

The Seattle Public Library
Board of Trustees Meeting
12:00 p.m. Thursday, April 25, 2024

Washington Mutual Foundation Meeting Room 1, Level 4
1000 Fourth Ave., Seattle, WA 98104

Remote Listen Line:

Dial: 213-282-4570 / Phone conference ID: 275 527 812#

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Meeting ID: 289 200 523 386 / Passcode: MuyV6v

-To submit public comment in writing, email: library.board@spl.org.

-To provide public comment in person at the Central Library, sign up in the meeting room.

-To provide public comment remotely, join meeting with link above and enter your full name in Q&A.

Agenda

A. CALL TO ORDER

B. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

C. PUBLIC COMMENT

D. CONSENT

1. Minutes of March 28, 2024 Regular Library Board Meeting
2. March 2024 Finance Report

E. CHIEF LIBRARIAN REPORT

1. Chief Librarian Report
2. System Report
 - a. 2024 Summer of Learning: Amy Twito, Youth and Family Learning Services Informal Learning Program Manager

F. OLD BUSINESS

1. 2023 Annual Levy Report

G. NEW BUSINESS

1. Strategic Plan Update
2. Food and Beverages in the Library Administrative Procedure Update
3. Union Report
4. Library Foundation and Friends of the Library Updates
5. Updates from Library Board Members

H. EXECUTIVE SESSION

I. ADJOURN

J. NEXT LIBRARY BOARD MEETING: May 30, 2024

(For more information, call Laura Gentry, head of the Communications Office, at 206-915-9028.)

Unapproved Board Minutes

Board of Trustees Meeting

The Seattle Public Library

March 28, 2024

CALL TO ORDER

The regular meeting of The Seattle Public Library (SPL) Board of Trustees was held on March 28, 2024. Library Board President Tali Hairston called the meeting to order at 12:04 p.m. Vice President Yazmin Mehdi and trustees Carmen Bendixen and Jay Reich were in attendance. Trustee Ron Chew was unable to attend. The meeting was conducted with a remote attendance option via video conference.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

It was moved and seconded to approve the agenda as published; the motion carried unanimously.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Public comment was accepted via email, in person at the Central Library, and online in the remote meeting. There were no public comments.

CONSENT

It was moved and seconded to approve the consent agenda as published; the motion carried unanimously.

CHIEF LIBRARIAN REPORT

Chief Librarian Report

Executive Director and Chief Librarian Tom Fay introduced new Library Programs and Services Director Kai Tang. Ms. Tang said she is excited to be at the Library. She said she most recently came from Richland Library in Columbia, SC, and before that Kent District Library in Michigan. She said she was a small business owner before moving to libraries, and is very focused on people. She said libraries are for everyone and are places to connect. She said she loves how community-focused SPL is. Ms. Tang said she is getting to know her colleagues who are a fabulous team, and she enjoyed attending All Staff Day. She said she wants to focus on organizational development and see where she can bring value to the Library and community. Library Board Trustee Jay Reich welcomed Ms. Tang. Library Board Vice President Yazmin Mehdi also welcomed Ms. Tang and asked what drew her to Seattle. Ms. Tang said she enjoys new experiences, is a lifelong learner, and wants to meet different people to learn different things and see how to make things better. She said different experiences are valuable because diversity is a strength, whether that be inherent or acquired. She said she doesn't know anyone in Seattle outside of new coworkers, so this is a challenge and opportunity; and being from Michigan, she is comfortable with the water and weather.

Mr. Fay said the Library had an incredible All Staff Day the day before. He said the All Staff Day Committee outdid themselves with a jam packed day of sessions. He said Friends and Foundation members attended to support, Union President Anne Cisney gave a speech, and several team members had a video presentation that was very well done. He said Foundation Executive Director Jonna Ward and Foundation Board President Sarah Stanley gave a talk about the Foundation in which Ms. Ward spoke about her impending departure and transition to the Library Support Network. He said he thanked Ms. Ward in his presentation, and staff were pleased the day wrapped up on time. Mr. Fay said he took part in bits and pieces of each session to get a flavor for all that was going on. He said an animal therapy group was a very popular area with a line of staff waiting to

meet the dogs and other creatures. Mr. Fay thanked all of the staff who put a great deal of work into making the day successful and enjoyable.

Mr. Fay said he attended the Washington Library Association conference in Spokane, where it was good to see colleagues and their work and presentations. He said the Northeast Branch reopened on March 4, after being closed since November 2023 to replace the HVAC systems which have been converted from gas to electric. He said the Library's Social Services Team held a resource fair at the Central Library on March 5 that included food, portrait drawing, haircuts, foot care, and free books from the Friends, and was a great opportunity for patrons to learn about the team and available resources. Mr. Fay said he and Institutional and Strategic Advancement Director Rick Sheridan gave a Library 101 briefing to the City Council's Library, Education and Neighborhoods Committee on March 14; he said councilmembers shared their personal stories and appreciation for the Library.

Mr. Fay said the Library recently changed the maximum number of holds allowed on digital books from 25 to 10. He said patrons were alerted, and some have contacted the Library, but for the most part people have understood the Library's rationale for the change. He said the change will be continued for some time until the Library has additional resources or other efficiencies. Mr. Fay said e-books are one of the most expensive materials the Library buys, and e-audio-books are even more expensive. He said as patrons transition more to digital materials, it puts a strain on Library resources. Library Board President Tali Hairston asked, as libraries adjust to a changing marketplace around e-books, whether Mr. Fay foresees any changes to the macro level of e-book pricing and availability that will transform how much libraries need to allocate to e-book acquisition.

Mr. Fay said it is a very complicated environment. He said there is an effort in Washington and other states to consider legislation that may help. He said libraries have concerns from a fair use standpoint that these materials are treated differently than other copyrighted materials, while publishers believe that library actions could cut into their business. Mr. Fay said publishers hold this view even though libraries are their best advertisement for authors and titles that may not get a lot of exposure. He said any state legislation that comes out will move to the courts to make decisions, so there will not be immediate assistance, even from legislation. He said the Library needs to look at efficiencies, setting reasonable expectations, and how to increase the materials budget. He said the Library Foundation has helped tremendously over the years. He said SPL has not seen an increase in the General Funds for at least eight years as Seattle's population has grown significantly. He said one thing that will be seen in the Strategic Plan is to increase the collections budget by at least 25% to recognize the population growth. He said there are new technologies and formats with a higher cost than traditional books, so the effort will need to be multi-pronged, and legislative actions will take time. He said there will be additional discussions with publishers and authors toward something that is easier for libraries to maintain and sustain over time.

Ms. Mehdi asked if there is an effort where public libraries band together to negotiate with publishers on the costs. Mr. Fay said there have been a number of attempts over the years which have not been overly successful. He said there are now other players in the market beyond OverDrive, which is the largest currently in use. He said the Palace Project, which comes out of Lyricis, had a lot of discussion with librarians as well as publishers, independent publishers, and authors, and they are looking at things like how to get access to Amazon and Audible titles. He said there are different pricing formats in the discussions with libraries and with publishers. He said one of the most difficult things for selection librarians to navigate is the multiple different ways that materials are priced, depending on the publisher. He said the work is time-consuming, particularly because to keep an e-collection, many of the materials need to be re-bought after two years. He said some may be bought in perpetuity, but most have to be re-subscribed to after a period, making it very difficult to create a full collection, which can be done more easily with print materials which can be planned, kept, and evaluated for retention based on use. Mr. Fay said it is difficult to create depth in an e-collection

because of the re-subscribing requirement.

Ms. Mehdi said the topic seems like a good one for the Public Library Association (PLA) or Urban Libraries Commission (ULC) to take on to advise public libraries. She asked about e-audiobooks being more expensive than e-books and said she would like to see data comparing use of print books, e-books, and e-audiobooks. Ms. Mehdi said she had heard that if a patron checks out and downloads an e-book and doesn't use the internet while the book is checked out, the person can keep the book for an extended period of time; and she asked whether that might increase the Library's costs. Mr. Fay said the Library will look into that. He said use of e-audiobooks is rising considerably. He said ULC is focused on the topic of e-materials costs, which is a nationwide issue. He said it is a topic at the ULC director level, in their discussion groups, and also their advocacy and lobbying teams. Mr. Fay said these issues need coordination at a national level and are why he supports ULC and the Library Support Network where Ms. Ward is going. He said a fractional way of addressing issues hasn't been a success, and it will take everyone working together at a national level to make inroads.

Mr. Fay said staff reports in the meeting packet contain great information on foot traffic at SPL. He thanked Data Librarian David Christensen and Levy Administrator Jan Oscherwitz who have been doing great work with data which helps the Library make solid decisions. Mr. Fay said there were also good reports in the packet from the Public Services regions as well as Human Resources. Ms. Mehdi said she appreciates the level and detail of data presented. She asked if the Library should consider adding programs in some of the lower traffic branches, as the data shows that foot traffic increases with increased programming. She asked if lower foot traffic branches are underused, and if so, what that means for their future. Mr. Fay said in some cases, programming is done out in the community, but a benefit to having libraries in neighborhoods is having resources available. He said programming does make a difference in numbers, and it also exposes people to the fuller service of the Library, particularly those who may come from a different culture and not be aware of what resources exist at a library. Mr. Fay said the Strategic Plan will contain a piece about increasing the Library's ability to do programming inside the libraries and outside in the community, which means having the staff and resources to make that happen. He said the Library will assess its needs and what skillsets are needed from a diverse workforce that does programming in the community.

Ms. Mehdi said this discussion raises the question of what a library is, and whether it requires four walls and a roof. Mr. Fay said this work does not, and part of it is taking a human-centered design approach to determine the biggest community needs, whether that is books or space for programming and community. He said the needs of the community have to be prioritized. He said there are places like the South Park Branch with no room for programs, yet the community knows the Library will do programs in the center of that space, and that is acceptable and an expectation for that community. He said as the Library looks at how to redesign spaces in the future, it will need input into what the people want. Ms. Mehdi said the South Park neighborhood is cut off from other areas by the layout of roads and bridges, so it is not a neighborhood that can be served from outside; she said there are other neighborhoods from which multiple libraries can be accessed more easily. Mr. Fay agreed.

Mr. Hairston said he appreciated the Human Resources report. He said the New Hire Playbook for onboarding sounds great. He said SPL is not just about books, but is also about the people who steward the work and support the communities they serve. He said staff wellness is critical. Mr. Hairston said a New Hire Playbook and other training that provides stability and well-being is a big part of what the Library Board cares about. He thanked Human Resources Director Brian Sharkey and the HR team for their work. Mr. Fay said the Strategic Plan talks about the sense of belonging being one of the transformational states the Library wants to see through its impact. He said the Library can't create a sense of belonging in the community if its staff don't feel like they belong or that their work is valued. He said the Library wants to do more to foster a sense of belonging and wants to make sure there are supports for staff who do hard work with the public each day.

Systems Reports

Seattle Reads 2024

Mr. Fay introduced Literature and Humanities Program Manager Stesha Brandon who said she was excited to share that the 2024 Seattle Reads selection is *Parable of the Sower*, by legendary science fiction author Octavia Butler. Ms. Brandon said this is the first time Seattle Reads has chosen a work of science fiction, the first time choosing an author who is no longer living, and the second time choosing an author with Seattle area ties. She said the book was written in 1993, and the story opens in the year 2024, giving readers an opportunity to consider how the future world in the book compares to our present day reality. Ms. Brandon said in the book, global climate change and economic crisis have led to social chaos. She said the story is set initially in California, which has become very dangerous with pervasive water shortages and desperate people who are doing anything they can to survive. She said the protagonist, Lauren Olamina, is initially sheltered from this chaos in a compound, and believes she suffers from hyper empathy, which is a debilitating sensitivity to the feelings of others. She said as the book progresses, Lauren sees that imminent disasters threaten her small community and fights to make her voice heard. She said what begins as a fight for survival leads to the birth of a new faith called Earthseed and a startling vision of human destiny.

Ms. Brandon said the themes of this year's program include a broad look at Butler's work and Afrofuturism, and her influence as a seminal author in terms of Afrofuturism and science fiction, climate change and environmental justice, and community building and vision. Ms. Brandon said the themes are broad, with a lot of nuance and room to explore within. She said Octavia Butler, often referred to as the grand dame of science fiction, authored several award winning novels, of which *Parable of the Sower* and *Parable of the Talents* are both very well known. She said Ms. Butler was the recipient of a MacArthur Genius grant and a number of other literary awards. She said Ms. Butler moved to Seattle in 1999 and passed away in 2006, while living in Lake Forest Park. Ms. Brandon said the City of Literature's literary map of Seattle features a spot for Ms. Butler at the Royal Palm Thai restaurant on 65th and Roosevelt because that was her favorite Thai restaurant.

Ms. Brandon said the program is working with community liaison Kristina Clark, owner of Loving Room Diaspora Books and Salon. She said she and Ms. Clark convened two community listening sessions at the end of 2023 and have done additional community listening in 2024 to help inform the programming. Ms. Brandon said programming this year is unusual because the author is no longer living. She said there is a unique opportunity to create community-led programming, and the Library is hosting programs in a dispersed model, over the course of several months, throughout the city. Ms. Brandon said details are still being finalized, but some of the highlights will include seven different opportunities to discuss the book, facilitated by librarians or community facilitators, and will include the low vision book group and a Spanish language book group. She said there will be three panel discussions that will include optimism and Afrofuturism, how that intersects with technology and STEM learning, and Ms. Butler's influence on queer writers and queer literature. She said Seattle Reads is working with Sistah Scifi, a Black-owned online science fiction bookstore, to curate five digital programs in June and July with Black speculative authors who are writing today. She said there will be three workshops as part of the Genius Conference being hosted by Langston and the African American Writers Alliance presented by Dante Felder of South End Stories, poet Jourdan Imani Keith, and a workshop with Reagan Jackson on writing yourself into the page. Ms. Brandon said the program is also involved in a partnership with the artist behind Dream Temple for Octavia, an installation at the King Street Station. She said an interdisciplinary celebration of Ms. Butler on her birthday, June 22nd, will be at Langston. She said there will be a lot happening, and the best thing is that most of the program ideas were generated by and are being led by community, so there is very deep community engagement from many community partner organizations.

Ms. Brandon said the program will have uncatalogued copies for readers to pick up, and is setting aside about a quarter of them for prioritized audiences which will be distributed through partners at

community centers and by two specific book groups. She said SHARE / WHEEL and the Southeast Seattle Senior Center also want to do book groups. Ms. Brandon said there are paperback print books and 500 copies of the graphic novel adaptation. Ms. Mehdi said she would love to get the full list of programs and dates and gave kudos for a very creative program. Ms. Mehdi thanked Ms. Brandon for hosting a program with author Susan Lieu the week prior. Mr. Reich asked how and why the graphic novel was developed. Ms. Brandon said the graphic novel is a fun, quick way to engage with the book and has been very popular. She said the graphic novel is a fairly comprehensive adaptation of the book. She said Ms. Butler's straight forward, laconic writing lends itself to a graphic adaptation. She said she is talking with the agent of the artists who did the artwork about the possibility of doing a digital event. She said if the budget allows, it would be a program people would be interested in. She said the bulk of this year's budget is being invested back into community-led programming which is exciting and is guiding the decision-making and negotiations.

Ms. Brandon said the Library strives to have books available in every format, including print, audio, e-book, and large print when it is available. She said they like to have the paperback to be as inclusive as possible. She said a Spanish language book group reached out, and the Library was able to get some Spanish language books. Mr. Fay thanked Ms. Brandon. He said experiencing the book any format is reading and is an important part of what the Library does, and is why the Library offers so many different formats.

NEW BUSINESS

2022-2023 Library Race and Social Justice Initiative Report

Mr. Fay said he and Head of Communications Laura Gentry gave a presentation in September to the City Council on the Library's RSJI efforts in 2022 and 2023. Ms. Gentry said the Library formally adopted a new statement on equity, race, and social justice in May 2023, which is guiding the work of the organization. She said the statement commits SPL staff and administration to identify and remove barriers to access for Library programs and services, particularly those barriers that result from racial, social or economic oppression. She said while the Board adopted a policy on this work in 2018, it was important for the Library to make a public statement about these commitments for transparency and accountability. She said the statement, priorities for equity work, and examples of how it has been put into practice in the Library's work can be found on the Library's web page at www.spl.org/equity. She said the page will be updated annually with examples of work in which staff reflect upon service delivery to ensure that programs and services are accessible and truly representative of community identity and need. Ms. Gentry said SPL has also signed on to ULC's Statement on Race and Social Justice, as well as their Declaration of Democracy Statement, which supports and the preservation and protection of democracy in our communities.

Mr. Fay said the Library has undertaken a collection diversity audit to ensure that SPL's collections reflect the richness and diversity of the full human experience. He said the Library has worked with three primary book vendors on the audit: Ingram, Baker and Taylor, and OverDrive which provides e-books and e-audiobooks. He said all vendors reported that SPL ranked among the top for diversity of collections, and Ingram noted that SPL ranks in the top 10% of libraries in North America. Mr. Fay said titles were reviewed, and books by and about BIPOC and queer people were added. He said, thanks to selection staff work and funding from the 2019 levy, more than 1,500 titles and nearly 4,700 copies have been added to SPL's print and digital collections to help amplify voices of historically marginalized and underrepresented groups in the community and people whose voices are currently being silenced by book bans nationwide.

Ms. Gentry said in 2022, the Library also conducted an equity analysis of the Begin With Books early learning program that has been promoting literacy and early learning in Seattle for more than 30 years. She said the program offers book kits that include board books, a music CD, a resource book, and an activity card that are great teaching resources for parents and caregivers. She said a

decline in circulation of these materials has brought a desire by SPL staff to make them more visible. She said the Library's Early Learning program manager worked with a consulting partner on an external analysis to determine impact, identify gaps in service, and begin to reimagine the program. She said the analysis found the biggest gaps in service were to disadvantaged and marginalized communities, including newer immigrants, English language learners, families experiencing poverty or homelessness, and families with children who have disabilities or special needs. She said study findings included recommendations for addressing gaps in service including: increasing the diversity of materials to ensure they're inclusive and culturally appropriate; removing barriers to access related to lost item fees, multi-language support, and transportation; engaging the community to identify needs for the program; and prioritizing community access and promotion where it can have the most impact. She said the Library hopes to convene a work group this year to determine how to best apply these recommendations to evolve the program and better serve Seattle families.

Mr. Fay said there was an internal analysis conducted on the current state of digital equity in Seattle and the Library's role in supporting and increasing digital inclusion. He said the resulting report is the work of a cross-divisional Library workgroup formed in 2022. He said a 2018 City of Seattle Technology Access and Adoption Study found that people who live in poverty are five times more likely not to have Internet access; people with disabilities are three times more likely; and people of color, older adults, and people whose primary language is not English are two times more likely not to have Internet access. He said SPL staff analyzed the City's report, along with hundreds of comments about digital inclusion from multiple community outreach and listening initiatives. He said the workgroup used a gap analysis approach for the report, framed by components of digital inclusion as outlined by the national Digital Inclusion Alliance, and the report provides a number of recommendations to help address questions of opportunity, community relationship, and the role of the library in increasing digital inclusion in the community. He said the Library looks forward to evaluating the recommendations in 2024 and building a multi-year implementation plan for this work. Mr. Fay said one concern around digital equity and inclusion is artificial intelligence (AI) and a widening of the digital divide. He said these are some of the things the Library is thinking about in its strategic planning in terms of advancing its technologies, both within the Library as well as in providing technologies to its communities that may not have access. Mr. Fay said 2024 RSJI work plans include: strategic planning; a new framework for Early Learning/ Youth and Family Services; a new digital equity plan; a Library app; revised Rules of Conduct; and staff-facilitated caucusing.

Mr. Reich asked if AI and the widening digital gap are related or separate problems, and whether there is evidence that the digital gap is widening. Mr. Fay said the concern is that the gap will widen. He said AI is built into many things people do every day, and to get the best results one has to understand how it is biased. He said library directors across the country see a role for libraries to play in assisting patrons to get information that is not faulty or biased. Mr. Reich said his colleagues in the community college system use AI as a tool for more effective and efficient communication, so he could imagine a widening of the gap for those who do not have a sophisticated understanding or experience with it. Mr. Fay said the Library's Technology Officer Charles Wesley is also looking at AI from a policy standpoint. He said policy decisions will come to the Board because AI has a lot of impacts on the Library, especially around public disclosure. He said there are many issues around AI the communities will need to know as it becomes more prevalent in daily life.

2023 Year End Levy Report

Levy Administrator Jan Oscherwitz said the Library Board reviews and approves the quarterly Levy Reports which document levy spending and accomplishments and are posted on the SPL website. She said each year the fourth quarter report is combined with an annual report that is submitted to the mayor and City Council by April 15. She said the Library then presents the report to its City Council committee. Ms. Oscherwitz said the Library Board trustees received a red-lined version of the report, via email, earlier in the day, that contains two corrections that were made after the meeting packet

was distributed. She said the corrections are found on pages 11 and 12 in the Collection section of the report. She said the Board would be asked to approve the corrected version, and the revised version will be included in next month's meeting packet for the record.

Ms. Oscherwitz shared information contained in the "Fourth Quarter and Annual 2023 Levy Report" memo and "2023 Annual Levy Report" found in the meeting packet. She said the first change made to the report was on page 11, where the last sentence of the second paragraph now reads, "In 2023, over 7,500 young people, representing every U.S. state and territory, signed up for a Books Unbanned card through the Library and nearly 85,000 digital items were checked out." Ms. Oscherwitz continued to share information contained in the written report. She said the second change to the report appears on page 12. She said under the heading "Building physical collections, adding language, and making holds available 24/7," a date had been corrected, and the second sentence now reads, "More than 124,000 people checked out physical Library materials in 2023, compared to about 113,000 in 2022...". Ms. Oscherwitz continued to share detailed information contained in the written memo and report.

Mr. Reich said he was blown away by the quality of the document, particularly appreciating the format that explains what was promised and delivered. He said the reporting sets up the Library well moving into the next levy, and should inform the team in how they might want to organize the next levy so that the Library can respond in such a responsive way. He said the report is a beautifully written, well-told story. Mr. Hairston and Ms. Mehdi agreed. Ms. Oscherwitz said there is a great team working on it, and thanked Digital Communications Strategist Elisa Murray in particular.

It was moved and seconded to approve the 2023 Annual Levy Report with changes as noted; the motion carried unanimously.

2023 Seattle Public Library Foundation Grant Award Summary Report

Institutional and Strategic Advancement Director Rick Sheridan said the 2023 Seattle Public Library Foundation Grant Award Summary Report contained in the meeting packet was also sent to The Seattle Public Library Foundation Board of Directors. He said he recently gave the same presentation to the Foundation Board to inform them about how the Library utilized their very generous grants in 2023. Mr. Sheridan said in 2023, the Library expended nearly 100% of the Foundation's \$5.132 million grant award, leaving only \$8,230 unspent -- an almost unheard of level of utilization. He said the success in spending was due to the emphasis Mr. Fay placed on ensuring that the Library is adequately using resources provided by the Foundation, and is a reflection of the trust-based philanthropy model the Foundation has adopted, allowing SPL to address potential underspends by pivoting to invest in another associated area. He said it is also due to tight coordination between the finance teams at the Library and the Foundation.

Mr. Sheridan shared a table on the first page of the report showing spending by funding priority. He said the Library overspent in the area of Providing Books and Materials, having purchased the remainder of The Seattle Post-Intelligencer digital archives for the years of 1986-present, as well as investing in Special Collections by purchasing a processing device to support their work. He said the category of Hours and Access was 90% spent, while Literacy and Early Learning was 85% spent, and Technology and Online Services funds were 96% spent. Mr. Sheridan said areas of underspend were primarily due to a lower cost of providing virtual programming as the Library adopts more hybrid delivery of programs and services, as well as the post-pandemic challenge of finding partners and providers for specialized services such as Language Story Times. Mr. Sheridan said that more than \$1 million of the grant funding goes to support key Library positions including a Mobile Services Librarian, Early Learning Program Manager, Youth Program Manager, Older Adult Program Manager, Expanded LEAP Lab staffing, Literature and Humanities Program Manager, Public Engagement Program Manager, and Digital Media Staff. He said the Library would not be able to execute programming in Seattle without the generous support of the Foundation for the

personnel to do so, along with additional dollars that support materials and activities with partners.

Mr. Sheridan said in the funding priority of Providing Books and Materials, increases were made in physical and e-materials in the general collection and in the areas of African American, biography and literary classics, children's, world languages, and read-along books, as well as Special Collections and the Seattle Room. He said Foundation funding added 325,379 items to the collection, including 1,270 Japanese language books, and SPL's first children's books in Hawaiian. He said the Foundation is funding the Books Unbanned program which saw 84,992 digital items checked out by teens and young adults.

Mr. Sheridan said in the funding priority of Hours and Access, funds were invested in lectures, author programs, and programs like Seattle Reads and Book Bingo, as well as supporting arts and music programs such as Legendary Children. He said funds supported job and life skills and workforce development, including Your Next Job and the Library 2 Business program. He said funds supported engagement in communities of color and historically disadvantaged patrons through ESL, literacy and citizenship programs. He said Mobile Services provided monthly visits to 28 preschools, 68 adult facilities, and two tiny house villages. He said the Foundation funds Seattle Reads, which hosted four programs with author Julie Otsuka in 2023 for her book *The Swimmer*, which was circulated more than 9,500 times. Mr. Sheridan said Foundation resources funded four to five student citizenship cohorts each quarter in partnership with the Asian Counseling and Referral Service.

Mr. Sheridan said in the priority of Literacy and Early Learning, funds supported the Global Reading Challenge, Summer of Learning, Homework Help, College Readiness, World Story Time, Raising a Reader, Team Read, and more programs that help children on their path toward literacy and love of learning. He said 1,131 students were served in 4,402 visits of Homework Help; more than 1200 children were served by Raising a Reader; more than 1,300 books were given to kids during Summer of Learning; and World Language Story Time was viewed more than 800 times on YouTube.

Mr. Sheridan said in the priority area Technology and Online Services, funds supported encouragement programs such as KidsTeam, Digital Art, and Esports, which expose kids to software and hardware technology, digital art programs, and pathways to careers in gaming. He said funding also supported the Nourishing Minds program for teen mental health. He said 800 people attended 68 in-person, virtual, and hybrid sessions around digital learning, including a program with youth on how to recognize digital misinformation.

Mr. Sheridan said in the funding priority of Major Maintenance, investments were made in new furniture for the Green Lake Branch and the Central Library, and upgrades to the HVAC and air filtration systems at Southwest and the Northeast branches. He said when costs rose due to delays in funding from the City, the Foundation provided resources needed to close the funding gap. Mr. Sheridan said this area reflects greater partnership between the Library and the Foundation; he said while some of this work has not yet been completed, the Foundation has approved funds in 2024 recognizing that the Library has contracts, financial commitments, and orders in place to complete work and receive materials that should be recognized in 2023.

Mr. Reich said the Library Board can't thank the Foundation enough for their support, as well as their philosophical change to trust-based philanthropy. He said the trust has to be earned, and he congratulated Mr. Sheridan and the Library's team on their work. He said this is the highest level of performance in terms of spending the money that also builds trust in a future of additional funding. Mr. Reich complimented the report and the team who has been involved in meeting the needs of the Foundation, and he thanked the Foundation for their generosity.

Donor Recognition – Children's Area, Southwest Branch

Mr. Fay welcomed The Seattle Public Library Foundation Deputy Executive Director Brian

Lawrence. Mr. Lawrence said the Foundation received a lovely and generous legacy gift provided by Janet Maurer Daggatt. He said Ms. Daggatt was lifelong reader who grew up in West Seattle, and in planning her estate, decided to leave her legacy through a gift to the Library. Mr. Lawrence said before she passed, the Foundation was talking with Ms. Daggatt about having a named space at a branch, but unfortunately she passed before the conversations were finalized. He said the Foundation had to good fortune to work with her family members to realize the legacy she wanted to leave by creating the Janet Maurer Daggatt Children's area at the Southwest Branch. He said in addition to providing funding for the namespace, she will also be establishing an endowment that will carry on forever contributing to the Library, as well as funding some programs in 2024. Ms. Mehdi thanked Ms. Daggatt's family for completing the gift in her name; she said it is remarkable when people leave legacy gifts. Mr. Lawrence agreed and said it is truly transformational. He said he, Mr. Fay, and Ms. Ward had lunch with the family and spoke about Ms. Daggatt, her life, and her commitment to the Library. Mr. Fay thanked Mr. Lawrence and Ms. Ward for the work they did in stewarding this gift. He said their work creates relationships, and it's amazing to see the meaningful gifts.

Updates from Library Board Members

Ms. Hairston said he has been asked to help the Biden administration's national science work on climate and energy as a consultant for the DEI work of the scholars who will be working on the report over a two-year period. Ms. Mehdi and Mr. Fay congratulated Mr. Hairston on his work.

Library Foundation and Friends of the Library Updates

Ms. Mehdi said the Friends Board held a retreat, rather than a regular meeting, so there is no report this month. Mr. Fay said the Foundation Board did meet. He said the Gates Foundation has renewed their commitment to SPL, doubling their current giving to \$300,000 for three years. He said a new \$500,000 endowment for Special Collections has been created by a donor with deep family roots in Seattle that will contribute \$20,000 a year to Special Collections and the Seattle Room, and will house many of the family's historic materials. Mr. Fay said three Foundation Board members attended three Global Reading Challenge semi-finals and were captivated, and he encouraged trustees to attend the fun event to see how engaged the kids are. Mr. Fay said the Foundation's 2023 fundraising totaled \$8.1 million, with individual giving \$3.41 million over the goal of \$2.75 million, and estate gifts of \$3.5 million. He said advocates from the Foundation, Friends, and Emeritus Boards attended Legislative Lobby Day in Olympia, along with Mr. Fay and Ms. Mehdi. Mr. Fay said the Foundation's 2024 fundraising goal is \$3.275 million in new revenue, and their themes are to partner effectively with SPL, connect with donors, strengthen advocacy efforts, execute a smooth CEO transition, and execute on their DEI commitment.

ADJOURN

Board President Tali Hairston adjourned the meeting at 1:42 p.m.



The Seattle Public Library

Memorandum

Date: April 25, 2024

To: The Seattle Public Library Board of Trustees

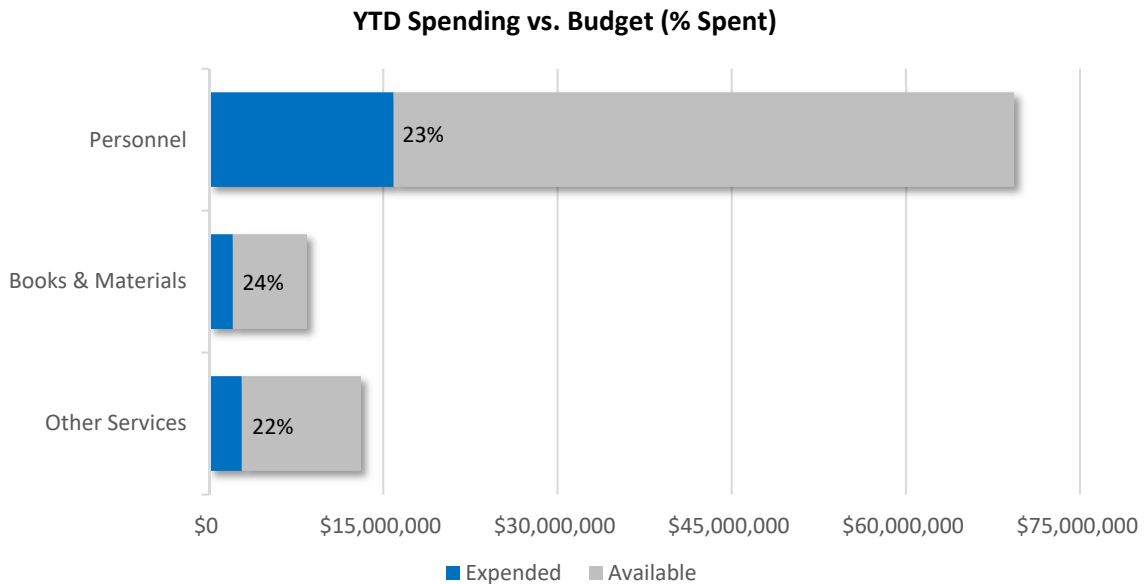
From: Tom Fay, Executive Director and Chief Librarian
Rob Gannon, Director of Administrative Services
Nicholas Merkner, Head of Finance and Accounting

Subject: **March 2024 Financial Reporting**

Overview

Overall, the Library has expended **23%** of its operating budget with **25%** of the year elapsed. This is in line with the prior year when the Library had also expended **23%** of the operating budget. Total expenditures at the end of the month were \$20.7 million.

The chart below provides a high level overview of year-to-date spending by budget group, and also helps to illustrate relative sizes within the Library’s operating budget.



Personnel Services

Personnel costs represent the largest category of expenses at the Library and make up 76% of the revised operating budget. As of this report there have been **seven pay periods processed** (with the first pay period of the year split between 2023 and 2024, resulting in only two days from that pay period charged to the current year)—as such we expect 24% of the personnel budget to be expended. Actual year-to-date personnel spending is **23%**.

Hiring Freeze

In January of this year, the Mayor’s Office provided guidance to all City departments relating to a hiring freeze. The City directed that vacant positions for which an offer had not yet been made be placed on hold for an indefinite period. The guidance also limited any new hiring efforts and required that a specific hiring freeze exception be granted. The Library Board of Trustees maintains control over positions at the Library and has the authority to institute its own hiring policies. Even so, to address budget challenges facing the Library system, we implemented a hiring freeze in tandem with the City’s hiring freeze mandated for executive branch departments.

Chief Librarian Tom Fay has approved several exemptions to the hiring freeze to help with our service levels. We are now hiring some temporary staff to help keep branches open. This process is underway; however, it will take several weeks to get new staff onboard. We are in close communication with the Mayor’s Office as we work through the budget process to better understand any impacts to our General Fund allocation in the 2025-2026 City budget.

Non-Personnel Services

The largest individual category of expenditures within the non-personnel budget is related to library books and materials—this category represents 9% of the revised operating budget. Spending is as expected at **24%**.

Other services which represent 15% of the adopted budget—and include equipment, services, and supplies—are **22%** expended.

Revenues

Library generated revenues collected during the period under review are **\$71,000**—bringing year-to-date collection to **\$184,000** (23% of our target). This amount is in line with revenue recorded during the same period in 2023 (\$184,000) with month-to-month collections for Lost Materials, Parking Garage Fees, and Print/Copy Services either on target or exceeding expectations. Private Event Rental bookings over the summer months carry the most risk of underperformance—variances within this category will be noted for the board during Q3. The Financial Services team will continue to closely monitor actual revenue collections and note outliers as part of this monthly report.

Action Requested: Library Board consideration of March 2024 Operating Budget financial reporting for approval at April 25, 2024 meeting. Comments or feedback are welcome.

Expenditure Control for March 2024

Amounts in \$1,000s	Revised Budget*	Current Month Expenditures	Year to Date Expenditures	% Expend	Balance of Budget
Personnel Services					
Salaries	44,958	3,325	10,104	22%	34,854
Benefits	24,364	1,917	5,800	24%	18,564
Personnel Services Sub-Total	\$69,322	\$5,242	\$15,904	23%	\$53,418
Books and Library Materials					
Books & Materials	8,428	693	2,053	24%	6,375
Books and Library Materials Sub-Total	\$8,428	\$693	\$2,053	24%	\$6,375
Other Services and Charges					
Central Costs	3,027	250	749	25%	2,278
Equipment - IT & Facilities	1,801	271	496	28%	1,305
Office Supplies, Printing & Postage	310	19	50	16%	260
Operating Supplies	559	43	86	15%	473
Other Expenses	642	29	102	16%	541
Other Maintenance	694	56	140	20%	554
Phone, Wireless & Internet	484	11	54	11%	431
Professional Services	502	20	37	7%	465
Software	873	29	285	33% (A)	588
Staff Training & Travel	185	7	12	6%	173
Vehicle Costs	319	15	73	23%	246
Facilities - Space Rental & Utilities	1,977	187	568	29%	1,409
Facilities - Building & Grounds Maint	1,317	86	157	12%	1,160
Facilities - Garage Debt Service	403	15	15	4%	388
Other Services and Charges Sub-Total	\$13,092	\$1,038	\$2,822	22%	\$10,270
TOTAL LIBRARY OPERATING BUDGET	\$90,842	\$6,973	\$20,779	23%	\$70,063

Footnotes:

* Includes \$1M related to prior year encumbrances and grant carry-forward

(A) Software renewal schedule does not align with calendar year--costs expected to align with budget by year-end.

Revenue Control for March 2024

	Revenue Budget	Current Month Revenue	Year to Date Revenue Collected	% Collected
Operations Plan Other Library Revenue				
Lost Material Fees	115,000	9,963	29,809	26%
Central Library Parking Garage Fees	345,000	31,444	84,628	25%
Copy Services/Pay for Print	95,000	11,697	27,961	29%
Space Rental (Private & Inter-Departmental)	162,000	13,081	26,773	17%
Book Sale Consignment	85,000	4,385	14,202	17%
Coffee Cart & Miscellaneous (vending machines, etc.)	3,000	105	206	7%
TOTAL LIBRARY GENERATED REVENUES				
	\$805,000	\$70,676	\$183,579	23%

Footnotes:



The Seattle Public Library

Date: April 25, 2024
To: Library Board of Trustees
From: Tom Fay, Executive Director and Chief Librarian
Re: April 25, 2024 Chief Librarian's Report

1. As I mentioned in your March 28 Board meeting, we held our annual All Staff Day on March 27. We had an incredible day in which all staff from across the system came together for a day-long in-service to connect with colleagues for trainings, team building, and educational sessions. We also announced the 2024 Employee Recognition Awards. Big congratulations to this year's award winners:
 - Customer Service Award: Noel Coleman, Library Associate II, Northeast Branch
 - Diversity and Inclusion Award: Bean Yogi, Adult Services Librarian, Southwest Branch
 - Hunter Maxwell Becker Brown Award: Jose Organista-Carrera, Library Associate II, Southwest Branch
 - Internal Organizational Values Award: Sang Le, Branch Operations Manager, Douglass-Truth Branch
 - Managerial Excellence Award: Lynn Phan, Branch Operations Manager, High Point Branch
 - Librarian Excellence Award: Erin Moehring, Children's Librarian, Greenwood Branch
 - Rising Star Award: Dillon Baker, Adult Services Librarian, Central Library
 - Customer Service Team Award: Financial Services Team: Nick Merkner, Head of Finance & Accounting; Jake Derramas, Accounting Operations Supervisor; and staff Shawne Anderson, Janice Melrose, Abbie Romano, Sandy Sivisay, and Josie Williams
 - Working Smart Team Award: Ballard Branch Team: Ela-Frances Jefferson, Branch Operations Manager, and staff Muna Ali, Melbourne Delaney, Amanda Duong Tran, Lesley Garrett, Oliver Grin, Margot Hieggelke, Jonathan Koroshec, Mychal Ludwig, Jack Marlowe, Jamar Melrose, Lynn Miller, Victor Nguyen, Jessica Powell, Doris Rahmig, Brianne Rychel, Fabi Sotelo, Corey Sutton, and Kiki Vandenburg
2. On March 28, Northwest Regional Manager Dawn Rutherford and I were guests on The Bridge radio show hosted by former Seattle City Council member Jean Godden and co-host Julianna Ross. We had the opportunity to discuss a number of Library issues including Library programs, services, and collections; countering censorship; the 2024 Seattle Reads program; engaging the community; and Library goals and priorities for the coming year.
3. In April, I gave several interviews to the Seattle Times, Real Change, KOMO News and KIRO Radio about a variety of topics including Books Unbanned, Senate Bill 5824, and changes to Library service hours through June 4 implemented to avoid unplanned closures.

4. I attended the Public Library Association conference in Columbus, OH the first week of April. More than 7,500 public library workers, supporters, and vendors from across the country attended the three-day conference featuring more than 100 education sessions, speakers, authors, networking opportunities, career services, educational moments, and exhibits. As always, it was a great opportunity to discuss best practices and exchange information and ideas with public library professionals from around the country.
5. On April 18, I welcomed families to the Leschi Book Fair and Family Literacy Night at Leschi Elementary School, an event focused on support for getting Black children to grade level reading by third grade. The event was planned by the SPL Summer of Learning Planning Team (led by Informal Learning Program Manager Amy Twito, children's librarians Mynique Adams, Lauren Mayer, and Jessica Werner, and teen librarian Alicia Garcia) in partnership with Leschi Elementary, and staff at South End Stories (retired SPS principal Dr. Donald Felder, Leschi Principal Genevieve "Genny" Ramsey, and Nia Steward and John Gladney who run the Melanin Poppin' and Rising Suns programs at the school.) At the event, children in grades 1-3 were able to pick out 10 free books to take home with them to encourage reading to support a foundation for their success in education. The Library looks forward to building on the success of this unique partnership opportunity to continue to deepen the impact of this important work.
6. April marks the one-year anniversary of SPL's participation in the Books Unbanned program to fight censorship and champion intellectual freedom by offering a free e-card for young adults ages 13 to 26 across the nation. This month, SPL joined Brooklyn Public Library in publishing a new report on the compounding impacts of book bans and limited access to reading materials in the words of young people themselves who have signed up for Books Unbanned cards through either library system. The report, "[In Their Own Words: Youth Voices on Books Unbanned](#)" gives new insight into the impact of censorship on teen and young adults across the United States and how restrictions and other barriers to access build upon and reinforce each other. The report can be found, along with more information about the program and participating libraries, at: www.BooksUnbanned.com.

Meetings and events during this reporting period:

- a. Board Meetings: Monthly Library Board of Trustees meeting; monthly meeting of Library and Friends leadership; monthly Friends of the Library's Board meeting.
- b. Standing Meetings: Compensation Committee; Senior Management Team; Monthly Managers meeting; Union/Leadership meetings; Foundation CEO/Chief Librarian bi-monthly meetings; Strategic Planning Core Team meetings.
- c. Library Talks, Meetings, Interviews and Visits: KCLS Director meetings; Metro area library director meetings; Public Library Association Conference in Columbus, OH; Interviews with The Bridge Radio, Seattle Times, Real Change, KOMO News, and KIRO Radio; Leschi Book Fair and Family Literacy Night
- d. City Meetings, Events and Programs: Mayor's Cabinet Meeting; monthly check-in with Councilmember Rivera; meeting with Seattle Center Director Marshall Foster; meeting with Seattle Department of Transportation Director Greg Spotts.

LIBRARY AT A GLANCE

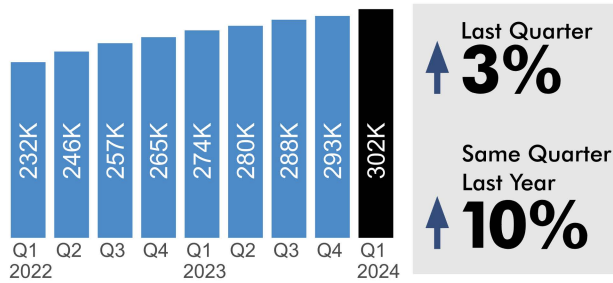


IN FOCUS: Quarterly KPIs

Q1 2024 saw a notable increase in digital borrowers and a small increase in physical borrowers and circulation.

Active Library Users

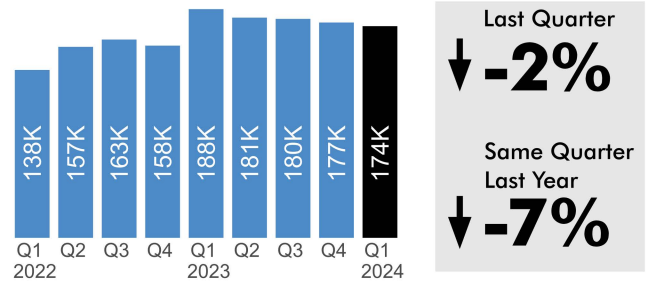
Patrons who checked out materials or logged in to use a Library resource in the last 12 months



Active users reached a new high at the end of Q1 2024, driven primarily by growth in e-content use. This count does not include Books Unbanned users.

Questions Answered

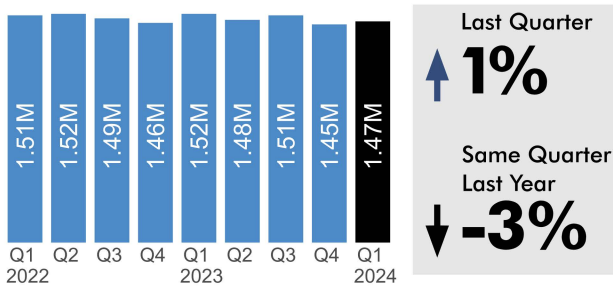
Number of in-person, phone and online questions answered



Library staff provided high-quality assistance, answering a steady stream of questions compared to previous quarters.

Physical Circulation

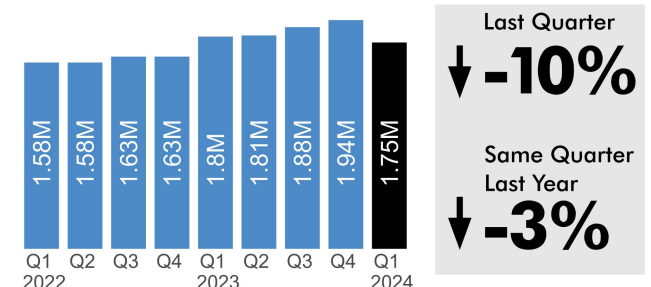
Number of items circulated or renewed



Physical circulation has been fairly steady over the past two years.

Digital Circulation

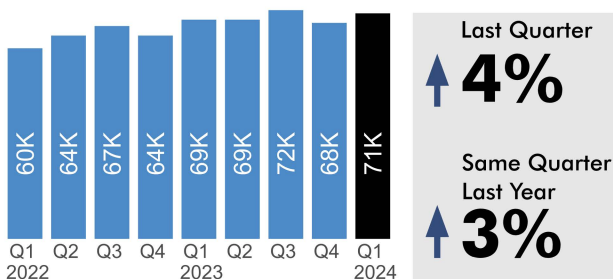
Number of items circulated



The Library discontinued Freegal, a music streaming platform at the end of 2023. This accounts for the decline in digital circulation.

Quarterly Borrowers - Physical

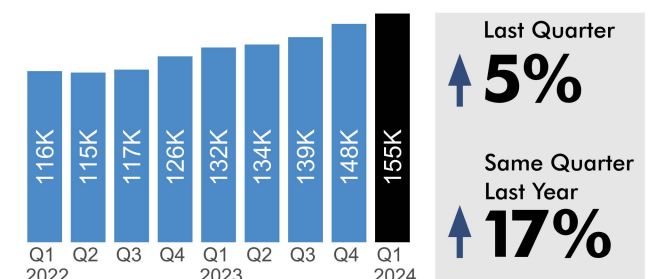
Number of patrons who borrowed physical materials



The number of patrons who borrowed physical materials has been trending up since Q1 2022 as the Library has offered more open hours.

Quarterly Borrowers - Digital

Number of patrons who borrowed digital materials



The number of patrons who borrow digital materials increased more than 30% in the last two years.

Capital Improvement Program & Building Maintenance

April 4, 2024

Rob Gannon, Director, Administrative Services

As the second quarter of 2024 begins, the Library's Capital Improvement Program has several major capital improvement projects underway. Below are highlights of both recently completed projects and ongoing capital improvement work.

Seismic Retrofit Projects

Green Lake – The construction work will continue through the second quarter of 2024. The delayed delivery of the new elevator has created some uncertainty regarding a specific reopening date, but the branch is still scheduled to return to service this summer.

University – The University project has been submitted for permit and is expected to be approved in June. The project has also been submitted to the Landmarks Preservation Board for review. Public bid is tentatively scheduled for mid-2024.

Columbia – The status and scope of the Columbia seismic retrofit project are on hold, pending additional information related to external funding requests and a revised cost estimate for the University branch seismic retrofit.

Other Major Capital Improvement Projects

Queen Anne Slate Roof Replacement – Completed in 2023.

Douglas-Truth Exterior Access Improvements – The exterior improvements, completed in 2023, included replacement of existing entry ramps, new hand rails, repair of city sidewalks on the South and West side of the property, improved parking by reconfiguring the existing parking lot, and restoration of the exterior Soul Pole art installation. Unrelated emergency sewer repairs at Douglass-Truth were also completed in 2023.

Capitol Hill Roof & HVAC – The project scope was the full replacement of the roof and replacement of the HVAC equipment. As mandated by the City of Seattle, this building was converted from a fossil fuel powered system to an all-electrical system. The project is substantially complete, aside from final adjustments to programming controls.

Corson Maintenance and Operation Center (MOC) – The interior build-out, installation of the Automated Materials Handling (AMH) system, addition of a second fiber optic line and exterior painting were all completed in 2023.

Northeast & Southwest branches HVAC/Electrification – The Southwest HVAC project was completed in late 2023, and the Northeast project – after various delays over which the Library had little control – was completed late in the first quarter of 2024 (aside from final adjustments to programming controls).

HVAC upgrades (electrification and adding branch cooling) at West Seattle, Queen Anne and Fremont – These projects, along with similar work at University and Columbia, are included in the Library's Hazardous Mitigation Grant application to Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). While the grant was submitted nearly two years ago, these projects are on hold because the Library is still awaiting a final decision at the federal level.

Collections and Access Services - Circulation Services

April 14, 2024

Bo Kinney, Circulation Services Manager

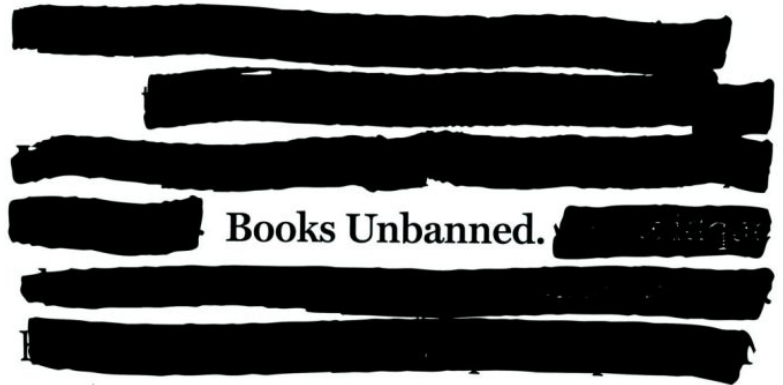
Elisa Murray, Digital Communications Strategist

Karly Williams, Public Disclosure & Public Information Coordinator

The Seattle Public Library is committed to facilitating access to constitutionally-protected information, without censorship or scrutiny. In a democratic society, free and open access to information gives people the resources to participate in the political process and strive towards self-improvement. (from SPL's [Intellectual Freedom Policy](#))

Fighting Censorship and Supporting the Freedom to Read with Books Unbanned

This April, the American Library Association released its annual [report on banned and challenged books](#) in the United States. As has been the case for the past three years, the number of challenged titles continued to increase, to the highest-ever total reported by ALA, with 1,247 attempts to censor 4,240 unique titles. This reflects the rise of “organized censorship campaigns on America’s libraries and librarians and on library users’ right to read,” in the words of Deborah Caldwell-Stone, the director of ALA’s Office for Intellectual Freedom.



This unfortunate news highlights the importance of intellectual freedom and access initiatives like the [Books Unbanned](#) program, which SPL joined in partnership with the Brooklyn Public Library in April 2023. (Three more libraries have since joined the growing [Books Unbanned coalition](#).) Books Unbanned fights censorship and champions intellectual freedom by offering a free e-card for teens and young adults (ages 13 to 26) across the nation. The card provides access to our e-

book collection for 1 year, and is generously funded by the Seattle Public Library Foundation.

As we approach the one-year anniversary of our participation in this groundbreaking and impactful program, we have welcomed

over 8,000 new cardholders from every state in the country, along with DC, Guam and Puerto Rico, and we have received thousands of stories from young people about their reasons for signing up.

To share these stories more widely, we collaborated with BPL and a team of Capstone students at the University of Washington Information School to analyze a broad sample of these testimonials, and this month, we released a report titled “[In Their Own Words: Youth Voices on Books Unbanned](#),” which shares what we’ve learned from these stories about the devastating impact of censorship and how restrictions and other barriers to access build upon and reinforce each other. It’s a unique chance to hear directly from the youth who are most affected and how programs like Books Unbanned are providing joy, representation and escape for a new generation of readers.

“Reading is an escape for me, and getting to escape into a world with characters who I can relate to and make me feel valid is extremely important to me and these opportunities are being taken away.”
—Age 17, Missouri

The stories highlight the reality of censorship and its prevalence across the nation. A key theme uncovered in the analysis is how formal acts of censorship, bans, challenges and restrictions to reading material can create a climate of fear and intimidation for young people. Cardholders also mention the impact of more “hidden” forms of censorship — self-censorship, soft or “quiet” censorship (pre-emptively restricting access as a means to avoid controversy), or the threat of future censorship — in affecting their freedom to read.

“ There are books that I cannot take home because they would put me in danger. Reading digitally allows me to keep myself safe but still give[s] me the ability to read freely.” —Age 19, Virginia

Many young people share stories of the inability to access representative materials, especially for LGBTQIA+ + (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex, asexual) and BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, people of color)

cardholders, which can exacerbate feelings of isolation and the sense that their identities are under attack. For these young people, digital access to books is essential to the ability to read freely.

Stories also highlight many other barriers to access beyond censorship and restrictions, include distance, accessibility issues and limited collections, and how censorship and barriers to access build upon and reinforce each other. In some cases, cardholders have no other access to a library at all.

Finally, the analysis revealed the difference that Books Unbanned has made in young people's lives. More than 200 cardholders included in the analysis who had renewed their BPL cards tell of finding representation, of finding joy and escape, and of opening up “my views of the world,” as a 24-year-old in California writes.

“ My school has removed all books from the school library and told us we can use the county library but I don't have a way to get there.”
—Age 13, Florida

Over and over again, young people are telling us that they just want to read! They want to expose themselves to new ideas, find stories that reflect and represent their identities, and find joy and escape. They want to read instead of scrolling through social media or playing games on their phones. It's inspiring to hear from so many young people about their desire for books and reading, and heartbreaking to see the impacts of books being taken away and this love of reading being stifled.

While books are often challenged because of misplaced concerns around harm to young people, the youth featured in this report tell a very different story — that the real harm is caused by censorship and limiting access to books that mirror their experiences and expand their understanding of the world.

“ Libraries fed my childhood... The freedom to read means everything to me, because it has shaped me as an individual. The freedom to read taught me to think freely.” —Age 20, Idaho

The report validates how important it is for young people to have free access to information and books, and what is lost when this freedom is taken away.

The report concludes with an urgent call to pay attention to young people's voices on why the freedom to read is essential, writing that, “The rising numbers of book bans and challenges serve as a clear warning sign of what we stand to lose if censorship is left unchallenged. The voices of these young readers are showing us what has already been lost.”

Or, as an 18-year-old Books Unbanned cardholder from California wrote: “In my opinion, the freedom to read is directly correlated with the freedom to think, and should never be denied anybody.”

On April 27, SPL celebrates our first anniversary of our participation in Books Unbanned. As we renew the program for its second year, we will invite cardholders to share more stories so we can better understand its impacts.



The Seattle Public Library

Memorandum

Date: April 15, 2024

To: Mayor Bruce Harrell
Councilmember Maritza Rivera, Chair, Seattle City Council Libraries, Education and Neighborhoods Committee

From: Tom Fay, Executive Director and Chief Librarian
Jan Oscherwitz, Library Levy Administrator

Subject: **2023 Library Levy Report Submittal**

By April 15 of each year, The Seattle Public Library is required by ordinance to submit an annual levy report to the Mayor and the City Council. This report details the Library's progress in using levy proceeds to restore, maintain and improve core Library services during the prior year. The Library Board of Trustees approved the 2023 Library Levy Report at its March 28, 2024 meeting. The [report](#) is available to the public on the Library's website.

In its 2019 proposal to voters, the Library laid out a clear framework for how levy proceeds would be used to maintain and enhance Library services in the areas of Hours and Access, Collections, Technology and Online Services, Children's Programming, and Maintenance. In 2023, the Library continued to experience staffing, operational and environmental challenges that were unforeseeable when the levy was proposed in 2019. While these challenges disrupted some of our day-to-day operations, we also made progress on delivery and planning toward key levy promises in service to the people of Seattle. Some highlights include:

Hours and Access: We promised to keep libraries open when patrons need them

The Library significantly expanded hours and service levels in the spring of 2023. Despite operational challenges related to construction, heat and staffing, our 27 libraries were open 70,000+ hours systemwide in 2023, compared to 61,000+ hours in 2022 and 68,000+ hours in 2019. With this expansion, Library locations were scheduled to be open 133 more hours per week than in 2019, (excluding the Green Lake branch which was closed for seismic renovation). In 2023, we resumed many in-person programs that revitalized our spaces with educational, cultural and community programming. We offered 36 author events at the Central

Library – including celebrating the 25th anniversary of Seattle Reads -- and restarted story times at our branches. Our Social Services Team, formed in 2022, continued to serve our patrons with the highest needs, providing over 900 referrals and support to patrons for housing, food, clothing, mental health, employment and other needs. They also launched a “Coffee and Conversations” program and a teen drop-in program at the Central Library. These informal gatherings bring patrons in need of social services together with Library staff on a weekly basis and often result in social service referrals as well as much-needed connection.

Our levy-funded change of eliminating overdue fines continues to have an impact. In January 2020, we eliminated overdue fines, restoring Library access to 18,000 patrons who had their accounts previously suspended due to fines. With this change, the Library reduced the number of suspended accounts by half. Since then, the materials return rate stayed the same and we have even seen a slight decrease in the number of items that are never returned.

Collections: We promised a robust collection of books and materials

We improved the Library’s collection by adding 113,000+ digital copies and 211,000+ physical items with the support of levy funds and other resources. Our acquisitions included 18,000+ copies of books from our highly popular no-holds, no-wait Peak Picks collection, which celebrated its sixth year in 2023. In 2023, the Library also completed its two-year diversity audit of its collections. More than 500 titles and 2,300 copies were added that amplify marginalized and underrepresented voices and perspectives for all audiences across print and digital formats. In 2023, 15% more people checked out digital books and 9% more people checked out physical materials compared to 2022.

Technology and Access: We promised to improve computer and online services

Our levy-funded hot spot program continues to provide internet access through our general collection and through targeted outreach with key community organizations. In 2023, the 850 hot spots in our general collection were checked out over 6,500 times, and we worked with 16 community organizations to make 372 loans of the 250 hot spots in our outreach collection to provide more stable internet access to communities disproportionately impacted by the digital divide. These include loans of shared hotspots at 12 Tiny House villages, a service the Library provided since 2018, as well as hot spots to tent cities and other temporary shelters. Along with lending hotspots from the outreach collection, Library staff also provided regular outreach visits to connect with people and share information about Library resources.

Children’s Programming: We promised to add more programming for children ages 0-5.

By the end of the year, we offered in-person weekly Play and Learn programs at seven different branches in support of programming for children ages 0-5. In 2023, new Play and Learn groups were established at Delridge and NewHolly branches and sessions were offered in Amharic as well as English at the Columbia Branch. Annual attendance at Play and Learn offered in Library branches exceeded 4,600.

Maintenance: We promised to maintain buildings for the next generation

To improve our buildings for the next generation, we began construction of a seismic [retrofit](#) project at the historic Green Lake Branch, the first of three levy-funded retrofits of historic branches. The LEED-certified Green Lake project also includes accessibility improvements and an electric HVAC system with air conditioning, which will allow the branch to remain open and provide shelter and relief for the community on hot days, and two new ev charging spaces. We also installed new AC systems at the Southwest and Northeast branches.

Ten Year Strategic Plan

Beyond fulfilling promises in the core levy investment areas, in 2023, we launched a levy-funded Strategic Planning process. The strategic planning process was informed by the Strategic Foresight process completed in 2022, which invited community partners, staff and other key library stakeholders to envision the likely future impacts and potential scenarios facing the Library over the next 10 years. This plan will help guide the Library through the final years of the 2019 levy and help lay a framework for potential future levy renewals.

We are proud of what we accomplished with levy funding in 2023, providing the Seattle community with access to library facilities, materials and services at some of the highest rates in our history. We look forward to sharing details about our Library levy accomplishments and welcome any questions about our progress.

- cc: Honorable Members of the Seattle City Council
- Ben Noble, Central Staff Director
- Aly Pennucci, Central Staff Budget Manager
- Eric McConaghy, Central Staff Analyst
- Paddy Wigren, Central Staff Executive Assistant
- Greg Wong, Deputy Mayor
- Patty Camacho, Mayor’s Office External Affairs Operations Manager
- Dan Nolte, Mayor’s Office City Council Liaison
- Lisa Gaccione, City Budget Office Fiscal & Policy Manager
- Adam Schaefer, City Budget Office Council Relations & Policy Lead
- Alan Lee, City Budget Office Fiscal & Policy Analyst
- Laura Gentry, SPL Communications Director
- Amy Lawson, SPL Chief Librarian’s Office Executive Assistant

2023 Annual
The Seattle Public Library
LEVY REPORT



Play and Learn group at South Park Library

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Expanding services and navigating transitions

Levy background

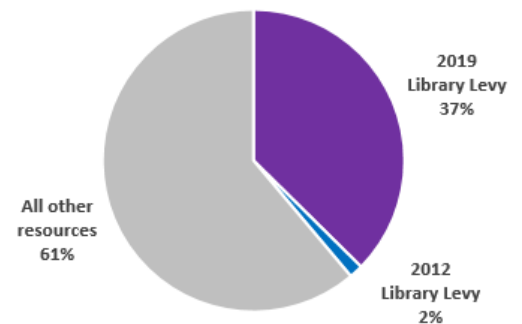
In August 2019, Seattle voters overwhelmingly approved (76%) a seven-year, \$219.1 million property tax levy to maintain and enhance Library services from 2020 through 2026, renewing a seven-year \$122.6 million levy that expired at the end of 2019.

In 2023, the 2019 Levy accounts for \$49.5 million (37%) of the Library's total revised budget of \$132 million. The 2012 Levy provides \$2 million (2%). Other sources including the City's general fund, state and federal grants, private funds and Library fund balance account for the remainder. The Library spent \$107 million (81% of its revised budget) in 2023, including \$30 million of 2019 Levy funds and \$1.6 million of 2012 Levy funds. Most of the levy budget underspend was related to multiyear projects in the Library's Capital Improvement Program and those funds carry over into 2024.

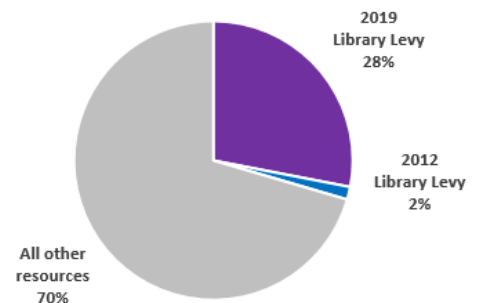
As part of its proposal to voters, **the Library laid out a clear framework for how 2019 Levy proceeds would be used to maintain services that had been funded by the 2012 Levy and provide additional services and programs over the seven-year levy period.** This report, which covers levy activities and spending for 2023 with an emphasis on Q4, continues the series of quarterly levy updates the Library has provided for the Board of Trustees and the public since 2013.

Beyond renewing 2012 Levy commitments, the 2019 Levy provides support for additional Library hours; elimination of overdue fines; improved collections and technology; safer, cleaner buildings; specialized programming and services for children; and development of a plan for the future of Library service.

2023 Library Revised Budget (\$132M)



2023 Library Spending (\$107M)



2023 highlights: expanded hours and services; more challenges

In 2023, the Library fulfilled many levy promises while continuing to respond to unanticipated challenges in keeping our facilities safe and open. In 2023, we significantly increased hours and service levels to access our resources in person, while continuing to offer a robust portfolio of online resources.

As you'll read in this report, we have continued to adapt to our new operating environment to meet the needs of Seattle residents in the levy investment areas of Hours and Access, Collections, Technology and Online Services, Children's Programming and Maintenance.

Planning for the future of the Library

In 2023, the Library made significant progress on developing a strategic plan to guide the Library over the next 10 years, which was one of the Chief Librarian's key priorities for the year. Using levy funds, we contracted with Territory, a consulting firm specializing in strategic plans, and Práctica Consulting, a firm tasked with performing qualitative analysis to reduce Library, facilitator and employee bias from the feedback we received. The Library engaged internal and external stakeholders to help guide our efforts to realize the hub future we had identified in our Foresight process. After extensive stakeholder engagement in the spring and an all-day retreat for the Strategic Planning Core Team in the summer, the Library held an employee town hall in September to update employees on the Strategic Planning Process, report back on the results of a staff survey and solicit feedback on the emerging plan.

In October, we conducted a follow-up survey for staff on the direction of the strategic plan. The 200 responses we received from this survey provided valuable insight on strategic plans of themes of equity, community belonging, enrichment, empowerment and staff retention.

In late October, we launched a public survey on the strategic plan, which was translated into 16 languages, and received 1,700+ responses. In November, the Board of Trustees updated The Seattle Public Library Foundation and The Friends of the Seattle Public Library board members on the plan, including a preview of the draft values and impacts. By the end of the year, the Library made a [Draft Strategic Framework](#) available to the public. We are working towards finalizing the strategic plan, with final adoption by the Board of Trustees anticipated in 2024.

“When I look at what we’re trying to do with the Strategic Direction, we’re talking about the transformational impact of belonging, and of being a resilient community. ... That is going to create more equitable opportunities for all.”

– Tom Fay, Chief Librarian, in an interview with [The Urbanist](#) about the strategic plan

Opening doors and increasing access

The Hours and Access category of the 2019 Levy supports operating hours in neighborhood branches and the Central Library; providing access to Library programs and services in the community; and outreach and engagement services throughout the city. Many elements of this levy category relate to increasing access to Library services through measures such as eliminating late fees and adding open hours. The revised levy budget in 2023 for the Hours and Access category is \$13.3 million.

In January 2020, we eliminated overdue fines, restoring Library access to 18,000 patrons who had their accounts previously suspended due to fines. With this change, the Library reduced the number of suspended accounts by half. Since then, the materials return rate has stayed the same and we have even seen a slight decrease in the number of items that are never returned. Also in January 2020, the Library started opening our branches one hour earlier on Sundays, the first step in what was intended to be more than 10,000 new Library hours annually systemwide funded by the levy. Then the pandemic began. After several years of COVID closures, restrictions and related staffing challenges, the Library was able to restore open hours to pre-pandemic levels in early 2023. In March and April 2023, we began expanding open hours to fulfill the levy promise. With this expansion, Library locations were scheduled to be open 133 more hours per week than in 2019, upon completion of the seismic renovation of Green Lake Branch. (See Table 1.) And although unscheduled closures (more on that below) reduced our actual open hours in 2023, our libraries were open more hours than in any year since 2009.

With our new schedule, we made numerous changes, including the following:

- More hours on Saturdays at 13 branches
- More hours on Sundays at all branches and the Central Library
- Earlier weekday openings at 13 branches
- Monday closures instead of Friday closures at six-day branches
- Earlier closures (6 p.m.) on Mondays at the Central Library and branches open on Mondays
- Changed the mix of branches open for extended schedules to prioritize branches identified as Levy priorities.

Although most branches added hours in 2023, some experienced minor reductions compared to 2019. Library hours have expanded the most at the South Park, Delridge, NewHolly, International District/Chinatown, and High Point branches. The Beacon Hill, Northeast and Rainier Beach branches have seen slight reductions in weekly open hours compared to 2019, but we have installed pickup lockers to provide 24/7 access to physical holds. Pick-up lockers are now in five locations.



Pickup locker at Broadview Branch

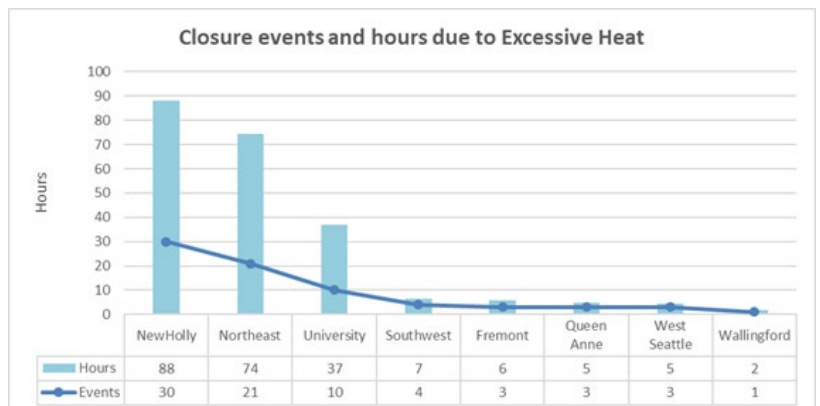
The additional open hours have increased community access to Library collections, information services, computers, programming and public spaces. In November, we began collecting comprehensive data from our new people-counting system that allows us to track entrances and exits at each location by the hour. With additional insights into patron use of the Library, we will be able to evaluate the effectiveness of our new hours and help make adjustments to our schedule. Based on preliminary entrance data, our new hours on Saturday and Sunday mornings are popular at many branches, although evening hours at many locations are not receiving much traffic unless programming occurs that drives patron attendance.

Post-COVID Operating Challenges Continue

As in 2022, we did experience some unplanned closures because of excessive heat, insufficient staffing and other issues, but overall, our libraries were open for 98% of our scheduled hours in 2023, for a total of over 70,000 hours. This compares to 61,000+ actual open hours in 2022 and 68,000+ hours in 2019, our pre-pandemic baseline.

Excessive heat in buildings without air conditioning was the most common reason for an unexpected closure. From June to mid-September, we adjusted weekday schedules at several branches that lacked air conditioning (Fremont, NewHolly, Northeast and Southwest branches) to take advantage of the cooler morning hours and to reduce closures in the afternoons and evenings.

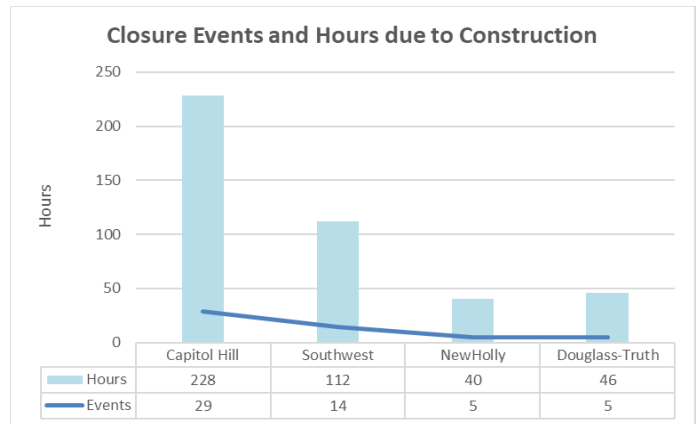
This seasonal adjustment resulted in fewer unplanned closures due to extreme heat than in the summer of 2022. However, a rule change in July by the State Department of Labor and Industries, which set the acceptable maximum for sustained indoor room temperature at 80 degrees for locations without air conditioning, contributed to unscheduled branch closures. (The Library’s past practice was to close branches when indoor air temperature reached



85 degrees.) The Library’s eight branches without air conditioning had to close 75 times in 2023 because of excessive indoor temperatures.

We will be in a better position next summer. In the fall of 2023, we replaced or added air conditioning at the Capitol Hill, Northeast and Southwest branches; a new HVAC system was also added at the NewHolly Branch by the Seattle Housing Authority, which operates the space that houses the library. By next summer, including the addition of air conditioning at the Green Lake Branch as part of its seismic retrofit, 22 of the Library’s 27 locations will have air conditioning, and we should experience fewer heat-related closures, as well as reducing our overall carbon footprint.

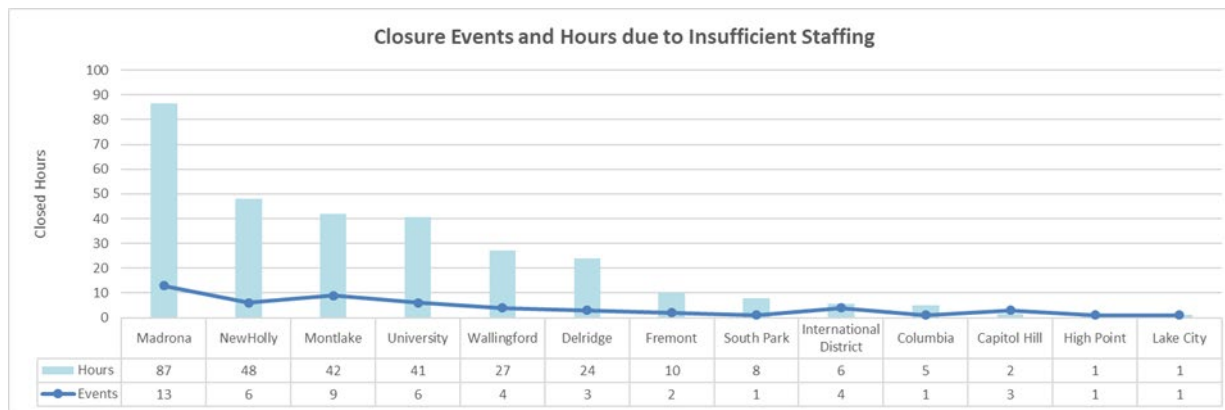
The second most common reason for branch closures was related to construction work. In addition to the year-long closure at the Green Lake Branch for the seismic retrofit project and a projected six-week planned closure at the Northeast Branch to install a new HVAC system (which are both excluded from the chart because they were scheduled), the Library also had to close the Capitol Hill, Douglass-Truth, NewHolly and Southwest branches temporarily to accommodate necessary construction.



Between April and the end of the year, the Capitol Hill Branch closed for a total of 29 days for a roof replacement and installation of a new electric HVAC system that is more efficient and reliable while reducing our carbon footprint. The Douglass-Truth Branch was closed for five days for repair of a broken sewer pipe, which required major excavation at the branch. The NewHolly Branch was closed for five days for installation of a new HVAC system. The planned Northeast Branch closure for the installation of a new electric HVAC system was extended (11 extra days in 2023 and 70 more days overall) because of electrification issues discovered and remedied by Seattle City Light. The Southwest Branch was closed for 14 days for the installation of a new electric HVAC system.

Staffing issues also contributed to the occurrence of unplanned closures, exacerbated by a surge in leave usage and modifications to minimum staffing levels at various Library locations. Before the pandemic, several branches operated with a minimum staffing requirement of three staff members, as outlined in our Collective Bargaining Agreement. However, because of a post-pandemic increase in volatile patron incidents, we re-evaluated safety measures for staff and patrons and revised how branch locations are staffed, including new minimum staffing level targets and a requirement for a minimum of two lead-eligible staff members for all open hours.

In 2023, we closed branches 54 times due to insufficient staffing for a total of 300 hours. Many were preemptive closures, which provided patrons advance notice. While closures related to insufficient staffing occurred at branches throughout the system, they were most frequent at the Madrona-Sally Goldmark, NewHolly, Montlake and University branches.



Other factors also led to unscheduled closures and delayed openings. These included security issues in and around our buildings and facilities issues such as gas leaks, power outages, and pest control issues. Together, these factors caused 51 closure events for a total of 169 lost hours.

The frequency and severity of security incidents in and around our buildings has not leveled off. Rules of Conduct violations resulted in nearly 600 exclusions over the course of the year and resulted in early closures and lockdowns at several branches. To mitigate the impact of the security challenges, the Library has added more security officers over the last five years. The levy now funds eight of the 21 security positions; four more than were funded in the 2012 levy. This has helped the Library more effectively respond to safety issues and to better weather normal levels of staff turnover. In 2024, the Library intends to upgrade and install security cameras at branches with a high number of security incidents and expand our security vehicle fleet to improve effectiveness of our security operations.

Our security team conducted nearly 5,000 branch patrols in 2023, including early morning patrols at high-incident branches to ensure our buildings were clean and safe before opening. This approach has proven successful and continues in 2024.

Reducing barriers to Library services

Beyond expanding Library hours, the levy supports improving access to Library services for everyone, especially those who face barriers to using Library resources. As discussed in the previous section, a key element of our 2019 levy included the elimination of overdue fines for Library materials, which had disproportionate impacts on lower-income communities.

In addition to eliminating late fees, we continue to refine our borrowing policies to improve equitable access. In 2023, we expanded the age range of our Foundation-funded Fresh Start program, which offers one-time waivers of lost material fees for young adults. Fresh Start was previously available to patrons ages 12-19 and has been expanded to serve patrons up to age 26, which aligns this program with other Youth and Family Learning programs. We have also made it easier for any patron to request a waiver for lost-item fees [online](#).



Calling patrons by the name they want to be called makes our Library more welcoming and inclusive. In 2023, we updated our [Library card application](#) to make it clear that patrons are welcome to sign up for a Library card using their preferred first name. We also updated our web page and provided flyers in Library branches with information about changing your name on your Library account.

As Library hours have expanded post pandemic, overall Library use has also increased, but there are still disparities. Evaluation of use data since 2020 shows that Library patrons living in the highest equity priority neighborhoods (as defined by the City's [Office of Planning and Community Development](#)) have been slower to resume borrowing Library materials than residents in the rest of the city. In 2023, we conducted empathy interviews with more than a dozen patrons from parts of the city that fell into the two highest equity priority quintiles. While reasons for no longer borrowing physical Library materials varied, many lapsed patrons told us that during the pandemic, they got out of the habit of going to the Library. In 2024, we intend to dig deeper into our findings from this research and to cross-reference with door-count data to help understand when and where additional hours are most impactful.



Patrons enjoying the Beacon Hill Branch

In-person and virtual programs and services

The Library continues to make strides in bringing back in-person programming. From January to June, we offered about 16 sessions a week of our popular in-person Homework Help program at eight branches. When we resumed the program for the 2023-2024 school year in September, we offered 20 weekly sessions at nine branches. Students get homework support, play academic games, read and work on academic skills. Free snacks are always provided. Ninety percent of Homework Help students reported their parents speak a language other than English at home, and the vast majority of students served by the program are youth of color. More than 1,100 K-12 students visited Homework Help in 2023, supported by more than 180 adult volunteer tutors. Total attendance at Homework Help exceeded 4,400 in 2023.

Last spring, we once again offered in-person Tax Help sessions in partnership with United Way of King County at the Central Library. Tax Help also returned to branch locations, with long-time partner AARP and new partner PMI Savvy offering sessions at 10 branches. Together, 147 Tax Help Sessions were offered between late January and mid-April, and an additional 21 were offered between May and July. Over 3,300 tax returns were filed at Library locations in 2023.

In 2023, the Library relaunched one of our most beloved early learning programs: in-person story time. Once again, children gathered with caregivers and librarians in libraries across the city to listen to stories, sing, move, connect with each other, and experience other benefits of early learning that will serve them throughout their life. Last year, the Library hosted more than 540 story times, with attendance of 18,000. We also held nearly 220 levy funded Play and Learn sessions, with total attendance of 4,600. This levy-funded program is described in more detail in the Children's Programming section of this report.

We launched our 104th Summer of Learning program, which invited youth to explore their past, present and future. To complement the program, we created multilingual downloadable materials, available online or at local branches throughout the summer. Summer of Learning participants were once again invited to a free end-of-summer celebration at the Burke Museum of Natural History and Culture at the end of August.

Over the course of the year, with support from the Seattle Public Library Foundation, the Library hosted 36 author events at the Central Library. Highlights included readings by Bonnie Garmus, author of "Lessons in Chemistry" in January, the celebration of the 25th Anniversary of Seattle Reads, the Library's citywide book group, featuring Julie Otsuka author of "The Swimmers" in May, Abraham Verghese, author of "The Covenant of Water" in June, James McBride author of "The Heaven and Earth Grocery Store" in September and Timothy Egan, author of "A Fever in the Heartland" in November. In the fall, the Library also hosted a three-part series, guest-curated by Frank Abe, about John Okada, the author of the seminal Japanese-American novel, "No-No Boy."



A family celebrating Summer of Learning at the Burke Museum event

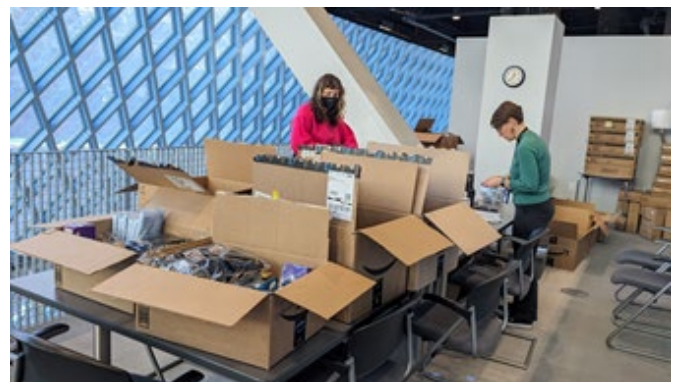
Beyond author events, the Library hosted programming that ranged from Ladies Musical Club concerts to entrepreneurial workshops. In October, the Library hosted "A Tale of Two Cities," a business resource open house where small business champions from Minneapolis and Seattle came together in-person and virtually for a unique learning and networking opportunity to discuss building a more inclusive urban economy. When possible, the Library strives to record live events and make them easily discoverable by patrons looking to catch up on past events. In 2023, we combined our podcasts (audio) and YouTube

(video) on our website. We have created pages for [Author Recorded Events](#), [Business Recorded Events](#), [Learning Recorded Events](#), and [Civic Recorded Events](#) and intend to expand offerings in 2024.

We have also been working to improve our ability to offer hybrid options at our programs and events. The Library has deployed 17 hybrid carts throughout the system. These carts include 4K high-definition cameras, 75-inch displays and meeting control touchscreens which allow for hybrid (in person and online) meetings at Library locations. We have tested the functionality of the carts at several staff meetings and used them for an all-staff Town Hall in September, attended by hundreds of staff (including 230+ individual and staff group logins). As we test these carts and learn more, we are preparing to use this technology for public programs at the Central Library and at neighborhood branches. Our goal is to offer accessible hybrid options for our communities going forward.

In-house Social Services team

In 2022, we launched our new Social Services team, which includes a social services librarian, a senior community resource specialist and a community resource specialist, funded by the levy to focus on services for youth up to age 26. By bringing on this team, we shifted from a contract model to an in-house model. This team provides expertise to the Library on social service resources, coordinates with other providers, works closely with our security team to support staff in de-escalation and trauma-informed practices and assists patrons in need of referrals or who are in crisis. The team meets regularly with Library staff throughout the system to share information and engage in problem solving.



Social Services staff boxing emergency supplies for branches

In 2023, the team forged relationships with REACH, the Salvation Army, the Seattle Fire Department's Health One team, the City's HOPE Team, Catholic Community Services and Public Health-Seattle & King County to provide access to services and resources to our patrons and has also initiated contact with 29 other organizations for potential future partnerships. The team provided 934 referrals and support to patrons for housing, food, clothing, mental health, employment and other needs. They also hosted 14 "Coffee and Conversations" at the Central Library. These informal gatherings, attended by more than 400 people, bring patrons in need of social services together with Library staff on a weekly basis. These gatherings make patrons feel welcome at the Library and often result in social service referrals. A similar staff led program occurred weekly at the Ballard Branch.

"I am profoundly grateful to the Coffee and Conversations staff for very cordial, welcoming, very informative, accommodating environment and encouragement."

- Coffee and Conversation participant

Teen librarians and the Social Services team co-host weekly Young Adult Drop-Ins at the Central Library. Drop-ins offer teens and young adults a chance to connect with Library staff to ask questions, get assistance navigating social services and other resources, and engage in creative pursuits like button-making and collage. Teen Feed, a local non-profit partner, provides hot meals for attendees, and we provide snacks, coffee, tea and craft supplies.

Promoting the Library

As we continue to restore services, we have worked to reintroduce Seattle residents to our in-person offerings. In the fall, we launched our 2023 Library Card Sign-Up Month Campaign. Titled “Free To,” the campaign highlights the Library’s free offerings and celebrates the freedom to read and explore ideas free from censorship. For the end-of-year holiday email, we expanded this well-received campaign by creating [videos](#) with five staff members that highlighted their personal experiences at the Library. We hope this campaign will continue to foster and explore diverse viewpoints and further demonstrate the importance of intellectual freedom at the Library.

We have also used our website to highlight and create more awareness around what we have previously called “Special Collections” at the Library. Under the new umbrella term “[Unique Collections](#),” we have designed pages on our website to showcase the unique content in each collection, which range from the African American Collection to the ZAPP Zine Collection. We will continue to add more visual content to the website as we promote these diverse collections throughout 2024.

LEVY ACCOMPLISHMENTS: COLLECTIONS

Building robust collections in print and digital formats

The 2019 Levy commits resources to maintaining and expanding the Library’s collection of physical and digital materials. The levy includes additional funding for e-books, e-audiobooks and streaming services; continuation of Peak Picks; and funds to support the acquisition and digitization of local history items. In 2023, the 2019 Levy provided \$5.9 million in the Collection category, including \$4.6 million for books and materials.

A more inclusive collection

The Library completed its two-year diversity audit of the collection. In 2023, more than 500 titles and 2,300 copies were added that amplify marginalized and underrepresented voices and perspectives for all audiences across print and digital formats. Over the two-year period, more than 1,300 titles and 4,000 copies were added as a result of the audit.

Digital collections reaching more people

An increasing number of Library users continue to access our electronic resources. Over 174,000 patrons downloaded more than 5.4 million digital books (e-books and e-audiobooks) through

OverDrive in 2023, including 1.4 million in Q4 alone. These annual numbers represent a 15% increase in users and items checked out compared to 2022. Use of our streaming services held steady in 2023. We saw a slight increase in the number of patrons using Kanopy, our most popular video streaming service (nearly 17,000 in 2023), and a slight decrease in the number of patrons using hoopla, a service that provides streaming music, movies, TV and comics (just over 13,000 for 2023). E-materials accounted for 7.4 million (55%) of 13.4 million total circulation in 2023.

Our digital books reached youth across the country. In April, using funds provided by The Seattle Public Library Foundation, we launched Books Unbanned in partnership with Brooklyn Public Library, offering teens and young adults across the nation a library card that provides free access to the Library's e-book and e-audiobook collections. The card, available via a simple online form, is intended for youth ages 13 to 26 outside the Library's service area. Intellectual freedom is a core value of The Seattle Public Library. Books Unbanned helps counter the series of increasingly coordinated and effective efforts to remove books from public and school libraries across the nation. Books Unbanned cardholders have access to the OverDrive collection, with a maximum of 10 checkouts at a time. In 2023, over 7,000 young people, representing every U.S. state and territory, signed up for a Books Unbanned card through the Library and nearly 85,000 digital items were checked out.



Banned Books display, Broadview Branch

We purchased nearly 113,000 digital copies during 2023, 3% more than in 2022, creating a selection of new materials of greater depth and breadth. We used levy funds to expand the World Language Collection, acquiring 800 copies of e-books and e-audiobooks for adults and more than 700 copies for children in languages other than English, including an opening day collection of 160 titles in Japanese for patrons of all ages. We now offer e-books and e-audiobooks in 11 other languages: Arabic, Chinese, French, German, Italian, Japanese, Korean, Spanish, Russian, Ukrainian and Vietnamese for adults and children.

We also used levy funds to provide unlimited access to the e-book and e-audiobook versions of "The Swimmers" by Julie Otsuka in advance of the Seattle Reads programs. During this period, this title was checked out over 6,600 times, making it one of the most popular items in our collection in 2023.

The impact of increased demand for digital materials

Increased demand for e-books and e-audiobooks has put significant pressure on the Library budget. Annual checkouts of digital books have almost tripled from 2015 to 2022, as have our costs. The Library has done our best to meet patron demand, but meeting the demand has come

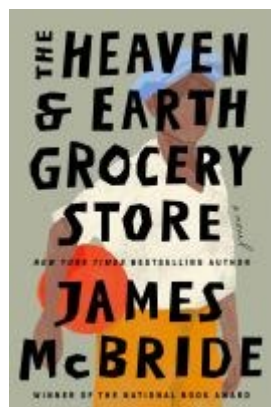
at a cost that has become unsustainable because of the high cost of digital books for libraries.

Holds are the largest single factor in increasing costs for digital books. To maintain reasonable wait times, the Library buys additional copies of a title when it accrues more patron holds. In 2023, 62% of the Library's spending on digital books was because of holds placed on high-demand titles. Library costs for high-demand digital books have nearly tripled since 2015.

To address these challenges, the Library's selection staff are in the process of evaluating a range of ideas for managing our digital book costs so that we can continue providing a broad and diverse selection of digital books and meet patron demand through the end of the year. The selection team actively monitors and adjusts the number of holds that trigger purchases through the year as part of managing costs. We are also reducing the digital holds limit for patrons in 2024.

Building physical collections, adding language, and making holds available 24/7

In Q4, patrons checked out more than 1.4 million physical items (including renewals), bringing the year's total to 6 million, about the same as 2022. More than 124,000 people checked out physical Library materials in 2023, compared to about 113,000 in 2022, an increase of about 9%. We added over 211,000 physical items to our collection using funds from all sources. We added three new pick-up lockers at the Northeast, Beacon Hill and Broadview branches in 2023 with funds from The Seattle Public Library Foundation and American Rescue Plan Funds. These lockers provide access to our physical collection when branches are closed by allowing patrons to pick up materials at any time of day, helping us deliver on our levy promise of more materials when patrons want them.



[Peak Picks](#), the Library's no-holds, no-wait collection of high-interest titles funded by the levy continues to be popular. In 2023 we added 118 Peak Picks titles and over 18,000 copies, including 31 new titles and 5,100 copies in Q4 alone. Fiction highlights include "The Berry Pickers," by Amanda Peters, winner of the 2021 Indigenous Voices Award for Unpublished Prose; "Let Us Descend," Jesmyn Ward's wrenching and beautifully told story of a young enslaved woman on a rice plantation in the Carolinas; and Alice McDermott's "Absolution," an evocative character study of American women in 1963 Saigon. Nonfiction highlights include "How to Say Babylon," Safiya Sinclair's memoir about her journey from a strict Rastafarian upbringing in Jamaica to finding her own voice as a poet in America; "City on Mars," Kelly and Zach Weinersmith's hilarious investigation into space settlement; and "Prequel," Rachel Maddow's page-turning account of public servants and private citizens who thwarted a far-right contingent.

Although Peak Picks checkouts were down slightly in Q4 due the ongoing closure of the Green Lake branch and the unexpected length of the closure of the Northeast branch, Peak Picks circulation was nearly 4% higher in 2023 than in 2022. By the end of 2023, patrons checked out nearly 950,000 Peak Picks, and we are on track to reach one million checkouts in 2024! The most popular Peak Pick during Q4 was the novel “The Heaven and Earth Grocery Store” by James McBride. The most popular Peak Pick for the year was Bonnie Garmus’ “Lessons in Chemistry.”

Top Ten Peak Picks for 2023:

1. “Lessons in Chemistry,” Bonnie Garmus
2. “Foster,” Claire Keegan
3. “A Fever in the Heartland,” Timothy Egan
4. “The Wager,” David Grann
5. “Yellowface,” R.F. Kuang
6. “Hello Beautiful,” Ann Napolitano
7. “Remarkably Bright Creatures,” Shelby Van Pelt
8. “The Guest,” Emma Cline
9. “Tomorrow, and Tomorrow, and Tomorrow,” Gabrielle Zevin
10. “Pasta for All Seasons,” Michela Tartaglia

Expanding our local history collections and making them more accessible

In 2023, we moved our digital assets related to our local history collections to a cloud-based solution to add capacity and improve redundancy and retention capabilities. Last year, we added over 800 items to our Seattle Room digital collections highlighting local history. This included the addition of over 200 items to our [Black Culture and History collection](#).with support of a Washington State Digital Heritage grant; new photographs in our [Century 21 Digital Collection](#) highlighting the 1962 World’s Fair; and more images in our [Werner Lenggenhager Photograph Collection](#), which shows views of Seattle and Washington State from the 1950s to the 1980s. We had over 43,000 unique users to the site, an increase of 3,000 people over the previous year. These users visited the site over 54,000 times.

This year we passed an important milestone with the Werner Lenggenhager Collection, completing digitization of over 6,000 images in collection of nearly 30,000 photographs. In the fourth quarter we added images that depicted [homes in the Central District](#) and [various street scenes from the University District](#).

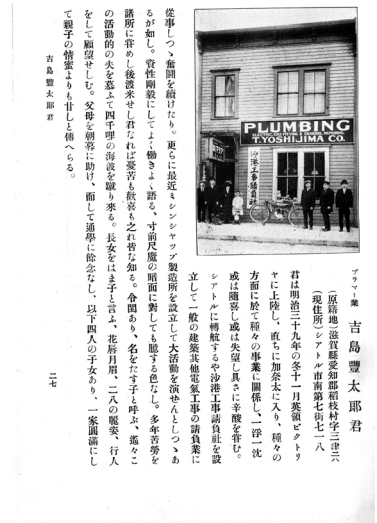
Another highlight from the fourth quarter included the digitization of John Caldwell’s [World War II era drawings](#) to add to our Black Culture and History Collection. Caldwell was a Black serviceman who passed through the city in the 1940s and spent time at Seattle’s segregated Camp George Jordan located on the south side of Spokane St. between First Avenue S. and Second Avenue S. Soldiers at the camp helped with war-time transportation logistics. Caldwell’s drawings, which include portraits of women and celebrities as well as a sketch of the Camp, are especially important because Camp George Jordan is largely absent from the historical record.



Camp George Jordan, John Caldwell ca. 1940s

During 2023, the Library acquired 130 photographs, 20+ photos albums and over 300 photo postcards, documenting life in Seattle and the changing urban landscape from the 19th century to the present day. In addition, two major Seattle book collectors donated important books to the Seattle Collection, including “Rambles Through the Northwest”(1884) and “Reports of the Governor of Washington Territory” for 1884, 1885 and 1886 — the latter inscribed by Governor Watson Squire. Finally, the Library acquired the archives of the Seattle Milk Fund (founded 1907), the Governor Eugene Semple Family Collection, and the annotated menu collections of two local restaurant reviewers through donations.

In 2023, the Library also acquired an extremely scarce biographical directory of Japanese immigrants in and around Seattle published in 1914. The volume includes biographical sketches of more than 100 Japanese immigrants from the Seattle area, most illustrated with halftone portrait photos. As there are no other recorded institutional holdings of this book in the U.S or Japan, this volume is a remarkable addition to the Seattle Collection. This rare item will provide researchers with a wealth of detailed information about the Japanese community in Seattle in the early 20th century.



Japanese Directory, 1914

LEVY ACCOMPLISHMENTS: TECHNOLOGY

Keeping our technology up to date

The 2019 Levy promises around technology include dedicated funding for digital equity offerings; replacing infrastructure for public internet access; replacing outdated technology for acquisition and circulation; and maintaining and upgrading public technologies and the spl.org website. Since the start of the pandemic, our presence online has grown. The levy provided \$2.5 million in budget authority to support technology operating expenses in 2022 and \$5.7 million, including \$2.5 million in carryforward, for the technology capital program.

Digital equity and the Hot Spot circulation program

Internet access is a critical need for everything from job-seeking help to social connection to remote learning. The 2019 Levy is the primary funding source for our [HotSpot program](#), and we have been able to leverage levy funding with additional Foundation and federal funds to offer more hot spots in the community.

Our levy-funded hot spot program continues to provide internet access through our general collection and through targeted outreach with key community organizations. In 2023, the 850 hot spots in our general collection were checked out over 6,500 times, and we worked with 16 community organizations to make 372 loans of the 250 hot spots in our outreach collection to provide more stable internet access to communities disproportionately impacted by the digital divide. These include loans of shared hot spots at 12 tiny house villages, a service we have been providing since 2018, as well as hot spots to tent cities and other temporary shelters. Along with lending hot spots from the outreach collection, Library staff also have provided regular outreach visits to connect with people and share information about Library resources. Last year, we upgraded our devices to the latest model offered by our hot-spot provider. Devices were last upgraded in 2018.

“I can't imagine a more useful service in today's age than access to Wi-Fi. The Library has done an amazing thing granting access to the world for those who are currently without Wi-Fi. Thank you.”

- Patron borrowing general circulation hot spot

At the end of the year, our outreach hot-spot team held community listening sessions with 13 partners who are from and work with Seattle communities most impacted by the digital divide to help improve program design in 2024 and beyond.

Expanding access to computers, scanners and more

In 2023, our technology team continued to modernize and improve the Library's technology. We upgraded 368 public and staff computers that had reached the end of their useful lives. We also replaced 40 printers no longer supported by the manufacturer. In 2023, nearly 39,000 patrons used Library computers almost 340,000 times. This is about 10% more people and sessions compared with 2022. Average session length increased from 55 minutes in 2022 to an hour in 2023.

The Library continued to be a central hub for community printing, with the number of pages printed increasing by 41% from 1.2 million to 1.7 million year over year. We have made it easier for patrons to use cash to use the printers and for our financial staff to audit usage of the machines. In addition, in the 4th quarter, we introduced a new model of printers with fast printing capability. During 2023, our ScanEZ stations, which offer free faxing and scanning as well as translation, became available at all locations and experienced 96% growth in usage from 146,000 to 283,000 pages.

While the use of public-facing Library technology has increased with the expansion of open hours over the last two years, the demand for desktop computers has declined as patrons have shifted to their own devices and Library laptops. In 2023, Library technology staff studied computer usage statistics and determined that the desktop inventory could be reduced by up to 30% without impacting availability of computers to our patrons. By right-sizing the number of desktops, we are able to free up resources to invest in high-demand technology, including additional laptop capacity, ScanEZ stations and upgraded print kiosks. We began removing excess desktops from branches in the fourth quarter and will continue removing them through 2024. We added a total of 14 laptops available to the public at eight branches; the number of laptops at the Columbia,

University and International District/Chinatown branches doubled.

In 2023, we leveraged levy funds with funds available through the E-rate program, a federal program that provides rebates for eligible internet service and hardware expenses. Funded in part through the E-rate program, we made substantial infrastructure upgrades that will help ensure our libraries have dependable internet access. These included new network switches on nine out of 11 floors at the Central Library, with emergency power deployed to nine branches.

The 2019 Levy includes \$4 million to support the replacement of the existing Integrated Library System (ILS) system upgrades. In 2022, the Library worked with a consultant to develop a roadmap for this work, including replacing the discovery layer and make investments in digital asset management. This process included in-depth discovery sessions across all library functions. Due to staffing constraints, the Library deferred the planned Request for Proposal process to solicit responses from the ILS market until 2024.

LEVY ACCOMPLISHMENTS: SUPPORTING CHILDREN

Expanding early learning options for children



Play and Learn group at Lake City Branch

More Play and Learn programs and Restarting In-Person Story Times

The 2019 Levy promised additional support for Library early learning programs for children ages 0 to 5, providing about \$280,000 to support this effort in 2023. A key element of our early learning program is our continued support for the Kaleidoscope Play and Learn program, which offers drop-in neighborhood-based play groups for the Family, Friend and Neighbor Caregiver (FFN)

community. Weekly sessions, which are facilitated by early childhood educators, are available to children between the ages of birth to 5. Parents, caregivers, and children are guided through a variety of developmental activities that promote early learning. The Library has historically partnered with local community-based organizations and agencies to offer these programs by providing meeting room space and access to group supplies. Additionally, our children's librarians have provided early literacy support, promoted library programs and services and built connections with family, friend and neighbor caregivers. Prior to the pandemic, five Play and Learn programs were offered weekly at Beacon Hill, Broadview, Columbia, Lake City, and Rainier Beach branches.

As part of the 2019 levy, the Library had planned to establish up to six additional weekly sessions, either offering a second session per week at branches that already had programs or at branches that had previously not offered Play and Learn. The plan was to launch the new groups in late 2020. With the closures of library facilities in March 2020, however, all in-person children's programming went on hiatus, and some levy funding for Play and Learn was re-directed to address other emergent needs, including support for remote learning for children in grades K-5.

We restarted Play and Learn programming in late 2022 at Beacon Hill, Columbia, Lake City and Rainier Beach branches with long-time partners, Chinese Information and Service Center and Denise Louis Education Center. We also partnered with Villa Comunitaria to launch a group at South Park Branch in late 2022 and a second group at Delridge Branch in 2023. Also, in 2023, we worked with East African Community Services to launch a group at NewHolly branch. Overall, we offered 219 Play and Learn sessions at seven Library branches with a total attendance of 4,680. We currently offer programs in Spanish, Chinese, Amharic, Somali and English.

“We are seeing the results of our increased outreach efforts (at Columbia Branch). There are now 5 Amharic speaking families that attend the group.”

–Karen Greene Smith, Kaleidoscope Play and Learn Coordinator Denise Louie Education Center

Each year, BrightSpark, the umbrella organization that administers the Kaleidoscope Play and Learn program, evaluates survey responses from program participants from all Play and Learn programs in King County. As a result of participating in Play and Learn, more than 80% of the 191 Play and Learn parents and caregivers who responded to the 2023 survey said that they are more likely to read, look at books or tell stories with the child in their care and better understand that children develop school readiness skills when they play. Eighty-seven percent reported that they feel more supported as a parent or caregiver in their community.

In April, we brought back in-person story times and other early learning programs for the first time since the pandemic. In developing our early learning programs for 2023, the Library listened to and worked with community groups to develop programs that advance our equity goals, are culturally appropriate, and, when possible, community led. During 2023, we offered 542 story times at 18 branches, the Central Library and in the community. Our offerings included world language story times in Spanish and Arabic and a perennial patron favorite, Fire Fighter Story Time. Total attendance at these programs exceeded 18,000.



Fire Fighter Story Time at Lake City Branch

Beyond in-person offerings, we continued to offer a robust menu of virtual programs through our [Kids' YouTube channel](#), including 179 different videos of story times, Play and Learn programs, Early Learning at Home programs, and children's activities online that are available to the public to enjoy at any time. Overall, our children's videos were viewed over 39,000 times. Our most popular video, first published in 2020, "What Firefighters Wear" garnered over 21,000 of those views.

LEVY ACCOMPLISHMENTS: MAINTENANCE

Protecting our investments

The 2019 Levy promised to maintain Library buildings, preserve funding for major maintenance and add resources to undertake seismic retrofits for the [historic Columbia, Green Lake and University branches](#). The 2019 Levy provided about \$2 million in budget authority in 2022 to support routine maintenance and \$12.9 million to support major maintenance and seismic work.

Routine maintenance: Keeping our facilities clean and safe

Keeping the Library clean, safe and accessible is an important levy priority. The members of janitorial/custodial team and facilities team were busy this past year, completing approximately 7,000 work orders. The janitorial/custodial team completed 4,000 for the year, including 400 work orders in the Q4. In addition to their daily job duties, they conducted deep cleanings of contaminated restrooms and worked on the detection and eradication of bedbugs and other pests

within some of our branches. They also kept the exterior of the Central Library clean by pressure washing the Fourth Avenue, Spring Street and Fifth Avenue plazas at least once every two weeks. They did similar work at the Ballard Branch, continuing to address the impacts of an increase in encampments of the insecurely housed near Library property, which required daily pick-up of garbage and weekly pressure washing of the exterior plaza to keep the Library and the adjacent Neighborhood Service Center presentable and accessible to the public. Other important maintenance work was performed by our vendors, including window washing (including of the nearly 10,000 windows at the Central Library) and the deep cleaning of all hard surface floors and carpets at our locations.



New Automated Materials Handling System at the Maintenance and Operations Center

The facilities team completed over 3,000 works orders for the year, including 800 in the Q4, performing activities that ranged from maintaining the Automated Materials Handling System (AMHS) (which went live in its new location in Q3) to performing safety checks and walkthroughs for the HVAC systems to addressing ongoing issues with the elevators with Eltec, our elevator service provider, and more.

Major maintenance: Preserving libraries for the next generation

The 2019 Levy provided \$7.6 million in 2023 budget authority and \$10.8 million in carryforward authority for major maintenance and seismic upgrades. The 2012 levy provided an additional \$1.3 million in carryforward authority. In Q4, the Library spent nearly \$1.88 million (\$7.2 million for the entire year) of 2019 levy funds on seismic, major maintenance and IT capital work, and over \$718,000 of 2012 levy funds (\$1.4 million for the entire year).

Projects completed during 2023 included: Exterior access improvements and emergency sewer repairs at the Douglass-Truth Branch; roof replacement at the Queen Anne Branch; the interior build-out and installation of the Automated Materials Handling System (AMHS) and exterior painting of the Maintenance and Operations Center; and high-priority ADA restroom access improvements to the Madrona-Sally Goldmark, Capitol Hill, Montlake, Northeast and Rainier Beach branches.

Construction for the Green Lake Branch seismic retrofit project is continuing through early 2024. As of Q4, the University Branch seismic retrofit remained in the permitting phase; the branch is tentatively scheduled to close for construction later in 2024. As mentioned in previous reports, due to scope expansion, material scarcity and significant increases in construction costs, the project may face a shortfall of \$5 to \$6 million.

The Library continues to pursue federal and state funding opportunities to supplement levy funding for both seismic and HVAC/electrification projects. However, applying for, monitoring and reporting on federal and state funding requires substantial staff resources, and often requires technical expertise, all

of which can be beyond current Library staff capacity. Timeliness of funding decisions, especially at the federal level, varies and is dependent upon political factors beyond the Library's control.

Should the Library fail to secure federal and state grants or should the City further reduce the Library's REET allocation, it is likely that there will be insufficient resources to undertake the third seismic project (the Columbia Branch) planned in the 2019 levy.

Progress on other significant projects during Q4 included completion of sewer repairs at the Douglass-Truth branch. HVAC/mechanical systems units were also installed on the Capitol Hill Branch roof, and the final punch list items for the roof itself should be finished in Q1 2024. Finally, electrification upgrades (with the notable addition of air conditioning) were nearly completed for two branches: the Southwest Branch, with system control punch list items to be addressed in Q1 of 2024; and the Northeast branch, which is scheduled to reopen March 2024.

Risks, opportunities and the path ahead:

As you'll read in our 2024 first quarter report, our staff continue to adapt, enhance and launch services and programs to help our community respond to the COVID-19 crisis and beyond. Here's a quick preview:

- Release of the Library's new 10-year Strategic Plan
- The challenges of managing e-book and e-audiobook demand
- Operational changes related to new union contracts
- Analysis of expanded hours

2023 Financials

The 2019 Levy accounted for \$49.5 million (37%) of the Library's total revised 2023 budget of \$132 million. The Library spent \$30 million in funds from the 2019 Levy and \$1.6 million in funds from the 2012 Levy.

Spending tables below show the 2023 Operations Plan Budget plus encumbrances and unspent budget authority from prior years in the revised budget columns. Carryover budget authority of \$16.5 million from the 2019 levy and nearly \$2 million from the 2012 levy were available for spending in 2023. We spent 61% of the 2019 Levy's revised 2023 budget authority and 81% of the 2012 Levy's revised 2023 budget authority.

2019 Levy	2023 Ops Plan	2023 Revised	2023 YTD	% Revised Budget	
	Budget	Budget*	Exp.	Available	Spent
Hours & Access	13,283,000	13,248,402	12,107,668	1,140,734	91%
Collections	5,800,000	5,907,076	5,867,566	39,510	99%
Technology & Online Services	2,563,000	2,408,817	2,242,341	166,476	93%
Children's Programming	301,000	366,308	338,398	27,910	92%
Maintenance	1,832,000	2,152,110	1,777,084	375,026	83%
Administration	300,000	492,916	452,743	40,172	92%
Capital Improvement Program	8,894,000	24,904,429	7,242,545	17,661,884	29%
Total	32,973,000	49,480,059	30,028,348	19,451,712	61%

Includes \$496k in operating carry-forward and \$16M in capital carry-forward budget authority

2012 Levy	2023 Ops Plan	2023 Revised	2023		% Revised Budget
	Budget	Budget*	Expense	Available	Spent
Technology & Online Services	-	258,000	159,068	98,932	62%
Buildings & Facilities Support	-	9,250		9,250	
Capital Improvement Program	-	1,684,622	1,429,744	254,878	85%
Total	-	1,951,872	1,588,812	363,060	81%

Entire 18100 budget consists of carry-forward budget authority

Table 1. Scheduled weekly hours in 2023 compared to 2019 baseline

	2019 Baseline	Jan.-Mar. 2023	Apr. hours expansion	Nov. adjustment for NET closure	When Green Lake Opens
Ballard Branch	60	59	62	62	62
Beacon Hill Branch	60	57	56	56	56
Broadview Branch	60	57	62	62	56
Capitol Hill Branch	60	55	62	62	62
Central Library	62	54	62	62	62
Columbia Branch	60	53	56	56	56
Delridge Branch	39	40	56	56	56
Douglass-Truth Branch	60	55	62	62	62
Fremont Branch	39	40	48	48	48
Green Lake Branch	39	33	CLOSED	CLOSED	56
Greenwood Branch	60	61	62	62	62
High Point Branch	46	47	62	62	62
International District/Chinatown Branch	46	42	62	62	62
Lake City Branch	60	61	62	62	62
Madrona-Sally Goldmark Branch	39	40	48	48	48
Magnolia Branch	39	33	48	48	48
Montlake Branch	39	40	48	48	48
NewHolly Branch	39	33	56	56	56
Northeast Branch	60	57	56	CLOSED	56
Northgate Branch	60	57	56	60	56
Queen Anne Branch	39	35	48	48	48
Rainier Beach Branch	60	59	56	56	56
South Park Branch	46	47	62	62	62
Southwest Branch	60	45	56	56	56
University Branch	46	47	48	48	48
Wallingford Branch	39	40	56	56	48
West Seattle Branch	60	45	56	56	56
Total Weekly Hours	1,377	1,292	1,468	1,416	1,510
Hours as a % of 2019 baseline level		94%	107%	103%	110%



The Seattle Public Library

Date: April 25, 2024

To: Library Board of Trustees

From: Tom Fay, Executive Director and Chief Librarian
Jessica Smith, Strategy & Policy Advisor to the Chief Librarian

Re: **The Seattle Public Library 2024-2033 Strategic Plan Draft**

Background

For more than 130 years, the services offered by The Seattle Public Library have been highly valued, well used, and well supported by the people of Seattle. The Library offers access to books and information to hundreds of thousands of Seattle area residents.

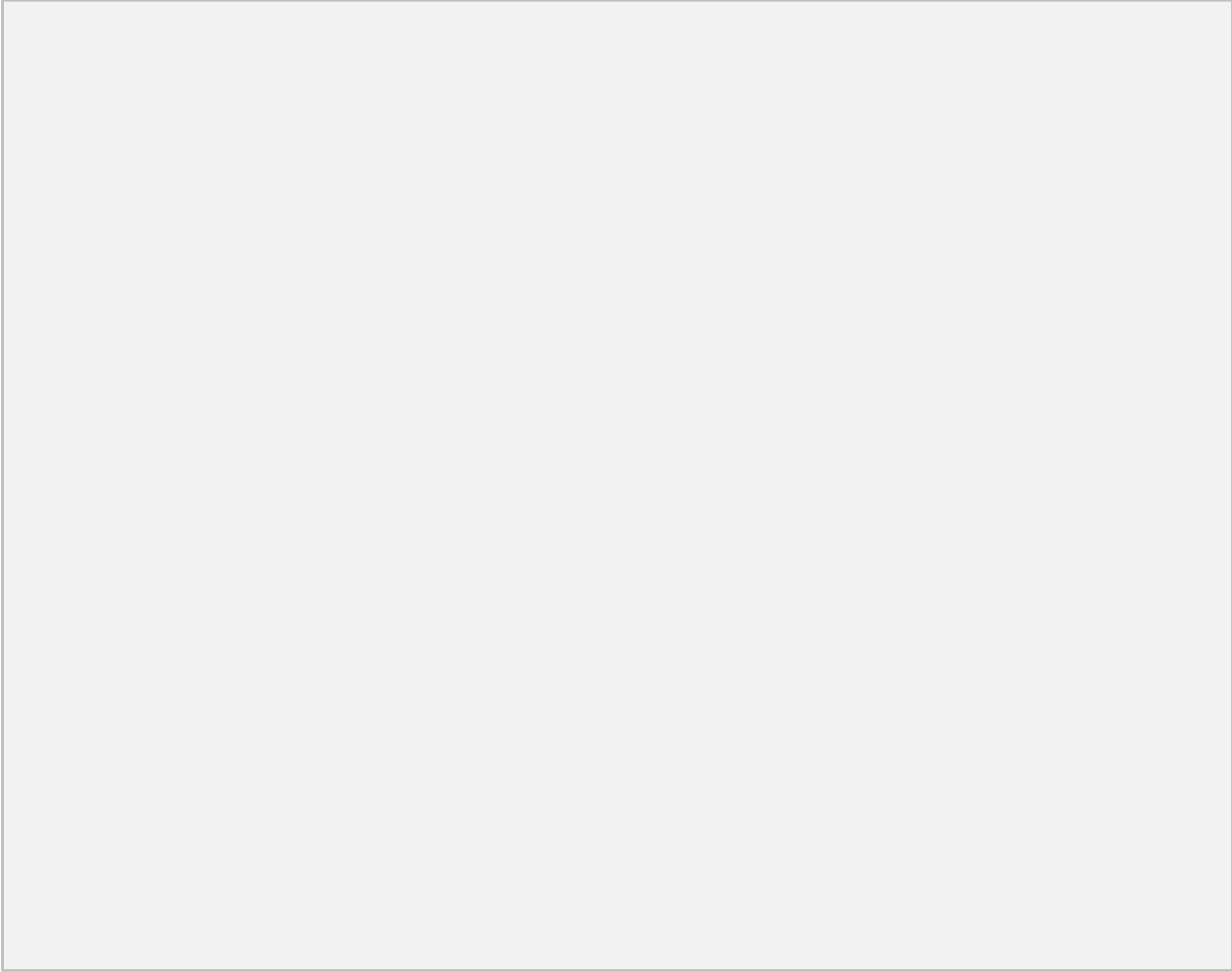
In 2022, the Library began working with Houston Foresight (the University of Houston) to complete a “Future of the Library” report. This report, supported by the 2019 Library Levy, was developed to help us better understand current and future challenges facing the community and our system. The report provides detailed analysis on the potential challenges, but also opportunities, the Library might face over the next decade.

Following receipt of the “Future of the Library” report in 2023, the Library began working with Territory North America to build upon the work of Houston Foresight and develop the 2024-2033 Strategic Plan. Nearly one year later, The Seattle Public Library’s 2024-2033 Strategic Plan draft is ready for review.

Next Steps

The April 2024 Board Packet includes the full text of the 2024-2033 Strategic Plan for your review and consideration.

Action required/requested: Request Board review of the 2024-2033 Strategic Plan Draft for approval at the May, 2024 Library Board meeting.



The Seattle Public Library

2024-2033 Strategic Plan

DRAFT for the Library Board of Trustees and Public Comment

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Message from the Chief Librarian and Executive Director, Tom Fay

Alongside patrons, partners, community members and stakeholders, The Seattle Public Library has identified a future vision and direction for the next 10 years. In this vision, the Library leverages its role and expertise in information services to serve as a community hub and connector.

The Library brings people together to enrich lives, empower community, and make a positive difference. The plan emphasizes our commitment to racial equity and social justice.

The concept of the Library as a community hub is not new. For decades, the Library has been an all-ages destination for discovery and learning. In more recent years, through partnerships and community listening, we have learned more about the emerging and emergent needs of our city. As a result, we are finding new ways to be in service to our community.

For example, we now provide expert social service information and referral support for patrons in need or crisis. This includes providing access to lifeline information some patrons struggle to find elsewhere. This includes referrals to housing opportunities, mental health support, transit access, medical care and more. Sometimes this work is as simple as offering a social hour and a cup of coffee in a safe and trusted space.

This is just one way the Library is making a positive difference in our community. We are also finding ways to support historically marginalized communities, low-income families, refugees and immigrants, early learners, children, teens and young adults, and seniors.

To sustain these efforts into the future, we must have a strong strategy in place and clear goals in mind. We must understand and strengthen our role in the community. This plan provides our path forward.

With a public service focus on **literacy, empowerment and enrichment**, we intend to increase a sense of **community belonging**.

With an organizational focus on **finance, staffing, capacity building, facilities, technology and sustainability**, we intend to make the Library a more **resilient organization**.

The future we envision builds on the Library's existing strengths: our world-class staff, buildings, collections, programs and services. It reinforces the importance of strong community partnerships. And requires us to build new skillsets, such as emerging technology knowledge,

new language skills and cultural competencies. It will require us to evaluate and adjust our hiring, training and retention strategies.

As this plan launches, I acknowledge there are significant challenges ahead – fiscal challenges, culture wars, global warming, increasing inequities and more. In particular, we must account for the City of Seattle’s looming 2025-2026 budget challenges. It is important we are realistic in what we can achieve and prioritize our most important actions. This plan outlines those actions.

This plan was written within the economic and budgetary environment of 2024. The actions, outcomes and impacts identified are aspirational, but achievable. Careful and creative management of resources over the next decade will be critical to our success.

Thanks to a “Future of the Library” study we conducted with expert futurists from the University of Houston, we also see many opportunities ahead. A new generation of enthusiastic library users has emerged, new technologies can help us succeed, and libraries are situated to be more relevant than ever.

I am excited about our future. Based on public and stakeholder feedback we have received about this plan, our community is excited, too.

THANK YOU to everyone who contributed to this plan. It would not have been possible without input from thousands of patrons, hundreds of staff, dozens of partner agencies and organizations, and our expert consultants.

Tom Fay
Chief Librarian and Executive Director
The Seattle Public Library

Introduction

For more than 130 years, the services offered by The Seattle Public Library have been highly valued, well used, and well supported by the people of Seattle. The Library offers access to books and information to hundreds of thousands of Seattle area residents.

As the Library looks ahead to the next 10 years, it recognizes that the changing needs of our community and increasing pressures of our era place a new level of importance on how the Library approaches the future. To better understand current and future challenges facing the community and our system, the Library worked with Houston Foresight (the University of Houston) to complete a “Future of the Library” report in 2023. This report provides detailed analysis on the potential challenges, but also opportunities, the Library might face over the next decade. See Appendix B for the full report.

Between 2000 and 2023, Seattle experienced significant growth, as well as increasing inequity and growing racial disparities. In recent years, the Library has found itself on the frontline of multiple crises: homelessness, mental health, addiction, and the COVID-19 pandemic.

The pandemic amplified existing inequities, accelerated technological and social change, contributed to educational losses, and challenged the social safety net. These changes have impacted Library operations, patrons of all ages, our staff and our partners.

The impact on our partners – many who serve historically marginalized communities -- was notable. Many organizations reduced or shuttered services, leaving wider service gaps in communities with the greatest need.

The Library seeks to help the community respond to these challenges and to chart a path forward. In doing so, we must be clear and strategic about our role in this work.

This requires the Library to expand our understanding of our information services expertise. It requires rethinking our approach to Library collections, programs and spaces. It requires close partnerships with other agencies and organizations. And it requires the funding and staffing to support it.

As we look toward our future, we believe the Library must:

- Continue our core service of providing free access to books and information.
- Develop community programming that improves people’s lives.
- Serve as a community hub and connector that helps facilitate positive change.
- Prioritize equity in its actions, services and outcomes.
- Listen to and reflect more diverse voices and viewpoints.
- Commit to putting people first.

The Seattle Public Library believes it is an organization well-positioned to help community members navigate, understand and access information that is important to them. We believe our work can enrich and empower people in our community. We believe our work can increase community belonging.

This plan outlines how we will work to achieve that through the mission, values and goals we have defined for the next 10 years.

Mission, Vision, Values and Principles

A successful strategic approach requires a strong mission, a clear vision, organizational values that align with the values of the community, and core principles to guide us.

These statements of organizational purpose will act as a consistent reference in times of change or challenge.

Our Mission

The Seattle Public Library's mission is to bring people, information, and ideas together to enrich lives and empower community.

Our Vision

We envision The Seattle Public Library as the central hub of an equitable and connected city where knowledge flourishes, connections deepen, and people find inspiration and a sense of belonging.

Our Values

The Library's values serve as a guide for how we interact with our community and each other. They include:

Care

- The Library cares about the well-being of our community.
- We are committed to patron safety and confidentiality, in person and online.
- We are committed to supporting intellectual freedom and a healthy democracy.
- We are committed to transparency, accountability and good stewardship.

Connection

- The Library values people by listening and responding to their needs.
- We build positive connections, emphasizing respect and dignity for all people.
- We are committed to seeking equitable outcomes for historically marginalized people.
- We are committed to teamwork and collaborative community building.

Learning

- The Library is an all-ages destination for learning and discovery.
- We offer a large and diverse collection of books and other materials for free.
- We host engaging programs tailored to community needs and interests.
- We promote and support early learning and lifelong literacy and learning.

Our Principles

The Library's principles are fundamental standards we apply to our work. These include:

Equity

We strive for equity in all aspects of our work. We distinguish between equity and equality. Equity recognizes relevant differences between people and works to overcome the disadvantages and obstacles that prevent some people from accessing or fully benefiting from Library programs and services. Equality, however, simply requires treating all people the same way, regardless of the relevant differences between them, and perpetuates injustice by maintaining those disadvantages and obstacles. We are committed to advancing equity, diversity, inclusion and accessibility at all levels of our organization and in all aspects of our work. In alignment with the City of Seattle’s Race and Social Justice ordinance, we work to uncover and dismantle institutionalized racism in our organization and to advance racial, social and economic justice in the Seattle community. To learn more about the Library’s commitment to equity, visit www.spl.org/equity.

Intellectual Freedom

We serve all people, and all people are welcome in the Library. Our materials, programs, resources and services are free and available to all people regardless of their origin, age, background or views. We promote and protect freedom of thought, freedom of expression, and the freedom to explore new information and ideas. We respect the right of all people to choose for themselves what to read, listen to or watch. Intellectual freedom is essential for a healthy democracy and fundamental to the mission of the Library. Learn more about the Library’s commitment to intellectual freedom by visiting www.spl.org/intellectualfreedom.

Roadmap to Community Belonging and Organizational Resiliency

The Seattle community and The Seattle Public Library have faced significant changes in recent years. This has included educational, social, political, technological, financial and environmental changes.

The Library has seen first-hand that the COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated many social challenges. Our community's children have experienced learning loss, teens have experienced increased mental health struggles, and many across all ages have experienced ongoing isolation.

A clear, strategic and collaborative response is needed to support the health and well-being of our city and its people.

The Library believes it can take actions over the next decade that can lead to gains in community literacy, self-empowerment and enrichment. We believe we can rethink and rebuild our approaches to Library funding, staffing, buildings, technology and sustainability to support these goals.

We seek to build:

A STRONGER, MORE INCLUSIVE SENSE OF COMMUNITY BELONGING

We believe everyone should feel a sense of belonging at the Library and in the city of Seattle.

Library programs, collections and services provide opportunities to appreciate and understand other's perspectives and lived experiences. We are proudly inclusive of numerous viewpoints and backgrounds, and act as champions of intellectual freedom for all.

The Library also acts as a community hub, bringing people from all ages, backgrounds and abilities together. To best support the entire community, the Library seeks to uplift those who are furthest from social, educational and financial justice.

To increase community belonging, the Library will emphasize partnership with our community. We will engage in close and ongoing listening to the many diverse voices of our city. Our collections, spaces, programs and actions will reflect the people of Seattle.

The following actions are key:

- Ensure open hours and programming hours are aligned to meet the needs of our community
- Co-design Library programs with a broad and diverse array of community organizations

- Maintain and expand the diversity, breadth and depth of physical and digital collections
- Identify and dismantle barriers to programs and resources for marginalized communities
- Establish and maintain engagement with communities most impacted by low literacy rates
- Convene partners to build networks of support in areas of community need
- Use Universal Design principles in public spaces and services
- Develop measures of success for the outcomes identified in this plan

A MORE RESILIENT ORGANIZATION

The Library must build its own organizational resiliency. The Library will develop new systems and funding mechanisms to sustain it in adverse times. We will build our capacity to respond to the rapidly changing needs of our community. We will support, protect and promote our workers.

The commitment to our role as a center of information remains strong. We must also adjust and evolve our service approach to remain relevant and impactful.

To achieve these goals, we must first prioritize assessments of our current work.

The following actions are key:

- Conduct assessments, including measuring community satisfaction, of current Library hours, programs, services, buildings, staffing and funding models
- Adjust staffing models to support deeper community engagement and more responsive services
- Create access plans for people who need additional support to participate in Library activities
- Prioritize, fund and staff the development of new partnerships

In the following pages, the Library has outlined six **AREAS OF IMPACT** to increase **COMMUNITY BELONGING** and **ORGANIZATIONAL RESILIENCY**.

Areas of Impact

The Library has identified six **areas of impact** we believe will lead to positive change in our community and within the organization. These impact areas were identified with guidance from community members, Library patrons, staff, partners and stakeholders. You can learn more about our research and community engagement processes on our website at www.spl.org/Future.

Community impact areas

We will work to help individuals and families **in our community** make measurable progress in the following areas:

- Literacy
- Empowerment
- Enrichment

Through these focus areas, we intend to cultivate a stronger sense of community **belonging** for patrons and staff.

Organizational impact areas

We will also work to make measurable progress **within the Library** in the following areas:

- Funding
- Increased capacity
- Buildings, technology and sustainability

Through these focus areas, we intend to make the Library a **resilient organization** well into the future.

The Library's role in the community

Our ability to make transformational changes in these areas requires us to be clear about our role within the community.

In the development of this plan, we noted the Library:

- provides free public spaces where all are welcome;
- connects people to free books and information, resources and to each other;
- conducts outreach, engagement and programming outside of our buildings;

- collaborates with other organizations to maximize community impact;
- and co-designs programs and services with members of the community.

The Library acts as a **community connector, facilitator, partner, organizer** and a **funder** of our community's priorities. In this plan, we embrace these roles and seek to build organized and well-informed networks of community support and resources where they are most needed.

Community impact: Literacy

Literacy helps people turn information into learning and knowledge. Literacy and learning were severely impacted worldwide during the COVID-19 pandemic. Children and teens experienced losses in reading and math. Adults fell behind in vocational training and higher education.

While data indicate signs of recovery in some of these areas, the recovery is uneven. These setbacks have deepened educational and vocational gaps for people of color and for people living with low or no income. The Library can play a role in helping these communities recover.

Literacy, which includes the ability to read, also includes the ability to understand and navigate information, environments, systems or situations. Misinformation spreads rapidly, and it has become difficult for people to understand what resources and information they can trust. As a trusted source of information, the Library can play a role in supporting information and systems literacy needs.

The Library thinks of literacy in other ways, too – digital, financial, language, health, and more. These are areas where the Library can support community literacy goals.

OUR COMMITMENT: The Library commits to helping people access the skills, resources and opportunities they need to read, learn and navigate their lives. We will work with partners to build networks of support that lead to positive impacts for multiple literacies.

LITERACY OUTCOMES: Goals we are working toward

The Library will provide programs, collections, services and other resources to:

- Help children, teens and young adults build a love for reading and learning
- Help students to read at or above grade level
- Support the needs of early learners, adult learners and non-English speakers
- Reduce barriers for Seattle Public Schools students to access the Library
- Help people of all ages navigate social systems in their daily lives

PRIORITY ACTIONS: Steps we will take

The Library will:

- Expand programs and services for children and youth that foster positive, lifelong connections to reading and learning

- Maintain and introduce new programs supporting financial, digital, educational, medical and other literacies
- Collaborate with community organizations providing literacy support and advocacy to build a resource network of support for regional literacy goals
- Co-locate book kiosks or lockers with partners throughout the city to improve access to books and information
- Incorporate artificial intelligence and other emerging technologies into digital literacy offerings and trainings for the public
- Strengthen partnership with Seattle Public Schools, especially Title I schools, to provide more Library resources to students at their schools
- Evaluate Library program effectiveness based on language acquisition, comprehension and confidence levels

Community Impact: Empowerment

As stated in our mission, the Library brings people, information, and ideas together to enrich lives and empower community. People feel empowered when they have the freedom, confidence and resources to pursue their life goals.

The Library wants to support people in pursuing their goals and interests and in achieving socioeconomic well-being. This includes supporting skill development, entrepreneurial support, free thought, self-expression and more.

We will do this by offering information services, classes and events that support people's goals and interests. We will connect people to organizations and networks that can support them. We will co-design our programming efforts with community members to ensure representation of diverse viewpoints.

There is significant community value to these efforts. For example, in 2022, the Library utilized the Urban Libraries Council's Business Value Calculator to estimate we provide a market value of nearly \$5 million in business services to Seattle area entrepreneurs and business professionals.

The Library provides many other valuable services to the community, including: resume and skill building support for job seekers, citizenship support for immigrants and refugees, language skills classes for non-English speakers, workshops for writers, technology and digital literacy classes and so much more.

The Library believes all people should feel welcome and have access to opportunities that will improve their lives.

OUR COMMITMENT: The Library commits to helping people build confidence and skills to pursue and achieve their life goals. We will prioritize inclusivity and accessibility, as they are key to empowerment for all.

EMPOWERMENT OUTCOMES: Goals we are working toward

The Library will provide community access to:

- Accessible and inclusive collections, programs, services and spaces that celebrate intellectual freedom and personal expression
- Cutting-edge technologies that support job and life skills needed now and in the future

- Entrepreneurial support to strengthen community business networks and build social capital
- Digital equity programming that narrows the digital divide through 2034 and beyond
- Discussions, workshops, classes and more that are co-designed with community

PRIORITY ACTIONS: Steps we will take

The Library will:

- Identify qualitative outcomes for the Library’s skill-building workshops, vocational training and career development programs
- Support participation in the current and future workforce by providing skill-building workshops, vocational training and career development programs
- Incorporate accessibility policies as a standard practice for all Library programs and services
- Partner with local organizations to evaluate community social service needs
- Assess and respond to the availability of digital access and literacy programs

Community Impact: Enrichment

Engaging in enriching activities helps people explore and discover a greater sense of themselves and of the world around them. People can enrich their lives through books, music, films, TV, performances, cultural celebrations, community discussions, local history, research and more.

Connecting with others is an important way to enrich a life. Our community, and the broader world, is facing an epidemic of loneliness and isolation. Depression rates have reached all-time highs in the U.S. The pandemic significantly damaged social well-being and connection. It is critical we act as a community to address this.

The Library seeks to foster joy, encourage curiosity, and provide meaningful experiences and opportunities to connect with others. Library materials, activities and experiences can enrich the lives of those who live in and visit our city. Our approach will encourage learning, acceptance and care for people in our community and the world.

OUR COMMITMENT: The Library commits to providing collections, programs, services and spaces that enhance and bring joy and connection to people’s lives.

ENRICHMENT OUTCOMES: Goals we are working toward

The Library will champion and celebrate:

- The joy of reading in our programs and physical and digital collections
- The diverse voices and talents of our community
- The preservation of local history, representing the many people and cultures who have called Seattle home
- Intellectual freedom and civic engagement in our programs and collections
- Experiences that build community and cultivate a sense of belonging

PRIORITY ACTIONS: Steps we will take

The Library will:

- Increase the collections budget by 25 percent to add more depth and breadth, as well as respond to increased interest in e-books and e-audiobooks.
- Assess and increase the Library’s representation of diverse voices in Library policies, programs and services

- Create programs that lead to shared positive experiences across backgrounds and cultures
- Build programs that encourage self-expression through art, writing and other creative activities
- Showcase local experts and artists to strengthen the community's sense of place and belonging

Library Organizational Impact: Funding

The majority of the Library's funding is provided by the City of Seattle's General Fund, with 61% of the budget provided by this resource in 2024. The Library's financial well-being and our ability to deliver services to the public is closely tied to the performance of the local and national economy.

We are grateful to Seattle voters for approving a seven-year, \$219.1 million Library Levy in 2019 to support, maintain, and expand core Library services. The Levy provides 30% of the Library's overall 2024 budget. Over the years, the Library has become increasingly reliant on the levy to maintain and grow our programs.

Consistency of Library services relies on consistency of funding mechanisms. The Library's funding resources need to support ongoing and increasing costs related to personnel, collections, facilities, technologies, programs and information services.

The Library's current funding mechanisms can result in cycles of growth followed by impactful reductions. These cycles can disrupt longer-term continuity of service and progress toward our goals.

OUR COMMITMENT: The Library commits to exploring additional funding resources beyond the City's general fund and seven-year levies.

FUNDING OUTCOMES: Goals we are working toward

The Library will:

- Develop a 2026 levy proposal to support the community's Library needs
- Explore opportunities to augment or replace seven-year levy funding cycles
- Increase private giving in collaboration with The Seattle Public Library Foundation
- Evaluate the potential for a comprehensive campaign to fund Library programs, services and building needs
- Modernize internal systems to ensure effective management of public and philanthropic funds
- In partnership with Friends and Foundation, advocate for the benefits and importance of libraries

PRIORITY ACTIONS: Steps we will take

The Library will:

- Assess community and organizational needs to inform the development of a levy renewal
- Communicate strategic goals and actions to enhance alignment with the Foundation for increased private sector funding for Library initiatives
- Ensure strategic organizational alignment with The Seattle Public Library Foundation and the Friends of The Seattle Public Library
- Collaborate with peer libraries to increase federal and philanthropic support nationwide
- Work with publishers and other libraries to address the rising costs of e-materials and the difficulty of acquiring titles

Library Organizational Impact: Capacity

The Library is people serving people, and Library staff are the heart and soul of our work. In recent years, libraries and their workers in systems across the U.S. are serving new kinds of community roles. Libraries are called on to provide access and knowledge, emerging technology assistance, shelter from inclement weather, social services support and more.

These community needs take more staffing and time and, in some cases, special expertise. This could include social service experts, security experts, information experts and more. As a free, safe and democratic space where everyone is welcome, library workers are helping people in all stages of life and with many different needs. Library workers need strong teams at each of our buildings to manage our public spaces.

With library roles evolving, we want to make sure our staff feel supported and proud of their work in our community. This means ensuring staff have the systems, infrastructure, knowledge and skillsets they need to do their jobs.

To best support our community, Library staff should understand and reflect the neighborhoods they serve. This means having the time and skills it takes to conduct meaningful neighborhood outreach and engagement with Seattle residents. It also means ensuring our recruitment and hiring strategies bring in talent that aligns with Library goals and values.

OUR COMMITMENT: The Library commits to building organizational capacity through new recruitment, hiring and training approaches, as well as improved systems and processes. We seek to be a desirable workplace and an employer of choice in our community.

CAPACITY OUTCOMES: Goals we are working toward

The Library will:

- Ensure the Library's workforce is diverse and culturally competent in working with Seattle's many communities
- Build capacity to stabilize operations and improve access to library offerings
- Increase staffing and evolve skill sets to support current and future community needs
- Increase staff sense of satisfaction, purpose and belonging at work
- Enhance staff empowerment, communication, training, development and upward mobility

PRIORITY ACTIONS: Steps we will take

The Library will:

- Provide more resources and training for supervisors and managers to support their staff
- Assess current organizational structure, staff roles and skill sets; determine changes needed to support our vision
- Identify and co-create training opportunities that improve employee and community outcomes
- Increase capacity for more community outreach, engagement and program development

Library Organizational Impact: Buildings, Technology and Sustainability

Our buildings include Seattle’s world-renowned Central Library; 26 neighborhood branch libraries, 10 of which are historic city landmarks; and a maintenance and operations center where books are sorted and dispatched.

The Library has worked to reduce its carbon footprint and convert building systems away from fossil fuels. But the Library lacks a dedicated funding stream for this work, as well as for the ongoing maintenance needs of its high-use public facilities. We have sought support for building needs and upgrades through voter-approved Levy funds, federal grants and other one-time funding sources. A longer-term, sustainable approach is needed to maintain these beloved, but aging buildings.

Our public buildings are increasingly being called on to serve in multiple capacities: centers of learning and knowledge, community meeting and gathering spaces, heating and cooling centers during inclement weather, daytime respite during wildfire smoke events, a safe haven for people experiencing housing instability, and more.

To serve these many needs, our buildings must be flexible and accessible in design, as well as safe, clean, well-maintained and welcoming to all. The Library must leverage new technologies to meet our building and sustainability goals, as well as to grow or improve our collections, programs and services.

As the climate continues to change, it is critical to the long-term needs of our community that we prioritize environmental sustainability.

OUR COMMITMENT: The Library commits to decreasing our carbon footprint. We will implement sustainable practices in the maintenance and upgrades of Library buildings and technologies. Library technology will improve the patron experience, in-person and online.

BUILDINGS, TECHNOLOGY AND SUSTAINABILITY OUTCOMES: Goals we are working toward

The Library will:

- Create accessible and culturally responsive Library spaces
- Reduce the Library’s carbon footprint by meeting or exceeding the City’s carbon reduction goals
- Offer access to modern technologies with an emphasis on reducing the digital divide
- Utilize new technologies to assess and improve the effectiveness of Library systems
- Be innovative in approach to capital improvements, facilities management, accessibility and beautification of library buildings

PRIORITY ACTIONS: Steps we will take

The Library will:

- Evaluate community usage of current Library locations; determine whether changes are needed
- Evaluate the current accessibility of Seattle libraries and develop an improvement plan
- Develop and implement a plan to move all Seattle libraries away from fossil fuels
- Enhance transportation options at libraries, such as bicycle parking and electric vehicle charging
- Convert the Library's fleet to electric vehicles
- Establish a solar roof replacement program whenever library roofs exceed their useful lives
- Develop adaptable and programmable spaces
- Provide fast and reliable Library technology, including hardware, software and internet access
- Maintain and upgrade systems to support scalable, sustainable technologies and services, including the Integrated Library System (ILS)
- Monitor the success of Library sustainability work with goals, assessment and reporting

Assessing our Resources

This Strategic Plan requires ongoing assessment of Library resources in support of our goals. Our approach to planning will be agile and iterative in support of a 10-year timeframe.

Many resources are needed to support this plan, but assessing the following resources is key:

- Funding
- Staffing
- Collections
- Partnerships
- Buildings and technology

In our assessments, we must understand the serious challenges and risks that face public libraries:

- Short-term and long-term economic downturns resulting in revenue declines
- Limited capacity to carry out needed work, such as engagement and program development
- Rapidly evolving technologies, which are costly to acquire, maintain and upgrade
- Aging buildings and deferred maintenance, which increases cost and complexity of improvements
- Climate change and its impact on our community and to library buildings
- Social and political pressures that challenge the fundamental role of public libraries

Implementation Phases by Funding Cycles

This Strategic Plan spans a 10-year time period. Full adoption of this plan will require an iterative approach to implementation that takes into account our financial resources.

Three defined implementation phases, outlined below, account for the City of Seattle's biennial budget cycles, future library levies, and other funding mechanisms we intend to pursue.

Each phase will begin with the evaluation of Library resources to track our ability to achieve our goals.

Phase I: 2024-2026

In this phase, the Library will implement and improve work already underway, including increasing digital equity and support for children, teens and young adults. New work will focus on conducting assessments of finances, buildings and operations to inform planning for future phases. In this phase, the Library will work with the City of Seattle in development of the 2025-2026 biennial budget. We will also plan for the renewal of the 2019 Library Levy in 2026.

Phase II: 2026-2028

In this phase, the Library will focus on implementation of the strategic plan's priority actions. We anticipate many of these activities will be made possible by the passing of a proposed Library Levy renewal in 2026. The Library will work with the City of Seattle in development of the 2027-2028 biennial budget. We will also conduct additional building assessments as needed to inform new funding proposals, such as a potential capital bond measure and a private capital fundraising campaign.

Phase III: 2028-2034

In this phase, the Library will focus on developing a capital bond measure to support the maintenance and upgrade needs for Seattle's public libraries. We will also work with our partner, The Seattle Public Library Foundation, to initiate a private capital fundraising campaign. During this phase, the Library will work with the City of Seattle in developing three biennial budgets (2029-2030, 2031-2032, and 2033-2034). We will also begin planning for another proposed levy renewal in 2033.

Reporting Our Progress

The Library will publish a Strategic Plan report at the beginning of each biennial budget cycle. The report will include recent accomplishments and upcoming actions. Additional updates related to this plan will be included in the Library's annual Operations Plan and Levy Report.

Appendices

The Strategic Plan includes the following elements that provide additional information and guidance for the future. Each appendix listed below includes a brief description of the type of information included within.

APPENDIX A: How We Developed This Plan

This appendix includes information on the “Future of the Library” Study which provided the Library and its stakeholders an opportunity to better understand possible future outcomes for public libraries, including what a “preferred” future might look like. This appendix also includes a brief description of the Theory of Change Model used to develop, assess and guide this strategic planning process.

APPENDIX B: Future of the Library Study

This appendix includes the “Future of the Library Study” developed and published by Houston Foresight in January 2023. This study, supported by the 2019 Library Levy, was commissioned to help the Library identify challenges and opportunities over the next decade. The study also includes potential responses to various social, political, economic and institutional scenarios that the Library might face. This report served as the Library’s starting point as it began to develop the 2024-2033 Strategic Plan.

APPENDIX C: How We Will Implement This Plan

This appendix focuses on how we will address the implementation process of this Strategic Plan. This includes a description of how we will identify our metrics and measures to monitor progress in our goals. It also includes a description of how we will implement the multiple phases of the Strategic Plan. Lastly, this appendix includes the Library’s commitment to transparency and accountability as we work through the successes and challenges of this plan.



The Seattle Public Library

Date: April 25, 2023

To: Library Board of Trustees

From: Tom Fay, Executive Director and Chief Librarian
Rob Gannon, Administrative Services Director
Kai Tang, Library Programs and Services Director

Re: Food and Beverages in the Library Administrative Procedure Update

Background

Currently, Library staff enforce no eating in the Library, except in designated areas. Current approved areas for consuming food and drink are Library meeting rooms, auditoriums, special events, and designated spaces, namely specific areas of levels 3 and 5 of the Central Library, the Lake City Branch café space, and branch lobbies. The current associated Rules of Conduct section is Category A: Consuming food or beverages in public areas of the Library not authorized by the Library (see attached Administrative Procedure.)

Proposed change

Eating is allowed in Library locations, except in designated non-eating areas. Non-eating areas include computer and copy/scan areas, collections, Special Collections, and areas specified by the local branch.

While eating is no longer prohibited, impactful behavior associated with eating will be addressed. Consuming food or beverages in a disruptive manner will be considered Disruptive Behavior (Category A) in the current Rules of Conduct. Examples of disruptive behavior include excessively smelly foods, creating food mess (drips, packaging, crumbs), eating in a manner that prevents other patrons from using the Library, damaging property, or leaving a mess.

Primary benefits:

- Provides a service environment that supports basic human needs. Restrictive eating policies disproportionately impact our patrons furthest from Racial and Social Justice.
- Enforcement of eating policy can lead to escalated interactions between staff and patrons, resulting in perceptions of harassment by patrons and worse impacts on staff
- Supports social services and youth programs where food improves our relationship with patrons, increasing trust, relevance, and interest. Existing programs that would benefit from loosening food restrictions include Homework Help, Teen/YA drop-in, Coffee & Conversations, and others.

Primary concerns:

- Fair enforcement of “disruptive eating”
- Janitorial response to food messes (spills, trash, etc.). How to request clean up? What expectations to set for Emergency Clean-up orders?
- Impact on furniture & furnishings (replacement/repair costs)
- Impact on regular Janitorial activities (increase trash volume, workload)

Specific language from the Administrative Procedure to be eliminated: As authorized by the Library, food and beverages may be consumed in Library meeting rooms, auditoriums, designated spaces and at special events.

Alternative language: As authorized by the Library, food and beverages may be consumed in all public areas of Library facilities except at computer stations, scanning/copying areas, collections, Special Collections, and other areas designated by the Library.

Action required/requested: Informational only, no action requested. Comment or feedback welcome.



Administrative Procedure

FOOD AND BEVERAGES IN THE LIBRARY	Approved by Tom Fay, Executive Director and Chief Librarian, DATE ; Supercedes Food and Beverages in the Library, adopted Dec. 1, 2015
Owner: Administrative Services Director	

BACKGROUND

The Seattle Public Library seeks to make Library facilities comfortable and safe for its patrons, volunteers and staff members. In order to be good stewards and caretakers of publicly funded facilities, the Library directs patrons, volunteers and staff members on how and where in the Library food and beverages may be consumed.

STATEMENT

The Library strives to create a welcoming, clean and comfortable environment for the public. Consistent with this goal, the following rules specify how food and beverage may be consumed in public areas of Library facilities:

- As authorized by the Library, food and beverages may be consumed in all public areas of Library facilities except at computer stations, scanning/copying areas, collections, Special Collections, and other areas designated by the Library.
- Consuming beverages from lidded containers is permitted throughout the Library. Lidded containers include covered coffee, water, soda and juice cups, glass and plastic beverage bottles and beverage cans.
- Infants may be nursed or fed from bottles in any area of the Library.

APPLICABILITY

This procedure applies to all food and beverage consumption occurring in public areas of Library facilities.

RELATED LAWS, POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

Board Policy, *Rules of Conduct*.

Revised Code of Washington (RCW) 49.60.030, Freedom from discrimination - Declaration of civil rights.

HISTORY

Supercedes *Food and Beverage in the Library* approved on December 1, 2015; Supercedes *Food and Beverage Rule Guidelines* approved March 16, 2004.



Administrative Procedure

FOOD AND BEVERAGES IN THE LIBRARY	Approved by Marcellus Turner, City Librarian, on Dec. 1, 2015;
Owner: Administrative Services Director	Supersedes Food and Beverage Rule Guidelines adopted March 16, 2004 Approved by Tom Fay, Executive Director and Chief Librarian, DATE ; Supersedes Food and Beverages in the Library, adopted Dec. 1, 2015

BACKGROUND

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The Seattle Public Library

Date: April 18, 2024
To: Library Board of Trustees
From: Anne Cisney, President, AFSCME Local 2083
Re: **Union Update – A transition and a thank you**

To the Seattle Public Library Board of Trustees,

Every April, AFSCME Local 2083 holds an election and then welcomes that year's incoming Executive Board to their new roles. The freshly-elected team, which typically includes a strong mix of new and returning members, begins their term in May.

This year, I am excited to announce that elections have resulted in a slightly bigger change in Union Leadership than we usually see: After fourteen years as Union President, I will be stepping back to the role of Vice President of Librarians. Jessica Lucas, who has served ably in several key roles within the Union—most recently as Executive Vice President—will be taking over the President's chair. I have every confidence in her leadership and am looking forward to introducing her to you after she is sworn in next month.

It has been such an honor to serve as Union President, and to have participated in so many conversations with you. I believe our willingness to approach opportunities and challenges in the spirit of collaboration, problem solving, and respect; and our ability to draw on the wisdom and ideas of Union members, Library Leaders, and the Library Board of Trustees; are among the greatest strengths of our organization. I look forward to continuing to be of support in the role I am about to assume.

I want to thank Tom Fay, Jessica Lucas, the Library Leadership Team, every member of the Library Board of Trustees, and the Union's membership for your ongoing commitment to developing this spirit of partnership and moving through whatever challenges come in the next year, together.

Sincerely,
Anne Cisney, President, AFSCME Local 2083

Action required/requested: Informational only.



The Seattle Public Library

NEWS RELEASES

Date			Title
03	15	2024	Join Seattle Writer and Editor Nisi Shawl for a Series on “Reading and Writing the ‘Other’” at The Seattle Public Library
03	15	2024	Seattle Reads 2024 Selection is ‘Parable of the Sower’ by Octavia Butler, the “Grande Dame of Science Fiction”
03	20	2024	All locations of The Seattle Public Library will be closed on March 27 for staff in-service day
03	28	2024	Enjoy the April 8 Solar Eclipse With Free Viewing Glasses From The Seattle Public Library
03	29	2024	April 2024 Author Readings And Community Events with The Seattle Public Library



The Seattle Public Library
MEDIA COVERAGE

Date	Organization	Headline	Details	Link
6-March-2024	Northwest Asian Weekly	<u>Local author Susan Lieu to discuss new memoir at Seattle Public Library event</u>	Among the Seattle Public Library (SPL)'s author events this month is one featuring Susan Lieu, who will be sharing insights into her latest memoir, "The Manicurist's Daughter," on March 19.	https://nwasianweekly.com/2024/03/local-author-susan-lieu-to-discuss-new-memoir-at-seattle-public-library-event/
7-March-2024	Chongqing International Media Center	<u>Chongqing and Seattle Celebrate 40 Years of Enduring Friendship and Collaboration Sister Cities</u>	Activities such as book exchanges and mutual donations have occurred between Chongqing Library and the Seattle Public Library.	https://www.ichongqing.info/2024/03/07/c-hongqing-and-seattle-celebrate-40-years-of-enduring-friendship-and-collaboration-sister-cities/
8-March-2024	CNN	<u>Rem Koolhaas: 'In all my buildings, I'm trying to escape'</u>	Libraries and Koolhaas are not an obvious fit. The popular image of them — labyrinthine, stuffy, dimly lit — hardly aligns with his aesthetic sensibilities ("the typical illumination of libraries is deeply unpleasant," he remarked). Yet his Seattle Public Library, completed in 2004, is one of his most famous works...	https://www.cnn.com/style/rem-koolhaas-architecture-escape-spc/index.html
11-March-2024	The Seattle Times	<u>Rant and Rave: Reader appreciates local library's decorations</u>	RAVE to the staff at the Beacon Hill branch of the Seattle Public Library who decorate the wall behind the counter every month. Worth a trip even if you're not looking for a book.	https://www.seattletimes.com/life/lifestyle/rant-and-rave-reader-appreciates-local-librarys-decorations/

11-March-2024	KUOW	<p><u>Libraries in Western Washington confront the challenges of being open to all</u></p>	<p>Over the last two years, the Seattle Public Library has created an in-house social services team that includes a social services librarian, a senior community resource specialist, and a second trained social worker who helps young people up to the age of 26. The program is funded by a 2019 levy, the city's general fund, as well as library-generated revenue.</p> <p>“This team provides expertise to the library on social service resources, coordinates with other providers, works closely with our security team to support staff in de-escalation and trauma-informed practices, and assists patrons in need of referrals or who are in crisis,” explained Elisa Murray, digital communications specialist with the Seattle Public Library.</p>	<p><u>https://www.kuow.org/stories/libraries-in-western-washington-confront-the-challenges-of-being-open-to-all</u></p>
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12-March-2024	Queen Anne & Magnolia News	<u>Plein Aires exhibit open through mid-April</u>	The Plein Aires are a group of hobby artists that have been working and painting together for the last 40 years or so. Their work will be on display at the Magnolia Branch of the Seattle Public Library until mid-April. The exhibit opened last weekend and features 47 paintings from 14 of the individual artists.	<u>https://queenannene.ws.com/news/2024/mar/12/plein-aires-exhibit-open-through-mid-april/</u>
—	Artbeat – City of Seattle Office of Arts & Culture	<u>Seattle Civic Poet Launches Public Poetry Campaign</u>	Launching on April 1, the campaign features Seattle poets Kathya Alexander, Bryna Antonia (Á Thanh) Cortes, Cindy Luong, Joe Nasta, and Bryan Wilson in these locations across the city: Seattle Public Library (downtown and South Park)...	<u>https://artbeat.seattle.gov/2024/03/12/seattle-civic-poet-launches-public-poetry-campaign/</u>
16-March-2024	The Seattle Times	<u>Seattle Reads 2024 program to celebrate legacy of Octavia Butler</u>	Every year, the Seattle Public Library partners with local independent bookstores and arts organizations to invite the city to read and celebrate one book as part of its Seattle Reads program. This year’s selection, Octavia Butler’s “Parable of the Sower,” marks a pair of firsts for Seattle Reads: It’s the first science fiction novel selection, and the first from an author who is no longer living.	<u>https://www.seattletimes.com/entertainment/books/seattle-reads-2024-program-to-celebrate-legacy-of-octavia-butler/</u>

20-March-2024	The Stranger	<p><u>Stranger Suggests: Anida Yoeu Ali's The Buddhist Bug, Make Believe Film Festival, CMAT, Sanctuary City, the Cherry Blossom Festival -- One Really Great Thing to Do Every Day of the Week</u></p>	<p>Morgan Parker and Jane Wong Discuss You Get What You Pay For</p> <p>(BOOKS) Renowned poet Morgan Parker's National Book Critics Circle-winning poetry book <i>Magical Negro</i> pulled its title from the Spike Lee-coined term for Black characters with quasi-magical powers. It's an incredible testament to 21st-century Black femininity, and I read it in one sitting. Pick it up if you haven't, then head to this talk with Parker and local poet Jane Wong in celebration of Parker's memoir-in-essays, <i>You Get What You Pay For</i>. Wong's recent memoir, <i>Meet Me Tonight</i> in Atlantic City, traces her upbringing in a Chinese takeout restaurant on the Jersey shore. (Seattle Public Library - Central Library, 1000 Fourth Ave, 7 pm, free)</p>	<p><u>https://www.thestranger.com/stranger-suggests/2024/03/20/79435015/stranger-suggests-anida-yoeu-alis-the-buddhist-bug-make-believe-film-festival-cmat-sanctuary-city-the-cherry-blossom-festival</u></p>
20-March-2024	West Seattle Blog	<p><u>FYI: Seattle Public Library branches' upcoming one-day closure</u></p>	<p>If you use Seattle Public Library services, SPL wants you to know that all its branches (and the Central Library downtown) will be closed one week from today, on Wednesday, March 27, for a staff in-service day. Branch book drops will remain open; no materials will be due on that date.</p>	<p><u>https://westseattleblog.com/2024/03/fyi-seattle-public-library-branches-upcoming-one-day-closure/</u></p>

27-March-2024	Real Change	<u>Free after-school tutoring can help address persistent educational inequities</u>	Homework Help is designed to eliminate as many barriers to access as possible. Because it is a drop-in program, students don't need to plan ahead. They can just show up and get help. Students do not need to have a library card to attend. Additionally, we understand the critical role nutrition plays in learning, so snacks are now provided at every Homework Help session courtesy of the Seattle Public Library Foundation and the Hunger Intervention Program.	<u>https://www.realchange.org/news/2024/03/27/free-after-school-tutoring-can-help-address-persistent-educational-inequities</u>
27-March-2024	West Seattle Blog	<u>HPAC hangout, library closure, beverage benefit, more for your West Seattle Wednesday</u>	SEATTLE PUBLIC LIBRARY CLOSURE: All branches are closed today for a staff in-service day. Book drops remain open.	<u>https://westseattleblog.com/2024/03/hpac-hangout-library-closure-beverage-benefit-more-for-your-west-seattle-wednesday/</u>
27-March-2024	KING 5	<u>It's making it harder for people to read': Washington librarians say rising cost of e-books is unsustainable</u>	Librarians would like to see legislation passed to help close the affordability gap. In Washington, they hope to introduce a bill in Olympia next year.	<u>https://www.king5.com/article/tech/librarians-against-rising-cost-e-books/281-e8c607da-6f27-4d0a-a9d1-3d063fc9d3aa</u>
27-March-2024	Curiosity - Seattle	<u>Seattle Public Library is giving out free glasses for the partial solar eclipse</u>	If you are looking for the special eye protection, The Seattle Public Library says it is offering a limited supply of free viewing glasses at its 27 locations.	<u>https://curiosity.com/seattle-public-library-free-glasses-partial-solar-eclipse/</u>