Racine Public Library Report for February 2026 Board Packet

Executive Director's Report - February

Prepared by Nick Demske

It has been a really great start to 2026 at the RPL. Many exciting things happened in our first month of the year, but none more exciting than **the return of Deputy Director Lizzie**. I'm really proud of our team for filling in the gaps for her so well during maternity leave, and all in all things went very well even in her absence, but her absence was felt and now that she's back, the library can continue operating at full capacity. And now we have a tiny, new addition to the RPL family (baby Aeden)!

The other biggest thing that happened is something that *didn't* happen. As I mentioned previously, the library was in conversation with city leadership about **going to referendum** in 2026. After several serious conversations and some careful reflection, **we've decided not to pursue that option this year**.

Referendum decisions are always very multifaceted, and so many elements went into this choice. One of the biggest pieces, though, is the reality that--after two referenda passed in the last election--taxes went up more significantly than they have in quite some time as a result (primarily in support of the school district). And it feels like the proposition of going back to voters and asking them to raise their own taxes again so immediately wouldn't make for the most strategic timing. This however opens up the year for us to **focus on strategic planning, overhauling the handbook and focusing on some other overdue, foundational projects** that would have been very difficult to squeeze in, if we *were* planning for a ballot measure. We also happened to notice that our library neighbors in south milwaukee are going to referendum this year, so now we'll have the benefit of watching their progress, being in conversation with them and learning from their experiences.

There were many other wins, even just in our first month. Business Manager Becky submitted a **Letter of Intent to Racine Community Foundation** that, if accepted and funded, would allow us to co-sponsor and build the capacity of the Parks Department's Main Gallery program, which pays kids to make art in the summer. Our new Programming Librarian, Emily, **submitted a small grant through ALA** for some additional programming support funds. I had several meetings with several bank affiliates to speak early on in the year about sponsorship opportunities for the RPL. We launched a **new staff intranet landing page**, and we **integrated a new scheduling software** building-wide (Homebase) for greater accountability and transparency, both

for staff and administration. Big thanks to Matt, Melissa, the whole DSI team, Lizzie and others for putting so much energy into launching those efforts.

Since this report is focused on the first month of the new year, I wanted to add the **3 goals we put in the RPL's section of the city's 2026 budget book.** Until we have a proper strategic plan, these three goals basically act as our proto-strategic plan; commitments we've publicly made to work on over the course of this coming year. To my knowledge, these haven't really been shared with the board in the past and I think it just makes sense to change that, starting with this year.

The 2026 goals as appeared in the budget are as follows:

Goal Statement #1

Increase the number of registered RPL card users by 5%

Not counting the students of Racine Unified School District, who are automatically given a library card number upon enrollment, the RPL currently has 32,633 card-holding users. This isn't even half the city's population, let alone half our service population (137,000). In 2026, we will aim to increase this number by 5%, or 1,632 additional card holders.

Notes/comments for this statement:

- We will increase outreach efforts in 2026, supporting library card registrations at each event.
- We will design a promotional campaign for the year specifically targeted to increase this foundational metric, which acts as the key to engaging with the majority of library services
- We will reorient this as a priority for staff to engage library users around, even when they're using the library in ways that don't require a library card (such as making copies or using the wifi)

Goal Statement #2

Increase avg program attendance by 10% in 2026

In 2024 we tracked 9000+ program attendees with an average program attendance of 17 per program (522 total programs). In 2025, even though staff have increased the amount of programs they're hosting, the attendance numbers are projected at this point to remain flat. In 2026, we'll focus on the amount of people who are positively impacted by our programs, rather than our number of programs as an output.

Notes/comments for this statement:

- We will look for areas where data might be getting lost in the collection process and tighten up that system as much as possible

- We will put less focus on staff simply hosting more programs and instead pivot to ensuring all the programs we offer are attracting attendance, eliminating the programs to start which are reaching the least amount of people.
- We will shift staff focus from more significant amounts of time planning and executing many programs, to working to successfully promote and attract people to the programs we continue to support

Goal Statement #3

Increase our "ROI Impact" number for the community by at least $1M from 2024 ROI

In 2025, the RPL's deputy director--using a strict methodology and value calculator utilized by other public libraries--did a holistic Return-On-Investment calculation for the library's services in 2024. The ROI was nearly $13.5M for the library, which had only a $4.4M operating budget that year. Because this ROI number is more all-encompassing than maybe any other metric we have, we aim to increase it by at least $1M in 2026, from the figure we have for 2024.

Notes/comments for this statement:

- There are a number of drivers to increase this number, but the ultimate metric driving it most broadly is just people using and benefitting from the library
- One important metric that this calculation incorporates is items circulated, including both physical and digital circulations. This number will inherently be increased if we have more active card holders, as mentioned in Goal 1, but we'll be reorienting some of our promotional efforts towards more collections-focused messaging.
- Goal 2 would also help drive this number higher, and so our promotions around programming will be more targeted
- We'll identify services not captured in this methodology to continue increasing the accuracy of this estimation going forward

I want to close by including a handwritten card I received from a much beloved patron of ours, Deb Madigan. Many of us know Deb and have been seeing her and serving her in this building for years. However, she recently had a surgery which, for a short time, made her unable to come in. Like so many other patrons, she found our home delivery service to be a big blessing during even that short time--so much so that she wrote a note to the library director detailing why the experience was so great, and calling out our home delivery coordinator, Katie Day, by name in the letter. Read it and hear from the words of a patron just how wonderful a service this can be, when the right people are carrying it out.

Jan. 9, 2026 - 10:15 A.M

Dear Nick,

I am writing to thank the library for offering a home delivery service, something I never thought I would need.

On Wednesday of this past week I had a pain pump surgery in hopes I will be able to stand up straight & walk again. I have at least a week long recovery at home. I had a return due, a hold to pick up, and a bag of book donations for the Friends.

Katie Day took care of all of these tasks for me. She even picked up my garbage bin which is over and put a small bag of garbage in it for me - above & beyond her job description, what a lovely, helpful woman.

The library is such an essential part of my life. I really couldn't do without it. Thanks again to the library & Katie for this wonderful service.

Sincerely,
Deb Madigan

Katie Day took care of all of these tasks for me. She even picked up my garbage bin which blew over and put a small bag of garbage in it for me - above & beyond her job description, what a lovely, helpful woman.

The library is such an essential part of my life. I really couldn't do without it. Thanks again to the library & Katie for this wonderful service. Sincerely, Deb Madigan

Deputy Director's Report - February 2025

Prepared by Lizzie Hjelle

- **Deputy Director Projects**
    - I returned from maternity leave on January 20th, and I was excited to jump back into many ongoing projects! A large portion of my time this month has been focused on preparing the library's annual report for the Department of Public Instruction, and much of the same information will be used to calculate Racine Public Library's 2025 Return on Investment. I remain confident that our ROI for 2025 will be greater than what we calculated for 2024.
    - The rest of my time has been occupied by continuing to evaluate our collections and services, and by determining a project outline for the ongoing revision of the Library Staff Handbook. Selectors of adult fiction, nonfiction, and AV will be coming together for a Collection Development Palooza in late February to review circulation data, establish collection goals and best practices, and collaboratively strategize ways we reinvigorate our physical collection.
    - A Note on Data Presentation - Last fall, I significantly changed the way library services data was presented in this packet, moving away from tables displaying disaggregated monthly data towards more visual presentation of year-to-date information. It is my hope that this has been a helpful change, but I am always open to feedback on what would best serve the Board's interests.
- **Feel-Good Moments**
    - A patron called the library in late January to express her appreciation for the Bookmobile staff bringing her items to her vehicle despite the frigid temperatures.
    - A patron called me personally to express her appreciation for Youth Services Supervisor Keiko and her expertise in helping her grandchildren find books they would enjoy reading. Her grandchildren enjoyed the books so much that they made Keiko a card to express their gratitude.

Social Worker's Report - February 2025

Prepared by Ashley Cedeno, Library Social Worker

The purpose of the library social worker's Februaryly report is to document and analyze the social services provided within the library setting. This report tracks key aspects of the social worker's role, ensuring accountability, identifying trends, and improving services.

Patron Interactions

Summarizes the number of interactions with patrons. "SWK" interactions include social service appointments by phone or in person, as well as interactions with local community resource organizations. "General" refers to library assistance of patrons not social service related. Starting in 2025, the distinction between the two is relayed in the below chart. Bus Passes do not count towards patron interaction totals.

Year/Month	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025			2026		
					SWK	General	Total	SWK	Gen	Total
January		24	56	137	68	125	**193**	124	186	**310**
February		20	71	249	69	74	**143**			
March		28	129	287	66	68	**134**			
April		61	119	290	60	124	**184**			
May		34	80	215	86	65	**151**			
June		36	137	222	93	30	**123**			
July		39	111	238	95	120	**215**			
August		42	211	197	91	152	**243**			
September	6	33	159	211	177	192	**369**			
October	15	40	189	271	130	235	**365**			
November	15	52	180	201	76	70	**146**			
December	19	40	118	131	54	49	**103**			

**prior to mid-2023, non-swk interactions were not tracked*

Need/Concerns

Displays the frequency of assistance provided across categories of patron need.

Aging and Disability Resources	7
Applying for Benefits/Financial Assistance	7
Clothing/Laundry	
COVID-19	
Domestic Abuse	
Education	
Emotional Support	1
Employment	16
Food Insecurity	3
Healthcare	3
Housing	10
Relating to Incident Report or Crisis	20
Internet/Hotspot	
Legal	8
Mental Health	2
Re-entry Services	4
Refugee/Immigration Support	
Sensory Room	3
Sexual Assault Services	
Substance Use	
Transportation (not including bus passes)	12
Veteran Services	
Library Social Work Expertise requested	2
General Library Assistance (Non-swk)	186
Digital Navigator Program (all interactions)	6
Communication w/ community org	20

**General: Anything that falls under this category are interactions I have with patrons that do not relate to social services, such as assisting patrons with printing, certain reference questions, etc during desk coverage or rounds. These interactions also get reported under the general library data gathering of interactions.*

***Relating to Incident Report or Crisis: Anything that falls under this category are interactions I have with patrons that either directly result in an Incident Report, or in which I speak to a patron regarding their*

suspension, meet with a patron prior to the end of their suspension, or any other incident that occurs that may not result in an Incident report.

Bus Passes

Tracks the distribution of transportation assistance, ensuring proper allocation and identifying demand.

Total bus passes distributed this month:

Year/Month	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026
January		27	0*	123	80
February		45	0	59	
March		54	10	54	
April		72	93	77	
May		99	86	80	
June		126	81	51	
July		101	97	93	
August		111	95	83	
September	62	107	66	64	
October	72	118	132	95	
November	44	18	62	68	
December	31	0 *	83	62	

*=No bus passes available

Continued Education (CE) or Training

Documents professional development efforts, such as courses or certifications completed.

- NA

Programs

Information on programming events led by or assisted by the Library Social Worker.

- Coffee and Conversation
    - 1/22- 5 participants; Topic: Do you have any New Year's Resolutions? How do we feel about resolutions?
    - 1/9- Staff: 1 participant; Topic: NA, general open ended conversation

Other/Miscellaneous

Captures additional relevant activities or observations that do not fit under the other categories.

- Continued efforts in the **Safety Committee (SC)**-weekly meetings focused on reviewing incidents and improving library safety protocols. As safety-related concerns arise, my role as a library social worker continues to be a valuable resource in addressing these issues
    - 20 interactions related to safety and security
- Hosting a BSW Carthage Social Work Student- **Field Placement/Internship-** Library Social Worker has agreed to host an intern for the 2025-2026 academic year. The purpose of the internship is to provide an under-grad level student with hands-on experience in a nontraditional social work setting, while learning to apply social work values in a community based environment.
    - Library Social Worker to provide weekly one-hour supervision
    - During the month of January, supervision of the social work intern has continued to require significant time and support as the student works toward achieving their learning goals and on-site responsibilities.

Marketing Report - February 2025

Prepared by Shay King, Head of Business Development

Overview

Communication Topics
January's communications focused on the New Year's and MLK Day closures; February's Rent Smart program; the upcoming Digital Literacy Fair; the Seed Library's upcoming reopen date; and our Domes experience passes.

Program Marketing (2/6/26)
The January through March cycle of programs has 57 remaining submissions.

We are in the program marketing posting phase for April and May programs. We received 56 on-time submissions comprising 158 different sessions.

Training and development

- All-staff meeting, Jan. 16: 2 hours (each) — Head of Business Development and Marketing and Outreach Assistant
- Wild Winter Conference Management Track, Jan. 21: 4 hours — Head of Business Development
    - Cultivating Community Support through Partnerships
    - Not an Emergency Room: A Mindset for Encouraging Realistic Performance Expectations Among Employees
    - (Don't) Do All the Things: Delegation in the Workplace
    - How Does Anyone Do All of This? Practical Organizational Strategies for Library Leaders

Viewership and Engagement

Press and Advertising

In January, the library was referenced **in the media** **at least 17 times**.

Press highlights:

- Racine Public Library launches new year with financial literacy workshops, full slate of January programs - Racine County Eye, Jan. 2
- Racine Public Library offers vital resources far beyond books to the community - Racine County Eye, Jan. 8
- Racine Public Library to close Jan. 19, offers full slate of programs Jan. 10–17 - Racine County Eye, Jan. 9
- Your 2026 guide to Black History Month events around Wisconsin - Spectrum News 1, Jan. 15

- Tween Time program launches Jan. 21 at Racine Public Library - Racine County Eye, Jan. 16
- Free Tax Filing Assistance, Digital Literacy Fair Planned at Racine Public Library - Racine County Eye, Jan. 30

Don Rosen Show Appearances
Listen live in Racine at 99.9FM & 1400AM, or in Kenosha at 98.1FM. Find previous appearances in our media placements log.

January appearances:

- We did not schedule any appearances in January.

Upcoming appearances:

- **Tuesday, March 10**, 7-8 a.m. - Melissa Donaldson (Digital Literacy Fair)
- **Thursday, March 26**, 7-8 a.m. - Nick Demske (Library Overview)
- **Thursday, April 23**, 7-8 a.m. - Rebecca Leannah (Local Author Showcase and Summer Reading Kickoff)
- **Thursday, May 28**, 7-8 a.m. - Shay King (Library Overview)

Wind Point Stroll
In the January issue, we ran a reading list but not an article. Our January ad focused on the SHARE Anywhere and Libby apps.

Racine Theater Guild
In the "Ripcord" playbill (Jan. 16 - Feb. 1), we ran an ad focused on the Feb. 6 Community Resource Fair.

Website

2026 Views & Visitors

2026	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Totals
Views	27,193												27,193
Visitors	7,686												7,686

January's views and visitors surpassed not just our average monthly viewers and visitors in 2025, but also that of any specific month in 2025.
- Views increased 3,062 from December (24,131) to January (27,193)
- Highest 2025 monthly views was 26,896 in March

Factors:

- January was the second month the new program bookmarks were active, which prominently display a QR code routing to the website calendar for registration and more info.
- 785 of the new views are accounted for by an increase in newsletter clicks (410 in December to 1,195 in January).

January's most-viewed pages:

- Home - 16,427 views (up from 15,830)
- Calendar - 2,603 views (up from 1,326)
- The Natural Library - 759 (up from 19)
- Library GO! - 542 views (up from 399)
- Hours & Locations - 538 views (up from 489)

Changes:

- The Natural Library was a new addition to the top five most-viewed pages in January due to placement in an early January newsletter, bumping Borrow from the Library from the list.
- Google Analytics reports that "On January 9, 2026, views for page path "/calendar-of-events/" spiked to 371, a sharp increase from an expected 46." This was the first day that we trialed the new event registration section of the newsletter. We don't suspect the activity was tied to any one program, as the programs on the calendar that day or the following were routine, non-registration programs.

2025 Views & Visitors

2025	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Totals
Views	26,544	23,669	26,896	24,176	24,475	24,792	25,496	24,066	25,055	24,000	21,826	24,131	295,126
Visitors	7,368	6,628	7,298	6,486	6,610	6,516	6,337	6,437	7,343	6,799	7,432	7,453	82,707

We will remove the 2025 statistics from board reports after January's report.

2025's most-viewed pages:

- Home - 158,019
- Calendar - 23,238
- Library GO! - 8,104
- Hours & Locations - 5,928
- Use Your Library - 3,777

2024 vs. 2025:

- Views: 292,451 -> 295,126
    - Average monthly views: 24,371 -> 24,594
- Visitors: 73,907 -> 82,707

- Average monthly visitors: 6,159 -> 6,892

Google Business Listing

January Google profile views: 2,543
January appearances in search results: 991
January calls: 468
January direction requests: 654
January website clicks: 2,460

Reviews
We received no new reviews or ratings in January.

Searches that led viewers to our profile

- For the Racine Public Library: “racine public library, 7th street, racine, wi,” “racine public library” and other variants (419+)
- For libraries in general: “library,” “library near me” and other variants (542+)
    - For libraries in locations we’re a part of: “library near mount pleasant, wi”, “racine county library”, “share library wisconsin”, “wisconsin library”
    - For branches that don’t exist: “caledonia library,” “caledonia wi library”, “library on 55th and racine”
    - For other specific libraries: “kenosha libraries,” “kenosha library” and other variants; “libraries near me that use hoopla”
- For our hours: “racine public library hours,” “racine library hours” and other variants (52)
- For programs we host: “activities for kids near me,” “indoor activities for kids near me” and four other variants; “things to do in racine wi for couples”
- For nearby locations: For services we offer: “notary racine wi”, “services offered by racine public library”
- Miscellaneous: “Opl”, “places to work in racine with a background”, “racine. yschunber”

Newsletter

Prepared 2/6/26.

2026	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Open rate	38.6%											
Click rate	1.3%											
Current recipients	25,366											

In January, the marketing and outreach assistant began trialing a “programs to register for” section of the newsletter. Click and open rates during the period of this addition have exceeded not just our average click and open rates for 2025, but also that of any single month in 2025.

High-performing links in January:

- Links to the calendar or specific events - 618 unique clicks
  - VITA 1/27 Free Tax Filing & Prep - 130 clicks
  - Make Stuff 1/20 - 127 clicks
  - Art with Ken 1/20 - 122 clicks
  - Minecraft Club 1/26 - 54 clicks
- https://www.racinelibrary.info/natural/ - 608 clicks

2025	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Open rate	36.1%	37.2%	36.7%	34.6%	38.0%	36.4%	36.3%	35.0%	37.2%	29.4%	34.4%	34.8%
Click rate	.8%	.7%	.8%	.9%	.8%	.7%	.7%	.6%	.6%	.6%	.8%	.5%
Current recipients	22,280	22,286	23,168	23,179	23,427	23,427	23,992	24,153	24,165	24,178	24,192	25,207

We will remove the 2025 statistics from board reports after January's report.

2025 in review:

- Average open rate — 34.0%
- Average click rate — .7%
- Mailing list: 22,280 -> 25,207

To sign up for our newsletter or view previous issues, visit RacineLibrary.info/newsletters.

Social Media

Prepared 2/6/26

Facebook
Current followers: 7,593
January views: 19,678

Instagram
Current followers: 1,570
January views: 700

TikTok
Current followers: 1,033
January views: 416

Ads

- Rent Smart program ad: 1/28 - 2/5

Technical Services and Circulation Activities Report - February 2025

Prepared by Chris Tobias, Circulation and Technical Services Supervisor

Circulation Report of January Activities 2026

RPL circulated a total of 35,134 in January of 2026. 32,625 items from Main and 2,509 items from the Bookmobile. December circulation was 31,118. Approximately 9,372 holds were placed and filled. 9,609 items loaned from our collection to other libraries, and 6,996 received for RPL patrons. 338 new library cards were issued during the month of January. Circulation for Home Delivery Services was 2,949 transactions in the month of January.

Consortium sorting / AMH activity:

- In January circulation staff inducted 80,415 items through the automated material handler (AMH).
- On the 21st the AMH suffered an internal fault to a control box causing a partial shutdown of the sorter. A Lyngoes System service technician replaced the part on the 29th. An applaud to the circulation staff for working to get the deliveries out in a timely manner.

Technical Services Report of January Activities 2026

In January TSD staff placed orders for 900 items and received 208 previously ordered items. A total of 708 items were cataloged and processed for the library catalog.

The project to label abbreviated series statements and numbers on Adult and Juvenile fiction collections has continued.

Inventory of various library collections continues.

9400 seed packets, so far, have been prepared by Dawn Seeger in preparation for the March 20th reopening of the highly popular Seed Catalog.

Digital Services and Innovation Activities Report - February 2025

Prepared by Melissa Donaldson, Head of Digital Service and Innovation

Programming

During January, the Digital Services and Innovation Lab staff hosted five programs, engaging 33 community members in hands-on learning and technology experiences.

Podcasting Studio.

The podcasting studio facilitated 8 appointments in January.

Tech Support

The DSI Staff provided community tech support, addressing 524 questions in January.

This month, the DSI full-time staff attended training for our new timing software, which we are rolling out this year. We are getting training on the new print software on 2/18.

The Racine Public Library purchased KnowB4 security training. We sent out our first fishing test in January. February is training month. We will then send out another phishing test in April. Those who do not pass the test in April will be required to complete additional training.

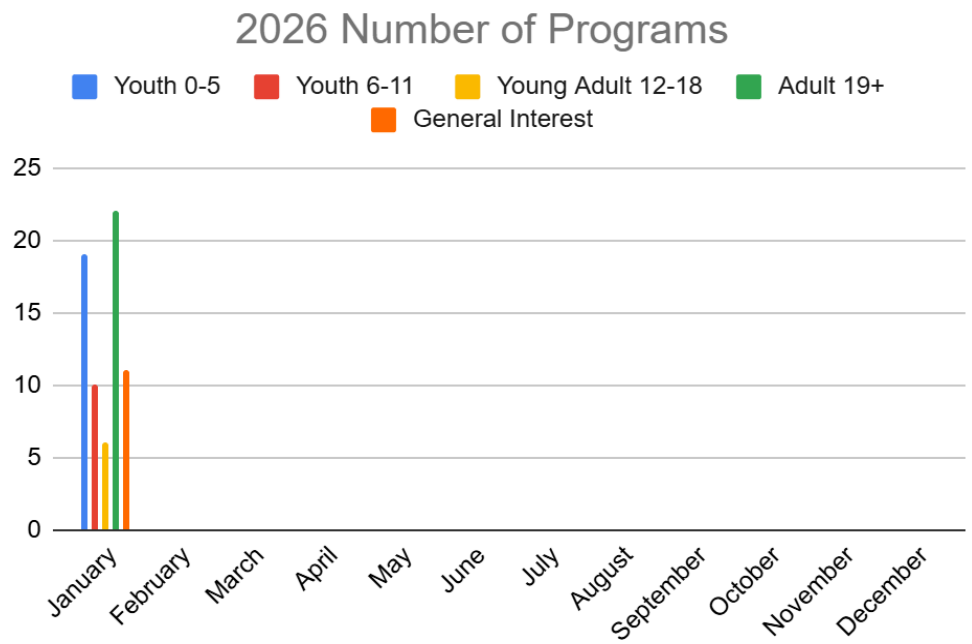
Homebase, building-wide scheduling software, is now being used for all staff. This will help Leadership know who is in the building and where they are supposed to be.

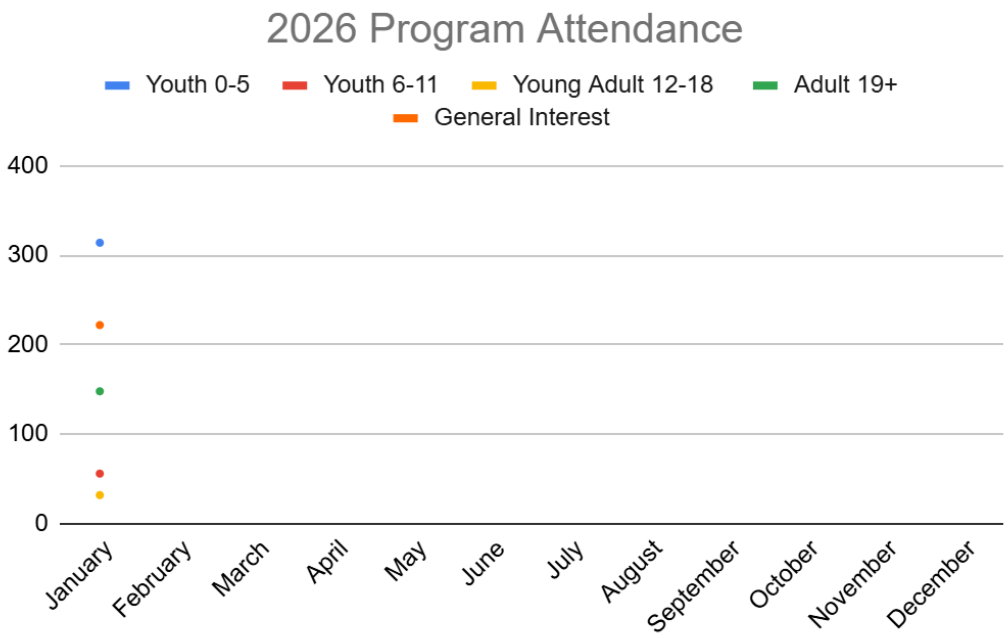
2026 Year to Date Library Services Statistics

Prepared by Chris Tobias, Matt Jerke, and Lizzie Hjelle

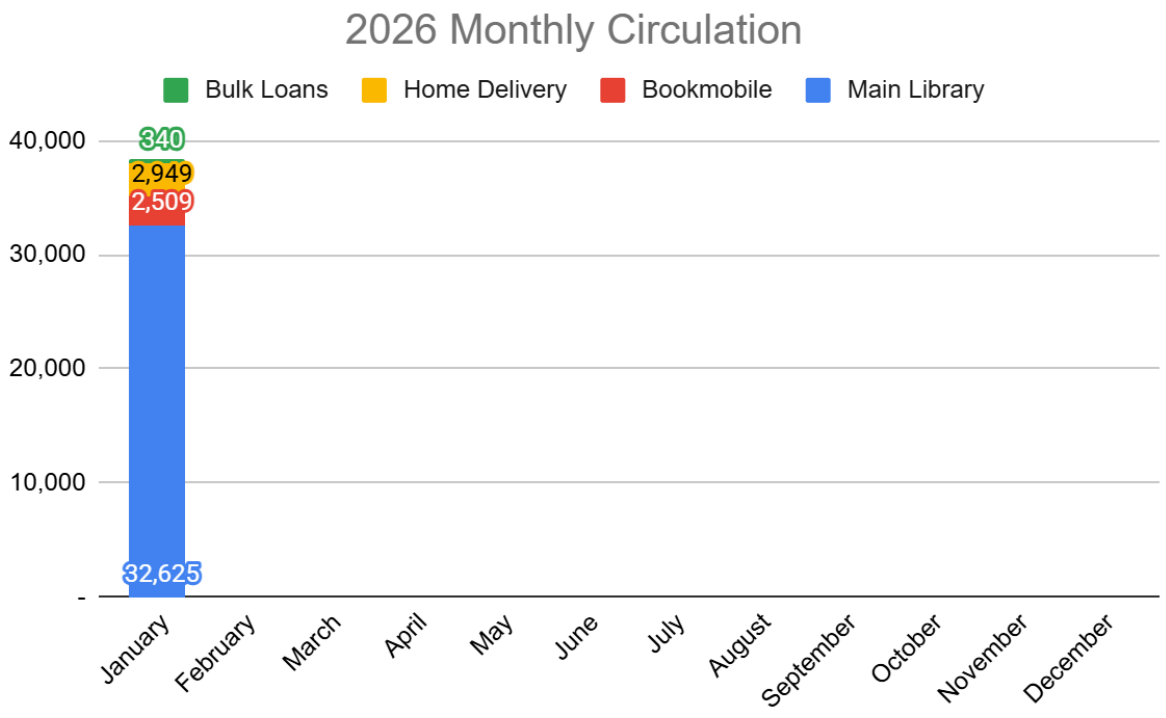
Library Programming Statistics

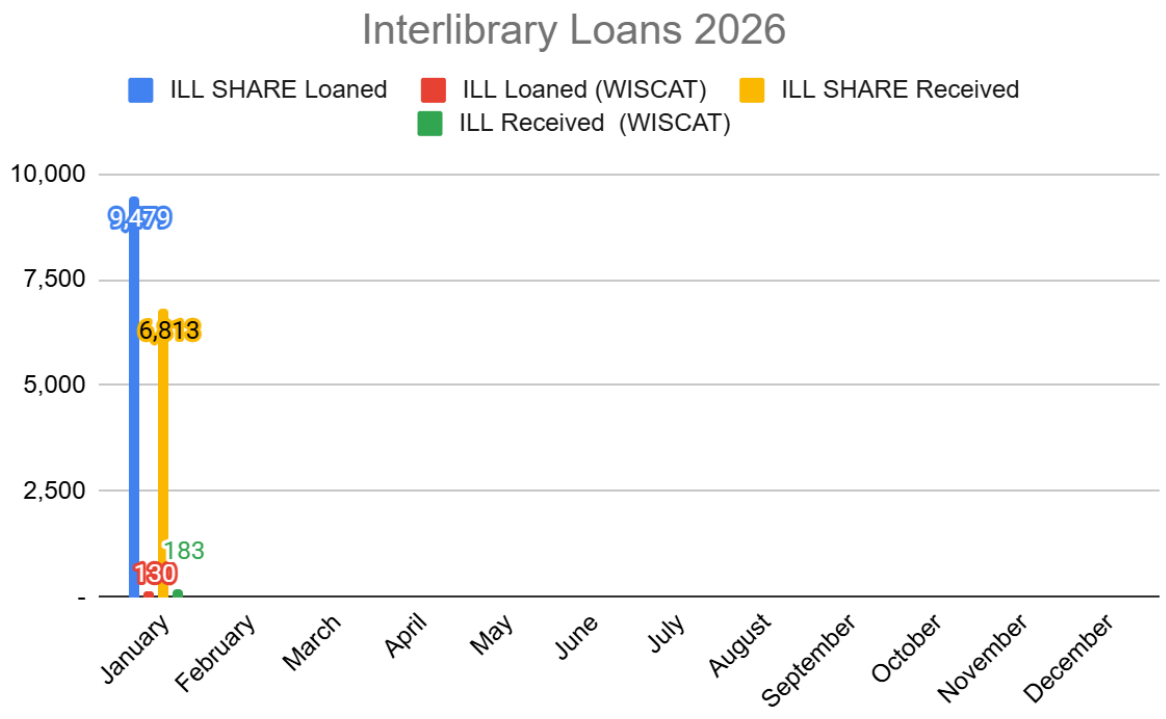
In January, the library hosted 68 programs attended by a total of 772 patrons.

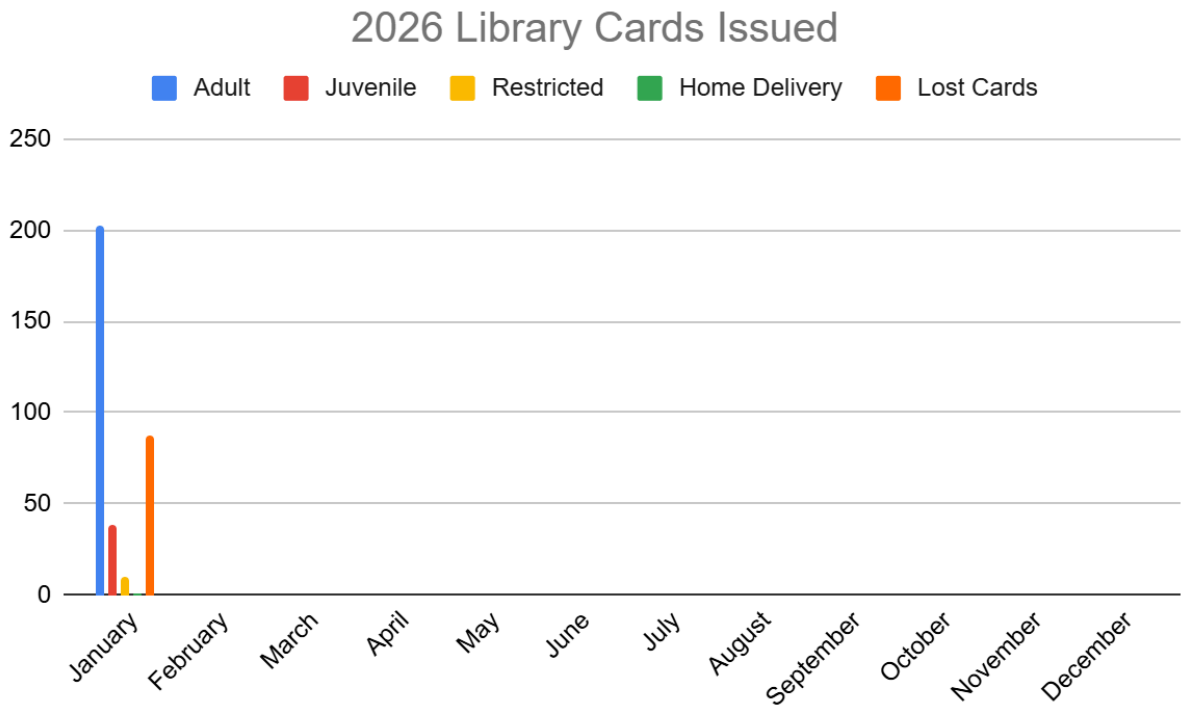




Physical Circulation Statistics





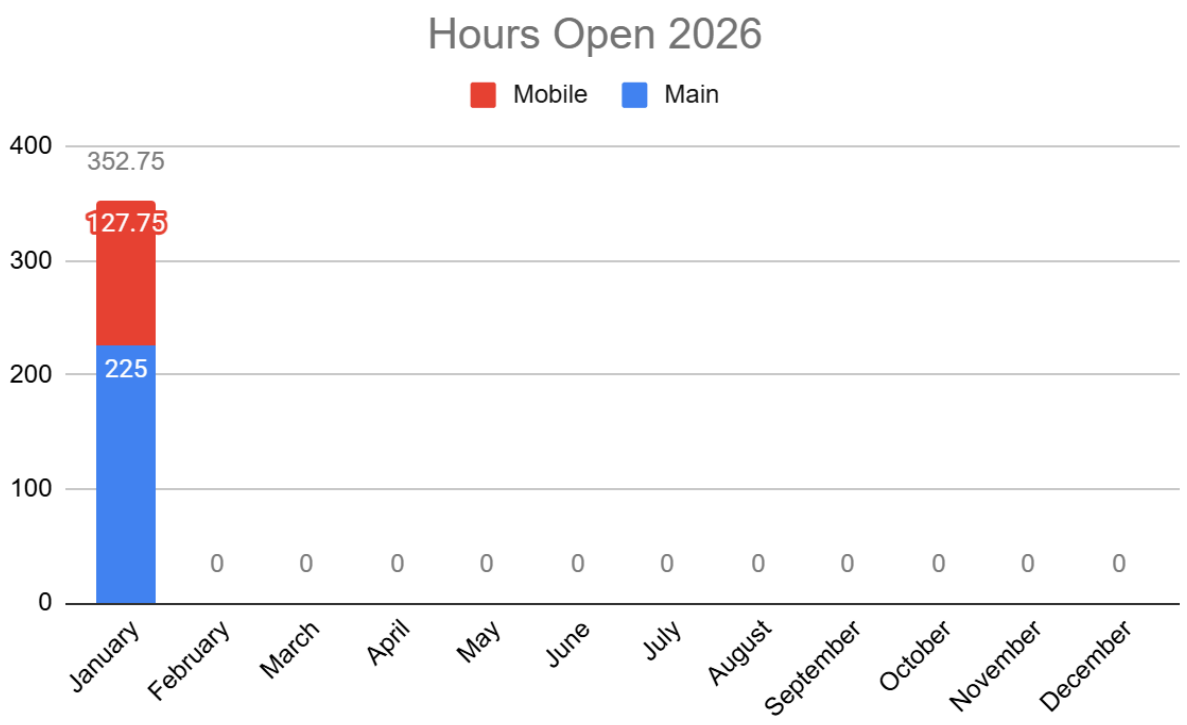


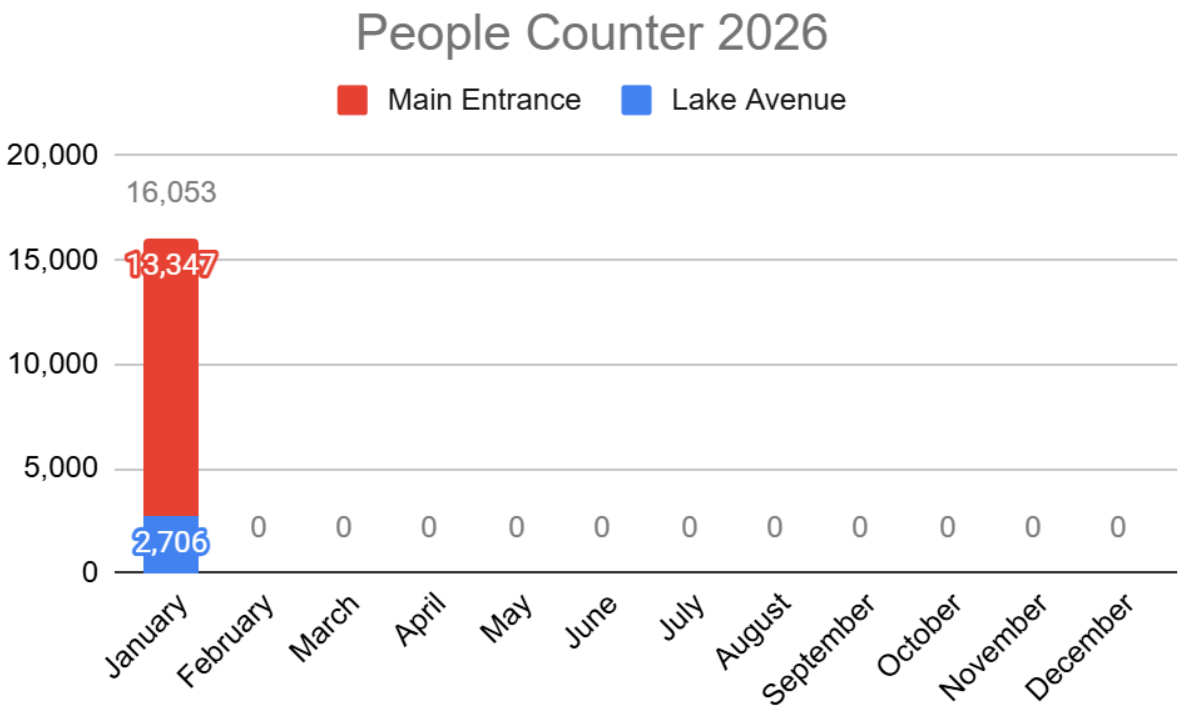
January Circulation by Municipality

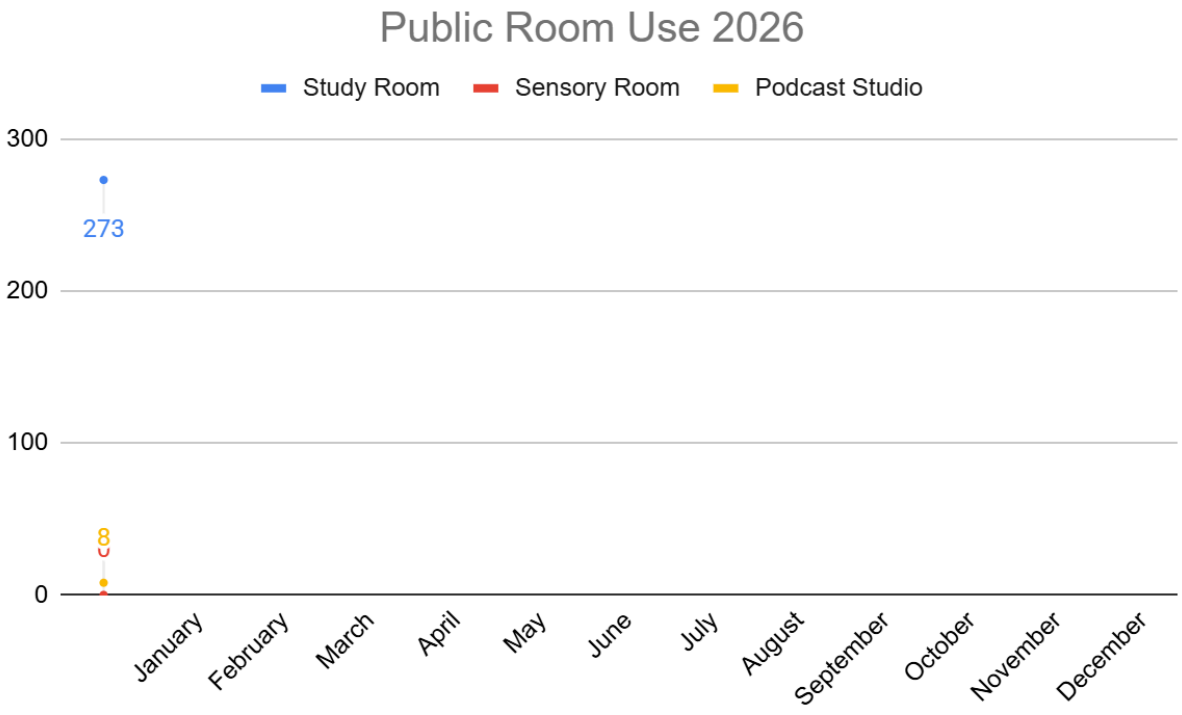
Main		Bookmobile	
DAMADISONC	3	KNKENOSHAC	3
GTPLATTEVC	5	KNSOMERSV	2
KNKENOSHAC	166	RACALEDONV	774
KNPARIST	7	RAELMWOODV	2
KNPLEASPRV	6	RAMOUNTPLV	816
KNSALEMLKV	12	RANORTHBYV	23
KNSOMERSV	12	RARACINEC	609
KNTWINLAKV	9	RARAYMONDV	8
MIMILWAUKC	14	RASTURTEVV	145
MIOAKCREEC	12	RAUNIONGRV	3
ONMINOCQUT	14	RAWINDPOIV	124
RABURLINGC	81	Total	2,509
RABURLINGT	8		
RACALEDONV	6,616		
RADOVERT	10		
RAELMWOODV	124		
RAMOUNTPLV	6,126		

RANORTHBYV	41		
RANORWAYT	7		
RARACINEC	17,584		
RARAYMONDV	234		
ROCHESTV	9		
RASTURTEVV	439		
RAUNIONGRV	107		
RAWATERFOT	3		
RAWATERFOV	7		
RAWINDPOIV	817		
RAYORKVILV	17		
RKJANESVIC	1		
WKMUKWONAV	1		
WPWAUPACAC	4		
WWEASTTRYV	13		
	116		
Total	32,625		

Building Usage Statistics

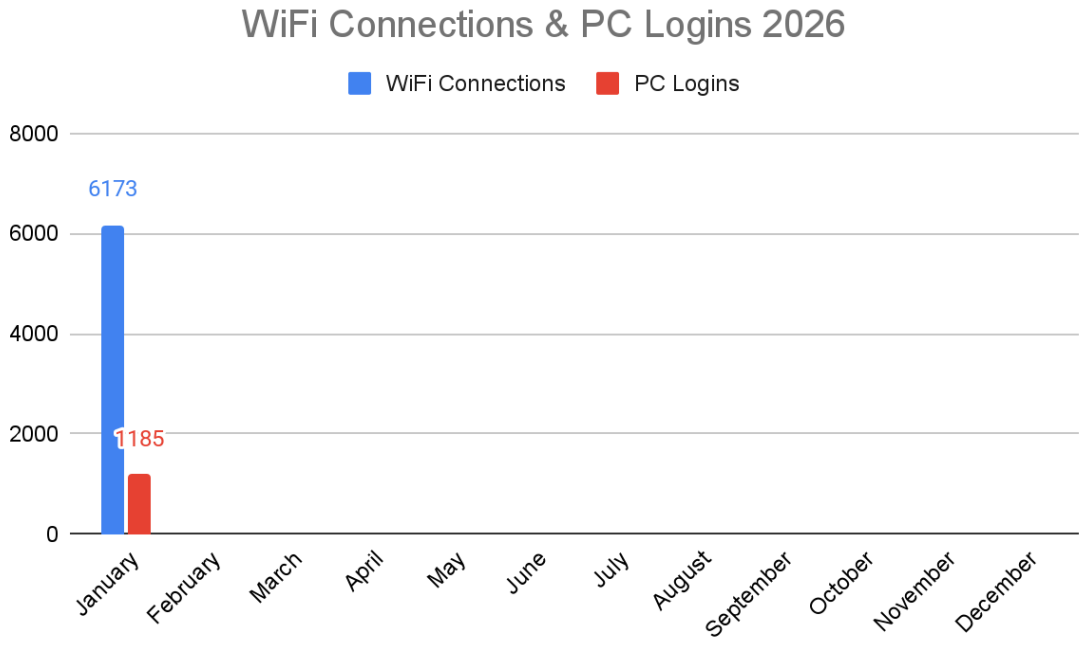


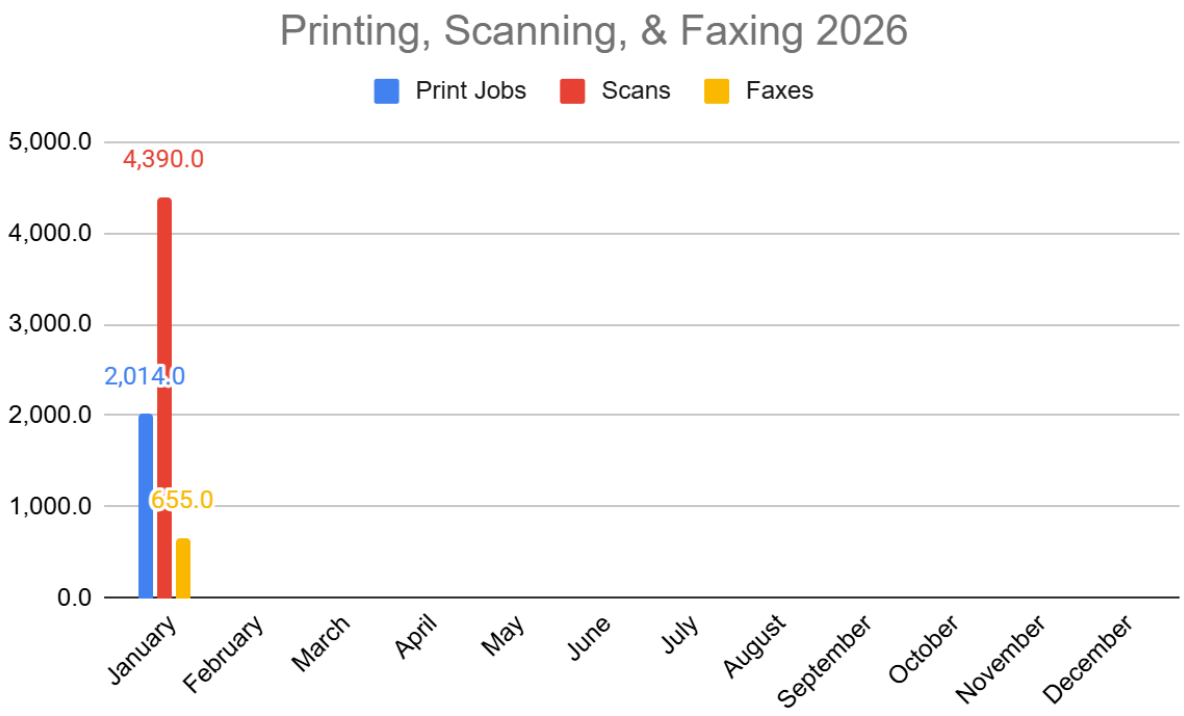




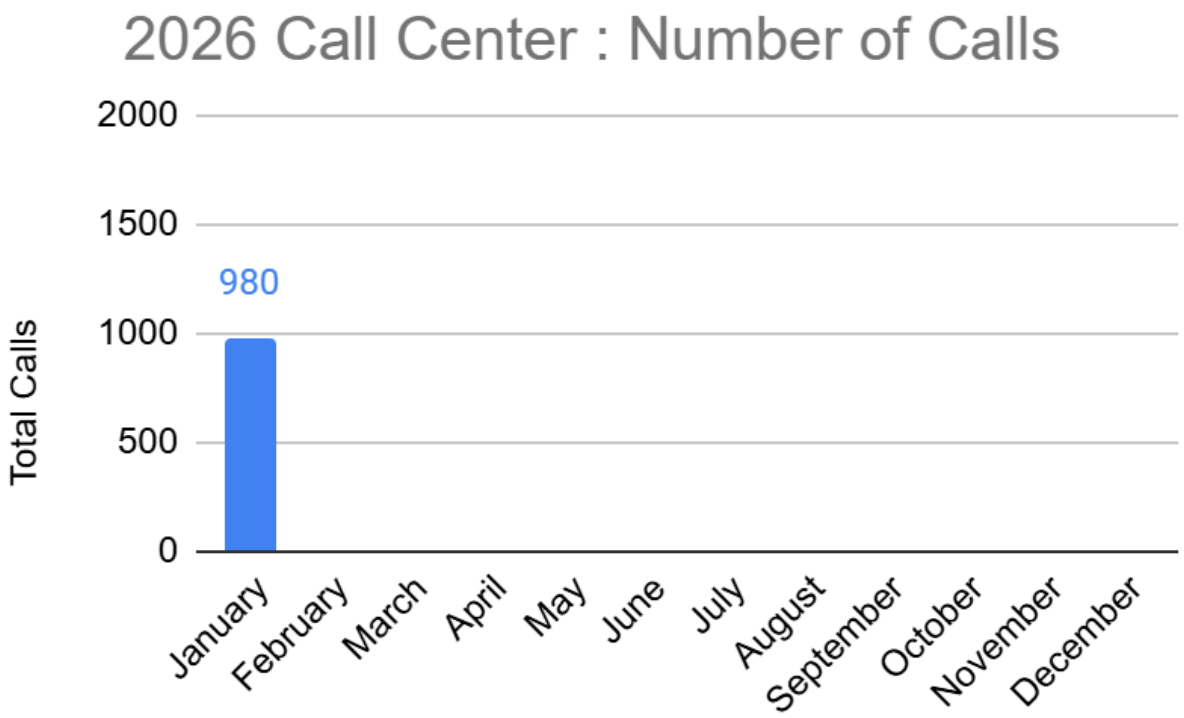
*Sensory Room has been closed for maintenance since August, 2025.

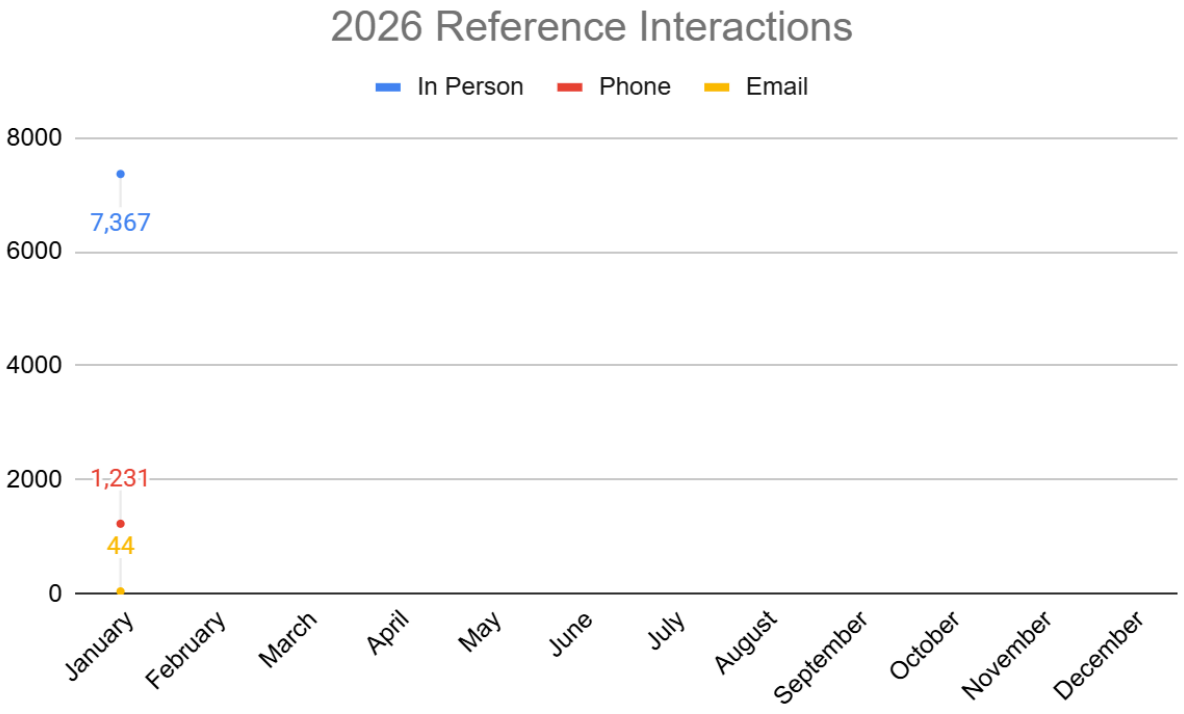
Technology Statistics



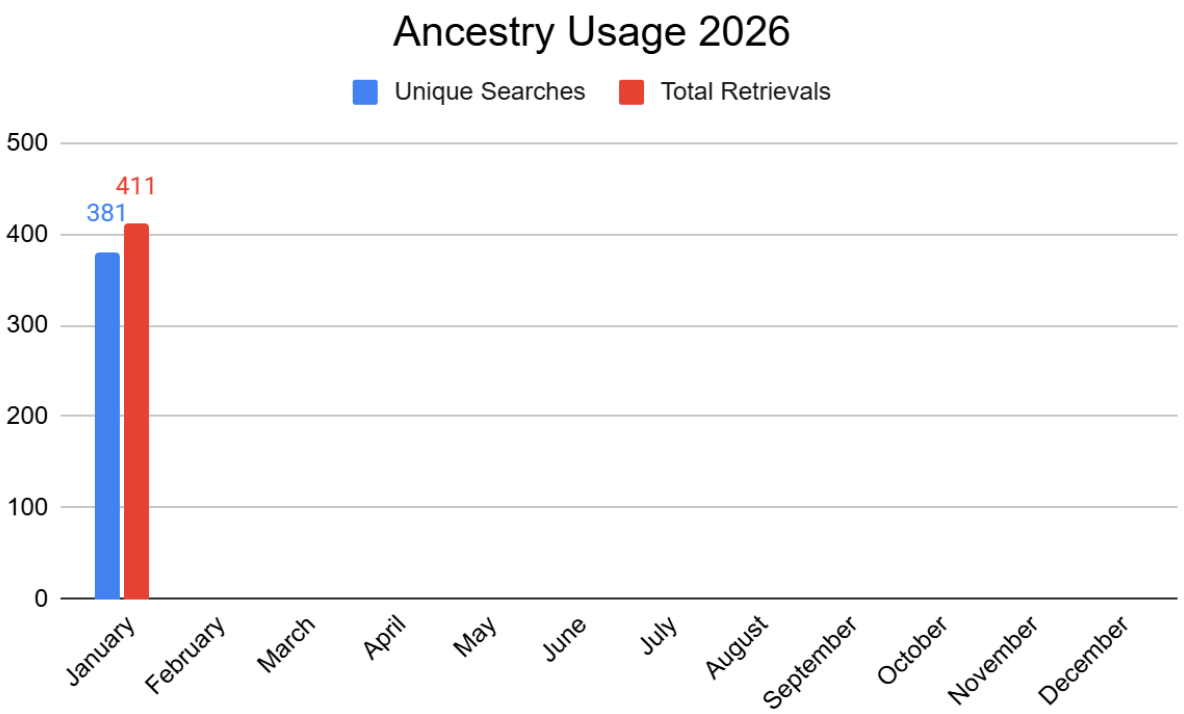


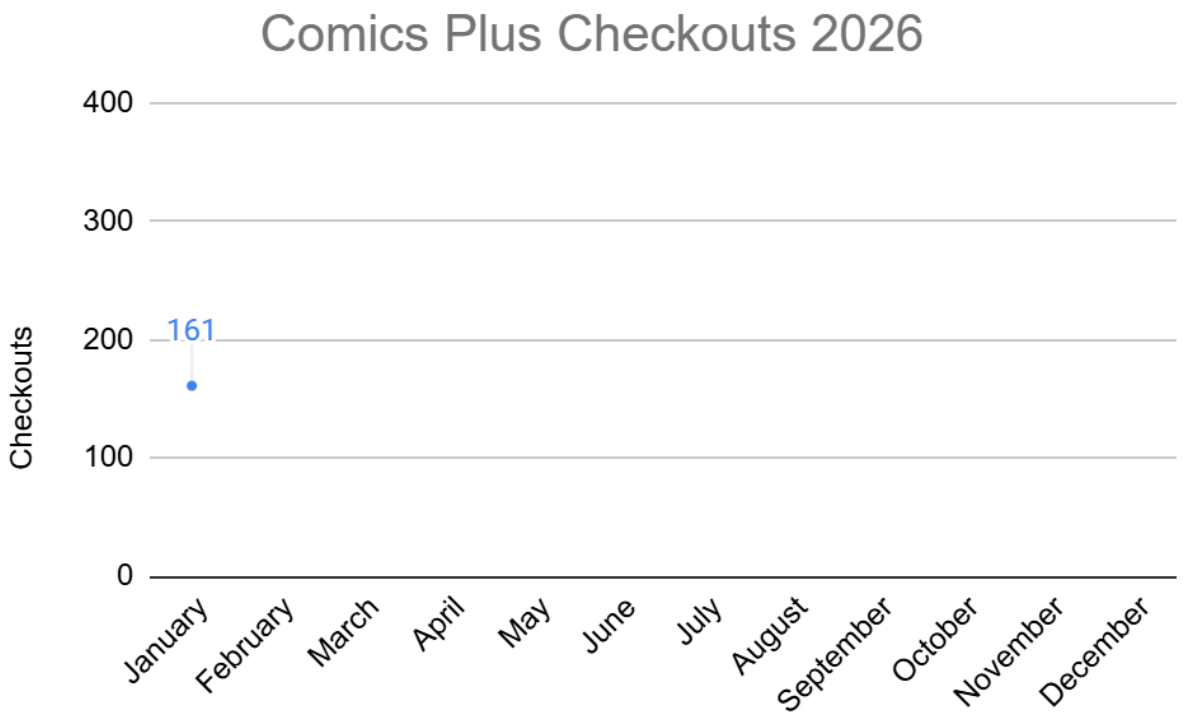
Reference Statistics

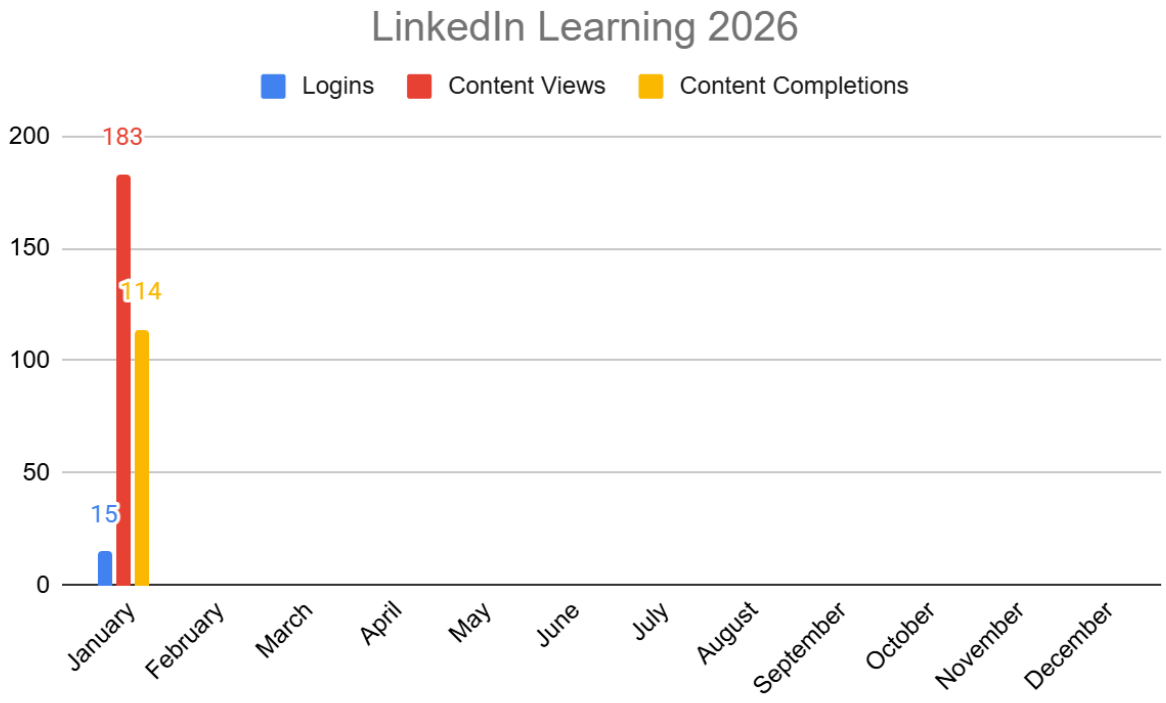


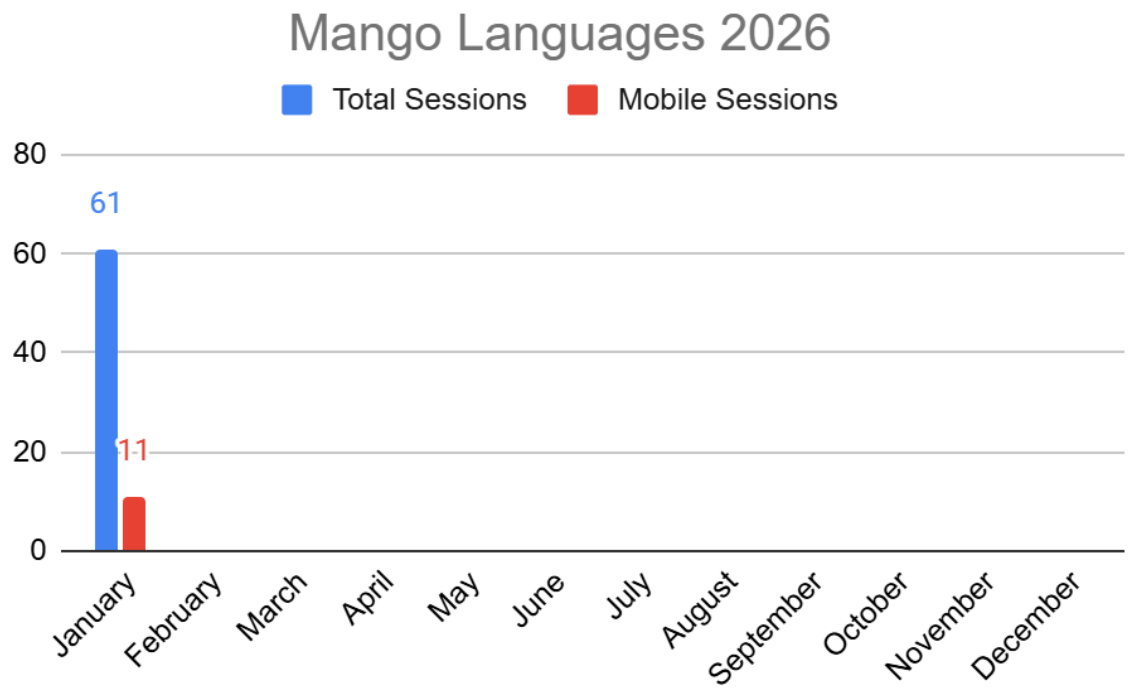


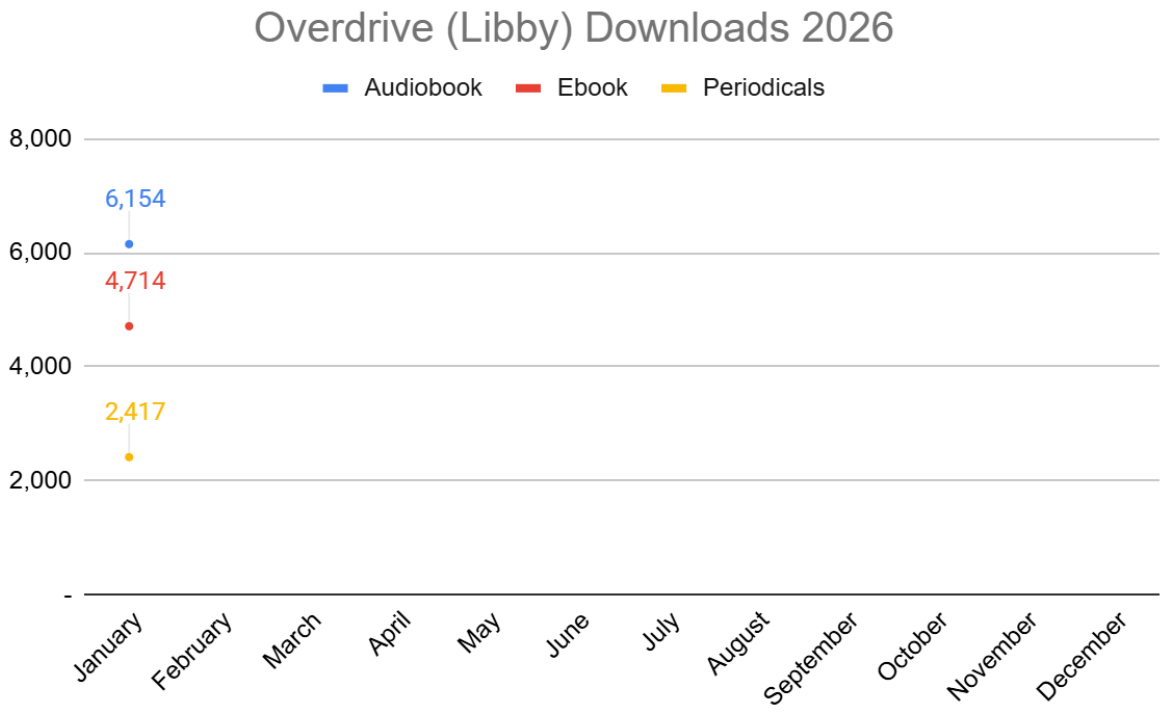
Digital Resource Usage Statistics






LinkedIn Learning 2026
Logins
Content Views
Content Completions
200
150
100
50
0
183
114
15
January
February
March
April
May
June
July
August
September
October
November
December


Mango Languages 2026
Total Sessions
Mobile Sessions
80
60
40
20
0
61
11
January
February
March
April
May
June
July
August
September
October
November
December


Overdrive (Libby) Downloads 2026
Audiobook
Ebook
Periodicals
8,000
6,000
4,000
2,000
-
6,154
4,714
2,417
January
February
March
April
May
June
July
August
September
October
November
December