



NORMAL PUBLIC LIBRARY™



ANNUAL REPORT



A new chapter began at Normal Public Library in 2025 as we happily closed our temporary branch after 15 months of renovations at our main building and reopened in our freshly renovated space at 206 W. College. In July, we welcomed the public into their library with enthusiasm and excitement for all that lies ahead within our updated and refreshed spaces. Our community members were thrilled to be back in their library browsing the shelves, trying out the furniture, and exploring the library that our design team and staff had created for them to enjoy.

Though the library's footprint did not expand, the way we had been using our existing square footage was studied closely and changed accordingly to respond to our community's needs. A nursing lounge, Tinker Studio (maker space), art center for children, and a dedicated area for teens were all added and met with positive feedback from library users. New shelving, signage, and wayfinding throughout the building enhanced the usability and accessibility of our building, and updated flooring, lighting, and wall coverings created a bright and inviting atmosphere.

As our community members have returned to 206 W. College, we have heard many oohs and ahhs as they reacquainted themselves with their library! Other features of the renovation included the following:

- Combined our Fiction, Mysteries, Westerns, Science Fiction, Romance, and Inspirational Fiction into one collection for a more streamlined browsing experience
- Replaced our Fell Avenue entry door to enhance building security
- Acquired nearly \$40,000 in grant funding from Ameren for weatherization and LED lighting efficiency upgrades
- Added fire strobes to our restrooms in the basement and 2nd floor to meet fire safety standards
- Added wireless access control hardware to several of our interior doors that lead to staff-only areas
- Replaced our self-check stations, service desk computers, security camera system, overhead ceiling speakers, and back end infrastructure
- Increased our internet bandwidth from 40Mbps to 200Mbps to better support our community's technology needs
- Made two of our second floor restrooms fully ADA accessible



SERVICES

Our approach to patron services in 2025 was necessarily adaptable and flexible as we moved from our small branch building into our main building halfway through the year. Staff demonstrated remarkable resiliency and resourcefulness as we navigated a year full of exciting, yet stressful, transitions! It is a credit to their professionalism and resourcefulness that the customer service we provided for our patrons resulted in us hearing consistently positive feedback. We heard from patrons throughout the year that they were thrilled and pleasantly surprised by the attentive and responsive service they received both at our temporary branch and at our main building. Whether we were bringing requested items across College Avenue in wagons to meet the needs of our patrons, or helping them acclimate to the new technologies and spaces at our main building, we were able to meet the high expectations we've set for ourselves in providing the best service possible to our community members. Other highlights include:

- Launched our new appointment service, Book A Librarian, that allows patrons to schedule time with a library professional to get help with using library resources and technology
- Began our library TikTok page to reach a wider audience through fun, engaging content (our most viral post has over 663k views and 26k likes!)
- Began providing home delivery services to families in addition to our existing home delivery services
- Deployed a large-scale retraining program for frontline staff to prepare them for reopening
- Continued to visit older adults in the community at our Pop-Up Library service, which brings library materials, staff, and services to most nursing homes and assisted living facilities in Normal
- Sent out over 750 library cards to students in Unit 5 schools
- In partnership with Bloomington Public Library, began creating a Digital Literacy curriculum for the McLean County Jail's ReEntry services department, with plans to deliver that content monthly in 2026
- Focused on targeted outreach to segments of our population that are traditionally underserved, including ISU students, members of our immigrant community, our Spanish-speaking community, older adults, Title 1 students and their families, and more
- Hosted tables at many off-site events including Festival ISU, Heartland Community College Transition Fair, the Día de los Muertos Celebration at McLean County Museum of History, Pack the Park with Town of Normal Parks and Recreation, and many other Town of Normal events
- Welcomed numerous tour groups to the new building including groups from Heartland HALO, Unit 5, Sunset Rotary, and others
- Distributed surplus donated books, movies, and audiobooks to the McLean County Jail, Uptown Station Books On The Go, Unit 5 schools, and others



Jim
Over the last 5 years or so the staff at the NPL have shown how truly adaptive and supportive of the community they can be. Thank you all!!!!

Jane
Thanks to the staff for all your help and kindness through the transition. I'm so thankful we had a physical space to come to during the closure!

Cathy
Thank you to the staff at NPL. Always helpful. So glad we still had a place to enjoy our books. Looking forward to the new library.

Christine
I loved putting books on hold and driving up to the bank little window to pick up and return them! So easy and quick! But I've REALLY missed browsing through stacks! Can't wait to come into our newly done public library!

Laura
I am grateful we still had a physical location to bring the kids to look at books while the big library was closed ❤️ And really excited it will be open again soon! 😊

Providing unparalleled customer service to our community remains our top priority for 2026, and we look forward to making the most of our new and improved spaces in order to do so. Our staff strive each day to exceed the expectations of our patrons and we keep our ears open for new ideas, suggestions, and comments that will help us meet that goal. We understand that the service that people receive at our service desks directly influences their feelings of welcome and belonging at NPL, and we aim to leverage those experiences to continuously build upon the inclusive, warm environment that we work to create each and every day.

PROGRAMS



570
DYNAMIC, ENGAGING PROGRAMS
put on by our staff throughout the year



FOR
23,931
PEOPLE OF ALL AGES

We continued to provide some of our most popular program series, while also providing new programs for the community to try. In particular, we began hosting **Design & Print** focused on 3D printing design for teens and adults, **Picture Book Club** for kids, and **Tinkercrafting: Unwind**, which is a sensory-friendly version of our popular **Tinkercrafting** series.

The first half of the year saw us programming around town as we did not have access to our own programming spaces until late summer. We are very grateful to the many partners who helped us out by allowing us to use their spaces, including Heartland Bank, Normal Township, Town of Normal, and Unit 5 schools, among others. Once we had reopened in our main building, we were thrilled to be able to host storytimes, educational lectures, craft programs, book clubs, and more in our new spaces. Being back in our own building also gave us the opportunity to add sensory-friendly spaces to some of our busier events for families, which allowed more families to participate in events like storytimes and craft activities. Other programming highlights include:

- Began hosting maker programming in our new Tinker Studio, which offers access to 3D printers, sewing machines, an embroidery machine, heat press, sublimation printer, and laser cutter
- Invited teens into our new teen area for programs like **Teen Writer's Group**, **Teen Advisory Council**, and others
- Hosted our **Summer Reading Kickoff** party in Uptown Circle, featuring a musical performance by children's artist Jim Gill
- Celebrated the end of our Summer Reading Challenge with a **foam party** at Underwood Park
- Utilized grant funding from the American Library Association (ALA) to host **Money Masters**, a financial literacy program for kids made possible by ALA's Thinking Money for Kids grant program
- Hosted several after-hours programs for teens and adults, including **The Upside Down** (Stranger Things event), **Teen Murder Mystery**, and others
- Celebrated Native American Heritage Month with a program on Starved Rock history, attended by 125 people
- Invited our community to puzzle their way out of escape rooms in **Cosmic Conundrum** (in our Tinker Studio), and in **NPL Taskmaster** (in Uptown)
- Provided off-site programming to Unit 5 after-school sites in partnership with Town of Normal Parks and Recreation
- Encouraged young entrepreneurs through our business mentorship program, **Kid Market**, which provided a way for local business owners to educate the next generation and gave kids a way to grow their business skills and sell their wares at a special kids-only market
- Cared for many of our youngest community members' very best friends at our **Stuffed Animal Sleepover** program this December



Many of our larger, more expensive programs would not be possible without the support of the Normal Public Library Foundation. In addition, our programs benefit immensely from our community partnerships. 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 was no different. 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, The Language Spot, and Bloomington Public Library; **Asian Heritage Celebration** with ISU AsiaConnect, ISU Lab Schools, and Illinois Art Station; **Pride Night at the Zoo** with Bloomington Public Library, Miller Park Zoo, and Prairie Pride Coalition; and **Paws and Pages** with Humane Society of Central Illinois.

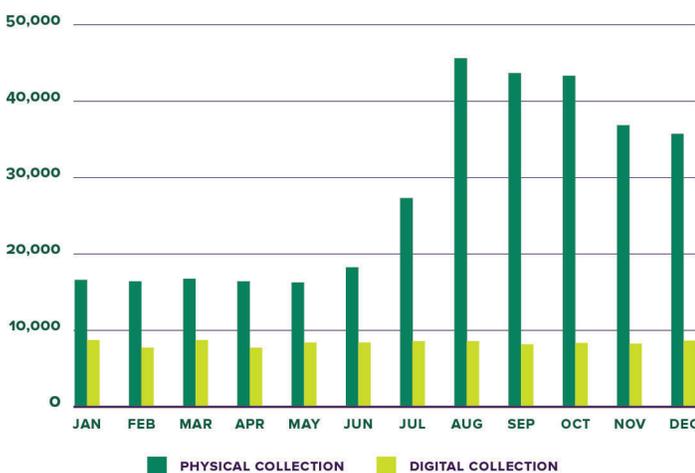
COLLECTION



Providing access to relevant, diverse, and up-to-date collections remains at the core of our mission as a public library. After our inventory project in 2024, we had a clear picture of the depth and breadth of our collection and we shifted our focus to moving and organizing those materials on our new shelving in a way that made sense for our patrons. The physical act of moving 135,000 items was an all-hands-on-deck situation, and our staff managed to complete the move in under two weeks. We are grateful to Milner Library at Illinois State University (ISU) for allowing us to borrow a large number of their carts to facilitate this move, which we dutifully wheeled over from ISU's campus in an impromptu cart parade!

Digital content remained popular with patrons, accounting for 23% of our circulation. We added several resources to our digital offerings this year, including online access to the Chicago Tribune. For our genealogy enthusiasts, we added HeritageHub, which provides access to hundreds of years of obituaries and death notices for research purposes. When one of our vendors, Baker & Taylor, went out of business, we pivoted to Brodart for print purchases and The Palace Project for e-book content. Our patrons were thankfully willing to roll with the changes and we appreciated the patience afforded to us as we dealt with that surprising closure!

Total Circulation of All Items in Physical & Digital Collections in 2025



MONTH	PHYSICAL COLLECTION	DIGITAL COLLECTION	TOTAL CIRCULATION	PHYSICAL COLLECTION PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL CIRC	DIGITAL COLLECTION PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL CIRC
JAN	16,552	8,805	25,357	65%	35%
FEB	15,417	7,884	23,301	66%	34%
MAR	16,644	8,623	25,267	66%	34%
APR	15,473	7,964	23,437	66%	34%
MAY	15,350	8,367	23,717	65%	35%
JUN	18,127	8,218	26,345	69%	31%
JUL	27,359	8,527	35,886	76%	24%
AUG	45,698	8,507	54,205	84%	16%
SEP	43,767	8,117	51,884	84%	16%
OCT	43,112	8,336	51,448	84%	16%
NOV	36,948	8,221	45,169	82%	18%
DEC	35,817	8,674	44,491	81%	19%
TOTAL	330,264	100,243	430,507	77%	23%

WHAT TO EXPECT IN 2026

As we look forward to the first full year in our renovated building, we are seeing endless possibilities on the horizon! The incredible improvement of our community's library spaces will allow us to not only continue the work that our patrons enjoy and expect of us, but to dream bigger and expand upon those offerings to intentionally invite more of our community into the library to discover programs, services, and collections that serve their unique needs. In 2026, we plan to:

- Increase the accessibility of our website
- Complete our roof replacement, increasing the energy efficiency of our facility
- Begin hosting open studio hours in our Tinker Studio so members of the public can freely use the technology available in that space
- Install interactive screens in our preteen and teen areas to enhance our programing capabilities
- Create a comprehensive strategic plan to guide us through the next three years
- Add a sensory-friendly calming space in the library's children's department, partially funded by an Educational Enhancement grant from Autism McLean
- Begin the certification process for the Sustainable Library Initiative
- Continue to expand our branding across platforms, remotely and inside our facility
- Partner for the future with our growing Normal Public Library Foundation

Our staff continue to be our greatest asset and we look forward to maintaining an environment where they can utilize their creativity, ingenuity, and knowledge to deliver superb services, programs, and collections to our community. Whether it is through a new book club, reading challenge, learning circle, or maker program, our priority remains to be a library where our community members can seek opportunities, support, and resources that help them reach their goals in every chapter of their lives.

