

Director's Report: Submitted by Patrick Pittman

January 2026

Director's Focus:

Space Analysis; Future Renovations; Year-End Assessment/Reporting

Personnel: See Personnel Committee report.

Finance: See Finance Committee report.

Facilities: See Facilities report.

Policy: See Policies Committee report.

Library Function: The board provided useful feedback during the January meeting regarding a flattening, or “plateau”, of building usage once library services reach a community saturation threshold. The thought indicates the board has a forward-thinking mindset when considering growth potential. However, the 2026 forecasts in all key metrics do not indicate this year will hit that point. The library will grow with community demand, which still has a significant ceiling. January 2026 had 6,199 patrons use the building over 227 service hours. This equates to roughly 27 patrons per hour (pph). January 2025 saw 5,906 patrons per hour at 230 service hours, for 25.7 pph. The goal remains at an annual utilization increase of 5-7%. As a slower month, January's numbers put the library right on target.

The key markers for library utilization still rely heavily on programming. January did not deviate from this pattern, as the library saw significant attendance at programs for early literacy, children, and families. Usage of meeting rooms and study rooms also contributed to library use, particularly as many have found the study rooms a vital resource for counseling sessions, studying, Zoom calls, and quiet spaces to read. These factors align to increase total utilization, while diversifying the offerings Seymour has for individual users. Building out on areas of public demand and seeing a steady influx of people using those features indicates a healthy library environment.

Circulation of library items improved marginally in January. On the upside, the library has not lost circulation. This indicates Seymour has items patrons want to read, watch, or use. The overall numbers look quite similar to pre-covid, so physical item demand may have reached the plateau. However, e-book and digital audiobook circulation grew exponentially in 2025. Seymour needs to ensure a tight curation of physical items while aggressively expanding into the digital side of procurement. This method worked to stabilize circulation numbers in late-2025, but it does have significant budgetary constraints. In that regard, the library will work within its capacity for the start of 2026 to verify a causal relationship between circulation and digital items.

The library participated in targeted outreach during January. On January 30th, Seymour sent professional staff to Hill School's Career Day. This provided students in grades 4 and 5 with the opportunity to ask about the job titles of Library Director and Public Librarian. The event created several new points of contact in the upper elementary grades, as well as meeting some familiar faces in an unfamiliar setting. The event helped raise awareness about the library at an age level where children can begin requesting library visits. The plan of service for the Summer Reading Program will filter down to focus on this age level in 2026, as prior years used the middle and high schools as a jumping point. The library should see a tween-focused set of programs for summer engagement.

The library had an initial visit and consultation from Vargas Associates for the space analysis of multiple parts of the library on January 7th. The completion of the analysis will not likely result in drawings until late February, but starting the process has boosted staff morale. To reiterate a few points, mostly made by the board and pertinent committees, the library does not have an estimate regarding the total costs of the project. The board hopes to see fundraising and capital campaigns begin in 2026, with a hope, not an expectation, that the library will have the funding to begin the project within this fiscal year. Everything pertaining to how the process unfolds will depend almost entirely on the renderings and recommendations from Vargas Associates.

Seymour has also made rough outlines of the upcoming community survey, as directed by the new Long-Range Plan (LRP). The last municipal survey, led by the Town of Sweden, provided insight and tangible steps to create a better user experience at Seymour. As the library pivots from its former LRP, it will help to know what went well, room for improvement, and things that no longer work. The flexibility of adjusting the new LRP with the feedback received will ensure that the service population will have its needs met in conjunction with the goals set by the board. Implementation should create a positive feedback loop of steady enhancements.

Looking Ahead: The library took in significant grant and donation funds in 2025 and began spending some of it in 2026. A digitization grant made possible by the Rochester Community Foundation allowed for the purchase of new scanning equipment in the Local History Room. Digitizing the community's history represents a top priority for the library. The current state of the documents and maps do not meet guidelines for preservation. A municipal library would not have the expectation of entirely acid-free storage, climate control, and gloved usage in a public area. Digitizing allows the library to retain the records, while still opening the room for public research. The project timeline will extend roughly three years or more, with labor coming from various employees and interns.

Likewise, as stipulated in the agreement with the third-party CPA, the presentation of the 2025 financial results should take place at the February board meeting. The board can work with Yaeger Treviso in finding time during the meeting for a breakdown of the end-of-year financials. The presentation helps inform the board how well the prior year budget worked to determine best use of funds.

Lastly, grant writing has gotten underway for upgrades to the security system and to ensure ADA compliance with the library's website. If 2024 represented a pivot, and 2025 represented stabilization, 2026 will represent taking the next steps in library modernization and enhancements. Coincidentally, this year will celebrate the 30th anniversary of the current building's opening and 90 years of the library in the community. As the library and board work toward their goals during this year, it should keep the historic significance in mind.

In Closing: The library did quite well in 2025, with upward movement in all key metrics. The reporting to the New York State Library and NYSED will help create a full picture of what that entails. The reporting should reach completion by April 1st (NYSL requirement), with a municipal report for board approval at the April 15th meeting. Otherwise, the library and board appear on the same page on forward thinking and acting. Both have several objectives to meet this year, which will require diligent work and careful planning. Everyone involved has the capability, but everyone will also need to remain mindful of their capacity.