

MEMORANDUM

January 26, 2026

TO: John Walsh, City Administrator

Gloria Butsch, Finance Director

FR: Suzanne Bishop, Library Director

RE: Impact of Decrease in Library Services in FY 2026

We have seen a substantial increase in patrons using the library, up approximately 17% over calendar year 2024. The current downward trend in the economy means more patrons needing our services. Because we are the only place where people can use the services we offer for free or a very minimal fee, we are already seeing increases in “non-traditional” library services, e.g., high schoolers working on homework and visiting with friends, tutors meeting with their students, caregivers bringing their little ones to storytimes and staying to use the Children’s Library and check out materials, and people using our wi-fi. The library is designated by FEMA as an “essential community organization.”

Specifically:

- An increase in new library cards. Frequently we hear that people are economizing by borrowing books, DVDs and audiobooks.
- More patrons are using our public computers to search for and apply for jobs, find and file government documents and print forms requiring signatures
- More patrons are coming to us for help setting up and using digital devices, email addresses, including senior citizens needing to stay in touch with family and using the Internet; these interactions require 5-to-30-minute meetings
- More patrons are borrowing hotspots and our wi-fi from the parking lot after hours.
- An increase in social service workers bringing kiddos in for observation, and for supervised family visits

Here is a list of potential impacts if staff reductions were required.

- Reduce open hours (Columbia Center and library) by 16 or more hours/week; we would no longer be able to adequately serve the existing patron base, or meet increased community need

- Additional front desk shifts taken by all full-time staff (up to three five-hour shifts/week), reducing the time they have for their essential tasks and responsibilities by up to 30%
 - Fewer storytimes
 - Near elimination of youth outreach
 - Up to 30% fewer items purchased, processed and made available to be checked out
 - Eliminate office hours in the local history room
 - Some reduction in community outreach
- Reduced Makerspace hours
- Reduced meeting room availability in the Columbia Center, reflecting the reduction in building hours
- Reduced/eliminated adult programming
 - No longer offer a Book Club (Library Assistant)
 - No longer offer the Genial Genealogists bi-monthly meetings (Patron Services Librarian)
 - Reduce Adults and Crafts programs to bi-monthly (Library Technician)
- A 50% reduction in tasks performed by library assistants, i.e., coordinating volunteers, scheduling meetings, producing library promotional materials and off-desk help. These tasks must be done by full-time staff.
- Reduce items circulated
- Cut the Summer Library Challenge in length, programs offered, or both

I can elaborate on this list as needed.