



**The
Urbana
Free
Library**

Director’s Report

Date: March 3, 2026

To: The Urbana Free Library Board of Trustees


From: Taliah Abdullah, Executive Director

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



- Working with 40 North, the University’s Asian American Cultural Center, the Urbana Park District, and the Library held a Lunar New Year celebration. Over 130 community members made and decorated red envelopes, created a horse craft, played board games from China and Korea, and watched dance performances. In addition to decorations and sharing information about Lunar New Year celebrations across cultures, a big attraction was a 20-foot-long dragon costume on loan from the Asian American Cultural Center.
- It was a pleasure to partner with Good Judy's Espresso and Bagel Bar and local drag artists for a Drag'ntines Day event, a Valentine's themed drag story time. This was the first community event hosted at Good Judy's since their opening just over a year ago, and they generously donated a portion of the day's proceeds to the Library. Programming Specialist Olivia Coleman contributed by providing read-aloud books for the drag performers and hosting a craft table where attendees could make bookmarks and Valentine's cards. Read-alouds were only a part of the performance; the artists also performed musical numbers, lead the audience in games, and concluded the afternoon with a dance party. It was a very joyful event, well-attended by families with babies through elementary aged children, and

all were able to find something to engage them as they celebrated love and the Valentine season.

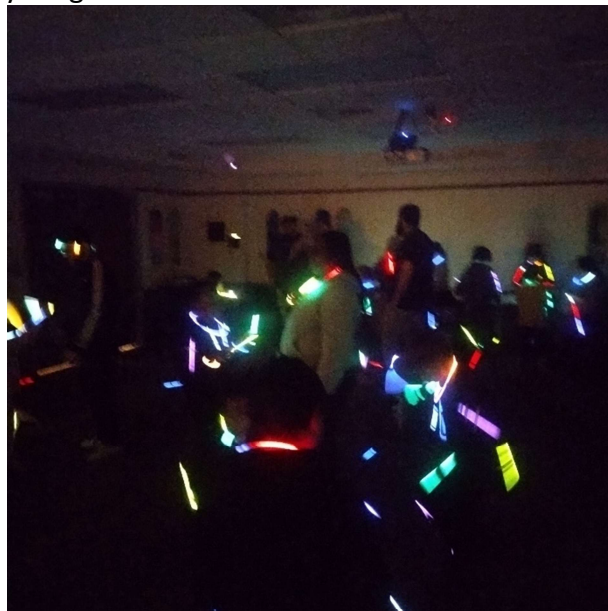
- The Young Artist’s Studio: Painting Light with Kinsey Fitzgerald – Hope is a Verb in Monet’s Water Lilies appealed to over 60 attendees as families with elementary-age students gathered to learn about painting with color, light, and imagination in the style of Monet and contemporary artists like Cy Gavin to create hope in times of darkness. Artist Kinsey Fitzgerald led the participants in a multiple step process. First crayon and tempera paint sticks were used to draw on a full-size poster board. Then parts of the drawings were protected with plastic and tape while the posterboard was covered with tempera paint. When the paint dried, the tape and plastic were removed to reveal surprising creations. After the paint dried, chalk pastels could be used to create a final layer of interest.



EMBRACE

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

- Olivia Coleman and Librarian Rachel Vellenga welcomed 140 attendees to the first ever Glow Stick Dance Party. This event was so popular that the Children’s area was full beforehand and attendees were waiting with anticipation before the doors officially opened. Adults glow sticked their children, the lights were dimmed, and all ages danced the time away. A young attendee said this event tied with The Bat Festival for the



coolest program!

- This school year, Olivia has been running a weekly SPLASH (Students Playing and Learning After School Hours) class. Second through fifth grades students participate in sessions focused on art and literacy, where each week they listen to a different book read aloud and then create artwork based off of it. Examples of past projects have included decorating sugar skull masks made from paper plates after reading a biography

about the artist who popularized them, making coffee filter snowflakes based on facts and photographs from a nonfiction book about snowflake formation, and drawing representations of sounds and having classmates guess the sounds they drew, inspired by a wordless picture book with silly illustrations of different sounds that the students helped to read aloud. Olivia has the fun challenge to find different books which lend themselves well to art projects that encourage students to think creatively and freely express their ideas.



EMPOWER

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

- Gerald and Kate McWorter gave a fascinating lecture on the history of New Philadelphia, the first town platted by a freed Black person, Frank McWorter. Gerald is a descendent of Frank and told the story of Frank and his wife Lucy, how they asserted their freedom, fought to free others, and created a fully integrated community. They include information on the women of the family, how many of Frank and Lucy's descendants were and are still history keepers, making sure this story continues to be told.
- Glen Young returned to share an engaging and insightful presentation on Creating a Family History Narrative. His goal was to demonstrate how genealogical records can be used as evidence rather than endpoints, encouraging us to move beyond basic names, dates, and documents to gain a deeper understanding of how our relatives lived, the challenges they encountered, and the factors that shaped their lives. Glen outlined the steps he followed to develop a detailed, context-rich narrative, highlighting the resources he consulted, the stories he uncovered, and the historical background that informed his work. His presentation was highly interactive, and the audience of 34 responded enthusiastically, thoroughly enjoying both the content and the lively discussion.
- Curiosity, Connection, and Celebration was the theme of the Library's Open House that celebrated the recent renovation and more. People were invited to explore everything the Library has to offer, chat with new Executive Director, and engage in activities on a passport scavenger hunt. Activity stations included: the Seed Exchange; puzzles and coloring; resource tables about programs, collections, and the Foundations and Friends, Archives and their Underground Railroad exhibit, and a makerspace and story time. Attendees also enjoyed a fantastic performance by the Freedom Coalition. Their mission to bring love, joy, peace and unity through music and positive energy was on full display. Over 250 people came to event, and the renovated areas of the Library received generous compliments.
- Champaign County Health Care Consumers were available on two separate occasions in the 2nd Floor Adult Computer Lab to connect Library patrons with help and resources for navigating health care, including Medicare and Medicaid.



- Check out the segment from The Archives Department titled "What's New in the Archives?" The "What's New" segment can be found quarterly in the Archives' monthly newsletter, and highlights newly available materials, updates to existing projects, and other items that are of interest. To sign up for the Archives newsletter (or any of the Library's newsletter), visit <https://urbanafreelibrary.org/about-us/newsletters>.

Action Item Details & Additional Information

- It's time to review and update both the Archives' and the Library's Collection Management policies, and also the Emergency Closings Policy, which are included for your review this month. Changes to the Emergency Closings Policy are intended to clarify the Library's longstanding practice. Staff recommend approving these policies.
- The City partners with the Library for Young Artist's Studio programs provides funding for them. This fiscal year, they are providing \$400. Staff request approval of the following budget changes:
 - \$400 increase in revenue to Donations/Contributions/Gifts (802 46300)
 - \$400 increase in expenses to Children's Programming (80280809 51812 80103)
- Staff request approval of the budget changes listed below to move funds from Library Resale Purchases, which are not currently being used, to increase marketing and advertising funds for the rest of the fiscal year.
 - \$908.04 decrease to Library Resale Purchases 80280851 51810
 - \$908.04 increase to Adv/Mkting/Public Education 80280809 52909
- Staff request approval of the budget changes listed below to move funds back to the Facilities wage line from their holding place in Patron Services to allow hiring of additional janitorial staff to support current Facilities staff in covering available hours and tasks:
 - \$8,472.03 decrease to (Salary – Regular Employees) (80280807-50110)
 - \$8,472.03 increase to (Salary – Regular Employees) (80280805-50110)

The Library discontinued Hoopla service two months ago and reallocated the Hoopla budget to Overdrive/Libby. Below is the monetary impact on Overdrive/Libby:

- Previous monthly spending limit: \$2850
- New monthly spending limit: \$6740

With the additional budget, the Library will be able to purchase 120 Advantage items per month going forward if prices do not increase. Advantage items are available only to Urbana Free Library (UFL) patrons, and the Collections Librarian orders them based on the number of UFL holds on Overdrive items.

Here is a breakdown of how Overdrive circulation has been impacted:

December 2025 Overdrive (with Hoopla):

eBooks: 4,301 circs / 68,254 in collection

Audiobooks: 5,175 circs / 38,382 in collection

Magazines: 2,400 circs / 6,559 titles in collection

Total: 11,876

December 2025 Hoopla:

eBooks: 579 circs

Audiobooks: 1230 circs

Music: 75 circs

Movies / TV: 156 circs

Total: 2040

Blocks: 1007

January Overdrive (without Hoopla):

eBooks: 4,698 circs / 68,619 in collection

Audiobooks: 6,306 circs / 38,721 in collection

Magazines: 2,874 circs / 6,580 titles in collection

Total: 13,878

Kanopy: 2008 plays

Comics Plus: 543 checkouts

February Overdrive:

eBooks: 4,136 circs / 68,776 in collection

Audiobooks: 5,447 circs / 38,964 in collection

Magazines: 2,567 circs / 6,548 titles in collection

Total: 12,150

Kanopy: 1842 plays

Comics Plus: 220 checkouts; 161 users

Overdrive's circulation increased by 2,002 items in January and 274 in February. Overall, TUFL patrons are moving through hold queues in Overdrive faster as we increase the percentage of Advantage titles available for TUFL patrons. We will continue to share the downloadable stats in future board packets.

Communication

Library Newsletters

- TUFL Times, March: https://tufl.moosend.com/show_campaign/07b37bc3-3125-4828-bf4f-4915f0321ff7
- Archives Newsletter, March: https://tufl.moosend.com/show_campaign/fba689bf-7fcb-422e-967c-a385050880c6

Library News

- **February 8, 2026** - *news-gazette.com* - Beyond the Boardroom: Urbana Free Library's Taliah Abdullah https://www.news-gazette.com/news/local/people/beyond-the-boardroom-urbana-free-libraris-taliah-abdullah/article_bde59ea6-8018-4e63-a924-c0926c1a2072.html
- **February 8, 2026** - *news-gazette.com* - Rachel Vellenga/review | 'You Are Here' a romance that, unlike many others, feels authentic https://www.news-gazette.com/arts-entertainment/books/rachel-vellenga-review-you-are-here-a-romance-that-unlike-many-others-feels-authentic/article_579277cb-7bdb-4cd1-bc2e-1889ed6eb463.html
- **February 9, 2026** - *citizenportal.ai* - Urbana Free Library board shifts \$20,000 in FY26 for union-related legal expenses <https://citizenportal.ai/articles/7422324/urbana-free-library-board-shifts-20000-in-fy26-for-union-related-legal-expenses>
- **February 12, 2026** - *dailyillini.com* - Local teen programs bring engagement, creativity https://dailyillini.com/life_and_culture-stories/around-town/2026/02/12/local-teen-programs-bring-engagement-creativity/
- **February 16, 2026** - *dailyillini.com* - Urbana Free Library reveals history close to home https://dailyillini.com/life_and_culture-stories/culture-diversity/2026/02/16/urbana-free-library-history/
- **February 18, 2026** - *ipmnewsroom.org* - WILL CALL: What's Happening in Central Illinois Feb. 19 – Feb. 22 <https://ipmnewsroom.org/will-call-whats-happening-in-central-illinois-feb-19-feb-22/>
- **February 25, 2026** - *chambanamoms.com* - 50+ Things To Do Over Spring Break in Champaign-Urbana <https://www.chambanamoms.com/2026/02/25/fifty-things-to-do-spring-break-champaign-urbana/>
- **February 25, 2026** - *chambanamoms.com* - Champaign-Urbana Weekend Planner – Welcome, March <https://www.chambanamoms.com/2026/02/25/champaign-urbana-welcome-march/>

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
Busey Bank Cash accounts	\$ 3,476,560.39	\$ 3,188,594.97	\$ 4,675,169.94	\$ 4,116,589.59	\$ 3,568,902.80	\$ 3,371,285.16
Busey Bank Credit Card account	\$ 152,102.48	\$ 155,474.35	\$ 160,216.59	\$ 163,753.82	\$ 168,142.05	\$ 170,486.63
Total	\$ 3,628,662.87	\$ 3,344,069.32	\$ 4,835,386.53	\$ 4,280,343.41	\$ 3,737,044.85	\$ 3,541,771.79
	January	February	March	April	May	June
Busey Bank Cash accounts	\$ 2,992,594.37					
Busey Bank Credit Card account	\$ 173,685.86					
Total	\$ 3,166,280.23	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -