



Director's Report

Date: September 4, 2025

To: The Urbana Free Library Board of Trustees

From: Taliah Abdullah, Executive Director

Re: Director's Report for Board Meeting of September 9, 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.

- In collaboration with The News-Gazette, the Archives has started microfilming recent issues of the local newspaper again. This includes starting a process of microfilming a backlog of papers from 2020 to the present. Microfilming the News-Gazette will provide better long-term preservation and access to the newspaper for generations.
- Continuing our partnership with the [iSchool at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign](#), the Library recently welcomed Kathia Perez-Enriquez and Kyle Durango as the newest Archives Apprentices. They will each get experience in all areas of the Archives department before completing a special project in the spring. In addition to Kathia and Kyle, the Archives will also host three U of I practicum students this semester who will work on projects associated with special collections processing, digital preservation, and collection development.



EMBRACE

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

- Between the U of I, USD116, and community events, library staff attended 11 outreach events and spoke with 729 community members. In addition to making library cards, staff received feedback about what attendees already enjoy and what they would like to see at the Library.

Feedback included statements of "The Library is my favorite place to go." "My children love to spend time there." "Thank you for all the work you do for the community."



EMPOWER

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

- *Personalize Your School Supplies* was a drop-in program created for children and families to get excited about preparing for the new school year. Participants could choose from six different projects: origami bookmarks, stamped bookmarks, buttons/pins, keychains, DIY stickers, and the "decoration station" which provided a variety of stickers and washi tape. This was the second year the program was offered, and was attended by 52 participants, ranging from preschool to middle school ages.
- The IDEA Store, a non-profit, creative re-use store, has begun a partnership with the Library's popular monthly Craft Happy, a drop-in crafting program for adults. The IDEA store will bring recycled supplies and craft ideas to some library events. In August, 22 participants made fabric collages using an amazing variety of fabrics, decorative ribbons, threads, and other adornments. The program was a mix of friendly collaboration and calm silence as people worked on projects. These drop-in programs cultivate creativity and community - and now, recycling! One regular attendee shared, "This program is so good for my mental health."
- At *Creating an Ancestor Sketch*, Thomas MacEntee presented a step-by-step approach to documenting ancestors to 58 community members. MacEntee suggested to potential writers, to break writing into smaller pieces rather than attempting to write a whole book all at once. MacEntee highlighted growing interest in the social history of ancestors and demonstrated how AI tools like ChatGPT can assist, and also stressed the need to cite AI-generated content properly. He recommended publishing platforms like MyStories.com and Amazon, and noted the pros and cons of each platform.
- Families from all over the world joined library staff for an End of Summer Reading Sidewalk Chalk Party in Cherry Alley! Forty-five community members, of all ages, enjoyed chasing bubbles, playing a giant game of Connect 4, tasty treats, and different activities with hula hoops. Hula hoop and summer reading are two favorites of Taliah Abdullah, and she joined in the fun to celebrate another summer of reading together.
- The Archives continued a quarterly segment in its monthly newsletter called "What's New in the Archives?" The segment highlights newly available materials, updates to existing projects, and other items of interest. To sign up for the Archives newsletter (or any Library newsletter!), visit <https://urbanafreelibrary.org/about-us/newsletters>.



Action Item Details & Additional Information

In order to accept and order donations towards Adult and Children's books, Library staff are requesting the following budget amendments:

- \$10,000 to Donations/Contributions/Gifts (810 46300)

- \$5,000 to Adult Book Gifts (81080832 51801 82304)
- \$5,000 to Children Book Gifts (81080833 51801 83205)

Communication

Library Newsletters

- September General Newsletter: https://tufl.moosend.com/show_campaign/ab800e22-10b8-440f-b6d2-c470d0dba92b
- September Archives newsletter: https://tufl.moosend.com/show_campaign/0d465851-5a49-4867-9d1c-26005f132723

Library Newsletters

- August 7, 2025 - *news-gazette.com* - Rich Warren | Hidden gems when it comes to free eBooks, audiobooks, videos https://www.news-gazette.com/news/local/science-technology/rich-warren-hidden-gems-when-it-comes-to-free-ebooks-audiobooks-videos/article_e9bd9cc2-9b26-5c92-b350-daeb7e8aa5ae.html
- August 20, 2025 - *Wcia.com* - Discover the Champaign County Historical Archives at the Urbana Free Library <https://www.wcia.com/ciliving-tv/ciliving-stories/ciliving/discover-the-champaign-county-historical-archives-at-the-urbana-free-library/>
- August 24, 2025 - *news-gazette.com* - Rachel Vellenga/review | 'Good People' for mental breaks, mood boosts https://www.news-gazette.com/arts-entertainment/books/rachel-vellenga-review-good-people-for-mental-breaks-mood-boosts/article_e7334208-b715-4711-9bff-b5151bdbaf8c.html
- August 26, 2025 - *ipmnewsroom.org* - New executive director outlines her vision for Urbana Free Library <https://ipmnewsroom.org/new-executive-director-outlines-her-vision-for-urbana-free-library/>
- August 28, 2025 - *wcia.com* - Community Spotlight: Urbana Free Library archives <https://www.wcia.com/community-spotlight/community-spotlight-urbana-free-library-archives/>
- August 30, 2025 - *News-gazette.com* - Inside Out | Fall back in time at the Archives https://www.news-gazette.com/news/local/community-events/inside-out-fall-back-in-time-at-the-archives/article_09929df8-0ea9-4e31-b1d6-e78c267b8a11.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 2025 - June 2026						
	July	August	September	October	November	December
Busey Bank Cash accounts	\$ 3,476,560.39					
Busey Bank Credit Card account	\$ 152,102.48					
Total	\$ 3,628,662.87	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
	January	February	March	April	May	June
Busey Bank Cash accounts						
Busey Bank Credit Card account						
Total	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -