



Director’s Report

Date: March 6, 2025

To: The Urbana Free Library Board of Trustees

From: Rachel Fuller, Interim Director

Re: Director’s Report for Board Meeting of March 11, 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.

- We are pleased to share an increase in civil service staffing at the Library due to two internal promotions. Jacob Strom has accepted a full-time Digital Media & Graphic Designer position. Expanding Graphics’ capacity will allow additional support for library programs and marketing. Shalini Smith has accepted a full-time Archives Librarian position. Adding additional staffing to Archives will help address collections processing backlogs, allow Archives to evaluate collections and their storage spaces more efficiently, and provide more timely reference service.
- Librarian Rachel Vellenga delivered a presentation about passive and drop-in programs to a packed room at the Illinois Youth Services Institute conference. Since both types of programming require unique preparation and organizational strategies, Rachel highlighted the Library’s recent Blueey on November Two-ey and Library Circus programs as well as the passive Flash Fun Center, all of which Rachel designed.

- On February 17, while the Library was closed to the public, staff participated in our annual “Staff Day,” a dedicated professional development and learning time. This year, a planning committee of nearly every department's staff organized a day filled with informative sessions and engaging activities. The day included department updates,



sessions highlighting lesser-known Library services, a presentation from Carle EAP Services, and an afternoon of collaborative learning with a wellness focus at Anita Purves Nature Center. Employees appreciated the opportunity to connect with colleagues, the high energy of the day, and the chance to learn from one another. One staff member even shared, “I thought it was the best Staff Day I have attended in my ten years here.”

- The Seed Exchange has been getting lots of attention on social media. The Library posted a thank you on Facebook to the Champaign County Forest Preserve for their large seed donation, and the post received a significant amount of engagement. As of this writing, the [post](#) has 938 likes, 214 shares, and an overall reach of 103,600 users. WCIA featured the collection, and the Seed Exchange almost ran out of seeds over the weekend before receiving another large donation. Special thanks to Jordan Kahle for her hard work on this collection. Our community loves the Seed Exchange!



EMBRACE

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

- The Library serves as a polling place during elections. After the recent Consolidated Primary Election, election workers shared that the Library was the most popular Urbana polling location during this election, with over 25% of overall votes cast from the Library.
- The Library participated in larger community celebrations for this year’s Lunar New Year. At Craft Happy Hour, community members made crafts inspired by the new year. Later, the Library hosted PostMark Lunar New Year events for all ages, which included multiple music performances, crafts for kids, and a snack tasting. Altogether, almost 100 community members attended Lunar New Year events at the Library.
- Recently, the Archives concluded its participation in the [POWRR](#) digital preservation program. The yearlong program resulted in the Archives updating tools, adding new cloud storage space for digital material, and beginning streamlined workflows and procedures. Digital materials have been evaluated, and plans for their long-term care are in development. Thank you to Sara Bennett for her work on the project this year!





EMPOWER

We connect people with tools and resources for learning, knowledge exchange, and personal growth that leads to greater fulfillment.

- February's UFLive! Concert featured Afro D and the Global Soundwaters and was attended by 97 community members. In addition to the well-received concert, staff member Carol Inskeep read an Archives [blog post](#) highlighting local African American author and librarian Dr. Miriam Fuller. Dr. Fuller served as the Leal School librarian from 1967-1971, where she worked to expand representation in the library's collection and vigorously promoted the joy of reading to Leal School's students and staff.



- Mary Butzow presented the *St. Joseph Record* newspaper digitization project to 17 community members interested in the histories of community organizations. She shared different types of information found in the paper, especially information related to genealogical research. The digitized papers can be viewed online at the Illinois Digital Newspaper Collection.
- The Astronomy Department from the U of I taught 81 community members about black holes at February's Jump Into Science program. Children and their caregivers loved the black hole demonstration, and some patrons shared that they learned new information about black holes and how they work. Children also made a black hole craft with half Styrofoam balls and paper.
- The Library hosted multiple Valentine-themed events in February. Highlights include a special Project READ social gathering, the start of a new romance book club, and the unveiling of the revamped public quantum network station, which now allows two people to use it simultaneously to play games (or send valentines to each other, as was done at the program). Over 175 community members attended these programs.

Action Item Details & Additional Information

- Thanks to a grant through the Illinois State Library providing statewide access to EBSCO databases, the Databases budget line (80280802-52910) has an excess of funds totaling \$7,000. Staff request approval of the budget amendments listed below:
 - \$7,000 decrease to Databases (80280802-52910)
 - \$3,000 increase to New Collections (80280802-51802-80103)
 - \$3,000 increase to Downloadables (80280802-51811)
 - \$500 increase to Games (80280802-51809)
 - \$500 increase to CDs (80280802-51805)

Communication

Library Newsletters

- The TUFL Times, March: <https://uflil.patronpoint.com/email/preview/157>
- The TUFL Times: Youth Edition, March: <https://uflil.patronpoint.com/email/preview/158>
- Archives Newsletter, March: <https://uflil.patronpoint.com/email/preview/156>

Library News

- February 1, 2025, wcia.com - Urbana Free Library hosting Conversation Café program <https://www.wcia.com/news/champaign-county/urbana-free-library-hosting-conversation-cafe-program/>
- February 2, 2025, wcia.com - Conversation Cafe in Urbana unites people of all ages to learn a new language <https://www.wcia.com/news/champaign-county/conversation-cafe-in-urbana-unites-people-of-all-ages-to-learn-a-new-language/>
- February 3, 2025, pubs.aip.org - Public quantum network: The first node <https://pubs.aip.org/aip/apl/article/126/5/054002/3333903/Public-quantum-network-The-first-node?searchresult=1>
- February 3, 2025, smilepolitely.com - Uncovering Queer Nightlife with Adam Beaty <https://www.smilepolitely.com/culture/uncovering-queer-nightlife-with-adam-beaty/>
- February 5, 2025, chambanamoms.com - Champaign-Urbana Weekend Planner – Season of Love <https://www.chambanamoms.com/2025/02/05/season-of-love-champaign-urbana/>
- February 5, 2025, smilepolitely.com - Building community, mostly offline <https://www.smilepolitely.com/opinion/building-community-mostly-offline/>
- February 19, 2025, chambanamoms.com - Champaign-Urbana Weekend Planner – Staying Warm with Lots to Do <https://www.chambanamoms.com/2025/02/19/staying-warm-champaign-urbana/>
- February 23, 2025, wcia.com - Urbana library helps residents grow gardens with 'Seed Exchange Program' <https://www.wcia.com/news/champaign-county/urbana-library-helps-residents-grow-gardens-with-seed-exchange-program/>
- February 24, 2025, wcia.com - Dive into some new romance books! <https://www.wcia.com/ciliving-tv/dive-into-some-new-romance-books/>
- February 24, 2025, newschannel20.com, Urbana primary sees over 1,000 early voters, more than 50% mail-in ballots returned <https://newschannel20.com/newsletter-daily/urbana-primary-sees-over-1000-early-voters-more-than-50-mail-in-ballots-returned>

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	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	\$ 3,405,816.30
Busey Bank Web account	\$ 107,613.47	\$ 111,788.42	\$ 114,332.89	\$ 117,950.09	\$ 122,400.96	\$ 125,985.42
Total	\$ 3,661,998.16	\$ 3,835,394.63	\$ 3,440,566.76	\$ 4,376,442.71	\$ 3,869,980.23	\$ 3,531,801.72
	January	February	March	April	May	June
Illinois Funds account	0.00					
Busey Bank Cash accounts	\$ 3,597,677.03					
Busey Bank Web account	\$ 130,042.46					
Total	\$ 3,727,719.49	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
**Illinois Funds account has been closed. Money was moved to Busey Cash account.						