GRAND ISLAND PUBLIC LIBRARY	EST. 1884	1124 W 2ND ST GRAND ISLAND, NE

ANNUAL REPORT

OCT 1, 2024 – SEP 30, 2025



TO INSPIRE AND STRENGTHEN OUR COMMUNITY BY CONNECTING PEOPLE WITH INFORMATION, IDEAS, AND EXPERIENCES.

— GIPL MISSION STATEMENT

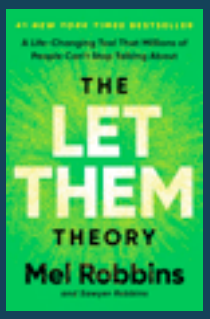
2025 BY THE NUMBERS

A YEAR IN STATISTICS

325,570
CIRCULATIONS
248,654 physical
76,916 digital

TOP TITLES







+ 12,408 items added

- 13,678 items withdrawn

COLLECTIONS

BOOKS
153,555

AUDIO
50,555

VIDEO
13,555

SERIALS
120

133,951
Visitors to the Library

5,541
Meeting Room Uses

38,624
Registered Borrowers

14,516
Computer Sessions

12,493
Program Attendance

1,251
Makerspace Users

$5,605,786
SAVED BY PATRONS using Library Services

$2,165,762
ANNUAL BUDGET SPENT: 91.3% of budget

FROM THE DIRECTOR'S DESK

CELINE SWAN, LIBRARY DIRECTOR



Lots of great things happened at the library this year for both staff and patrons, with numerous successes marking our journey. These achievements tell us it is time for our library to expand as our community continues to grow.

Art is well-loved by our patrons. We have had some amazing displays, and our Art Alcove was busy every month with exhibits. One popular collaboration was Stuhr Museum's "Then and Now: The Many Flavors of Grand Island." Our library boasts a substantial art collection and is working on a database that would allow patrons to search and view our offerings. At the end of the fiscal year, New York restoration artist Steve Roy visited the library to restore our **Harry Bertoia "Willow" sculpture**.

Maintenance staff has been hard at work enhancing the library environment. They added chair guard trim to study rooms, installed corner guard protection, hung cupboards, improved the outdoor lawns and gardens, tackled pigeon abatement, and weathered a flood in the main floor HVAC room and basement, among other projects.



The sculpture was originally donated to the library in 1974 by M.H. Allen.

We were thrilled to receive **Gold Accreditation** from the Nebraska Library Association! In April the library upgraded security with a new camera system, and a new phone system was set up in August. We also worked diligently to rework the copy, scan and fax area in the adult reference area to better serve the public.

The library collaborates with many city nonprofits, which appreciate our central location for meeting patrons. They often choose to meet here because it serves as a diverse community center in the heart of town. For these organizations, we provide tables in the foyer, private meeting rooms, and we promote their initiatives on social media.



Lincoln City Libraries' new Bookmobile serves Lincoln & Lancaster County.

As Grand Island continues to grow, the library is committed to find ways to reach residents who are unable to visit the library due to transportation issues, language barriers, or other challenges. Addressing underserved patrons, early literacy and disseminating information on food and housing insecurity are key objectives. A major goal is to encourage more youth to return to the library and engage in reading.

The best news we received by far was that the City Council approved the library to add 2 FTEs (five part-timers) for Fall 2025, allowing us to extend our operating hours by an additional four hours on Saturday starting January 2026. This is a wonderful development for both our staff and the community! Another exciting project is the reintroduction of a Bookmobile to serve the city.

We are excited to have the support of the City and the Library Foundation as we progress through the 2025–2026 year and continue work on our Strategic Plan 2022–2026 goals. We remain committed to making a difference every day in our community by providing excellent customer service, helping everyone in our community achieve success, and continuing to move forward in our growing city.

COMMUNITY FOR KIDS

LAURA FENTRESS, YOUTH & FAMILY SERVICES LIBRARIAN



Children pose with balloons for Preschool Prom.

The Library was able to expand its reach to local families with fruitful partnerships and programs. Here are some highlights from this year.

We teamed up with the GI Parks and Recreation Department and the Platte Valley Astronomical Observers to hold three Star Parties at Camp Augustine in October, November, and May. Astronomy enthusiasts from around central Nebraska shared their knowledge and their telescopes with families who enjoyed the chance to gaze at the night sky. The library's own telescope, which circulated a dozen times in 2024-25, also made an appearance at all three programs.

We concluded our winter break programming in early January with our first-ever Cabin Fever Friday. (It turns out the library's lobby is large enough to safely accommodate a full-size inflatable bounce house, which means we can provide a way for kids to run off excess energy even in the dead of winter!) Kids also enjoyed hula hoops, jump ropes, and even a popular "snowball fight" with large fleece pom poms.

Other programming highlights included a special storytime visited by Cookie Monster himself in celebration of the Library's 140th birthday in October, and Hoopla 4 Health, a fun and active presentation from Carly Harroun that got kids moving and grooving with hula hoops over spring break in March.

> "I am so glad you are open to fun things! This place is hoppin'!"
>
> *– a parent at Preschool Prom*

Summer Reading 2025 kicked off with a community carnival presented in partnership with Nebraska Public Media. Wave Pizza provided the food, while representatives from the GI Police Department, Multicultural Coalition, Nebraska State Fair, and Early Development Network shared fun activities and important information with families. Nebraska Public Media staff anchored the event with family engagement activities and crafts for a total attendance of 275 people.

Rounding off our programming for the fiscal year was our inaugural Preschool Prom. Toddlers and preschoolers were invited to come to the library dressed in their best, take a "limo" (wagon) ride across the library lobby, and dance the afternoon away in our meeting room. This adorable event was a highlight for kids and families!



Eddie the Comfort Dog enjoys the attention from a group of young children at Storytime.

We are so grateful to the volunteers and GI Library Foundation for their support in making these programs happen!

COLOR OUR WORLD

ERICA ROGERS, TECHNOLOGY & TEEN LIBRARIAN

They say time flies when you're having fun, and we had a lot of fun in 2025! We started off the year bringing in a bounce house for our "Cabin Fever" program that brought in a lot of teens and kids alike! We also hosted our first Mario party in March to celebrate Mario's birthday. If you don't know, Mario is a famous video game character that's been around since the 1980's. For the tweens, we hosted several fun projects, ranging from painting tiny canvases & pinecone crafts to learning how to sew tiny pocket hugs.

Summer brought in array of vibrant programs, as the theme was "Color Our World." We kicked off the summer with an outdoor waterfight that the teens really got into. We also brought back a fan favorite, Nancy Fairbanks, who taught the kids how to make creatures out of pottery. We ended the summer with a Zombie Escape Room that had the teens running all over the library to solve the puzzles and escape!

In the Makerspace, things picked up with over 1,000 patrons coming to visit! We brought in a lot of Adult Services groups from Hands of Heartland & Duet. They love making t-shirts and tumblers! It's fun to see them come in wearing some of the shirts they have made, or carrying around their tumblers. Their joy spreads more joy.

I also attended the Nebraska Makerspace conference in Lincoln where I presented twice. I was able to bring along two staff members, and we had fun learning about different types of equipment and things that we can do with our space.

It was another great year at the Grand Island Public Library. Here's to another year flying by!



Teens volunteer at the Library's annual Bear Fair.



DIGITAL SERVICES ON THE RISE

SHAUN KLEE, REFERENCE & COLLECTION SERVICES LIBRARIAN

Digital checkouts continue to grow in popularity. During the past year, digital checkouts increased 6.5% compared to the previous year and now total almost one-quarter (23.4%) of our total annual circulation. E-books and digital audio, provided primarily through Overdrive/Libby and Hoopla, Grand Island Public Library patrons are embracing the library's digital collections. Not only do we circulate digital copies of popular items, but we also offer a variety of research and informational databases on subjects, from automobile repair to finance to family history and genealogy.

LIBRARY BOARD



Your library is more than just a community hub: it's a promise to connect you with ideas and experiences. Soon we will be able to bring the library to you, with the return of the Bookmobile!

The Grand Island Public Library is a community hub that never sleeps. While our digital services keep you connected 24/7, our physical space has expanded hours, especially on weekends. Our community responded, with a 25 percent increase in library visitors – nearly 135,000 people.

The impact is clear:

- **$5 Million Saved:** We estimate our 40,000 registered borrowers saved millions by borrowing books, movies, and games rather than buying them.
- **Community Connections:** Our meeting rooms served more than 5,500 people (a 43% increase).
- **Popular Programs:** We welcomed more than 12,000 people for everything from the beloved Bear Fair to the teen MAR10 Day, plus adult programs and book clubs.

Thanks to a commitment from the City Council, Library Foundation Board, and Library Board we are expanding services to your neighborhood. Our staff has long dreamed of reviving the bookmobile and we expect to move forward soon!

Literacy remains the focus, and my family makes several trips a week, often leaving with an armload of books each.

The library helps us express our creative side. My kids love use the Makerspace tools to create one of a kind items. The numbers show we're not alone; The Makerspace welcomed more than 1,200 users, a 29 percent increase from the year before.

The Library Board, appointed by the Mayor and City Council, meets monthly. Our focus remains on connecting you with information, ideas, and experiences. Whether you are visiting us to use the 3D printer, or waiting at the curb for the new Bookmobile to pull into your neighborhood, we are honored to serve you. Come visit us soon!

Sara White
Library Board President

LIBRARY FOUNDATION



Over the last 65 years, the Grand Island Public Library Foundation has met a variety of the library's specific needs with complete or partnership funding for their programs, projects or facility renovation needs.

In recent years, the Grand Island Public Library Foundation's Annual Sponsorship Program, aimed at fostering partnerships with local businesses, organizations, and individuals has grown to partnering with 20 different businesses and individuals this past year. Through this program, sponsors have the opportunity to support library programs, events, or initiatives, and in return, receive recognition and visibility within the community. This program has not only provided vital financial support, but has also strengthened our ties with the local community and created meaningful opportunities for collaboration.

With the help of two part-time staff, the board of directors and volunteers, the Foundation raised $140,423 during the last fiscal year. We were fortunate to have 168 donors, 25 first time donors and 20 sponsors, as well as hundreds of Book Sale patrons. Our volunteers provided 4,784 hours to the library with a value of $152,897 in donated time. Volunteers helped with author visits, cultural celebrations, outreach activities and the maintenance of ongoing Book Sale, as well as regular library programming. We were proud to have partnered with the library on guided painting for teens, art exhibits, and crafternoons in the Makerspace. In addition to providing volunteer support for programs, the Foundation provided funding support to the library in the amount of an outright gift of $30,000 in addition to special projects, grants, and scholarships throughout the year.

The goal of the Foundation is to raise, award, and steward funds for the future needs of the library. For example, the Foundation paid for the last two library renovations through wise investments and stewardship of past gifts and fundraising activities. More information about Annual Sponsorships can be found on our website: https://giplf.org/become-a-sponsor/

To make a donation, please visit: https://giplf.org/online-donation-form/ or stop by the library. Donations can also be mailed to: Grand Island Public Library Foundation, P.O. Box 1364, Grand Island, NE 68802.

We extend our heartfelt gratitude to all our donors, sponsors, volunteers, board members and community partners for their unwavering support. Your generosity has been instrumental in driving our mission forward and empowering us to help create a thriving and inclusive library environment for all.

Sincerely,

Leigh Lillibridge
Executive Director

SPECIAL THANKS TO THE FOLLOWING 2025 ANNUAL SPONSORS & GRANTORS

GRANT FUNDING:
Bud & Gloria Wolbach Foundation
Edgar & Frances Reynolds Foundation, Inc.
Fred & Amanda Glade Foundation, Inc.
Kaufmann-Cummings Foundation

STAFF DIRECTORY

ADMINISTRATION

Celine Swan, Library Director
Nancy Broich, Library Secretary

LIBRARIANS

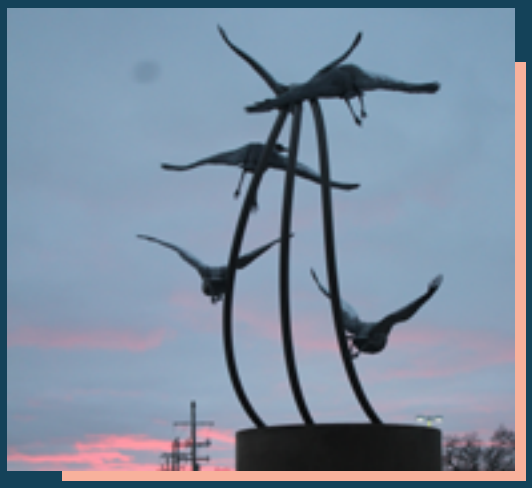
Laura Fentress, Youth and Family Services
Shaun Klee, Reference and Collection Services
Erica Rogers, Technology and Teen Services

LIBRARY ASSISTANT II

Susie Cartwright
Lori Medlin
Jeanne Simons
Elle Supencheck

LIBRARY ASSISTANT I

Jackie Tran
Darlene Polk
Jodi Schultz
Brenda Halm
Penny Skalka
Robert Heagy
John Howard
Nicole Roundy
Sandy Cortez
Alessandra Valencia
Carolina Ramos
Lindsay Wassinger



MAINTENANCE

Ray Hayman
Craig Hansen

PAGES

Elliott Balcolm
Wendy Brehm
John Galbraith
Pam Morriss
Deyci Nunez
Melissa Sears

LIBRARY FOUNDATION

Leigh Lillibridge, Executive Director
Kim Mettenbrink, Volunteer Coordinator
Ed Meedel
Dan Hill
Pat Bell
Ines Gonzalez
Dawn Hill
Abby Kile

LIBRARY BOARD

Sara White, President
Barbara Beck, Vice President
Daryl Kelley, Secretary
Holly Anderson
Catherine Brockmeier
Benjamin McCarty
Anna Stehlik
Jack Sheard, City Council Liaison