



NORMAL PUBLIC LIBRARY



ANNUALREPORT



As we reflect on 2024, one word truly sums up the year for us: transformational. Once we began a renovation and asbestos abatement project that had been years in the making, staff swiftly pivoted to provide library services in a separate leased space and programs at a variety of off-site locations, all while prioritizing our connection and service to the community. Our temporary branch at 201 W. College, which has allowed us to keep our connection and service to the community thriving, started as a vacant bank building, but thanks to our staff and patrons' energy and enthusiasm, it was transformed into a lively, vibrant library. Meanwhile, our programming staff offered story hours, crafting sessions, puzzle competitions, and other activities at locations around the community, including the Community Activity Center, Coffeehouse, the Normal Masonic Lodge, Normal Township Hall, and Heartland Bank, proving that libraries are about so much more than just their collections and spaces: at their heart, they're about people.

HIGHLIGHTS OF 2024

Throughout this year of change, staff innovated and adapted constantly in order to exceed the level of service that our community has come to expect. Though the spaces available to us were drastically different, our staff met that challenge with creativity, positivity, and open minds. Our patrons let us know what was working (love the drive-thru!) and what wasn't (more directional signage, please!), and staff worked through the kinks together. Some major highlights of 2024 include:

- Began an extensive building renovation and asbestos remediation project, with a projected completion date of June 2025
- Opened and operated a temporary branch at 201 W. College, providing access to computers, technology, collections, and staff
- Added and hired a new position in our Technical Services department, a Children's Collection Development Librarian
- Added and hired two 30-hour Library Technical Assistant positions to aid in technology programming, staff training, and makerspace activities in the future library
- Added and hired a new Programming and Youth Services Librarian, focused on 3D printing and makerspace activities in the future library

- Successfully provided varied and popular programming at several off-site locations
- Increased our presence in the community through tabling at events as well as outreach to preschools, daycares, Unit 5 schools, Heartland Community College, area nursing homes, the McLean County Jail, and others
- Added several unique items to our collections, including radon detectors, Bluetooth transmitters/receivers, and grant-funded Playaway Launchpads for children
- Replaced our network infrastructure including our firewall, network switches, and WiFi access points

SERVICES

As we approached providing library services for our community from a leased space that was smaller than our Community Room at our main building, we had to be ready to take risks and fail forward. Staff worked together to pivot from providing service in a 44,000 square foot building to a 2,100 square foot former Busey Bank branch, and relied on questions, suggestions, and ideas from our patrons in order to shape our branch into the best temporary library possible. We have received consistent, positive feedback from our users indicating that they greatly appreciate all that

our branch library offers, both in the services we provide and as a connection to their library.



A few highlights of the last year include:

- Leasing our temporary branch at 201 W. College, providing access to technology, staff, and our collections
- Added collections and services to our branch as they were requested by patrons, including:
 - Adding space for DVDs
 - Making a menu of magazines so patrons would know what subscriptions were available to them
 - Adding large and visible signage to most sides of our building
 - Giving patrons a look inside our progress through social media videos and posts
- Provided consistent updates to the public on our construction progress and information on how they can use the library during our project
- Created an Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion staff committee in order to reflect and further those principles internally and externally
- Created a weekly in-house newsletter for staff so that we could be up-to-date and confident in our service in a swiftly changing environment
- Continued to offer home delivery service to those who find it difficult to use the library, and saw increased use at our Pop-Up Libraries at area nursing homes
- Through our Unit 5 library card project, created and mailed 900 library cards to Unit 5 students

- Provided countless hours of tech support to help our patrons fill out job applications online, create 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

Providing service out of two buildings (201 and 206 W. College) and at multiple off-site locations would not be possible without our stellar team of staff. Beyond being cheerfully along for the wild ride this year has been, our staff have made their mark in the library profession by completing advanced degree programs, publishing articles in professional library journals, presenting at state and national conferences, and serving on state and national committees and boards. We are proud of our staff for their drive not only in improving our library, but themselves as well.

PROGRAMS

Our staff provided 453 dynamic, engaging programs throughout the year for 28,601 people of all ages. While we continued several program series from past years that remain in demand, we also added many new series that have been very popular. As we adapted our programs to different rooms and buildings throughout Normal, our patrons continued to show up to read, create, and have fun with us. We greatly value our community's engagement with us and their feedback, and consistently incorporate their requests, comments, and ideas into our programming schedule. Many of our larger, more costly programs would not be possible without the support of Normal Public Library Foundation. Other programming highlights include:

- Worked with our community partners extensively to find space for programming while our building is closed to the public
- Collaborated with groups such as the Illinois Art Station, Communication Junction, Illinois Humanities Road Scholars Speakers Bureau, Latinos en BloNo, and others to bring exciting, relevant programs to our community



- Presented our Summer Reading Challenge in a new environment while maintaining the features our patrons know and love, such as our Book Bucks Store, Summer Reading Kickoff Party (530 attendees) and End Of Summer Reading Bubble Party (220 attendees)
- Began several new programming series, including Cottagecore: Embroidery, TinkerCrafting, Crafty Prints, Partner Project (sewing for families), Family Book Club, Claim Your Future (college application and FAFSA help), and others



- Hosted a Swiftie Par-Tay (135 attendees), Camp Half-Blood (week-long Percy Jackson event series), Pop-Up HERstory with Nomad Theatre (230 attendees), and many more
- Continued our wildly popular murder mystery events for adults and teens, with themes like Lady Whistledown, Wizard of Oz, Prom Night, and others

- Hosted authors Eric Rohmann and Candace Fleming

As in past years, many of our programs benefit greatly 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, and this year those partnerships were especially important. 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, Illinois Art Station, Latinos en BloNo, Western Avenue Community Center, and Bloomington Public Library; Asian Heritage Celebration with ISU AsiaConnect, ISU Lab Schools, 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 2024. With our main building closed to the public, we had a unique opportunity in 2024 to assess and inventory our collections. As part of this effort, we were able to create a clear picture of what's on our shelves and what we might like to add. As we reflected on feedback from our staff and patrons, we made the decision to interfile our adult fiction collections to make them easier to use and adjusted call numbers on our Large Print items so that they are more easily recognizable in our catalog.

Our nontraditional library items, collected in our Library of Things, remain extremely popular with our patrons and maintain a presence in our temporary branch. Board games, robots, sewing machines, ukuleles, and so much more make for a collection that encourages exploration, fun, and lifelong learning. We continued to expand that collection this year with the addition of new board games, Bluetooth transmitters, and radon detectors. This year, our Chromebook kits, WiFi hotspots, and instruments were some of the most popular offerings in our Library of Things.



Other collection highlights from this year include:

- Created storage solutions for our collection during the renovation
- Added grant-funded pre-loaded educational tablets called Playaway Launchpads to our collection
- Maintained access to almost all library holdings through careful planning, storage, and shelving during both phases of our renovation project
- Promoted use of browser and educator packs, which are staff-curated packs or lists of items based on theme, age, etc., so that patrons did not have to research and request individual items for themselves, their families, or their classrooms while they are unable to access our full collections

Digital content remained popular in 2024, with 91,012 digital items circulated. Patrons continue to enjoy accessing free streaming

movies (4,042), music (531), e-books (40,004), e-audiobooks (40,212), magazines (5,849), and more through our digital resources. All content on these platforms are available to Normal residents at no cost.

FACILITIES & SPACES

Providing a safe, healthy facility is a top priority for us, which is reflected in what is by far our biggest achievement of the year: ridding our building of asbestos and asbestos-containing material. This project was years in the making, and after careful planning and budgeting, we were thrilled to get it started in 2024. Beyond removing the asbestos, we are fully renovating and updating our building at 206 W. College to bring it into the 21st century. When we reopen our main location in 2025, our patrons will surely be delighted by the updates and improvements that are currently underway. Already, we have:



- Updated all lighting to LED
- Replaced our network infrastructure for better connectivity and security
- Relocated our networking infrastructure to a designated network room with anti-static floors
- Installed exterior LED wall packs on the building for Fell parking lot illumination and replaced Fell parking lot lightpole to LED
- Upgraded HVAC thermostats in 1972 building as well as replaced 1972 building ductwork
- Wet sealed the majority of our windows for weatherization efficiencies
- Replaced our exterior off-site book drop at Jewel-Osco
- Became a member of the Sustainable Libraries Initiative with plans to complete certification in 2025-2026



WHAT TO EXPECT IN 2025

We are heading into 2025 with optimism and are greatly excited to soon welcome the public into our renovated, updated, and healthy space at 206 W. College. Staff are eager to show off the additions and positive changes to our patrons, which include but are not limited to:

- An all-ages makerspace for crafting, creating, and learning
- A designated teen space that encourages collaboration and conversation, separate from the kids and adult areas
- A children's art-making area on the second floor
- Refreshed meeting spaces in the basement, an updated computer and technology center, and a new open meeting space on the first floor, along with two additional small meeting/study spaces on the first floor
- Updated, comfortable, and eye-catching furnishings throughout all three floors of the building
- Attractive, matching, and more accessible shelving for our print collections
- Improved wayfinding throughout the building
- A renewed and updated Children's Discovery Room, including a new private nursing room

Our staff continue to work extremely hard to prepare our collections, spaces, and each other for our eventual reopening in June 2025. We cannot wait to show the community their new library, and feel confident that the improvements and updates we have made will be appreciated as they were all born out of direct patron feedback over the last several years. We hope our community members see themselves and their vision of their public library reflected in the changes we have made, and we look forward to introducing them to their new library.