



**NORMAL PUBLIC LIBRARY**



**ANNUAL**REPORT



2022 found us innovating, creating, and adapting to provide the highest possible level of service for our community. We are proud to have responded to an explosion of community visits and support with new and exciting opportunities for our patrons that were received with enthusiasm and joy. We continued to forge new partnerships while nurturing and growing our existing connections, all of which will serve us well in the future as we develop and deliver effective and impactful services, programs, and collections to our community. We added a new full-time position to assist with outreach services, and we wished children's services manager Tori Melican the best of luck as she retired after more than 34 years of service. We also said goodbye to longtime director Brian Chase as he made his way to Florida, and welcomed new director John Fischer in the last week of the year.

## HIGHLIGHTS OF 2022

- Debuted our new and improved website in April 2022
- Added 11 Chromebook Kits funded by Illinois State Library/American Rescue Plan Act funds
- Installed two Study Pods funded by Illinois State Library/American Rescue Plan Act funds, including one that is fully accessible
- Held our inaugural Year-Round Adult Reading Challenge, with 793 participants
- Celebrated a return to in-person Summer Reading, with 695 people attending our Camp NPL kickoff party, 298 attending our end of Summer Reading Field Day event, and hosting popular events throughout the summer with partners such as Sugar Grove Nature Center, Wildlife Prairie Park, and many others. A total of 3,919 people registered for the Summer Reading Challenge, with 2,033 completing.



- Greatly expanded, improved, and prioritized our Spanish language collection by creating a new space for materials, adding new formats, and utilizing feedback from our community partners to create a robust collection
- With ISU, partnered to celebrate International Day of Peace with a community art project, gallery display, and book giveaway
- Collaborated with artists, YWCA Stepping Stones, and the community to display artwork and poetry for Sexual Assault Awareness Month with an interactive exhibition

## SERVICES

Staff approached services in 2022 with adaptability and accessibility at the forefront of their minds. We continue to look for ways to strengthen our communications, prioritize providing multiple options and opportunities to participate in library programming, and embrace creativity in our outreach efforts. A few highlights of these efforts include:

- Expanded Pop-Up NPL service to Adelaide Apartments and the McLean County Nursing Home
- Began hosting the Black Nurses' Association of Central Illinois to offer free blood pressure screenings and health information to the public on a consistent, monthly basis

- Celebrated Library Card Sign-Up Month with off-site library card sign-up events, in partnership with the Bloomington Public Library, at various locations throughout the community including at The Wash House, Hy-Vee, Jewel, and others.
- Hosted successful food drive benefiting the School Street Food Pantry as part of this month-long celebration



- Partnered with Bloomington Public Library and Connect Transit to offer free bus rides by showing a library card on any Connect Transit route for the month of September, providing 19,970 free rides
- Reached thousands of community members

through individual and partnered outreach events, including events in collaboration with Heartland Community College, Unit 5 schools, Chamber of Commerce, Uptown Normal/Town of Normal, 4H/County Fair, Immigration Project, David Davis Mansion, Miller Park Zoo, ISU, McLean County Museum of History, and many others

Services to staff were a priority for us this year as well, including offering training from outside organizations on topics such as child abuse, sexual harassment, housing discrimination, and more. We added a library of online training from Ryan Dowd focused on providing library services to people experiencing homelessness, and with staff input, refined and distributed an updated staff expectations document to ensure that staff felt supported and informed in their roles.

We are also proud to share that our staff were active in professional organizations at the state and national level throughout the year. This included presentations at the annual Illinois State Library conference on hybrid programming and our Library of Things,

presented in collaboration with Bloomington Public Library, Carlock Public Library, and Milner Library. Staff also participated on committees within the profession, including the Illinois Library Association's Best Practices Committee, the Bluestem Award Committee, the Resource Sharing Alliance's Database Committee, the Illinois Youth Services Institute Planning Committee, and the American Library Association Committee on the Salaries and Status of Library Workers, among others.

## PROGRAMS

This year we were elated to expand our in-person program offerings and creatively serve our community in exciting, new ways. We proudly provided 648 programs across all formats in 2022, many of which boasted full registrations with waitlists. From murder mysteries to life-sized Candyland, the library was a place where community members could reliably find free opportunities for fun, education, and connection, all in the same space. Some highlights of our programming in 2022 include:

- Convened Día de los Libros/Día de los Niños (day of the book/day of the child) in partnership with Conexiones Latinas, The Immigration Project, and BN Parents
- Resumed popular Tiny Book Concert program series, sponsored by the Normal Public Library Foundation
- With local students and Town of Normal staff, helped arrange, publicize, and execute the "20 Year Project" time capsule project
- Added a new program, Family Coders, partially funded by a grant from the Illinois Prairie Community Foundation
- In response to community feedback, added a new evening storytime called Jammie Jamboree for families who cannot easily attend storytimes during the weekday
- Hosted the Asian Heritage Celebration in collaboration with ISU AsiaConect, ISU Lab Schools, Korean Academy of Language and Culture, and the Illinois Art Station





- Welcomed patrons to many new programs, including several focused on creativity such as Adult Writing Meetup, Maker Academy, Art Sparks, Paper Crafting Club, and art classes with ISU Art Education



- Offered a wide range of programs focused on career and job skills, funded by Illinois State Library and American Recovery Act Plan funds

- Added several new book clubs including Romance Me (romance books), Stranger Than Fiction (non-fiction books), and Book Brunch (year-round reading challenge books)
- Hosted three Illinois Humanities Road Scholars events, including Connie Martin's "Pre-Civil War Quilts: Secret Codes to Freedom on the Underground Railroad", Chris Vallillo's "Oh Freedom! Songs of the Civil Rights Movement", and in collaboration with the McLean County Museum of History, Catalina Maria Johnson's "Latinos in Illinois and the USA: Music as a Cultural History"

Beyond the programs mentioned above, we continued to offer passive program options for patrons that were flexible and easy to access. Our Take and Make craft kits for teens and adults remain extremely popular, and we made a concerted effort to add more all-day programs that would allow patrons to come at a time that is convenient for them, rather than having to arrive at the library at a set time. We saw great success with these and received positive feedback from participants, encouraging us to continue to provide and increase these types of programs.



## COLLECTIONS

Providing accessible, diverse collections remains a core value of the Normal Public Library, and we are committed to using data-driven decisions and community input to update and further refine our physical and digital collections. To accomplish this, we utilize professional journals, reviews, library databases, and patron interactions to order materials that meet the needs of our community.



Our Library of Things continues to be extremely popular, and this year saw us adding additional board games, kits created by local Girl Scouts, bluetooth speakers, and more. Other collection highlights include the following:

- Began offering a new online language-learning resource, Transparent Language, to our growing virtual branch
- Enhanced existing digital resource America's News Source by adding the image edition of The Pantagraph, providing same day issues available online in addition to the text articles that we already had available
- Added Cloudsource OA to our library catalog in order to provide patrons access to full-text journal articles, lectures, lesson plans, and more
- Expanded the formats available in our Books that Talk collection, including large print chapter books
- Developed and expanded our collection of Playaways for children, going from 11 to 120 items
- Continued to make thoughtful changes to the ways our collections are organized and managed to make it easier for patrons to find the items that they're looking for
- Refined and improved the workflow and processing of periodicals
- Added Quest 2 virtual reality headsets to our internal collection, which we use at programs and outreach events

Digital content remained very popular, comprising 8% of our total circulation. Patrons continue to enjoy accessing free streaming movies, music, TV, e-books, e-audiobooks, magazines, and more through Hoopla, eRead



Illinois, OverDrive, Kanopy, and more. All content on these platforms are available to Normal residents at no cost. As these resources can occasionally come with a bit of a learning curve, staff are always available by phone or in person to provide direct support to patrons who may need assistance.

## FACILITIES & SPACES

Spaces for people to meet and gather remain in high demand, and community members came back to our spaces in droves as COVID-19 pandemic restrictions eased. To address this demand, we sought out grant funding and donations from local businesses to enhance our collaborative and individual work spaces. We added two private study pods that are constantly in use, funded by Illinois State Library and American Rescue Plan Act funds, and we gratefully accepted several pieces of gently used office furniture from Country Financial that allowed us to add to our seating in our adult and teen areas. As soon as we put these new pieces on the public floor, patrons were sitting down to read a newspaper, take a phone call, or start a study session! Overall, we welcomed 168,743 patrons through our doors in 2022.



In our Children's area, staff assessed what toys and tools needed to be removed, replaced, or purchased for our very popular Discovery Room. Daily cleaning procedures developed during the pandemic were implemented on a permanent basis, and toys that were no longer viable, such as the whisper tubes, were blocked off and slated for removal. Staff continue to research and purchase new and engaging features and toys for this space so that it remains fresh and exciting for children and their families.

Our public gallery space hosted works from regional artists bringing arts, photography, and crafts to our community. We were honored to host photographs from the JWP Audubon Society, children's artwork from the Illinois Art Station, and featured fine art by Deana Moore Schoolcraft.



## WHAT TO EXPECT IN 2023

- Continue to implement the goals and priorities outlined in the 2021–2024 strategic plan, with a focus towards best serving the public
- Addition of Fiero Code to our virtual library, a self-paced learn-to-code software for kids ages 8-18
- Possible abatement project
- Enhance collections, services, and programming for families and individuals in our community who do not speak English as their primary language
- Continue to deliver exceptional services, collections, and programs for all ages in various formats, including in-person, virtually, hybrid, and off-site
- Continue optimizing our resources, including our staff, budget, and spaces
- Work with the Library Planning Committee to advance discussions regarding the library's space challenges
- One-on-one appointments with librarians to assist patrons with tech help, using library resources, genealogy, and more
- Prepare a succession plan
- Replace public laptops and iPads
- Resurface and stripe our parking lot
- Replace security cameras
- Refresh network equipment



**In memory of our friend and colleague**



**STEPHANIE ADAMS**