

Executive Director's Report JANUARY 2025

Snowed Inn Winter Reading Challenge 2025

The Snowed Inn Winter Reading Challenge kicked off on January 13, inviting patrons to enjoy winter reading with a CLUE-style theme. Participants can stop by the Readers Services Desk to pick up a reading log featuring mystery characters, book and genre suggestions, and fun activities. As they read, they earn raffle tickets for a chance to win a \$25 gift card to local restaurants. We hope everyone has SNOW much fun reading this winter!

To ensure inclusivity, the Adaptive Winter Reading Program offers flexible options for teens and adults who may find it challenging to meet the standard program's requirements. This version provides customizable choices so everyone can participate at their own pace.

For those who love a challenge, Get a Clue Interactive Mystery is a self-guided detective experience for teens and adults. Participants explore the main floor of the library, investigating nine suspects, a stolen book, and hidden clues to solve the mystery of who committed the crime, what weapon was used, and where the book is hidden



Introducing the Book Match Service

As part of the Winter Reading Challenge, the Readers Services Department is launching Book Match, a new personalized Readers' Advisory service. Patrons can fill out a form attached to the Snowed Inn Reading Log, and a Readers Services staff member will follow up with tailored fiction recommendations via email.

This service offers another way for patrons to engage with our Readers Services team and benefit from their expertise. Looking ahead, we plan to integrate Book Match into the new library website for even greater accessibility.

Origami Paper Craft Drop-In

On January 17, the Readers Services Department hosted its first-ever Origami Paper Craft Drop-In, where participants created origami-inspired designs. Many were new to origami and enjoyed making everything from bookmarks to traditional Japanese cranes.

The event was a success, with attendees eager to return for the next session on Valentine’s Day, where they’ll create heart-themed paper art projects—perfect for gifts or keepsakes.



Enhanced Signage & Displays in Youth Library

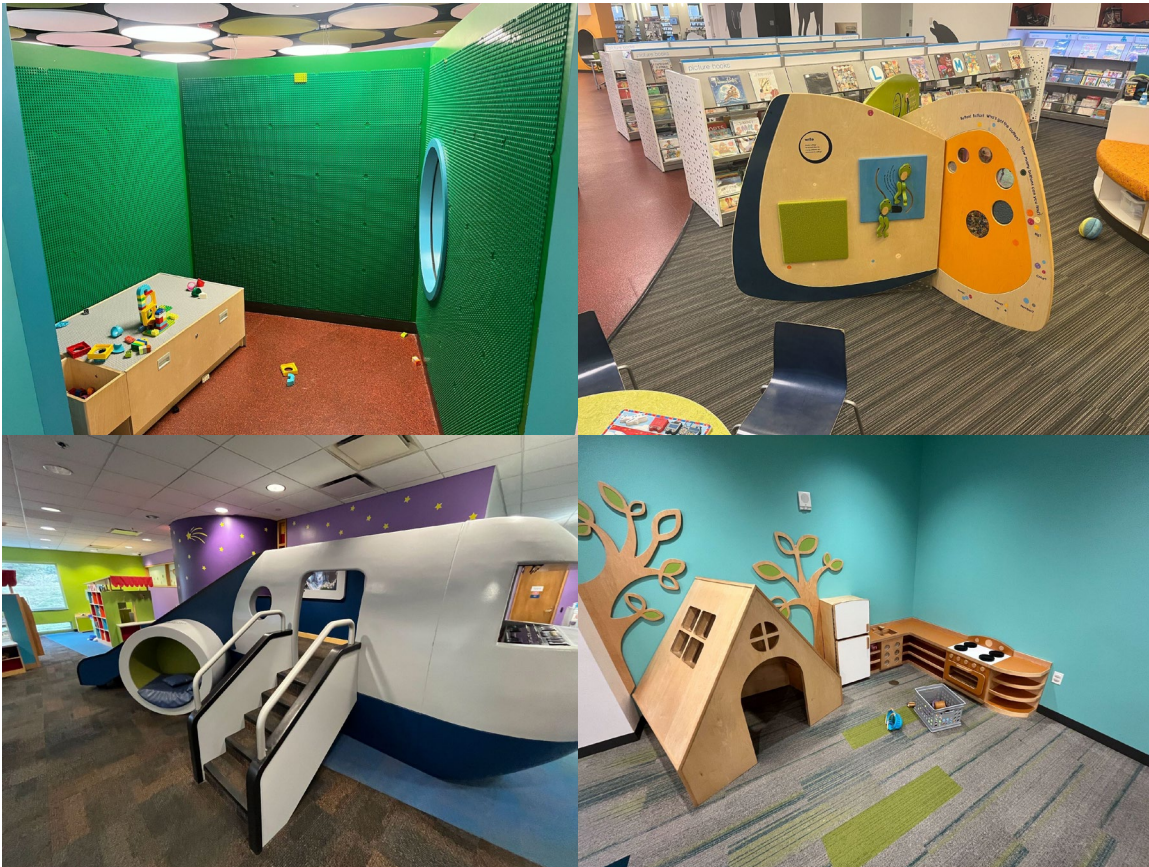
To improve visibility and engagement in our Youth Services area, Special Services designed a vibrant display for the Youth Library of Things, making the collection more accessible to children. Additionally, a playful “Imagination Zone” sign was added to highlight our growing play space. As we continue weeding and removing shelving in the eastern lower level, this expanded area will feature more interactive play elements. This initiative aligns with Strategy 3.5 of our 2025-2027 Strategic Plan: “Update and diversify wayfinding signage and other interior visuals.”



Tour of Area Libraries for Youth Space Enhancements

On February 3, Executive Director Jack Bower and Youth Services Director Lucia Khipple toured three area libraries with noteworthy children’s areas: Barrington Area Library, Wauconda Area Public Library, and Lake Villa District Library. Each featured impressive play spaces, and their staff provided valuable insights on which play structures were most and least effective.

This visit was part of our ongoing effort to explore ways to further enhance the Youth Services area with enriching, interactive play features. Seeing these elements in person allowed Jack and Lucia to evaluate their practicality and impact. Among the highlights were two indoor slides, a rocket ship, LEGO walls, LEGO walls, Lite-Brite installations, and other STEM-related play structures.



Roku Streaming Service Updates

In January, the library completed a significant transition in how we circulate Roku streaming devices. Previously, all streaming services were subscribed on each Roku. However, after careful planning by IT Director Mike M and Reference Director Jennifer C, we have moved to a categorized model where individual Rokus now feature select streaming services:

- Blue Roku: Prime, Apple TV, HBO Max
- Green Roku: Paramount+, Peacock
- Orange Roku: Netflix, Discovery+
- Yellow Roku: Disney+, Hulu, MHz

Additionally, we introduced seven “Lucky” Rokus, which contain all streaming services but are available only on a first-come, first-served basis and cannot be reserved.

This change is not only a more cost-effective solution, but it also streamlines billing by reducing the number of subscriptions assigned to each device. Previously, every Roku carried eight or more streaming services, whereas now, each device features only two or three. This approach ensures patrons have access to a wide variety of content while significantly lowering the cost per circulation and improving financial management.

Before initiating this project, the library had 11 Roku devices in circulation. With this expansion, we now have 24 Rokus, including all categories, with four more (Kids and Spanish) coming soon. The demand remains high, with nearly all Rokus regularly on hold.

Library Website Update Progress

We have been making steady progress on the new Rolling Meadows Library website (rmlib.org). Due to workload demands and some staff illness causing minor delays, we have adjusted our timeline, now aiming to launch the full site by the end of March.

However, we remain on track to introduce the new program registration platform when spring program registration opens on February 25. At the same time, we will also roll out the new study room booking software. This phased approach will allow staff to familiarize themselves with these two new systems before the full website goes live.

We are very excited about the improved functionality and look forward to sharing the updated site with our community soon!

Improving Patron Suggestion Box Visibility

In alignment with Strategy 4.5 of our 2025-2027 Strategic Plan—“Adopt continual feedback mechanisms to gather input from community members on an ongoing basis”—Special Services and Building Services installed a more visible suggestion box outside the Friends’ Book Sale Room after receiving feedback that the previous box blended in too much. Additionally, the feedback form was updated to make it more user-friendly and effective in capturing patron input.

These forms provide patrons with a direct way to share input with the Library Director. We will continue exploring additional methods to ensure community voices are heard.



Maximizing Investment Returns with IMET

Now that IMET has proven to be a reliable investment vehicle with higher interest rates, we have been working to ensure as much of the library’s funds as possible are stored there while maintaining sufficient liquidity for operational needs. The current interest rate is 4.25%, and in February, we moved an additional \$708,000 into the IMET account. If rates hold steady, this investment alone will generate an additional \$31,860 in interest for the library this year.

Our current cash management strategy is to maintain at least \$50,000 in savings, \$375,000 in checking, and invest the remaining funds in IMET to maximize returns. We will continue to monitor liquidity needs and interest rate trends, making further adjustments gradually as appropriate. This latest transfer brings our total IMET investment to approximately \$4,260,000.



2024 Audit Initiated

On January 15, Paul V. Inserra, CPA, of ATA Group, visited the library to begin the 2024 audit, collecting necessary documents and reviewing financial records now that the new year is underway. He has been working closely with Financial Services Coordinator Julie T. and has conducted interviews with administrative staff to review financial practices.

The audit is typically completed by June, with Paul Inserra presenting the final report at that month’s board meeting.

Potential Rolling Meadows 457 Plan Consolidation

In February, the City of Rolling Meadows initiated a project to consolidate its 457 retirement savings providers and seek competitive bids to ensure the best selection and costs for employees. Currently, the city/library offers two separate plans—one through MissionSquare and one through Nationwide—with employee investments split between them. The goal is to merge these into a single plan after evaluating bids to secure the most favorable rates and terms.

Given his experience with these types of accounts, Executive Director Jack Bower has offered to assist the city in vetting the proposals and analyzing the best plan options before a final provider is selected.

2025 Benchmarking Update

In 2023, the library launched a benchmarking project to ensure that employee compensation aligns with current market rates. This initiative aims to enhance retention, recruitment and recognition of staff contributions. We partnered with experts from HR Source, who provided valuable insights and objectivity throughout the process.

Initial Assessment and Findings

A key metric in our assessment is the compa-ratio, which compares an employee's salary to the median compensation for similar positions within our market. At the conclusion of the 2023 assessment, we found that our average compa-ratio was **92.3%**, with 17 positions falling below the recommended threshold of 80%.

Prior to the previous director's departure, adjustments were made for these positions—bringing 17 staff members up to the recommended minimum of 80%. This proactive step raised the average compa-ratio to 95.2%. At the beginning of 2024, a 5% across-the-board pay raise further increased the average compa-ratio to 95.5%.

Ideally, we aim for the average to be around 100%, indicating that compensation meets market standards. However, our average was slightly elevated because some employees were also paid above their recommended pay ranges. We also identified inconsistencies in how pay increases were applied in the past, which the benchmarking project seeks to address.

August 2024 Adjustments

In August 2024, we implemented the first significant adjustments based on our benchmarking findings. Our approach was a formula that used two criteria to ensure objectivity and fairness:

1. **Position Within Pay Range:** We assessed where each employee fell within their designated pay range.
2. **Tenure:** We considered the length of time each employee had been in their current position.

By relying exclusively on these two factors, we maintained an unbiased approach. These targeted adjustments primarily benefited employees at the lower end of their pay ranges, especially those with longer tenure. As a result, the average compa-ratio increased to 98.1%. It's important to note that these mid-year adjustments complemented the earlier 5% pay raise.

January 2025 Adjustments

Continuing our commitment to competitive compensation, in January 2025, we conducted further benchmarking adjustments alongside another across-the-board pay raise for all staff. This included:

- **3% Increase:** Applied universally to all employees.
- **Targeted Increases:** Based on employees' positions within their pay ranges and their tenure.

Additionally, HR Source recommended that we adjust the pay ranges by 2.5% to account for annual cost-of-living increases. Because these adjustments were applied to every employee, they were more modest than the targeted increases implemented in August 2024. For employees already above their pay ranges, we provided bonuses rather than base pay increases. This is designed to gradually align their compensation within the appropriate range in a fair and thoughtful manner.

2025 Benchmarking Comparison

	2023 Baseline	2023 Initial Adjustments	2024 Annual Increase (5%)	Mid-2024 Adjustments	2025 Annual Increase (3%) + Adjustments
Compa-Ratio					
<80%	14	3	2	0	0
80%-85%	7	16	22	10	8
85%-90%	8	9	5	5	3
90%-95%	3	3	5	12	14
95%-100%	2	2	2	9	7
Midpoint					
100%-105%	4	5	3	6	9
105%-110%	1	1	6	4	4
110%-115%	3	3	4	5	4
115%-120%	4	4	3	3	5
>120%	4	4	4	3	3
Total Staff	50	50	56	57	57
Under Midpoint	29	28	29	15	11
~At Midpoint	10	11	16	31	34
Over Midpoint	11	11	11	11	12
Avg Compa-Ratio	92.3%	95.2%	95.5%	98.1%	99.9%

Current Status and Future Recommendations

Following the January 2025 adjustments, our average pay rate has risen to **99.9%** of the midpoint—bringing us very close to our target of 100%. While it is natural to have employees at both the lower and higher ends of their pay ranges, maintaining an average near the midpoint supports a balanced and equitable salary structure.

We remain dedicated to regularly reviewing and updating our compensation practices to reflect market standards and to recognize the valuable contributions of our staff. This ongoing commitment to competitive pay not only supports our goals of retaining talented employees and attracting new talent but also reinforces our investment in the long-term success of the library.

Overall, since mid-2023 staff have experienced a **7.6% increase** on average in their pay scales—adjusted for cost of living and inflation—an encouraging sign of progress and our commitment to continuous improvement.

Department Highlights

Reference Services

- Notary services continue to be well-received by the community. Full-time Reference Librarian Anne J. has completed notary training, expanding availability alongside Notary Nicole B.
- Three high school volunteers are assisting with the upcoming Seed Library as part of our efforts to expand volunteer opportunities. This aligns with Strategy 1.4 of the 2025-2027 Strategic Plan “Provide more volunteer opportunities inside and outside the library, including engagement pathways that do not require English language fluency.”
- The Collection Committee finalized the Library of Things collection development procedure to guide the growth and management of this popular collection.

Special Services

- Designed the Snowed Inn Winter Reading Challenge game boards.
- Completed the Spring 2025 newsletter, scheduled to arrive in mailboxes the last week of February.
- Finalizing Spring event designs and planning for upcoming events, including:
 - Volunteer Luncheon
 - Summer Reading 2025: Slow Down & Read
 - Summer Reading Kick-off
 - September 2025 Anniversary Event
- Installed a new art exhibit featuring artist Bob Cobb on the upper level.
- Historian Ashley S. has begun interviewing the executor of Joyce Mackert’s estate for Joyce’s induction into the RML Legacy Project.

Technology

- Replaced SonicWall firewall with a newer model, improving network uptime and building-wide Wi-Fi access.
- Reference Meeting Rooms are fully operational following soundproofing upgrades, with Meeting Room #1 receiving a new TV.
- Print stations in the Reference Area were upgraded with larger touch-screen monitors for improved usability.

Circulation

Please refer to the Circulation Monthly Statistical Report for the latest data.