



# Annual Report

2025 Fiscal Year

07.01.2024 - 06.30.2025

Kansas City  
Public Library

explore  
learn  
discover  
find  
inspire  
create  
connect  
access  
empower



# Letter from Pete Brown

## President, Board of Trustees



As I reflect on the Kansas City Public Library's last year, I'm filled with immense pride at all we have achieved together and have deep gratitude for the critical role that our patrons and community partners played in making it possible. This was a year of both celebration and forward vision, as we closed our momentous 150th anniversary celebration and commenced charting a course for the Library's future through the launch of our strategic and facilities planning efforts now underway.

We marked the close of our sesquicentennial in unforgettable fashion. In September, we welcomed literary icon Margaret Atwood ahead of Free to Read Week for a powerful reminder of why libraries matter, offering readers the freedom to explore ideas and inviting us to see the world through many perspectives.

Our momentum carried into fall with the Heartland Book Festival, a multigenerational, statewide celebration of literature and the arts that brought thousands together for workshops, performances, and conversations. With nearly two dozen presentations and hands-on activities, the festival sparked creativity, inspired new learning, and reinforced the Library's role as a welcoming cultural center for all. We capped the year with a community celebration honoring 150 years of connection, learning, and shared stories.

This spring, we hosted the Big Read, a city-wide read-a-thon, centered on Rebekah Taussig's *Sitting Pretty: The View from My Ordinary, Resilient, Disabled Body*. A lifelong Kansas Citian, Taussig guided our community through conversations about disability and accessibility. Programming ranged from storytime for children featuring her new book *We Are the Scrappy Ones*, to keynote conversations and book groups that reached hundreds and invited us to imagine an inclusive world through shared storytelling.

Alongside these milestone events, hundreds of programs across all 10 Library locations and partner sites reached thousands, offering support with resumes, job searches, and career planning. Our digital inclusion efforts helped patrons build confidence using computers, smartphones, and essential online tools for work, school, and daily life. From family storytimes to writing workshops, wellness events, and pop-up book groups, the Library brought people together across the city to learn, connect, and grow.

In a time when technology and culture hold individuals in isolation, the Library stood as a pillar of connection. As we welcomed all, fostered civil dialogue, and offered access to trusted information, our spaces reminded people that they are seen, heard, and valued as part of a thriving Kansas City community.

While challenges around censorship, accessibility, and digital equity remain, our collective journey continues to prove libraries are critical civic infrastructure that open doors for learning and discovery, amplify marginalized voices, and knit communities together in meaningful ways.

The accomplishments of the past year were possible because of you – our supporters, staff, and volunteers – who believe in the transformative power of libraries. Your support ensures the Library remains a beacon of hope, inclusion, and connection for all.

Together, we're helping Kansas City prosper and thrive – story by story, conversation by conversation, community by community.

With gratitude and optimism,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Pete Browne', with a stylized flourish underneath.

**Pete Browne**  
President, Board of Trustees

## Board of Trustees 2024 - 2025

**Pete Browne**  
President

**Claudia Oñate Greim**  
Vice-President

**Laura Dominik**  
Secretary/Treasurer

**Jonathan Kemper**

**Susan Kenney**

**Michelle Smirnova**

**India Williams**

**Elizabeth Warwick**

**Reid Day**



Central Library

# Letter from Abby Yellman

## Library Director



Dear Friends and Supporters,

This year, I had the privilege of joining and leading the Kansas City Public Library team while seeing firsthand the everyday impact we have on the lives of our patrons and, by extension, our Kansas City community.

I'm continually reminded that public service is at the heart of everything we do at the Library. It is deeply fulfilling to be part of a trusted institution that has served Kansas City for more than 150 years by meeting the real, everyday needs of our community. This year, we provided thousands of free notary appointments from housing documents to school forms. We supported our immigrant and refugee neighbors through English-language classes, citizenship preparation, and technology support sessions that empower our newest community members to navigate and contribute fully to our city with confidence and dignity.

Early literacy remains at the heart of our mission. Nearly 1 million books were checked out this year, many by children just beginning their reading journeys. Our Books to Go program delivered nearly 85,000 books to early childhood centers for ease of access to materials, and children's librarians led hundreds of storytimes and enrichment activities to inspire young minds.

Our community specialists expand access to information, improving lives and helping patrons build essential skills in digital literacy, personal finance, business and entrepreneurship, health and wellness, and civic engagement. Working individually with patrons in our branches and across the community,

this team provides specialized support from small business coaching and workforce training to assistance with public benefits, legal support, health access, and civic participation while offering trusted guidance and meaningful connections along the way.

This year, we also took an important step in preserving our city's story: the Library will become the permanent home for *The Kansas City CALL*'s photograph archive of more than 70,000 images and related research files, ensuring this vital record of Black life and history in Kansas City, spanning more than a century, remains preserved, accessible, and free to the community.

The common thread across our Kansas City Public Library and services is a steadfast commitment to meet people where they are. Our Library welcomed over 1.3 million visitors this year, offering free internet access, job search support, cultural programming, and a community space that belongs to everyone.

These subtle, yet essential acts of service may go unnoticed, but together they reveal the true essence of what a library is to its community: a transformational place of learning, empowerment, and belonging.

Thank you for believing in our work, and for helping the Kansas City Public Library shape a stronger, more connected Kansas City — 1 visitor, 1 book, 1 program or service at a time.

With immense gratitude,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Abby Yellman". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending from the end.

**Abby Yellman**  
Chief Executive, Kansas City Public Library



# Checkouts

Both digital material checkouts and visits to locations saw impressive growth. From eBooks and audiobooks to music, videos, and podcasts, our expansive collection continues to reflect the diverse interests of our community and offers something for everyone. It's all part of the Library's ongoing commitment to offer free tools, stories, and experiences that grow alongside the people we serve.

890,956 Books borrowed

1,648,683 eBooks, audiobooks, music, videos, & podcasts borrowed



143,359 Current Library cardholders

+46,980 New Library cardholders



# 1,334,112

In-person  
Library visits


# Digital

In 2025, the Library expanded its digital reach. Through new programs and with continued support from our talented tech teams, more patrons were able to get online — staying connected, pursuing jobs, advancing education, and finding the information that mattered to them most.



# 4,185,295

## Online visits to Digital Branch and KCLibrary.org

160,330	Free, on-site Wi-Fi sessions	
865	Hotspots borrowed	
752	Laptops borrowed	



# Outreach

The Library's Mobile Services and Community Outreach teams continued sharing the joy of learning with communities across Kansas City. From nursing homes to early childhood centers, and programs for immigrant and refugee families, the Library remains committed to delivering resources, information, and opportunity to all.



5,825	Free books donated through Takeaway Books
8,919	Books distributed through Lobby Stops and bag swaps
178	People utilizing Library By Mail
>84,070	Books and library materials delivered through Books to Go

110,449

Number of items Mobile Services delivered, circulated, and gave out



Bookmobile



# Interviews

## Practice

## Financial

## Literacy

## English Ba

## Citizenshi



Kansas City  
Public Library  
RISE Refugee & Immigrant  
Services & Empowerment



Naturalization Ceremony

2,965	Documents notarized for free at the Library
6,440	People served through Refugee & Immigrant Services & Empowerment (RISE)
459	Classes offered through Refugee & Immigrant Services & Empowerment (RISE)



# Signature Events

In 2025, the Library hosted a vibrant lineup of Signature Events that brought the community together with authors and thought leaders to spark conversation and inspire civic participation. We're proud to be a trusted gathering place for dialogue, ideas, and shared understanding.



Margaret Atwood

80  
Signature Events  
& author visits



Heartland Book Festival

13,234   Live attendees

24,339   Online views



# Missouri Valley Special Collections

Missouri Valley Special Collections continued to make public materials accessible to all by documenting the history of Kansas City. 2025 marked the 20-year anniversary of the department's Missouri Valley Sundays speaker series — including programming on the history of the Crossroads Arts District, the discriminatory practice of redlining, and the role of French women in the founding of Kansas City.



604 Individual requests for historical images

297 Research students hosted

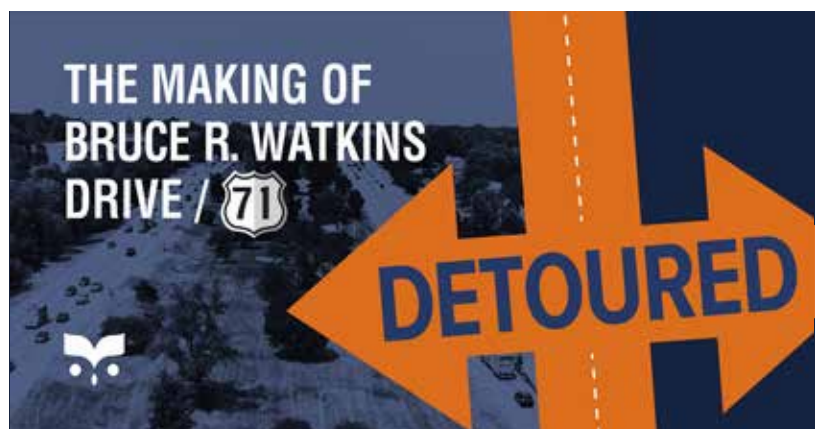


Dr. Kevin Fox Gotham event

Special Collections staff curated a new Central Library exhibition titled *Detoured: The Making of Bruce R. Watkins Drive*, which documents the first 50 years of the roadway and its impact on Kansas City's East Side community. Missouri Valley Special Collections also received the 2024 George Ehrlich Award from Historic Kansas City Foundation for its articles spotlighting historic buildings and landmarks as part of the *What's Your KCQ?* partnership with *The Kansas City Star*.

941

Sunday speaker series attendees





# Big Read

The 2025 Big Read featured Rebekah Taussig, Kansas City-based author of *Sitting Pretty: The View from My Ordinary, Resilient, Disabled Body* and *We Are the Scrappy Ones*. The Library hosted talks with Taussig along with writing workshops, book group discussions, and sponsored activities for all ages to better understand disability advocacy and its importance in the community.

**+1,600**  
Participants



This year's Big Read was sponsored by the National Endowment for the Arts Big Read, the City of Kansas City, Missouri Neighborhood Tourist Development Fund, the Estelle S. and Robert A. Long Ellis Foundation, and Health Forward Foundation.

**33**  
Public Programs

- Author Event
- Writing Workshops
- 800+ Free Books
- ASL Interpreters at Signature Events
- Art Exhibition
- Shelf Life Storytelling Event
- Crip Camp Movie Screenings
- Book Groups



# SUMMER READING

## Color Our World



Summer Reading keeps readers of all ages engaged. Through “Pop In at the Park” events, the Library brings books and activities directly into Kansas City parks and neighborhoods, making it easier for Kansas City residents to stay connected, mitigate summer learning loss, and discover new stories.

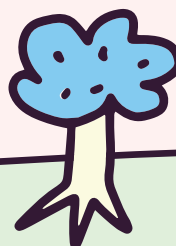


30,468

Books read

29

Parks visited through Pop In at the Park



# 15,148

## Registered Summer Reading Program participants



# Youth & Family Engagement

We're proud to offer programs that spark learning and build connections for youth and families in our community. This past year, young readers enjoyed hands-on activities and lively storytime experiences that nurture curiosity and inspire a lifelong love of reading.

## 62,822

### Youth Program Participants



## 9,762

### Meals distributed through Kids Café



## 25,668

### Phone calls to Library's Dial-A-Story program

# Financials

## Revenues

\$32,441,856	Property taxes
\$1,575,822	State & federal grants
\$2,249,701	Investment income
\$594,044	Contributions
\$526,912	Charges for services
\$87,557	Other
<b>\$37,475,892</b>	<b>Total Revenues</b>

## Expenditures

\$19,147,954	Salaries & fringe
\$3,206,335	Library materials
\$5,762,653	General operating
\$3,250,860	Building operations
\$650,541	Capital outlay
<b>\$32,018,343</b>	<b>Total Expenditures</b>

kclibrary.org

One Kansas City Public Library, many locations

Central

Digital

Luicle H. Bluford

Mobile Outreach

North-East

Irene H. Ruiz

Plaza

Southeast

Sugar Creek

Trails West

Waldo

Westport