

Executive Director's Report July 2024

Techno Tigers Robotics Team Event

On July 20, the library hosted the Techno Tigers, a Rolling Meadows High School-based robotics team. Over the past three years, the team has donated over 1,200 books to the Rolling Meadows Library and is running another book drive this summer. Dedicated to teaching STEM and community involvement, the Techno Tigers demonstrated their robots during the Book Sale, utilizing space near the building entrance. They were very happy with the number of attendees they interacted with. The event, coordinated by Readers Services Director Mary Constance Back and her department, was a collaborative success.



Maximizing Returns on Library Reserves

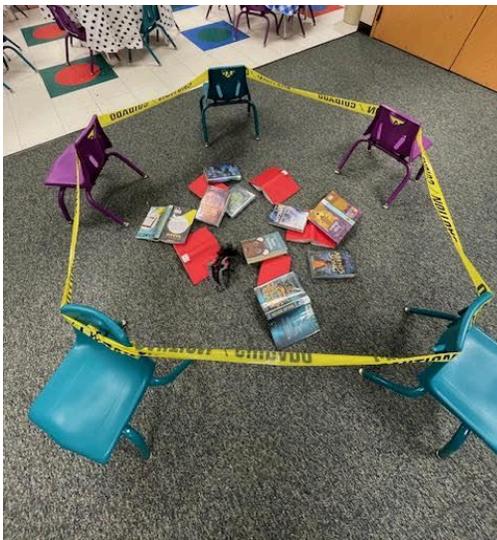
In the last few years, interest has increased from previous nominal rates. President Threadgill inquired about the rates on the library's reserves. We are currently earning 1.6% on the funds in our Chase Bank Savings account and Executive Director Jack Bower recognized that we should be able to do better given the current environment.

Jack reached out to Molly Talkington, the Finance Director for the City of Rolling Meadows, to explore options for higher-yield investments. She suggested transferring funds into the Illinois Metropolitan Investment Funds' (IMET) Convenience Fund Money Market account, which currently offers an interest rate of approximately 5.1%. Molly assured us that we could safely invest \$2 million without facing any shortfalls. Given that a money market account is a conservative and liquid investment, this move seems prudent.

By making this change, the library is effectively tripling our interest rate (in the current environment), which is a fantastic improvement for our financial health.

Highlight: Youth Services Programs

Summer programming continues in high gear with a variety of engaging activities. New additions like No Bake Baking and Who Did It? are capturing the interest of our young patrons. These join our ongoing summer favorites: Duo Language Fiesta, Explore Art Neon Style, Crafting Club, Book Discussions, and Drop-in Crafts.



Strategic Planning

Following the Board's acceptance of the Library Strategies' proposal last month, we have commenced our strategic planning process. We provided comprehensive background documents to the consultants to ensure they have a thorough understanding of our library's current standing.

Jack also recruited a Steering Committee for this project. The committee includes library staff such as him, Assistant Director Lucia Khipple, Mary Constance Back, Reference Services Director Jennifer Collette, and Community Relations Manager Laura Garcia . Representing the Library Board are Jean Threadgill, Steve Rossi, and Sylvia Vange (the Planning Committee). Our community partners include Rob Sabo (City Manager, City of Rolling Meadows), Natalia Nieves (Director of Human Services, City of Rolling Meadows), Nick Troy (Executive Director, Rolling

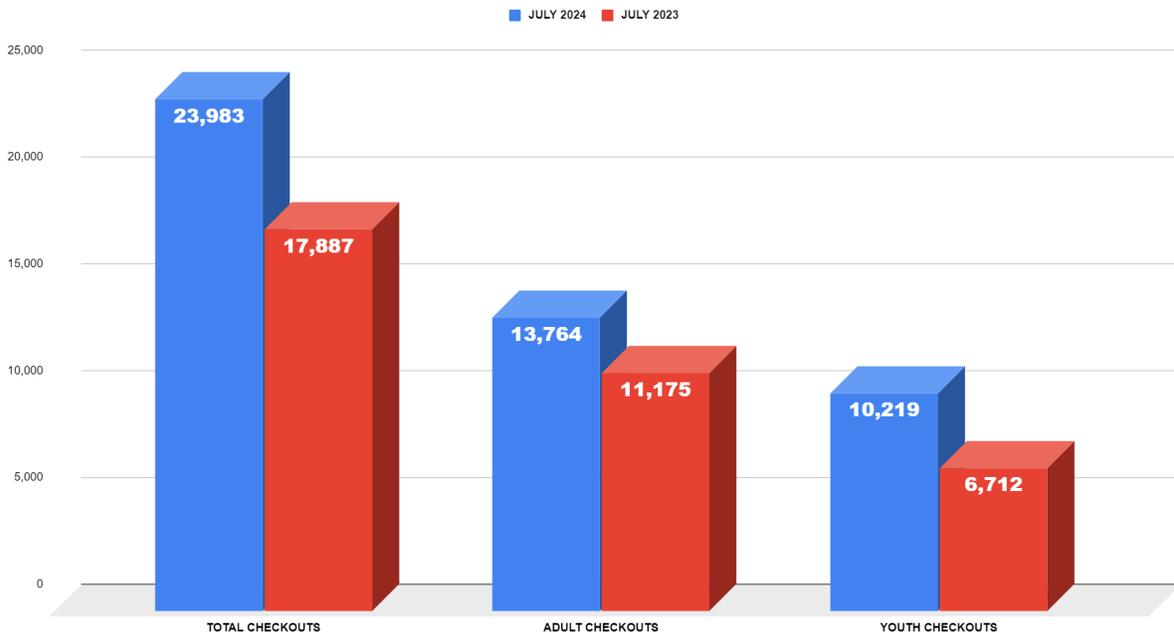
Meadows Park District), Steven Gaus (Business Development Director, Rolling Meadows Chamber of Commerce), Kristin Franke (Library Innovation Teacher, Kimball Hill Elementary School), and Katie Shaw (Head Librarian, Rolling Meadows High School).

The Steering Committee will convene four times during this project to provide input, feedback, and to help promote the planning process. They will also review the strategic plan before it is presented to the library board in early 2025.

More information will be shared as we progress, but we have already scheduled SOAR (Strengths, Opportunities, Aspirations, and Results) sessions for our staff on September 20, and for the Board later that evening at 6:30 PM. These sessions, facilitated by our consultants, will be valuable opportunities to gather input from our key stakeholders.

Circulation Stats

Our circulation stats continue to improve significantly. In July, we recorded 23,983 checkouts, representing a 34.1% increase compared to the same month last year. This upward trend reflects our ongoing efforts to engage our community and enhance our collection.



Catalog Rollout

On Wednesday, July 24, we successfully rolled out Vega, our updated catalog system for patrons. Vega offers several advantages: it provides better support and reliability as our previous Classic Catalog (Innovative's Webpac) is no longer supported; it enhances user experience with a modern, intuitive interface and superior account features; it integrates seamlessly with our upcoming new website, offering a cohesive experience; and it improves visuals, particularly for collections like the Library of Things.

IT has updated all appropriate links from our old catalog, though the Classic Catalog link is still available at the bottom of every Vega catalog page for those who prefer it. Our goal is to ensure a smooth transition, and we are committed to continuously evaluating and improving Vega based on feedback from staff and patrons.

Benchmarking Project Update

In July, Jack resumed the library's benchmarking project initiated in 2023.

In 2023, we recognized the need to reassess our pay structure and partnered with HR Source for a Market Benchmarking & Compensation Structure Development project. This project involved analyzing job descriptions, classifying positions into distinct pay grades, and establishing appropriate pay ranges.

Each pay grade has a midpoint, with a pay range extending from 80% to 120% of this midpoint. Employees are expected to progress toward the midpoint as they gain experience. Our analysis identified some employees as underpaid. To address this, we are implementing market adjustment increases for those affected, which was budgeted for.

Jack developed an objective methodology based on an employee's tenure in their position and current pay within their position's range. Our goal is to have these adjustments applied in August.

New Employee Self-Service (ESS) Payroll System Transition

The admin office is working with the city to fully integrate the library into the City's Employee Self-Service (ESS) payroll system.

The city transitioned to ESS earlier this year but held off on fully integrating the library. Staff have been minimally impacted but the admin office finds payroll more cumbersome without an electronic system. Our current process is paper-based and error-prone, requiring extensive verification. Before the city's transition, admin payroll processing took about 15 man hours every two-week pay period. Since the city's transition, that has increased to 21 hours. We expect that once we transition, we will not have to do manual math or decipher handwriting, cutting our workload by an estimated half and freeing up admin time for other important projects.

We are targeting October for transitioning to the ESS electronic payroll system. The new pay period will be Sunday to Saturday, aligning with the city's schedule, and will be more conventional compared to our current Thursday to Wednesday pay period.

Administrative Associate Karen L. has designed a new timesheet to prepare everyone for the new system. While the initial adjustment will require more work, the electronic system will ultimately make payroll processes more convenient for everyone. This transition should be smooth since staff already use the system to view paystubs, though not for active timekeeping.

The new system will reduce errors, increase efficiency, and offer greater convenience by allowing staff to log hours directly. Aligning with the city's schedule will also create a more standardized and less confusing pay period.

Formation of the Emergency Planning Committee

On July 1 and July 18, the newly formed Emergency Planning Committee convened to collaborate across departments and create a comprehensive “Library Operations Manual.” This manual will be a living document, reflecting the committee's goals, which include:

1. Standardize Operations: Develop clear procedures for addressing common issues and emergencies, enabling quick and effective resolution.
2. Role Clarity: Define staff roles and responsibilities to ensure transparency and understanding.
3. Resource Availability: Identify locations of necessary items for resolving issues promptly (emergency contacts, keys, etc.).
4. Safety and Emergency Preparedness: Outline steps to handle emergencies such as medical incidents, fires, or natural disasters, ensuring the safety of patrons and staff.
5. Emergency Supplies: Ensure the library is equipped with essential emergency supplies.
6. Uniform Training and Support: Organize training sessions and drills for staff to practice emergency procedures.
7. Review and Update: Regularly review and update the manual based on feedback and best practices.
8. Strengthen Communication Channels: Establish internal and external communication channels for timely information dissemination during emergencies.

Mary Constance formed and leads the committee.

Release of Final Bequest Funds Update

Ameriprise is the holder of the IRA Joyce Mackert generously willed to the library. Throughout the year, our library attorney and staff have been in correspondence with Ameriprise to secure the release of these funds. In July, Jack worked diligently to expedite the final release, coordinating with our attorney Roger Ritzman and Ameriprise customer service to ensure all paperwork was properly completed.

Working with Ameriprise has been challenging due to their preference for mail communication, lack of clarity, and repeated requests for additional information that could have been addressed initially. Despite these frustrations, we are now close to having the funds released.

In the Community

July Outreach

Summer outreach efforts are thriving. We are bringing books and activities to Acorn Academy, RMNRC (Rolling Meadows Neighborhood Resource Center), and Park District camps. These initiatives help us extend our educational and recreational resources to a broader audience, ensuring children throughout the community can enjoy and benefit from our library's offerings.

North Suburban Public Library Directors Meeting

Jack has recently begun attending the North Suburban Public Library Directors Networking Group meetings. These gatherings provide him with the opportunity to connect with neighboring library directors, compare notes on library developments, exchange information, and learn about ongoing policy changes and trends in the library field. Additionally, the meetings are hosted by different directors at their respective libraries, giving Jack the chance to visit various libraries and explore potential partnership opportunities. So far, he has visited the Des Plaines and Park Ridge Public Libraries.

Department Highlights

Youth Services

- Youth Services welcomed back Margie B. as a Youth Associate after her retirement during the pandemic. Margie brings a wealth of experience and a deep connection to our community. As a bilingual professional, she knows many of our families from her time teaching at Conyers Learning Academy. Margie's return strengthens our team and enhances our ability to serve our diverse patronage effectively.
- Our Summer Reading Challenge continues to be one of the best in years, with 864 kids currently signed up and 120 kids having completed the challenge, earning their Summer t-shirts so far. With four weeks remaining, there's still plenty of time for more participants to join in the fun and achieve their reading goals. We look forward to seeing even more young readers engaging with our program and enjoying the rewards of their hard work.

Readers Services

- Last month, the Readers Services Ready Reference collection was thoroughly updated to attract patrons to the desk while subtly illustrating the kinds of questions we can assist with. Additionally, educational trivia card games have been added to the Music and Movie reference collections. These games are for in-house use, aiming to enhance the patron experience and promote the library as a destination spot while drawing attention to our music and movie collection displays. If there is interest, we will purchase copies for the circulating games collection as well.
- On July 15, we hosted two 1-hour Extreme Sour Challenge sessions for teens ages 11-16. Teens met in the Teen area and put their taste buds to the test with sour candy. There were

20 participants in total: 15 at 3 p.m. and 5 at 6:00 p.m. This was the first program of its kind for RML teens!

Reference Services

- It has been a busy month at the Reference Desk as we continue to enjoy the Summer of 2024 at the Library! Public Computers and the Small Group Meeting Rooms have been very busy.
- Reference Librarian Nana H. created a “color your own bookmark” activity for the remainder of the Summer. It has been popular with patrons and will continue through August.
- EBSCO’s Learn With Novelist Classroom has been purchased for staff. This continuing education resource gives staff members access to more than 20 courses totaling 45 hours of self-paced learning via their computer. Courses focus on Readers Advisory and other best practices in serving all library patrons.

Special Services

- The Fall 2024 newsletter was submitted to the printer on July 30 and is scheduled to be in mailboxes by mid-August.
- In anticipation of re-carpeting displacing our office, we are trying to work ahead of September's needs including:
 - Fall 2024 promotional material
 - Display cases
 - Fall StoryWalk
 - Library card sign-up month raffle and display

Technology

- This month we rebuilt and updated all 3 youth iPads and added iPads that will allow for staff-patron training and assistance. An iPad was added to the Reference area and the Readers area.
- We have begun preparing for the lower-level re-carpeting and planning for the moving of technology equipment and temporary offices.
- Current Technologies will be continuing with the last phase of the door lock project. The next set of doors to be upgraded will be the Receiving exterior door, Tech Services Office, Youth Program Room, Special Services Office, and lower-level restrooms.
- We have also been doing some Department Director and Admin training/situation troubleshooting as a back-up for the IT department.

Circulation

- We participated in Ravinia’s Words and Music program again this year. Patrons who checked out 6 CDs received 2 free lawn passes to a classical concert of their choice. All of the patrons who received passes were very grateful!
- We’ve received a lot of positive feedback regarding automatic renewals. Patrons love it!