



Director’s Report

Date: January 9, 2025

To: The Urbana Free Library Board of Trustees

From: Rachel Fuller, Interim Director

Re: Director’s Report for Board Meeting of January 14, 2025

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Strategic Plan Progress



ENHANCE We steward our physical and financial resources to serve evolving community needs that support growth and sustainability.

- On December 3, 2024, The Urbana Free Library Foundation launched its first-ever [Double Your Impact! Gift Match Challenge](#), a partnership with the Frampton family in honor of their mother, Margaret Frampton, and her love of and many contributions to the Library. The campaign, which allowed four months to achieve a target of \$15,000, was a resounding success, with staff promoting the challenge at service points and via bookmarks in displays. The challenge goal was exceeded, with \$20,329.91 raised by January 7, 2025. The challenge has closed, and the sponsors have pledged to match \$15,000 of the funds raised.





EMBRACE

We learn about and respond to our community in order to create a welcoming environment that cultivates equity, mutual respect, and belonging.

- At the Meet a Hedgehog program, 101 children and parents enjoyed learning about hedgehogs and making a hedgehog-themed craft. Everyone's favorite part of the program was meeting the two hedgehogs, Melon and Hodgepodge. Several people thanked staff afterward, saying they enjoyed making the craft, meeting the hedgehogs, and learning new information. (Did you know hedgehogs aren't native to the US and live here only as pets? Also, keep them safe from avocados, as avocados are poisonous to hedgehogs.) Library staff even received a thank you card from a grandparent and child who were on the waiting list, and for whom Library staff were able to make extra space.



- Throughout December, the Library hosted a time travel-themed escape room inspired by the Library's 150th anniversary and funded by The Urbana Free Library Foundation. Groups of 1-4 worked together to solve puzzles and escape from the 1918 opening of the current library building back to the present. In December, 116 community members attempted the escape room. The escape room proved so popular that the Library extended the program by an extra week through January 12. The room was designed and built by students from the University of Illinois Informatics 418 class taught by CU Community Fab Lab staff.

- Multiple music events at the Library meant there was something special for everyone this month! Performer Zach Mayer shared Jewish songs, stories, and dancing for all ages. The Parkland Guitar Ensemble performed Christmas carols, punk music, and classical pieces. And, the Library hosted its annual holiday performance by Carl Johnson and the New Orleans Jazz Machine, which Bob and Bonnie Switzer generously sponsored through The Urbana Free Library Foundation. Overall, 141 community members came to Library music programs this month.





In December, The Library completed two large Collections projects. Both were designed to enhance the patron experience and promote increased circulation of materials.

- The New Browsing Area was unveiled in December after months of planning and shifting of material on the first floor. The new space, located across from the Welcome Desk, highlights the new and unique material available for circulation. As most foot traffic enters via Green Street, the New Browsing Area is situated to encourage more browsing and spontaneous discovery.



- The space is more open, welcoming, and accessible. Further, the first-floor collections have shifted to make space for the DVD collections, which moved into the stacks. Non-fiction DVDs were reunited with Fiction DVDs on the first floor, and Books on Disc moved to the second floor.
- The reclassification of the Children’s World Language Collection is now complete. Each item in the collection is organized by language and material type, making it much more browsable and accessible for non-native English speakers. Previously, the books were in the j Non-Fiction collection by call number, with languages spread apart, making browsing difficult. Since the completion of the project, children’s staff have shared that patrons are checking out more items from the collection. The conversion started in July, and a breakdown of the circulation statistics for the top three collections by size is below:

Collection	July 2024	Aug 2024	Sept 2024	Oct 2024	Nov 2024	Dec 2024
Chinese	1	24	40	44	26	57
French	N/A	N/A	4	11	21	31
Spanish	130	203	219	273	342	268

- At the Champaign Genealogical Society’s and Champaign Historical Archives’ Annual Show and Tell, 16 participants shared their family treasures and heirlooms. One notable item shared was an ancestor’s spinning wheel! Participants also shared many photos, historical documents, and stories.

- The Holiday Card-Making program was full this year, with 86 community members attending. People could create their own designs or receive inspiration from pre-made samples. The event had a congenial atmosphere, and a local women’s walking group came with their youngsters for their holiday outing. A variety of cards were created, including holiday wishes, love notes, and birthday cards.
- At the annual Noon Year's Eve program, families with young children celebrated the new year early so that little ones didn't need to stay up until midnight to join the celebration. This year's event featured a story time with books and songs, New Year's resolutions and counting, a magic wand craft, freeform movement and dancing, and a countdown to noon. In total, 57 community members participated. Many families commented that they had a lot of fun and were grateful to have an event that made it easier for their children to celebrate the holiday.



Action Item Details & Additional Information

- This month, staff present one policy for Board approval as part of our regular policy review cycle. Staff recommend approval of this policy.
- Staff request approval of the budget changes listed below to pay the second invoice from Organizational Architecture for the executive director search process:
 - \$7,000 decrease to Adv/Mkting/Public Education (80280809 52909)
 - \$7,000 increase to Recruiting Expenses (80280801 52904)

Communication

Library Newsletters

- The TUFL Times, January: <https://uflil.patronpoint.com/email/preview/150>
- The TUFL Times: Youth Edition, January: <https://uflil.patronpoint.com/email/preview/151>
- Archives Newsletter, January: <https://uflil.patronpoint.com/email/preview/152>

Library News

- December 5, 2024, *smilepolitely.com* - Weekender: December 5-8 <https://www.smilepolitely.com/culture/weekender-december-5-8/>
- December 10, 2024, *wcia.com* - Urbana Free Library has Events All Month Long <https://www.wcia.com/ciliving-tv/ciliving-stories/ciliving/urbana-free-library-has-events-all-month-long/>
- December 11, 2024, *chambanamoms.com* - Champaign-Urbana Weekend Planner – Lights So Bright <https://www.chambanamoms.com/2024/12/11/lights-so-bright-champaign-urbana/>
- December 14, 2024, *news-gazette.com* - Inside Out | The people who made 150 years possible: Nelle Carpenter https://www.news-gazette.com/news/local/history/inside-out-the-people-who-made-150-years-possible-nelle-carpenter/article_09f0e95a-b908-11ef-b88c-a3e062dbed85.html

- December 16, 2024, *chambanamoms.com* - Must-Do Things During Winter Break in Champaign-Urbana <https://www.chambanamoms.com/2024/12/16/winter-break-activities/>
- December 18, 2024, *chambanamoms.com* - Champaign-Urbana Weekend Planner – Merry, Merry <https://www.chambanamoms.com/2024/12/18/merry-merry-champaign-urbana/>
- December 20, 2024, *smilepolitely.com* - Guide to New Year’s Eve 2024-2025 <https://www.smilepolitely.com/culture/guide-to-new-years-eve-2024-2025/>
- December 22, 2024, *news-gazette.com* - Rachel Vellenga/review | Sisterly bonds tested in 'Hello Beautiful' https://www.news-gazette.com/arts-entertainment/books/rachel-vellenga-review-sisterly-bonds-tested-in-hello-beautiful/article_3616059a-bcf2-11ef-a82b-330cec40e83b.html
- December 24, 2024, *chambanamoms.com* - Have a Family-Friendly New Year’s Eve in Champaign-Urbana <https://www.chambanamoms.com/2024/12/24/new-years-eve-family-celebration/>
- December 31, 2024, *news-gazette.com* - Your Questions, Their Answers | Spotlight on: Urbana mayor, Part 5 https://www.news-gazette.com/news/your-questions-their-answers-spotlight-on-urbana-mayor-part-5/article_55ae57f8-c649-11ef-bb1a-d3e68b86c35e.html

Budget Information

- Budget and FY24 Financial Reports: <https://urbanafreelibrary.org/about-us/your-right-to-know/financial-reports>

Bank reconciliations for the last day of the month: July 2024 - June 2025						
	July	August	September	October	November	December
**Illinois Funds account	\$ 229,049.51	\$ 230,094.72	\$ 231,083.43	\$ 232,055.85	0.00	
Busey Bank Cash accounts	\$ 3,325,335.18	\$ 3,493,511.49	\$ 3,095,150.44	\$ 4,026,436.77	\$ 3,747,579.27	
Busey Bank Web account	\$ 107,613.47	\$ 111,788.42	\$ 114,332.89	\$ 117,950.09	\$ 122,400.96	
Total	\$ 3,661,998.16	\$ 3,835,394.63	\$ 3,440,566.76	\$ 4,376,442.71	\$ 3,869,980.23	\$ -
	January	February	March	April	May	June
Illinois Funds account						
Busey Bank Cash accounts						
Busey Bank Web account						
Total	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
**Illinois Funds account has been closed. Money was moved to Busey Cash account.						