



ANNUAL
REPORT

2024



Photo by Gray Media Services

Letter from the Director and Board Chair

Every year is exciting at the Great Falls Public Library. Passing the Public Library Levy in 2023 has made this past year even more special for the library's staff and board. We want to express our deep gratitude to our community for their support of the Library.

Great Falls is a remarkable place that understands that a thriving library is critical for a well-connected community and voted to pass the levy even under tough economic times. We are proud that we delivered on our promises in less than a year.

- We've improved access by making Library parking free.
- We provide more educational programming and digital resources, including eBooks, language resources, and free online classes for job seekers and local business owners.
- The Library is now open seven days a week, and the Bookmobile provides service six days a week.
- We restarted our homebound service for seniors, veterans, and people with disabilities.
- We are providing more educational programming for children and families, including adding more story and toddler time events and expanding early literacy programs.

This annual report will outline our budget, service utilization, and other important data. It will show how impactful the levy has been in expanding and improving our services. But what is even more important than numbers is what they mean. They mean laughing children as they discover new books, smiles on faces as community members find a new job, and even relief as seniors get help with technology.

Even something as simple as free parking has made a noticeable difference, with one patron saying, "I love that the library has free parking now!"

We sincerely appreciate your support of us both with your tax dollars and with your participation in our many programs and services. We are excited about the future of the Great Falls Public Library.

Sincerely,



Susie McIntyre
LIBRARY DIRECTOR



Whitney Olson
BOARD OF TRUSTEES CHAIR



Great Falls Public Library Board of Directors

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Jessica Crist

Sam DeForest

Noelle Johnson

Shannon Wilson - City Commissioner,
Ex-Officio

Rae Grulkowski - County Commissioner,
Ex-Officio

Susie McIntyre - Library Director

Thanks to the Great Falls Public Library Foundation.

The Great Falls Public Library Foundation is an incredible partner and essential funding source in our work to bring a vibrant library to our community. Equally important is their public support of us and our mission. Because of the Foundation and their donors, we are a better library and community, and they have our deepest thanks.

Board of Trustees

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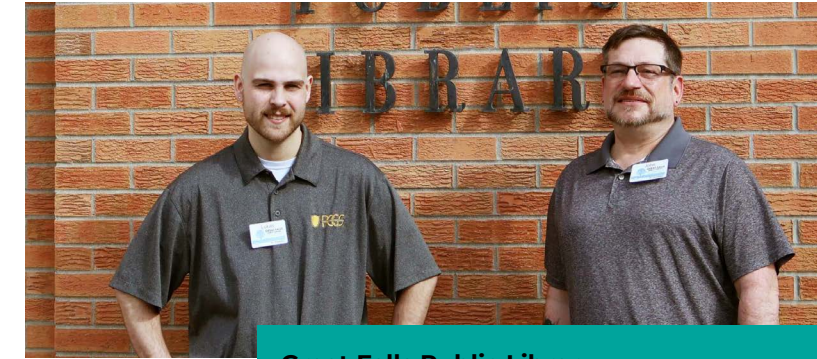
Jean Faure - Attorney ex-officio

Brianne Laurin - Executive Director

New and Improved Services

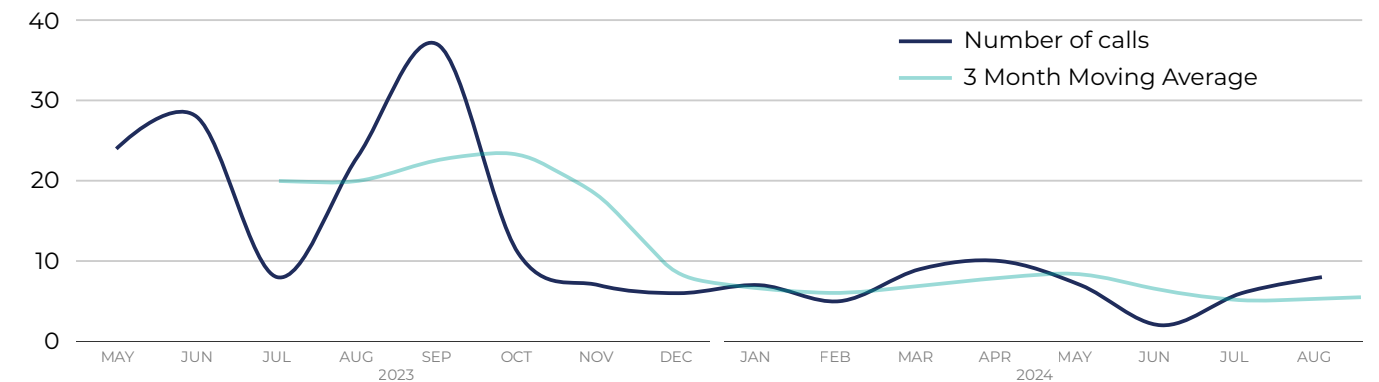
Improved Safety

In April 2024, the Library hired two full-time Safety Specialists who monitor the building, park, and surrounding area, interact with patrons, and support staff in handling behavior issues. The Library Board also updated the Patron Behavior Policies, and all staff received additional training. Before the levy, the Library was one of the top ten callers to the city for support. Our efforts resulting from the levy have drastically reduced public safety calls.



Great Falls Public Library
Safety Specialists

NEW SAFETY SPECIALISTS DRAMATICALLY REDUCE CALLS TO 911 DISPATCH



Expanded Bookmobile Service

The Bookmobile is a mobile library serving assisted living homes, daycares, schools, colonies, and other areas in Cascade County. We are now on the road six days a week. In FY24, the Bookmobile made over 900 stops at 30 different locations serving 7,796 patrons.

From our Bookmobile Coordinator:

"This morning, I took the bookmobile to a new location. The director was super excited about the bookmobile and didn't even realize it was a service our library offered! She told me I was her hero today. That made me feel pretty good, and the first I've heard of that on the job. The bookmobile is meeting new faces and making memories for our youth and community!"



Bookmobile Homebound Service Restarts

Restarted Homebound

Each Saturday, the Bookmobile travels to the homes of people who cannot physically visit the Library. We had to stop the program during COVID. Once the levy passed, we trained a new Bookmobile driver and are already helping 12 people.

Expanded Programming

Our **Winter Speaker Series** focused on Montana's storytellers, bringing Lailani Upham, Alyssa Roggow, Chris La Tray, and John Clayton to the Library. The series had 145 participants and ended with a two-hour workshop on storytelling with Marc Moss.

We are bridging the digital divide with hotspots for checkout, public access computers, printers, and WiFi. In FY2024, trained reference staff provided individualized computer assistance over 5700 times. In just two months of **Thursday Open Tech Sessions**, we provided in-depth tutorials for 15 people with their phones and computers.

We started the **Bookworms United** challenge to read 50 books in 50 weeks and added **three new monthly book clubs**: The Very Arbitrary Book Club, the Silent Book Club, and the City of Great Falls Employee Book Club.

Increased funding has allowed for **increased youth services programming** and resources, including Dungeons and Dragons Campaigns, Lego STEM Challenges, Chess Club, Talk Like a Pirate Day, Thelma and Kelp's Unicorn Party, adventure crafts, holiday celebrations, and loot boxes.



Free Parking and Expanded Hours

In addition to free parking, the library is now open seven days a week and has a pickup window every day from 9 am - 6 pm.

	Before the levy	Starting June '24
S	CLOSED	1P - 6P +5
M	12P - 6P	9A - 6P +3
T	10A - 8P	9A - 8P +1
W	10A - 8P	9A - 6P -1
T	10A - 8P	9A - 8P +1
F	10A - 6P	9A - 6P +1
S	10A - 6P	9A - 6P +1

EXTRA HOURS EXTRA SERVICE

+12.8%

In FY2023, there were **242,213** patron checkouts vs. FY2024 when there were **273,385**

Since expanding hours from 52 to 63 in June 2024, the Library has served

**1862
PATRONS**

Summer reading was a huge success

109 teens received a Library Loot Box with individually selected books and small prizes. When teens completed two books, they earned a chance to win a Nintendo Switch. This program was made possible by a Keep Kids Reading grant from the Town Pump Charitable Foundation.

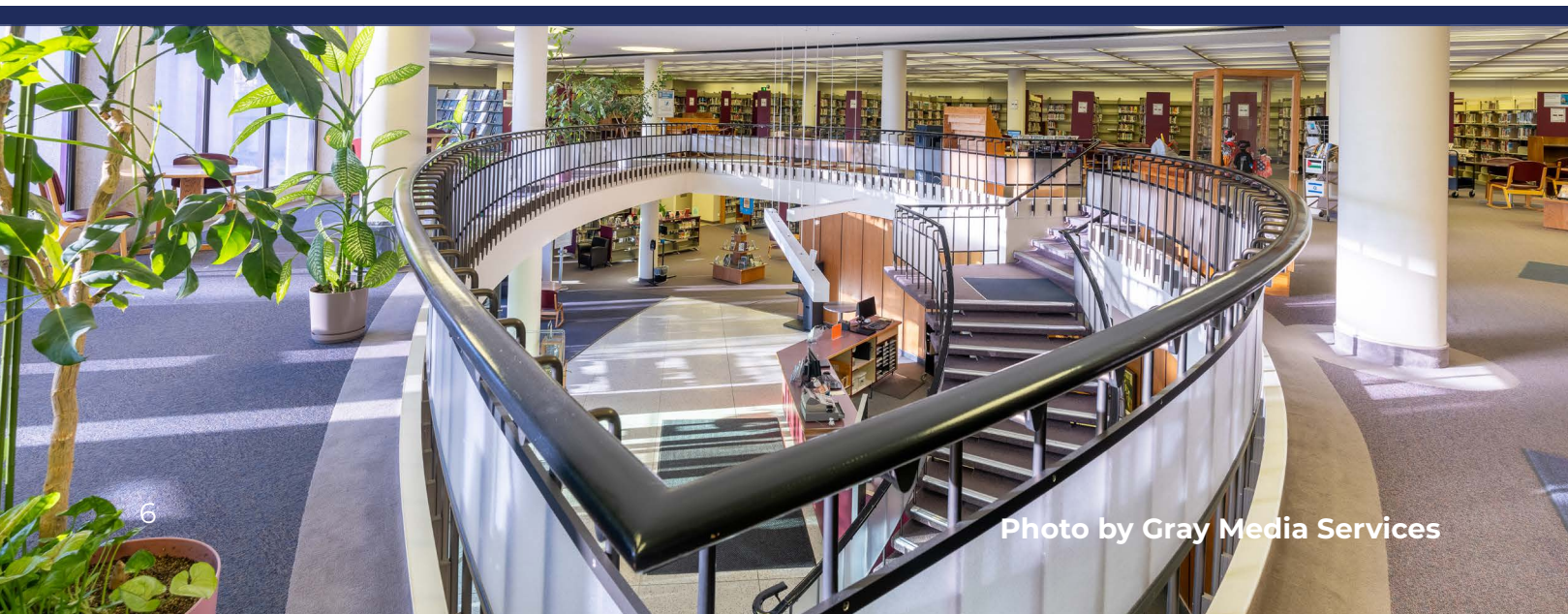


Photo by Gray Media Services

Expanded digital resources

Many of our digital resources are made possible with the support of the GFPL Foundation.

MontanaLibrary2Go and the Libby App

We doubled monthly investments in eBooks and eAudiobooks. Patrons had 45,217 digital checkouts from Jan. to June 2024—a 16% increase from the first six months of the fiscal year.

LinkedIn Learning

We offer FREE access to LinkedIn Learning, which provides online classes for job seekers, students, and local business owners. Library patrons watched 858 learning videos in FY2024.

Mango Languages

Patrons now have FREE access to Mango Languages, an online language learning tool that includes American Sign Language. Library patrons had 8,553 language learning sessions in FY2024.

Online News

In 2024, we purchased tablets to allow patrons to access digital editions of Montana and national newspapers.

More Early Literacy Started Fall 2024

Before the passage of the Library levy, we provided three weekly early literacy programs. In September 2024, we expanded our offerings to five early literacy programs each week:

- **Bookworms Storytime:** This new program for preschoolers and emerging readers features more challenging songs, movement, and longer stories to build attention span and vocabulary. The wider age range and timeslot are intended to help homeschool families.
- **Preschool Storytime:** This is one of our longest-running early literacy programs, helping preschoolers build early literacy skills with songs, movement, and a great story.
- **Books & Babies:** Babies and their families come together for this fun, snuggly early literacy program. Babies enjoy lap bounce songs and quick, engaging stories followed by playtime.
- **Toddler Time:** Our most popular early literacy program now meets twice a week. Toddlers and their families build early literacy skills with songs, movement, lap bounces, and a story, followed by playtime.

Program Highlights

We thank the GFPL Foundation, SCHEELS, and Bighorn Outdoor Specialists for sponsoring the **Adult Summer Reading** program. This new program engaged 224 people thrilled to connect with their childhood memories and explore new genres again.

Montana Shakespeare in the Parks brought Hamlet to Gibson Park on August 7. Nearly 600 people of all ages and backgrounds (and some adorable furry family members) came together for their first or 50th experience with Shakespeare and the theater. We are grateful to the GFPL Foundation for supporting this delightful annual event.

Summer Music in the Library Park had nine performances, with the total attendance mark reaching 1,494 for these free shows. Sponsors were the GFPL Foundation, TDS Cares, SCHEELS, Montana Credit Union, First Interstate Bank, and Bravera Bank.

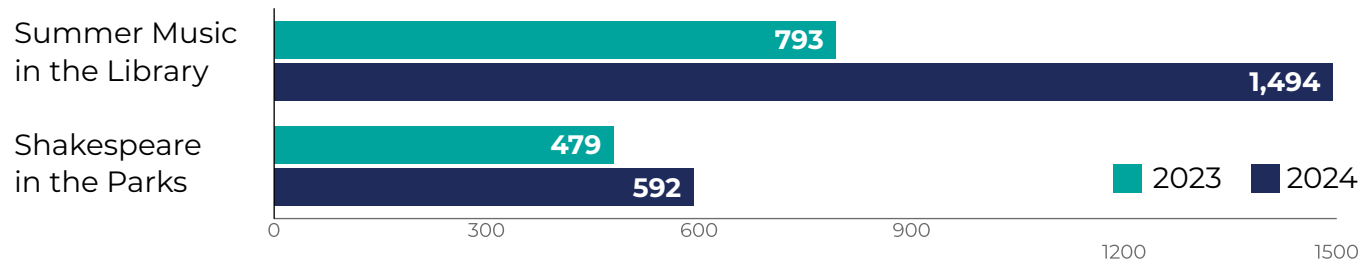


Photo by Gray Media Services

What a Difference a Year Makes!

273,358



19,171
REFERENCE QUESTIONS
ANSWERED

168
ADULT / FAMILY
PROGRAMS WITH
7407
PARTICIPANTS



193
YOUTH PROGRAMS
WITH
4146
PARTICIPANTS

379
BOOK CLUB
PARTICIPANTS



224
Participants in the adult
summer reading program



145
PARTICIPANTS
IN THE WINTER
SPEAKER SERIES



17,988
LIBRARY CARD
HOLDERS



63
HOURS OPEN
PER WEEK



4,723
PARTNER
CRATES
SENT
OR
RECEIVED



2187
CHILDREN RECEIVING
BOOKS FROM
Dolly Parton's
Imagination Library



21,601
COMPUTER
SESSIONS



858
LinkedIn Learning
videos watched



8,553
Mango
language
learning
sessions



5,736
1-on-1 computer
assistance sessions

72K
WIFI SESSIONS

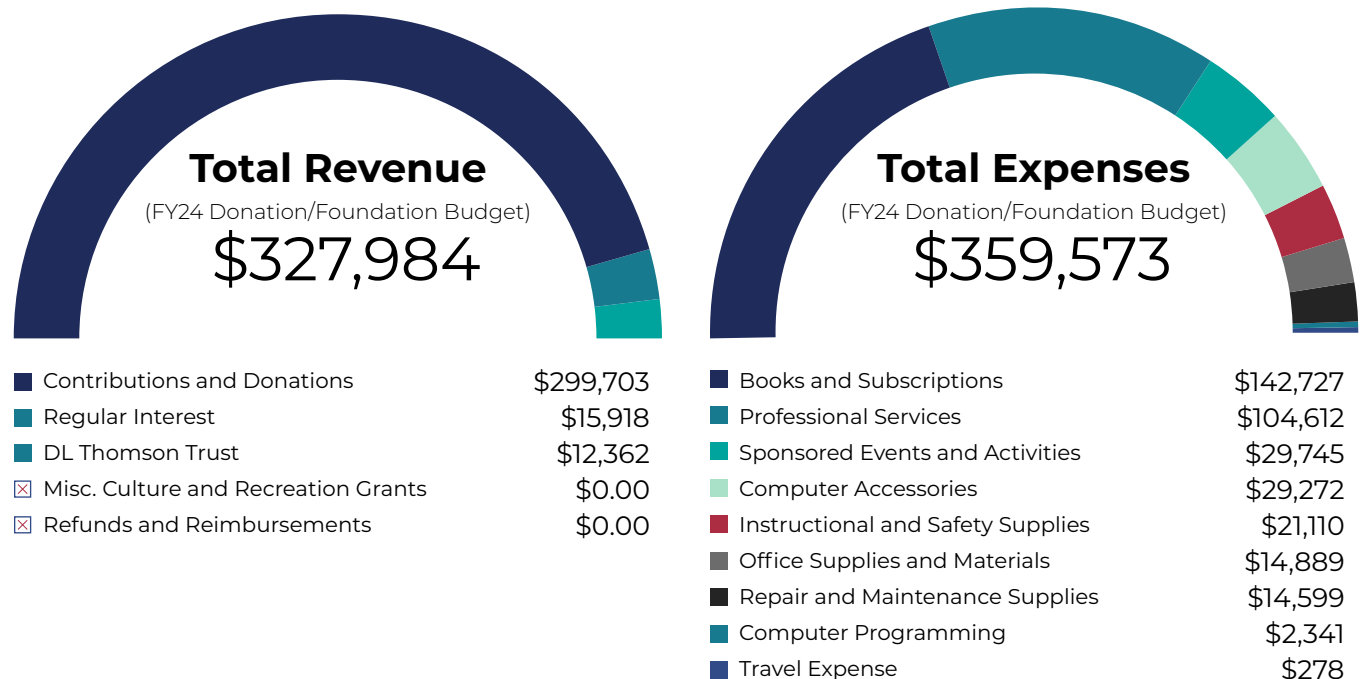
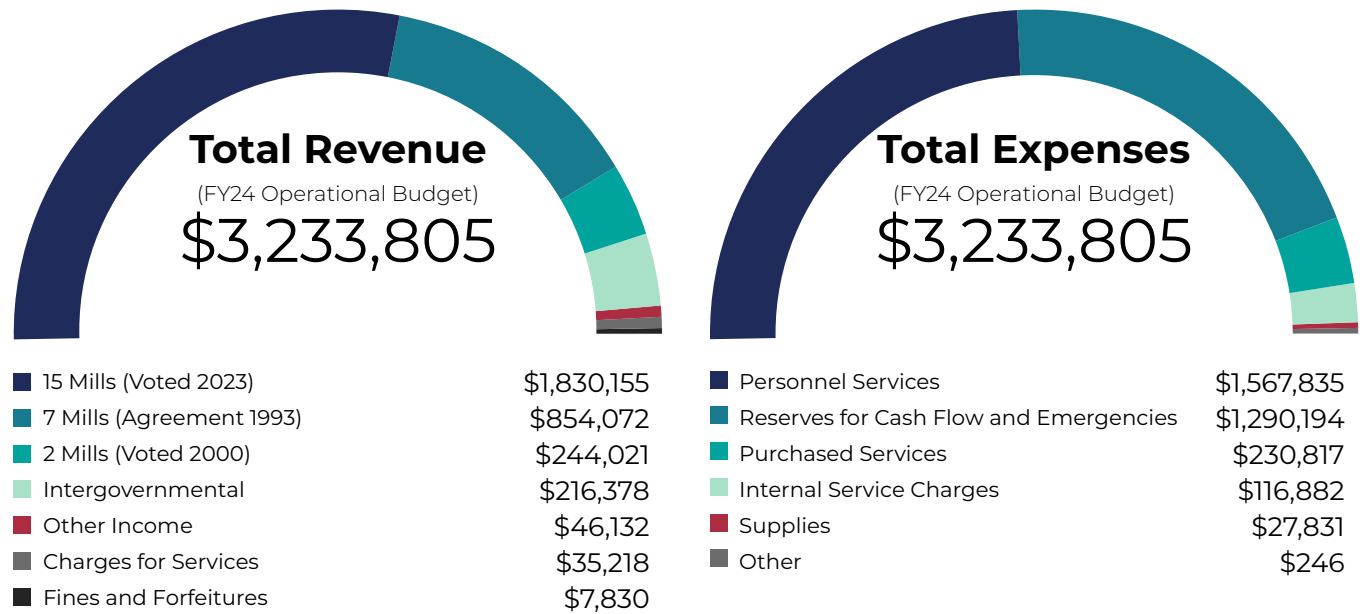


485
retrievals from the
Chilton Auto Repair
database



Our FY2024 Budget

The Great Falls Public Library is grateful for the funds we receive through the levy, donations, grants, and sponsorships. We know how valuable these resources are and work hard to use every dollar to serve our community. We don't take anything for granted. Here's how our revenues and expenses were for FY2024.



Have questions about the budget? Librarians have the answers.



Q: WHAT ARE THERE TWO REVENUE CHARTS AND TWO EXPENSE CHARTS?

Great question. We have two separate but equally important accounts. The first is our operating budget (top two charts). This funding comes from mills, fees, and other sources. These funds are used to pay for the building, staff, and other general operating costs. The second account (bottom two charts) comes from donations, grants, and the generosity of the Great Falls Public Library Foundation. It pays for some of our special programming like Montana Shakespeare in the Parks.

Q: ARE YOU AUDITED?

Yes. The City of Great Falls is audited on a yearly basis based on state and federal requirements, and the Library Fund and Library Foundation Fund are part of this audit. The Auditors are qualified and approved by the State of Montana. The City receives an unmodified "clean" report from the auditors each year.

Q: WHY IS THE RESERVE FOR CASH FLOW AND EMERGENCIES LINE ITEM HIGH?

The beginning of the fiscal year brings several annual costs like insurance and software fees. The levy changed the library's cash flow, making it important for the Library to have enough cash on hand at the end of a fiscal year to cover expenses until property tax revenue is received in December. With the establishment of an appropriate reserve fund, this line will be much lower next fiscal year. The Library puts every dollar we receive to good use for the Great Falls community.

Q: WHERE CAN I GO TO LEARN MORE ABOUT THE LIBRARY BUDGET?

As Librarians, we love it when someone wants to read more about a subject. More information can be found on the City's website at greatfallsmt.net/finance/budget. The Library Board also regularly reviews our financials, and that information is on the Library's website at greatfallslibrary.org/library-board-of-trustees/.

