

Q1 2026
The Seattle Public Library
LEVY REPORT



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Q1 2026 levy report

Levy background

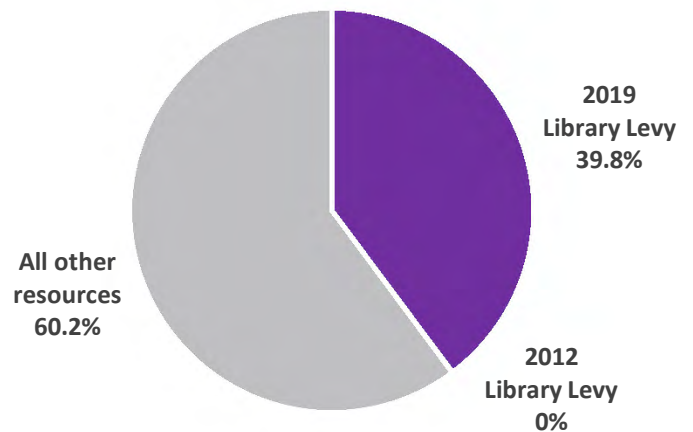
In August 2019, Seattle voters overwhelmingly approved (76%) a seven-year, \$219.1 million property tax levy to maintain and enhance Library services from 2020 through 2026. This year will be the final year of the 2019 Levy.

In 2026, the 2019 Levy accounts for \$57.1 million (39.8%) of the Library's total revised budget of \$143.5 million, while remaining resources from the 2012 Levy provide \$53,000. Other funding sources include the City's General Fund, state and federal grants, private funds, and Library fund balance.

As part of its 2019 Levy 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 Q1 2026, continues the series of [quarterly updates](#) the Library has provided for the Board of Trustees and the public since 2013.

The 2019 Levy has provided 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.


**2026 Library Revised Budget
\$143.5 million**



Did you know?

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

Q1 2026 highlights

Strategic plan update: In Q1, we continued to make progress on [Strategic Plan initiatives](#), including the Integrated Library System replacement, expanding language access, refining our new processes for planning and promoting Library programs, enhancing security training, and finishing up the first year of the Story Squad literacy project with Seattle Public Schools. Throughout this levy report, you'll notice that Strategic Plan initiatives are marked with .

Growing Library use: During the first three months of 2026, Library use continued to increase by many key measures. The number of active Library users increased by 12% compared to the first quarter of 2025, with 340,000 patrons active within the last 12 months. Our 27 Library locations welcomed 900,000 in-person visits in Q1, a 7% increase compared to Q1 2025. While the number of physical checkouts slightly declined, digital checkouts continued to grow.

What is an “active Library user”?

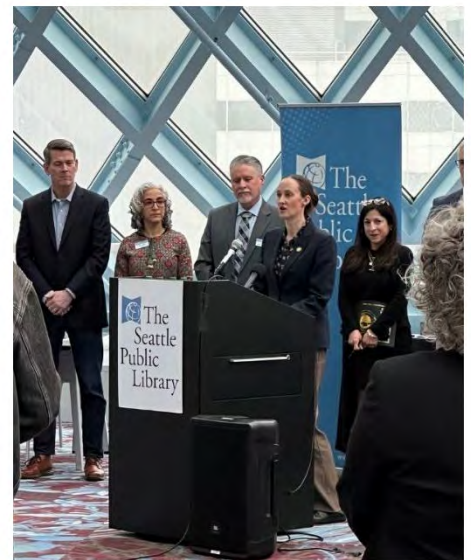
It refers to the number of patrons who have used their Library card at least once in a certain time period.

University Branch retrofit progress: In Q1 2026, the Library made steady progress on [Levy-funded safety upgrades and renovations](#) at the landmarked University Branch. The seismic retrofit of the branch was completed, and the final structural support components successfully installed. The renovation also includes the installation of a modern electric HVAC system, interior and exterior accessibility improvements, and the addition and modernization of public spaces inside the branch. The branch is expected to reopen in Q3 2026.

🟢 **Contract finalized with new Integrated Library System (ILS) vendor:** In Q1, we concluded successful contract negotiations with Clarivate and announced the selection of their ILS, [Polaris](#), as the future replacement of Horizon, our decades-old ILS. This is a major milestone. With contracting completed, we shifted into the implementation phase of the project, and began laying the groundwork for system configuration, data migration, and process alignment with staff from across the organization.

AANHPI Seattle Room Digital Collection: The Library’s Special Collections team launched a new digital collection celebrating [Asian American, Native Hawaiian, Pacific Islander \(AANHPI\) Culture and History](#), which includes 200 items related to Seattle and the Puget Sound area. Highlights include [Chinese Community newsletters](#) and materials related to Japanese American forced removal and incarceration during World War II, such as an [accession register](#) of books held at the Minidoka Library. This quarter, almost 49,000 users visited our digital Seattle Room collections, with 141,000 pageviews.

2026 Library Levy proposed by Mayor Katie Wilson: With the 2019 Levy set to expire at the end of 2026, the Library worked with Mayor Wilson to shape a replacement levy package, guided by community input and the Library’s 10-year strategic plan. On March 10, 2026, Mayor Wilson proposed a \$410 million Library Levy to provide supplementary funding from 2027 through 2033 in the areas of Hours and Access, Collections, Technology & Online Services, Building Maintenance and Administration. At the end of Q1, the proposal was reviewed and amended by a select committee of the Seattle City Council, chaired by Councilmember Maritza Rivera. On April 14, the City Council ultimately approved a \$479.76 million replacement levy to be on the August 2026 ballot. See highlights of the approved proposal at www.spl.org/2026levy.



LEVY ACCOMPLISHMENTS: HOURS AND ACCESS

IN FOCUS: Quarterly Usage Trends

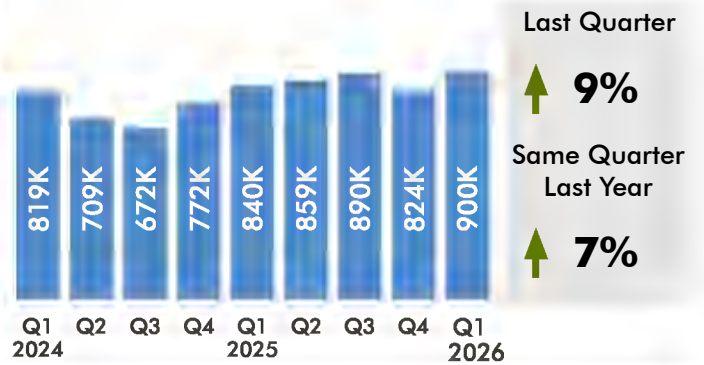
Active Library Users

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



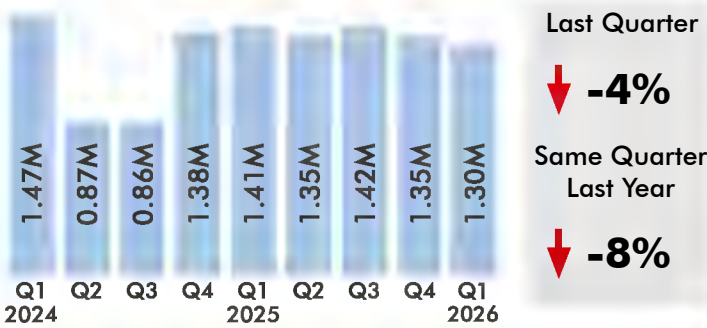
In-Person Visits

Number of in-person visits. Estimates applied at some locations due to sensor outages.



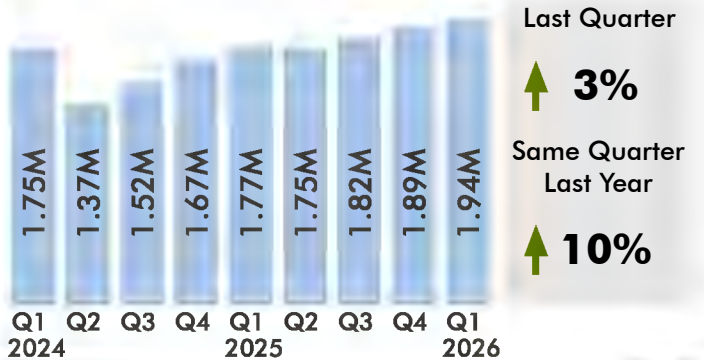
Physical Checkouts

Number of physical checkouts (including renewals)



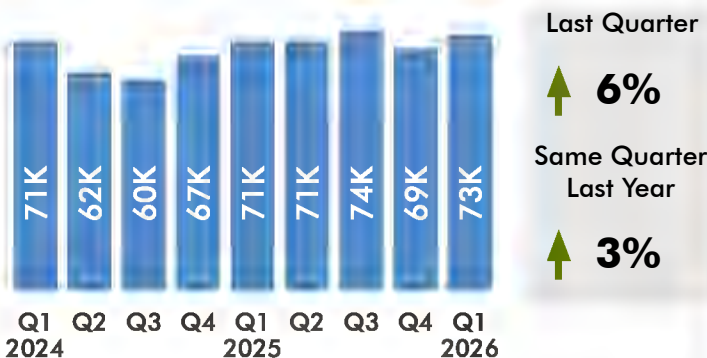
Digital Checkouts

Number of digital checkouts (including streams and views)



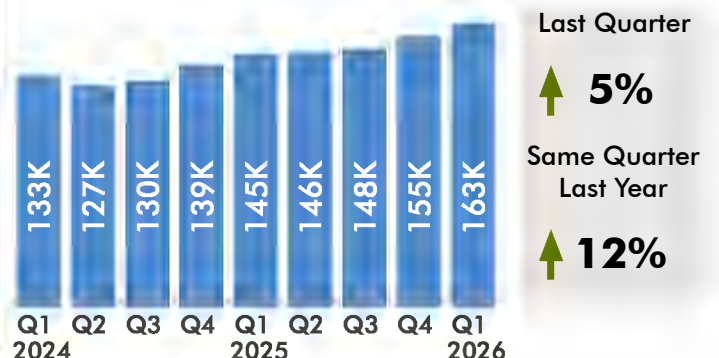
Borrowers - Physical

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. Data from and following this period may change as delayed or corrected records are incorporated.

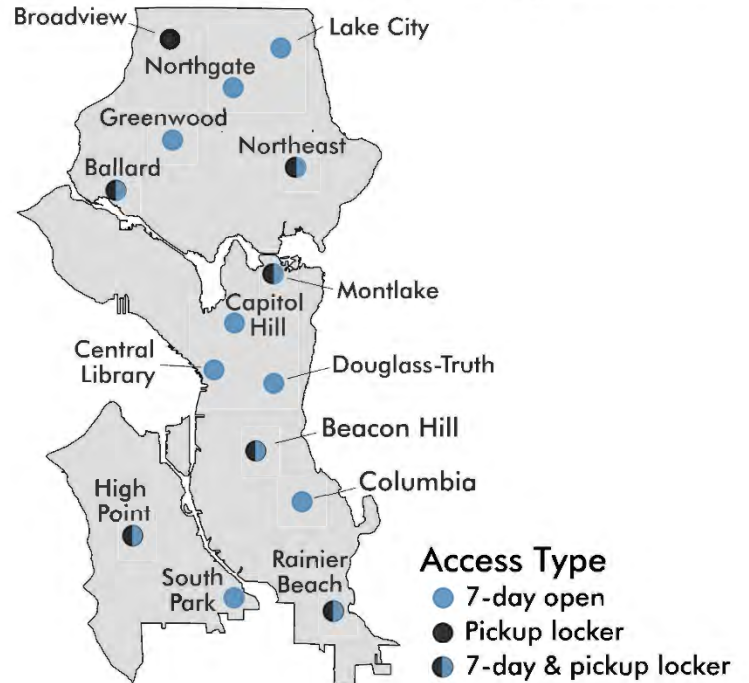
Stable open hours, strong Library use

The 2019 Levy provides \$22.6 million in 2026 for investment in Hours and Access, and total Levy spending in Q1 for this category was \$5.1 million. This funding supports open hours at our 27 libraries; community access to Library learning programs and services; and citywide outreach and engagement. We expand library access in many ways, including adjusting open hours to meet community need and removing barriers to access. The levy-funded elimination of late fees in 2020 restored access for 18,000 library users, and continues to have a positive impact on patrons, while not affecting the rate at which materials are returned.

14 branches with daily service: Starting on Jan. 27, the Library [added Monday service](#) at the Montlake Branch, which expanded the number of libraries that are open seven days a week from 13 to 14 locations. To accommodate the addition of hours at the Montlake Branch, we slightly reduced open hours at the Capitol Hill and Douglass-Truth branches, which helped improve staffing stability at these locations.

All locations, with the exception of the University Branch which is closed for renovations, continue to be open at least six days a week. (See the table on page 19 for details.) Pick-up lockers are available at seven locations, and use of lockers for 24/7 holds pick-up continues to grow, with 9,800 locker-supported checkouts in Q1.

7-Day Branches and Pickup Lockers



Increased Library use: Around 340,000 people used their Library cards over the last year to check out books, access resources, and attend online programs. This is a 12% increase since Q1 2025. During the first quarter of 2026, 19,500 patrons signed up for a Library card, taking advantage of our simplified Library card signup process, which we redesigned in 2025.

Welcoming back patrons: To make our borrowing practices more equitable, last year we approved a change to clear unpaid patron fees older than three years. In December, we cleared fees for 10,000 active patrons, and in Q1, we notified these patrons that their account access was restored and welcomed them back. Patrons were invited to share comments via a short survey, and we received many positive responses.

Community Voices: Restored access

“I have been battling cancer for the last year, and finances are very tight, so **having access to library resources means a lot.**”

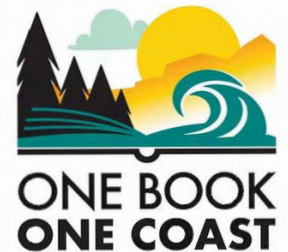
- Patron whose account was reinstated

Programs and services

In Q1 2026, the Library held more than 2,300 public programs and events. The Seattle Public Library Foundation supports many of the direct costs for some Library programs such as the Global Reading Challenge and author programs. The levy provides direct financial support for a limited number of programs (Kaleidoscope Play and Learn and youth-focused social services programming), and funds much of the staffing that helps make many other programs possible.

Central Library programs: In Q1, we held more than 330 public Library programs at the Central Library. Bestselling author Michiko Aoyama discussed "Hot Chocolate on Thursday," guest curator artist Amber Flame kicked off a new series that included a "meet cute" night of love poetry on the Red Floor; and the second annual [KUOW Book Talk series](#) featured two events with local authors. The Central Library also hosted 60 private programs, including nonprofit and mission-driven organizations to whom we provided the space for free. We saw many repeat bookings for organizations needing a low-cost location for training, cultural programming, and large-scale gatherings.

One Book, One Coast: We launched the first year of One Book, One Coast, a shared reading initiative organized by LA County Library that brings together more than 190 library systems to encourage millions of people to read and discuss [“They Called Us Enemy.”](#) the bestselling graphic memoir by actor and activist George Takei. We created a [webpage](#) as a hub for information about the program, and will offer unlimited e-copies of the book starting in Q2.



Meeting spaces: The Levy supports the use of community meeting spaces that are free at 22 neighborhood branches. In Q1, Library meeting rooms were used almost 3,200 times by crafters, nonprofits, public agencies, Scout troops, music groups, and many other community groups.

● **Literacy and learning:** In Q1, we held more than 340 story times across 27 locations and in the community, as well as around 80 levy-funded Play and Learn sessions. We continued our Story Squad pilot program with Seattle Public Schools, delivering a set of books to Bailey-Gatzert Elementary to support classroom topics such as letter-writing.

Global Reading Challenge: On March 31, a team of fourth graders from John Stanford International School with a creatively spelled team name, the Global Bananana Pancake Group, became the [31st Global Reading Challenge city champions](#). In sum, 3,700 fourth and fifth graders from 71 SPS elementary schools participated in the program, which is supported by The Seattle Public Library Foundation.

◆ **Increasing language access:** In Q1, our Marketing and Online Services team worked to improve language access for English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) programs, with a goal of helping more people access services in their own language. We used city and library data to assess emerging language needs, focusing on our six prioritized languages in Phase 1. We then selected 10 more languages in which to expand our print and digital materials (Phases 2 and 3). We have created ESOL Fliers in Phase 1 and 2 languages and are working on Phase 3 languages as well as creating additional language hubs on the website.

A bookish Super Bowl bet: When the Seahawks beat the Patriots in the Super Bowl LX, the Library won a [bookish bet](#) against Boston Public Library (BPL). The prize? BPL shared an SPL-created list called [“Seattle Picks for Patriots Fans”](#) on their social accounts. The Central Library was a prime parade-watching destination during the Feb. 11 Super Bowl parade, with 4,100 people visiting the Central Library, the busiest day of the year by far.



The Global Bananana Pancake Group proudly displays their trophies.

The Global Bananana Group with their well-earned Global Reading Challenge trophies.

Social Services: Connecting patrons to community and care

Library staff who focus on social service referrals include a Social Services librarian, a senior community resource specialist, and a Levy-funded community resource specialist focused on youth and young adults. Their work connects patrons to community and Library resources, and to Seattle’s civic and cultural communities. Here are highlights of their work in Q1.

Connecting patrons to resources: We recorded 186 Social Services-focused interactions with patrons, 150 of which involved referral to services such as shelter, food, and housing. During a Tier 3 Severe Weather activation in mid-February that resulted in large-scale shelter opening at Seattle Center, our team worked to alert people to weather and shelter information, which resulted in 43 conversations about emergency shelter.

Community programs: We welcomed more than 470 people to 10 Coffee and Conversations at the Central Library this quarter, which many attendees cite as a highlight of their day. Six Crafternoon events supported community, connection, and creativity for 87 attendees, including a passionate group of crocheters who asked for “a crochet corner at SPL for the people!”

Community partnerships: We began a new partnership with Minority Veterans of America (MVA), which now tables at three branches monthly, raising awareness about MVA services, including transitional housing, case management and other supports. An ID Clinic at the Ballard Branch helped 10+ patrons get low-cost IDs, needed for accessing many human services. We partnered with the Benefits Law Center to offer a Social Security Overpayment Legal Clinic at the Central Library.

Lifesaving supplies: Beginning in January, we began distributing intramuscular naloxone to patrons, as well as nasal naloxone. Like nasal naloxone, intramuscular naloxone is a safe, FDA-approved, over-the-counter medication that reverses overdoses, with an application similar to an EpiPen or insulin injection. In Q1, the Library distributed around 1,370 naloxone kits. Community resource specialist Ly Huynh received the Washington Library Association’s 2026 Outstanding Service Award for her work bringing [free naloxone](#) to the SPL system.

Staff training: A new staff program, titled “Focus On...” offered informal learning and sharing on topics related to social services, such as shelter, housing, and crisis response options in Seattle.

Community Voices: Social Services

“You are so nonjudgmental. Thank you! I never feel like you are judging me or my situation.”

“If it weren’t for you all and the Library, I wouldn’t be here.”



This bird-themed zine was created by a patron at a Crafternoon event, and then added to the Library’s ZAPP collection.

Ensuring Library spaces are safe and welcoming

The levy funds about one-third of the positions on our security team, which oversees the security of Library buildings and public spaces. In Q1, the Security team achieved meaningful progress across technology, staffing, access control, and training initiatives.

Security infrastructure improvements: The Library's Security and IT teams replaced non-functioning security cameras at the Central Library that were impacted by the 2024 cybersecurity event. They are installed and fully operational in 25 locations at the Central Library, and the Security Team has already been able to use the cameras to address security breach concerns and identity thefts.

Issues with the Madrona-Sally Goldmark Branch ADA button and the Capitol Hill Branch locking systems were fully resolved, improving safety, accessibility, and reliability.

◆ **Building the security team:** Two additional Security officers were hired in Q1, with the hiring of two more officers planned for Q2. A contract was secured in Q1 to support long-term training partnerships for the security team, which will provide ongoing instruction on tactics that help us safely manage situations that pose risk of physical violence, as well as on customer service and security refresher training.

◆ **Community Use Agreement and incident reporting.**

The Security team continues to support staff in implementing the [Community Use Agreement](#) (CUA), which became the Library's new code of conduct in 2025. To enhance consistency across branches, a focus group was established to improve staff communication and training related to Incident Report writing and applying the CUA.

Coffee & Conversations collaboration: Security officers have been more involved in the weekly Coffee and Conversations events at the Central Library, helping identify patrons who might benefit from the program. The program provides a low-stakes way for patrons to meet our Social Services team and ask questions in a warm, welcoming environment. Referrals from Security have resulted in better connections with patrons and fruitful connections to resources.



Community Voices: Safety

"I love the Library because they create a **safe space where people can just be**. Books, computers, tools, resources, and places for people to build community."

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 2026, the 2019 Levy provides \$7.15 million for Collections, and total levy spending on Collections in Q1 was \$1.8 million. Here are highlights of our levy-funded Collections work in Q1.

Digital checkouts continue to grow: Checkouts of digital materials were 1.94 million in Q1 2026, 10% higher than Q1 2025 (see page 3). Because of the high cost of digital books, the Library has [made changes in recent years](#) that have helped us support growing digital checkouts while managing spending. We did see a slight increase in spending on high-demand purchases and renewals (the cost of repurchasing a license to keep a digital title in our collection) in Q1. But these increases are relatively modest and expected. We added nearly 29,000 copies of digital titles in Q1.

Physical collection: While checkouts of physical materials decreased slightly compared to recent quarters, the number of patrons checking out physical materials grew by 6% in the last quarter. We purchased around 41,000 copies of print materials in Q1.

Peak Picks: Peak Picks, our popular no-holds, no wait collection of high-interest print titles, is fully funded by the levy. In Q1, we added 31 [Peak Picks titles](#) and 5,400 copies, with almost 32,000 Peak Picks checkouts.

🟢 **Expanding language access:** In Q1, the Library added 580 books to our [World Languages Collection](#) in Chinese, Japanese, Korean, Russian, Somali, Spanish, Ukrainian, and Vietnamese, including Traditional Chinese cookbooks that had high patron interest. With support from The Seattle Public Library Foundation, we also added 414 World Language titles for adults and 165 titles for teens in 11 languages and launched a Portuguese digital book collection with 50 titles for adults and 30 titles for teens.



Did you know?

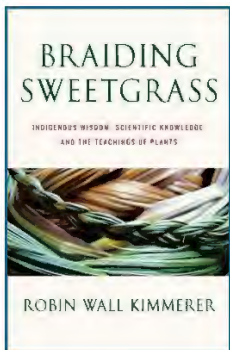
Libraries can't purchase most e-book titles as we do physical books. Instead, publishers require that we buy licenses that expire after a certain amount of uses or time. If there is still patron interest, we then have to renew the license. This is partly why **e-books are 3-5 times as expensive as physical books** for libraries.

E-audiobooks gaining popularity

In recent years, Seattle library patrons' preferred format has become digital books, and increasingly, e-audiobooks.

In 2025, the Library's e-audiobook checkouts were 49% of digital books, with **adult fiction and nonfiction e-audiobooks outpacing e-book checkouts** for the first time.

5 most popular e-audiobooks in 2025 at The Seattle Public Library



1. "Braiding Sweetgrass" by Robin Wall Kimmerer (Always Available)
2. "Tom Lake" by Ann Patchett
3. "Demon Copperhead" by Barbara Kingsolver
4. "Onyx Storm" by Rebecca Yarros
5. "The Women" by Kristin Hannah

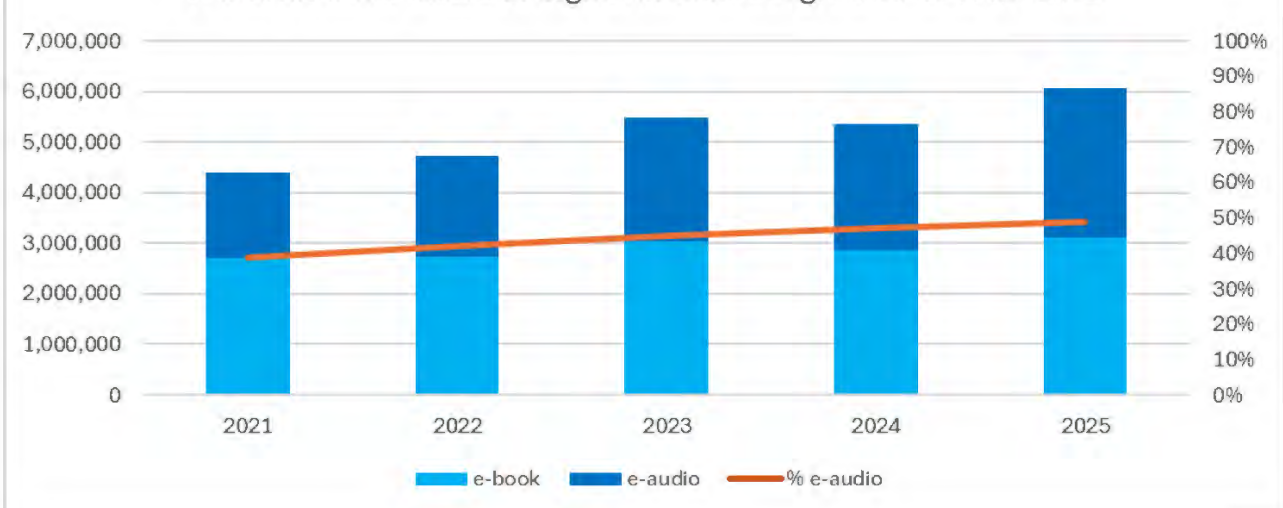
Why e-audiobooks?

- ❖ There is a growing trend of audio listening, including the rise of podcasts.
- ❖ Increasingly sophisticated production values, such as full-cast recordings, attract new listeners.
- ❖ Audiobooks have been more available in "Always Available" formats than e-books.

E-audiobook costs

- ❖ Digital books are 3-5 times more expensive for libraries than print books.
- ❖ While costs vary depending on the license, libraries typically pay even more for e-audiobooks.

E-audiobooks' share of digital checkouts grew to 49% in 2025



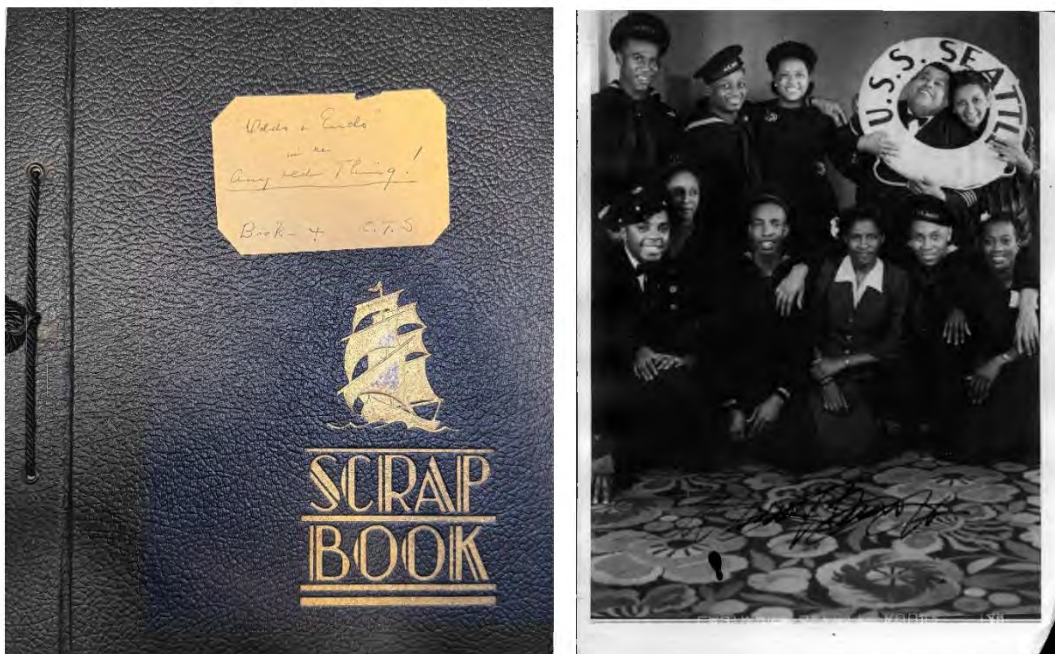
Local history collections

The [Seattle Room](#), located at the Central Library, provides in-person access to local history materials, 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, both funded by the 2019 Levy, help researchers and community members use these unique collections to understand Seattle's rich and varied history.

In Q1, Seattle Room staff continued to steward and provide access to Special Collections materials by responding to more than 460 email inquiries and welcoming over 500 visitors to the Seattle Room for activities ranging from in-depth research appointments to introductions to the space and its resources.

Seattle Room curators purchased 211 items in Q1, including 24 original photographs of Seattle's Black community taken by Al Smith. He captured weddings, church and community gatherings, sporting events, and concerts, shedding light on life in Seattle's vibrant Central District between the 1940s and '60s.

We also acquired a number of publications related to leisure activities from the early 20th century, including Seattle Yacht Club annual magazines, a 1931 "Gazetteer of Northwest Yachts and Who's Who Among the Yachtsmen," and a 1917 Seattle Golf Club yearbook, which lists early members such as Edwin A. Strout (1862-1928). Coincidentally, we also acquired a scrapbook created by Edwin's wife Cora Taylor Strout (1869-1940), which we reunited with scrapbooks that were already part of our Strout Family Collection, circa 1901-2003.



Highlights of Q1 Seattle Room purchases include a set of photos by Al Smith depicting life in the Central District (above right); and a scrapbook created by Cora Taylor Strout, which will be added to the Strout Family Collection.

Seattle Room Digital Collections

In the first quarter, we introduced a new digital collection celebrating [Asian American, Native Hawaiian, Pacific Islander \(AANHPI\) Culture and History](#) with over 200 items related to Seattle and the Puget Sound area. The bulk of the collection includes material related to Chinese, Filipino, and Japanese communities, including [Chinese Community newsletters](#) produced between 1964 and 1970; two [issues of Bamboo Magazine](#), a 1950s periodical created by Filipino American community leaders Dorothy Laigo and Fred Cordova during their time at Seattle University; and materials related to the forced removal and incarceration of Japanese Americans during World War II, such as an [accession register](#) of books at the Minidoka concentration camp's library.

In conjunction with this new collection, we also added 138 AANHPI images to our existing [Seattle Historical Photograph Collection](#), which include images from Chinese, Filipino, Hawaiian, Korean, Japanese, Samoan, and Vietnamese communities. Digitization helps us amplify voices in the AANHPI community and bring together historical materials that are spread across multiple locations and collections into one easily searchable spot. This quarter, almost 49,000 users visited our digital Seattle Room collections, with 53,000 sessions and 141,000 pageviews.

Number	AUTHOR	TITLE	FUSION	Year	Cost	EDGARS
51	Thompson, W.	Desi Kiseatsu no kenashi (1st)	120	1947	195.28	
52		(2)	121	1949		
53	Sato, J.	Kiseatsu no osaki no kenashi	122	1949		
54	Thompson, W.	Seidenshoku	123	1950		
55	Yoshida, G.	Shingyaku jiten no kenashi 1st	124	1948		
56	Okuyama, M.	Shinshi shingyaku goshu		1945	200	
57	Okamoto, S.	Dogs goshu	Shingyaku goshu	1944	200	195.23
58	Matsu, S.	Bikan' sake		1948		
59	Okamoto, S.	Hiko goshu		1948		
60	Okamoto, S.	Seidenshoku goshu	11	1945		
61	Okamoto, S.	Rusaka no himitsu kasha		1945	327	
62	Okamoto, S.	Shingyaku goshu		1948	300	
63	Okamoto, S.	Goto' sake		1948	300	
64	Okamoto, S.	Uwasa no shonin		1947	300	
65	Okamoto, S.	Shingyaku goshu (1st)		1945	300	
66	Okamoto, S.	Shingyaku goshu (2nd)		1947	195.21	
67	Okamoto, S.	Desi Kiseatsu no kenashi		1947	195.23	
68	Okamoto, S.	Kiseatsu no kenashi		1945	190	
69	Okamoto, S.	Seidenshoku goshu		1945	195.23	
70	Okamoto, S.	Shingyaku goshu		1945	195.23	
71	Okamoto, S.	Uta no tabanitate		1947	195.21	
72	Okamoto, S.	Shingyaku no keta		1945	195.23	
73	Okamoto, S.	Shingyaku		1947	195.23	
74	Okamoto, S.	Shingyaku		1947	195.23	
75	Okamoto, S.	Shingyaku		1947	200	

Highlights of the new AANHPI digital collection include an accession register of books held at the Minidoka Library (above), and two issues of Bamboo, a 1950s periodical created by Filipino American community leaders Dorothy Laigo and Fred Cordova.



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 provides \$2.7 million of operating budget authority related to technology and online services in 2026 and \$4.3 million of unspent technology capital budget authority from prior years. Total Levy spending in Q1 for technology operating expenses was \$500,000 and \$143,000 for Capital IT infrastructure.



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.

In Q1, the Outreach Hotspot Team facilitated 80 new long-term hotspot checkouts with community partners serving people disproportionately impacted by the digital divide in Seattle. We have 250 hot spots in our outreach collection.

Through ongoing engagement tailored to each community served, library staff and community partners also raised awareness of library offerings such as virtual library programs, workshops, tutoring sessions, research databases, and online learning platforms.

The 900 hotspots in our general circulation collection continued to be popular, with 2,000 check-outs in Q1 2026. Our vendor is providing an updated hotspot model, the A70, and we have begun to replace our older hotspots with newer models as needed.

Community Voices: Hotspots

“The hotspots **helped my students tremendously**. They were able to register for college, complete schoolwork, attend virtual meetings/appointments, and any job-related activities.”

- South Seattle College, Justice-Involved Solutions Unit

Maintaining access to technology

Robust technology use: The first quarter of 2026 saw steady or increased use of the Library’s technology services. Sixty-five thousand patrons used computers for 102,000 hours, comparable to recent quarters. Around 31,000 patrons printed almost 600,000 pages on Library printers, a 17% increase compared to Q1 2025. Patrons used ScanEZ to scan almost 153,000 pages, an increase of nearly 19% from the previous quarter, and 46% from Q4 2025.

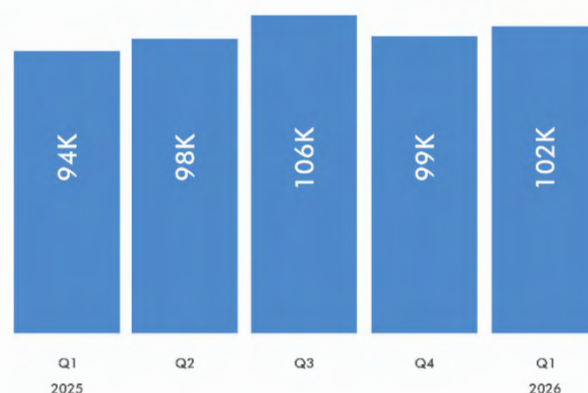
Integrated Library System progress: The 2019 Levy included \$4 million to support the replacement of the existing Integrated Library System (ILS), the Library’s central digital platform for managing collections materials, checkouts, patron accounts, and other services.

In Q1, we concluded successful contract negotiations with Clarivate and announced the selection of their ILS, [Polaris](#), a major milestone. With contracting completed, we shifted into the implementation phase of the project, and began laying the groundwork for system configuration, data migration, and process alignment with staff from across the organization.

Mobile app: Since its April 2025 launch, our [mobile app](#) has been downloaded more than 27,000 times on Apple and Android devices. Users can navigate the app in Spanish, Vietnamese, and Traditional and Simplified Chinese.

Cybersecurity program: SPL IT continues to advance the Library’s cybersecurity protection by adopting industry best practices across identity management, infrastructure security, user education, and email protection. In Q1, to improve our general technology and cybersecurity infrastructure, we upgraded and replaced network connectivity in four branches, and made our network more secure by upgrading the firewall.

Public Computer Hours Used Each Quarter



Community Voices: printing

“Thank you for making space available without pressure to buy something. Also, the complimentary printing is so helpful.”

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 \$574,000 to support this effort in 2026. Total Levy spending in Q1 for supporting children was \$88,000.

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.

Kaleidoscope Play & Learn creates community spaces to learn, engage, and connect for young children and their caregivers.

In Q1, the Library offered around 80 levy-funded Play and Learn programs in four languages and at seven locations: the Beacon Hill, Columbia, Delridge, Lake City, NewHolly, Rainier Beach, and South Park branches. We also added a new Play & Learn group at the Northgate Branch, facilitated by Denise Louie Education Center, through funding from Best Starts for Kids King County.

Villa Comunitaria, which facilitates Play and Learn sessions at the Delridge and South Park branches, reported that Spanish-language play continues to be a central draw, particularly for multi-generational families seeking to engage in bilingual learning in a way that is both joyful and accessible. Grandparents, parents, and children participate together, strengthening cultural connections while supporting early language development.

Denise Louie Education Center, which facilitates sessions at the Columbia, Lake City, and Rainier Beach branches, reported an increase of 6.1% in the overall attendance/retention at Play and Learn compared to Q1 2025, with the Lake City Branch session experiencing the largest increase. The average age of the children attending the sessions is 24 months.



A Play and Learn session facilitated by Villa Comunitaria.

Protecting our investments

The 2019 Levy provides \$1.5 million in 2026 budget authority and \$15.3 million in carryforward authority for major maintenance work. This includes \$9.5 million for crucial work on the Library's historically landmarked Carnegie buildings, including the seismic retrofit of the University Branch, which is currently underway, and planning and design for the future retrofit of the Columbia Branch, which is a major capital project included in the [2026 Library levy proposal](#). It will also fund the replacement and modernization of HVAC control panels at the Columbia, Fremont, Queen Anne, Rainier Beach, University, and West Seattle branches.

In Q1 2026, the Library spent \$1.3 million in 2019 levy funds on major maintenance and seismic retrofit work, with an additional commitment of \$3.5 million incurred by the end of Q1 for future work this year.

Did you know?

The renovation of the University Branch has given us an opportunity to repair and restore historic features of the 115-year-old landmarked building. See [our recent update](#) for details.

Major maintenance: Preserving libraries for the next generation

Seismic retrofit complete: The University Branch renovations and seismic retrofit, which began in January 2025, [progressed steadily](#) and on schedule during Q1, with the seismic work completed at the end of the quarter. The branch's comprehensive overhaul includes a seismic retrofit, the installation of a modern electric HVAC system, interior and exterior accessibility improvements, and the expansion and modernization of public spaces inside the branch. This project is now entering its final phase and is on track for substantial completion in Q3.



The University Branch retrofit includes a steel moment frame at the front entrance.

Reducing carbon footprint, adding cooling: When the University Branch reopens, 23 of 27 SPL locations will offer [air-conditioned public spaces](#). Partial funding for the remaining HVAC

installation projects at the Columbia, Fremont, Queen Anne, and West Seattle branches is included in a \$5.2 million Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Hazardous Mitigation Grant awarded to the Library in 2024. This grant does not cover the entire cost of each project and supplemental levy funding has been necessary.

HVAC installations at the Fremont and West Seattle branches received their final permits in Q1 and will be publicly bid in Q2, with construction scheduled for Q3. Architectural design and permitting for the HVAC installations at the Columbia and Queen Anne branches was in the Request for Qualifications phase during Q1. The Library continues to pursue federal and state funding opportunities to supplement levy funding for both seismic retrofit and HVAC/electrification projects. The processes of applying for, monitoring, and reporting on federal and state funding require substantial staff time. Timeliness of funding decisions varies and is dependent upon factors beyond the Library's control.

Also during Q1, we began replacing gas heaters with heat pumps at the Library's Materials and Operations Center and replacing the aged HVAC system at the Rainier Beach Branch with an energy return ventilation system. Both projects should be completed during Q2 and each will reduce the Library's carbon footprint. We are grateful to the City's Office of Sustainability and Environment for supporting these projects.

The Library also began updating mechanical system controls for the Central Library and all neighborhood branches during Q1. This long-term project will begin with the Central Library and include the Fremont, Rainier Beach, University, and West Seattle branches, timed to coincide with planned work on their HVAC systems. Finally, planning and design phases were underway for remodeling the space on Level 2 of the Central Library, which housed the original Automated Materials Handling System (AMHS) before a new AMHS was installed at the MOC.



Children reading at the Rainier Beach Branch, which will get a new HVAC system in Q2.

Routine Maintenance

Q1 was another busy quarter for the Library's Facilities and Janitorial/Custodial teams, with both teams remaining understaffed despite onboarding and training new staff members. Combined, these teams responded to a total of more than 3,300 work orders, including 1,200 for routine and/or scheduled maintenance, and 2,100 requests from Library staff.

Risks, opportunities and the path ahead

Here is a quick preview of Q2 2026:

- Focus on Wi-Fi hotspots
- Update on the Integrated Library System project
- Update on HVAC installation projects

Q1 2026 Financials

The 2019 Levy accounts for \$57.1 million (39.8%) of the Library's total revised 2026 budget of \$143.5 million. The 2012 Levy accounts for \$53,000. The Library spent \$9.6 million from the 2019 Levy and \$75,000 from the 2012 Levy in Q1 2026.

Spending tables below show the Library's 2026 Operations Plan budget plus encumbrances and unspent budget authority from prior years in the revised budget columns. Carryover budget authority of \$19.3 million from the 2019 Levy and \$53,000 from the 2012 Levy was designated for spending in 2025.

2019 Library Levy

	Operations Plan	Revised Budget	YTD Expenditures	Remaining	% Spent
Hours & Access	22,478,000	22,563,374	5,143,215	17,420,159	23%
Providing Books & Materials	7,150,000	7,149,591	1,827,601	5,321,990	26%
Technology & Online Services	2,851,000	2,724,456	499,678	2,224,778	18%
Literacy & Early Learning	468,000	573,667	88,308	485,359	15%
Building & Facility Support	2,061,000	2,135,266	400,773	1,734,494	19%
Administration	737,000	736,603	203,012	533,591	28%
Major Maintenance	1,508,000	16,864,088	1,320,458	15,543,630	8%
Capital IT Infrastructure	474,000	4,346,272	143,150	4,203,121	3%
Total	\$37,727,000	\$57,093,317	\$9,626,194	\$47,467,123	17%

Includes \$138k in operating carry-forward and \$19.2M in capital carry-forward budget authority

2012 Library Levy

	Operations Plan	Revised Budget	YTD Expenditures	Remaining	% Spent
Hours & Access			75,174	(75,174)	0%
Major Maintenance		53,392		53,392	0%
Total	\$0	\$53,392	\$75,174	(\$21,782)	141%

Includes \$53k in capital carry-forward

Appendix 1. Scheduled weekly hours in 2026 compared to 2019 baseline

Location	2019	Jun 19, 2024 – Sept. 24, 2024	Sep 25, 2024 – Jan. 28, 2025	Jan. 29, 2025 – Jan. 26, 2026	Current as of Jan. 27, 2026
		<i>Dark blue: > or = 2019; Light blue: < 2019</i>			
Ballard Branch	60	62	62	62	62
Beacon Hill Branch	60	56	56	56	56
Broadview Branch	60	54	54	54	54
Capitol Hill Branch	60	60	60	60	56
Central Library	62	62	62	62	62
Columbia Branch	60	48	56	56	56
Delridge Branch	39	48	48	48	48
Douglass-Truth Branch	60	62	60	60	56
Fremont Branch	39	40	40	48	48
Green Lake Branch	39	CLOSED	48	48	48
Greenwood Branch	60	62	62	62	62
High Point Branch	46	58	56	56	56
International District/Chinatown Branch	46	46	48	48	48
Lake City Branch	60	54	62	62	62
Madrona-Sally Goldmark Branch	39	32	40	48	48
Magnolia Branch	39	40	40	48	48
Montlake Branch	39	37	40	48	56
NewHolly Branch	39	40	48	48	48
Northeast Branch	60	48	48	60	60
Northgate Branch	60	40	48	58	58
Queen Anne Branch	39	40	40	48	48
Rainier Beach Branch	60	56	56	56	56
South Park Branch	46	62	58	58	58
Southwest Branch	60	48	48	48	48
University Branch	46	40	40	CLOSED	CLOSED
Wallingford Branch	39	40	40	48	48
West Seattle Branch	60	48	48	48	48
Total Weekly Hours	1,377	1,283	1,368	1,398	1,398
% of 2019 baseline		93%	99%	102%	102%