

REPORT TO CITY COUNCIL

- Grand Rapids Area Library (GRAL) is a free community resource supported by property taxes since 1895.
- GRAL is the busiest library in NE Minnesota outside of Duluth.
- There are six libraries in Itasca County, but 75% of library transactions in Itasca County occur at GRAL.
- GRAL is used by all of Itasca County. More than 50% of checkouts are from cardholders who live outside the City of Grand Rapids. This is a long-term pattern going back decades.
- Thank you, City Council, for funding 84% of GRAL's annual operations through 2025.

SERVICE AREA

2025

The Library serves the following cities and townships:

- Arbo
- Blackberry
- Cohasset
- Feeley
- **Grand Rapids**
- Harris
- LaPrairie
- Sago
- Spang
- Wabana
- Warba

Service Area Population: 21,071

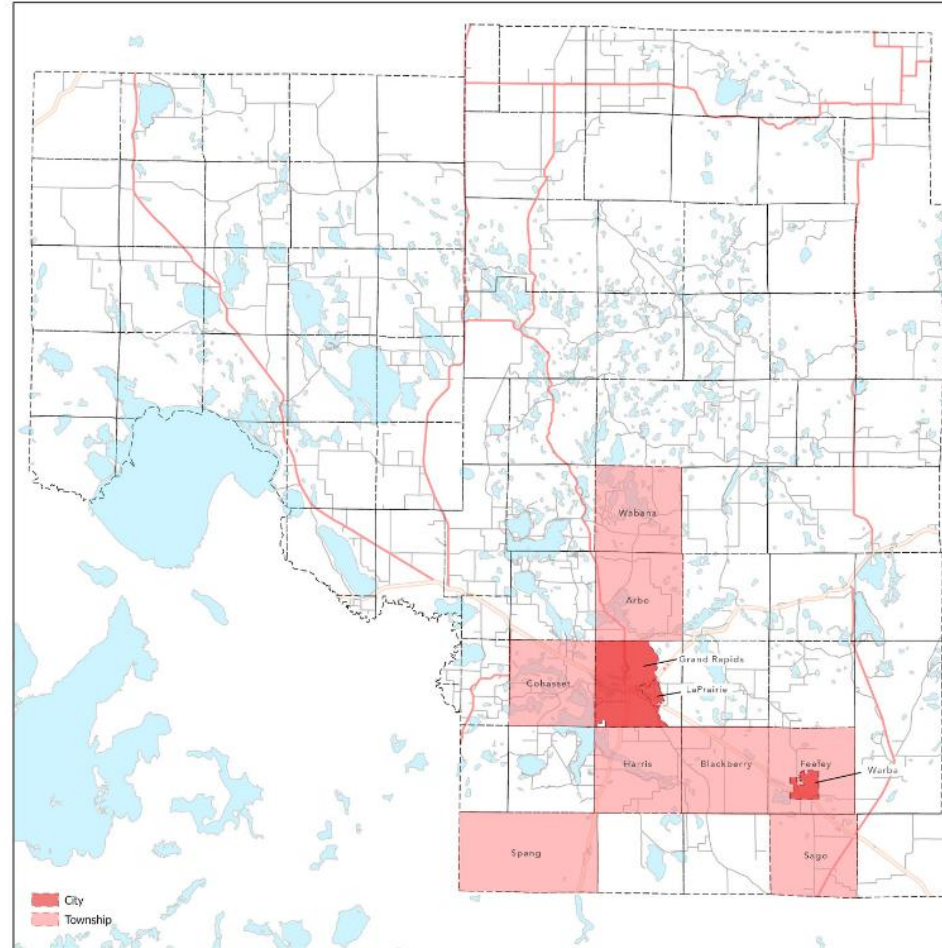
Library Cardholders: 9,388

Door Count: 63,878

Materials Circulation: 168,080 items
[~20% are downloadable items]

Passports accepted: 1,052

Hours of public computer use: 2,085



GRAL BEYOND BOOKS

2025

Our wide reach meets community needs with unique in-person and online programs - and much more.

ANNUAL
PUZZLE
PALOOZA

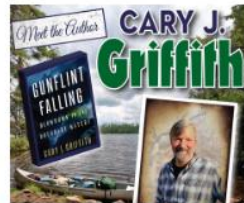


Active
Social
Media



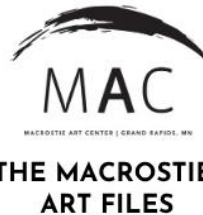
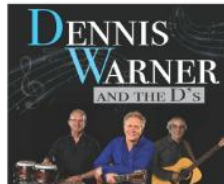
Online Storytime!

Explore & Create
with Ms. Diana



LEGO
CLUB

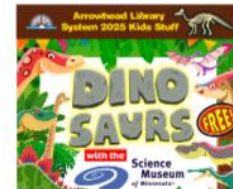
Page Turners
Book Club



GRAND RAPIDS AREA LIBRARY & EARLY EDGE
present
BookTime

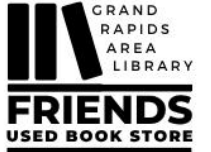


bell museum
After School
STEAM



TEEN
TUESDAY

Teen Book
Club



Spring Fever
Pop-Up
Book Sale

Exploring the
Superior National
Forest

#gralbeyondbooks



GRAL BEYOND BOOKS

2025

Children's Programs promoting literacy, education, and entertainment:

- In person programs: 49
- In person program attendance: 1,493
- Summer Celebration attendance: 537 people
- Summer Reading participation: 1,391
- Winter Reading participation: 471
- Artastic at Home kits distributed: 1,050

Online Storytime viewership

2024:

- 52 episodes
- 26,909 views

2025: Through September

- 41 episodes
- 14,645 views

#gralbeyondbooks



GRAL BEYOND BOOKS

2025

How does the Library support the community, beyond lending books?

Open & Welcoming Environment for All:

- Free parking
- Public telephone
- Public restrooms
- ADA accessible building
- Device charging station
- Water bottle refill station
- Community information resource
- “Dry” space
- Polling place for local voting
- Children’s play space
- Teen space
- Quiet study rooms
- Meeting rooms
- Library Lawn:
 - StoryWalk
 - Music park
 - Picnic tables
 - Lounge seating
 - Fishing pier
- Safe space for individuals experiencing homelessness
- Vulnerable adults and children and their caregivers
- Tourists visiting
- Low-cost Used Book Store
- Community bulletin board

Public Meeting Space:

- Supervised family visits
- Attorney/client meeting
- Probation officer/client meeting
- Other City, County, and State official/client meetings
- Tutoring
- Recovery groups
- Support group meetings
- Teen group homes
- Book club meetings
- Young/teen parent group meetings

Business/Personal:

- Small business operations/meetings
- Passport processing
- Resource support for those recently incarcerated (sent via Itasca County Sheriff’s Office)

Volunteerism:

- RSVP (Retired Senior Volunteer Program)
- Community service completion
- Job readiness placement
- Students
- Passionate patrons

Programming & Education:

- In-person programming for children, teen, and adults
- Online programming for children
- Literacy programs for all ages (annual summer and winter reading, etc.)
- Free community events (Summer Celebration and more)
- Public and private school field trips
- Resource and curriculum support for homeschool families
- Test proctoring

Technology Services:

- Free/open WiFi
- Free computer use
- Faxing
- Copying
- Printing support
- Microfilm machine
- Light tech support

Library of Things/Items Other Than Books:

- Cake pans
- Educational Kits for children
- Memory Kits for adults
- Lawn games
- Art kits
- Bike locks
- Kilowatt meters
- CD player
- DVDs
- Games
- Fishing poles
- PFDs
- Ukuleles
- Pedometers
- Paper shredder
- Puzzles
- Exercise bike with reading platform
- Free access to newspapers and magazines
- Travel guides and maps

#gralbeyondbooks



2025

AN EFFECTIVE COMMUNITY PARTNER



CHALLENGES

1 Funding

Loss of funding for 2026 diminishes our ability to provide programs, services, and access.

- In 2025, we are staffed 268 hours per week, with four full-time and four part-time staff.
- **In 2026, we will be staffed at 195 hours per week. Only one position maintains full-time status.**

CHALLENGES

2 Maintaining Service Levels

It is difficult to balance public expectations of open hours and services, against available funding.

THE CHILDREN'S LIBRARY: 30 STAFF HOURS CUT

- Reduced in-person programs and events
- No Online Storytime – outreach that had hundreds of views per month
- Minimal Summer reading programming
- No Summer Celebration
- No school visits
- Slower time of processing new materials
- Minimal cataloging support
- Minimal book repair of items to make them last longer
- Fewer displays
- No community outreach
- No participation in regional meetings
- Significantly reduced time for collection development and maintenance.

CHALLENGES

2 Maintaining Service Levels

CATALOGING/PROCESSING OF MATERIALS: 15 STAFF HOURS CUT

Significantly reduced speed in:

- cataloging new and replacement materials
- processing/laminating/labeling books
- ordering Library and janitorial supplies
- fewer calls and questions will be answered including:
 - placing holds on books
 - renewing items
 - updating patron account information

CHALLENGES

2 Maintaining Service Levels

REFERENCE: 12 STAFF HOURS CUT

- Significantly reduced timeliness of:
 - ordering new and replacement materials (young adult, adult fiction, adult nonfiction, large print, magazines, books on CD and Playaway, DVDs, and more)
 - answering dozens of patron/community service questions daily
- Greatly limited:
 - passport services
 - printing/copying/faxing services
 - IT support
 - Public computer access

CHALLENGES

2 Maintaining Service Levels

CIRCULATION (PUBLIC SERVICE CLERKS): 16 STAFF HOURS CUT

- Significantly reduced speed/timeliness of:
 - checking in returned items
 - shelving returned items
 - getting items out for inter-library loan (affecting all libraries in ALS)
 - Library card services
 - answering dozens of patron/community service questions daily
- Greatly limited:
 - printing/copying/faxing services
 - IT support
 - public computer access

CHALLENGES

2 Maintaining Service Levels

GREATER BURDEN PLACED ON DIRECTOR OF LIBRARY SERVICES TO:

- Manage all Library Services
- Manage all employee relations
- Staff the Reference Desk for scheduled passport services
- Order all new and replacement materials (young adult, adult fiction, adult nonfiction, large print, magazines, books on CD and Playaway, DVDs, and more), which requires research and professional journal consultation
- Act as secondary backup staffing for Circulation during all open hours
- Act as sole liaison to Board, Foundation, and Friends groups

CHALLENGES

3 Building Maintenance

Phase I of the Façade Maintenance & Repair plan is complete.

Phase II includes necessary roof replacement.

THANK YOU

Providing essential day-to-day & emergency operational support:

- Public Works
- IT
- Facilities
- Finance

Additional funding for collection enhancement, programs, and projects:

- Grand Rapids Area Library Foundation
- Grand Rapids Area Library Friends

Other community supporters:

- Arrowhead Library System:
 - \$50,000 in-kind IT
 - Monthly take-and-create programming
 - Quality in-person programming and promotions
- Community Volunteers:
 - In 2024, 85 people served on boards and committees, at special events, and regularly inside the Library, giving 3,190.5 hours of their time.
 - As of September 2025, 86 volunteers have given 2,343 hours of their time.

