







SIOUX CITY PUBLIC LIBRARY





Annual Report

2025-2026











Kids wait in line to check out books during a Summer Reading event.

Board of Trustees

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Contents

2 *Overview Letter*
3 *SCPL by the Numbers*
4 *Youth Summer Reading*
6 *Youth Services*
8 *Reader Services*
9 *Adult Summer Reading*
10 *NEW for FY26*
12 *Hours & Locations*

Dear Library Patrons, Friends, and Supporters,

This year has been one of notable growth, innovation, and community engagement for the Sioux City Public Library, and we are proud to share the milestones the Library has reached and the impact we have made on our community.

FY26 was a record-breaking year for the Library, with exceptional growth across event attendance, total visitors, meeting and study room use, website traffic, online engagement, and Summer Reading Program participation. Physical visits reached their highest point in nearly a decade, while Library event attendance and use of community spaces soared to an all-time high.

While the Library innovates annually, this year's efforts centered on researching and introducing new resources specifically tailored to Sioux City residents. Although launching new initiatives presents challenges, strategic groundwork ensured that the community responded to new programs, events, and collections launched in FY26 with enthusiasm. *(Details on page 10)*

The Library also strengthened and increased its partnerships with local organizations, schools, and businesses, fostering a collaborative spirit that benefits the entire community. Our dedicated staff, volunteers, Foundation, Board of Trustees, and the Friends organization have worked tirelessly to ensure equitable access to high-standard resources and services for all of Sioux City.

The Library and its staff are proud to serve Sioux City. Alongside our local partners, we strive to make our community a vibrant destination to live, learn, and grow. Thank you for your continued support of the resources that enrich the lives of everyone in our community.



Sara Leiss
Acting Director

The Sioux City Public Library welcomes all people and provides equitable access to all resources and services.
- Adopted by the Board of Trustees, January 2023



Sioux City Public Library
by the Numbers
2025-2026

310,923 Total Visits

Library Visits Increased **+29%** in FY26

Aalfs Downtown: **233,474** ***(+45%)***
Morningside Branch: **54,705** (-5%)
Perry Creek Branch: **22,744** (+6%)

320,869 Total Items Checked Out*

879 items per day!

458 Hotspot Checkouts

Funding for hotspots is provided by the Library Foundation.

2,727 New Library Cards Issued

25,405 Active Library Cards (+5%)

17% of Sioux City residents have active Library cards based on 14,906 active resident/property owner cards.

61% of checkouts are physical materials

- 195,002 physical material checkouts* in FY26
- Picture Book checkouts are up **+10.5**
- 125,357 eResource checkouts* *(43% of checkouts are Audiobooks - checkouts often limited due to holds.)*

146,579
Total Number of Physical Items & Recordings
7,324 Physical Items Added
9,155 Items Withdrawn or Damaged

19,364 ***(+18%)***
People Attended a Library Event

610 Programs/Events

32,011 Database Sessions (-8%)

19,081 Computer Lab Logins (+3%)

150,065 Wifi Logins (-18%)

98,656 Website Visitors ***(+25%)***

+124k Engaged Video Views
(+3 second views or longer on Facebook & YouTube)

7,270 Facebook Followers ***(+13%)***

In FY26 Library patrons saved
over $2.5 million

The Library tracks dollar amounts patrons save by borrowing vs. buying **physical materials only**. *This does NOT include eResources, databases, or use of Library computers, equipment, and spaces.*

7,127.5 Hours of Service at **3 Locations**

2,269.25 Volunteer Hours

1,936 ***(+19%)*** Meeting Room Bookings

5,933 Meeting Room Attendees*

*Indicates a less than 1% change from FY25.

BUDGET SUMMARY
Operating Budget (not audited)

$3,803,954	**City Adjusted Budget amount**
	Expenditures
$2,980,998	Personnel
$253,386	Materials
$569,570	Building/Operations/Equipment
	Revenue
$53,649	Fines/Fees Collected
	Gifts & Grants Received
$100,333.49	Library Foundation Endowment
$6,198.51	Gleeson Book Fund Distribution
$40,203.16	Friends of the Sioux City Public Library
$18,620.92	State of Iowa Funds
$15,000.00	MRHD Holiday Gift
$10,000.00	Carnegie Decendants Gift
$3,691.12	Other



A Recordbreaking Summer!

Families attend the Summer Reading Celebration and take part in crafts, reading activities, and sign up for Summer Reading!

5,385
(+48%)
Summer Reading Event Participants

119
Summer Reading Events

The Sioux City Public Library's Youth Services department went above and beyond to ensure kids of all ages enjoyed Summer Reading in 2026. **1,749 children and teens participated in the Summer Reading Program at the Library. Participants logged 608,106 minutes of reading** this summer *(that's equivalent to 422 days of reading,)* an **increase of 12% from the 2025** Summer Reading season!

Program attendance increased substantially with 5,385 patrons attending events, almost double the attendance from 2025!

Due to reaching registration capacity on most events, the Library had to implement a waitlist system to help meet demand. Library events without registration were also very well-attended. **Over 500 youth and adults attended the kickoff event** at the Aalfs Downtown Library. The **Pokémon-a-Thon event saw 841 Library visits** in a single day with over 200 youth visiting all three Library locations to be entered for a special prize drawing. **120 visitors attended the Library's Happy Birthday America Celebration** and enjoyed live music, crafts, and games.

608,106
(+12%)
Minutes read by Sioux City Public Library Youth Summer Reading Participants!

Kids and teens attended 119 events during Summer Reading which included Read-to-Me-Dogs, storytimes, LEGO builds, Family Yoga, Little Sprouts Jamboree, Free Movie Fridays, the Great Plains Zoomobile, Owl Programs with Dorothy Pecaut Nature Center, Teen After-Hours events, Teen Crafternoons, Illusionist Keith West, Imagination Builders, and Innovation Studio sessions.



Attendees learn about owls during a presentation by the Dorothy Pecaut Nature Center.



The Great Plains Zoo brought small animal ambassadors to the Library.

"A mom didn't tell her son why they were coming to the Library and recorded him walking up to the Youth Desk, and when he found out he won Dog Man books 8-14 his excitement was top level! He was reading all summer, putting all of his tickets earned into a chance to win these books!"
- submitted by Library Staff

1,749
(+5%)
Kids & Teens Participated in the Summer Reading Program

7,566
(+16%)
Beanstack Badges Earned



Toddlers two and under play at Little Sprouts Jamboree.



Visitors enjoy the magic of Illusionist Keith West.



A family examines an owl pellet during an event with Dorothy Pecaut Nature Center.



Teens make recycled t-shirt tote bags during a Teen Crafternoon event.



Imagination Builders attendees show off their craft creations.



Kids test their knowledge of buoyancy by building boats during an Innovation Studio event.



Innovation Studios attendees use archaeology techniques to uncover artifacts at a simulated dig.





(Above) A girl read to a therapy dog at a Read-to-Me Dogs event.
(Below) Teens snap a pic at the Teen After-Hours Mystery event.



(Above) Visitors enjoy crafts, games, and live music during the Happy 250th Birthday, America event.
(Below) Kids at the Celebration Event select a book after signing up for the Summer Reading Program.



"It's been a busy summer at the Library, but it's been a FUN summer. The Summer Reading Program and Library events have kept us focused on reading."
– Summer Reading Parent comment

(Below) Weekly storytime at Morningside Branch Library.







Read All Year!

Beyond Summer Reading

Sioux City Public Library Youth staff plan and create programs to keep kids engaged with the Library and books all year. Programs included 1st Saturday Family Storytime, Baby Storytime, StoryWalks®, weekly storytimes, Stories & Cuentos: Bilingual Storytime, Crafternoons, STEM Saturday, teen events, an Open House, musical groups, and other events. **The Library held 184 non-summer reading events with 4,011 children and 2,642 adults participating.**

13,397 Particpants Attended Library Events for Youth in FY26



Attendees beat the winter blues with STEM Saturdays! The Library uses every scrap of space at the Aalfs Downtown Library during these events as is seen in these March photos. (Above) Children age 4-8 explore coding with Bee Bots in the Teen Area. (Below) At the same time, youth ages 9-12 learn about electrical circuits with Spintronics modules in the Gleeson Room.



51,078
(+28%)
Books read to *1,000 Books Before Kindergarten* Participants

1,000 Books Before Kindergarten

Research shows that reading to your child before they enter school is the most reliable predictor of school success. The Library's *1,000 Books Before Kindergarten* program encourages parents to read to their children prior to starting school.

In FY26, **323 NEW readers were enrolled and 51,078 books were read to children.** Participants also receive level-up rewards for every 200 books that are read to them **– 232 Level-Up Moments occurred in FY26 program!**

A 1,000 Books Before Kindergarten participant celebrates having 800 books read to them!







(Above) Kids participate in a STEM Saturday session on balance. (Right) Students from The Career Academy visit the Library to select picture books for a research project.

Tours & Outreach Storytimes

Sioux City Public Library works with local schools, childcare programs, and learning centers to provide staff with supplemental resources to enhance literacy experiences for youth in their care.

During the school year, Library staff went to area preschools for 179 outreach storytimes at 36 different locations. 3,471 children and 501 adults participated in these events.

The Library also offers tours for visiting group with special programming organized by youth staff. In FY26, 19 groups consisting of **530 kids and 74 adults toured the Library.**

The Library also delivers book boxes curated by staff to local preschool classrooms and childcare centers. To support classroom learning, nine centers received deliveries from the Library every three weeks – for a total of 1,950 books and 66 storytime kits.

"This book is so funny. It was good to read. My mom said maybe I shouldn't read these books before bed anymore because I laugh so much and get so excited right before I am supposed to sleep."
– Kid Reader review of the book *Captain Underpants and the Wrath of the Wicked Wedgie Woman*

179
Outreach Storytimes in FY26

3,471
Children &

501
Adults

"Being able to go to the library and get books became the highlight of my life. It's so special to me, knowing there is a place for people to get books."
– child patron Kayden



(Above) 1st Saturday Family Storytimes are frequented by guest visitors such as The Cat in the Hat, the Easter Bunny, and others. (Below) While visiting the Downtown Library, kids can particpate in scavenger hunts and StoryWalk activities.





In partnership with the Siouxland African Association, musicians and dancers from Duniya perform at the Library.



(Above) Carolers from North Middle School put on a holiday performance at the Library. (Below) Teens enjoy a special costumed Halloween After-Hours Trivia Night.





Reader Services Librarian, Michael Maxwell, asks a tie-breaker question during Trivia Night.

Adult Programs

Year-Round Events

Kids aren't the only ones having fun with the Sioux City Public Library - adults get their share of entertainment and educational programming, too!

In FY26 the Library hosted 118 adult-focused programs with 5,286 participants.

Adult programming featured **Trivia Nights, Crime Talks, Puzzle Competitions, Library BINGO, Monday Movie Matinees, *Reference Roundtable,*** and more. The Library also partnered with the Sioux City Symphony to support the ***Violins of Hope*** **concert and traveling exhibit** and the Siouxland NAACP for the ***Coretta Scott King Concert*** for Black History month with book displays and supportive marketing.

NEW Online Programs

Readers of all ages have used the Beanstack app for the Summer Reading Program, but why stop when summer ends?

To keep patrons engaged year-round, **the Library launched three new reading challenges in FY26**: the *Book Review Challenge*, the *Read 100 Books Before You Turn 100 Challenge*, and the *Open Book Club Challenge*.

Patrons can sign up and log their reading at any time on Beanstack. **Since the launch of these programs in January, 569 people have signed up to participate.**

Sioux City Reads

Sioux City Public Library held its 4th **Sioux City Reads** season. In November, Library patrons voted to select the 2026 title. Voters chose ***The River We Remember*** **by William Kent Krueger**. During March 2026, events held included book discussions, a writing contest, video presentations, a community mural, Trivia Night, and puzzle competitions. **176 people participated in Sioux City Reads events and activities.**

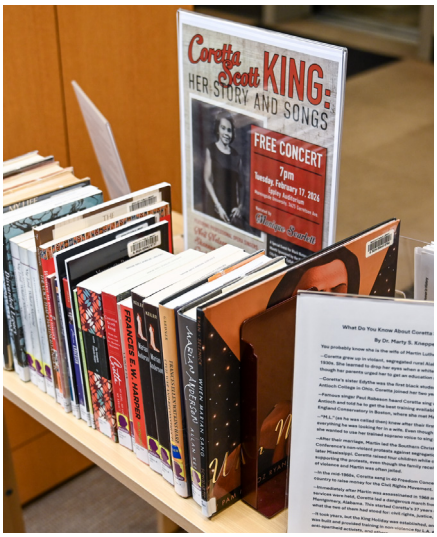
3,027
Particpants Attended Library Events for Adults in FY26

149
Adult-Focused Programs



Local History Librarian, Sarah Ricker gives a local history true crime presentation.





(Above) Library visitors were invited to add a 'memory fish' to the window mural during Sioux City Reads. 227 fish were added to the mural. (Right) A book display on Coretta Scott King in partnership with Siouxland NAACP to help promote their concert event.



Morningside Branch Manager Kelsey Patterson (left) and Circulation Manager Jenn Delperdang (right) host *The First Fifty Pages* podcast.

The Library On-Air

Sioux City Public Library Staff contribute regularly to local radio programs on Siouxland Public Media with ***Check It Out*** and ***The First Fifty Pages.*** In FY26, **31 new *Check It Out* segments** aired and new podcasts of ***The First Fifty Pages*** **featuring authors Tracy K. Smith and Ruta Sepetys** were produced.

Open Book Club

The *Open Book Club* meets each month for two in-person sessions, plus a virtual session for a total of **35 events** in FY26. These lively discussions averaged **12 participants each month.** The *Open Book Club* also participates in a special event for the *All Iowa Reads* initiative.

Home Delivery

Library volunteers provided **65 hours of delivery service,** serving **32 homebound patrons**.

Adult Summer Reading



Local History Librarian, Sarah Ricker, leads a Local History True Crime Walking Tour of Downtown Sioux City.

560
event attendees

2,596
(+22%)
badges earned

From June 1 to July 31, the Sioux City Public Library hosted its *Adult Summer Reading Program*.

119 attendees joined Library staff at Buffalo Alice for a Trivia Night kickoff to win books from the Summer Reading book list and learn more about Adult Summer Reading.
Alongside Trivia Night, participants enjoyed a packed schedule of events, from popular Local History True Crime Walking Tours and themed Monday Movie Matinees to hands-on activities like a popcorn tasting and bird habitat building. Readers also stayed engaged through bi-weekly Side Quests, Library BINGO, and a puzzle competition. **560 people attended Adult Summer Reading events.**

210 adults signed up online and earned 2,596 digital badges. Participants could earn badges by reading, visiting a Library location, downloading an eBook on Libby, or checking out different Library media. Earning badges earned digital tickets for a chance to win prizes.



(Left) Visitors build a bird habitat.
(Below) The Summer Reading Puzzle Competition at the Library was both fierce and fun for patrons.



"I really liked this book. It's not one I would have picked up outside of the summer reading program, but found that I just couldn't put it down. It gave me a different perspective on life and interesting historical context. I would definitely recommend it!"
- book review by Jacquelyn on *These Heathens* by Mia McKenzie



Patrons try our the new outdoor StoryWalk at the Morningside Branch Library.

NEW Programs!

In FY26, the Library expanded its programming with several new initiatives, including three adult reading challenges and two short-term Beanstack challenges designed specifically for youth. These seasonal challenges gave kids and teens clear reading goals and completion prizes within a set timeframe.

Hallow-Read

- October 1-31
- 217 participants registerants with 101 completing the goal
- 3,124 books read by ages 0-5
- 20,215 minutes logged by ages 6-18

Winter Break Challenge

- December 22 to January 31
- 129 registrants and 58 completers
- 2,507 books read by ages 0-5
- 21,009 minutes logged by ages 6-18

Offering positive reinforcement throughout the school year provides children and teens with valuable extra incentives to keep reading.

NEW Outdoor Storywalk

Funded by the Friends of the Sioux City Public Library, a **new outdoor StoryWalk** was installed at Peter's Park in October at the Morningside Branch Library.
The StoryWalk is another way to bring library services to the residents of Sioux City while creating a literacy rich environment in our community.

NEW Events!

Building on strong community interest, the Library successfully expanded several signature programs outdoors this year to accommodate growing audiences.

In October, the Library's popular Local History Crime Talks tried out a new approach at Graceland Cemetery for **Stories Beneath the Stone, an outdoor walking tour that drew over 300 participants** eager to uncover the criminal history behind local gravesites.

During Summer Reading, **two balmy-weather walking tours brought downtown true crime history to life for 227 attendees**.

Also new in FY26, the Library formed partnerships with Nine Square Feet, the Loess Hills Wild Ones, and Walmart to host **two Seed Swap events which were attended by over 200 garden enthusiasts**. Events offered seeds for food, plants, and flowers, alongside a variety of library literature on planting and cultivation available for checkout.



Local History Librarian, Sarah Ricker, leads a group on a true crime walking tour in downtown Sioux City.



(Above) Visitors pick out and leave seed packets during a Library seed swap.
(Below) Sarah Ricker interviews with KTIV about the Graceland Cemetery Walk.

300+ people attended the Library's first True Crime Cemetery Walk in October at Graceland.







ILA conference attendees listen to a presentation.

The Library Hosts the Iowa Library Association Conference

The state conference of the Iowa Library Association was held the first week of October in Sioux City. **Librarians from all over the state came to Sioux City, which had not been the host site for more than 20 years.** The event welcomed more than 200 librarians and library staff.

NEW Collections & Tech!

These collections and infrastructure were new at the Library this year:

Library of Things

- Promotes sustainability by allowing residents to borrow specialty household items
- Tools, games, hobby equipment, health monitoring devices, and more

Iowa Adventure Pass

- Online pass
- Checks out with your Library card
- Admission to Iowa attractions such as museums, heritage centers, and zoos

Replacement of Outdated Tech

- Self-check devices at all locations
- Microfilm machines
- Quest children's educational computer

Games available for checkout at the Library.



8,632
Social Media Followers + Subscribers

124k
Engaged Video Views



Online Engagement

The Sioux City Public Library maintains a very active social media presence to help spread the word about our resources and events. This year the Library stepped up content creation and **produced almost 100 short-form videos resulting in 124,518 video views** three seconds or longer on Facebook and YouTube. Video content is in addition to marketing, photo, and event posts featured on the Library's social networks. **A solid growth rate benchmark for followers on Facebook for local entities is 2% per year, but in FY26 the Library's Facebook followers grew by +13%.**



A photo of Library recieving the City's Proclaimation during National Library Week was one of the most liked on Facebook.

Community comments from Facebook:

Kathy
The Library is a safe haven for many. A place to find peace and quiet. A place to let your imagination take you away from stress. A place to have fun. Kids as well as adults need them. It's a place you can afford to go, unlike everywhere else where you need to pay. Books are important if you want an educated society.

Jim
Over the years I have used the library's reference division to assist in finding local history countless times. Always friendly, knowledgeable, and willing to help.

Kalie
LOVE our Library! So thankful for such great programs and resources!

Jo Ann
I love the Sioux City Library and all of its librarians!

SIOUX CITY
PUBLIC LIBRARY

Aalfs Downtown Library

529 Pierce Street · Sioux City, IA 51101
712-255-2933
Monday - Wednesday.....9 am - 8 pm
Thursday - Saturday.....9 am - 5 pm
Sunday (Sept - May).....1 pm - 5 pm
Sunday (June - Aug).....Closed

Morningside Branch Library

4005 Morningside Avenue · Sioux City, IA 51106
712-255-2924
Monday - Wednesday.....10 am - 6 pm
Thursday - Friday.....10 am - 5 pm
Saturday.....9 am - 5 pm

Perry Creek Branch Library

2912 Hamilton Blvd. #101 · Sioux City, IA 51104
712-255-2926
Monday - Friday.....10:30 am - 5:30 pm

SiouxCityLibrary.org

Access Library catalog & databases.
Download eBooks & eAudiobooks.
Stream movies & music.
Request titles & renew checked out items.
Sign up for newsletters.

"Libraries are one of the few truly free public spaces left. They provide access to the internet, job resources, tutoring, literacy programs, and safe places for kids and families. For many people, especially those without reliable internet or stable housing, the library is a lifeline."
– comment from Hannah

"The Library got me back into reading after I graduated high school. I wasn't super interested, but in college I came here to do a project and checked out a book and it turned out to be one of my favorite reads."
– comment from Anna

"I love the variety of books you have. With our busy schedules it is great to be able to put books on hold and stop by to get them. My girls love partcipating in the summer reading program every year, even my teenagers still love to participate! It is a great motivator to keep them reading."
– comment from Angie

""I like the Library because there are so many books to pick out. I love the Summer Reading Program!"
– comment from Jaxson (age 9)