



**Rochester
Public Library**

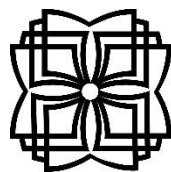
More Than You Think

115 South Avenue | Rochester | New York | 14604

**Rochester Public Library Board of Trustees Meeting
Rundel Memorial Building, Central Library
January 28, 2026, 9:00 a.m.
Agenda**

- | | | |
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| I. PUBLIC COMMENTS | McDermott | |
| II. APPROVAL OF MINUTES | McDermott | page 3 |
| III. PERSONNEL CHANGES | Scott | page 9 |
| IV. FINANCIAL REPORTS | Hasselwander | page 11 |
| V. UNFINISHED BUSINESS (Action Items)
None | | |
| VI. NEW BUSINESS (Action Items) | | |
| 1. FFRPL Library Grant for Circulating Materials Report | Clasper | page 15 & 31 |
| 2. RPL FY25 Audit | Hasselwander | page 15 |
| 3. Professional Services Agreement, Raising a Reader Consultant | Hasselwander | page 15 |
| 4. Professional Services Agreement, Children's Staff Training | Smathers | page 16 |
| VII. REPORTS & DISCUSSION | | |
| 1. Liaison Reports | | |
| a. From the MCLS Board | Clasper | |
| b. From the Friends & Foundation of RPL | Borgus | |
| 2. Staff Reports | | |
| a. Director's Report | Clasper | |
| b. Central Library Assoc. Director | Lehman | |
| c. Community Libraries Deputy Director | Scanlon | |
| 3. Other Reports or Discussion | McDermott | |
| VIII. ANNOUNCEMENTS | | |
| 1. Committee Appointments | McDermott | |
| IX. ADJOURNMENT | | |

**Next Meeting
February 25, 2026
Rundel Memorial Building, Central Library**



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

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

RPL Trustees Excused: Marcus Cooper, Mark Wyand (Treasurer)

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

President Benjamin called the meeting to order at 9:07 a.m., welcomed trustees, staff, and guests, and confirmed a quorum was present.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

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

MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the October meeting were approved as presented.

PERSONNEL CHANGES

Director of Library Administration & Operations Suro called attention to the personnel changes and staffing levels for October 11–November 7, 2025, and offered to answer questions. Trustee Salluzzo 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. She announced that ESL Federal Credit Union will acquire Alesco Advisors the library's investment advisor. Alesco is expected to continue operating as an independent entity under the new ownership. Trustee Murphy Abbamonte MADE A MOTION to approve the monthly financial reports as presented and approved by the RPL Finance Committee. THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

Northeast Branch Operations Budget Endorsement

Director Clasper reviewed the item and offered to answer questions. Trustee Kraus MADE 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. THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY. Library management will forward the letter of endorsement from the board to the city administration.

NEW BUSINESS

Reappointment of Trustees

Trustee Brenner reviewed the item and offered to answer questions. Trustee Brandt MADE 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. THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

Election of Officers

Trustee Brenner reviewed the item and offered to answer questions. Trustee Salluzzo MADE A MOTION to appoint the slate of officers for 2026 as presented and recommended by the Nominating Committee. THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY. The new officers are, Trustee Brenner as President, Trustee McDermott as Vice President, Trustee Wyand as Treasurer, and Trustee Murphy Abbamonte as Secretary.

MCLS–RPL Service Agreement

Finance Manager Hasselwander reviewed the item and offered to answer questions. Trustee Brenner MADE A MOTION to approve the MCLS–RPL Services agreement for January 1, 2026–December 31, 2027. THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

Early Closure of RPL on New Year’s Eve

Director Clasper reviewed the item and offered to answer questions. Trustee Call MADE A MOTION to approve early closure of all RPL locations at 5:00 on December 31, 2025. THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

Temporary Closure of Maplewood Community Library

Deputy Director Scanlon reviewed the item and offered to answer questions.

Trustee Kraus left the meeting at 9:23 a.m.

Trustee Brenner MADE 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. THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

Temporary Closure of Phillis Wheatley Community Library

Deputy Director Scanlon reviewed the item and offered to answer questions. After discussion, Trustee Salluzzo MADE 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. THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

Professional Service Agreement, Mason Digital

Finance Manager Hasselwander reviewed the item and offered to answer questions. After discussion, Trustee McDermott MADE 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. THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

Professional Service Agreement Extension, Father Tracy

Finance Manager Hasselwander reviewed the item and offered to answer questions. Trustee Salluzzo MADE A MOTION to approve an agreement extension with Father Tracy Advocacy Center to continue family crisis support services through June 30, 2026. THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

Trustee Brenner MADE A MOTION to move into executive session to discuss a matter that could involve litigation. THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY, and the executive session began at 9:50 a.m. Guests and Liaisons were excused.

Trustee Brenner MADE A MOTION to move out of executive session. THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY, and the executive session ended at 10:08 a.m. Guests and Liaisons were invited back.

Professional Service Agreement, Clarissa Street Legacy

Trustee McDermott MADE A MOTION to approve an agreement with Renee K. Long DBA Clarissa Street Legacy for a term of December 1, 2025–March 15, 2026.

Trustee Brandt left the meeting prior to the vote.

THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

REPORTS & DISCUSSION

Liaison from the Reynolds Board

Trustee Salluzzo reported that the Reynolds Library Board met in November at the Genesee Valley Club. Mike Burns was elected Treasurer, and Patty Uttaro was elected as a new board member. Library Director Clasper provided a report on recent advocacy efforts, including meetings in Albany and ongoing statewide library related issues. Executive Director Borgus reported on the Friends and Foundation of the Rochester Public Library (FFRPL), including a reminder about Roc the Day. The Board also held a preliminary discussion about whether the Reynolds organization should remain independent or be incorporated into the FFRPL, noting the cost of maintaining a separate audit and administrative overhead. One option discussed was a structure similar to the Tummonds Fund, which would preserve the history and restrictions of the Reynolds funds while reducing expenses. Trustee Salluzzo reviewed the long history of the Reynolds Library, dating back to the late 1800s, and acknowledged the importance of balancing historical independence with financial efficiency. Further discussion is planned.

At 10:10, Trustee Brenner left the meeting and Trustee Brandt returned to the meeting.

Liaison from the Monroe County Library System (MCLS) Board

Trustee Brandt reported that the MCLS Board approved several items at its most recent meeting. These included approval of the MCLS-RPL joint agreement, and installation of thirteen new solar tables for community use across the county. The Board approved an access agreement to allow data migration to an alternate backup site, if necessary, at minimal cost. A professional services agreement was also approved with attorney Stephanie Adams, who specializes in library issues. Lastly, the Board approved a \$17,000 agreement for the Wired for Opportunity program, which will provide two AmeriCorps members working 40 hours per week.

Liaison from the Friends & Foundation of RPL (FFRPL)

Executive Director Borgus reported that the four-board challenge for ROC the Day successfully raised \$11,265, representing more than half of the total fundraising goal. Board members were provided with the invoice detailing the items purchased, which have already been ordered and will support the upcoming move into the renovated Maplewood Community Library. A social media toolkit was shared, and board members were encouraged to help spread the word to raise the remaining funds, noting that there will be significant competition during the campaign.

Borgus also reminded board members that they received an envelope for the annual campaign at their seats. She explained that while regular donors are not sent appeal letters repeatedly once they have given, board members receive each mailing because they serve as ambassadors and should be familiar with all marketing materials. She emphasized appreciation for board members' prior contributions and clarified that the purpose of sharing the letter is to keep them informed, not to solicit additional gifts.

She reported that the December reminder letter will include the winter flyer, which will announce the Sokol High School Literary Awards contest and the upcoming Tuesday Topics series. She outlined the schedule: on January 6, Library Director Clasper will launch the series with a presentation on "Beyond Books," highlighting the full range of library services; on January 13, Finance Manager Hasselwander and Capital Manager Brie Harrison will present on the history of the Rundel Memorial Library Building; and on January 20, Deputy Director Scanlon will present on the Maplewood Community Library renovation and expansion and the upcoming Northeast branch. Board members were encouraged to attend Tuesday Topics at the Kate Gleason Auditorium to provide a supportive audience. Borgus added that the sessions will be recorded and made available online and used as supplemental marketing for fundraising efforts.

Director's Report

Director Clasper reported that the RPL Staff Day was held on October 24 and was well received, with overwhelmingly positive feedback from staff. The event, themed "RPL's Got Talent," highlighted the diverse skills and creativity of staff members and supported internal community building.

She also reported attending a recent screening of *The Librarians* documentary in Avon, where she participated as a panelist in a public discussion following the film. The film addresses book bans and contemporary challenges facing libraries, and Clasper noted strong community interest and engagement. She shared that a screening is being planned at the Central Library during National Library Week, with countywide programming being coordinated in partnership with MCLS directors to promote libraries across the community.

Finally, Director Clasper announced that the State Librarian has appointed her to serve a five-year term on the Regents Advisory Council for Libraries. In this role, she will advise the New York State Board of Regents on library-related issues, with meetings held primarily virtually several times per year.

Central Library Report

Associate Director Lehman reported that a library assistant has been hired for the Central Library Administration Office. Callise Wiley, who previously worked in the circulation department for several years, has joined the team and will assist with coordinating private events at the Central Library. Lehman noted that private event policies, licensing, agreements, and pricing have not been updated since before the COVID-19 pandemic and will be reviewed and revised as needed, with any proposed changes brought to the board.

Lehman also reported attending the New York Library Association Annual Conference in Saratoga Springs in early November, where she participated on a panel focused on first-year leadership experiences. She noted that the conference included multiple sessions addressing new leadership and transitions across libraries statewide, reflecting significant retirements and leadership changes.

Finally, Lehman highlighted upcoming and current events at the Central Library, including a small private wedding being hosted in Harold Hacker Hall. She also invited board members to view the nutcracker display in Harold Hacker Hall, featuring pieces from the personal collection of Ana Suro.

Community Libraries Report

Deputy Director Scanlon reported that a significant portion of the past month was devoted to social care network events, reflecting increased community need. Information was shared with county library directors to help coordinate responses to inquiries and ensure that efforts are targeted and effective.

Scanlon noted a growing number of partnership requests, which require careful review to balance staff capacity with meaningful community impact. He highlighted several upcoming partnerships, including a collaboration with City Arts through the Arts Bloom program. This initiative will bring bilingual, family-focused programming led by Grupo Cultural Latinos En Rochester (GCLER) to multiple locations over the next six months, including events at the Central Library, Frederick Douglass Community Library, and Lincoln Branch. Programming will include cultural celebrations, movement and yoga classes, crafts, and seasonal activities.

He also reported plans for a future arts partnership with a graduate student in fine arts who specializes in puppetry as a tool for STEAM education. The proposed program would involve adults creating puppets for later use in children's programming, with a tentative timeline of summer 2026.

Scanlon shared that he has joined the City Arts team, allowing for earlier collaboration and increased input on potential arts programming, including advocacy for a future mural at the Lyell Branch Library. He further reported on a new mural at the Frederick Douglass Community Library funded through a gift facilitated by Senator Cooney. The mural honors his late mother, a children's literacy professor, and incorporates imagery from classic children's literature. A public celebration event is planned for December to highlight the installation, and board members will be welcome to attend.

Finally, Scanlon expressed appreciation to Ana Suro for her guidance and support since his hiring and congratulated her on her retirement.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

President Benjamin appointed Trustee Cooper as the Chair of the Nominating Committee.

President Benjamin announced that Trustee Call is leaving the board due to a relocation out of Rochester for a new job and thanked her for her service on the board.

President Benjamin acknowledged the retirement of Director of Library Administration & Operations Ana Suro and thanked her for her many years of service to the RPL.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 10:43 a.m.

Debi Mansour

NEW HIRES

Hamm, Diamond	Library Assistant/PT/Teen Center	11/24/25
Hedman, Kingston	Shipping Aide/PT/Shipping	11/17/25
Johnson, Isaiah	Cleaner/PT/Facilities	12/15/25
Linares, Susel	Clerk Typist/PT/Circulation	11/17/25
Scott, Geraldine	Human Resource Coordinator/FT/Personnel	12/01/25

PROMOTION

Anatra, Catherine	FROM: Library Page/PT/Circulation	
	TO: Library Assistant/PT/Circulation	01/05/26
Prelevic, Natasa	FROM: Clerk III/Typing/PT/Lyell	
	TO: Library Assistant/PT/Lyell	11/24/25

TRANSFER

Wiley, Callise	From: Library Assistant/PT/Circulation	
	To: Library Assistant/PT/Central Library Administration	11/17/25

RESIGNATION

Antonienko, Erin	Clerk III/FT/Children's Center	12/05/25
Bamann, David	Clerk III/Typing/PT/Arts and Literature	12/29/25
Coonelly, Taylor	Librarian Sub/PT/Children's Center	12/01/25
Cox-Hiler, Joclyn	Librarian Sub/PT/Branch Administration	01/06/25
Krause, Kurt	Maintenance Worker/PT/Facilities	12/19/25
Mandara, Rayna	Library Assistant/PT/Circulation	01/09/26
Weidner, R. Jack	Maintenance Helper/PT/Lincoln	12/15/25

RETIREMENT

Suro, Ana	Director of Library Administration and Operations	
	23 Years of Service	12/24/25

STAFFING

Full-Time Positions

Budgeted

Central

81

Community

31

Filled

81

30

Vacancies

0

1

Part-time Positions

Budgeted

Central

105

Community

134

Filled

75

105

Vacancies

30

21

CENTRAL FINANCIAL REPORT, NOVEMBER & DECEMBER 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 (\$3,707).

EQUIPMENT & SUPPLIES

Materials expenses within budget (\$50,439), includes the annual renewal of Mergent Online (\$8,968). Equipment and supplies within budget, includes semi-annual printer paper order (\$1,632), cleaning supply orders (\$3,827), and uniform/boot orders for staff (\$3,383).

SERVICES & CHARGES

Services & Charges expenses are within budget. Includes: print & copy machine monthly maintenance and lease payments (\$7,754); utility invoices (\$110,222); telephone service (\$2,641); security services (\$1,471); semi-annual collection charge bill (\$10,016); programming expenses (\$5,154).

CASH CAPITAL

Carpet repair on Bausch & Lomb main stairs (\$4,379).

COMMUNITY FINANCIAL REPORT, NOVEMBER & DECEMBER 2025***SALARY & BENEFITS***

Salaries and wages are projected within budget. Minor travel expenses occur for staff attendance at NY Library Association annual conferences (\$1,871). Overtime budget will be adjusted, as necessary.

EQUIPMENT & SUPPLIES

Materials expenses within budget (\$67,058) including Raising a Reader order (\$5,775). Equipment and supplies within budget. Includes semi-annual printer paper order (\$1,632); snow blower replacement (\$2,034); and plumbing expense (\$1,006).

SERVICES & CHARGES

Services & Charges expenses are within budget. Includes: print & copy machine monthly maintenance and lease payments (\$4,560); telephone service (\$2,641); utility invoices (\$25,082); security services (\$2,435); window cleaning (\$1,275); MCLS cost share (\$158,015); and programming expenses (\$3,548).

CASH CAPITAL

Hand dryers installed at Charlotte Branch (\$1,690)

Central Financial Report, Fiscal Year 2025-26 Fiscal YTD (through December 31, 2025)						
Category	Description	Original Budget	Revised Budget	Expenses Fiscal YTD	Remaining Balance	% of Budget
Salary & Benefits						
	Full-Time Salaries	5,226,800	5,226,800	2,663,103	2,563,697	51.0%
	Part-Time/Temp Salaries	1,664,200	1,664,200	715,051	949,149	43.0%
	Overtime	19,000	19,000	3,817	15,183	20.1%
	Employee Benefits	3,642,600	3,642,600	583,465	3,059,135	16.0%
	Employee Development	34,100	40,261	10,262	29,998	25.5%
	Other	67,200	67,200	16,748	50,452	24.9%
	Sub Total	10,653,900	10,660,061	3,992,447	6,667,614	37.5%
Equipment & Supplies						
	Materials Budget	511,800	519,313	180,011	339,301	34.7%
	Other Furnishings & Equipment	10,100	10,100	1,811	8,289	17.9%
	Office Supplies	60,100	69,384	25,516	43,868	36.8%
	Other Materials & Supplies	59,800	68,487	26,410	42,077	38.6%
	Sub Total	641,800	667,284	233,748	433,535	35.0%
Services & Charges						
	Utilities	467,500	468,300	264,836	203,464	56.6%
	Facility Maintenance	109,300	123,869	31,698	92,171	25.6%
	Professional Services/Fees	236,600	241,647	146,283	95,364	60.5%
	Chargebacks	89,700	89,700	7,338	82,362	8.2%
	Service Charges - Other Gov't	51,400	51,400	12,564	38,836	24.4%
	Telecommunications	14,200	14,200	7,553	6,647	53.2%
	Other Expenses	172,300	177,367	26,840	150,527	15.1%
	Sub Total	1,141,000	1,166,482	497,113	669,370	42.6%
TOTAL EXPENSED						
		12,436,700	12,493,827	4,723,308	7,770,519	38.0%
Central Cash Capital						
		FY26 Budget	Prior Year Carryover	Expenses YTD	Remaining Balance	
	Facility Maintenance Allocation	50,000	171,850	24,499	197,352	14.3%
	Rundel Loading Dock Assessment	120,000	0	0	120,000	0.0%
	Cash Capital Total	170,000	171,850	24,499	317,352	14.3%
REVENUE RECEIPTS						
		11,736,100	11,736,100	3,191,099	8,545,001	
		Original Budget	Revised Budget	City Prorate Share + Revenue YTD	Outstanding Revenue	

Community Financial Report, Fiscal Year 2025-26 Fiscal YTD (through December 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	1,013,082	1,144,618	47.0%
	Part-Time/Temp Salaries	2,022,700	2,022,700	1,005,359	1,017,341	49.7%
	Overtime	2,000	2,000	2,529	-529	126.5%
	Employee Development	19,600	22,309	7,150	15,159	32.1%
	Other	27,400	27,400	5,195	22,205	19.0%
	Sub Total	4,229,400	4,232,109	2,033,316	2,176,588	48.0%
Equipment & Supplies						
	Materials Budget	536,600	543,840	155,769	388,071	28.6%
	Office Supplies	37,700	39,851	15,826	24,025	39.7%
	Other Materials & Supplies	41,200	56,519	26,228	30,291	46.4%
	Sub Total	615,500	640,211	197,823	442,387	30.9%
Services & Charges						
	Utilities	229,500	230,513	84,138	146,375	36.5%
	Facility Maintenance	39,700	48,306	8,603	39,703	17.8%
	Professional Services/Fees	402,000	464,846	196,105	268,741	42.2%
	Chargebacks	26,400	26,400	3,909	22,491	14.8%
	Service Charges - Other Gov't	7,500	7,500	0	7,500	0.0%
	Telecommunications	17,100	17,206	7,103	10,102	41.3%
	Other Expenses	50,900	58,788	13,544	45,244	23.0%
	Sub Total	773,300	853,759	313,402	540,157	36.7%
TOTAL EXPENSED						
		5,618,200	5,726,078	2,544,541	3,159,133	44.4%
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	31,188	120,945	28.7%
	Library Technology	0	108,664	44,371	64,293	40.8%
	Library Capital Projects*	0				
	Cash Capital Total	52,000	259,839	97,458	214,381	37.5%
REVENUE RECEIPTS						
		277,000	277,000	184,103	92,897	
		Original Budget	Revised Budget	Receipts Fiscal YTD	Outstanding Revenue	

* Projects administered by City DES

Trust Funds Financial Report, Fiscal Year 2025-26						
Fiscal YTD (through December 31, 2025)						
	Allocation	Carry-forward	TOTAL	YTD Expenses	% of Total	
Fenevessy (Central + Branch bal)*	4224	\$81,871	\$26,256	\$60,127	\$32,038	53.3%
Gleason Fund	4225	\$16,362				
Gleason Fund (FFRPL)*	4225	\$12,572	\$15,976	\$24,910	\$9,464	38.0%
Taylor Fund	4226	\$3,723	\$13	\$3,736	\$620	16.6%
Beeney Fund (FFRPL)	4227	\$5,042	\$4,246	\$9,288	\$2,697	29.0%
Carnahan Fund	4228	\$1,604	\$818	\$2,422	\$31	1.3%
Reynolds Fund - RPL	4229	\$148,267	\$112,797	\$261,064	\$67,280	25.8%
Purton Fund	4231	\$17,543	\$11	\$17,554	\$4,113	23.4%
Boland Fund	4232	\$1,589	\$2,504	\$4,093	\$0	0.0%
Kenyon-Jeffries Fund*	4233	\$20,827	\$1,497	\$10,324	\$3,000	29.1%
Poletto Fund	4234	\$1,604	\$363	\$1,968	\$0	0.0%
Gervickas Fund	4235	\$6,236	\$7,823	\$14,059	\$928	6.6%
Craig Fund (FFRPL)	4236	\$2,803	\$2,642	\$5,445	\$274	5.0%
Lee Fund (FFRPL)	4237	\$1,524	\$1,365	\$2,889	\$626	21.7%
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	\$47,929	30.8%
TOTAL		\$427,180	\$230,704	\$577,884	\$169,552	29.3%
*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 December 31, 2025)						
Fund	Allocation	Transfer In	TOTAL	YTD Expenses	% of Total	
Gift Fund	4230	\$33,118	\$3,300	\$36,418	\$3,444	9.5%

January 2026

NEW BUSINESS (ACTION ITEMS)

FFRPL LIBRARY GRANT FOR CIRCULATING MATERIALS REPORT (CLASPER)

Board Action Requested: A motion to approve the 2025 Report for the FFRPL Library Grant for Circulating Materials.

Details: The Friends and Foundation of RPL annually require that boards of libraries which receive money from the FFRPL Library Grant for Circulating Materials formally approve and certify use of those funds in the prior year. This anonymous private fund is used to supplement popular reading material in print, audio, and electronic formats. Libraries in MCLS (except Irondequoit), the OWWL System (except Wyoming County), and NIOGA System members in Genesee and Orleans Counties receive money annually based on circulation in the previous year. In 2025, the Rochester Public Library used its FFRPL Grant for Circulating Materials funds to purchase supplemental circulating materials of 1,544 e-books and 453 audiobooks, at a cost equal to or exceeding \$103,307.25. This action is required under the terms of the anonymous bequest to FFRPL and certifies that libraries receiving funds have not reduced other sources of funds for purchase of materials.

RPL FY25 AUDIT (HASSELWANDER)

Board Action Requested: A motion to accept EFPR's audit of the 2024-25 fiscal year.

Details: EFPR Group has completed their audit of the 2024-25 RPL fiscal year and met with the RPL Board Finance Committee on January 20, 2026, to review their findings. The Board Finance committee members will provide their summary and recommendation to the Board, with the attached management report and financial statements.

PROFESSIONAL SERVICES AGREEMENT, RAISING A READER CONSULTANT (HASSELWANDER)

Board Action Requested: A motion to approve an agreement with Sarah Spano to develop materials and training curriculum for the Raising a Reader program, with maximum compensation of \$6,000 and a term through June 30, 2026.

Details: The RPL will engage with the consultant for services related to the expansion of the Raising a Reader program into home-based childcare providers. The consultant will develop a series of literacy activity packets aligned with the science of reading. The packets will be used by family childcare providers to support the implementation of developmentally appropriate, evidence-based literacy practices in home-based childcare settings. The consultant will also provide training to library staff to equip them to coach family childcare providers in the effective use of the literacy packets. The consultant will provide five training sessions for staff, 24 finalized literacy packets, and ongoing support during the contract period. The consultant will be compensated on an hourly basis, at \$48.00 per hour, for a maximum of 125 hours. This will be funded with the Rochester Area Community Foundation grant accepted in November.

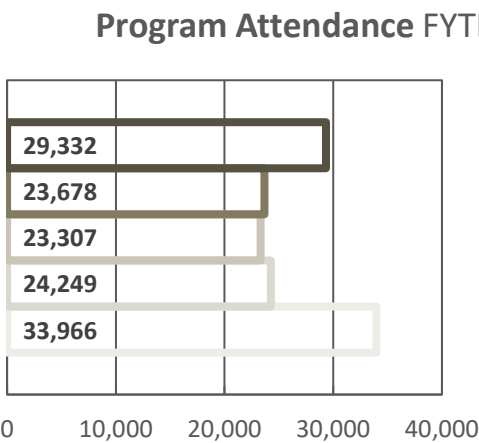
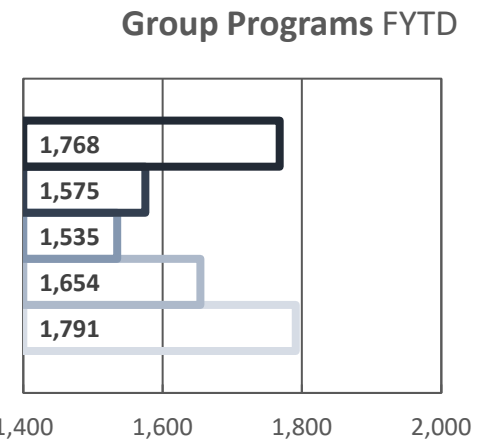
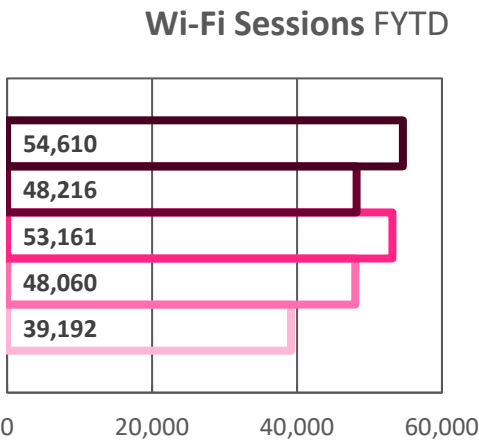
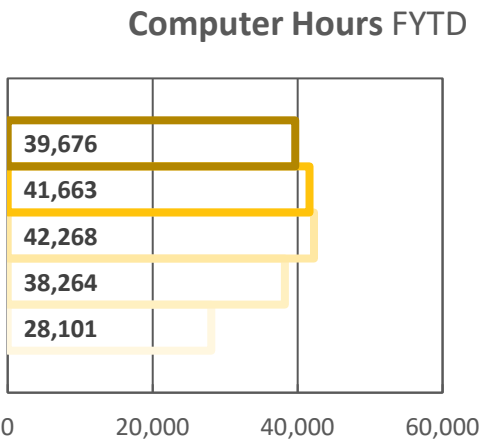
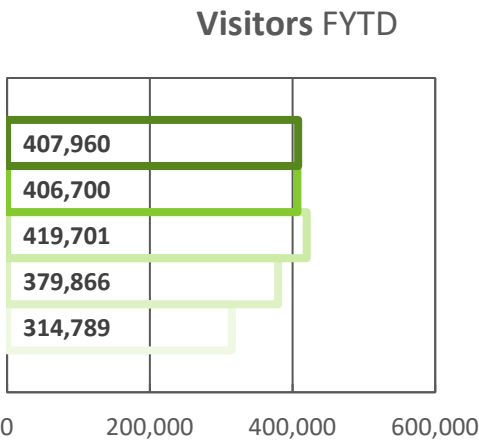
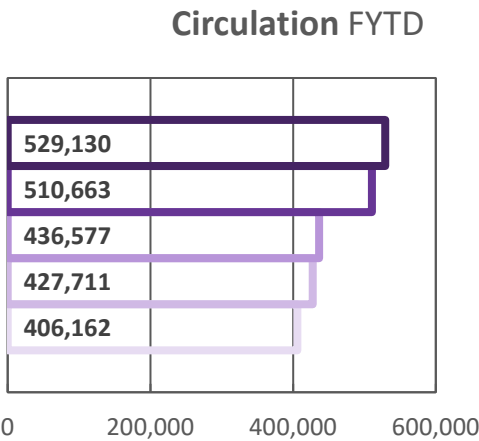
PROFESSIONAL SERVICES AGREEMENT, CHILDREN'S STAFF TRAINING (SMATHERS)

Board Action Requested: A motion to approve an agreement for staff training services with Sensational Inclusion, LLC, with maximum compensation of \$3,330 and a term through December 31, 2026.

Details: The RPL plans to offer two in-person training sessions for staff serving children in the coming months. The sessions, titled *"The Science of Reading"* and *"Building an Anti-Racist Library Practice,"* will be open to all MCLS staff working in children's services. Sensational Inclusion, LLC, is recommended by Tonia Burton, Children's Services Consultant, based on successful prior trainings reported in the post surveys from training in 2025. Each session costs \$1,665 and will be funded through trust funds.

These trainings are essential for staff professional development as they provide evidence-based strategies for literacy instruction and promote inclusive, equitable practices in library services. By participating, staff will strengthen their ability to support diverse learning needs and foster welcoming environments for all children and families. Participants will complete evaluations immediately after each session to assess content relevance, presenter effectiveness, and confidence in applying new skills.

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



PATRON STORIES

HELPING A LOCAL AUTHOR BRING THEIR BOOK TO LIFE

Arnett Branch Manager Ginger Brewer recently assisted a local author in navigating the self-publishing process. The website he used wasn't very user-friendly, so Brewer worked with him step by step to ensure the book was properly formatted, the cover dimensions were accurate, and the spine was aligned correctly. She also guided him through the final upload. The author later contacted Branch Administration staff to express his gratitude for Brewer's help, highlighting her patience, kindness, and extensive knowledge. It was a proud moment for Arnett and a reminder of how personalized support can make a difference for someone trying to share their work with the world.

SULLY BRANCH SERVES AS A LIFELINE

A patron shared that when she moved to Rochester last year, the Sully Branch became a vital resource for her family. She depended on the library's Wi-Fi, computers, and DVDs while settling in and helping her children find stability. Although she now lives in another part of the city, she continues visiting Sully because of the support she received. She told staff the library "saved her life" during that transition and expressed deep gratitude for being able to rely on library services.

A CONNECTION TO THE PAST

Shalis Worthy, Historical Services Coordinator, received positive feedback from a researcher who called from California with a reference question about their family history research. *"When I contacted Ms. Worthy, she generously offered to pull the specific directories and provide us with the information we needed. The documents and details she shared—and especially her help in interpreting them—have given my uncle and me a clearer connection to our family's past. We are deeply grateful for her generosity, expertise, and dedication to preserving local history. She is truly an asset to the Central Library system."*

A STOP MOTION SURPRISE

At the Winton Branch, a young patron brought a bit of summer reading magic into the holiday season. While checking out a pile of books, the nine-year-old asked Librarian Mary Fraser if she remembered the little figurines, mostly porcelain cats, she'd won spinning the prize wheel during summer reading—and then proudly showed a stop-motion movie she'd created with them. She built a snowy background with trees and a gingerbread house, featuring the cats and their friends singing carols, visiting the gingerbread house, and enjoying cocoa, culminating in a comical last-minute struggle to fit through the door. Fraser and staff were surprised and delighted by the girl's creativity, patience, and imagination.

THE ART OF GROWTH

During the holidays, staff at the Frederick Douglass Community Library received many cards from patrons, but one was particularly memorable. A child, previously very shy and often hiding behind her mother during visits, gifted the staff a beautifully detailed, hand-drawn card. Thanks to the library's welcoming atmosphere, she has gained confidence, made friends, and learned to express her needs. The drawing beautifully depicts the library, featuring the new mural above the bookshelf, the dinosaur near the book drop, and the key on the bathroom door.



ANSWERING A CALL FOR HELP

A woman recently arrived at the Arnett Library feeling depressed and asked for assistance with calling the suicide hotline. Library Clerk Ceola Bacot sensitively asked open-ended questions and helped her make the necessary calls. Curtis Jackson, Library Security, joined her, and together they kept the woman engaged, provided consistent reassurance, and ensured she didn't feel alone. When emergency officers and medical personnel arrived, she was able to receive the care she needed. The Arnett Branch serves as more than just a library to many—it's a place where staff look out for their neighbors, exemplified by this moment which highlighted their deep commitment to ensuring the community's safety and well-being.

A TEEN PHOTOG WITH A DREAM TO SUCCEED

Takiyah Reid, an East High School senior and longtime Teen Central patron, is being recognized for her positive mindset and the inspiration she brings to her peers. She credits Teen Central and the support of ImagineYOU's Jeff and Teen Central staff Shetora Banks and John Hylton for helping her develop confidence and creative direction. *"Thanks to the generosity of Mr. Jeff for always allowing me to use the equipment and the encouragement by you guys to see my vision through, I'm confident in my abilities and ready to take it to the collegiate level."* Reid shared. Her passion for photography and filmmaking has fueled the growth of her business, Shot by Ky Multimedia, and led to collaborations with local artists, businesses, and the City of Rochester, as well as opportunities to study at the USC School of Cinematic Arts and earn college acceptances and scholarships.



A SANCTUARY SPACE

Recently, staff in the Central Library's Technology Center were approached by some patrons who were eager to share their thoughts on the value of the library. *"You have no idea how important this place is to some of these people,"* said one patron, *"It's a safe place where they can be when they have nowhere else to go. They know they aren't going to be assaulted or harassed here."* Another patron commented that *"The structure and rules keep it a space they don't have to be constantly on guard,"* referring to the Code of Conduct and vigilance of the staff on duty. A third regular patron said, *"It's not just a safe place; it's a place people can heal."* She knows many of the people using the library, and the Technology Center in particular. *"Yeah, some of them are not ok,"* she continued, *"I know for them this is a sanctuary, and I know that because it was my sanctuary too!"*

UNDEFEATED WORLD-WIDE CHAMPION

Victor Q, the President of the Central Library Liberators, won the NASEF Worldwide Mario Kart 8 Time Trials for the second year in a row. He is the back-to-back champ and has not lost a single playoff map in three straight tournaments.

A SUPRISE FROM THE PAST

One day, Director Emily Clasper received an unexpected piece of mail. Former American Library Association President Ann Symons, an avid collector of vintage postcards, had come across a 1930's era postcard depicting the Rundel Library. She sent it to Emily along with a card with holiday greetings and best wishes for the coming year. This made everyone's day, so Emily sent back a thank you note and an update for Ann on the current status of the building and the upcoming improvements we are planning to preserve the facilities. Ann has since gotten in touch to let Emily know how much she appreciated learning this information and said that this exchange was just confirmation that library folks have a special connection between one another.



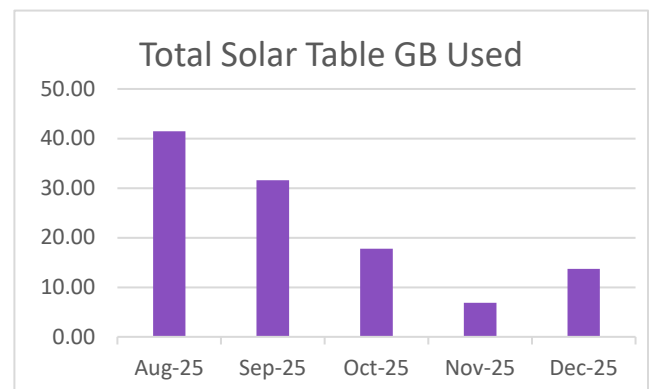
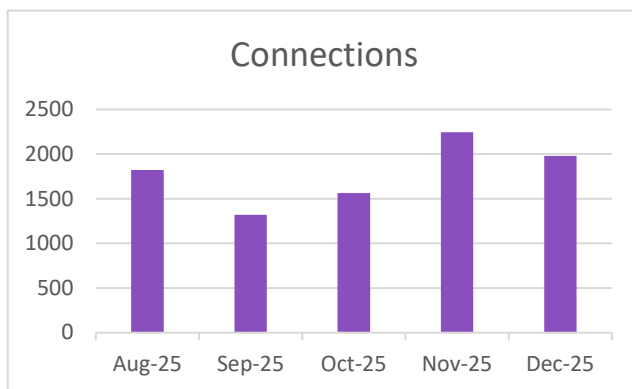
SPECIAL INITIATIVES

WIRED FOR OPPORTUNITY (MCLS)

PROGRAM STATISTICS

Month	Classes	Attendance	Class Topics	
Jul	25	170	Intro to Computers	Library Resources
Aug	29	187	Applying for Benefits	Intro to Google
Sept	26	175	Computer Catch-Up	Online Job Search
Oct	23	161	Scams and Security	
Nov	35	252		
Dec	21	109		
Total	159	1054		

SOLAR TABLE USAGE



PROGRAM UPDATE

The Wired for Opportunity Program wrapped up the first of its two years with an influx of positive feedback. Comments for class participants in the past few months have included compliments for our instructors, appreciation for the library, and praise for the program in general. While solar table use has decreased due to winter weather conditions, it has not ceased, with the partners hosting the tables reporting a surprising level of activity given low temperatures. As we enter the final year of the program, plans to expend the last of the grant funds and wind down the program are in place. In the meantime, we expect a short-term increase in MiFis in circulation, expanding the units into Branches and MCLS Town libraries to help meet demand in the short term.

DIGITAL EQUITY PRESENTATIONS

Jen Byrnes presented on Wired for Opportunity at TLCU, the annual conference of The Library Corporation (the makers of CARL, our online catalog) and COSAC, the Coordinated Outreach Library Services Advisory Council. She also presented on the Importance of Digital Equity in Entrepreneurship at ELC International (Entrepreneurship & Libraries Conference, virtual). The theme this year was "How Libraries and Librarians around the World Support Entrepreneurship in their Communities and Campuses."

A LIFELINE AT THE LYELL BRANCH

The Lyell Branch's new Good Phone—installed earlier this fall by RIT to provide free phone access for the community—is already making a real difference. A young mother recently came in distressed after her partner stole her car, wallet, and phone, leaving her with nothing. While her toddler played safely in the children's area, she used the Good Phone to make the calls she needed. By early afternoon, she had connected with the right support services, and by 3:00, she was in safe housing at a domestic violence center. The phone gave her a lifeline when she needed it most.



PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

TOY LIBRARY SHOWCASE

The Lincoln Branch Toy Library, in partnership with Central Children's and WXXI, hosted an Open House to showcase its programs, services, and collections. The event welcomed teachers, librarians, daycare providers, home and family support workers, therapists, and other early childhood professionals, providing an opportunity to connect and learn about resources available for young children.



LEVELING UP

The Winton Branch library hosts Nintendo Switch programs on the first of each month, run by librarian Emily Quevedo Smith for kids aged 9 to 18, attracting many tweens. December's event featured 15-year-old Isaac, who meshed well with the regular tweens and particularly with Noah, an 8-year-old Switch fan improving his Super Smash Bros skills. They bonded over gaming, with Isaac teaching Noah button presses and attack tactics, while Noah showed Isaac cool Super Mario characters, both agreeing Bowser was the best. They later found they were both homeschooled and frequented the library, excited to meet again at next month's program, forming a surprising friendship over their shared interests.

QUEEN CATHARINE MONTOUR

Historical Researcher Emily Morry hosted Jaime Montour's presentation, "Writing the Story of Queen Catharine Montour and Awakening the Montour Legacy." The program was originally meant to be a dialogue between author Cynthia Neale, who wrote a book about the 18th century Haudenosaunee Queen Catharine Montour, and one of Montour's few remaining descendants, Jaime Montour. Neale was unfortunately unable to attend, so Montour gave an autobiographical talk that discussed growing up on the Six Nations Reservation in Canada and how her life's journey led her to connect with her distant Haudenosaunee ancestor. It was undoubtedly the most moving presentation Morry has ever witnessed in her 12 years at the library.

PLATES OF APPRECIATION

For Giving Tuesday, children and teens at Phillis Wheatley Community Library created paper plate awards to honor a friend, parent, or teacher. Participants designed their own awards or selected from themes provided by Safe to Be Smart Library Assistant Katy Rebholz, including Best Mom, Best Dad, Clean-Up Hero, Best Teacher, and Best Friend. Using markers, colored pencils, and stickers, the activity strengthened creativity, fine motor skills, and self-expression while encouraging empathy and positive social connections. One child even surprised Branch Manager Lori Frankunas with a "Most Fashionable" award.



CRUCIAL CONVERSATIONS

The Monroe Branch Library hosted a "Death Cafe," a reflective discussion about death and a celebration of life. Eighteen participants shared experiences, coping strategies, and reflections on loss, fostering a warm and supportive environment for meaningful conversation. [Spectrum News produced a special interest story](#) about this event. It aired on Christmas Eve.

A SEASONAL STROLL WITH STORIES

The Arnett Branch Library and the Friends of Arnett organized a Winter Walking Tour for Dr. David and Ruth B. Anderson School No. 16. Approximately 120 children aged 5–12, along with their parents and teachers, took part in various activities such as decorating a Christmas tree in the nearby park, enjoying story time at the library, and taking photos with Santa. Kindergarten students also received library cards and borrowed books. The day concluded with candy canes as the children walked back to school.

VIOLIN PERFORMANCES AT CENTRAL

The Arts & Literature division featured Anna Leunis and Petros Karapetyan performing various musical works on violin. This performance duo played an impressive set of pieces from different eras in musical history. Leunis and Karapetyan gave an informative background to the music to give more insight to attendees. The acoustics in Rundel Arts Room and the Rundel building provide a wonderful experience for the ears. Their performances range from classical masterworks to pop favorites including selections from Wicked and Taylor Swift. Their concerts support a special project: traveling to Kenya to teach music to children at the In-Step Children's Home.



A LITTLE WHITE LIE

The Sully Branch welcomed a large and enthusiastic turnout at its annual gingerbread house decorating event. One participant who attended with her young children admitted that she told her employer she had to leave work early for an appointment. The appointment was to bring her children to the program.



OUTREACH & PARTNERSHIPS

THE WORLD'S WEAKEST LIBRARIAN

To promote the final day of the Winton Library book sale, staff took a playful approach on social media. They shared a photo of Librarian Emily Quevedo Smith lying dramatically on the floor, paired with a caption that read, *"Winton patrons, we need your help! Any books we don't sell have to be carried out of the library, and our librarians are very weak! Here is one who has collapsed at the mere idea of exercise. Saturday, 12/6, is our fill-a-bag sale. Fill a bag of books for \$1.00. Please, please, please stop by and fill a bag and save our poor librarians."* The post struck a chord. It reached nearly 14,000 people on Facebook and generated close to 300 engagements, making it Winton's most successful post to date. Perhaps most impressive of all was Saturday's door count of nearly 600, compared to the typical 400. Some patrons arrived saying things like *"I'm here to save a librarian!"*



ARCHIVE OF BLACK HISTORY AND CULTURE

Antoine McDonald, Librarian from the Local History and Genealogy Division, presented at the Parma Public Library to inform patrons about the details of the Archive of Black History and Culture (ABHC). McDonald discussed the ABHC's development and shared details regarding current and upcoming ABHC projects.

McDonald was also recently contacted by Bob Scheidt, the new president for the Rochester Historical Society (RHS). As the incoming president, Scheidt is interested in exploring more of Rochester's African American History and was advised to contact the Archive of Black History and Culture. After meeting, Scheidt invited McDonald to the RHS Board of Directors Meeting where discussions took place around opportunities for collaboration, RHS collections on loan to the Local History and Genealogy Division, a joint historical "passport" project and joint visits to the City, the LHGD and the RHS archives.

GLOBAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP

The Business Insight Center partnered with RocEDC, Pathstone, Small Business Administration, Venture Jobs, Ibero, The Commissary, and the Urban League to present Global Entrepreneurship Week Rochester (GEWROC) 2025 from November 18–21. Melissa Cobo was at the helm for this event. GEWROC is a region-wide celebration of the people, programs and partnerships building our local economy. Across industries, cultures, and stages of growth, they connect visionaries, change makers, and entrepreneur eco-system supporters.

THE RICHEST VAN IN TOWN

RPL GO!, staffed by Lyell Branch Manager Dennis Williams and Clerk Hannah Wilson, attended the *It's a Wonderful Life* holiday festival in the South Wedge. Nearly 200 visitors stopped by to browse books and learn about library services.



LIBRARIES SPREADING WARMTH AND JOY ACROSS THE COMMUNITY

This winter, Frederick Douglass Community Library and Maplewood Community Library partnered with local organizations to support children and families facing economic hardship. Frederick Douglass Community Library served as a collection site for winter essentials and toys, helping ensure refugee, immigrant, and migrant farmworker families experienced a season of warmth, dignity, and care through direct community distribution.

At Maplewood Community Library, a continued partnership with Rochester General Hospital provided holiday gifts to local children, creating moments of joy and connection during a festive library program. Together, these efforts demonstrate how libraries act as trusted community hubs, strengthening partnerships and delivering meaningful social impact for families across the city.

INSPIRING EDUCATORS

MCLS Children's Services Consultant Tonia Burton and Lincoln Branch and Toy Library Manager Suzanne Macaulay attended Monroe Community College's Early Childhood Career and Resource Fair to spread Raising a Reader and Toy Library joy! It was a fantastic morning connecting with current and future early learning educators and professionals.



COLLECTION UPDATES

DOLL RESTORATION

MCLS Office Librarian Alicia Gunther worked with Librarian Melissa Manczuk and Division Head Erin Clarke to safely pack up the vintage 1940s Japanese dolls Hideo-san and Haruko-san for transport to the Rochester Museum & Science Center for restoration by Mr. Masaru Aoki. Mr. Aoki is a restoration expert from Yoshitoku Dolls in Tokyo-Asakusabashi, Japan. He refreshed the fabric of the kimonos and re-dressed the dolls, as well as performing some minor repair work on Hideo-san's head. Gunther is working on a social media post to document the process.

MORE AND MORE MIFI'S

The Reynolds Media Center received 1000 new MiFi units to prepare for distribution. 500 are being added to the Central collection and another 500 will be divided between the community libraries and the town libraries. There has been a lot of planning, processing, and training during December and I'm sure it will continue through the next couple of months. Stephanie Lane has been doing a great job and all the rest of RMC have been stepping-it-up with help in the care and maintenance of the MiFi as we increase our collection to almost 1500!

MAKING SPACE FOR TEENS

The Winton Library has been shifting to support its growing teen fiction and brand-new teen nonfiction collections. This shift also creates expanded room for manga and graphic novels. These updates make it easier for teens to explore a broader range of books and find materials that reflect their interests and needs.

FAMILY SEARCH

After just over three years, the FamilySearch scanning project, managed by Brandon Fess, Special Collections Librarian, came to an end in December of 2025. During this time, the Local History & Genealogy Division hosted a succession of three teams of volunteer scanners. While an official, final total for the number of items imaged isn't available yet, as of January 7, 2026, 2057 items from the holdings of the Local History & Genealogy Division are available on the Family Search website, with additional material still to be mounted. Several hundred additional items were imaged by the teams as "side projects" for the benefit of the library and will be made available through the library website or NY Heritage (as appropriate) in the coming years. This vast project, carried out at no cost to the library, has transformed the state of our digital collections and eliminated most of our imaging backlog outside of newspaper microfilm and archival collections.

STAFF HIGHLIGHTS

JENNIFER BYRNES RECIEVES ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT CHAMPION AWARD

Division Head and Lead for the Digital Equity Initiative, Jen Byrnes, received the Economic Empowerment Champion award from Connected Communities, an organization dedicated to building up the EMMA (East Main/Maplewood/Alexander) and Beechwood neighborhoods from within by engaging residents, service providers, and community partners using a holistic approach. From Connected Communities: *"This award goes to one member of the committee who has gone above and beyond. We want to thank you for showing up consistently, helping shape the committees work, and actively developing solutions for the Greenwood Project. On top of that you brought an awesome solar table to our Neighborhood Hub, helped promote the Connect Lab by connecting us to business first Wednesdays, and arranged for monthly Business Insight Center office hours at the lab."*



TONIA BURTON RECIEVES HEALTI KIDS POWERFUL PARTNER AWARD

Our MCLS Children's Services Consultant Tonia received the Powerful Partner Award from Healthi Kids for her partnership, connecting the community with a wide variety of healthy resources, new ways to play, and making it all easier for families to access. From pop-up play days and the PlayROCs Your Neighborhood initiative to supporting the Play Walk and expanding infant/toddler play kits across libraries, this work is always a team effort and Tonia leads the charge for our local libraries.



RPL AND MCLS SAY GOODBYE TO ANA SURO

After 23 years of service to the City of Rochester, Director of Library Administration and Operations Ana Suro announced her retirement. Staff celebrated her departure at the opening reception for the Central Library’s holiday exhibit, which featured Ana’s personal collection of collectable Nutcrackers.



STAFF SERVICE RECOGNITIONS

The following RPL staff members received recognition from the City of Rochester for their milestone years of service:

November

Tonia Burton	Central Library	15 Years
Maria Heeks-Heinlein	Sully Branch Library	15 years
Donna Owen	Charlotte Branch Library	40 years

December

Marie Turner	Sully Branch Library	30 years
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LIBRARY DIRECTOR’S CORNER: EMILY CLASPER

RPL IN THE NEWS

- WXXI News: [Free phones filling old payphone stands in city neighborhoods](#)
- Spectrum News: [Feeling 'blue' this Christmas? 'Death café' helps residents cope during the holidays](#)
- News 10: [Amerks kick off ‘Reading Power Play’ season at Rochester Arnett Library](#)
- WHAM 13: [GALLERY: Amerks celebrate 20th season of 'Reading Power Play'](#)
- RochesterFirst.com: [Wilmot Cancer Institute hosts event for Lung Cancer Awareness Day](#)

TRUSTEE CALL TO ACTION

[Send a Postcard to Support the National Right To Read Act! \(H.R. 6440 / S. 3365\)](#)

RECOMMENDED READING

NPR: [Book distributor shutting down deals logistical blow to libraries](#)

Time Magazine: [The Supreme Court Just Opened the Door to a New Era of Book Bans](#)

Carnegie Corporation of New York: [How Libraries Became 'First Responders' for America's Opportunity Gap](#)

Minnesota Star Tribune: Brown: [High costs? Budget cuts? Even more reason to protect public libraries.](#)

IMPORTANT DATES

January 27, 5:00–6:30: Trustee Handbook Book Club – Open Meetings Law Zoom Session. [Registration](#)

February 3: NYLA Library Advocacy Day. Contact your Assemblymembers and Senators in Albany to express your support for Library funding. Post using #LAD26 on social media to show your support!

February 24, 6:00: Rochester City Council Meeting.

UPCOMING LIBRARY PROGRAMMING

[Find Upcoming Library Programming Here](#)

DIRECTOR'S SITE VISITS

In 2025, Director Clasper visited all MCLS member libraries (19) and all RPL branch libraries (10) as directed by the Boards.

December

Greece Public Library

Webster Public Library

November

Seymour Library (Brockport)

Hamlin Public Library

October

Gates Public Library

East Rochester Public Library

September

Scottsville Free Library

Lincoln Branch

August

None

July

Newman Riga

June

Fairport

May

Brighton Memorial Library

Mendon Public Library

Parma Public Library

Pittsford Community Library

Winton Branch Library

April

Ogden Farmers' Library

Irondequoit Public Library

Phillis Wheatley Community Library

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 Comm. Library

Lyell Branch

Monroe Branch

DIRECTOR'S UPDATES

The final months of 2025 passed in a whirlwind of meetings, events, and planning activities layered onto the day-to-day operations of RPL and MCLS.

Several notable meetings focused on advocacy for library funding and legislation. MCLS concluded its in-district meetings with state legislators, where we advocated for State Operating Aid, Construction Grants, School Library Materials Aid, and pending legislation to protect intellectual freedom and library worker safety. I also joined State Librarian Lauren Moore in several Zoom meetings with members of the Assembly Committee on Libraries to advocate for increased support for the New York State Library through a modest increase to the real estate transaction fee that benefits the Cultural Education Fund. This increase would help offset reductions in federal funding and ensure the State Library can continue providing essential services to New York's 23 library systems.

Other meetings helped RPL and MCLS build new relationships and strengthen existing ones. I met with the new RCSD Superintendent, Eric Rosser, alongside members of the RPL team to discuss opportunities for deeper collaboration. I also met with several Western New York public library system directors to explore grant funding opportunities for rural libraries, prompted by a promising potential opportunity. In addition, meetings of the MCLS New Library Director's Cohort gave Jennifer Smathers and me the chance to support and learn alongside new directors while building shared knowledge and camaraderie.

As expected for this time of year, much of our work focused on budgeting and planning. Our management team held a mini-retreat to review the RPL mission, vision, and strategic goals and to identify priorities for the year ahead. These discussions informed our upcoming budget development work for both RPL and MCLS, as well as plans to develop the required New York State five-year Plan of Service and undertake needed strategic planning and policy reviews.

The end of the year also included several festive and engaging events. I spoke on a panel about book bans after a screening of the excellent documentary *The Librarians* at the Avon Park Theater. I presented at Summit Independent Living Community, speaking with an enthusiastic group of seniors about current trends in libraries. I got to hang out at the Lincoln Branch Library as they hosted an open house for educators. RPL staff, trustees, and media toured the Maplewood Branch construction site for a preview of its progress. I attended a well-received installment of the Local History Division's Storied Saloons series at Rising Storm at the Mill in Penfield, highlighting the history of the Daisy Flour Mill. We also celebrated the opening of the Nutcracker exhibit featuring the personal collection of newly retired staff member Ana Suro, hosted a holiday brunch for Central Library staff, and closed out the year with a fun appearance on [Connections with Evan Dawson](#), discussing favorite books of the year.

While 2026 has arrived without slowing the pace, we are well positioned to take on the challenges and opportunities ahead.

~Emily



CENTRAL LIBRARY ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR'S UPDATE: SARAH LEHMAN

New York Library Association Annual Conference

I had the opportunity at the start of November to attend and present at the annual New York Library Association Conference in Saratoga Springs New York. Led by Parma Director Grace Englebrecht, I was part of a panel along with Amanda Madigan from Pittsford, Grace and Patrick Pittman from Brockport. We shared some of our experiences on common 'first year in leadership' topics and answered questions from attendees. The informal nature of the panel led to some wonderful questions from attendees and great discussion that all of us enjoyed.

I also attended some very interesting presentations focused on addressing potential incidents within a library from a community support lens, two other presentations discussing new leadership challenges and a project from one small library that partnered with local small businesses to bring more community awareness around library services.

Legislative Breakfast Planning Meeting

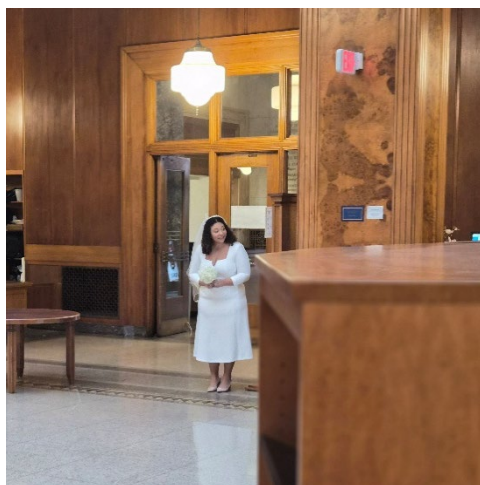
At a previous meeting of county directors, there was interest expressed in holding a Legislative Breakfast celebration event again. Led by Deputy Director BJ Scanlon, I and two other county directors formed a team to plan an event for 2026. The event will tentatively be held at the Central Library in late April (to go along with National Library Week). The team met in November to begin planning and we look forward to seeing this event come to fruition.

Memorial Art Gallery, Aging INSPIRED! Community Event

Rochester Public Library was approached and invited to be part of an event held by the Memorial Art Gallery to share information regarding recreational activities offered by Central, RPL and the Monroe County Library System for retired individuals. I attended the event along with Alicia Gunther from the MCLS office and Maren Kyle from the Extension and Outreach Division. We were able to share information on specific items such as prints available for circulation, Cricut machines, sewing machines and other arts materials. We also brought and spoke about countywide offerings such as VIP Passes, Empire Passes and databases such as Medici.TV, Hoopla and Libby.

A Wedding Celebration

In late November, Rochester Public Library Management was approached about a potential (very last minute) wedding to be held in Rundel Library. The couple had family from different countries, but both families were going to be in Rochester for Thanksgiving, and they wanted to take advantage of this to hold a small, intimate wedding. We said yes and were so happy to help Erica and Charlie celebrate this event in their life.



“Owning the Moment” Stephanie Cole Adams Training

I attended a training presented by Stephanie Cole Adams; a lawyer who often works closely with libraries throughout the state. The presentation focused on common topics that many directors and public libraries may encounter from a legal perspective-such as first amendment audits, developing a code of conduct, developing a mission, FOIL, privacy and confidentiality as well as many other topics. It was a very well-presented training that allowed for significant interaction from the audience and allowed participants to role play potential scenarios and practice how they may manage these if they occur in our real-world professional roles.

~Sarah

COMMUNITY LIBRARIES DEPUTY DIRECTOR'S UPDATES FROM BJ SCANLON

Libraries Ignited by Arts and Cultural Programming

The City of Rochester's ArtsBloom program, is expanding arts and cultural programming in libraries. Grupo Latino Cultural En Rochester (GLCER) will host more than 30 programs from January to June at Lincoln Library, Douglass Library, and the Central Library.

Another ArtsBloom-supported initiative led by artist and puppeteer Kasim Wallace, will provide Summer STEAM programming for children at several branch libraries. In preparation, programs at the Winton and Arnett Branch Libraries brought together adults to build the puppets that will be used in the upcoming children's programs.

The Monroe Branch Library has been selected by ROC Paint for a new mural in the teen section, the Lyell Branch Library is under consideration for an exterior mural, and a new children's mural is now gracing the walls of the Douglass Branch Library.

Health + Safety Committee Update

The Health + Safety Committee, which meets quarterly, has become a useful venue for sharing important information with staff and for collecting staff suggestions. This includes feedback related to accessibility and reasonable accommodation, which is helping create a safer more welcoming environment for staff.

Community Libraries have acquired two AEDs, this will allow us to have an AED in every branch. Once the storage boxes arrive, we will schedule installation.

Continuous Education

I had the opportunity to participate in a workshop alongside the Monroe County Library Directors with Stephanie Cole Adams. The session explored how to handle difficult situations in libraries and helped us develop legally responsible strategies that are just and equity-driven.

Branch Administration is also organizing a Branch-wide staff training in April. This will help create more parity in training opportunities, between Branches and Central.

Maplewood Update

The Maplewood Branch Library closed to the public as of Saturday, January 17. The branch is scheduled to resume operations in March 2026 at its newly renovated and expanded location at 1111 Dewey Avenue.

Holiday Cheer

This holiday season, I joined Area Coordinator Bruce Tehan and Librarian III Amy Discenza in celebrating and recognizing our branch libraries. We spent the better part of a day visiting all the branches, dropping off some tasty treats, and taking time to recognize and thank our incredible team.

~BJ

FFRPL Annual Grant Report for:

Rochester Public Library 115 South Ave., Rochester, NY 14604

1. Amount of FFRPL grant in preceding year: \$ **103,307.25**
2. Amount of grant NOT used for the purchase of circulating books & materials in preceding year (if any): \$ **0.00**

(Note: Should be zero, unless library did not use all the grant funds; then it is the \$ amount received minus \$ amount spent)

3. Statement certifying the number and value of circulating books & materials purchased with grant money in preceding year:

“Last year in **2025**, **Rochester Public Library** used its *FFRPL grant only* to purchase **supplemental** circulating materials of **0** printed books, **1,544** e-books and **453** audio books, at a cost equal to or exceeding **\$103,307.25** (Amount received in previous year).

(Note: it is understood approved selected materials will always cost slightly more than the full grant amount. Do NOT include circulating materials purchased with library’s annual library materials budget; except for slight variance needed to spend the full grant.)

4. For the two preceding years, **total** funds budgeted for **materials**, as reported in the NYS Library Annual Report:

In **2024**: **\$1,002,800**

In **2025**: **\$1,001,600**

Total Spent

In 2024: \$1,270,280

In 2025: \$1,339,560.21

Briefly explain any variance greater than 10 percent: N/A

5. Statement certifying your library is a tax supported public or association library and remains eligible to receive FFRPL grants:

“Rochester Public Library is a tax supported public library/association library and is eligible to receive FFRPL grants, which we agree will only be spent for **supplemental** circulating material. We further agree to abide by all terms & conditions of confidentiality, spending and reporting requirements in order to remain eligible for continued grants.”

Library EIN: 22-3160973

Approved by the Rochester Public Library Board of Directors: **January 28, 2026** (Deadline by February 15)

Signature: _____

Matthew McDermott, Acting Board President, Rochester Public Library

Signature: _____

Emily Clasper, Director, Rochester Public Library