

The Seattle Public Library
Board of Trustees Meeting
11:00 a.m. Thursday, November 20, 2025

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

Remote Listen Line:

Dial: 213-282-4570 / Phone conference ID: 295 613 936#

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- 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.
 - To submit public comment in writing, email 24-hours in advance of the meeting: library.board@spl.org.
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Agenda

A. CALL TO ORDER

B. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

C. PUBLIC COMMENT

D. CONSENT

1. Minutes of October 30, 2025 Regular Library Board Meeting
2. Minutes of November 5, 2025 Special Library Board Meeting

E. CHIEF LIBRARIAN REPORT

1. Chief Librarian Report
2. System Report
 - a. Library Survey Results – Kai Tang, Director of Library Experience and Engagement

F. OLD BUSINESS

G. NEW BUSINESS

1. Third Quarter 2025 Levy Report
2. Draft 2026 Operations Plan
3. 2026 Library Board Liaisons to Foundation and Friends Boards
4. Union Report
5. Updates from Library Board Members

H. EXECUTIVE SESSION

I. ADJOURN

J. NEXT LIBRARY BOARD MEETING: Dec. 11, 2025

(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
October 30, 2025

CALL TO ORDER

The regular meeting of The Seattle Public Library (SPL) Board of Trustees was held on October 30, 2025. Library Board President W. Tali Hairston called the meeting to order at 11:00 a.m. Vice President Yazmin Mehdi and Trustees Carmen Bendixen, Ron Chew, and Faith Pettis were in attendance. 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 was no public comment.

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/Chief Librarian Tom Fay said October was busy with speaking engagements. He said he participated in a Friends and Volunteer Appreciation event with King County Library System (KCLS) in Issaquah, joining KCLS Executive Director Heidi Daniel and KCLS Foundation Executive Director Lisa Yamasaki on a keynote panel about the importance of advocacy and Friends groups. He said he also spoke at a SPL Foundation stewardship event called 'History Unveiled' at the Central Library which showcased SPL's Special Collections and included a panel with special guests Representative Shaun Scott and historian Knute Berger. Mr. Fay said he also spoke at a Banned Books Week program at the Folio: The Seattle Athenaeum entitled "Operating and Supporting Libraries During Turbulent Times" in a discussion with Seattle Public Schools Library Services & Instructional Materials Program Manager Darcy Brixey, moderated by Seattle Athenaeum Librarian Lillian Dabney. He said he collaborated with the Folio for a second Banned Books Week program at the Central Library in which he joined Ms. Dabney and Director of the National Library of Ireland Dr. Audrey Witty on a panel on the future of libraries, providing equitable access to information and fostering informed citizenry.

Mr. Fay said he participated in the Digital Public Libraries of America Forum on AI in Libraries and Archives held at the University of Washington, speaking about AI in libraries in the opening panel with Cleveland Public Library Director Felton Thomas and Coalition for Networked Information Executive Director Kate Zwaard. He said the panel was moderated by the UW iSchool Assistant Professor Ben Lee, who has been a vocal proponent of AI and the ethical use of AI in our society. He said several SPL team members attended and had good representation in starting to lead topics about how public libraries can be involved in AI and its ethical use. Mr. Fay said he and Director of Institutional and Strategic Advancement Rick Sheridan and Administrative Services Director Rob Gannon provided a Library levy briefing to Mayor Harrell to share a high-level overview of proposed 2026 Library levy planning, laying out the needs, challenges, and opportunities for SPL around operations and capital investments. Mr. Fay said he and Community Partnerships and Government Relations Manager Kiersten Nelson also joined Senator Emily Alvarado and Representative Julie Reed in a meeting at the Central Library to

discuss legislation mirroring Connecticut Senate Bill 1234, which is a first-in-the-nation law aimed at reshaping how public and school libraries license e-books and digital audio books.

Library Board Vice President Yazmin Mehdi said Mr. Fay's presentation to the Mayor on levy planning was well received. She commended Mr. Fay and his team. Mr. Fay said it had been a large team effort. Library Board President Tali Hairston said he and Ms. Mehdi met with Mayor Harrell on Oct. 21 for 30 minutes. He said they hope it will become a norm for the Board to greet the mayor for conversation and to continue to build that relationship, given the Library's unique position within the city.

Systems Reports

Friends of the Library Update

President of the Friends of The Seattle Public Library Angel Sauls said the Friends' mission is to elevate the Library and inspire the love of reading in its communities. She said the Friends love their mission and work. She thanked Mr. Fay and SPL staff, saying it is the Friends' honor to support them and to see the Library flourish under Mr. Fay's leadership. She thanked the Friends' exceptional staff, contract workers, board members and volunteers. She said it is an honor to advocate with the Library Board, Foundation Board, and leadership. She said the generous support of the Foundation allows the Friends to achieve their programming objectives.

Ms. Sauls said in 2025, accomplishments under advocacy and support include supporting direct outreach to voters and local and regional government through the Legislative Day visit to the capital, participation on the Joint Advocacy Board, writing letters to City Councilmembers, attending meetings at town halls, and participation in the Public Library Action Network. She said the Friends make an annual small grant in support of the Library's Summer Book Bingo program and provide funding to support the Library in purchasing and dispersing service items, including USB drives as needed. She said the Friends also enjoy providing gift baskets of snacks to Library staff units, with 2025 recipients being Security, Human Resources, Janitorial Services, Mobile Services, Information Technology, and staff at the Maintenance and Operations Center.

Ms. Sauls said, in the area of community book donations, the Friends' book donation program continues to be example of the community's love of reading. She said the Friends' Georgetown location receives an overwhelming number of donated books. She said in 2024, the Friends received 26,938 books at the FriendShop and sold 29,307 books through their combined locations and events, as well as recirculating 33,066 books back to the community through many organizations. Ms. Sauls said so far in 2025, the Friends have accepted more than 19,656 donated books. She said, due to the large supply of untracked donated books at their Georgetown location, the Friends have recirculated 47,265 books back into the community through organizations including the Ballard Food Bank, Book to Prisoners, Little Free Libraries, Senior Centers, Westside Baby, The Book Project, the Seattle King County Health Clinic, and the Seattle VA Medical Center. Ms. Sauls said the Friends have two new Little Free Libraries at SeaTac Airport, and there will soon be four. She said the Friends sold an additional 29,189 books through the FriendShop and the Georgetown Bookshop. She said the Friends sell more books than they receive due to the large, untracked supply coming into the Georgetown location.

Ms. Sauls said the Friends are nearing their 17th year of participating in the Renee B. Fisher Books for Teachers grant in which they hold events throughout the year to connect Title One school teachers with free books for their classrooms. She said the program was expanded this year to include multilingual learner and special education classrooms. She said so far in 2025, they have provided 130 teachers at 51 schools with 8,646 books for their classrooms, which is in addition to the 47,265 books recirculated to the community. She said since 2009, the Friends have connected more than 2,000 teachers with more than 152,863 books.

Ms. Sauls said one of the Friends' most successful ongoing programs is their first Library card Owl Totes in which readers six years and younger getting their first Library cards receive cloth

bags to carry home their first Library books. She said the Friends have provided 3,075 Owl Totes to new little Library card holders over the past year, and more than 34,933 Owl Totes since 2015.

Ms. Sauls said, regarding Board and governance updates, this year the Friends delved deeply into strategic planning work to align with the Library's strategic plan, with a goal of being to identify the Friend's strategic capabilities while embracing their mission-driven work. She said, through 2028, the Friends' six focus areas are: strengthening advocacy and partnerships; expanding community engagement through signature offerings and events; deepening literacy and school support; strengthening member and communication infrastructure; cultivating a strong, inclusive board and volunteer culture; and growing their brand visibility and clarifying their identity. She said the Friends' strategic plan document will be shared on their website soon. She said they are updating their Board and staff manuals and have created a Friend's historical video which will be available shortly.

Ms. Sauls thanked Friends' staff members and FriendShop volunteers for their efforts as sales continue to exceed projections with expanding product selections in store and online. She said this summer they introduced a selection of print-on-demand apparel available on their website, and thanked Library Head of Marketing and Online Services Helen Tapping for her assistance.

Ms. Sauls said the larger Georgetown space has provided room for social events, more space for the Books for Teachers program, a launchpad for Georgetown artist displays, and continued sales. She said the Friends maintain excellent partnerships with Collin Books and Freeway Park Book Carts. She said the Friends had a few pop-up book sale events in Library branches this year and will again have a booth at the Gates Foundation Discovery Center Holiday Marketplace on December 5 and 6. She said future offerings, outreach, pop-ups, events, and community collaborations will be announced through newsletters and social media.

Ms. Sauls said the Friends of The Seattle Public Library have been volunteering to support the Library since 1941. She said more than 60 volunteers contributed 3,900 hours this year, allowing the Friends to surpass many of their goals. She said volunteers sold gifts and more than 30,000 books to customers; accepted and sorted more than 19,000 book donations at Friend shops; prepared more than 47,000 books to share with the community; stuffed more than 5,000 Owl Totes; organized more than 8,600 books for Books for Teachers; and completed myriad retail related tasks that have helped the Friends toward success. Ms. Sauls said the Friends are very grateful for their volunteers. She said they will recognize two special volunteers at their annual meeting with the designation of Volunteer of the Year Award.

Ms. Sauls said the Friends participated in a number of community outreach events this year, some in collaboration with the Foundation. She said they were proud to donate books at community programs at Town Hall, Armoire Clothing Rental Company, Phinneywood Garage Sale, Rainbow City Performing Arts Group performances, Juneteenth celebrations at the North African American Museum and Capitol Hill Pride Festival, Columbia City and Lake City Farmers Markets, and the Rainier Valley Food Bank where it was wonderful to give away books and see community members. She said further connections were made at the Friends of the Waterfront Park opening as well as SPL pop-ups. She said many tri-branded tote bags were shared at events.

Ms. Sauls said the Friends' 2025 Annual Meeting on November 1 will mark the start of the new year for the Friends and begin to bring 2025 to a close. She said author Emma Patty will be the guest speaker, and the meeting will review 2024 and highlights of 2025. Ms. Sauls said she is humbled to have been in the role of the Friends Board President for the last two years, and it has been her pleasure to advocate alongside the Library and the community. She said she is honored to pass the reins of Friends Board President to Jennifer Lo, saying Ms. Lo has boundless energy and an analytical mindset, and will further the Friends' mission in support of the Library in brilliant ways. She thanked Ms. Lo for her work and the Library Board for the opportunity to present.

Speaking as the Library Board's 2025 liaison to the Friends, Ms. Mehdi thanked Ms. Sauls for her leadership for the past two years. She said Ms. Sauls has done a remarkable job with a beautiful viewpoint and leading from a happy place. She said attending Friends Board meetings has been a joy, and the Friends have done a remarkable job of promoting reading and literacy and the importance of libraries in the community in many ways and at many events. She said recirculating 47,000 books is remarkable and serves to recycle while promoting reading and connecting people with books that they might not otherwise find. She said presenting books for people to view involves curation and thought. She said the Friends do a wonderful job, and Friends Business Manager Lisa Lee does a great job of helping people find books. Ms. Mehdi said she welcomes Ms. Lo, will miss working with Ms. Sauls as Friends Board President, and will look forward to seeing Ms. Sauls at future meetings. She thanked Ms. Sauls for her work.

Mr. Hairston agreed. He thanked Ms. Sauls for her tremendous leadership. Library Board Trustee Faith Pettis agreed, saying she will miss Ms. Saul's smiling reports, and agreed that Ms. Sauls approaches her work from a place of happiness. Ms. Pettis thanked Ms. Sauls for her work. Mr. Fay said one day he hopes to have the same passionate, positive leadership skills that Ms. Sauls has. He said Ms. Sauls is a joy to work with as a partner in leadership. He said Ms. Sauls and Ms. Lo have done a lot of good transition work, and the organizations can look forward to positive energy from Ms. Lo. Mr. Fay said he hopes Ms. Sauls can take a breath as she steps away and he looks forward to Ms. Lo's time as president. Mr. Fay thanked Ms. Sauls for her work.

Library Foundation Update

President of The Seattle Public Library Foundation Board Sarah Stanley thanked the Library Board for inviting her to speak and said the baseball cap she was wearing said The Seattle Public Library. Ms. Stanley said 2025 is her second and final year serving as Foundation Board President. She said she supports the Library because it makes an impact on people's lives. She said this year, in all areas of the City, she noticed people smiling at her and receiving a lot of positive feelings from people around town, and she realized that people were having a positive response to her Library baseball cap. She said the experience is a wonderful illustration of the impact that the Library has in the community, and she feels proud to be part of an institution that can have that impact.

Ms. Stanley said the Foundation's mission is to inspire the community's philanthropic support of advocacy for and pride in the Library. She said their goal is to help advance the Library's vision where knowledge flourishes, people find inspiration, and together they create a sense of belonging. She said the Foundation invests funds they raise to support 50 library programs focused on literacy, enrichment, and empowerment, that are loved by patrons. She said the Foundation's support goes above and beyond what public funding provides. She said they cultivate relationships to bring funding, resources, and opportunities to SPL, as well as advocating as an external voice for SPL with policymakers. Ms. Stanley said the Foundation builds pride around the Library through events and outreach in every neighborhood.

Ms. Stanley said her goals as Foundation Board President for 2024 and 2025 were to execute and capitalize on a successful leadership transition, which has been done. She said Foundation CEO Brian Lawrence's leadership and position as the Foundation's community ambassador is respected by boards, staff, community leaders, donors, and patrons. She said another goal was to build the Foundation's advocacy arm to prepare for a potential 2026 levy. She said they are planning and working to ensure that the right partnerships are in place to help spread the word. She said the Foundation Board has had information sessions at their meetings are clear on their role.

Ms. Stanley said the Foundation has been developing their strategic plan and anticipate approval in January 2026. She said the Foundation Board and CEO have been working in partnership to implement the vision and ambition that can fulfill their mission for the next five years. She said the effort started with a retreat in February to get clarity on priorities, and began work in May with consultant Laura Pierce, forming a committee to create and focus on this work. She said the Foundation had constituent listening sessions with SPL leadership and management teams, SPL

Trustees, Friends, Emeritus board members, Foundation staff, donors, corporate partners, and Library patrons. She said the full Foundation Board has participated in strategic planning and recently had another half-day Saturday retreat with excellent attendance and outcomes.

Ms. Stanley said another goal was to grow the Foundation's financial health. She said they continue to see strong fundraising and are investing responsibly through their endowment. She said they are carefully managing funds to ensure long-term vitality for the Library. Ms. Stanley said another goal was building board capacity. She said they had five new members join in May, and the Board is ensuring that everyone is in the right place and has a pathway to advance. She said the Foundation Board recently completed two annual surveys to set goals and conduct a self-assessment to help identify our future leaders. She said the Foundation Board has intentionally tried to ensure that their board has the information that it needs to make decisions. Ms. Stanley said her last goal was to make sure that serving on the board was a fun, rewarding, and desirable experience. She said she is happy to report that the self-assessment surveys show there are many members who want to step into leadership positions, which is a good sign.

Ms. Stanley said the Foundation has raised \$3.15 million through September of this year, compared to \$2.6 million at the same point last year. She said they are at 94% of their fundraising goal, with \$3.15 million in funds raised for the Library through core fundraising, from individuals, organizations, and from Board fundraising. She said Board member fundraising has exceeded their goal of \$75,000 by more than \$39,000. She said the Foundation continues to receive transformational estate gifts. She said the Foundation will exceed fundraising goals and is in a strong financial position. Ms. Stanley said Foundation Board members signed more than 400 appeal letters this year, exceeding last year's record of 270. She said Foundation Board members helped at and attended events, and engaged in other support activities such as stickering for the Global Reading Challenge program.

Ms. Stanley said, in terms of development, their five new board members received training from Foundation staff on all aspects of the Foundation, the Library, board governance, and how to be a good board member. She said, in terms of advocacy, the Foundation exceeded its goal this year by signing up 1,300 members for the Public Library Action Network (PLAN.) She said PLAN is a platform and tool that serves to alert advocates and supporters on how they can stand up, act, and voice support for the Library.

Ms. Stanley said, regarding donor engagement, the Foundation is on target to host 22 donor events and activities in 2025, including branch fundraising events, meet-and-greets with donors, author and book programs, free webinars and seminars, and other events. She said the recent Histories Revealed event with the Special Collections team included updates on Foundation activities and ways that donors can support the Library. She said more than 200 people attended the program and she thanked Foundation and Library staff who collaborated on a very successful event.

Ms. Stanley said, in terms of diversity, equity and inclusion, the Foundation Board continues to do outreach to engage communities that are underrepresented on the Foundation Board. She said their Board has looked at their recruitment and best practices, held Board-led DEI bias training discussions, and continues to do an annual review of their DEI statement in library funding.

Ms. Stanley said the Foundation has been working closely with SPL to provide flexible funding to fully leverage Foundation dollars as part of their trust-based philanthropy. She said the Foundation anticipates increasing their fundraising commitment to \$5.6 million in 2026, which is an eight percent increase from 2025 funding. Ms. Stanley said collaboration is very important to the Foundation. She said the Foundation strives to be partners with the Chief Librarian, Library Board, and Library staff. She said they are grateful to partner with the Friends and have deepened that relationship. She said the Joint Advocacy Committee has accomplished a lot, which couldn't have happened without partnership with the Friends of the Library.

Ms. Stanley said in January 2026, new Foundation Board leadership will be approved, the new strategic plan will be unveiled, and Mr. Lawrence will begin implementation of the plan. She said the Foundation is strong going into 2026 and is ready for what lies ahead. She said the Foundation has a strong staff. She said they are excited with the staff, Board, Library, and community support, and they are grateful for the Library's leadership in the city and throughout the community. Ms. Stanley said the Foundation is ready to support the Library's levy efforts. She thanked the Library Board members for their volunteer commitment and service to the Library. She said it has been a fantastic two years that have been impactful. She said she is proud and honored to have reported to the Library Board today and last year. She said trustees should wear a Library baseball cap to receive positive feelings from the community.

Library Board Trustee Ron Chew said he has seen the evolution of the Foundation from the Libraries for All campaign two decades ago. He said it has been an amazing transformation, growth, and evolution. He congratulated Ms. Stanley, Foundation Board leadership, and Mr. Lawrence for bringing the Foundation into maturity. Mr. Chew said he recently started working with the Washington State History Museum in a limited capacity to help them with organizational capacity building, and he has cited the SPL Foundation as a model. He said he hopes to set up a meeting between the two organizations, as the Museum is in a similar place to the Foundation 20 years ago, and the Foundation could have a lot of knowledge to share.

Ms. Mehdi said it has been a pleasure to work with Ms. Stanley and the Foundation. She said the work of Ms. Stanley, the Foundation, and Foundation staff in the context of the Advocacy Committee has been phenomenal. She thanked Ms. Stanley and Foundation Board member Brittney Moraski for heading that committee. Ms. Pettis thanked Ms. Stanley for the two years of leadership she has contributed to the Foundation's accomplishments. She said the eight percent increase in fundraising is huge and is asking a lot of Foundation Board members. She thanked the Foundation deeply for their partnership and support of the Library.

Library Board Trustee Carmen Bendixen said she echoed what had been said already. She said she has been the Library Board's 2025 liaison to the Foundation and it has been a pleasure to see into their strategic planning process and see how everyone on their board is contributing and asking hard questions. She thanked Ms. Stanley for her leadership and said she looks forward to seeing what comes out of the strategic planning work. Mr. Hairston said, in a time of decreasing public funds nation-wide, it is an amazing gift to the community for philanthropists to step in to support in the ways Ms. Stanley has shared. He said those dollars make a big impact in a very real way in folks' lives. He thanked Ms. Stanley and the Foundation. He said the last two years have been a great journey in a time that has not been easy.

Mr. Fay thanked Ms. Stanley and said the transition from the past to current Foundation CEO was very smooth, which doesn't happen without good leadership and consensus building with the Board of directors of roughly 25 people. He said leadership transition was a key milestone that Ms. Stanley took on early in her presidency, in addition to taking on a strategic plan, levy, and advocacy, all of which are major accomplishments in a very short period. Mr. Fay said he appreciated Ms. Stanley's leadership and looks forward to continuing to see her at Foundation Board meetings. He thanked Ms. Stanley for her work to support the Library and its efforts.

NEW BUSINESS

2026 Operations Plan Framework

Director of Administrative Services Rob Gannon said Head of Finance and Accounting Nick Merkner was available in the meeting, off-camera, to answer questions about this presentation. Mr. Gannon thanked Ms. Sauls and Ms. Stanley for their work on behalf of the Library. Mr. Gannon said today's discussion presents the outline and framework of the Operations Plan. He said the Library's budget development has been going on for much of the year in close coordination with colleagues at the City. He said the Mayor's proposed budget is now before the City Council

for consideration. He said the Library is deep into developing its 2026 Operations Plan for Library Board review in draft form in November, and final review and approval in December.

Mr. Gannon said the framework document in the meeting packet does not include detail, but demonstrates how the information will be presented, and is consistent with past years. He said the document is being presented for the Board's awareness and understanding, and to offer the Board the opportunity to provide feedback or additional direction. He said this year's Operations Plan will incorporate as much reference to the Strategic Plan as possible and will be the first to report on some of the Strategic Plan accomplishments. He said when the Library Board approved the Library's Strategic Plan, they asked staff to incorporate related accomplishments in the Operations Plan framework. He said the draft will also include how accomplishments are leading to additional work and focus for the coming year. He said the document will show the how SPL has spent funds in the past years, and what the balance of funds looks like for the coming year.

Mr. Gannon said Ms. Stanley referenced a likely allocation from the Foundation. He said Foundation funds would be included in the final document for Board approval. He said the framework will include information on the citywide budget challenge and how the Library plans to accommodate a general fund reduction in 2026. Mr. Gannon said a levy renewal package will not be directly noted in the 2026 Operations Plan, as the plan will focus on how SPL is spending current levy funding. Mr. Gannon said the team is very conscientious about what a levy renewal package could mean for the Library, but that work will be developed separately and will not be explicitly referenced in the 2026 Operations Plan.

Ms. Mehdi thanked Mr. Gannon. She said for a number of years the Library has remarked that the last time there was a major building project was the 1998 bond levy, and the Library often talks about how its buildings are 20 years old. Ms. Mehdi said she would like the Library to begin using forward-looking language in the Operations Plan, pulled from the Strategic Plan. She said, for example, a goal in the Strategic Plan is to implement sustainable maintenance and upgrade practices for buildings and technologies. She said the Library is not only focused on updating old buildings but is trying to create spaces for the future. She said the ability to make major changes with public funds is limited, but she would like to see the Strategic Plan language in all of SPL's documents as forward-looking in terms of deliverables to the public. Mr. Gannon thanked Ms. Mehdi for the feedback and said the team would work to incorporate it into the Operations Plan as well as continuing to be a year-to-year focus. He said a significant component of the levy plan will be maintaining and enhancing the building portfolio.

Mr. Chew said while SPL may not be deeply affected by federal cuts, it may be good to address that issue, as the Library does not operate in a vacuum, and what is happening at a national level may negate some grant opportunities that might have been pursued otherwise. He said libraries across the country are grappling with repositioning. Mr. Gannon thanked Mr. Chew and said that it can be acknowledged in the section of the Operations Plan on anticipated or future risks. Mr. Hairston said he supported Ms. Mehdi's comments and agrees that the Operations Plan should point toward the Strategic Plan and move the focus from the past to the future of the Library.

Proposed Change to 2026 Annual Wage Increase Implementation Date

Human Resources Director Brian Sharkey said the Library is seeking a change in implementation date for the annual wage increase (AWI) under the collective bargaining agreement. He said the Library Board approved contract language for the 2023-2026 collective bargaining agreement, and the Library is about to enter the final year of that contract. He said, as part of that contract, there is a 3.6% AWI that will be applied to all represented staff, as well as to non-represented staff, with the exception of staff in the Discretionary Pay Program that falls under Mr. Fay's purview, and the Chief Librarian, whose compensation is set by the Board.

Mr. Sharkey said the 2026 implementation date written into the contract was Saturday, January 10, which the City has reviewed and determined is not the appropriate date. He said the City typically implements the AWI on a Wednesday, the first day of the pay period, and the January

10 date was a clerical error in the contracts. Mr. Sharkey said the rest of the City has moved to a December 31 implementation date, which is a Wednesday and the start of a pay period. He said the Library would like to make the same change so that SPL employees receive the wage increase on the same date. He said Mr. Gannon, Mr. Merkner, and the Library's Finance Team reviewed the issue for financial impact. He said there is a difference of approximately \$60,000 for the Library, and the Finance team has confirmed that there are funds available to cover it.

Mr. Hairston asked when SPL management and Local 2083 leadership agreed to move the implementation date from January 10, 2026. He asked if the decision was included in Library Board meeting notes or if the Board was informed. Mr. Sharkey said the issue was brought forward at the most recent Labor/Management Committee meeting, which is a monthly meeting of the Executive Team of the Union. He said the Library wanted to make sure the Union was also in support, and today's action is Library management's request to the Library Board for approval.

Ms. Mehdi asked if the date was incorrect in the Coalition of City Union contracts or only in the Library's contract. Mr. Sharkey said the date was listed as January 10 in the Coalition of City Union contracts. He said it has never been the case to implement the AWI on a Saturday and was an error in the City contract that the Library essentially copied over to its own contract. Ms. Mehdi thanked Mr. Sharkey for the clarification. She said it is unfortunate there is a budget impact, but the Library needs to be responsible to appropriately pay its staff.

It was moved and seconded to approve a new 2026 Annual Wage Increase implementation date of December 31, 2025 for represented employees of Washington State Council of County and City Employees, AFSCME, AFL-CIO Local 2083 Bargaining Units; and for non-represented employees outside of the DPP/APEX program as published; the motion carried unanimously.

2026 Proposed Library Board Meeting Dates

Mr. Fay referred to the memo in the meeting packet and asked the Board for any suggested changes. Ms. Pettis said the proposed June 25 meeting date coincides with the American Libraries Association annual conference. Mr. Fay said staff can manage remote attendance. Mr. Hairston asked if the 11:00 start time still works for all trustees. Ms. Pettis and Mr. Chew said it works well, and Ms. Pettis said she will need to miss the September meeting. Ms. Bendixen said she has a team meeting conflict with the 11:00 start time but she will manage it. Mr. Hairston said he will be out of the country on a number of dates but will attend remotely.

It was moved and seconded to approve the 2026 Proposed Library Board Meeting Dates as published; the motion carried unanimously.

Union Report

AFSCME Local 2083 Vice president of classified staff Katherine Hernandez said the Union's October report refers to safety issues in branches, specifically a fiberglass installation at the Maintenance and Operations Center (MOC) over the summer and the roof replacement at the Greenwood Branch in September and October.

Ms. Hernandez said she is a Library Associate at the Greenwood Branch and has been with SPL for almost 13 years, during which time she never felt that the Library didn't have her best interest in mind when it came to her health and safety until the roofing project. She said the Library can plan for many scenarios, but how it reacts to unexpected situations says a lot about an organization. She said she was disappointed and upset by SPL's response to fumes at the Greenwood Branch that made staff ill on September 17 and the entire following week. She said staff requests to close the branch were largely ignored, and staff experienced headaches, burning eyes, scratchy throats, nausea, dizziness, and lightheadedness for multiple days before work was halted. She said staff reported incidents up the chain of command, and did not receive a response for several days, which

made staff feel unsafe, taking a mental and physical toll. She said it is unknown whether staff will have any long-term health effects from the fumes. Ms. Hernandez said patrons were also exposed to fumes and chemicals. She said patrons' service was also affected, as staff were working while ill.

Ms. Hernandez said it is distressing to feel that one's employer does not care about their life, which is how she felt working in fumes, which made her feel low and disrespected. She said when the branch closed in October to finish the construction, it was welcome, but was too little, too late. She said trust with staff at the Greenwood Branch and around the system has been broken. She said, as a member of union leadership, she is able to get to know SPL administration, and she knows they care about staff, but she did not experience that in this instance, which was disheartening.

Ms. Hernandez said challenges like the fiberglass installation at the MOC over the summer should not have happened again but did. She said instead of SPL remedying the situation quickly, staff had to work in an unsafe environment for days. She said in her nearly 13 years at SPL, the organization has looked for ways to become an employer of choice, but the choices made in these moments regarding the health and safety of staff prove SPL has a long way to go to reach that goal. She said there will be next steps and lessons learned, and Union leadership looks forward to working together with Library administration to prevent incidents like this in the future.

Mr. Hairston thanked Ms. Hernandez for sharing the experience of the employees. He said the Board is serious about hearing, listening, and paying attention to these issues. Ms. Mehdi said the situation is distressing. She said the report acknowledges that the situation caught Library leadership by surprise. She said it is disconcerting to hear that trust has been broken, and she asked what can be done to repair it. Ms. Hernandez said while Library leadership was caught off guard at the beginning, staff mentioned symptoms and illness for days and did not receive a response. She said when staff were allowed to close the branch early, they had already been in the building for six hours. She said it is hard to say how trust can be repaired after a major breach of trust related to staff health. She said she hadn't seen this happen before the MOC and Greenwood incidents. She said staff will look to future capital projects, and how they are treated in relation to health and safety concerns. Ms. Hernandez said there needs to be an apology from Library administration to staff.

Mr. Fay said Library administration does apologize to staff and patrons for this experience. He said this is not the way these projects should go. He said administration has identified areas of improvement around the processes by which projects are done including communication between Capital Projects and staff at branches, and better integration of the Safety Manager into the projects. He said administration is working on these areas to ensure that these experiences do not happen again. He said there are always things in construction projects that can arise as surprises, but some things are foreseeable. He said better communication, better integration of safety management protocols, and better responsiveness in the moment are necessary. He said it takes the integration of multiple people to ensure that projects go well and do not cause safety concerns to staff, patrons, or construction personnel. Mr. Fay said these are all important pieces, and it is Library administration's responsibility to manage the projects, not only the contractors' responsibility.

Mr. Chew asked, while staff were feeling the effects of fumes, whether the construction workers were asked to work on a different task. Ms. Hernandez said, to her knowledge, there were attempted solutions. She said the Greenwood Branch manager did a great job of communicating with the SPL Capital Projects manager and with the contractor directly. She said there were attempts to find solutions, but unfortunately, the attempted solutions did not fix the problem. Mr. Chew said, in home remodels, for example, when something goes awry, a contractor may stop work until a solution is found. Ms. Hernandez said there were attempts to remedy the situation, which were appreciated, but were unfortunately unsuccessful.

Updates from Library Board Members

Ms. Mehdi said she appreciated the Technical and Collection Services report in the meeting packet. She said it was fascinating to read about how SPL staff figured out how to properly file

the collection. She said instead of using the Dewey Decimal System which has one number for comics and manga, SPL staff came up with an interesting and useful solution. Ms. Mehdi said her personal experience when working at the Library was of having many interesting personalities coming together and trying to solve a problem for patrons. She said this is an elegant solution and she commended staff.

ADJOURN

Library Board President Tali Hairston adjourned the meeting at 12:17 p.m.

Unapproved Board Minutes

Board of Trustees Special Meeting

The Seattle Public Library

November 5, 2025

CALL TO ORDER

A special meeting of The Seattle Public Library (SPL) Board of Trustees was called to order by Library Board President Tali Hairston on November 5, 2025 at 3:05 pm, when members of the Library Board trustees joined members from the boards of The Seattle Public Library Foundation, the Friends of The Seattle Public Library, and the Library Foundation's Emeritus Board for a work session. The meeting was held at the Central Library.

FOUNDATION STRATEGIC PLANNING

The Seattle Public Library Foundation Chief Executive Officer Brian Lawrence, Foundation Board President Sarah Stanley, and Foundation Board Co-Vice President Matt Hillman provided a high-level overview of the Foundation's strategic planning effort. Mr. Lawrence, Ms. Stanley, and Mr. Hillman discussed the process, priorities, and structure of the Foundation's strategic plan which is being crafted to align with the Library's 2005-2036 strategic plan. The Foundation's plan reaffirms its mission and will serve to guide its work in supporting quality Library service to the city of Seattle.

LIBRARY SURVEY RESULTS

Director of Library Experience and Engagement Kai Tang presented a high-level overview of responses received from the Library's 2025 community survey. Data analysis will be used to guide planning of Library priorities around spaces, collections, programs, and services.

LEVY RENEWAL PLANNING

Chief Librarian Tom Fay presented a high-level overview of planning and next steps in the development of a seven-year levy renewal that will be proposed to replace funding provided by the Library levy approved by voters in 2019.

ADJOURN

Library Board President Tali Hairston adjourned the meeting at 5:47 p.m.



The Seattle Public Library

Date: November 20, 2025

To: Library Board of Trustees

From: Tom Fay, Executive Director and Chief Librarian

Re: November 2025 Chief Librarian's Report

1. A note of appreciation to the Library Board, Foundation Board, Friends Board, and Emeritus Board members who came together at the November 5 All Boards Meeting to receive updates on the Foundation's Strategic Planning effort, the Library's community survey results, and Library levy renewal planning. As always, the annual gathering was a valuable forum for information sharing and engagement among the supporting organizations who work together to strengthen the Library.
2. On October 26, I attended the Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority Delta Upsilon Omega Chapter's annual tea at the Douglass-Truth Branch where the chapter presented a generous \$1,908 contribution to the Library in support of the African American Collection at the Douglass-Truth Branch. For more than 60 years, generosity from AKA DUO members has continued to add new materials and funding to the African American Collection which now numbers more than 10,000 items including books, newspapers, artwork, and other materials highlighting Black culture and history in a rich collection reflective of the community. The African American Collection at the Douglass-Truth Branch is one of the largest public library collections of African American literature and history on the West Coast and is valued by researchers, scholars, students and community members alike. The Library deeply appreciates AKA DUO's continued engagement with the Douglass-Truth Branch and commitment to partnership and community building.
3. This month, four new electric vehicle (EV) charging stations were installed in the Central Library garage, with work completed during overnight shifts to lessen the impact on garage operations. In 2024, the Library received a \$270,000 grant from the Washington State Department of Commerce for the installation of EV charging stations at the Central Library; Beacon Hill, Broadview, Green Lake, and Rainier Beach branches; and the Maintenance and Operations Center. The charging stations will become operational following completion of construction at all locations and establishment of vendor service, maintenance, and patron payment systems.

Meetings and events during this reporting period:

- a. Board Meetings: Monthly Library Board of Trustees meeting; bi-monthly meeting of the Foundation Board; Friends of the Library monthly Board meeting; Friends Annual

Meeting; monthly meeting of Library and Friends leadership; monthly meeting with Library Board President and Vice President; annual All Boards Meeting.

- b. Standing Meetings: Compensation Committee; Senior Management Team; E-Team; Monthly Managers meeting; Union/Leadership meetings; Foundation CEO/Chief Librarian bi-monthly meetings.
- c. Library Meetings, Talks, Interviews and Visits: Puget Sound Library Director quarterly meeting; monthly meeting with King County Library System Director.
- d. City Meetings, Events and Programs: Mayor's Cabinet meeting; Deputy Mayor bi-weekly meeting; monthly meeting with Councilmember Rivera.

Information Technology

Building Back Better: Modernizing IT and Preparing for the Future in 2025

November 20, 2025

Charles Wesley, Library Technology Officer

Overview

This year the Information Technology department has made large strides towards our goals of modernization and preparing for the future. We are transforming our infrastructure, team, strategies, and practices to better position IT for the future. We are excited to share an update on what we have accomplished this year.

2025 Workplan

Starting in 2022, the IT department instituted a new annual work planning process. Projects are identified across categories such as maintenance and operations, strategic priorities, cybersecurity, and discretionary work to enhance Library services.

The 2025 IT work plan included 40 projects across 17 services totaling approximately \$2.4M in cumulative budget. Services in scope for this year include, among others, public and staff computer replacements, enterprise network upgrades, preparation for a new ILS in 2026, and continuing to mature our cybersecurity program.

2025 IT Projects by Category	
Cyber Security	8
Discretionary	12
M&O	15
Strategic Priority	5
Total	40

Highlight: SPL Cybersecurity Program

In 2025, SPL made significant progress in strengthening its cybersecurity posture by hiring a full-time Cybersecurity Analyst to lead strategic initiatives. This role has been central to conducting assessments, deploying modern security solutions, and aligning SPL's efforts with the National Institute of Standards & Technology (NIST) Cybersecurity Framework.

Key Accomplishments:

- **Cybersecurity Assessment:** A comprehensive evaluation using the NIST CSF identified critical gaps and guided remediation efforts.
- **Managed Security Services (MSSP):** Implemented a 24/7 Security Operations Center (SOC), Security Information and Event Management (SIEM) system, and vulnerability management platform to unify threat detection and response across SPL's environment.
- **Email Security Enhancements:** Deployed enhanced protection that blocked over 1,000 phishing attempts and prevented three account takeover incidents

- **Continuous Penetration Testing:** Conducted over 30 internal and external tests using automated tools to validate controls and prioritize remediation.
- **Tabletop Exercises:** Facilitated two incident response tabletop exercises to strengthen organizational readiness and cross-team coordination in simulated attack scenarios.

Highlight: ILS Selection Update

As the Library prepares for an ILS migration in 2026, this year has focused on conducting an RFP process to solicit and evaluate bids for a new ILS. The two vendor finalists are SirsiDynix (Symphony) and Clarivate/Innovative (Polaris).

For the last two months, the ILS Selection Committee has been carefully reviewing vendors' proposals and additional information gleaned from their demos and responses to supplementary questions. This committee comprises over 20 subject-matter experts from across the Library with detailed knowledge of Library cataloging, circulation, technical/IT systems, and other areas central to the work of an ILS.

The committee is now making its initial recommendations to the project's executive sponsors, Administrative Services Director Rob Gannon and Library Experience and Engagement Director Kai Tang, for their consideration.

Once the Library has made a final determination on which vendor we will work with, a contract will need to be negotiated with the selected vendor.

Highlight: Branch Switch Replacement

Core network infrastructure is critical to providing network and internet connectivity to all Library locations. The physical hardware installed in all Library buildings must be replaced when its service life ends.

In 2024, the IT department focused on core switches at the Central Library. In 2025, branch network switches are being replaced. This \$1.6M project includes 34 switches, with 19 already completed, and 5 more scheduled before the end of the year. We expect to complete these upgrades in the first half of 2026.

Functional improvements include improved ability to schedule software upgrades and patches, improved alerting and notification of device failures or degradation, improved ability to isolate computers for security or operational needs, increased power over ethernet (PoE) capacity to support internet-of-things (IOT) devices such as environmental sensors and building security hardware. There will also be increased port capacity, which provides more room for expansion of device density at each location.

Due to the impactful nature of this work, replacements have been scheduled to minimize impact on staff and patrons by utilizing planned closures, holidays, or planned building maintenance or construction projects.

Highlight: Computer Replacement

The global pandemic has had lasting impacts in many operational areas of the Library. Coming out of the pandemic, the Library had a backlog of staff and public computers that were beyond their useful service life and were out of warranty. At the start of this initiative, roughly 80% of computers were out of warranty.

The IT department prioritized addressing this backlog in the following years by introducing an improved rolling replacement cycle. The goal was to budget and plan to replace a consistent number of machines each year so that future replacement cycles would predictably fit within budgetary and staff capacity limits.

Each year has seen improvements in reducing this number, and we are very happy to report that we are on target to have 100% of all devices within warranty by the end of 2025. Of the 250 machines scheduled for replacement this year, 200 have been replaced to date, with the final 50 on track to be complete by the end of the year.

Looking to the Future in 2026 and beyond

IT priorities next year and beyond include continuing to upgrade our aging infrastructure. Wireless upgrades in branches, additional upgrades to networking, and staying ahead of hardware replacements are core maintenance and operations needs. The new ILS migration will be a significant change that will enable future modernizations in many staff and patron facing services.

To prepare for this, IT continues to work on building sustainable services that meet the needs of a diverse audience. As the present focus on building a firm foundation on refreshed infrastructure transitions to transforming Library technology services, IT will be positioned to strategically partner across divisions of the Library to meet the needs of our patrons in the future.

Q3 2025

The Seattle Public Library LEVY REPORT



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Q3 2025

Levy background

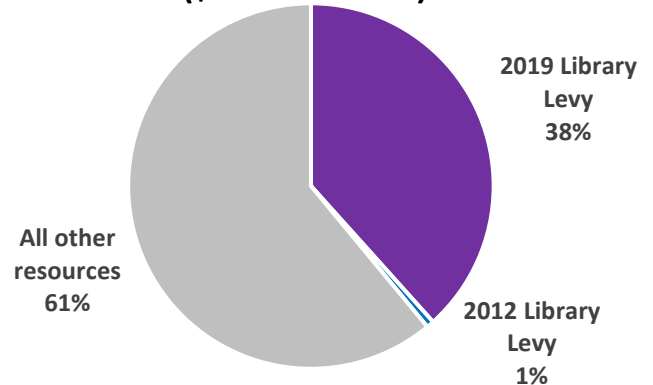
In August 2019, Seattle voters overwhelmingly approved (76%) a seven-year, \$219.1 million property tax levy to maintain and enhance Library services from 2020 through 2026, renewing a seven-year, \$122.6 million levy that expired at the end of 2019.

This is the sixth year of the Levy. In 2025, the 2019 Levy accounts for \$54.5 million (37.9%) of the Library's total revised budget of \$143.8 million. The 2012 Levy provides \$0.9 million (0.6 %). Other sources of funding include the City's general fund, state and federal grants, private funds, and Library fund balance.

As part of its 2019 proposal to voters, the Library laid out a clear framework for how Levy proceeds would be used to maintain services 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 Q3 2025, continues the series of [quarterly 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 open hours; elimination of overdue fines; improved collections and technology; safe, clean, and well-maintained buildings; specialized programming and services for children; and Library strategic planning.

**2025 Library Revised Budget
(\$142.2 Million)**



Did you know?

The Levy supports a **quarter of all positions** at the Library, including 35% of children and teen service librarian positions.

Q3 2025 Highlights

During the third quarter of 2025, the Library saw strong usage of services and programs, indicating that we've rebounded since recovering from a ransomware attack in 2024. Given a turbulent national political landscape that continues to create uncertainty for many, the Library is focused on its role as a safe, welcoming space for our patrons, and on creating programs and services that nurture, empower, and inspire our community.

Community use survey: The Library worked with Olympic Research and Strategy (ORS), to create and conduct a community use survey that ran from Aug. 25 to Sept. 24, available in multiple languages.

Over 1,000 people participated in a statistically significant mailer survey that reflects Seattle demographics. Thousands more participated in a publicly available online survey. We expect to receive results and analysis from ORS in November, which will help inform decision-making and shape future Library services. The survey builds on findings from 30+ community workshops held earlier this year.

Strong library use: With a consistent schedule of open hours, including all locations open at least six days a week, the Library saw robust use of core Library services, spaces, and collections in Q3. More than 325,000 people used their library card to check out materials and access services, and more than 890,000 people made in-person visits.

University Branch progress, Green Lake Branch

recognition: The [Levy-funded safety upgrades and renovation](#) at the landmarked University Branch have made major progress, with a focus on retrofitting the branch against seismic events. In September 2025, the Green Lake Branch renovation, completed in 2024, won a [“Preserving Neighborhood Character” award](#) from Historic Seattle.

Columbia Branch retrofit deferral. In September, Mayor Harrell released the [2026 proposed budget](#), which included a \$5 million reduction to the Library from the General Fund. To address this reduction without impacting the Library’s public services, we have proposed deferring the Columbia Branch seismic retrofit, which was part of the 2019 Levy package. This proposed change will be presented to the Library’s Board of Trustees at their December meeting.

Strategic Plan progress: Library staff have been making progress on implementing the first year of the newly adopted [10-year Strategic Plan](#), an impact-focused effort funded by the Levy. A Q3 milestone for the plan’s impact area of “literacy” was the delivery of classroom kits to teachers at Bailey Gatzert Elementary, as part of the Story Squad early literacy project. We also hired two new positions that will manage Strategic Plan priority impact areas, including a Security and Emergency Services manager and an Inclusion and Belonging director; and made progress on procuring a new integrated library system.

We look forward to sharing a more detailed update on strategic plan implementation in our end-of year Levy report.



Browsing at the South Park Branch.

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

- The Library’s Strategic Plan

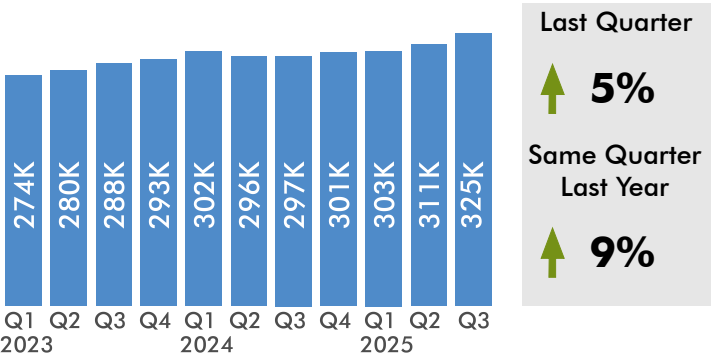
LEVY ACCOMPLISHMENTS: HOURS AND ACCESS



IN FOCUS: Quarterly Usage Trends

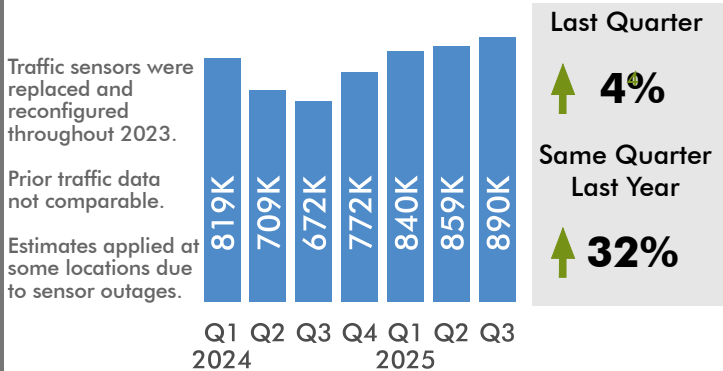
Active Library Users

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



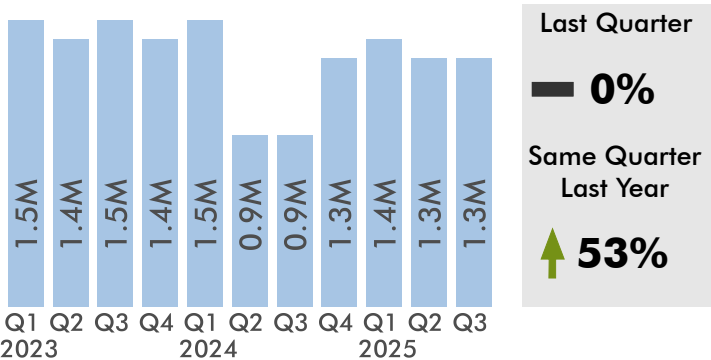
In-Person Visits

Number of in-person visits



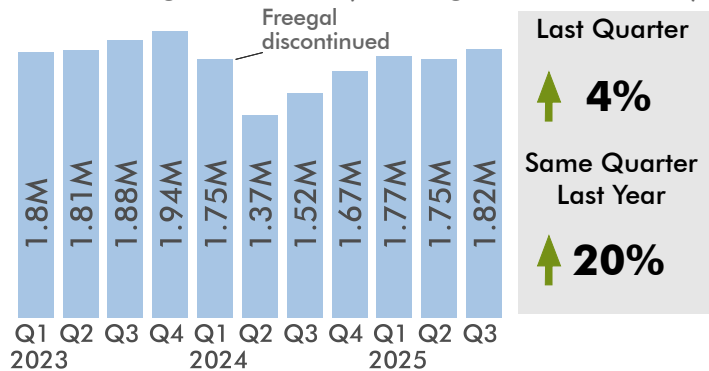
Physical Checkouts

Number of physical checkouts (including renewals)



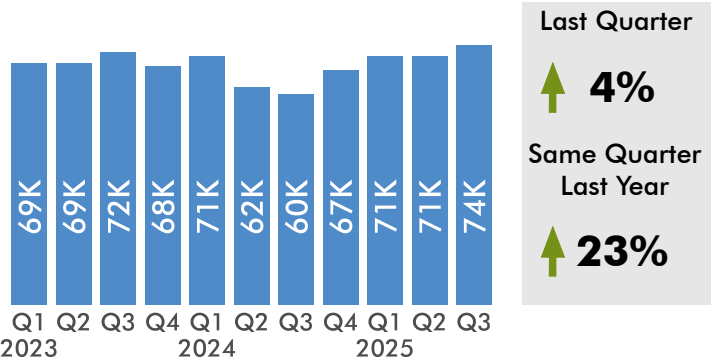
Digital Checkouts

Number of digital checkouts (including streams and views)



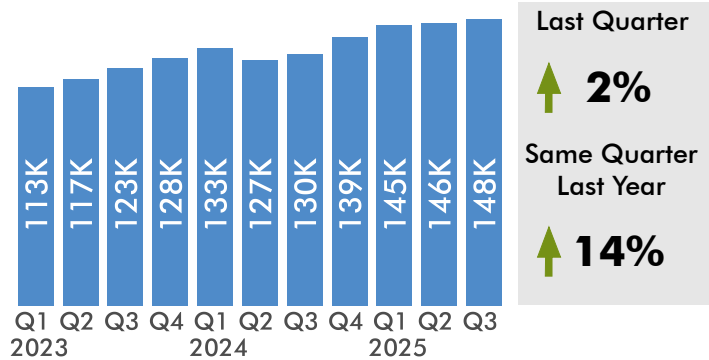
Borrowers - Physical

Number of patrons who borrowed physical materials



Borrowers - Digital

Number of patrons who borrowed digital materials



A ransomware outage significantly disrupted borrowing and overall library use from May to September 2024.

LEVY ACCOMPLISHMENTS: HOURS & ACCESS

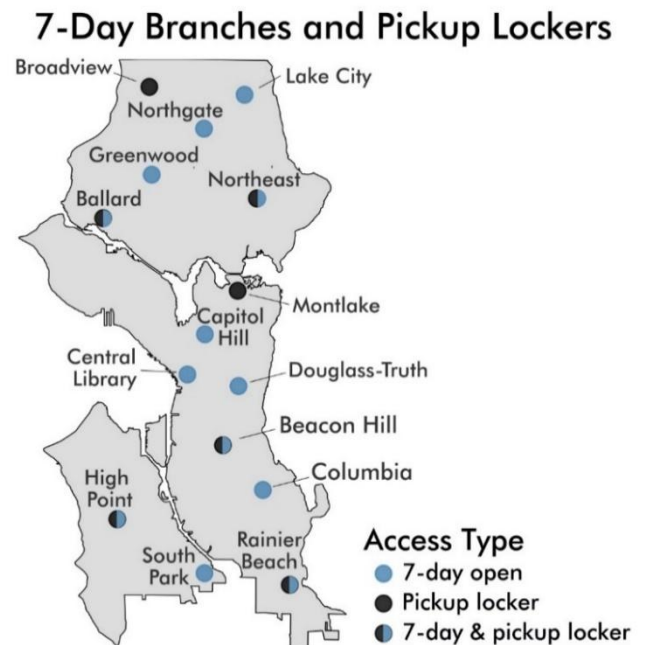
Strong Library use, visits and checkouts

The 2019 Levy provides \$16.5 million in 2025 for investment in Hours and Access. This funding supports open hours at our 27 libraries; community access to Library learning programs and services; and citywide community outreach and engagement. Many elements of this Levy category relate to increasing access to Library resources. We achieve this in several ways, including eliminating late fees, adding open hours, and creating new access points, such as holds pick-up lockers that are available 24/7. Total Levy spending through Q3 2025 for the Hours and Access category was \$11.5 million.

Nine months of stable open hours: The 2019 Levy promised expanded hours above 2019 levels, which increases community access to Library collections, information services, computers, printers, programs, and public spaces. In the five years since the COVID-19 pandemic, we have navigated many challenges in restoring and expanding hours. In late January 2025, we implemented a new schedule that increased hours, ensuring all active locations are open at least six days a week and one weekend day. Thirteen locations are open seven days a week. (See Appendix 1.)

Library and locker use: More people (325,000) used their Library cards in Q3 than during any quarter since at least Q1 2023. Patrons are also using pick-up lockers to collect their holds more frequently, with 24,000 locker checkouts through the third quarter of 2025, compared to 17,000 checkouts for all of 2024. This growth suggests patrons are becoming more aware of and comfortable with the technology. Almost 890,000 people made in-person visits to Library locations, more people than any quarter since at least Q4 2023 (we did not have comparable data before that time).

New library card application: In April, we launched improved online Library Card Application forms, which are available in five languages at www.spl.org/Card. In Q3, more than 23,000 people used the new form to sign up for a full or provisional Library card.



Programs and services

In Q3 2025, the Library held more than 900 programs throughout the city. The Levy is an important component of programming because it funds much of the staffing that makes these programs possible. Direct costs for most Library programs are supported by The Seattle Public Library Foundation, which funds Museum Pass, Summer of Learning, and many other programs.

Central Library programs: The Central Library supported almost 220 events in Q3, including 65 private events and almost 140 Library-hosted programs. Public events included Ladies Musical Club performances, author events, KUOW Book Club events, a Seattle Times Live “Columbia at the Crossroads” event; and a gallery exhibit inspired by the Douglass-Truth Branch’s African American Collection. We also accommodated free use of Central Library meeting rooms for nonprofit organizations, including the Wing Luke Museum, Mary’s Place, and On the Boards.

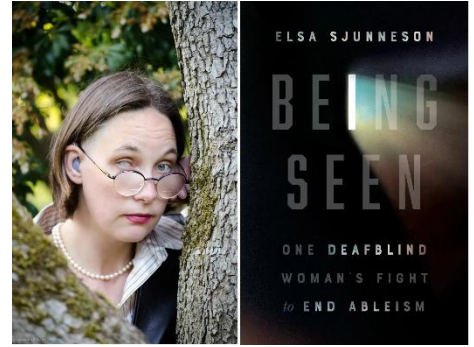
Literacy and learning: Around 300 story times, including 65 Play & Learn sessions, were held across our 27 locations in Q3. The annual Summer of Learning program for kids and families included activity booklets and the first full season of family programming since before the pandemic. This fall, we are piloting a new [Story Squad program](#) with Seattle Public Schools to deliver supplemental books for grades 2-4 in Title I schools. Story Squad supports the literacy impact of the Strategic Plan and aims to help students read at or above grade level.

The power of reader connections: In August, a story was published that was a testament to the impact of the work of our adult, teen, and children’s librarians. The NoveList blog posted a [powerful story](#) by author and activist Elsa Sjunneson about the difference that two SPL Reader Services librarians made in her life. She also chronicled this experience in [“Being Seen: One DeafBlind Woman’s Fight to End Ableism.”](#)

Meeting rooms supporting civic engagement: The Levy supports the use of community meeting spaces, free at neighborhood branches that have them, and available for a modest fee at the Central Library downtown. In Q3, meeting rooms were used more than 2,300 times by nonprofits, public agencies, Scout troops, singing groups and yoga classes.

“Here for You” campaign: For Library Card Sign-up Month (September), our marketing staff created a multilingual campaign, “Here for You,” that highlights programs, resources, and all the ways the Library is here for patrons (www.spl.org/HereForYou). We collaborated with local artists and branch staff to develop collectible postcards for all 27 locations. (See page 6 for more information.)

Redesigned Shelf Talk blog: In July, we redesigned our 17-year-old Shelf Talk blog to be more dynamic, visual, accessible, and connected to our website and brand (blog.spl.org).



“With every stack of books, with every chat about what I wanted to read next, they were helping me to stay alive.”

- Elsa Sjunneson, “Being Seen”

“Here For You”: Library Card Sign-Up Month campaign

The Library is a source of stability and empowerment for many during uncertain times. Our **fall campaign “Here For You”** celebrates the many ways we support patrons.

- **14,000 postcards** distributed
- **6,700 Library card** sign-ups in September

www.spl.org/HereForYou



Campaign elements

- Collect postcards & passport stamps for all 27 locations!
- Featuring local artists
- Multilingual ad campaign
- Social media campaign
- Signage/window clings

Patron praise for Library postcards

"I love this! On a mission to **visit them all**. ❤️"

"What a creative way to highlight library **access and community connection**."

"I love the Here For You activity!! **Today I bussed/walked to five branches!**"

Social Services: Connecting patrons to resources and community

Our Social Services team includes a Social Services librarian, a senior community resource specialist, and a Levy-funded community resource specialist who focuses on youth and young adults up to age 26. Their work is rooted in our Strategic Plan goal of building community and cultivating a sense of belonging, with a focus on understanding and centering patrons' interests and needs and connecting them to each other, to the Library, and to Seattle's civic and cultural communities. Here are highlights of the team's work in Q3.

An increase in referrals: In Q3, the Social Services team recorded 186 interactions with patrons, 161 of which involved referral to an external organization such as shelters and health care providers. This is a 50% increase from Q2, which may reflect growing awareness and a growing need.

Life-saving overdose prevention

supplies: Through a partnership with Public Health - Seattle & King County, the Library distributed 1,750 free naloxone kits (two doses per kit), as well as other overdose prevention supplies in Q3.

Resource fairs: Social Services worked with teams across the Library and with dozens of community partners to host two resource fairs in Q3: The second Young Adult Resource Fair at the Central Library, which drew over 200 young people, and a Lake City Resource Fair, with 250 attendees.



The Young Adult Resource Fair offered tarot readings, health services, haircuts, and ID cards.

Central Library programming: 268 patrons attended six Coffee and Conversations events, and 187 patrons attended 11 Crafternoons, with less attendance than in Q2, perhaps due to changes in location and reduced budget. Social Services staff also regularly attend weekly Young Adult Drop-ins to connect youth to services and resources and to build rapport.

Branch programs: The Social Services team worked with branch staff to host Coffee & Conversations at the International District / Chinatown Branch, which drew more than 80 patrons across four events. FareStart Mobile Market, held weekly at the NewHolly Branch, and FamilyWorks Mobile Pantry, held bimonthly at the Broadview Branch, routinely attract over 30 patrons each week.

Community voices

"The library is a sanctuary where you can feed your noggin, use the bathroom, get water. **As a homeless person, it is truly an island oasis.**"

– Patron at International District / Chinatown Branch, Coffee & Conversations

Ensuring that library spaces are safe and welcoming

Community Use Agreement takes effect: On August 1, 2025, the new Community Use Agreement (CUA) replaced the Library's Rules of Conduct as official policy regarding appropriate behavior while on Library property. This was a multi-year process that engaged dozens of staff and community members and aimed to address inequitable enforcement and impacts of our rules on patrons of color, younger patrons, patrons with accessibility needs, and patrons experiencing homelessness. Before the transition, the Library conducted a comprehensive implementation and training process with staff, which is ongoing. (See page 9 for more information.)

Building our Security Services team. The Security Services unit oversees the security of Library buildings and public spaces to provide patrons and staff a welcoming and safe environment. A Strategic Plan priority this year was to create and hire for a new leadership position in Security Services. On August 4, the Environment and Security Services manager started, a position that oversees a team of 22 officers and coordinates safety, security, and emergency management for the Library system.

In Q3, the security team was very involved in implementing the CUA. Under new leadership, the team is working with staff on a daily basis to define, uphold, and apply the agreement with compassion and professionalism. They are also coaching staff in effectively using CUA tools, such as a new Incident Report form.

Security leadership is also making progress on the Strategic Plan priority of assessing the Library's security effectiveness and identifying the opportunities to make Library spaces more safe and welcoming. The team is taking steps to assess each location's unique security needs through analysis, visits, and listening sessions; and to prepare for a security audit of the Central Library. Another priority this quarter was to establish the Security Services team's internal values, vision, and mission statements to guide the team's work going forward.

Security team mission

The Security Team's mission is to foster a safe and welcoming environment for all Library patrons, staff, and community members. We maintain a visible presence at Library locations, uphold and enforce the Library's Community Use Agreement, respond quickly to resolve incidents, and serve everyone in the Library with compassion, respect, and professionalism.

The Library's Community Use Agreement

In August 2025, after a years-long community engagement process, the Library adopted a new [Community Use Agreement \(CUA\)](#), replacing the Library's former Rules of Conduct, to provide guidelines about behavior while on Library property. The CUA is designed to be welcoming, inclusive, and aligned with Library values.

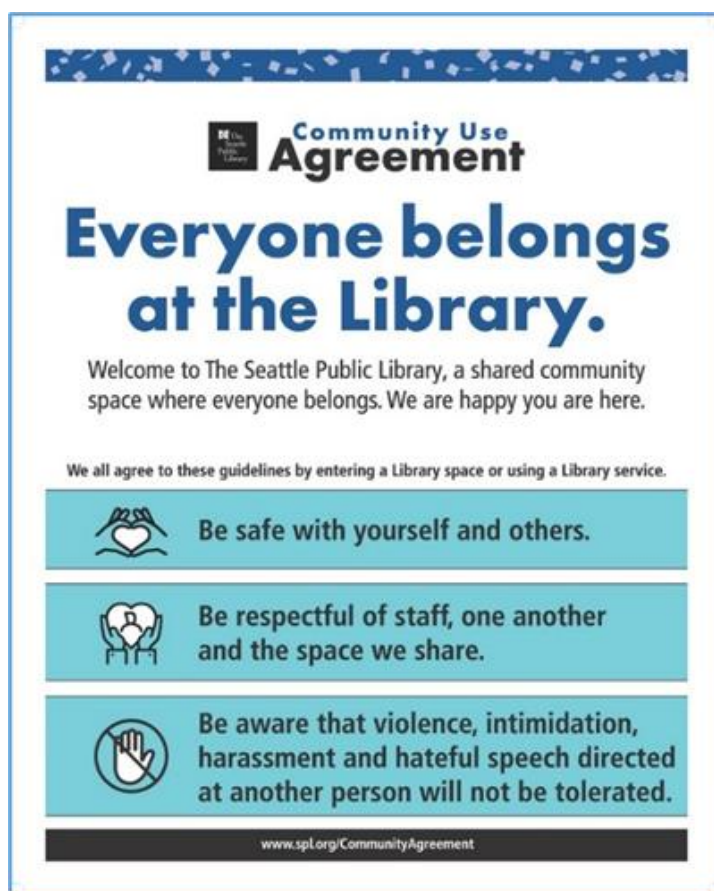
What Makes the CUA Different?

- ✓ Shorter and simpler with friendly, visually engaging presentation
- ✓ Positive, values-driven language
- ✓ Emphasis on safety and helping patrons successfully use the Library
- ✓ Emphasis on empowering staff to apply the CUA flexibly
- ✓ Stronger protection for staff against harmful and hateful behaviors
- ✓ New suspension guidelines and incident reporting process to support staff enforcing the CUA
- ✓ Required CUA training for all staff, as well as ongoing support and coaching

Our Commitment to You

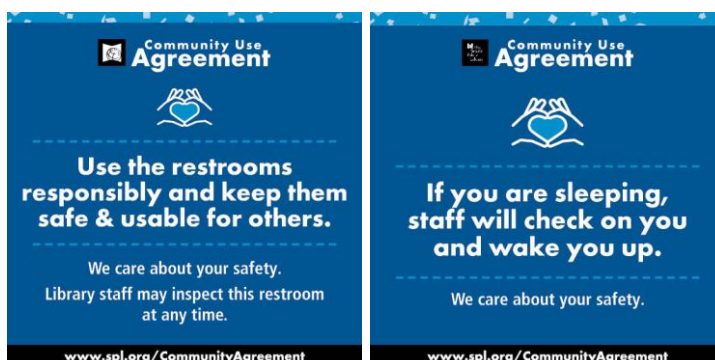
The Community Use Agreement underscores the Library's commitment to equity, intellectual freedom, and accessibility.

Learn more at
www.spl.org/CommunityAgreement



Patrons are reminded of the CUA through a poster, signage and a brochure.

The CUA's core values of safety, respect and civility are communicated in many ways throughout our spaces, from language kiosks to interactions with staff.



LEVY ACCOMPLISHMENTS: COLLECTIONS

Building robust collections

The 2019 Levy commits resources to maintain and expand the Library's collection of physical and digital materials. This includes funding for e-books, e-audiobooks, streaming services, the Peak Picks collection, and the acquisition and digitization of local history materials.

In 2025, the 2019 Levy provides \$6.4 million for Collections, including \$5.5 million for books and materials, or 55% of the Library's books and materials budget. Total Levy spending through Q3 2025 for the Collections category was \$4.7 million, with 18% of Levy funds remaining to be spent. We are on track to fully spend the 2025 Collections budget.

Here are highlights of our collections work in Q3 2025.

Digital checkouts growing, spending stable:

Checkouts of digital books (e-books and e-audiobooks) increased 4% from Q2 to 1.5 million. The number of patrons accessing digital books in Q3 2025 increased by more than 15% compared to Q3 2024. We purchased almost 25,000 copies of digital titles.

We continue to closely monitor spending on digital books. Our average weekly high-demand spending (the cost of buying multiple copies of the most popular digital books) decreased slightly in Q3 2025. We expect to spend our entire high-demand budget in 2025, which helps us create a broad and diverse e-collection.

Books Unbanned, a Foundation-funded program that allows youth ages 13 to 26 across the country to check out digital books for free, continued to grow. In Q3, 9,200 Books Unbanned cardholders checked out more than 100,000 digital books.



Something for everyone: Young readers at South Park.

Did you know?

Every year, our Collections team receives **more than 12,000 submissions from patrons via our Suggest a Title service**. We accommodate the vast majority of these requests.

Physical collection and Peak Picks: Checkouts of physical materials including books, media, and equipment totaled 1.3 million in Q3, comparable to recent quarters, and 64,000 physical items were purchased. Peak Picks, our popular no-holds, no-wait collection of high-interest titles, was responsible for 37,000 physical checkouts. Peak Picks added 28 titles and 4,760 copies in Q3. Peak Picks is fully funded by the Levy.

The most popular Peak Picks titles were, in order, [“So Far Gone.”](#) a novel by Spokane writer Jess Walter; [“A Marriage at Sea,”](#) Sophie Elmhirst’s thrilling narrative about a couple who survive after being adrift for months; [“Atmosphere,”](#) by Taylor Jenkins Reid; [“Spent,”](#) a comic novel by Alison Bechdel; and [“Storybook Ending,”](#) a debut novel by Seattle Times art critic Moira Macdonald.

Other notable Peak Picks additions included Susana M. Morris’s “Positive Obsession,” a biography of Octavia Butler; and Angela Flournoy’s much-anticipated second book, “The Wilderness.”

Expanding language access: In Q3, Levy funds were used to add 270 adult titles and 192 children’s titles to the Library’s World Languages digital book collections, spanning 11 languages.

Highlights for children include the newest e-book volume in Spanish of the popular Babysitters Club graphic novels, multiple e-book titles from “Barefoot Bilinguals” in Vietnamese and English, and Arabic and English, and the audiobook of “The Lion, The Witch and the Wardrobe” in French. Print books were added in 11 languages as well.

An exciting development for our World Languages Collection is that the Library is adding our first-ever Portuguese language titles, all print books, which be available to patrons in Q4.

New York Times and streaming services: New York Times digital usage increased by 13% since Q2, with 43,000 sessions in Q3. Use of both the Kanopy and Hoopla streaming services increased slightly compared to Q2. Flipster magazine usage also increased slightly after several quarters of declining use. Hoopla is our most popular streaming service, with more than 62,000 checkouts in Q3.



Artist and author Tessa Hulls, who used the Library’s collection of graphic novels to inspire her Pulitzer Prize winning book “Feeding Ghosts,” participated in our fall [“Here for You” campaign.](#)



Local history collections

The [Seattle Room](#), located at the Central Library, provides in-person access to treasured local history items, including local manuscripts, menus, photos, postcards, books, and more. Our digital Seattle Room collections make Seattle history easier to access for students, researchers, historians, and others. The Seattle Room curator and Special Collections digital librarian positions are both funded by the Levy.

The Strategic Plan includes a goal of increasing the Seattle Room collection budget to provide more materials focused on Seattle and the Pacific Northwest, and from diverse communities that have contributed to our local history.

This quarter, the Seattle Room accommodated 144 research appointments, and an additional 825 people visited without an appointment. We added 265 items to the Seattle Room collections, including 47 books, three maps, and over 140 photographs.

One of our most exciting additions was a business and biographical directory of Issei (first-generation) Japanese immigrants to Washington state, created in 1920 by the Hiroshima Kenjinkai (prefectural association) to celebrate the organization's 20th anniversary. The directory is a rich resource, with many business photographs and detailed biographical information.

The only other publicly available copy of this directory is held by Densho, which has made it available in digital form on [their website](#).



The 1920 business and biographical directory of Issei (first-generation Japanese immigrants).



A photograph from the business directory of Nitta Grocery Store, 723 7th Ave., Seattle.

Seattle Room Digital Collections

This quarter almost 33,000 users visited the Seattle Room's digital collections, with 36,000 sessions and more than 110,000 pageviews.

We added over 250 glass plate negatives from the [Paul Dorpat Collection](#) to our [Seattle Room Digital Collections](#). The glass plate negatives, dating from circa 1900 to 1920, include many Seattle street views and rare interior shots of businesses such as knitting factories, saloons, stores, and barbershops. Photos outside the city include shots of a Newcastle coal mine and scenes at Snoqualmie Falls.

Some of the negatives are believed to be taken by Seattle resident William Leroy Brown (1871-1939). Since glass plate negatives are very fragile and easily damaged, digitization offers an important way to provide access while still preserving these images for many years to come.



William Brown (left) posing with family at 163 6th Ave., Seattle, ca. 1902. Paul Dorpat Collection.

Keeping our technology up to date

The 2019 Levy promised dedicated funding for digital equity offerings, updated infrastructure for public internet access, updated technology for acquisition and circulation, and continued maintenance and upgrading of public technologies and the [spl.org website](https://spl.org). The Levy funds \$2.8 million of operating expenses related to technology and online services in 2025 and \$4.4 million of unspent technology capital budget authority from prior years. Total Levy spending through Q3 2025 for technology operating expenses was \$1.6 million.

Digital equity and the HotSpot program

The 2019 Levy is the primary funding source for our [HotSpot program](#), which provides internet access through our general collection and through focused outreach with community organizations.

The Library's 850 Wi-Fi hot spots in the general collection continue to be extremely popular, and were checked out more than 1,500 times in Q3. The Library's outreach team also loans 250 hot spots on a long-term basis to community partners who use the hot spots to support Seattle residents most impacted by the digital divide.

The outreach team made 90 new hot spot loans in Q3, more than in Q2 because we had processed updated hotspot models. Patrons using hot spots reported being able to attend online citizenship, ESOL, and GED classes; complete homework; enroll in local colleges; apply for jobs; stay connected to loved ones; and learn on-demand skills.

HotSpot partners

- Alphabet Alliance of Color
- API Chaya
- Casa Latina
- Friends of Seattle World School
- South Seattle College – Justice Involved Solutions
- St. James Cathedral Immigrant Assistance
- Low Income Housing Institute Tiny House Villages
- Literacy Source
- Nickelsville Tiny House Villages
- SHARE/WHEEL shelters and tent city
- University Heights Center – Vehicle Residence Program
- Villa Comunitaria

Community voices

*“Before this course, I was afraid of using a computer ... But through this experience, I have learned that with practice, patience, and confidence, **I can overcome those fears and succeed.**” – Digital literacy student who used a hot spot for the duration of the course*

Maintaining access to technology and improving cybersecurity

ILS project progress: The 2019 Levy included \$4 million to support the replacement of the existing Integrated Library System (ILS), which is the central digital platform that allows libraries to manage collections materials, checkouts, patron accounts, and other services.

The Library released a Request for Proposal (RFP) in late July. By September, we had two potential ILS vendors: [SirsiDynix](#), our current Horizon vendor, and [Clarivate/ Innovative](#). Both are leaders in the library technology field, with strong track records of successful ILS implementations. After product demonstrations in October, we expect to select the vendor. The new ILS is expected to be implemented by the end of 2026.

Computers, printing, and ScanEZ: Q3 saw strong use of the Library's technology services. More than 17,000 patrons used public computers, booking 106,000 hours of computer time, and 30,000 patrons printed about 550,000 pages, a small increase from the previous quarter. Patrons used ScanEZ to scan about 138,000 pages, an almost 20% increase from Q2. In Q3, we also deployed additional security tools to public PCs and upgraded equipment as needed.

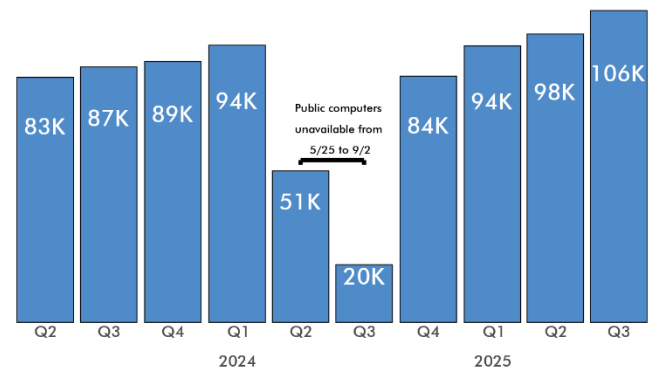
Mobile app downloads: Since its April launch, our new mobile app has been downloaded more than 20,000 times on Apple and Android devices. Users can navigate the app in Spanish, Vietnamese, and Traditional and Simplified Chinese.

Cybersecurity program: A cybersecurity analyst, hired earlier this year, is leading the development of a more mature cybersecurity program at the Library. The program has made progress on developing and optimizing security measures added after the 2024 ransomware attack on the Library, driving continuous improvement in our practices, and establishing policies and procedures to ensure the Library remains well-protected.

Requirements for new Integrated Library System (ILS)

- Certified to meet or exceed high cybersecurity and information security standards.
- User-friendly interface that supports efficient workflows.
- Can be configured for Library and patron needs without extensive customization.
- Can be integrated with other Library systems and applications.

Public Computer Hours Used Each Quarter



LEVY ACCOMPLISHMENTS: SUPPORTING CHILDREN

Expanding early learning options for children

The 2019 Levy promised additional support for Library early learning programs for children, ages birth to 5, providing about \$476,000 to support this effort in 2025. Total Levy spending through Q3 2025 for supporting children was \$277,000.

The Levy directly funds Kaleidoscope Play and Learn, drop-in neighborhood-based programs that provide opportunities for young children and caregivers to gather in community spaces and participate in quality early learning experiences.

In partnership with community organizations that provide trained facilitators, the Library currently offers weekly Play and Learn programs in four languages and at seven locations. In Q3 2025, around 65 Play and Learn sessions with total attendance of more than 1,700 were held at the Beacon Hill, Columbia, Delridge, Lake City, NewHolly, Rainier Beach, and South Park branches. Including Play and Learn, around 300 story times were held in Q3, with attendance of about 10,000.

Play & Learn sessions continue to thrive as a hub for play, learning and engagement. A facilitator with East African Community Services commented that as we move into the colder months, more families in the area are discovering sessions. Villa Comunitaria reported that a notable 40% of participants consistently attend both Delridge and South Park sessions, and that Latine families make up about 60% of participants at the South Park sessions, which are in Spanish.



A Play & Learn facilitator with Villa Comunitaria.

What Play and Learn participants and partners say

“In addition to playtime, families are sharing parenting tips, learning about child development, and participating in songs, stories, and guided activities that make each session lively and enriching.” – East African Community Services

“Families are not only attending sessions; they are building lasting relationships that extend beyond the program.” – Villa Comunitaria facilitator

Protecting our investments

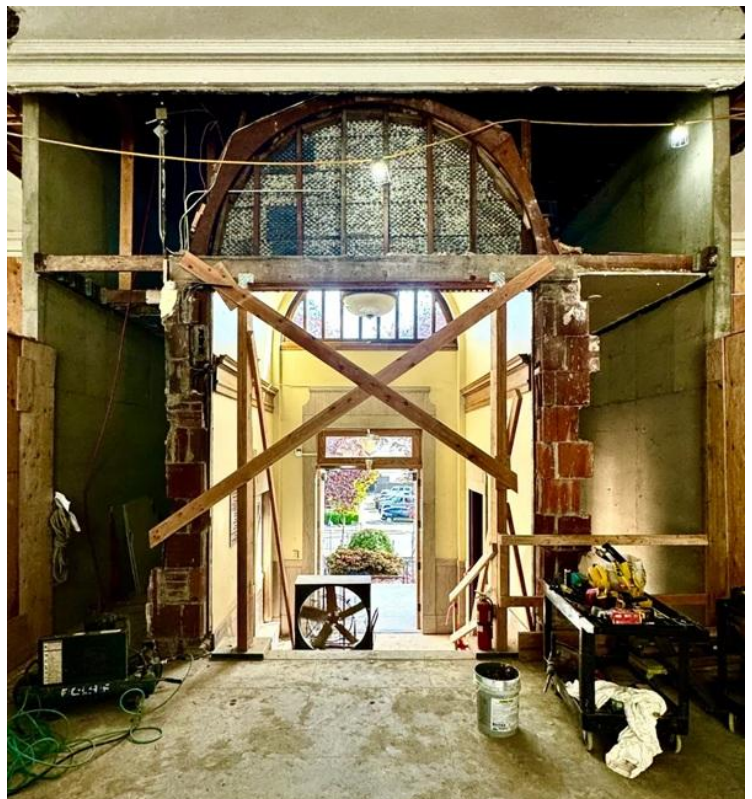
The 2019 Levy provides \$7.9 million in 2025 budget authority and \$13 million in carryforward authority for major maintenance, including nearly \$8 million dedicated specifically to seismic retrofit work. The 2012 Levy provided an additional \$232,000 in remaining carryforward authority, most of which is committed to projects in their final phases. In Q3 2025, the Library spent \$914,957 in 2019 Levy funds on seismic and major maintenance work, for a total of \$2.7 million year-to-date, with an additional \$6.28 million committed/encumbered year-to-date.

Major maintenance: Preserving libraries for the next generation

University Branch renovation progress:

In Q3, the renovation of the historic University Branch focused on the seismic retrofit of the building. In July, we received welcome news: Leveraging levy funding committed to the renovation, the Library received a [\\$2 million grant](#) from the Washington State Department of Commerce as additional funding for the renovation.

This comprehensive project will secure the branch against earthquakes while preserving the historic character of the building. Other major improvements include the installation of a modern, electric HVAC system; accessibility improvements such as a new entrance and elevator; two new reservable study rooms and a modernized meeting room downstairs; and many interior renovations. The University Branch is expected to reopen in late 2026.



Q3 progress on the University Branch focused on the seismic retrofit. Reinforced, concrete shear walls are being installed on either side of the main entrance.

Greenwood roof repair: A long-planned roof repair project on the Greenwood Branch began in mid-September. Due to anticipated construction impacts, a three-week construction closure was planned for Oct. 8 through Oct. 28.

Columbia Branch retrofit deferral. The [2026 proposed budget](#), released in September, included a \$5 million reduction to the Library budget. To address this reduction without impacting the Library's public services, we have proposed deferring the Columbia Branch seismic retrofit, which

was part of the 2019 Levy package. This proposed change will be presented to the Library's Board of Trustees at the December meeting.

Climate-friendly air conditioning: With the completion of the Green Lake Branch and the University Branch renovation underway, only four branches remain without air conditioning: the Columbia, Fremont, Queen Anne and West Seattle branches. Partial funding for these projects is included in the \$5.2 million Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Hazardous Mitigation Grant awarded to the Library in mid-2024. The Fremont and West Seattle projects are scheduled for early 2026. The Columbia and Queen Anne branches are in the design phase, with construction expected to start by fall 2026. Timing of these projects, however, is contingent on identifying supplemental funding sources.

Capitol Hill HVAC/electrification: The Capitol Hill HVAC/electrification project (which began in 2023) continued to await final adjustments, although the branch air conditioning has been operational for over a year.



On the hottest day in July, Katy was one of many Green Lake Branch patrons enjoying the new AC: "To be able to get out of the heat is so crucial."

Routine maintenance: keeping facilities and grounds clean and safe

Q3 was another busy quarter for Facilities, and Custodial and Janitorial staff. Across both teams, staff responded to approximately 3,200 work orders in Q3. Just over 1,000 work orders were for routine or regularly scheduled maintenance, and nearly 2,200 remaining work orders were unscheduled requests from Library staff, such as restroom, biohazard and/or waste cleanup; grounds maintenance; and HVAC maintenance. Of the 2,200 unscheduled requests, 17.5% were marked Emergency, Urgent, or High Priority, which is a decrease of 4.5% from Q2.

Every day, our Facilities and Janitorial/Custodial teams handle new challenges effectively and help provide safe and positive experiences to patrons.

Risks, opportunities and the path ahead

Here is a quick preview of the annual report for 2025:

- Phase 1 implementation of the Library's new 10-year Strategic Plan
- Analysis of community survey results to inform future service levels
- Continuing to navigate funding uncertainty
- Year-end look at key statistics and trends

Q3 2025 Financials

The 2019 Levy accounts for \$54.5 million (37.9%) of the Library's total revised 2025 budget of \$142.2 million. The 2012 Levy accounts for \$933,000 (0.6%). The Library spent \$23 million from the 2019 Levy and \$0.4 million from the 2012 Levy through Q3. Underspensing was largely due to delays in implementing major maintenance and technology capital programs.

Spending tables below show the Library's 2025 Operations Plan budget plus encumbrances and unspent budget authority from prior years in the revised budget columns. Carryover budget authority of \$17.5 million from the 2019 Levy and \$232,000 from the 2012 Levy is designated for spending in 2025. The revised 2025 budget also includes an additional appropriation of \$700,000 in remaining funds from the 2012 Levy.

2019 Levy	Operations Plan	Revised Budget	YTD Expenditures	Remaining	% Spent
Hours & Access	16,450,000	16,496,931	11,521,230	4,975,701	70%
Providing Books & Materials	6,412,000	6,397,268	4,738,531	1,658,738	74%
Technology & Online Services	2,821,000	2,810,696	1,650,372	1,160,324	59%
Literacy & Early Learning	454,000	476,955	277,341	199,614	58%
Building & Facility Support	2,034,000	2,132,522	1,316,555	815,967	62%
Administration	723,000	722,929	484,970	237,960	67%
Major Maintenance	7,989,000	21,047,879	2,687,862	18,360,017	13%
Capital IT Infrastructure	-	4,418,334	385,809	4,032,525	9%
Total	\$36,883,000	\$54,523,987	\$23,062,669	\$31,440,845	42%

Includes \$144k in operating carry-forward and \$17.5M in capital carry-forward budget authority

2012 Levy	Operations Plan	Revised Budget	YTD Expenditures	Remaining	% Spent
Providing Books & Materials	-	700,000	350,000	350,000	50%
Major Maintenance	-	232,961	9,569	223,392	4%
Total	\$0	\$932,961	\$359,569	\$573,392	39%

Includes \$700k one-time support for books and materials and \$232k in capital carry-forward budget authority

Appendix 1. Scheduled weekly hours in 2025 compared to 2019 baseline

Location	2019	Jun 19, 2024 – Sept. 24, 2024	Sep 25, 2024 – Jan. 28, 2025	Current schedule from Jan. 29, 2025 <i>green=above 2019</i> <i>yellow=same as 2019</i> <i>red=below 2019</i>
Ballard Branch	60	62	62	62
Beacon Hill Branch	60	56	56	56
Broadview Branch	60	54	54	54
Capitol Hill Branch	60	60	60	60
Central Library	62	62	62	62
Columbia Branch	60	48	56	56
Delridge Branch	39	48	48	48
Douglass-Truth Branch	60	62	60	60
Fremont Branch	39	40	40	48
Green Lake Branch	39	CLOSED	48	48
Greenwood Branch	60	62	62	62
High Point Branch	46	58	56	56
International District/Chinatown Branch	46	46	48	48
Lake City Branch	60	54	62	62
Madrona-Sally Goldmark Branch	39	32	40	48
Magnolia Branch	39	40	40	48
Montlake Branch	39	37	40	48
NewHolly Branch	39	40	48	48
Northeast Branch	60	48	48	60
Northgate Branch	60	40	48	58
Queen Anne Branch	39	40	40	48
Rainier Beach Branch	60	56	56	56
South Park Branch	46	62	58	58
Southwest Branch	60	48	48	48
University Branch	46	40	40	CLOSED
Wallingford Branch	39	40	40	48
West Seattle Branch	60	48	48	48
Total Weekly Hours	1377	1283	1368	1398
% of 2019 baseline		93%	99%	102%



The Seattle Public Library

Memorandum

Date: November 20, 2025

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: **Draft 2026 Operations Plan**

The Operations Plan draft provides an updated view of how the document is taking shape coming out of Board's framework review earlier in the fall. Feedback and direction is welcome at this stage and the document will be undergoing continuous work between now and the end of November. The final version will be presented to the Board at your December meeting. Budget information included at this stage is in draft form and is subject to revision.

Key Remaining Dates in Budget Process

A summary of the remaining key milestones and schedule to complete the budget development process are provided below.

November

- Friday, November 14th and Monday, November 17th – City Councilmembers discuss and vote on amendments
- Thursday, November 20th – City Councilmembers vote on final budget legislation and technical amendments
- **Thursday, November 20th – Library Board of Trustees Reviews Draft Operations Plan**
- Friday, November 21st – City Council adopts budget

December

- Thursday, December 4th – Operations Plan submitted for consideration by Library Board of Trustees
- Thursday, December 11th – Library Board of Trustees takes action on 2026 Operations Plan

Attachment: Draft 2026 Operations Plan

Action Requested: Presented for informational purposes only. Comments or feedback are welcome.



The Seattle Public Library

2026 Operations Plan - Draft

The Seattle Public Library's 2026 Operations Plan describes the second year of planned activity inside the City of Seattle's biennial 2025-2026 budget cycle and the final year of a seven-year, voter-approved, \$219.1 million Library Levy. This plan summarizes planned spending information under the City's 2026 Adopted Budget (General Fund, Library Levy, Library-generated revenue, Real Estate Excise Tax), in addition to private funding resources from Library gift funds and grant awards provided by The Seattle Public Library Foundation and other entities. The Library Board of Trustees is responsible for monitoring Library funds appropriated through the City's budget.

The Library's 2024-2033 Strategic Plan provides a vision which spans a 10-year period and endeavors to maintain a focus on core Library services while creating opportunities to expand our role serving the City—this plan informed development of the 2026 Operations Plan. Additionally, the Library Board Policy on Race and Social Justice and the City of Seattle's Race and Social Justice Initiative, a commitment to eliminate racial disparities and achieve racial equity, help guide the use of these funds and all aspects of Library operations.

I. Overview

A. 2026 Operations Plan Relative to the Adopted 2025 Budget

To provide a comprehensive picture of the Library's 2026 planned spending, the Operations Plan includes both Operating and Capital budgets. The 2026 Library budget across all funding sources, including private gift and grant support, is **\$113.3 million**. This amount is **\$2.5 million lower** than the prior year (a **2% decrease**).

The net decrease in the Library's budget is largely attributable to a \$5 million General Fund reduction—which is in addition to a \$2.84 million cut previously included as part of the 2025-2026 biennial budget. To absorb this additional reduction, the Library will defer the Columbia Library seismic retrofit project, freeing up \$5 million in capital authority to be converted into operating authority through a one-time funding swap. High-level changes to the Library's 2026 budget are noted below with a summarized view of year-to-year changes provided in Attachments 1 and 2:

Operating Budget Changes

- Application of an endorsed **\$2.84 million reduction** in 2026 General Fund support
- Redeployment of **\$5 million in capital resources from the 2019 library levy in order to offset a \$5 million reduction in operating resources provided by the City General Fund**. This represents a one-time fund swap, creating a structural budget deficit that must be addressed during the upcoming biennium.
- **\$1 million in additional gifts and grants** from The Seattle Public Library Foundation and other private sources for collections, programming, early learning, organizational equity

advancement, and bolstering system-wide security. This increase in private funding is a one-time adjustment and is not assured to be fiscally sustainable.

- Adjustments to **Central Costs, annual wage increases, benefit rate changes, health care, and other inflationary changes added \$2.5 million** in operating resources. These resources are largely dedicated to designated cost pools and do not carry programmatic flexibility.

Capital Budget Changes

- **Library levy capital support decreased by \$6 million.** \$5 million of this amount is related to a one-time 2026 General Fund swap as noted above. The remaining \$1 million reduction is in accordance with the long-term capital plan and represents expected sunset of one-time increases related to 2025 seismic retrofit and unreinforced masonry project costs.
- **REET capital project support increased by \$219,000.** This increase is in accordance with the City's long-term capital financial plan.

B. 2025-2026 City Council Budget Actions

[Any Library-specific City Council budget actions will be described and discussed here. There are presently no anticipated adjustments.]

C. Economy and Revenue¹

Nationally, the economy has remained resilient in the face of the high uncertainty triggered by tariffs and other federal policy changes. Initial expectations of rapidly increasing price levels did not materialize through the first half of 2025. Inflation in the Seattle Metro Area was 2.2% in the second quarter of 2025, lower than the 3.3% anticipated in March. However, expectations of climbing inflation now extend into 2026. At the Library level, inflation has outpaced budgetary capacity during the most recent 5-year period, resulting in lost purchasing power on non-labor items. Outside of baseline inflationary assumptions included with the levy, the Library has extremely limited capacity to apply inflationary adjustments on non-labor categories.

While the Mayor proposed and the City Council adopted and endorsed balanced budgets for 2025 and 2026, economic conditions shifted after the budget was adopted. Revenue forecasts earlier in 2025 projected a \$217.8 million decrease across the City General Fund (\$50.4M) and Payroll Expense Tax Fund (\$167.4M). This led to a budget development process where the Library was required to absorb a General Fund reduction of \$5 million—although this cut was structured in such a way that it allowed the Library to avoid elimination of positions.

¹ Information contained in this section is drawn from the 2026 Budget Book as proposed by the Mayor to the Seattle City Council.

II. 2019 Library Levy Renewal

In 2019, Seattle voters improved access to critical education, literacy, and information resources for every resident by passing a seven-year, \$219.1 million Library levy. This measure presented a clear framework for how the public investment would be used to maintain services that had been funded by the 2012 Library levy and to provide additional services and programs over the seven-year levy term.

The Library levy has provided a stable source of funding to deliver critical educational, informational and literacy resources, while maintaining the investments made in Library locations as part of the 2012 Library levy and the 1998 Libraries for All bond measure. Beyond renewing existing commitments, the 2019 levy provided support for additional Library hours; elimination of overdue fines; improved collections and technology; safe, clean, and well-maintained buildings; specialized programming and services for children; and the development of a plan for the future of Library service.

The 2026 Operations Plan marks the final year of this public investment; levy resources will provide 33% of overall Library budget authority. The Library has carefully stewarded these resources to deliver on promises made, while adapting our staff, buildings, and collections to a rapidly changing social environment and increasingly digital world.

III. Strategic Plan

This year's Operations Plan is notably informed by the Seattle Public Library 2024-2033 Strategic Plan. The plan provides a vision over a 10-year period by both maintaining a focus on core Library services and creating opportunities to expand our role serving the city. The plan seeks to leverage the Library's expertise in providing information services to our community. It looks to build out our programs and collections to increase community literacy, empowerment and enrichment. The plan acknowledges the many challenges we face now and in the coming years, including constrained fiscal resources, rapid technological change, and stressed systems critical to supporting community health, but orients the Library to navigate those obstacles rather than succumb to them.

With a service focus on **literacy, empowerment and enrichment**, we intend to create programs, services, collections and spaces that build a greater sense of **community belonging**. And with an organizational focus on **capacity building, facilities improvement, technology innovation and sustainability**, we intend to make the Library a more **resilient organization** to best serve the people of Seattle.

The future we envision builds on our existing strengths, including our world-class staff, buildings, collections, programs and services. It reinforces and expands the importance of relationships and connection. It also requires us to change and grow, building new skillsets, such as emerging technology knowledge or new language skills. It will require us to evaluate and adjust our hiring, training and retention strategies.

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

- Prioritize equity in our actions, services and outcomes.

- Continue and expand free access to books and information.
- Increase access, including for those with limited English proficiency.
- Develop more community programming that improves people’s lives.
- Serve as a community hub and connector.
- Create and facilitate positive change.
- Listen to and reflect diverse voices and viewpoints.
- Commit to putting people first.

Additional insights related to the Strategic Plan can be found on Attachment 3.

IV. Priority Areas within Library Operations

A. Hours and Access

The Library’s largest expenditure is related to personnel, representing \$86 million, or 76% of total Library resources. Library open hours mean access to technology, collections and resources, programs and knowledgeable staff for information and referral. The Library plans to hold steady in the total open hours made available for the public during when compared to the previous year. We do not anticipate major shifts in total open hours or branch schedules going into 2026. Two investments to increase access during the coming term are:

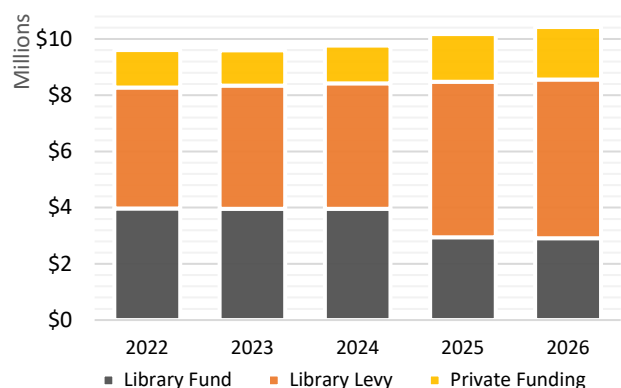
+\$126,000 for assistive listening, captioning, and other audio-visual technology updates to meeting rooms at the Central Library. For the Library’s Strategic Plan, this is in alignment with our service focus and helps to build a greater sense of community belonging, while also supporting an organizational focus for facilities improvement. *(support provided via Private Funds)*

+\$22,000 to support Special Collections programming which will include topics related to Seattle and Pacific Northwest history and culture, African American history and culture, and family history and genealogy research. For the Library’s Strategic Plan, this is in alignment with our service focus to help build a greater sense of community belonging. *(support provided via Private Funds)*

B. Books and Materials

The Library provides \$10.7 million to support the purchase of books and materials, with an additional \$642,000 used to support the processing and acquisition costs of those materials. These resources are provided via a combination of General Fund, Library Levy and private gifts (a summary of which can be seen in Figure 1). Of note, this section does not include circulating patron Wi-Fi hot spots—which are categorized as “Technology”.

Figure 1: Materials Budget by Funding Source



When considering the purchase of materials to be added to the collection, the Collection Services team applies an equity lens that factors in audiences, categories and formats, while also focusing

acquisitions on titles that reflect underrepresented voices, including those from people of color, the LGBTQ+ community and other marginalized groups. Nearly 10 million items from the collection are checked out each year.

Important changes to the books and materials budget include:

+\$30,000 for World Language digital collection enhancements to add Portuguese titles, while increasing the number of titles in the existing 11 languages collected in Overdrive for adults, teens, and children. For the Library's Strategic Plan, this is in alignment with our service focus on literacy, empowerment, and enrichment. *(support provided via Private Funds)*

+\$20,000 to refurbish and enhance map, atlas, legal, and medical materials. The circulating map collection was enhanced in 2018 and laminated hiking maps included in that enhancement have proven to be very popular with patrons, however many are now in need of replacement or updating. Some legal and medical resources included in the collection contain outdated information are in need of modernization. For the Library's Strategic Plan, this is in alignment with our service focus on literacy, empowerment, and enrichment. *(support provided via Private Funds)*

C. Technology and Online Services

The Library provides free access to digital devices (desktop computers, laptops and tablets) that can be used to search online resources, connect to the internet, or use popular software. Our wireless internet access is provided free to patrons and has experienced exponential growth as patron preferences shift toward mobile access. Additionally, patrons can use their Library card to check out a portable Wi-Fi hot spot.

The digital environment provides increasing opportunities to participate in the information society, although some individuals and families can face serious barriers to access. These barriers, often referred to as the "digital divide," may include a lack of affordable internet connectivity; lack of internet ready devices; or a lack of skills, knowledge, or means to access digital resources. The Library plays an important role in helping bridge the digital divide by providing access to patrons who lack this capability at home.

Important changes in this area include:

+\$16,000 for to replace mobile iPads in use by Mobile Services (initially purchased in 2021). These devices are loaned to low-income adult borrowers and support building digital literacy skills for those who may not have access otherwise. For the Library's Strategic Plan, this is in alignment with our service focus to help build a greater sense of community belonging. *(support provided via Private Funds)*

+\$474,000 for capital IT infrastructure projects which will include replacing firewalls and wireless access points. For the Library's Strategic Plan, this is aligned with our organizational focus to support technology sustainability. *(support provided via 2019 Library Levy)*

D. Literacy and Early Learning

Libraries play an important role in fostering literacy, particularly for those who have historically faced barriers to access, such as immigrants and refugees, and those developing literacy skills, such as preschool and elementary students. A key investment in this priority area:

+\$60,000 to enhance the existing MP3 Read-Along picture book collection, add Easy Reader and Easy Chapter Books, and add more Decodable Readers to our existing Easy Reader collection. These materials have been extremely popular with patrons since their launch in 2022 and by enhancing and expanding collection, it will allow more parents and caregivers to supplement their children's reading instruction at Seattle Public Schools. For the Library's Strategic Plan, this is in alignment with our service focus on literacy, empowerment, and enrichment. *(support provided via Private Funds)*

E. Building and Facility Support

Our buildings provide a forum where patrons can read or study in a comfortable environment, listen to interesting and engaging speakers, participate in meaningful community events, or find daytime respite. \$6.3 million, or 5% of Library resources, support keeping our facilities open, clean, functional, and welcoming to all. An additional \$1.4 million is provided as part of the Library's Capital Improvement Program, which helps ensure our facilities remain in good structural condition and continue to exist for future generations.

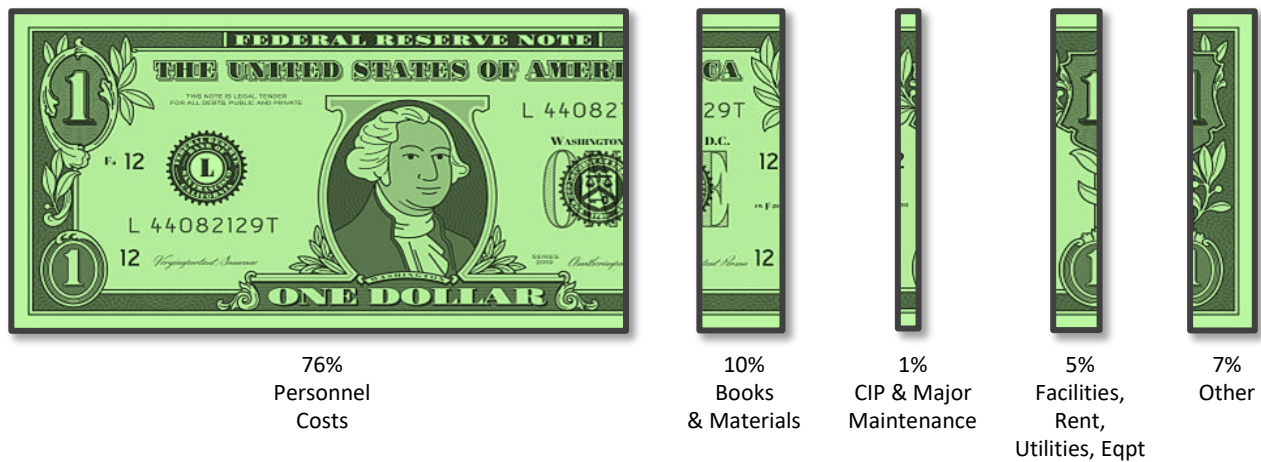
University Branch Library Unreinforced Masonry Project

Renovations on the University Branch Library are expected to conclude in 2026 and will advance City and Library goals around sustainability, climate readiness, community access, and cultural enrichment. New electric heat pumps and energy recovery ventilators will improve the facility's ability to provide patrons respite during heat and smoke events—and will efficiently meet the potential enhanced ventilation needs associated with future pandemics. Solar panels will reduce the library's energy footprint. ADA improvements including an elevator and site landscaping will make the library fully accessible, including staff areas. Seismic reinforcement with careful attention to preserving historic features will assure that the legacy of Carnegie library endowments is conserved for future generations.

V. Operations Plan Overview by Personnel, Collections, and Buildings

The overarching framework within which our priority areas fall consists of: 1) Personnel, 2) Books and Materials, and 3) Buildings. Relative investments of Library resources among these categories are shown below, along with an illustration of how \$1.00 is spent at the Library. Due to the unique nature of Library services and how they are provided to the public, Library work is inherently people-oriented—meaning the majority of our resources are dedicated toward personnel. Additional department level budget information can be seen on Attachment 1.

Figure 2: How \$1.00 is spent at the Library and the Proposed Budget

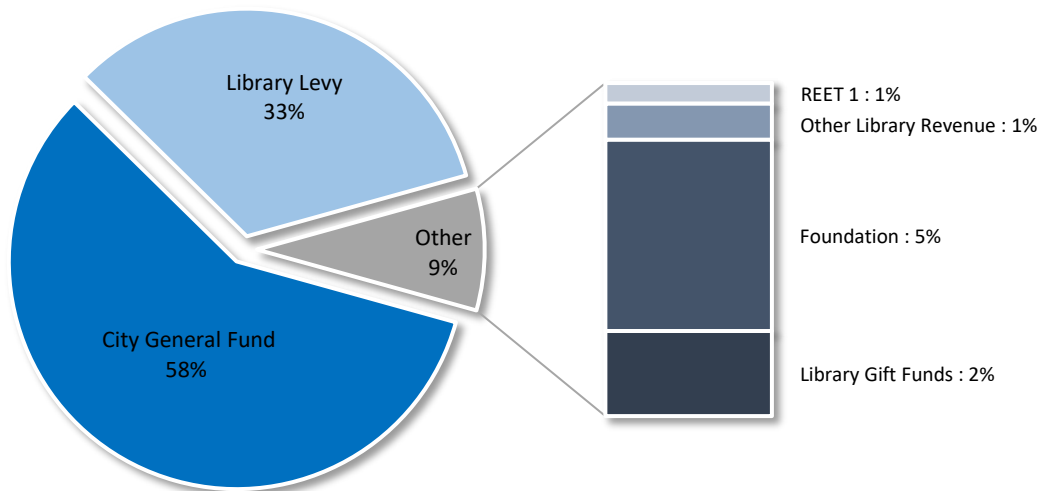


Amounts in \$1,000s	2026 Proposed	%
<i>Personnel</i>		
Public Services, Collections & Access	\$61,102	54%
All Other Departments	\$24,888	22%
<i>Personnel Sub-Total</i>	<i>\$85,990</i>	<i>76%</i>
<i>Books & Materials</i>		
Books & Materials Collection	\$642	1%
Collection Processing	\$10,722	9%
<i>Books & Materials Sub-Total</i>	<i>\$11,364</i>	<i>10%</i>
<i>Buildings</i>		
Capital Improvements & Major Maintenance	\$1,448	1%
Utilities, Maintenance, Rent, Equipment	\$6,253	5%
<i>Other</i>		
Direct Programming Supplies	\$1,954	1.6%
City Central Costs	\$3,566	3.1%
Software	\$995	0.8%
Other	\$1,722	1.5%
<i>Other Sub-Total</i>	<i>\$8,237</i>	<i>7%</i>
Total	\$113,292	

VI. Operations Plan Overview by Funding Source

The design and development of the Library budget occurs in alignment with the 2024-2033 Strategic Plan, in addition to a backdrop of equity impacts associated with the City's Language Access Plan (Library plan included as Attachment 4), as well as the City's Race and Social Justice Ordinance and the Library Board policy on Race and Social Justice (Attachment 5). Library operations are supported by three main funding sources: City appropriation of General Fund support, an annual allocation from the seven-year, voter-approved Library Levy, and private gift funds—which include annual grants from The Seattle Public Library Foundation.

Figure 3: Operations Plan by Funding Source



Amounts in \$1,000s	2025 Adopted	2026 Proposed	% Change
<i>Operating Fund</i>			
City General Fund (Operating)	\$68,479	\$65,702	-4%
2019 Library Levy (Operating)	\$28,894	\$35,745	24%
Other Library Revenue	\$835	\$853	2%
Interdepartmental Support	\$27	\$27	0%
Interfund Transfer	\$166	\$178	7%
Use of Library Fund Balance	\$1,859	\$0	-100%
<i>Operating Fund Sub-Total</i>	<i>\$100,260</i>	<i>\$102,505</i>	<i>2%</i>
<i>CIP</i>			
2019 Library Levy (CIP)	\$7,989	\$1,982	-75%
REET I (CIP)	\$386	\$605	57%
<i>CIP Sub-Total</i>	<i>\$8,375</i>	<i>\$2,587</i>	<i>-69%</i>
<i>Gifts and Grants</i>			
Seattle Public Library Foundation*	\$5,200	\$5,600	8%
Gift Funds (Balch, Bunn, other)	\$1,990	\$2,600	31%
<i>Gifts and Grants Sub-Total</i>	<i>\$7,190</i>	<i>\$8,200</i>	<i>14%</i>
Total	\$115,825	\$113,292	-2%

* Grant awards approved by The Seattle Public Library Foundation Board of Directors

A. General Fund

The majority of the Library's funding is provided by the City General Fund, with **58%** of our budget provided by this resource.

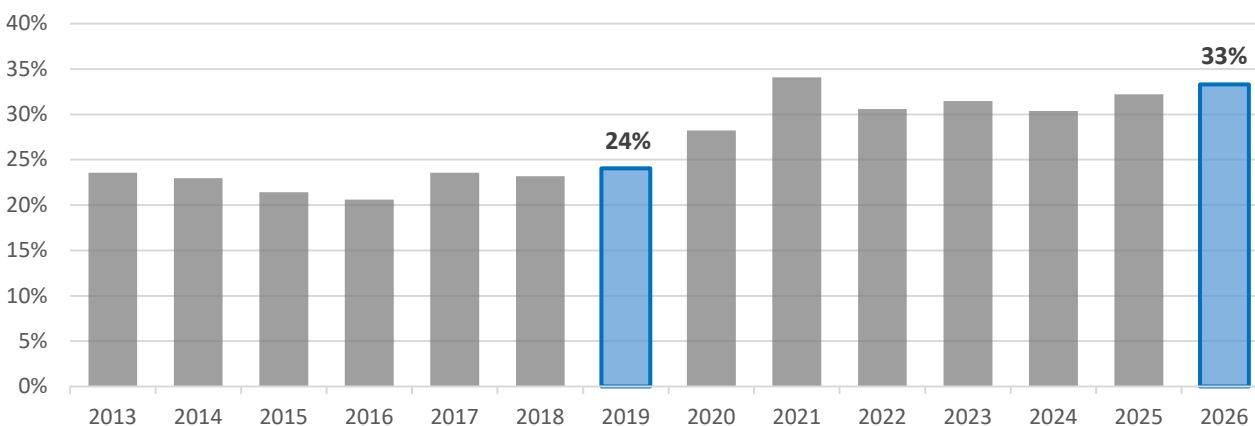
Amounts in \$1,000s	2025 Adopted	2026 Proposed	% Change
Hours & Access	\$31,901	\$28,636	-11%
Providing Books & Materials	\$14,449	\$14,340	-1%
Technology & Online Services	\$4,878	\$4,831	-1%
Literacy & Early Learning	\$616	\$679	9%
Building & Facility Support	\$8,484	\$8,150	-4%
Administration	\$5,232	\$5,924	11%
City Central Costs	\$2,919	\$3,142	7%
Total	\$68,479	\$65,702	-4%

While our 2026 endorsed budget already reflected a \$2.84 million General Fund reduction, owing to a projected \$217.8 million City-wide revenue shortfall, the Library was to identify additional, deeper cuts to the General Fund budget. To stave off significant reductions in patron service levels and library staffing, the Library proposed to instead coordinate a one-time \$5 million funding swap between our capital program and the operating budget. The outcome of this action will allow the Library to maintain consistent operating hours in 2026, while providing critical resources and capacity needed to continue our 2024-2033 Strategic Plan goals.

B. 2019 Library Levy

In August 2019, Seattle voters approved a seven-year, \$219.1 million 2019 Library Levy renewal to support, maintain, and expand core Library services; renewing a \$122 million Library Levy that was first passed in 2012. With the passage of the 2019 Library Levy, the Library increased our dependence on time-limited voter-approved funding. Across both operating and capital budgets, **the levy will provide \$37.7 million in 2026**, which represents **33% of the Library's total budget** (up from 24% pre-2019 Library Levy—Figure 4).

Figure 4: Pre-2019 Library Levy Budget % Compared to Current-Year Budget %



Each year, the Library Board of Trustees allocates available levy funds through the Operations Plan. More information on 2019 Library Levy categories, including how they map back to the budget can be found on Attachment 6.

Amounts in \$1,000s	2025 Adopted	2026 Proposed	% Change
Hours & Access	\$16,450	\$22,478	37%
Providing Books & Materials	\$6,412	\$7,150	11%
Technology & Online Services	\$2,821	\$2,851	1%
Literacy & Early Learning	\$454	\$468	3%
Building & Facility Support	\$2,034	\$2,061	2%
Major Maintenance (CIP)	\$7,989	\$1,508	-81%
Capital IT Infrastructure	\$0	\$474	100%
Administration	\$723	\$737	2%
Total	\$36,883	\$37,727	2%

Levy – Operating Fund

In 2026, the Library continues to fulfill levy commitments. The Library will be scheduled to open 21 more hours per week than before the start of the 2019 levy. We will continue to offer seven weekly play and learn groups, exceeding our levy commitment to fund up to six groups. We will also continue to offer social service support to at-risk youth through our community resource specialist program. Our Social Service Team has leveraged resources in branches and in the community to provide a robust array of services for patrons.

As noted earlier, due to the one-time capital to operating levy funding swap, there will be \$5 million in additional labor costs funded via the levy that previously received funding via the City General Fund. Other highlights of levy funding for 2026 include fine-free access to the books and materials collection, investment in e-materials and our no-holds no-wait Peak Picks collection, digital equity through the Wi-Fi hot spot program, and enhanced levels of building maintenance and branch security.

Levy – Capital Improvement Program

The 2026 Library levy capital budget has been reduced from an initially endorsed \$6.5 million budget to \$1.5 million. This is due to a one-time funding swap of \$5 million between the library's operating and capital budget authority to offset a General Fund reduction. This action allows the Library to prevent service level reductions to patrons but comes at the cost of deferring the Columbia Library seismic retrofit project. The 2019 Library levy included partial funding for seismic retrofits at the three of the most vulnerable branches: Green Lake (completed in 2024), University (underway in January 2025), and Columbia (now deferred).

In the final year of the levy, the remaining \$1.5 million in authority has been programmed for unforeseen conditions and costs associated with the University branch seismic retrofit project. If this funding is not needed for the University branch, it will be transferred to assist with planning costs for an eventual Columbia branch seismic retro fit project or to cover costs associated with electrification and HVAC upgrades across five branches (University, Columbia, Fremont, Queen Anne, and West Seattle). The five branch electrification/HVAC upgrades were prompted by a

federal FEMA grant awarded to the Library in 2024 to assist in funding those projects. These branches were prioritized based on immediate maintenance needs, air-conditioning status, years since last remodel, and proximity to other branches. The 2026 capital project plan is included as Attachment 7. Current levy Capital Improvement Program funding concludes in 2026, at the end of the 2019 seven-year levy term.

C. Other Capital Improvement Program Support

Capital improvement projects may carry large fund balances as timelines shift and are influenced by external factors, project complexity, supply chain disruptions and materials shortages (more likely with historically landmarked buildings), and the availability of qualified contractors in a competitive local construction market (also often related to historically landmarked buildings). Projects require ample planning and are often multi-year in nature—as a result, the Library may have carryforward resources that span multiple fiscal years. A long-term capital improvement program is submitted to the City Budget Office each year and is included as Attachment 8.

Real Estate Excise Tax (REET) – Capital Improvement Program

The 2026 Operations Plan includes a total of \$605,000 in REET funding, which is tax revenue generated from property sales in Seattle. The total \$605,000 is dedicated to construction costs associated with the University branch seismic retrofit project (which includes upgrades to, and electrification of, the branch’s mechanical and HVAC systems).

D. The Seattle Public Library Foundation

The Seattle Public Library Foundation helps the Library equitably enhance its collections, offer activities for all ages, pilot new and innovative initiatives, and enrich our program of service for our community. It supports the Library by securing and managing donations from individuals, businesses and other foundations to enhance levels of Library service beyond what public funding alone can provide. The Foundation’s goal is to expand the reach of the Library, not to supplant funding for core Library operations. The Library submits grant requests and provides support where needed, however the final award amount, as well as the efforts funded, is at the discretion of The Seattle Public Library Foundation Board of Directors.

Amounts in \$1,000s	2025 Adopted	2026 Proposed	% Change
Hours & Access	\$1,341	\$TBD	TBD%
Providing Books & Materials	\$2,056	\$TBD	TBD%
Technology & Online Services	\$490	\$TBD	TBD%
Literacy & Early Learning	\$779	\$TBD	TBD%
Major Maintenance (CIP)	\$215	\$TBD	TBD%
Administration	\$319	\$TBD	TBD%
Total	\$5,200	\$TBD	TBD%

E. Library Gift Funds

The Library receives investment earnings from two main funds, the Robert C. Bunn Trust and the Albert S. Balch Trust, which enhance Library services and support new initiatives. There are other, minor designated contributions made to the Library which must be spent in accordance with

donor restrictions. The allocation and approval for spending authority of Library gift funds occurs as part of the Operations Plan. Details on items funded for 2026 can be found on Attachment 9.

F. Library Enterprise Revenues

The Library has limited opportunities for revenue generation, with said resources used to support core operations. These funding sources provide **approximately 1% of the Library's 2026 budget**.

Proposed revenue figures categorized by type are as follows:

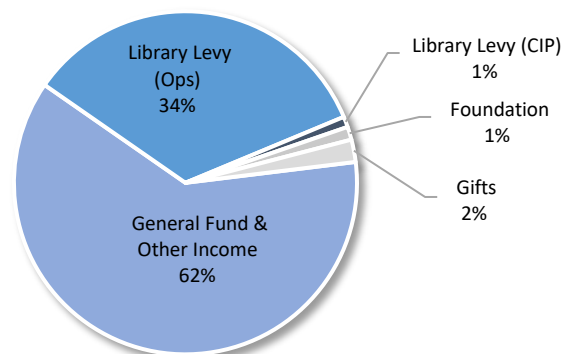
Amounts in \$1,000s	2025 Adopted	2026 Proposed	% Change
Lost Material Fees	\$120	\$120	0%
Central Library Parking Garage Fees	\$377	\$390	3%
Copy Services/Pay for Print	\$100	\$120	20%
Space Rental	\$177	\$177	0%
Consignment Fees	\$85	\$70	-18%
Miscellaneous Revenue	\$3	\$3	0%
Interfund Transfer	\$166	\$178	7%
Total	\$1,028	\$1,058	3%

VII. Staffing Levels by Funding Source

The 2026 Library budget contains **702 positions (612.8 FTE)**—funded via multiple sources (Figure 5).

Figure 5: FTE by Funding Source

	2025 FTE	2026 FTE	% Change
General Fund & Other Income	428.0	378.8	-13%
Library Levy (Operations)	159.6	207.4	23%
Library Levy (CIP)	6.1	6.1	0%
Foundation	9.5	8.6	-11%
Gift Funds (Bunn & Balch)	8.0	11.9	33%
Total	611.2	612.8	0.3%



A. Vacancies and other Personnel Savings

As Library employees leave for reasons such as retirement or in search of other opportunities, their position will go unfilled for a period of time. In the simplest of terms, the period when a position is unfilled represents labor cost savings. Assuming full employment for an entire year is unrealistic; as such, salary savings assumptions are built into the budget by forecasting an organization-level vacancy rate. Additionally, as staff are hired on or promoted to higher level positions in the organization, there is typically a step differential between the previous incumbent's compensation, and that of the new individual hired to continue said duties.

In consideration of these and other smaller scale personnel impacts, **a 5.5% salary savings assumption is included** in balancing the budget. This figure of 5.5% reflects a continuation of the increased savings rate factored into the 2025-2026 biennium, which means the Library must now

hold positions vacant for longer periods of time. The Library Financial Services team will closely monitor actual savings and expenditures to ensure appropriation authority is not over-expended.

B. Accrued Vacation and Sick Leave Payouts for Retirement & Other Separations

Staff turnover due to cyclical separations (24) were down in 2024 when compared to the two years proceeding it (33 in 2022 and 37 in 2023). This decline is attributable to the Library adhering to the City-wide hiring freeze, which caused a decrease in 2024 hiring outside of critical positions. Staff retirements were down slightly, however the ranks of Library employees reaching retirement age, but who have yet to announce their retirement, are significant. As of November 2025, the Library had **113 employees** eligible for retirement and the estimated liability associated with these potential retirements is **\$1.7 million**.

The Library has managed separation payouts within our annual appropriation (by leveraging against agency-wide vacancy savings), although considering our aging workforce, this approach is not a guarantee of funding a future liability. Library separation and retirement payouts over the past three years are as follows:

	2022		2023		2024	
	Count	Amount	Count	Amount	Count	Amount
Separation Payouts	33	\$137,000	37	\$133,000	24	\$81,000
Retirement Payouts	12	\$151,000	17	\$201,000	10	\$153,000
Total	45	\$288,000	54	\$334,000	34	\$234,000

VIII. Risks

In any given year, the Library is faced with risks that can impact our operations in a multitude of ways. Some of these risks have been analyzed as part of the Operations Plan and are as follows.

A. Levy funding expires in 2026

Currently, the levy supplies 33% of the Library’s total funding. If the levy is not renewed it would leave a significant funding gap, requiring system-wide changes to the way the Library operates, impacting hours of operations, availability of physical and digital materials, staffing and maintenance service levels.

While the loss of levy funding represents a risk for the entire Library, it would severely impact work on capital projects as the levy funds the vast majority of the major maintenance program—which preserves the public’s significant investment in existing facilities. If the levy is not renewed, the Library’s capital program would be scaled back significantly and result in a sizable backlog of necessary building maintenance projects.

We are developing a levy renewal plan to put before voters in 2026. Through surveys and public meetings, we have confirmed Seattle residents continue to place value in preserving core services and see the Library’s role as providing strong and accessible resources now and for future generations of Library users. In early 2026, we will engage with the public on a potential levy package. We anticipate the Mayor will deliver a proposed Library levy ballot measure to the City Council in the spring. Developing this package and engaging with key stakeholders and the public will be a major work program item in early 2026.

B. Pressures of social issues on staff and safety/security in our buildings

The Library serves a critical role in providing daytime respite and engagement for people who are insecurely housed, unemployed, or out of school. Keeping libraries safe and clean ensures everyone in the city has a welcoming and attractive place to learn, to access the internet, search for a job, and connect with friends and family, or to simply be. However, providing open access also brings the challenges our community faces outside of our doors, including mental health struggles, addiction issues, and insecure housing conditions. These impacts are also felt by the general public who may feel unsafe when such incidents and disruptions occur.

These socio-economic challenges have introduced notable and ongoing pressures on the Library and Library staff. If this trend continues, the Library will need to hire additional security officers and to evolve staffing models, assuring more public services staff onsite to manage an increasingly complex environment.

C. Aging building portfolio

Library buildings are among the most intensively-used City facilities in Seattle. Prior to the pandemic, the Central Library hosted over 1.2 million visitors annually, with library branches serving over 3.6 million visitors. The Library's historic landmark buildings have unique features such as brick facades, slate roofs and other details. When undertaking maintenance and repair work, it is essential to use designs and materials consistent with their landmark status—all factors that increase major maintenance costs.

The Central Library is into its third decade of service and its systems are aging. A building of the Central Library's size, complexity, and intensity of use requires significant annual maintenance to preserve core functionality and continually improve building efficiency. Updating Central's mechanical and HVAC systems to align with current City policy (including the Mayoral order to eliminate fossil fuels) and lessen its carbon footprint will require significant funding beyond the annual Levy major maintenance allocation.

D. Mid-year Cut to the General Fund Budget

2025 marked the first year since the outset of the COVID-19 pandemic where a mid-year budget reduction target was requested of the Library. Prior to the pandemic, mid-year underspend targets were a relatively common occurrence. For example, we were asked to meet underspend targets during seven out of the ten years preceding the pandemic. Previously accumulated fund balances have been deployed to stave off what would have otherwise represented service level cuts associated with reductions in General Fund support from 2020 through 2025. An ongoing priority for the Library is to ensure there are viable means to achieve reduction requests that do not impact staffing or branch operations.

IX. Closing Summary

The Library levy provides necessary resources to support ongoing Library programs and services. Although the current Library levy is set to end in 2026, the strategic planning on how to approach this is already well underway. Considering other large-scale projects on the Library's horizon, it will be essential to develop a plan for sustainable funding longer term.

X. Attachments

1	2026 Operations Plan compared to 2025 Adopted Budget
2	Key Changes in 2026 relative to 2025 Adopted Budget
3	Strategic Plan Insights
4	Library Language Access Plan
5	Library Board Race and Social Justice Policy
6	2019 Library Levy Categories & Budget Cross-walk
7	2026 Capital Improvement Projects
8	Long-Term Capital Improvement Program Plan
9	Library Gift Fund Project Listing
10	Library Organizational Chart



The Seattle Public Library

Date: November 20, 2025
To: Library Board of Trustees
From: Jessica Lucas, President, AFSCME Local 2083
Re: **November Union Report**

In a time of challenges not only for SPL but throughout the country, we would like to extend our gratitude to the work that staff are doing for the month of November. All staff play an integral part in keeping the library going by offering support to our communities and each other. Our janitorial and custodial staff keep our branches clean and welcoming to patrons. Material Handling staff and Drivers keep our materials moving. IT staff keep our internet afloat for our most vulnerable populations to keep access to email and other resources. LA1s keep our shelves stocked and our return bins managed. Our LA2s are usually the first staff that folks see entering our spaces and do an amazing job initiating contact. LA4s are on desk most of the day and are integral in building community within our buildings. Librarians, through their work inside and outside the building, bring the library to where people are. Event staff do amazing work supporting the fantastic events that happen at CEN. Without all of these staff, our buildings would be empty and patrons would miss the integral role that libraries have in our communities.

We are thankful for all the work our colleagues do, including those not mentioned above, each and every day.

Action required/requested: Informational only.



The Seattle Public Library

OCTOBER 2025 NEWS RELEASES

Date	Title
31-Oct-25	November 2025 Author and Community Events at The Seattle Public Library
28-Oct-25	Free Genealogy Sessions Offered at Library Branches with Seattle Genealogical Society
10-Oct-25	Central Library exhibit celebrates the artwork of trans and gender non-conforming artists
09-Oct-25	Books Unbanned Announces Milestone During Banned Books Week
06-Oct-25	Free Homework Help Starts This Week at 9 Locations of The Seattle Public Library
02-Oct-25	October 2025 Author and Community Events at the Library
01-Oct-25	Celebrate Banned Books Week with a Read-In and Programs Highlighting the Future of Libraries and the Impact of Censorship



The Seattle Public Library

OCTOBER 2025 MEDIA COVERAGE

Organization	Date	Headline	Details
West Seattle Blog	27-Oct-25	Halloween trivia, WSHS food-drive dropoffs, Baby Story Time, more for your West Seattle Monday	Homework Help at the High Point Branch; Southwest Artist Showcase and Baby Story Time at the Southwest Branch
South Seattle Emerald	24-Oct-25	South End Life: With 'Books Unbanned' Card, Local Librarian Helps U.S. Readers Access Digital and Audio Books	Funded by The Seattle Public Library Foundation, Books Unbanned offers free, renewable, one-year digital library cards to youth, 13 to 26, throughout the country who have limited access to books. Nearly a million digital titles are made available through SPL alone.
West Seattle Blog	23-Oct-25	Our list for your awaiting-the-rain West Seattle Thursday	Southwest Artist Showcase and Toddler Story Time at the Southwest Branch; Preschool Story Time at the West Seattle Branch; Drop-in Chess at the High Point Branch.
KUOW	22-Oct-25	How to support the arts in Seattle when you're not a millionaire	Mentions The Seattle Public Library's free museum pass program
The UW Daily	22-Oct-25	Seattle On Hold: Exploring Green Lake Library	"We're one of the original Carnegie libraries, so there's generations and generations of people that have been visiting and utilizing the library over the century," Nguyen said. "You see how busy and how well-loved and how well-used it is every single day."
Seattle's Child	21-Oct-25	Need homework help? SPL has your kids covered	"Free tutoring is now open at nine library branches"
The Seattle Times	21-Oct-25	8 horror books written by women	"The Seattle Public Library loves to promote books and reading. This column, submitted by the library, is a space to share reading and book trends from a librarian's perspective. You can find these titles at the library by visiting spl.org and searching the catalog."

ALA - Programming Librarian	21-Oct-25	Nourishing Minds: A Free Toolkit for Teen Mental Health Programming in Libraries	"The Nourishing Minds Framework, funded by the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) and with support from The Seattle Public Library Foundation, is a comprehensive approach for libraries to support teen mental health. Over the course of three years, Seattle Public Library staff tested the digital toolkit, supporting librarians and teens with meaningful teen-focused programming."
The Seattle Medium	17-Oct-25	Podcast: Seattle Public Library Expands Free Tutoring Services For K-12 Students	"The Seattle Public Library has launched an initiative to provide free, drop-in tutoring and study support for K-12 students at nine branches citywide through its Homework Help program. This effort seeks to address the challenges of accessing affordable academic support, particularly in the wake of pandemic-related disruptions. Elisa Murray, Communications Strategist for The Seattle Public Library, will elaborate on the expansion of this crucial resource and its role in enhancing educational accessibility for all students."
KOMO News	17-Oct-25	Thousands of teens, young adults nationwide sign up for 'Books Unbanned' initiative	"ARC Seattle co-anchor Steve McCarron spoke with The Seattle Public Library system's Elisa Murray to learn more about the initiative, how it came about, and the response it's generated across the country about the impact of literary censorship."
West Seattle Blog	15-Oct-25	From Mariners to meetings, here's our West Seattle Wednesday list!	Southwest Artist Showcase at the Southwest Branch; Kid's art workshop at the Delridge Branch
The Seattle Medium	15-Oct-25	Seattle Public Library Expands Free Homework Help Across Nine Branches	"Today, nine branches offer Homework Help: Broadview, Columbia, Douglass-Truth, High Point, Lake City, New Holly, Northgate, Rainier Beach, and South Park. Each location hosts one to three sessions per week. Participation is entirely free and does not require registration."
West Seattle Blog	14-Oct-25	Here's our list for your West Seattle Tuesday!	Southwest Artist Showcase at the Southwest Branch; Homework Help at the High Point Branch

West Seattle Blog	13-Oct-25	What to know for your two-holiday West Seattle Monday	Libraries are closed for Indigenous People's Day
Westside Seattle	09-Oct-25	City Council Select Budget Committee hears emotional public testimony on housing, homelessness, and budget priorities	"Library Funding: Brian Lawrence, CEO of the Seattle Public Library Foundation, asked the Council to safeguard funding, noting proposed cuts of \$5 million in capital projects for the Seattle Public Library (SPL)."
The National Review	09-Oct-25	The Anti-Democratic Streak of 'Banned Books Week'	Article photo caption: "A librarian checks out books at the Central Branch of the Seattle Public Library in Seattle, Wash., March 13, 2020.(Jason Redmond/Reuters)"
The UW Daily	08-Oct-25	Seattle on Hold: Exploring the Wallingford Library	"With just a couple of tables, chairs, and computers, the Wallingford Branch isn't the best study spot — though I've never seen it very full, there's a chance you might not get a seat. The space does have a healthy collection of books, including a decently sized Peak Picks collection, and is equipped with scanners, chargers, and printers (cardholders get \$1.50 a week for free)."
KUOW	08-Oct-25	We just want to celebrate stories.' Observing Banned Books Week with a Seattle bookseller	"The Seattle Public Library is a resource, too, especially for young readers. SPL's Books Unbanned program provides anyone ages 13 to 26, living anywhere in the U.S. access to the library's entire collection of e-books and audiobooks. Interested readers just have to fill out an online form."
West Seattle Blog	05-Oct-25	West Seattle Art: Southwest Artist Showcase's opening day	"For the next month, Southwest Library is alive with art! Today brought the opening reception for this year's Southwest Artist Showcase, which the library has been hosting for more than 30 years, displaying art brought in by any and all community members interested in participating. Art of all sizes and by all ages!"

Seattle Gay News	05-Oct-25	Nuestra Euforia/Our Euphoria comes to Seattle Public Library - a conversation with artist Vaquero Azul	<p>"Q: Can you tell us about your upcoming show and presentation at the library?</p> <p>VA: On Saturday, Oct. 4, from 4 p.m. to 6 p.m., I'll present a program at the Central Library auditorium called "Nuestra Euforia/Our Euphoria." I'll share about the history of our communities, our culture, and the layers of the work I do. I want these garments that I designed during this residency at SPL to get to live a full life on stage, to be seen and celebrated with the amazing members of Danza Monarcas. It'll be a very beautiful evening of celebration and resistance of our Queer & Trans joy.</p> <p>An art show called "Nuestra Euforia/Our Euphoria" will open at the Central Library in the Level 8 gallery on Oct. 18. The exhibit will feature my sewing work I made during the artist residency, artwork I've made over the years, a Trans Pride ofrenda to honor our Transcestors, art with local artists, photography of cultural bearers, and photographs of our LGBT+ folklórico group, Danza Monarcas."</p>
Seattle Daily Journal of Commerce	03-Oct-25	Banned Books Week at Seattle Library	"The Seattle Public Library will mark Banned Books Week, Oct. 5–11, with a series of free programs, displays, and events highlighting the freedom to read and the impact of censorship."
West Seattle Blog	02-Oct-25	Clothing swap, culverts meeting, campaign forum, West Seattle Book Club, comedy, music, more for your Thursday	Drop-in Chess at the High Point Branch; Southwest Artist Showcase at the Southwest Branch
West Seattle Blog	01-Oct-25	Art, sports, music, games, RainWise, more for your West Seattle Wednesday	Rainwise event and Southwest Artist Showcase at the Southwest Branch