

Burlington Public Library



Annual Report

FY2026, July 2025 - June 2026

The library is an open door to realms of possibility & imagination. The library gives us wings.



From the Board President & Director

Board President, Jennifer McMillan

As we approach the 20th anniversary of the new Court Street building, it is apparent that even though things have changed over the years, the relationship between this library and the community it serves has not. Every number you see in this report, from door count, programming, circulation, etc. represents an individual in our community who has been impacted by our library.

The BPL staff has dreamed big and used every resource at their disposal to bring us amazing opportunities to create, learn, and imagine in Fiscal Year 2026. From new virtual resources, to outstanding programming, and the launch of the bookmobile, the library staff continues to listen to the needs of the community and respond accordingly.

It takes multiple individuals and funding sources to make this happen. Staff, trustees, Friends and Foundation members all work hard to ensure BPL is successful in its mission. Even though the future remains uncertain, the commitment of this community to its library ensures BPL will continue to play a vital role in it for years to come.

Library Director, Brittany Jacobs

What an incredible year Fiscal Year 2026 was! We hit the ground running in July 2025 by unlocking another 50 trees to plant in our award-winning parks through the Read to Grow summer reading program, which set the tone for an excellent year.

FY26 marked an important step towards our long-term sustainability as this was the first year that the city paid for a capital improvement (new boilers) for the library since moving to this location 20 years ago. With dedicated public funds for the library's operating and CIP line, we can go forth confidently knowing that public resources will be allocated to the maintenance and investment for this fabulous community resource.

With 121,506 library visitors, the small but mighty BPL staff helped them to the tune of 1 staff for every 4,673 patrons (or 1 full time staff for every 13,500 visitors). The BPL staff are the lifeblood of this organization, and I am so proud of the work that they do day in and day out to serve the ever changing needs of our community.

Thank you for joining us this past year, and for supporting the library by being an active library user.



Jennifer McMillan

Library Board President, FY26-Present



Brittany Jacobs

Library Director

Jennifer McMillan
President

Becky Godfrey
Vice President

Mary Weinand
Advocacy Committee Chair

Roger Hatteberg

Brandon Orth
Advocacy Committee

Amanda Mansheim
Advocacy Committee

Todd Chelf

Burlington Public Library

Board of Trustees FY26



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2030



Becky Godfrey, Vice Chair
2026



Mary Weinand
2029



Roger Hatteberg
2028



Brandon Orth
2029



Amanda Mansheim
2027



Todd Chelf
2031



Board of Trustees

In accordance with Iowa Code 392 and the Burlington, Iowa Code of Ordinances Chapter 21, the Burlington Public Library Board of Trustees is the governing and policy-setting body of the Burlington Public Library.

The Board of Trustees is composed of seven volunteer residents of Burlington, Iowa who are appointed by the Mayor and approved by the City Council. Trustees adhere to a professional Code of Ethics, serve six-year terms, and meet on the 3rd Wednesday of each month at 4:30pm, unless otherwise stated. All Board meetings are open to the public.

Board Committee: Advocacy

The Advocacy Committee works for the betterment of library services in the community by advocating for funding, communicating with stakeholders and community organizations, and promoting library services to community members. In FY26 the Advocacy Committee held two open meetings to discuss proposed legislation during the 91st General Assembly as well as making visits to the State Capitol for subcommittee hearings and a meeting with the State Librarian.

Iowa led the nation in proposed anti-library legislation this year, giving the Advocacy Committee much to discuss with the public as the legislative session unfolded.



MISSION

The Burlington Public Library creates opportunities for all people to connect with others, to learn about the world around them, and to imagine the futures before them.

HISTORY

Much like other cities in the 1800's Burlington's first library was private, requiring shareholder fees for membership and access rights. Philip Crapo together with the Knights of Labor launched a campaign to put a vote to the people for a 'free' (tax based) public library. After much public debate, a vote was held on May 18, 1885 with the public approving the referendum, creating the first free public library West of the Mississippi.

With a generous gift of \$20,000, Philip M. Crapo was instrumental in establishing the first major library collection and building, located at 501 N 4th St. Philip Crapo served as the first President of the Library Board of Trustees, and Clara M. Smith was the first librarian.

Elizabeth Lily served as the first Children's Librarian, not only of the Burlington Public Library, but the first West of the Mississippi. During her tenure she began the work of securing the library's first bookmobile, and over 80 years later, in FY26, BPL got Ms. Lily's dream project across the finish line. The bookmobile was designed by Joseph Burgus, and has been named Ms. Lily in Elizabeth's honor.

In 2006, after over 100 years in the N 4th location, the library moved down the hill to 210 Court St. The Burlington Public Library has been serving the greater Burlington area for 141 years.



Philip M. Crapo



VALUES



COMMUNITY

We value the community and as a municipal public library we ensure free access to our space, events, resources, and services so that everyday democracy, collective enrichment, and engagement of the community as a whole can take place.

LEARNING

We value literacy, life-long learning, and ensuring that the library is a springboard for curiosity for learners of all ages.



INNOVATION

We value innovation as libraries must remain flexible and adaptable in order to meet the community's needs in a fast-changing world.



SERVICE

We value high quality customer service and teamwork, ensuring kind, equitable, and appropriate service to all patrons, volunteers, and employees alike.



LIBRARY SERVICES

As part of our November 2025 All Staff Day, the Burlington Public Library team went through training and certification with Dementia Friendly Iowa. This training enables the BPL staff to better serve and be on the lookout to support patrons experiencing cognitive loss and the associated symptoms. One of the biggest services we provide to the public is a competent, compassionate, and creative staff, always on the lookout for how to best show up and serve our community.



Continuing with the Space Needs Assessment work that started in FY23, we opened our newest service point with the Welcome Desk and book return. These high service points are now at the very front of the library offering an immediate point of service for all library visitors. A permanent Tech Help Desk is also located at the front area, offering help with tech during all hours of operation.



In preparation for the upcoming Americans and the Holocaust touring exhibit, work was also done this year to begin prioritizing space for patrons to gather. A multi-year inventory project that looked at all 130,000 items on our shelves allowed for the collection to be condensed and several shelves taken down, creating more room for community gathering spaces.

This year we entered a contract with Iowa Primary Care to host a Behavioral Health System Navigator in the library. On Tuesdays and Thursdays Shelly Strawhacker provides assistance to patrons needing help with a variety of things from housing to help navigating systems such as SNAP, Medicaid, and similar social services.



Several new resources were added to the collection this year as we kept a close eye on the needs of our community, and responded accordingly. Upon hearing about the closure of Case New Holland, with 209 individuals laid off, BPL entered into a contract with Gale Presents, Udemy, a learning platform to help people upskill and re-enter the workforce. Gale Presents, General OneFile was also added to the collection as a premier research database offering solid information to counter the streams of mis- and dis-information on the internet.



LIBRARY STATISTICS

LIBRARY BUILDING

Building Size: 55,000 sq. feet
Weeks Open: 52
Hours Open Weekly: 60
Meeting Room Use: 4,639

LIBRARY VISITORS

Door Count: 121,506
New Library Cards: 1,154
Total Registered Users:
21,009

LIBRARY STAFF

Paid Staff: 26
Full Time: 9
Part Time: 9
Part-Part-Time: 8

LIBRARY PROGRAMS

Children & Teen Programs: 330
Children & Teen Participants:
10,903
Adult & All Ages Programs: 268
Adult & All Ages Participants:
7,254
Total Programs: 598
Total Participants: 18,157

LIBRARY COLLECTIONS

Items Added: 11,059
Items Removed: 8,175
Items Donated: 847
Circulation: 272,519
ILLs Sent: 1,144
ILLs Received: 735

DIGITAL LIBRARY:

Wifi & Computer Use: 44,920
Successful Retrieval of E-
Information: 156,207
Website Visits: 64,789



LIBRARY FUNDING

Funding for the Burlington Public Library is made up of five sources:

General Fund (City of Burlington Property Taxes: \$1,485,227
Intergovernmental Fees: \$173,997
Friends of the Burlington Public Library: \$13,510
Friends of the Burlington Public Library Foundation: \$102,964
State Library of Iowa: \$16,677
Total FY26 Budget: \$1,792,375

STRATEGIC PLAN UPDATE

Voted on by the Library Board of Trustees on January 17, 2024 the Burlington Public Library Strategic Plan serves as an action plan that will guide the work towards upholding our mission and value statements. This plan runs from 2024 through 2028, and was developed with community data and feedback.

Below are the specific gains in objections and projects throughout FY26:



Efficiency

To create efficiencies for community members, library staff, and partnering entities ensuring positive interactions with the library and ease of use of library resources.

Objective 1: Staff Efficiencies - All programming forms are now live and are being used by BPL staff and external partners for program proposals, reporting, and reviews. This streamlines our programming data and helps us to ensure that all programs uphold the mission and values of the Burlington Public Library.

Objective 2: Patron Efficiencies - New wayfinding signs were incorporated throughout the facility including on endcaps, above shelving, and even on the floor with our new 'Returns' rug.

The website and OPAC (online public access catalog) were updated for ease of use, garnering 64,789 hits in FY26.



Sustainability

Plans and work to ensure the long term success of the Burlington Public Library as a beacon for our community.

Objective 1: Building - A partnership with the Clean Energy Districts of Iowa, Michael's Energy, and Alliant was established to perform a retrocommission on the library's geothermal system. Data collection and prep began in FY26, and the study will take place in FY27.

Objective 2: Staff - The Burlington Public Library entered into a contract with Iowa Primary Care to host a Behavioral Health Systems Navigator at the library two days a week to offer mental health and social service support, providing support that goes beyond the capacity of the BPL staff.

STRATEGIC PLAN UPDATE



Human-Centeredness

Implementing a human-centered approach to all decisions and functions of the Burlington Public Library to champion a sense of belonging and community for all.

Objective 1: Customer Service - For the second year in a row we have offered three staff development days for the BPL staff, Trustees, Friends and Foundation Board.

August 2025: FY25 Recap, FY26 Overview, and Strategic Plan Update

November 2025: Tour Heart Song and complete Dementia Friendly Iowa Training

April 2026: Intellectual Freedom Training with Amanda Sand and the State Library of Iowa

Objective 2: Gathering Spaces - The Space Needs Assessment response continues with further efforts to create gathering spaces for patrons as well as a more user friendly library experience. The new book return, Welcome Desk, and Tech Help Desk were all launched this year to better serve our community.

A mobile TV and stand was purchased to further enhance the Genealogy Room as a meeting space for area groups, lectures, and library programs. Some events included a Zoom call with Dr. Green of NASA, hosted by the Southeast Iowa Astronomy Club, the Des Moines County Genealogical Society meetings, and the BPL Genealogy Workshop and Lock-in.



Access

Promoting and maintaining equitable access to information, resources, events, and outreach.

Objective 1: ADA - Work to comply with Federal ADA requirements on our website began this year and will continue through Spring of 2027.

Additional Playaways and Wonderbooks were added to the collection to enhance the library experience for those with visual impairments.

Objective 2: Information - The Bookmobile rolled out on its first route and outreach this spring, bringing the 80-year old project across the finish line!

NEW TO OUR LINE-UP

Digital Resources

In February, the Burlington Public Library began offering free access to Gale Presents: Udemy, Get SetUp and General OneFile! Under the umbrella of Gale, these three databases provide incredible access to a wide variety of classes, research resources, and digital connection.

Gale Presents: Udemy

Udemy provides access to thousands of on-demand video courses for career development spanning across 75 categories.

Gale Presents: GetSetUp

GetSetUp provides live and on-demand classes for adults 55+ to build confidence, spark curiosity, and connect with others.

Gale Presents: OneFile

OneFile is a research database with a collection including over 300 titles ranging from credible articles to magazines, newspapers, and scholarly journals.

Physical Collection

- Toniboxes
- The Daily Iowan Newspaper
- Playaways & Wonderbooks

Library Building

The library got a glow-up this year with the TICOS group completing the teen mural, new chairs throughout the building, plants to add a cozy feel, and more gathering spaces for the community to mingle and linger together.

Programming

In partnership with the Des Moines County Master Gardeners and the Leopold Landscape Alliance, BPL was able to bring in NYT Bestselling Author, Douglas Tallamy!

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| • Mahjong Meet Ups | • Adult Craft Hour | • Silent Book Club |
| • Accessibility Coloring Hour | • Pokemon Club | • Girls Who Code |
| • Bright Ideas | • Beginner Bridge | • Master Gardener Winter Seminar |

