The language at the time provided guidelines for the annual closures but was open-ended in its authorization time limit. This has allowed the Deputy Director of Branch Administration to oversee these staff development days without requesting approval from the board each year. He is proposing that the Board be given the opportunity to renew their approval every four years which will provide opportunity to ensure the staff development closures are continuing to be useful and in line with the goals of the RPL.

Next, he shared his involvement in the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Safe Space program. He shared an anecdote from the Arnett Branch about a young person whose family was trying to get them to drop out of school to help financially support their family. They wanted to continue schooling and had been couch surfing for a while, using the library as a safe haven. Library staff were able to talk with that young person, build that relationship and connect them with the Center for Youth. The Center for Youth was able to help connect them with family out of town, and the library staff heard through reports from that young person's friends that they were able to finish high school and are doing well.

Last, he reported that the launch of the new bookmobile, RPL GO! is progressing nicely. A team is working on the coordination of how to share the van across divisions when not in use by the Lyell Branch staff. All potential drivers are going through training on the safe operation of the vehicle and the final installations of technology are scheduled.

### **Agreement, Father Tracy Advocacy Center (Late Item)**

Ms. Clasper reviewed the item and explained that the Rochester City Council unanimously approved legislation at their meeting the previous evening to amend the budget and make funding available to support the Father Tracy Center services within the Central Library. Ms. Murphy Abbamonte MADE A MOTION to approve an agreement with the Father Tracy Advocacy Center for an amount not to exceed \$54,000 through December 31, 2025. THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

### **Other Business**

None

### **Adjournment**

The meeting adjourned at 10:31 a.m.

*Dan Karin, Secretary*



## PROMOTIONS

<b>Hoecker, Chloe</b>	<b>FROM:</b> Library Page/PT/Sully Branch <b>TO:</b> Clerk Typist/PT/Monroe Branch	03/31/2025
<b>Morrey, Emily</b>	<b>FROM:</b> Library Assistant/FT/Central/Local History <b>TO:</b> Historical Researcher/FT/Central/Local History	03/31/2025
<b>Pradhan, Onisha</b>	<b>FROM:</b> Library Page/PT/Central/Circulation <b>TO:</b> Clerk Typist/PT/Central/Circulation	03/24/2025
<b>Shropshire, Cy</b>	<b>FROM:</b> Librarian I/PT/Central/Technology Center <b>TO:</b> Library Tech Services Specialist/FT/Central/Tech Center	03/24/2025

## RESIGNATIONS

<b>Gamble, Megan</b>	Library Page/PT/Sully Branch	04/04/2025
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## STAFFING

<b>Full-Time Positions</b>	<b>Central</b>	<b>Branches</b>
Budgeted	81	31
Filled	79	28
Vacancies	2	3
<b>Part-time Positions</b>	<b>Central</b>	<b>Branches</b>
Budgeted	122	136
Filled	71	109
Vacancies	51	27





#### CENTRAL FINANCIAL REPORT, MARCH 2025

##### *SALARY & BENEFITS*

Salaries, wages, and overtime are within budget. Underruns transferred to travel & training to allow the City & County Historian to attend the National Council on Public History, increasing the revised budget for Employee Development.

##### *EQUIPMENT & SUPPLIES*

Materials purchases and other expenses are projected within budget.

##### *SERVICES & CHARGES*

Services & Charges expenses are within budget.

##### *CASH CAPITAL*

BLB glass repair expense hits prior year funds (\$8.8K). Remaining funds are reserved for planned expenses (HVAC) and unknown needs with upcoming construction projects. Report only reflects FY25 funds, which remain unspent.

#### COMMUNITY FINANCIAL REPORT, MARCH 2025

##### *SALARY & BENEFITS*

Salaries and wages are within budget.

##### *EQUIPMENT & SUPPLIES*

Materials purchases and supplies are within budget.

##### *SERVICES & CHARGES*

Services & Charges expenses are within budget.

##### *CASH CAPITAL*

New current year expenses include a new staff laptop purchase (BrAd) and furniture orders for Sully & Winton. Prior year rollover funds were utilized for carpet replacement in the Arnett Branch's Children section. Remaining funds are reserved for other planned expenses including for NE branch design services.

Central Financial Report, Fiscal Year 2024-25 Fiscal YTD (through March 31, 2025)					
Category	Description	Original Budget	Revised Budget	Expenses FISCAL YTD	Remaining Balance % of Budget
Salary & Benefits	Full-Time Salaries	4,943,000	4,943,000	3,759,581	1,183,419 76.1%
	Part-Time/Temp Salaries	1,597,400	1,581,300	1,033,825	547,475 65.4%
	Overtime	17,500	17,500	15,966	1,534 91.2%
	Employee Benefits	3,310,600	3,310,600	2,455,972	854,628 74.2%
	Employee Development	27,700	32,466	22,784	9,681 70.2%
	Other	59,800	59,800	44,025	15,775 73.6%
<b>Sub Total</b>		<b>9,956,000</b>	<b>9,944,666</b>	<b>7,332,153</b>	<b>2,612,512 73.7%</b>
Equipment & Supplies	Materials Budget	505,000	507,214	327,469	179,745 64.6%
	Other Furnishings & Equipment	10,100	10,100	339	9,761 3.4%
	Office Supplies	56,500	59,143	33,806	25,337 57.2%
	Other Materials & Supplies	51,000	55,115	28,886	26,289 52.4%
		<b>622,600</b>	<b>631,572</b>	<b>390,499</b>	<b>241,133 61.8%</b>
Services & Charges	Utilities	467,500	467,500	348,462	119,038 74.5%
	Facility Maintenance	13,400	132,962	52,818	80,144 39.7%
	Professional Services/Fees	27,000	228,997	175,224	53,773 76.5%
	Chargebacks	80,700	92,628	45,368	47,259 49.0%
	Service Charges - Other Gov't	51,400	51,400	27,365	24,035 53.2%
	Telecommunications	14,200	14,950	9,700	5,250 64.9%
	Other Expenses	204,400	230,022	81,794	148,228 35.6%
	<b>Sub Total</b>	<b>1,143,200</b>	<b>1,218,458</b>	<b>740,730</b>	<b>477,728 60.8%</b>
<b>TOTAL EXPENSED</b>		<b>11,721,800</b>	<b>11,794,756</b>	<b>8,463,383</b>	<b>3,331,373 72.2%</b>
Central Cash Capital	Facility Maintenance Allocation	94,000	94,000	0	94,000 0.0%
<b>REVENUE RECEIPTS</b>		<b>11,736,100</b>	<b>11,736,100</b>	<b>4,891,873</b>	<b>6,844,227</b>
		Original Budget	Revised Budget	Central Library Support from City + Central Revenue	Outstanding Revenue

Community Financial Report, Fiscal Year 2024-25						
Fiscal YTD (through March 31, 2025)						
Category	Description	Original Budget	Revised Budget	Expenses FISCAL YTD	Remaining Balance	% of Budget
Salary & Benefits	Full-Time Salaries	2,080,100	2,076,500	1,412,206	664,294	68.0%
	Part-Time/Temp Salaries	2,026,400	2,013,400	1,406,821	606,579	69.9%
	Overtime	2,000	2,000	8,563	-6,563	428.2%
	Employee Development	22,900	26,610	11,904	14,707	44.7%
	Other	28,300	28,300	17,134	11,166	60.5%
Sub Total		4,159,700	4,146,810	2,856,627	1,279,017	68.9%
Equipment & Supplies	Materials Budget	496,600	502,973	319,876	183,097	63.6%
	Office Supplies	37,700	37,806	27,063	10,743	71.6%
	Other Materials & Supplies	34,500	35,512	19,030	16,482	53.6%
Sub Total		568,800	576,292	365,970	210,322	63.5%
Services & Charges	Utilities	224,500	229,993	142,452	87,541	61.9%
	Facility Maintenance	39,000	39,496	12,110	27,386	30.7%
	Professional Services/Fees	376,800	381,042	183,778	197,265	48.2%
	Chargebacks	27,300	36,182	26,187	10,795	70.8%
	Service Charges - Other Gov't	7,500	7,500	7,201	299	96.0%
	Telecommunications	21,400	22,631	12,505	10,126	55.3%
	Other Expenses	54,000	67,266	38,203	29,063	56.8%
	Sub Total	719,000	784,910	422,436	362,475	53.8%
TOTAL EXPENSED		5,477,500	5,508,012	3,645,033	1,851,813	66.2%
Community Cash Capital	Computers & Equipment	10,000	10,000	2,107	7,893	21.1%
	Library Furnishings	12,000	12,000	9,232	2,768	76.9%
	Library Facilities	41,000	41,000	2,184	38,816	5.3%
	Library Capital Projects*	40,000				
Cash Capital Total		103,000	63,000	13,523	49,477	21.5%
REVENUE RECEIPTS		390,461	390,461	230,735	159,726	
		Original Budget	Revised Budget	Receipts FISCAL YTD	Outstanding Revenue	
* Projects administered by City DES						

Trust Funds Financial Report, Fiscal Year 2024-25						
Fiscal YTD (through April 7, 2025)						
	Allocation	Carry-forward	TOTAL	YTD Expenses	% of Total	
Reynolds Fund - RPL	4229	\$144,857	\$215,802	\$116,209	53.8%	
Fenevessy (Central + Branch bal)	4224	\$31,369	\$56,647	\$58,227	102.8%	
Kenyon-Jeffries Fund	4233	\$20,191	\$11,997	\$8,250	68.8%	
Purton Fund	4231	\$17,007	\$3,716	\$15,111	72.9%	
Gleason Fund	4225	\$15,862				
Gleason Fund (FFRPL)	4225	\$12,183	15,117	\$15,209	35.0%	
Gervickas Fund	4235	\$6,045	\$1,157	\$1,267	8.9%	
Taylor Fund	4226	\$3,610	\$4,030	\$1,357	17.8%	
Boland Fund	4232	\$1,541	\$1,535	\$572	18.6%	
Carnahan Fund	4228	\$1,555	\$0	\$810	52.1%	
Poletto Fund	4224	\$1,555	\$0	\$953	61.3%	
Beeney Fund (FFRPL)	4227	\$4,878	\$2,829	\$689	8.9%	
Craig Fund (FFRPL)	4226	\$2,716	\$1,209	\$243	6.2%	
Holtzman Fund (FFRPL)	4239	\$1,560	\$1,851	\$977	28.6%	
Lee Fund (FFRPL)	4237	\$1,475	\$2,581	\$368	9.1%	
Vietnam Veterans Fund (FFRPL)	4238	\$688	\$2,161	\$148	5.2%	
Tummonds Fund (FFRPL)	4241	\$88,391	\$54,141	\$76,668	53.8%	
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>\$355,483</b>	<b>\$204,667</b>	<b>\$297,058</b>	<b>54.9%</b>	
Gift Fund Financial Report, Fiscal Year 2024-25						
Fiscal YTD (through April 7, 2025)						
Fund	Allocation	Transfer In	TOTAL	YTD Expenses	% of Total	
Gift Fund	4230	\$4,244	\$30,810	\$3,705	10.6%	

April 2025

### ACTION ITEMS

#### *NYS ANNUAL REPORT (CLASPER)*

**Board Action Requested: A motion to approve the RPL 2024 NYS Annual Report.**

Details: All public libraries in New York State are required to submit an annual statistical report to the New York State Education Department's Division of Library Development. This year the 2024 results for the Rochester Public Library are notable:

- 843,064 visits to libraries, an increase of 61,605 or 8%.
- There were 98,379 reference transactions, an increase of 7%.
- Circulation of physical materials totaled 764,115, up 15% from last year.
- Circulation of physical materials totaled 1,105,014, a 9% increase from last year. After a 14% drop in 2023, this brings us closer to 2022 levels of circulation.
- The number of physical items held decreased overall as fewer items added to collection, more items weeded than in the previous year.
- Participation in the Summer Reading program increased to include all RPL Locations. Registration for Summer Reading rose by 14% for children, 244% for teens.
- Program attendance over all remained strong, with some increases and decreases in various categories of programming. See Section 3 in the report for specific numbers of programs and attendance.

Overall, 2024 was a good year for RPL. Increases in visits and circulation of both physical and digital materials are an encouraging sign.

#### *CENTRAL LIBRARY SHOULDERS TO STAND ON SPECIAL EVENT HOURS (CLASPER)*

**Board Action Requested: A motion to approve keeping the Bausch and Lomb Public Library Building open until 9:00 p.m. on May 21, July 16, September 1, and November 19, 2025, to accommodate the screening of archival films in the Kate Gleason Auditorium.**

Details: The Local History and Genealogy Division and the Reynolds Media Center have partnered with [ImageOut](#) to plan a series of screenings of archival films at the Central Library. The screening of these films works in conjunction with our Shoulders to Stand On LGBTQIA+ collection.

The 2025 Archival Film Festival will consist of screenings of the following films:

- *Teorema*, Wednesday May 21
- *Shoulders To Stand On*, Wednesday July 16
- *The Watermelon Woman*, Wednesday September 17
- *Madchen in Uniform*, Wednesday November 19

RPL has worked with ImageOut in the past to plan this series, including assisting in the selection and sourcing of the films shown. This time, the group has asked to use our space as well, reserving the Kate Gleason Auditorium for the screenings. To keep consistency with past years' events and better accommodate the core audience for these films, the group has requested that the films are screened from 6:30–8:30 p.m.

On the event dates, we anticipate closing the rest of the library at the usual time but making the Kate Gleason Auditorium available until the film screening ends. Staffing for this event, including Security, will be arranged so it will not impact the budget.

#### *RPL SPECIAL EVENT EXTENDED HOURS (CLASPER)*

**Board Action Requested: A motion to allow the RPL Director discretion to approve extending access to RPL spaces for RPL-sponsored or co-sponsored events, provided the additional hours do not impede the regular provision of library services, staffing is available to provide adequate security, there is no impact on the budget, and the Board is informed of the after-hours program or event. This authorization will expire December 30, 2029.**

Details: RPL Locations occasionally need to keep spaces open later than the normal closing time to accommodate Library-sponsored or co-sponsored programming and special events. Typically, these instances are for an hour or two, do not require public access to the entire building, and do not have a budget impact as employee hours can be flexed to provide adequate staffing and security. This currently requires Board approval. The Director would like to request the discretion to approve extending access to RPL spaces for RPL-sponsored or co-sponsored events, provided the additional hours do not impede the regular provision of library services, staffing is available to provide adequate security, it does not impact the budget, and the Board is informed of the after-hours program or event.

#### *OCCUPANCY & SERVICE AGREEMENT AMENDMENT, EMPIRE JUSTICE CASH PROGRAM (HASSELWANDER)*

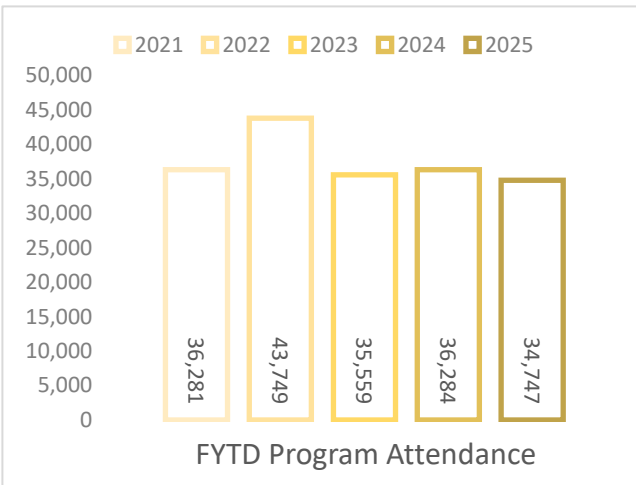
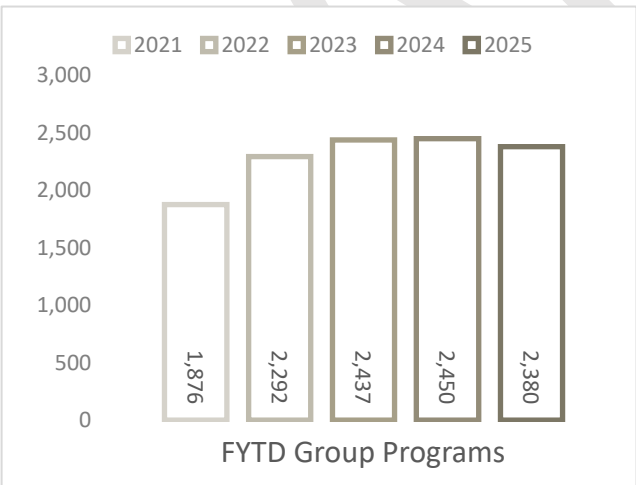
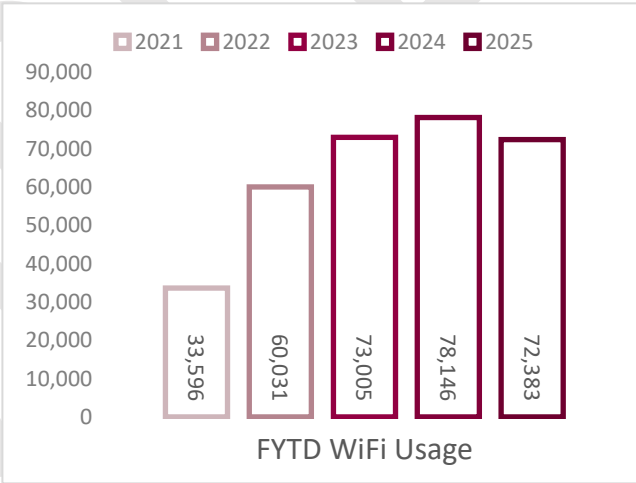
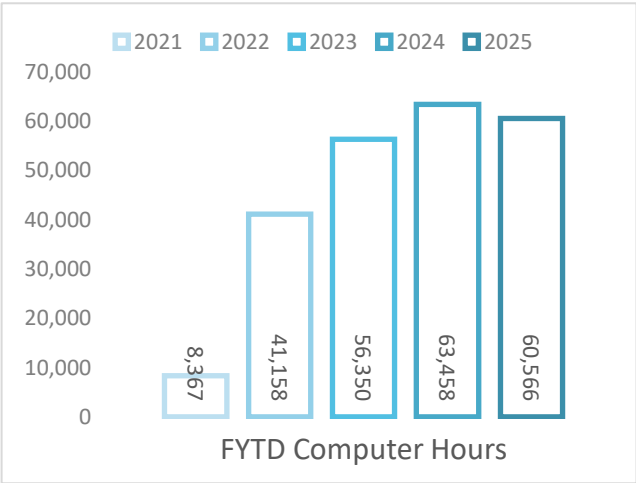
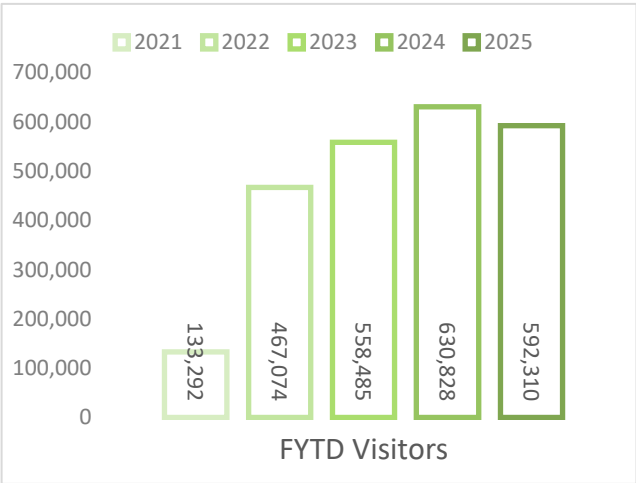
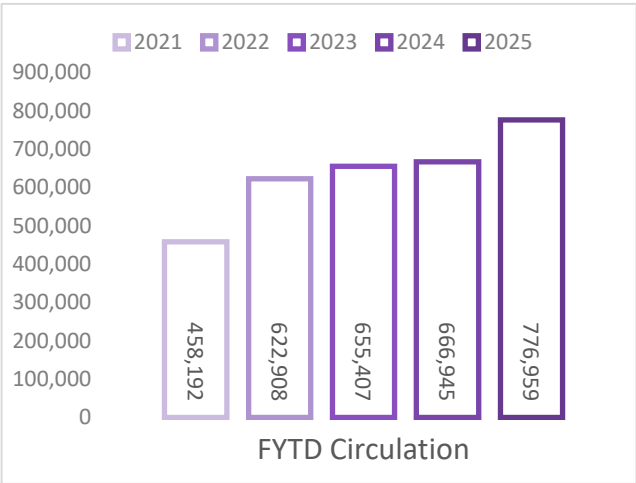
**Board Action Requested: A motion to approve the amended occupancy and use agreement with Empire Justice Center for CASH operations at the Central Library for a five-year extension ending February 25, 2030.**

Details: Empire Justice has operated the CASH (Creating Assets, Savings, & Hope) program from the Central Library since 2019, first in the lower link level and now on the fourth floor of the Bausch & Lomb Public Library building. CASH is a free tax preparation site that has helped over 191,000 families, resulting in \$146 million in total EITC (Earned Income Tax Credit) benefits to date. In addition to being a Volunteer Low Income Tax Assistance (VITA) site, CASH provides year-round financial services to community members and library patrons.

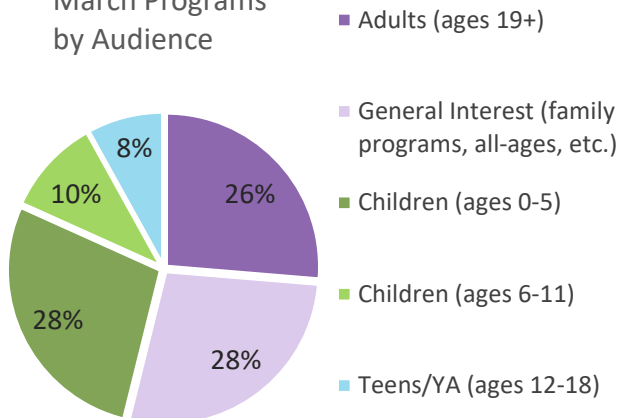
The original agreement was approved by the RPL board at the May 2019 board meeting and established an occupancy charge based on utility, security, and facility expenses, as opposed to a traditional lease based on square footage. The valuation of CASH occupancy is updated based on the annual budget of the Central Library, and calculated as a ratio of the space CASH occupies and a portion of public/shared access spaces to the total Central Library square footage.

This amendment extends the agreement for another five-year term ending February 25, 2030. The occupancy charges proposed for the first year are \$37,800, invoiced quarterly.

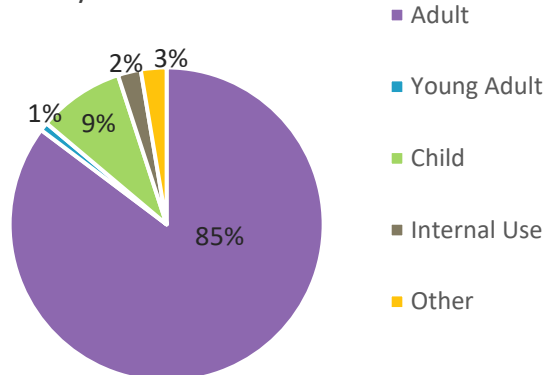
RPL AT A GLANCE (FISCAL YEAR JULY–MARCH)



March Programs  
by Audience



March Circulation  
by Borrower



## PATRON STORIES

### KINDNESS IN ACTION AT TAX TIME

During tax season, Circulation and Information staff often assist CASH program users with printing documents from their phones. Recently, Callise Wiley helped a man print a photo of his Social Security card that was sent to him via text. Without email set up on his phone, and after a failed attempt to forward the image through a companion, Wiley offered her own phone number so they could text it to her directly. She printed the image for the grateful couple and promptly deleted their information to ensure their privacy. Later, Wiley received a text message that said, *"Thank you sweetheart so much for your kindness today you were such a blessing."*

### PRESERVING JEWISH STORIES FOR GENERATIONS

*The Jewish Tidings* and *Jewish Ledger* are now available on NYS Historic Newspapers, thanks to a partnership with Hillel at the University of Rochester. Joy Getnick, Hillel's executive director, shared that access to these papers has already made a meaningful impact on Rochester's Jewish community. She sent the following message to the Local History & Genealogy division:

*"I've heard from people (and this all happened immediately) that they are using the system to:*

- Find birth/death announcements and fill in family trees, particularly with the names of siblings of generations past*
- Find family wedding announcements and photos*
- Conduct themed histories, i.e.: the new owner of the local kosher butcher was interested in learning more about the history of Jewish food in Rochester and now can!*
- Begin inquiries into organizational histories, i.e.: of Jewish Family Services and related offerings in Jewish Rochester*
- Learn more about their parents' involvement in local organizations and synagogues*
- Conduct research on the history of Jewish women at the University of Rochester as part of a larger historical project*

*The outpouring of positivity reached all corners of the Rochester Jewish community and will invariably over time reach well beyond because these papers also capture a slice of the history of Rochester.*



*They're a treasure, and this project not only saves them but makes them accessible for generations to come.*

*Thank you!!!"*

### A PRAYER ANSWERED WITH COMPASSION

Melissa Manczuk in the Arts & Literature Division took a reference call from a patron seeking the full text of the Prayer of St. Patrick. The patron had been trying to write it down from someone else reading it aloud when they were disconnected. As Melissa read the prayer, the patron asked to skip ahead due to hand pain. Melissa offered to mail her a copy instead, which the patron gratefully accepted, thanking her several times.

### ARNETT BRANCH STAFF BRING HOPE IN DIFFICULT DAYS

A patron expressed deep gratitude for the kindness Arnett Branch staff showed her and her children during a particularly challenging period in the summer of 2024. She noted that she lacked the words to fully convey her appreciation, but the Arnett Branch team played a crucial role in restoring her hope. On a comment card, she wrote:

*"The staff were helpful and offered words of encouragement to me and my children during our most difficult times. Thank you!"*

### GUIDANCE AT WINTON BRANCH OPENS NEW DOORS

As the library was closing on a Tuesday evening, a regular patron stopped by the Circulation Desk at the Winton Branch to share her gratitude. She praised the Digital Literacy Volunteer for their help and described Smith as a blessing, crediting her with teaching her how to set up email and apply for jobs. *"I think I've been helped by everyone here, and this month marks a year since I started coming to the library. I got my job at the airport eight months ago, and I couldn't have done it without the library."* What a wonderful way to end the day!

### COMMUNITY GRATITUDE SHINES FOR LIBRARIES

Amid recent news of the presidential executive order cutting funding to the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) and the rise in book banning, some patrons have expressed concerns about the Winton Branch Library's future. One boy, accompanied by his mother, brought in a plate of cookies to show his appreciation to the library staff. Another patron called to ask how she could support the Winton Branch and shared her experience living in countries without libraries. She emphasized the vital role libraries play in communities and democracies.

## SPECIAL INITIATIVES

### WIRED FOR OPPORTUNITY (MCLS)

Progress continues on the launch of digital skills classes through the Wired for Opportunity program. The first shipment of 250 Chromebooks and 25 tablets has arrived, to be used in classes and distributed to participants who complete the program. LAS has cataloged the devices and compiled tracking information into a spreadsheet. Rich Mangione is coordinating the ordering of additional supplies, including tech tubs, in preparation for the classes.

Mangione is also leading the installation process for the upcoming solar tables, with ordering now underway. Meanwhile, the Wired for Opportunity program has received positive media attention, with more coverage expected as rollout milestones are announced. One recent highlight can be found here: [WXXI News article](#).

## PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

### *ART IN THE PUBLIC SPACE—CENTRAL ARTS & LITERATURE DIVISION*

The Art in the Public Space series wrapped up the Marionettes by Rachel exhibit with a thoughtful discussion featuring artists Michael Moss, Javannah Davis, John Magnus Apollo (Champlin), Dr. Hinda Mandel, Thomas Warfield, and Christopher Hennelly. Each artist shared powerful reflections on how their backgrounds shape their approach to public art and its role in the community. To broaden its reach, Hennelly coordinated with media partners to have the program replayed on WAYO radio on March 31 at 1 p.m.



### *THINKING MONEY FOR KIDS: PENNY PINCHER'S PARTY—BUSINESS INSIGHT CENTER & CHILDREN'S DIVISION*

Kids become party planners, creating Planning Boards for their clients while staying on budget. BIC and the Children's Center collaborated on this program designed to help kids learn about budgeting.



### *BEYOND THE BUD: ANCILLARY OPPORTUNITIES IN THE CANNABIS INDUSTRY—BUSINESS INSIGHT CENTER*

Presented by April Smith of Cannabis Workforce Initiative. Attendees learned about the myriad ways they can work in the cannabis industry.

### *STORIED SALOONS: LOCAL HISTORY HAPPY HOURS—OFFICE OF THE CITY AND COUNTY HISTORIAN*

A crowd of 69 people attended the second event in the Storied Saloons: Local History Happy Hours series at the Union Tavern in Sea Breeze. Owner Kelly Bush regaled the audience with stories about prohibition, secret gatherings, and larger-than-life characters in the tavern's 200-plus-year history. The next Storied Saloons program will be held at The Spirit Room, 139 State Street, Rochester, at 5:30 pm on May 15.

### *NEW YORK STATE TAXPAYER ASSISTANCE PROGRAM—SCIENCE AND HISTORY DIVISION*

Florence Morris manages the large tax program held annually in the Science Division. The New York State Taxpayer Assistance Program is going very well this tax season, in which representatives from NYS Department of Taxation and Finance are available to assist patrons who fill out their taxes on provided laptops, using online software. This program has been running every Wednesday throughout the tax season. The Science, History and Social Sciences Division staff continue to work with patrons in taking their appointments for the TAP Program as well as continuing to provide information to the CASH Program on the fourth floor.

### *SENIOR PLANET—JOHN LOVENHEIM CENTER FOR TECHNOLOGY AND INNOVATION*

Cy Shropshire's Senior Planet courses have been a hit with participants. By intentionally keeping the initial class size small, Shropshire ensured flexibility while piloting the curriculum. Now that the first round is nearly complete, registration has begun for the next series, and demand is high. At last count, 20 seniors were already on the list, with more hoping to join future sessions. This growing waitlist reflects Shropshire's thoughtful, long-term approach to building the program and their skill as an engaging and dedicated instructor.

### *WORLDWIDE MARIO KART TIME TRIALS—TEEN CENTRAL*

The Liberators are once again participating in the NASEF Worldwide Mario Kart Time Trials. The spring worldwide tournament is open to all ages, so everyone in an organization can participate. Our reigning champion Victor has come in first place on the first two tracks of the event. He is the favorite to win the spring open tournament.

### *COOKING DEMONSTRATIONS—ARNETT BRANCH*

The Arnett Branch Library was pleased to host two cooking demonstrations this month, facilitated by Foodlink and the Westside Farmers Market. Both programs provided patrons with healthy recipes featuring a variety of fruits and vegetables. Attendees appreciated the engaging presentations and the delicious food samples on offer. Both organizations have scheduled future demonstrations at the library.

### *GLASS ETCHING FOR ADULTS—CHARLOTTE BRANCH*

The library's Cricut machine was utilized to design basic stencils, which participants then etched onto drinking glasses during two well-attended programs. Staff have received multiple requests to offer additional Cricut-based programs.



### *SAFARI STORY TIME—FREDERICK DOUGLASS COMMUNITY LIBRARY*

The theme of this month's Safari Storytime with the Zoomobile was bugs. The attendees were enthralled by the special guests—an African cockroach and two large millipedes—and had lots of questions.



### *TEENS CONNECT: MENTAL HEALTH WORKSHOPS—LINCOLN BRANCH*

Vera Haygood and Sarah Lehman coordinated with Justin Delinois from the New York Immigration Coalition (NYIC) to organize a series of workshops on mental health for teens and their parents. The event was a resounding success, attracting wonderful attendance. Staff from Lincoln and NYIC look forward to continuing this partnership and planning more events in the future.

### COMIC CLUB—WINTON BRANCH

The March meeting of the Winton Comic Club featured a lively discussion on Pokémon Adventures manga, led by Emily Smith. Kids eagerly shared their favorite Pokémon and thoughts on the series. After the discussion, they played Pokémon Battle Bingo, which was a big hit.

The highlight of the meeting, however, was longtime member and first-time co-host Rowan. He brought in his personal Pokémon card collection to teach fellow club members how to build strong decks and battle effectively. With Rowan's guidance, everyone carefully assembled their decks and competed in friendly matches. He offered strategic tips throughout the event and even taught Smith how to play, although she ended up finishing last in the tournament.

To wrap up the fun, Rowan gave away some of his cards as prizes, including one to Smith as a keepsake—and a lighthearted consolation for her defeat at the hands of some very skilled Pokémon players.



## OUTREACH & PARTNERSHIPS

### COMMUNITY OUTREACH

Amy Discenza presented to a group of 20 mentors from the City of Rochester's Pillars of Hope program. She highlighted recent construction projects and renovations, new and noteworthy library services, digital resources, community partnerships and collaborations, programs and events, and ways the Central Library can support the Pillars program through tours and class visits. Throughout the presentation, she emphasized how the Rochester Public Library can assist community members in their job search or pursuit of lifelong learning, and highlighted ways to utilize the library for enjoyment and savings.

### RAISING A READER

RAR staff continued to do storytimes and support storytimes for all sites. Staff have been communicating with sites about their end-of-year celebrations. RAR staff's goals are to attend as many celebrations as possible to connect with families and teachers. Olivia Cutter worked on an end of year teacher survey for RAR sites. The survey will help determine strengths and how staff can better support sites for the next school year.

### RPL GO!

The team of Amy Discenza, Dennis Williams, and BJ Scanlon presented on RPL GO! at the RPL All-Staff meeting.

### TORA-CON

At RIT's Tora-Con, the Rochester Public Library (RPL) and Monroe County Library System (MCLS) were well represented through both programming and support. RPL GO! was used to transport materials to and from the event, with staff coordinating the logistics.

BJ Scanlon attended the convention and sat in on The Librarian's History of Manga in the U.S., a panel presented by RPL staff. Isaac Lewis (Douglass), Kayla Lappino (Maplewood), and Jacob Bigelow (Sully) served as panelists, discussing how manga is categorized in libraries. Lewis emphasized the need to distinguish between age-appropriate titles, noting that many manga labeled as Young Adult contain mature themes. The panel prompted valuable discussion and one-on-one conversations ahead of the "Manga in Libraries" event.



## COLLECTION UPDATES

SUNY Brockport intern Emilie Fregoe continued to inventory books and collections material in the Monroe County Historian's Collection. She contributed 16 hours of service in March.

## STAFF HIGHLIGHTS

### *HIRING A NEW ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR FOR CENTRAL*

Interviews are underway to hire an Associate Director for the vacant Central Library role.

### *FESS BRINGS HISTORY RESOURCES INTO THE CLASSROOM*

Brandon Fess gave a tour of the Local History & Genealogy division to 15 social studies teachers from the Rochester City School District. Fess was asked to talk to the teachers about the Division's resources, especially those that have classroom uses. As a result of this tour, Fess was invited to present on the library's resources at an upcoming Monroe County teacher training day.

### *TEACHING BY EXAMPLE: JOHNSON INSPIRES TECH CENTER STAFF*

Building a strong, capable team has been essential to the success of the Technology Center, and Trevor Johnson stands out as a key contributor. With 18 years of security experience and training in de-escalation and conflict resolution, Trevor brings a calm, confident presence to every situation. He is also a patient and highly effective teacher, especially when it comes to troubleshooting Apple devices, and consistently delivers outstanding service to our patrons. Staff have started picking up on his techniques just by watching him work. Supervisor Jay Osborne recently defused a tense situation by calmly redirecting a confrontational patron, using the same approach Trevor would have taken. Learning these strategies from someone so skilled has become invaluable on-the-job training and a reminder that everyone on the Technology Center team brings something unique, helping the whole team grow.

### *MITCHELL CELEBRATES 15 YEARS WITH RPL*

James Mitchell has done outstanding work at the Sully Branch for 15 years. Emily Clasper, BJ Scanlon, Maria Heeks-Heinlein, and George Carter presented James with a certificate from Mayor Malik Evans and the City of Rochester in honor of his service.



## LIBRARY DIRECTOR'S CORNER: EMILY CLASPER

### *TRUSTEE CALL TO ACTION*

[Tell your legislators to protect intellectual freedom](#) by supporting the Freedom to Read Act (S.1099/A.7777) and Open Shelves Act (S.1100/A.3119-A). Already passed in the Senate, it's the Assembly's turn to pass both bills before adjourning on June 17th!

### RECOMMENDED READING

- ALA: [State of America's Libraries: A Snapshot of 2024](#)
- *The Hill*: [70 percent of book challenges come from groups, elected officials: Research](#)
- *Hyperallergic*: [A Celebrated Librarian's Concealed Life](#)
- *INDY Daily*: [How Two Wake County Libraries Are Navigating the Homelessness Crisis](#)

### IMPORTANT DATES

**May 9, 10:45;** City Budget Press Conference, City Hall

**May 14, 10:30–1:30;** Comic Empowerment Awards, Central Library, Hacker Hall

**May 15, 5:30–7:00;** Storied Saloons, The Spirit Room, 139 State St.

**May 19, 5:00;** MCLS Board Meeting, Central Library, Board Room

**May 20, 6:00;** City Council Meeting, City Hall

**May 26,** Library Holiday, all locations closed

### UPCOMING LIBRARY PROGRAMMING

[Find Upcoming Library Programming Here](#)

### DIRECTOR'S SITE VISITS

#### March

Penfield Public Library  
Henrietta Public Library  
Rush Public Library  
Sully Branch  
Arnett Branch  
Chili Public Library

#### February

Charlotte Branch  
Maplewood Community Library

#### January

Frederick Douglass Community Library  
Lyell Branch  
Monroe Branch

### *DIRECTOR'S UPDATES*

I was proud that MCLS sponsored two tables at the annual Women Empowering Women Conference, hosted by the Greater Rochester Chamber. This sponsorship provided twenty women from libraries across the County with the opportunity to engage in leadership training and network with other emerging female leaders in the Rochester area. The day was filled with informative sessions and meaningful conversations.



To strengthen internal communication within RPL, I partnered with the management team to conduct a staff survey focused on our monthly All-Staff meeting. The response was tremendous, and the feedback has been incredibly valuable. It helped us identify several ways to make the meeting more relevant and impactful for a wider range of staff. We've already implemented many of the suggestions, and we'll be sending out a follow-up survey in the coming months to evaluate how well the changes are working.

I also had the opportunity to meet with Senator Jeremy Cooney to discuss the future of libraries in our region and the evolving needs we anticipate. He expressed great enthusiasm for the direction we're headed and offered his support in helping promote our programs and services through his office.

In addition to my work with the Opioid Steering Committee, I've been actively participating in the City and County Arts and Culture Steering Committee and the Homeless Advisory Council. These groups are each focused on addressing complex issues facing our community, and it's been rewarding to contribute to their work. In every one of these collaborative spaces, I've heard strong, positive feedback about the role libraries play and excitement about future partnerships.

*~Emily*



### *CENTRAL LIBRARY ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR'S UPDATES FROM EMILY CLASPER*

I've been engaging with a group of downtown Rochester business owners to discuss security concerns and efforts to keep patrons and employees safe while in the area. Meetings of the newly formed Downtown Security Resource Sharing Team have resulted in a number of suggestions for collaborative training initiatives and improved communication between downtown business owners.

*~Emily*

*COMMUNITY LIBRARIES DEPUTY DIRECTOR'S UPDATES FROM BJ SCANLON*

Highlights from my first month include: Visiting each of the branches and talking with staff, in my travels I received a lot of media recommendations and advice, notably I got a crash course on My Little Pony so I could talk about it with my nieces, a recommendation to read *Heartstopper*, and an invitation to a future D&D session.

BRAD staff also began a practice of stopping into at least one program a week put on by our team. I've joined the Arnett Branch teens for a taste-testing program and ardently disagreed with their rankings, watched live Irish Dance demonstrations at Philis Wheatley Community Library, and clapped and sang with a group of 12 toddlers during Rhyme Time at Winton Branch. I've also learned the dangers of working too late on a Friday, when my car was locked away, and I had to navigate my way out of the library late at night!

I had the opportunity to travel to RIT for Tora-Con, an all-things anime convention, where I attended the panel on the Librarian's History of Manga in the U.S., presented by a team of RPL employees. I will also be working Saturday shifts at each of the branches throughout the upcoming months to learn more about operations, meet staff, and have some front-end experience with patrons.

RPL is in the process of reconvening the library's Health and Safety Committee. This committee, chaired by me, focuses on identifying and resolving health and safety concerns for staff, as well as reviewing notable incidents that have occurred within the library system.

~BJ