Director's Report: Submitted by Patrick Pittman

August 2026

Director's Focus:

Pending Grants; Summer Reading Closeout; 2027 Budget

Personnel: See Personnel Committee report.

Finance: See Finance Committee report.

Facilities: See Facilities report.

Policy: See Policies Committee report.

Library Function: The conclusion of the 2026 Summer Reading Program provided useful data for future planning and an early indication of shifting library demographics. Tween and teen participation was stronger in 2026 than in any year since 2020. Activity in this age group included 37 volunteer sessions, 62 programs with 429 attendees, and 119 program registrations. Overall, tweens and teens showed the largest increase in engagement, broadening and strengthening the library's service mix.

Building usage declined in August compared with 2025, with a noticeable decrease after the Summer Reading Program ended. The library recorded 6,088 building visits in August 2026, compared with 6,628 in August 2025. Year-to-date usage is down approximately 2% from 2025; however, that comparison masks the operational reality of the summer months. After a softer start to the year, the library experienced sustained high foot traffic and patron volume throughout the Summer Reading Program, with daily activity placing significant demand on service desks, public areas, programming spaces, and staff availability.

This level of summer use required appropriate staffing to maintain service quality, support programming, manage patron needs, and keep the building operating smoothly. In both years, more than 51,000 people used the building through the end of August. Meeting room requests remained flat compared with 2025, while study room usage has spiked, indicating a shift toward smaller-group and individual space needs. These trends remain within expected community service patterns for the library.

Circulation has increased slightly from 2025. Through August 2025, the library circulated 103,970 items; during the same period in 2026, circulation reached 104,143 items. As noted in previous reports, continued investment in audiobooks and e-books through Libby is likely to support stronger circulation moving forward. Spending patterns for these resources indicate their value: when the core collection remains consistent and electronic resource investment increases, overall circulation tends to improve. In months with minimal electronic resource spending, circulation remains flat or declines compared with the prior year. This pattern reflects broader changes in borrowing habits over the past several years.

Programming remained strong, particularly in connection with the Summer Reading Program. Children's Services offered 72 programs throughout the summer with 3,386 participants, averaging 48 participants per program. While the total number of programs decreased by 11 from 2025, participation increased by 324. This shift demonstrates the efficiency and effectiveness of Youth Services planning and execution.

Adult programming also showed positive momentum, especially through new history-based lecture offerings. In August, Mark Sample, a professor at MCC, presented lectures on the American Revolution and the Civil War, each drawing approximately 20 to 30 attendees. A broader range of adult programs has helped attract a previously untapped audience. Collectively, these efforts show Seymour Library continuing to advance its mission of supporting literacy and lifelong learning for all.

The endorsed 2027 budget provides a credible and workable framework to present to the municipalities. The budget aligns anticipated expenses with revenue and reflects a calculated breakeven, matching revenues and expenses, approach. The auditor's notes indicated that the board should budget for donation purchases and capital expenditures, and the board has complied with that recommendation. Before adopting the budget in October, the board should review these figures against the fund balance to ensure that the final numbers are grounded in current financial conditions.

As part of that review, the August financial package should be understood through an adjusted operating lens: once the one-time $93,500 bathroom-project grant reimbursement is removed and the pending $5,732 Library System Grant receivable is recognized, the year-end run-rate projection remains within roughly $800 of breakeven after applying the appropriated fund balance. Now that summer has ended, the library has also begun trimming back hours for non-salaried employees to better align staffing levels with the slower post-summer operating period.

Looking Ahead: With summer now behind us, the library typically enters a slower period from post-Labor Day through early October. Historical trends suggest this is the best time to pause, evaluate, and plan. Several staff members will take vacation during this period, when the pace of daily operations is less intense. The library and the board are aligned in using September to focus on collection management, building improvements, and policy evaluation—work that often gets delayed during the summer months.

The community survey has been released to the public, and the library has received approximately 200 responses to date. The collection period will close on September 20th. The data gathered from the survey will help inform library operations in 2027. Early comments appear useful for considering future programming and collection management options, and the survey will also give the board feedback to evaluate against its goals. Related to those goals, the

Seymour Library Foundation will hold its After Hours event on October 17^{th}, 2026, to raise funds for the Teen Scene Renovation.

In Closing: August reflects a stable operating position as the library transitions out of the summer season. Building visits softened following the close of the Summer Reading Program, but year-to-date usage remains close to 2025 levels, and circulation has slightly exceeded last year's total through August. Programming remains the strongest indicator of community engagement, with increased youth participation despite fewer programs and encouraging attendance for new adult lecture offerings. These trends suggest that targeted programming, continued investment in electronic resources, and community-centered planning are producing measurable results. As the board moves toward budget adoption and reviews community survey feedback, the library is well positioned to use current data to guide collection priorities, building improvements, and services that reflect the evolving needs of Seymour Library patrons.