



Schenectady County Public Library Board of Trustees Meeting  
November 20, 2025 - 6:00 pm  
Swanker Room – Hon. Karen B. Johnson Library

1. Call to Order, Roll Call
2. Public Comment
3. Consent Agenda
  - a. Board of Trustees Meeting Minutes for October 23, 2025
4. Family Place Library
5. Proposed 2026 Meeting Dates
6. Appointment of Nominating Committee
7. Strategic Planning Update – Library Strategies
8. Mohawk Valley Library System Overdrive
9. President's Report
10. Director's Report
11. Friends of the Library Report
12. Committee Reports
  - a) Finance Committee
  - b) Planning Committee
  - c) Policy Committee
13. New Business
14. Adjournment

The next regular Schenectady County Public Library Board of Trustees meeting is scheduled to be held on January 22, 2026 at 6:00 pm in the Swanker Room at the Hon. Karen B. Johnson Library.

The regular monthly meeting of the Schenectady County Public Library Board of Trustees was held on Thursday, October 23, 2025 at 6:00 p.m. in the Swanker Boardroom at the Karen B. Johnson Central Library.

**PRESENT:** Madelyn Thorne, President; Brenda Schworm, Vice-President; Steve McCutcheon, Treasurer; Timothy Burke; Justin Chaires; Jude McQueen; Carmel Patrick

**ABSENT AND EXCUSED:** David Fronk; Julie McDonnell; Bernice Rivera; Tina Chericoni Versaci

**STAFF:** Charity Thorne, Executive Director; Beth DeMidio, Director of Operations; Devon Hedges, Assistant Director; Janice Martin, Board Clerk

**GUESTS:** Diane Wilkinson, President, Friends of the Library; Michelle Ostrelich, Schenectady County Legislature, Vice-Chair Education & Libraries; Cathy Alloway, Library Strategies (via zoom)

Madelyn Thorne called the meeting to order at 6:03 p.m.

#### **PRIVILEGE OF THE FLOOR**

No speakers this evening.

#### **CONSENT AGENDA**

Moved by Justin Chaires, seconded by Steven McCutcheon. Motion passed.

A video clip was shown of a class visit to the Rotterdam Branch Library by Jefferson Elementary students.

#### **STRATEGIC PLANNING**

A strategic planning update was given by Cathy Alloway from Library Strategies via zoom.

#### **PRESIDENT'S REPORT**

The Community Survey is live on the SCPL website. Spread the word.

The library has received positive reviews on the new sitting area near the entrance at KBJ.

#### **DIRECTOR'S REPORT**

Trustees reviewed the written report by Executive Director Charity Thorne.

Highlights include:

- Picture Book Browsing Bins
- Mont Pleasant Fall Festival
- Family Place Library

#### **FRIENDS OF THE LIBRARY**

- The Fall book sale netted over \$19,500
- An Evening with Elizabeth Strout: A free event sponsored by the Friends of the Library, on November 12, 2025, at Proctor's GE Theatre. Tickets can be reserved through Proctor's. Thank you to Doug Bixler for help in promoting this event.
- Membership has increased from 362 members in April to the current 950 members.
- Black Friday, November 28, 2025: 50% off at both bookstores.
- November/December newsletters are available at all libraries.

FINANCE COMMITTEE

No report.

PLANNING COMMITTEE

No report.

POLICY COMMITTEE

No. report.

NEW BUSINESS

Steven McCutcheon announced that October is Dyslexia Awareness Month. Libraries in Vermont are involved in creating awareness of Dyslexia and asked if SCPL would consider this endeavor as well.

The meeting was adjourned at 6:32 p.m. on a motion by Justin Chaires, seconded by Timothy Burke.

The next meeting will be held on Thursday, November 20, 2025

LIBRARY BOARD OF TRUSTEES  
PROPOSED MEETING DATES FOR 2026

Thursday, January 22, 2026

Thursday, February 26, 2026

Thursday, March 26, 2026

Thursday, April 23, 2026

Thursday, May 28, 2026

Thursday, June 25, 2026

No meeting in July

Thursday, August 27, 2026

Thursday, September 24, 2026

Thursday, October 22, 2026

Thursday, November 19, 2026 (3rd Thursday instead of 4th due to Thanksgiving)

No meeting in December

## Executive Director Report to the Board

**November 20, 2025**

October kicked off with our first staff training and development day. We were able to have a majority of regularly scheduled staff attend and highlights of the day included:

- Customer service training with Jen Park, a 2025 Library Journal Mover & Shaker who works at the Ramapo Catskill Library System
- Strategic planning SOAR (strengths, opportunities, aspirations, results) sessions with Cathi and Della from Library Strategies
- Implicit bias training facilitated by Jason Benitez from the Capital Region Chamber of Commerce

And more including a scavenger hunt, book talks, and mini refreshers on core library functions. We look forward to the next one!

Other key projects in October included:

- The launch of our strategic planning community survey. Our staggered promotion throughout the 8-week period of the survey involves reaching out to many community partners to help reach their audiences as well as each library location conducting multiple outreaches to have a presence at other community agencies or events in an in addition to the more standard publicizing through library mediums such as our website, social media, email blasts and in our buildings. So far our community collaborators have been incredibly generous in their assistance to get the word out to as large and diverse of an audience as possible.
- As part of our strategic planning process, we opted for the storymap to be created showing statistical information about Schenectady County. In October, the storymap was reviewed and finalized
- The reorganization of the Hon. Karen B. Johnson Main Library's youth services area to accommodate the picture book browsing bins and expand the play space. This was a considerable team effort crossing KBJ teams and county departments - we are very grateful to the County Facilities team for all of their assistance in moving fixtures!
- Hiring for part-time clerk, part-time library assistant, and full-time library clerk positions. We conducted interviews and are hoping to onboard prior to the County's cutoff for the year on December 1. With the addition of several part-time positions, we are conducting a library-wide schedule review with the aim of reducing or eliminating as many recurring coverage gaps where only two people are scheduled at a time as possible across all nine locations.
- Conversations with Mohawk Valley Library System about Schenectady patron access to the MVLS Overdrive platform. MVLS has proposed either limiting Schenectady patron

access to the MVLS Overdrive to only currently available items (no ability to place holds) or SCPL making payments to MVLS given that Schenectady patrons make up around 50% of total MVLS Overdrive use as of September.

- Designing changes to our internal payment request process for Friends of the Library-funded purchases in order to implement better controls, tracking and documentation of those expenses and to improve efficiency of purchase approval by eliminating the use of paper forms for requests.

## Public Services

### Hon. Karen B. Johnson Main Library

The first Staff Development Day held was held at the Main Library for SCPL staff this past month. We all came together for informative presentations on customer service, implicit bias, staff-presented book talks, and were able to participate in part of the strategic planning process with consultants from Library Strategies. Staff appreciated interacting with each other, including seeing peers from branches they may not often visit, during training on library services as well as some stress-breaking activities that many reported were among the highlights of the day. Over 70% of the staff who attended the workshops rated the day at 3 or more stars out of five. Nearly 80% of participants thought the day met or exceeded their expectations. Over 90% of participants reported that their confidence in performing their duties was increased or similar to before the day.



### Youth Services

October has included a number of programming and outreach events conducted by the KBJ Youth Services staff. Programming for children and teens often brings enthusiastic attendees and October was no exception. 474 attendees came to 30 programs at the library and many more (hundreds!) were seen at outreach events (including Trunk or Treat gatherings) in the community related to Halloween. Our most popular children's programs included Story Times to Go, Baby Lap Time, and Stay & Play. For tweens & teens, "Glow & Behold Candles", Teen Writing Club, and crafts at Teens Unplugged saw the most participation.

### Adult Services

43 adults attended programs at the Hon. Karen B. Johnson Main Library this past month. The majority of attendees (18) came for our Sensory Sessions program, featuring activities intended for audiences with sensitivity to their environment, activities that let them enjoy the library setting in a manner that allows them to participate more fully. An art program on gel plate prints also brought in ten adults. The successful, offsite book group for adults, "Books on Tap" held a last meeting at the Manhattan Exchange for the foreseeable future. Although it's been a well-attended program, attendees have expressed interest in meeting at a site with less challenges related to accessibility and being able to truly focus on the discussions. They'll be meeting at the Hon. Karen B. Johnson Main Library in the future.

### Circulation and Public Services

The past month saw several key initiatives brought to fruition, making the Library's spaces more functional and welcoming. Physically, the Library addressed a practical need by installing a new public phone in the lobby, ensuring accessible communication for all patrons. The collections area received a visual boost with the delivery of new display furniture, enhancing the presentation of materials and making browsing a more appealing activity.

Most notably, the Library successfully executed major shifts within its collection areas:

- The Children's Area underwent a massive reorganization with the introduction of Browse Bins, a change that has been met with a significant, positive shift in how young readers engage with and select books.
- The Teen Area also saw shelving moved to create an optimized layout, better tailored to serving and engaging the young adult demographic.

An order has been placed for headphones for in-house lending, which will become available in November, offering patrons the resources needed for focused, quiet work within the facility.

Meanwhile, patron feedback continues to validate previous efforts. The recently established seating area is still receiving overwhelmingly positive comments, highlighting its successful use. Furthermore, access to a broad range of materials remains robust, with Inter-Library Loan (ILL) services reported as consistently active.

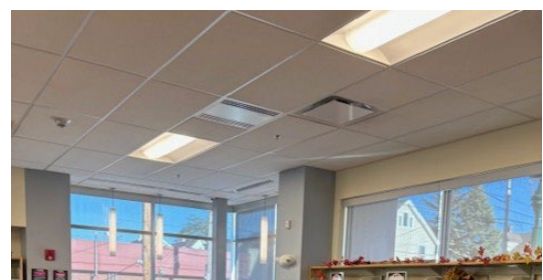
Building on these successes, the Library is now developing two exciting initiatives for the upcoming winter months, blending essential community service with imaginative patron engagement.

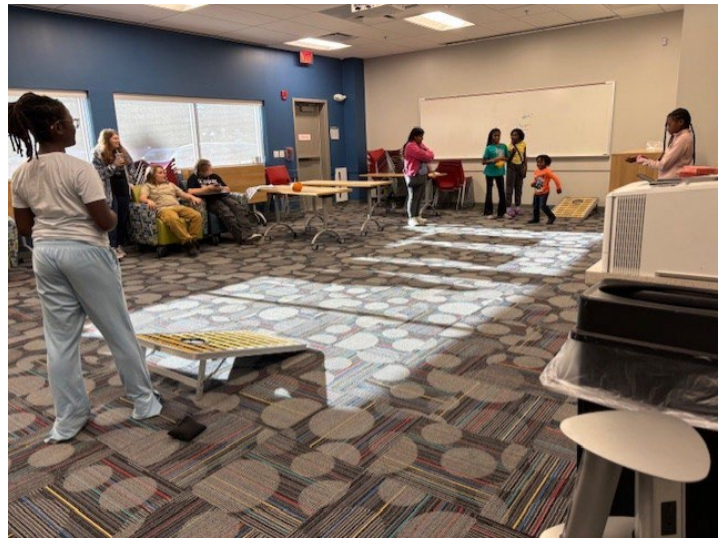
1. Winter Warm-ups Program: Following a successful trial last winter, the Library plans to reinstate the popular offering of hot beverages to all patrons. A particular emphasis will be placed on extending this welcome on "Code Blue" days (severe cold weather alerts), reinforcing the Library's role in providing a needed shelter and comfort during extreme weather.
2. Gumball Machine Book Pick Program: This creative concept promises a fun, interactive twist on book discovery. Patrons will utilize a gumball machine spin to receive a book suggestion or recommendation. As an added element of fun, they will also have a chance to "win" a bookmark, encouraging engagement and the discovery of new reads.

These planned initiatives, along with the recent physical and programmatic enhancements, strongly reflect the Library's commitment to continually improving its environment, services, and outreach to the community it serves.

### **Mont Pleasant Branch**

Our Mont Pleasant Branch adult services librarian, Ali Bailey planned and executed a Fall Festival this month which had 75 participants! The entire team at Mont Pleasant pitched in. There were seasonal games like pumpkin carving and corn hole, a story time and food from local restaurants. One of the regular Special Patrol Officers even participated by managing the photo booth and prints of the pictures were given to those individuals.





### **Rotterdam Branch**

It was great to welcome back Chloe Whittaker from *Embroider with Chloe* for the “Spooky Stitching Workshop” at our Rotterdam branch on October 8th.

Patrons were able to create a “ghost initial hoop” under Chloe’s direction. Her programs are always well attended, and there is usually a waitlist. A few patrons had called the day of this program to express interest, and so due to popular demand, Chloe will return in December to the Rotterdam branch for a workshop creating embroidered felt ornaments.



The Rotterdam Non-fiction Book Club met on the third Wednesday of the month to discuss “The Wager” by David Grann. Grann, author of “Killers of the Flower Moon,” provided another captivating novel about the 1741 shipwreck of the HMS Wager, a British warship.

Local artist and educator Megan Viscio came to the Rotterdam branch on October 29th for the program “Glass Gardens.” Using recycled ceramic and glass pieces, patrons constructed plant dioramas. This class was a hit with patrons, who told me that they weren’t sure at first what to do, but once they let themselves create, they had a lot of fun.



CrAFTERwork continues to be popular at the Rotterdam branch, and in October, Library Assistant Jody Monroe led a workshop on creating “Halloween Cupcake-liner Wreaths.” Each participant had a fun time coming up with unique ideas!



Fiber Therapy has become so popular that patrons are coming in for it on Saturday afternoons regardless of whether it's on the calendar. One of our regulars who took Jody's How-to-Crochet series is now crocheting her wedding dress with a butterfly design.



October was a busy month for outreach at the Rotterdam branch. Right at the start of October, seven 1<sup>st</sup> grade classes from Jefferson Elementary came to the library where many received their very first library card. Youth Services librarian Stephanie Olson read “Caps for Sale” by Esphear Slobodkinda and gave a tour of the children’s sections of the library. After that, children

had about 20 minutes to choose a book to check out. The visits went so well that the school would like to bring next year's crop of 1<sup>st</sup> graders to the library to make this a traditional field trip for future classes.



Stephanie also visited the Rotterdam Boys and Girls Club to conduct a story and craft hour with the 1<sup>st</sup> graders. There is a new after school care coordinator there, and she expressed interest in having Stephanie visit monthly for a story time and craft.

Another great outreach opportunity Stephanie had was at the Woestina Elementary Pre-K program. The Schalmont school district just re-opened the building for Pre-K, after it was vacant for many years. We are so glad to have made this connection because there will be so many of our little patrons attending that school.



Youth services programming in October was truly Halloween-centric with craft programs to celebrate the spooky season, a LEGO Haunted House challenge, and a Zombie Hunt!

Representatives from Paul Tonko's office attracted the attention of several patrons on October 15<sup>th</sup>.

Local artist Barry Finley displayed his work in the Wingate Room throughout October.

### **Quaker Street Branch**

Library Assistant Jody Monroe taught devotees of our monthly CrAFTERwork series how to create “Book Page Pumpkins,” an apt project for a library program in October!

Youth Services librarian Stephanie Olsen taught little ones how to make a painted sugar skull, a ghost magnet and a tissue paper pumpkin to celebrate the spooky season.

Stephanie once again partnered with Project Growing Minds to present a bilingual spooky story time and crafts program, and “Elementary Spanish for Kids with Ivonne” came back to Quaker Street after running it in the Spring.

And sometimes, the unplanned moments are the most magical ones. On October 29<sup>th</sup> the branch had a surprise visit from Onyx the horse who was being walked by his owner while some of our little Imagination Station friends were still in the building. All walked out to the parking lot to meet the beautiful animal and feed him some carrots.

### **Niskayuna Branch**

The Niskayuna Branch was proud to host its first public concert since the renovation of our meeting room and the completion of the sound attenuation project. Bluegrass band Unken Brew led by David Leiberman delivered a foot-stompin' good time to appreciative audience members. Patrons left requesting more music events in the future.

The branch's Yoga, Qi Gong, and Fiber Arts series continue to draw many patrons, with October being no exception.

The Firehouse Artists displayed and discussed their art in our meeting room.

The Build Zone program, which has a strong weekly attendance of repeat builders, has seen an upswing in new attendees. Our builders love to hear about the day's theme, and our Halloween and National Pizza and Dessert Month's builds were fun and creative! And our New & Popular items are once again being checked out faster than we can shelve them some days. The Chills and Thrills display in our Teen section was utilized multiple times; our teens love their scares.

### **Woodlawn Branch**

Bingo evening at Woodlawn continued to pick up new fans throughout October. Much fun was had and prizes were enjoyed by all the winners. Crafters continued to meet every Wednesday at the Woodlawn branch and produce beautiful quilted, knitted, and crocheted items. Quaker

Street clerk Michelle Yager held a beginning crochet class attended by 8 people. The Woodlawn book club led by librarian Dori Trela read and discussed “Twenty-one Days” by Anne Perry.

For our younger friends, October brought creativity and music. Miss Lisa continues to educate & delight our little patrons through music and dancing. In just two weeks this month, we had over sixty children and their caregivers visit the Woodlawn Library! Our creative corner, where we have puzzles, manipulatives, and coloring projects is used regularly and the circulation staff love to hang up all the amazing art that our little ones create for us.

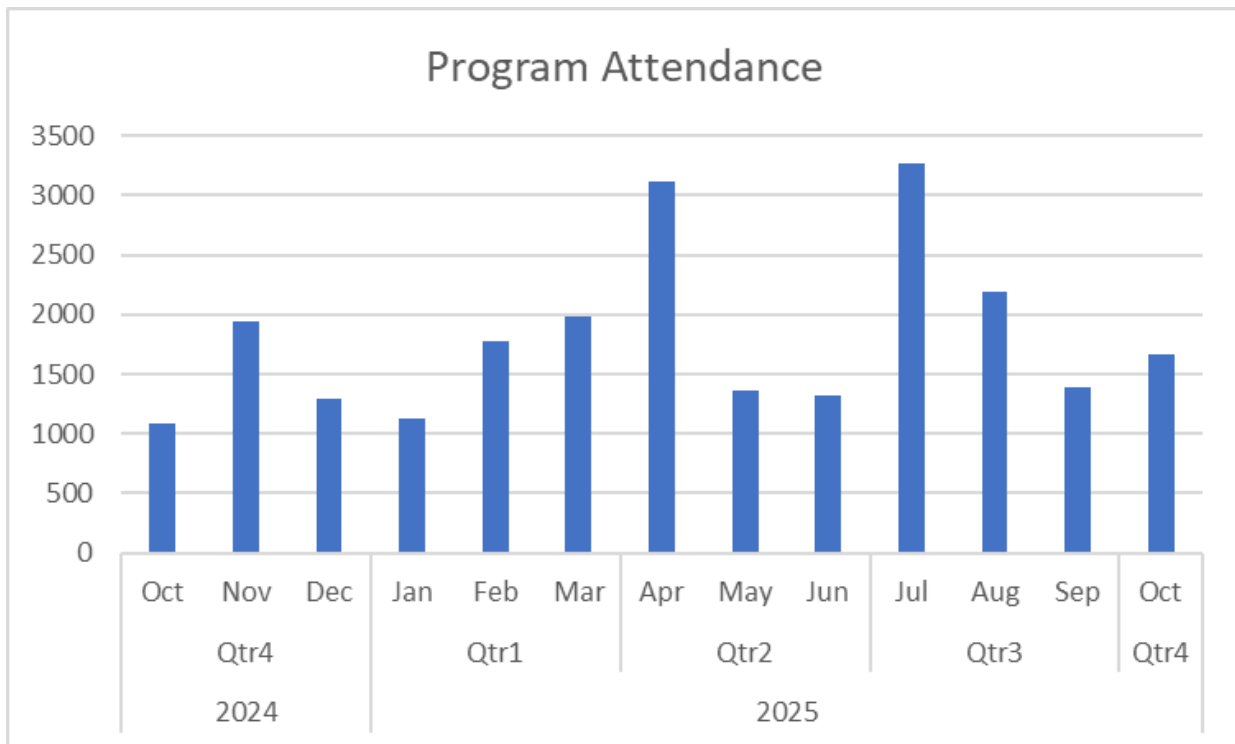
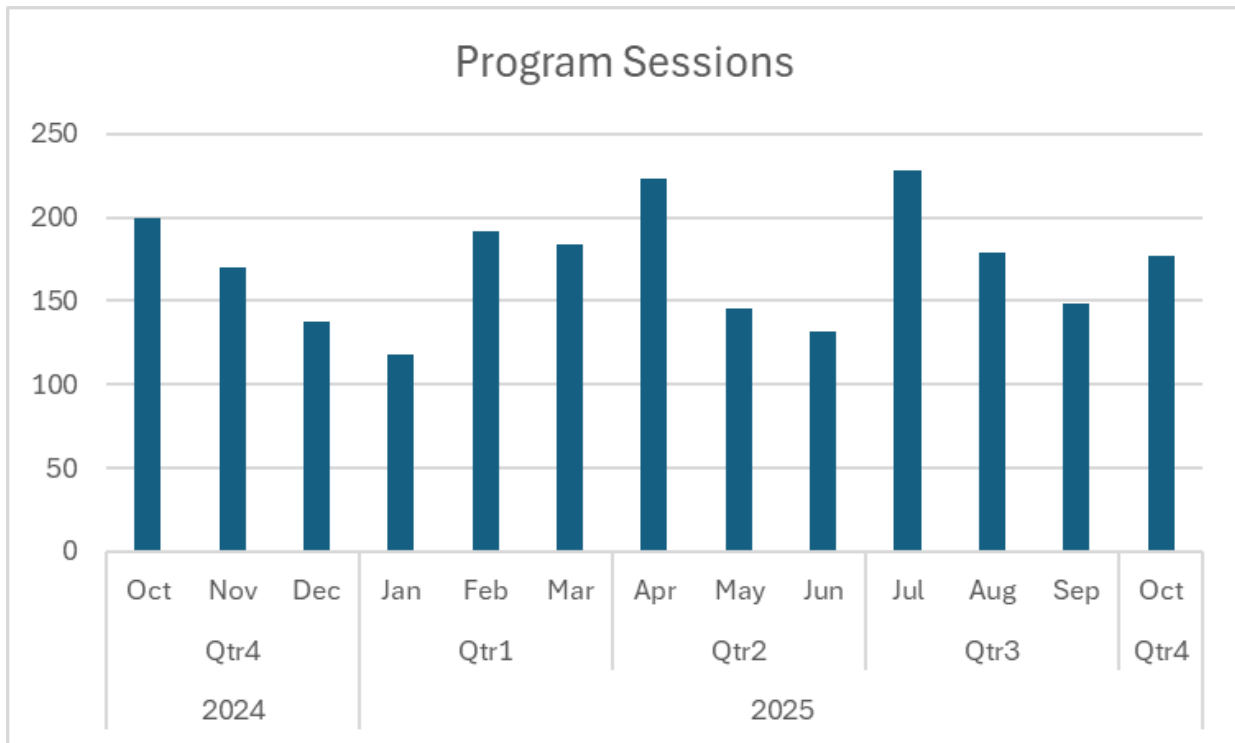
### Scotia Branch

Top program attendance was Family Storytime with Miss April with an average of 23 attendees at 3 sessions, eight adults came out to enjoy the Single Breath Story Writing workshop, and 12 people came to practice reading with supportive animals. Staff reported enjoying lots of visitors on Halloween! 89 patrons attended programs at the Scotia Branch in October. Collection management work on the Youth Services sections is mostly complete.

### Glenville Branch

Top program attendance was Family Storytime with Miss April with an average of 32 attendees over 4 sessions, Slow Flow Vinyasa Yoga with 14 participants, Paper Making and LEGO Club with 10 participants each. 185 patrons attended programs at the Glenville Branch in October.

10/2025 CIRCULATION	CURRENT	LAST YEAR	CHANGE	FYTD	LAST FYTD	CHANGE2
Bornt	1,023	857	19%	11,464	7,614	51%
Main Library	17,448	14,401	21%	204,806	163,786	25%
E-Resource	15,107	16,334	-8%	161,811	163,084	-1%
Glenville	4,453	3,943	13%	47,339	48,422	-2%
Mont Pleasant	1,507	1,495	1%	13,134	13,023	1%
Niskayuna	10,035	8,177	23%	103,181	97,883	5%
Quaker Street	1,760	1,421	24%	17,247	16,074	7%
Rotterdam	6,762	5,579	21%	65,333	61,269	7%
Scotia	3,227	2,575	25%	33,498	30,402	10%
Woodlawn	1,433	1,207	19%	14,946	11,474	30%



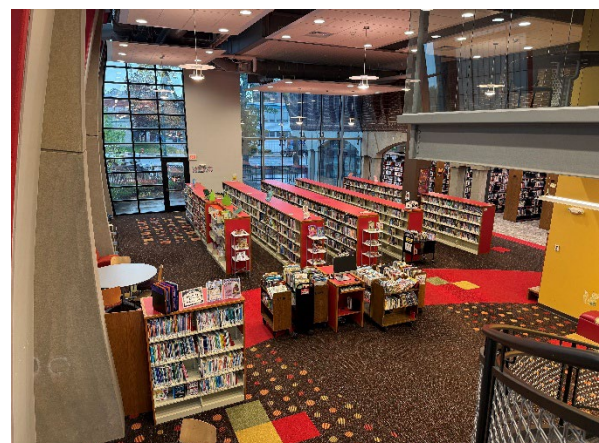
### Support Services

Interviews for the full-time library clerk position and part-time library assistants were conducted this month for vacancies at the KBJ Main Library. We are working to grow the Adult Services

Team at KBJ to a similar size to the Youth Services Team at KBJ. Our goal is to add two part-time library assistants that will be scheduled as a second person to assist patrons during the busier times at the information services desk.

On October 1 the first staff development day occurred. All nine locations were closed and staff reported to the KBJ Main Library to participate in an all staff customer service training, two strategic planning sessions were held to discuss staff's outlook on the future of the library, mini-trainings were conducted by fellow team members, as well as implicit bias training, book talks from two staff members and the day ended with a scavenger hunt.

We also embarked on the first phase of the updates to the Children's section with the installation of the new book browsing bins! Thank you to the Facilities Department for their help breaking down old stacks, putting together the new bins then working on repurposing some of the other shelves within the Children's section as well as the Teen section. The youth services and circulation teams at the main library were also an integral part of this project and many thanks are deserved for their role!





The sales on our new public printing, copying and faxing continue to steadily increase:

<b>Month</b>	<b>Total Sales</b>
January	\$2,140.00
February	\$2,715.00
March	\$3,854.30
April	\$4,168.75
May	\$3,503.90
June	\$3,526.50
July	\$4,195.65
August	\$4,915.40
September	\$4,559.95
October	\$4,834.00

As most of the world was, we were affected by the large-scale AWS outage on October 20, 2025. The main items affected for us were our TBS system, Hoopla, and Community Survey through Survey Monkey. Luckily the outage only lasted a day.

We launched our Strategic Planning Community Survey online, with advertising on our social media and Facebook page, we will be sending it out via our Constant Contact account to all emails we have in our system. Along with the digital aspect of pushing out word to the community about our survey, we have large signage in all of our locations, as well as the lobby of the County Office building. Flyers have also been made available to locations such as the Whitney and Second Look bookstores.

We have obtained a second payment kiosk for our TBS system here at KBJ Main Library. We are planning on separating out the print release station from the copy/scan/fax station to help alleviate any bottle necks that occur when we have a good amount of people trying to do both from one station.

