



NORMAL PUBLIC LIBRARY™



ANNUALREPORT



As we look back on 2023, Normal Public Library is proud to have spent the past year working diligently to provide fun and creative opportunities for our community members to engage with our collections, programs, services, and spaces. We are delighted to have welcomed new cardholders and visitors to the library, and were honored to have the chance to provide all of our patrons with proactive and enthusiastic service at their community library. Once again, our partnerships throughout the educational and nonprofit community allowed us to reach far beyond our walls, and we prioritized nurturing and growing these essential relationships throughout the year. We took a close look at our library's structure and filled three positions, including a Facilities Lead, a Business and Technology Librarian, and an additional Programming and Youth Services Librarian, so that we are better equipped to provide exceptional service now and in the future. We spent a good amount of time in 2023 planning for 2024, as we anticipate a large construction project that will provide an updated, refreshed, and healthy space for our community to gather and enjoy. Though we expect some disruption ahead, our staff and board are excited and ready for this positive and transformative new chapter.

HIGHLIGHTS OF 2023

- Honored by the Illinois State University's Center for Civic Engagement with the Civic Engagement Community Partner Award
- Awarded Project Next Generation Grant in the amount of \$12,410, which supported the creation of a coding club for those aged 10–18
- Filled open staff positions to better support the library's current and future goals
- Library trustees committed reserve funds to the library improvement project in order to create a safer and more welcoming library
- Provided a dynamic and enjoyable Summer Reading Challenge to 3,967 people that was fully funded by Normal Public Library Foundation
- Expanded our world languages offerings by adding materials in French to the adult



collections, and books in Hindi to the children's collections

- Removed fees for faxing, providing yet another free and valuable service to our community
- Partnered with Bloomington Public Library and Connect Transit in September to provide 24,804 free bus rides for library cardholders for Library Card Sign-Up Month

SERVICES

In 2023, staff went above and beyond to provide a wide variety of library services to the public. While it would be impossible to individually list all of those in this report, the commonalities that are shared among these

services is an emphasis on accessibility and a close attention and considerate response to patron needs. Library services were provided not only within our building, but throughout the community through our extensive outreach

efforts. A few highlights of those efforts include:

- Provided biweekly home delivery services to over 50 residents who have difficulty getting to the library on their own
- In response to user requests, added headphones, magnifying pages, and file folders to the front service desk for patron use



- Replaced public use laptops to provide a better, faster computer experience
- Collaborated with Little Free Pantry to collect non-perishable food and household items
- Filled 52 Educator Pack requests, comprised of 550 individual book selections
- Provided countless hours

of tech support to empower our patrons to be able to fill out job applications online, obtain email addresses, access important documents, download e-books and other resources, print documents, convert files, and more

- Distributed surplus books to various locations, including the McLean County Jail, Little Free Libraries, Carle Cancer Center, Uptown Station, YWCA, and others
- Filled 216 3D printing requests through our 3D printing program
- During tax season, provided access to common tax forms and printed for free any tax forms that were not available within the library
- Through our Unit 5 Library Card Project, distributed over 1,600 library cards to Normal students through the mail
- Obtained over 300 items from Illinois libraries outside of our system per patron request, as well as over 120 items from libraries outside of Illinois
- Continued to “pop up” in the lobbies of

several senior living locations, including Blair House, Mercy Creek, Evergreen Village, Evergreen Place, ARC, and others to provide access to new large print books, movies, audiobooks, and library staff assistance

We are also proud to share that our staff were active in professional organizations at the state level throughout the year. One of our Children’s librarians, Lyndsey Carney, served on the Monarch Award Committee and the Illinois Youth Services Planning Committee. Staff also participate in various community boards and committees, including the Reducing Social Isolation Committee, Area Planning Committee for Adult Education, Community Educators Group, and many more.

PROGRAMS

Our staff provided 656 dynamic, engaging programs throughout the year for 28,667 people of all ages. Our programs are constantly in flux as we adapt them to our community’s needs and feedback, and we appreciate that we receive positive comments about our efforts on a near-weekly basis! Many of our larger, more costly programs would not be possible to provide without the support of Normal Public Library Foundation, and we are very grateful for their support. Other programming highlights include:

- Began two new recurring programs, Crime Club and Recipe Rotisserie cookbook club
- Challenged our community to read every day with our Summer Reading Challenge, “Find Your Voice!” A few programming highlights include: Take a Bow, a kid-produced small theater production; Tiny Art Show, which featured work from 100 community members of all ages; a digital photography course for adults; Comic Book Club for kids.
- Joined 393 people in a joyous End of Summer Party that included foam, sensory activities, music, crafts, and games with the Parks and Rec Pop-Up Park
- Hosted many fun events including: our first annual Puzzle Palooza competition and swap; interactive murder mysteries for teens and adults, including one based on the hit TV show Only Murders in the Building;



Wackadoo!, a Bluey-themed extravaganza; Pins and Needles: A Fiber Arts Celebration, and many more

- Made valuable updates to the storytime schedule to appeal to a wider audience of families, including adding a storytime intended for toddlers aged 19-36 months and updating an existing storytime to include time for play and caregiver coffee time
- Celebrated Banned Books Week with several events that encouraged community members to engage with challenged titles, including a month-long Banned Books Bingo, a virtual roundtable on the state of book challenges in 2023 with other stakeholders, and a community book discussion event



- Educated and equipped our community to utilize our maker equipment through programs such as Create with Cricut, Maker Monday, Paper Crafting Club, Beginning Sewing, and Pronoun Pins.

• Participated in and contributed to many off-site community events throughout the year, including the Juneteenth Celebration at Miller Park, Heartland College's Transition Fair, Heartland College's Social Services Fair, Senior Day at the McLean County Fair, Bloomington Farmers' Market, and many more

- Partnered with the Town of Normal's Parks and Recreation staff to provide programming at all of their after-school sites
- Hosted an intergenerational storytime program at Blair House Senior Living

Many of our programs benefit from partnership with different community groups. Forming, deepening, and maintaining those relationships to increase the accessibility and value of our programming is something we are always working towards. A few examples of these partnered programs include El día de los niños/El día de los libros (Day of the Child/Day of the Book) with The Immigration Project, Conexiones Latinas, Latinos en BloNo, Western Avenue Community Center, and BN Parents; Instrument Petting Zoo with Illinois Wesleyan University's Music Education department; Asian Heritage Celebration with ISU AsiaConnect, ISU Lab Schools, Korean Academy of Language and Culture, and Illinois Art Station; and Pride in the Park with Bloomington Public Library,

Prairie Pride Coalition, and PFLAG Bloomington/Normal.

COLLECTIONS

Providing up-to-date, diverse, and engaging collections remained a top priority for us in 2023, as it does each year. We remain committed to using data-driven decision making and community input to update, refine, and add to our physical and digital collections. To aid in this effort, we use professional journals, reviews, library databases, and patron interactions to be sure that the materials we are providing meet the needs of our community members.



Our nontraditional library items, collected in our Library of Things, remain extremely popular with our patrons. Board games, robots, sewing machines, ukuleles, and so much more make for a collection that encourages exploration, fun, and lifelong learning. We continue to expand this collection with suggestions and inspiration from community members, staff, and our library peers.

Digital content remained popular in 2023, with 77,580 digital items circulated. Patrons continue to enjoy accessing free streaming movies (3,829), music (484), e-books (37,529), e-audiobooks (32,664), magazines (2,750), and more through our digital resources. All content on these platforms are available to Normal residents at no cost.

Other collections highlights include the following:

- Circulated 719,726 physical items, including 614,599 books, 53,816 movies, and 3,744 magazines, among others
- Created Kits for Kids in the children's department, which are kits that include a combination of toys and books that focus on one theme (colors, alphabet, etc.)
- Expanded our Library of Things with the additions of portable digital image scanners, a video to digital file converter, scan pens, and portable DVD drives
- Added Fiero Code and Weiss Financial

Ratings to our online learning resources

- Added 15 Chromebooks using Project Next Generation grant funding, funded using Library Services and Technology Act funds provided to the State Library by the Institute of Museum and Library Services

FACILITIES & SPACES

Free, public spaces for people to meet, gather, and socialize remain in high demand, and we responded to that need by providing a variety of options for meeting spaces. Our two standalone meeting pods, funded by an Illinois State Library and American Rescue Plan Act funds in 2022, remain constantly in use. Our meeting rooms, which we opened again for public use this year, have been extremely popular and have provided space for community resource fairs, job fairs, book clubs, homeschool cooperatives, wellness events, and more.



Providing easy access to the library remains a top priority for us. To that effect, we renewed our lease for the Fell Avenue parking lot and updated our exterior lighting to provide better illumination in that lot. We also seal coated and striped our main parking lot, and updated our exterior signs and lighting so that our building is easier to locate.



In our Children's area, staff assessed what furniture and seating needs were needed on the floor, and we used that input to purchase new, functional furniture to refresh our Book Nook and Wellness Room. These new furniture pieces have created a more welcoming and usable environment for kids and their families.

Our first-floor art gallery hosted works by a variety of regional artists throughout 2023, highlighting artists of many different ages and backgrounds in various mediums. Whether it was watercolors, photography, multimedia collage, or illustration, our patrons embraced each opportunity to engage with art in a free, public setting with enthusiasm.

WHAT TO EXPECT IN 2024

The biggest project coming up in 2024 is the asbestos abatement of the 1972 portion of our building and the renovation of our entire building. We are ready and able to pivot library services, programs, and collections to allow for this vital project to move forward while still providing our community with several options for library access. Upon completion of this project, we look forward to an updated, modernized library that will serve Normal residents well for the next 10-15 years. Additionally, we plan to:

- Replace network equipment and move all network rack locations and equipment to mechanical rooms or enclosed office spaces
- Upgrade our VOIP system and seek increased internet bandwidth
- Create a strategic plan for 2024-2027
- Add two 30-hour Library Technical Assistant positions as well as a Collection Development Librarian to our staff
- Increase the visibility and fundraising capability of Normal Public Library Foundation

