



# The Urbana Free Library

## Director’s Report

**Date:** February 5, 2026

**To:** The Urbana Free Library Board of Trustees

**From:** Taliah Abdullah, Executive Director

**Re:** Director’s Report for Board Meeting of February 10, 2026

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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.

- Pat Cain attended the annual History-Social Science Education Symposium at Illinois State University. In addition to presenting about lesson plans developed for the “Journey to Freedom: Illinois Underground Railroad” exhibit currently on display at the Library, Pat attended sessions focused on the incorporation of local primary sources in classrooms, community history projects involving young adults, and strategies to incorporate local history while also commemorating the US’s 250<sup>th</sup> Anniversary celebrations in 2026.



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

- Craft Happy Hour had 16 participants. They made a craft inspired by India’s tradition of prosperity hens, and the event was a great example of how our programs create community. At least two people had just moved to town. Staff shared information about other adult programs, such as the Puzzling Colors Club, and attendees had multiple conversations about what to do in town and how to make friends as adults.



- The Champaign County Historical Archives hosted an exhibit opening reception to mark the beginning of the traveling exhibit, [Journey to Freedom: Illinois Underground Railroad](#), which was attended by 100 people. The exhibit is coordinated by [Looking for Lincoln](#) and tells the courageous stories of freedom seekers, the multiracial conductors who assisted them, supportive communities along the way, and much more. Library staff partnered with the [Champaign County African American Heritage Trail](#) to present companion exhibits featuring stories of the Underground Railroad from east central Illinois. Remarks were made by Archives Manager, Pat Cain, Looking for Lincoln Executive Director, Sarah Watson, Co-Chair of the Champaign County African American Heritage Trail, Dr. Barbara Suggs-Mason, Coordinator for the Champaign County African American Heritage Trail, Robert White, and The Urbana Free Library Executive Director, Taliah Abdullah. The exhibit will be on view through the end of March, and associated programming will take place in the coming months.
- The library held a Quiet Book Club for adults where they could read in companionable silence with others. Everyone who attended read for the full hour and we got requests to hold the program again. Another person shared that the event helped them get into a book they had been struggling to start.
- Lucinda Lawrence from the local chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution presented on genealogy research techniques and resources, lineage-proof workarounds, and D.A.R. research methods to 40 community members. The presentation covered various approaches for verifying Revolutionary War ancestors, including the use of maps, church records, and military pension records. Lucinda shared her personal research experience proving David Todd's lineage and discussed the DAR's online resources now available to the public.
- This month, the Archives began hosting an Urbana High School senior as part of UHS's Executive Internship program. The program gives UHS seniors an opportunity to get on-the-job experience at community organizations and businesses. The student working in Archives will work with staff to gain an understanding of available resources and services offered at CCHA and the Library, complete research on a local history topic of their choosing to write a blog post, and end the semester by generating a program, campaign, or other initiative to engage young people with CCHA & Library resources and services.
- At an event led by the U of I Astronomy and Aerospace departments, 57 children and caregivers learned about meteorites and man-made technology. The Astronomy Department gave a presentation and brought model rockets and meteorite samples, while the Aerospace Department brought mini rovers and an imitation moon and Mars set up for the rovers to drive on. The event was very hands-on; attendees got to hold the meteorites, navigate the rovers, and use telescopes.

## Action Item Details & Additional Information

- In order to cover current and anticipated legal expenses associated with union negotiations, a transfer between expense budget lines is requested. Staff request approval for the following budget amendment:
  - \$20,000 decrease to Other Contractual Services (80280801 52999)
  - \$20,000 increase to Legal Services (80280801 52101)

## Communication

### Library Newsletters

- TUFL Times, February: [https://tufl.moosend.com/show\\_campaign/f2790a8b-89f4-4c40-aa90-d785ef6b1e3a](https://tufl.moosend.com/show_campaign/f2790a8b-89f4-4c40-aa90-d785ef6b1e3a)
- Archives Newsletter, February: [https://tufl.moosend.com/show\\_campaign/1ff0bf96-b50e-4c4e-bb0f-b00ccf488c9c](https://tufl.moosend.com/show_campaign/1ff0bf96-b50e-4c4e-bb0f-b00ccf488c9c)

### Library News

- January 7, 2026 - *chambanamoms.com* - Champaign-Urbana Weekend Planner – Settling in for Winter <https://www.chambanamoms.com/2026/01/07/champaign-urbana-settling-in-for-winter/>
- January 8, 2026 - *smilepolitely.com* - Get your culture here: January 2026 <https://www.smilepolitely.com/culture/get-your-culture-here-january-2026/>
- January 8, 2026 - *legacy.com* - Jane Williams Obituary <https://www.legacy.com/us/obituaries/news-gazette/name/jane-williams-obituary?id=60531991>
- January 13, 2026 - *mahometdaily.com* - Champaign-Urbana Joins National Network as Dementia-Friendly Community <https://mahometdaily.com/champaign-urbana-joins-national-network-as-dementia-friendly-community/>
- January 14, 2026 - *ipmnewsroom.org* - WILL CALL: What's Happening in Central Illinois Jan. 15 – Jan. 18 <https://ipmnewsroom.org/will-call-whats-happening-in-central-illinois-jan-15-jan-18/>
- January 15, 2026 - *wcia.com* - Journey to Freedom: Illinois' Underground Railroad Exhibit <https://www.wcia.com/ciliving-tv/journey-to-freedom-illinois-underground-railroad-at-urbana-free-library/>
- January 16, 2026 - *ipmnewsroom.org* - New exhibit showcases Illinois' role with the Underground Railroad <https://ipmnewsroom.org/97782-2/>
- January 19, 2026 - *citizenportal.ai* - Trustee presentation: copyright, fair use and Public Domain Day highlighted implications for libraries <https://citizenportal.ai/articles/7301195/illinois/champaign-county/urbana/trustee-presentation-copyright-fair-use-and-public-domain-day-highlighted-implications-for-libraries>

# Budget Information

- Budget and FY26 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
<b>Busey Bank Cash accounts</b>	\$ 3,476,560.39	\$ 3,188,594.97	\$ 4,675,169.94	\$ 4,116,589.59	\$ 3,568,902.80	\$ 3,371,285.16
<b>Busey Bank Credit Card account</b>	\$ 152,102.48	\$ 155,474.35	\$ 160,216.59	\$ 163,753.82	\$ 168,142.05	\$ 170,486.63
<b>Total</b>	\$ 3,628,662.87	\$ 3,344,069.32	\$ 4,835,386.53	\$ 4,280,343.41	\$ 3,737,044.85	\$ 3,541,771.79