

Updated Strategic Plan 2025

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Our Mission

As always when looking at our goals for the coming years, we start with a reminder of our mission statement:

The Hatfield Public Library is a welcoming and lively center for lifelong learning, personal enrichment and community interaction. It is dedicated to serving all Hatfield residents, and is especially cognizant of its role in promoting the value of reading and self expression to the youth of the town. The Library is responsive to community needs as they evolve over time and strives to connect its users to ideas, to experiences, and to others in the community and to the world at large.

It's easy to forget in the day to day running of the library, but everything we do is in service of these goals. Putting books on display. Keeping the collection fresh and organized. Making sure furniture is clean and comfortable. Offering programs for everyone from babies to teens to seniors. Taking the time to recommend books to patrons, or assist them with recalcitrant electronics. Even something as simple as keeping the steps clear on an icy day is in service to making the library a welcoming place.

Of course, as many of you are already aware, we do have limits. Our library resides in Dickinson Memorial Hall, which was built more than 130 years ago, and not designed as a library. The entire public space is just under 2,000 square feet. There is no meeting room, so groups like the Library Book Club and Knit & Crochet have to meet in the nonfiction area in the basement. The bathroom is so small that the sink is in the hallway which, in turn, is so narrow that you can't pass by when someone is using the sink. There is no handicapped access and there is no way to address this barring a large-scale, multi-million dollar project.

Pursuing this type of large-scale project is outside the remit of this plan. Anyone interested in discussing a potential project, or learning the history of past efforts, should contact the Library Director, Eliza Langhans, at hatfieldpubliclibrary@gmail.com.

Instead, the goal of this exercise is to ask: Are we doing everything we can? Within the limits that exist on the library—be they imposed by building, staff limitations, or budget constraints—are we putting our efforts where they can be the most effective? These are not new questions for us. In fact, it often feels like we ask them every day. But we wanted to take a moment to pause and assess our efforts, as well as to solicit input from you, our patrons, so that we can be united in our objectives and work together to make the library what we want it to be.

Methodology

In the summer of 2023 we put out a survey which was completed by 16 families, 11 teens, 26 adults, and 42 children. Surveys were customized for each demographic, but included questions on library collection, visiting habits, library programs, and the most effective ways to do outreach.

From April to June of 2024 we conducted five focus groups with a total of 23 participants. Focus groups participants were drawn from regular library users and program attendees. In addition we spoke or emailed with 10 Hatfield teachers. We also conducted interviews with the Trustees and library staff.

We have collected and analyzed data in the following areas: circulation of library materials, library visits by hour and day, and program attendance. We also examined our budget to look at how much was being spent on each area of library operations.

Bright Spots

We are grateful and honored to say that the feedback from the focus groups and surveys was overwhelmingly positive. Patrons affirmed that they feel welcome in the library and that staff are friendly, engaging and helpful. One patron said, “It’s like Cheers, where everyone knows your name.” Several acknowledged that we have done well in optimizing our use of space, specifically by creating areas for comfortable seating, as well as displaying books and other library materials.

They appreciate the work we do to keep the collection fresh, and our efforts to promote new collection items, like our unboxing YouTube videos and the weekly Wowbrary newsletter.

In terms of outreach, some patrons mentioned they appreciate our Remind text messages, though not everyone was aware of this service. They appreciated our programming fliers, monthly email newsletter, and our Facebook and Instagram posts. Interestingly, one of the most common ways people mentioned learning about programs was our outdoor sandwich boards, something we will explore further under action items.

Programming in the library has also exploded in the last year, surpassing pre-pandemic levels by 77 percent. With the hard work of our Children’s Librarian, Jocelyn Cozzo, and support of the other library staff, we held 211 programs in FY2024, with 2,647 attendees, compared to 111 programs with 1,493 attendees in FY2019. Some highlights include our popular weekly Popcorn & Pokemon club, our new monthly Music and

Movement on Saturdays, and our series of special summer programs, some of which brought in more than 100 attendees. We also have had some new community-led groups, including a parent-led Minecraft group and a kid-directed Dungeons & Dragons group. Comments on our programming from the surveys and focus groups was overwhelmingly positive, with the most common feedback being to want more.

Another bright spot: people are reading! As we will explore further under Data Analysis, the two strongest growing areas of our collection are adult books and kids books.

Below are a few more positive comments from our surveys. We appreciate having such dedicated and supportive patrons in our community.

“Wonderful little Library. Very welcoming staff.”

“Love the library and the librarians are all so helpful and friendly.”

“Hours, options and programs run very seamlessly!”

“Love the summer programs you do; and the toys in the children’s room.”

“The library is absolutely a bright spot. Please continue offering programs and books for all ages!”

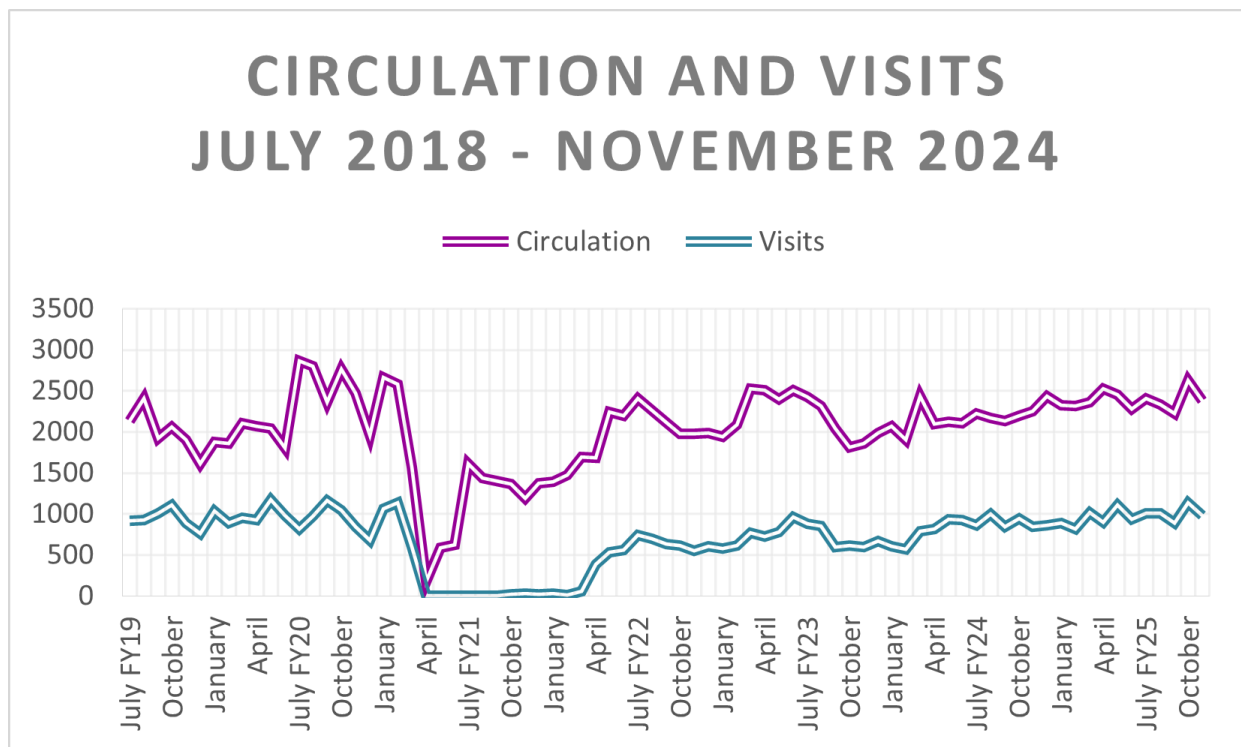
Data Analysis

Circulation Overview

Comparing data over time can be tricky as parameters can change. One example of this is that in July of 2019, our network changed the settings in the circulation system so that renewals became automatic. Previously, if a patron had an item checked out and they wanted to renew it, they had to request a renewal through the library, or renew it themselves by logging into their patron account through the online catalog. Now, anytime library items go past due date, the item is renewed either one or two times, depending on the setting for that item.

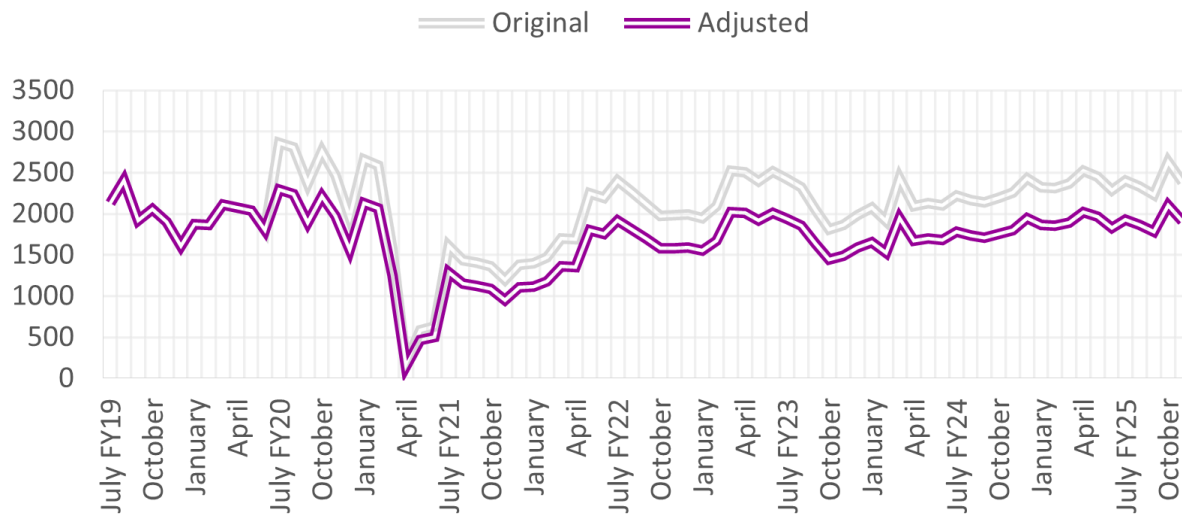
We appreciate this more user-friendly setting, and our patrons appreciate it as well. However, because we have always counted renewals and circulations as one number, aka one renewal is equal to one circulation, this had the effect of inflating our circulation numbers—and this at a time when looking at data already tricky, since all our numbers went down to zero when we closed in March of 2020, and as they came back up, check-out patterns and behaviors were changing.

In this chart tracking total circulation and visits from 2018 to 2024, you can see how drastically we were initially affected by the pandemic.



You can also see that both circulation and visits are back up to pre-pandemic levels. Except, when you factor in the change in renewal policy, is circulation really as high as it seems? By comparing circulation data over time, we calculated that the auto-renewals added an additional 20 percent to our circulation numbers. Here is the data with the post-July 2019 numbers adjusted downward by 20 percent.

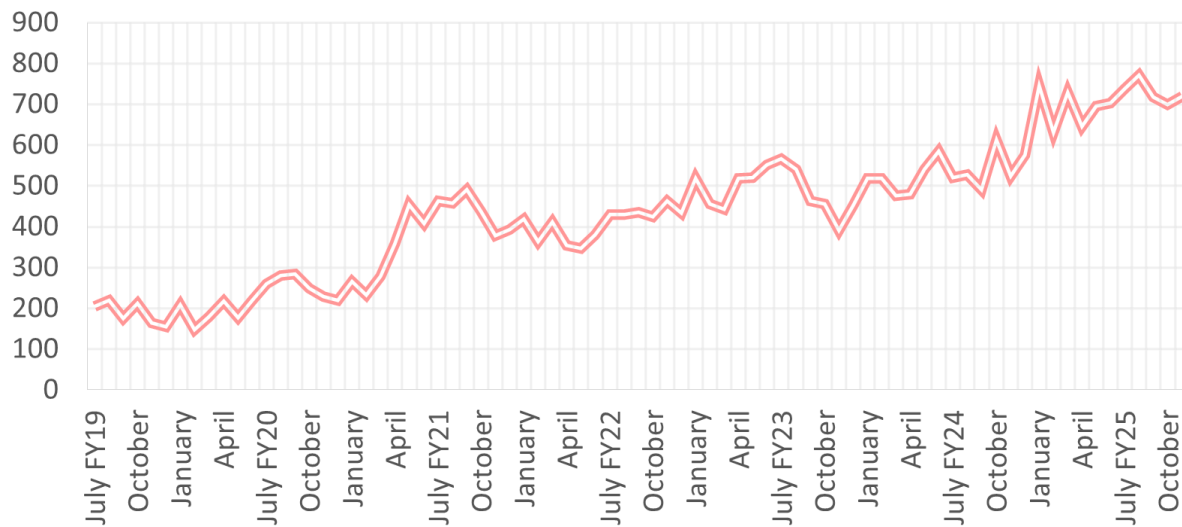
CIRCULATION ADJUSTED FOR AUTORENEWALS



Now it is possible to see that our overall numbers are trending slightly downward to where they were pre-pandemic. Out of curiosity, we ran the numbers for neighboring libraries, with the same adjustment for auto-renewal, and discovered that we are not an outlier in this area, and that in fact our rebound has been stronger than some.

In addition, these numbers do not include circulation of e-books and e-audio, which have gone up substantially in recent years. Here is a look at this increase:

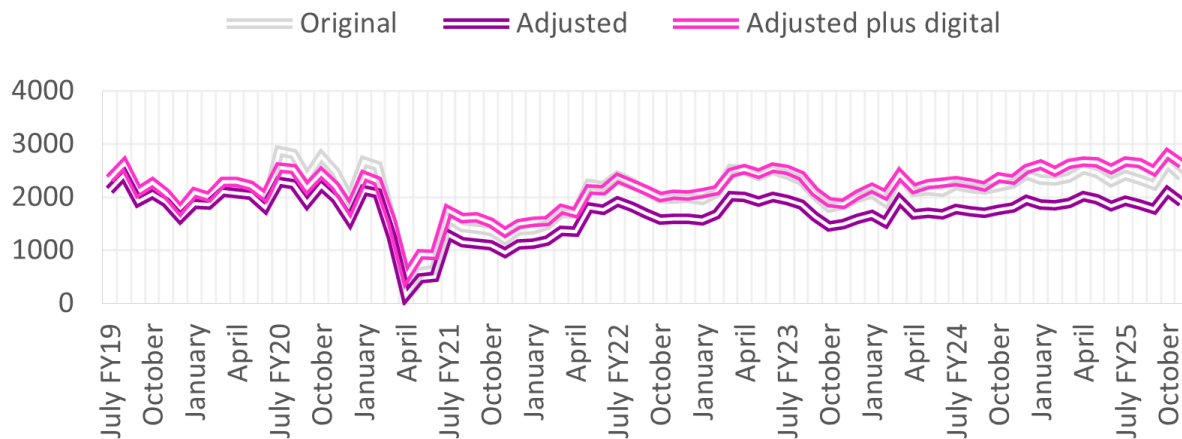
DIGITAL CIRCS JULY 2018 TO NOVEMBER 2024



As you can see, circulation of digital items has almost tripled over the last six years.

And here is the circulation chart from above, with an additional line representing our total circulation of physical items combined with our circulation of digital items.

CIRCULATION WITH DIGITAL AND PHYSICAL ITEMS COMBINED

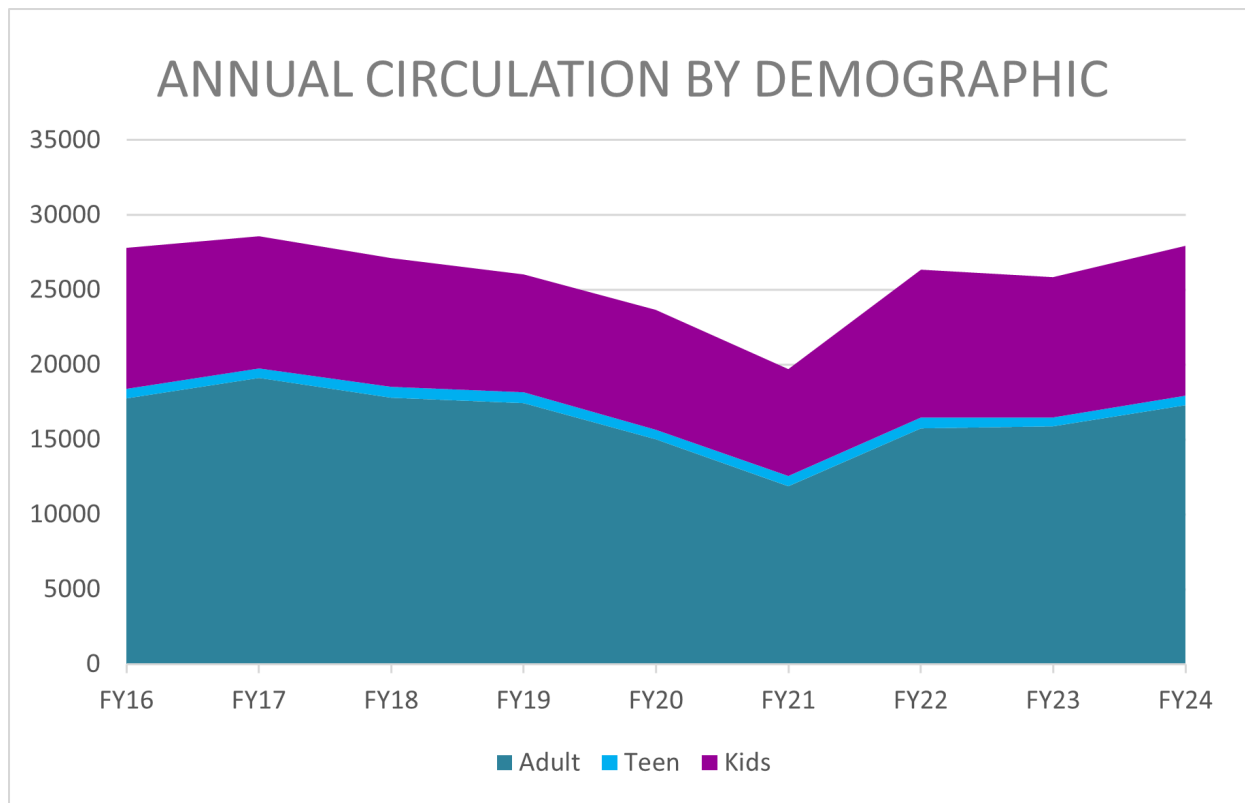


When you include digital, our numbers show robust library use and a healthy post-pandemic recovery.

However, a deeper dive into these numbers reveals that not all areas of library use are growing equally, or at all.

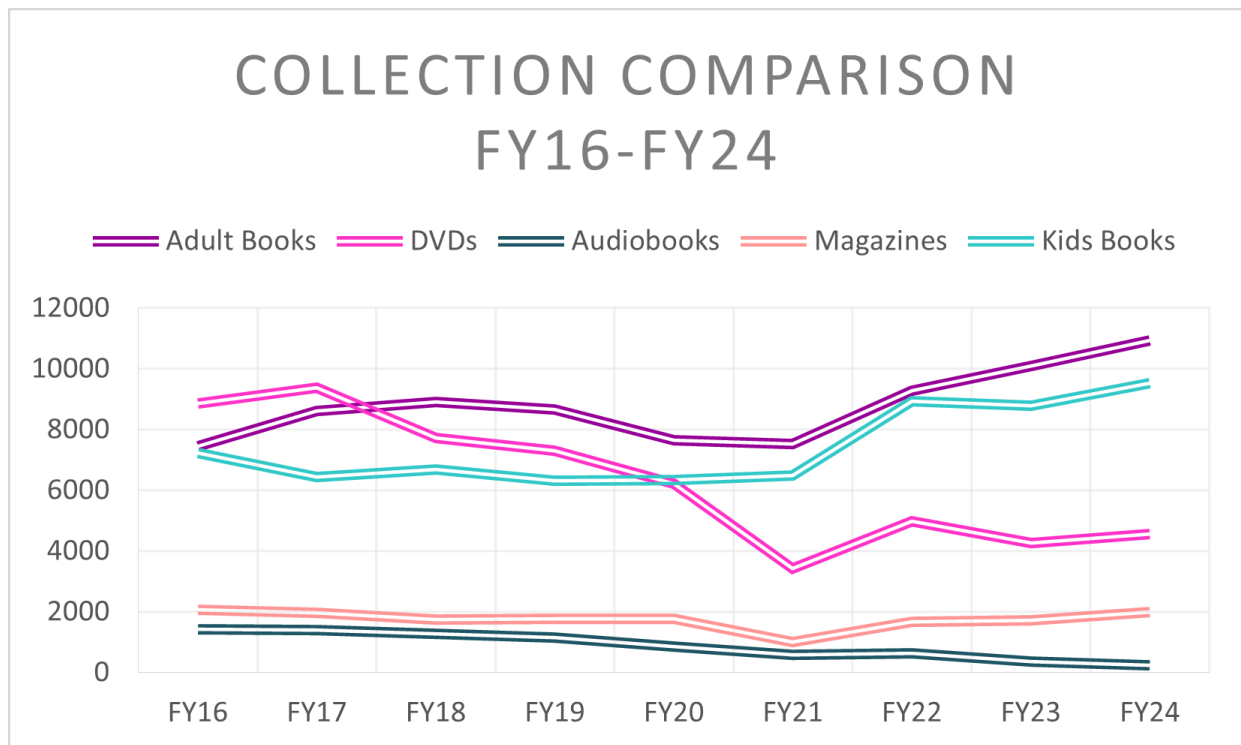
Circulation by Subcategories

Here's a chart to give you a sense of how library circulation is split up between the three main demographic groups served by our collection: adults, children and teenagers.



As you can see, about two-thirds of our circulation comes from the adult collection, with the remainder coming from the children’s collection and only a small percentage coming from our Young Adult (YA) books. The circulation of YA books—and teen participation in library activities—will be discussed in its own subsection below.

In the meantime, here is a look at how five areas of the collection have circulated over the past eight years.



Two areas of the collection, kids books and adult books, both show a healthy growth. Magazines have held steady. DVDs, on the other hand, are half of where they were in FY16, and audiobooks have gone from almost 2,000 circulations in a year to less than 250.

It might seem like there is a simple—and equivalent—explanation for the decrease in both DVD and audiobook circulation: patrons are shifting away from older technologies (CD and DVD players) and migrating to digital platforms. This is certainly true in the case of audiobooks. Listening to an audiobook on CD was always inconvenient, since you had to change to discs throughout the book. Many people listen in their cars, and few cars still have CD players. For the majority of patrons, once they switched to listening to digital audiobooks through Libby (our digital lending library) there would be no incentive to go back and forth between the two formats. The physical audiobook collection will almost certainly be phased out completely in the coming years.

If you look at the data for DVDs, however, you will notice that after plummeting during the pandemic, DVD circulation made a partial recovery and in the last year has even had a slight increase. Anecdotally, we heard from patrons who subscribed to streaming services during the pandemic only to drop them later and switch back to DVDs to save money. Many people still have DVD players, and watching a movie or even a TV show on DVD is not as cumbersome as listening to an audiobook on CD. However, there is another factor that may determine the fate of our DVD collection: fewer and fewer

movies and television shows are being released on DVD. We regularly have patrons asking for movies or TV shows that don't exist on DVD. If blu-ray is available, we may purchase that instead, but many patrons have told us they don't have blu-ray players.

We do offer free online streaming in the form of our Kanopy subscription, and use of this service has been growing slowly but steadily, with 1,913 "plays" in 2024, versus 1,689 in 2023 and 1,141 in 2022. Many popular movies and TV shows are not available through Kanopy, which focuses on critically-acclaimed movies, documentaries, foreign films, and other "thoughtful entertainment." This service, though a favorite of many patrons, has a limited scope.

Inch by Inch: Another Perspective

Because our library building is so small, we often find ourselves analyzing how to best use the space all the way down to the inch. For another perspective on how different areas of the collection are circulated, we calculated the approximate monthly circulation for each subcategory, then measured the number of linear inches the collection takes up in the library. We used that information to calculate a number for "circulation per inch per month," to see how each area of the collection is performing given its allotted space. Just a note that because dividing the circulation by subcategories is time-consuming, this data was calculated over the course of a single year. Data collected over multiple years might lead to varied results.

CIRCULATION BY LINEAR INCH	APROX CIRC PER MONTH	APPROX LINEAR SHELVING BY INCH	CIRCULATION PER INCH PER MONTH
Adult Fiction	571.18	4813	0.12
Gardening	8.91	90	0.1
Crafting	19.39	135	0.14
Cooking	56.35	450	0.13
Biography	42.45	503	0.08
General	138.07	1137	0.12
Large Print	26.91	360	0.07
Audio	18.36	438	0.04
DVD	351.82	3942	0.09
Magazine	166.18	720	0.23
Biography	48.27	502.5	0.1
ALL ADULT	1462.09	13140.5	0.11
Teen Fiction	38.09	536	0.07
Teen Nonfiction	2	30	0.07
Teen Graphic	11.45	148	0.08
ALL TEEN	51.55	714	0.07
Juvenile Fiction	141.55	990	0.14
Juvenile Nonfiction	98.64	584	0.17
Picture Book	289.82	708	0.41
Early Reader	53.91	240	0.22
Board Book	65	72	0.9
Juvenile Graphic	134.64	336	0.4
Juvenile Audio	1.91	29	0.07
Wonderbooks	32.18	76	0.42
Juvenile DVD	30.09	116	0.26
Juvenile Magazine	1.91	12	0.16
ALL JUVENILE	865.18	3339	0.26
ALL LIBRARY	2378.82	16973.5	0.14

We can then sort this data from highest to lowest.

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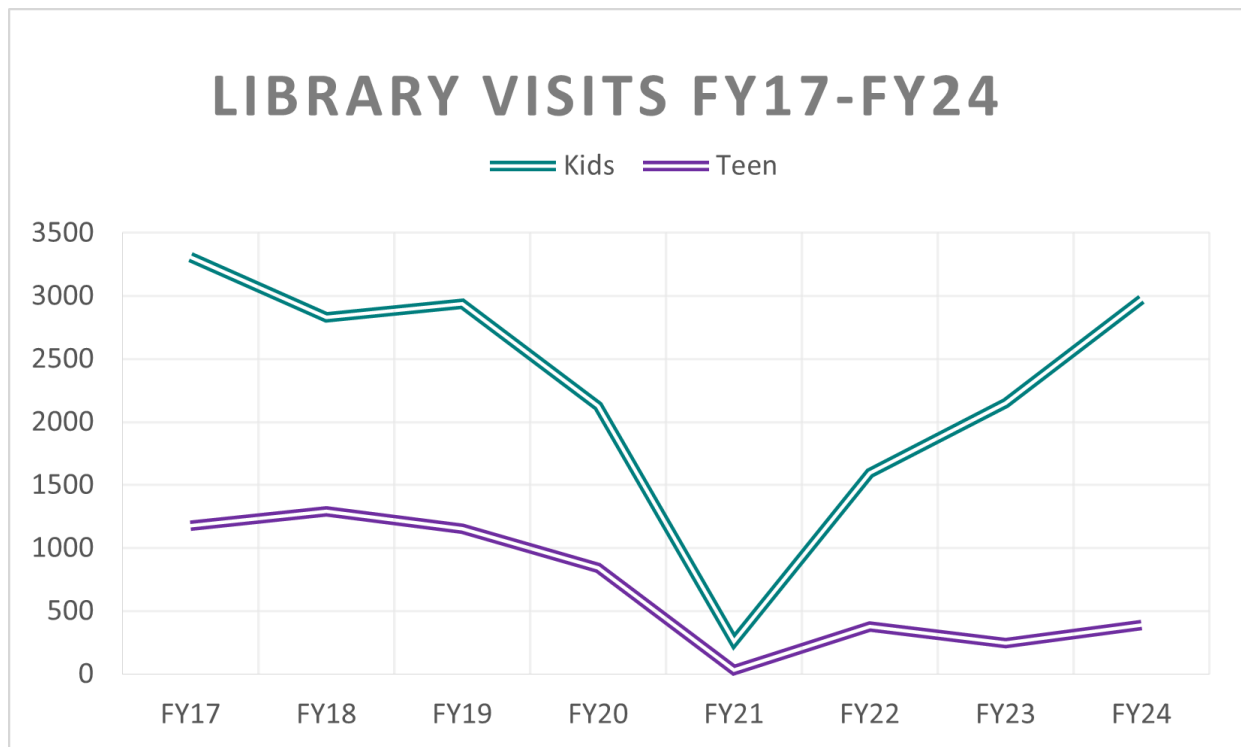
Some collections inherently have an advantage: board books are stored in crates instead of on shelves, thereby taking up less space per book; picture books are very thin and fit more to a shelf. It is notable, however, that almost every category in the juvenile collection is either equal to or higher than the library average. Our Children's area is small but busy and we are proud of what we are able to do within this compact space, both in terms of the collection and programming.

One recent success story in the Children's area is the Wonderbook collection. Wonderbooks are a combination of print and audiobook, and the collection includes picture books, beginning readers and chapter books. They were only added to the collection three years ago and have soared in popularity. It is our instinct to invest both purchasing dollars and collection space towards getting more Wonderbooks, which clearly have struck a chord with our library families. But does the inverse hold true: if a collection is lower on the scale, should we buy less of it?

As is often the case, there is no one size fits all approach. As discussed above, DVDs and audiobooks are subject to larger shifts in usage. Similarly, large print has been affected by users shifting to e-books, which have adjustable fonts. Biography has a lower number, but new biographies continue to circulate well. It's possible we may want to deaccession a greater percentage of older titles, once they are no longer of interest. Gardening has the disadvantage of being seasonal, with the majority of its circulation during the spring and summer months: during those times it is a very popular section.

But what of the confluence of purple at the bottom of the chart? The teen categories are all among the lowest, and that's just part of a larger pattern of falling numbers for teens. We alluded to it earlier, but now the time has finally come to talk about what's going on with teens and the library.

Teen Patrons



Look at the chart above, and the first thing you'll probably notice is the "V" marking the dramatic fall in library visits during FY 20 and FY21, when we were forced to close the library due to the pandemic. But note that with the blue line, representing kid visits, the "V" shot back up to where it was. The purple line has failed to make a similar recovery, and in fact is at less than half of where it was pre-pandemic. This data would hardly be surprising to anyone working at the library; we can see it with our own eyes. The library as a whole may have bounced back from the pandemic with gusto, but the one demographic that hasn't bounced with us is teenagers.

No matter what data point you look at, the number of teens using the library is down. We have less teens coming into the library, an 66% drop from FY19 to FY24. Our circulation of Young Adult (YA) books has been less dramatically affected, perhaps because YA books are also popular among adults, but during that same timeframe we still have a 16% drop. In our 2017 patron survey, we got responses from 29 teens. In our 2023 survey, we could only get 11. When we were scheduling our focus groups as part of this strategic plan, we wanted a focus group for teens, but were unable to pin anyone down. The closest we got were parents of teens attending the adult and family focus groups and telling us their teens were too busy. We do have one wonderful exception—a group of teens who come to get volunteer hours for school, but in general teenagers are simply not coming to the library the way they were in the past. When informally asked why they and their friends aren't coming to the library, the teenagers we talked to also

said they are too busy. The teenagers who did complete our survey said they don't have time to read, and when they do read, they buy the book at a store or online.

This leads to some questions that can be difficult to answer. Are teenagers that much more busy now than they were in, say, 2018? What other factors—increased cell phone use, for instance, or a change of habits post-pandemic—might be affecting this downward trend? And what can we, as librarians, do to mitigate this loss? Let's put a pin in this to revisit as we look to the future in Action Items and Next Steps.

Programming

As previously mentioned, programming numbers are up. Just from FY23 to FY24 we've had a 53% increase in the number of programs and a 66% increase in the number of attendees. The vast majority of this increase comes from our family programming and enormous credit goes to Jocelyn Cozzo, our Youth Librarian. In her four years at the library she's connected with local families, allowing her to develop a programming line-up that responds directly to the needs and interests of our community.

Program popularity naturally shifts over time. If numbers drop for a particular program, we might consider a scheduling change, or a shift in marketing, or a break from that program so we can focus on something new. In the big picture, however, while programs geared towards children and families tend to bring in high numbers, our adult programs, particularly one-off programs (versus monthly) tend to bring in far fewer people. Over the past three years, the average attendance at a family/youth program is twice that of an adult program.

This presents a conundrum because in focus groups and surveys, we consistently have requests for more adult programs, specifically lectures, workshops and author visits. We want to meet these interests, but find ourselves met with a number of difficulties. Hiring an outside presenter is expensive, and organizing and promoting a program takes staff time and resources, which is hard to justify when attendance at adult programs can be so hit or miss. At times there seems to be a delta between the stated interest in these programs and real-life attendance, whether from busy schedules, lack of knowledge, or lack of interest in the specific programs or presenters we are able to afford. And our lack of proper meeting space means that, funding limitations aside, we're prohibited from doing a large-scale event—say, a big-name author—that would attract regional interest and bring in more people than we can accommodate. We'd like to respond to our patrons by giving them more adult programming, but we need to find a way to do this that's within our means and effectively uses our resources.

Hours

In the focus group, when asked about the library's schedule, someone quipped they wished we could add hours "anytime the library's not open." That would of course be ideal, but everyone immediately acknowledged that endless hours are not a realistic possibility. Staffing is 70% percent of our budget, and just one additional hour of staffing increases the budget by 1.2%. In addition, in a small town like Hatfield, we don't have the traffic to justify a sharp increase in hours. That doesn't mean, however, we have no options to explore.

When you walk into the library, you might notice the staff member at the circulation desk move to mark a tick on a sheet of paper. That's because we keep track of how many people come into the library each day, subdivided into adults, children, and teens. Through our circulation system, we also have access to circulation data by hour of the day. For example, if you run the proper reports, it's possible to find out how many library items were circulated, say, on November 14, 2023 from 10 to 11am.

This is a great deal of information. But for the purposes of our analysis, we quickly realized it wasn't enough. Specifically, we had noticed a drop-off in evening circulation in our post-pandemic data—and unlike some of the other post-pandemic drop-offs, this figure wasn't bouncing back. But the circulation data alone wasn't telling us what we needed to know. Take, for example, the data point that four library items were checked out on a Friday night from 7 to 8. This is already a low number. But does it mean that four people came and checked out one item each, or that one person came and checked out four items? According to the desk staff, it was more likely to be the former, but we wanted hard data. We created a new tally sheet to keep track of how many individual patrons came in during each hour of the day.

We collected hourly patron data for eight months starting in July of 2024. When averaged out, the data looked like this:

		Tuesday							Wednesday							Thursday							Friday							Saturday			
		10-11	11-12	12-1	1-2	2-3	3-4	4-5	2-3	3-4	4-5	5-6	6-7	7-8	10-11	11-12	12-1	1-2	2-3	3-4	4-5	2-3	3-4	4-5	5-6	6-7	7-8	9-10	10-11	11-12	12-1		
Average	Adults	7.4	7.6	5.8	7.3	5.6	4.8	4.5	8.2	7.1	5.8	3.2	3	0.8	9.5	4.2	4.9	3.6	4.9	4	3.7	9.8	7.9	4.3	4	2.4	1.2	5.1	7.8	8.1	6.3		
	Kids	3.8	4.2	1.1	5.2	2.8	1.5	0.6	4.6	3.5	1.2	0.8	1	0.1	5.6	1.1	1	2	5.2	1.5	1	6.9	7.6	0.4	0.5	0.3	0	1.7	3	1.7	0.8		
	Teens	0.2	0.2	0.2	0	0.9	0.2	0.2	0.6	0.2	0	0	0.5	0	0	0.1	0	0.1	0.6	0	0.1	0.8	0.5	0	0.2	0.1	0	0.2	0.4	0.3	0.7		
	Total	11	12	7.1	12	9.3	6.5	5.2	13	11	7	4	4.5	1	15	5.3	6	5.7	11	5.5	4.8	18	16	4.7	4.7	2.9	1.2	6.9	11	10	7.8		

Our busiest times often correspond to programs, or when we get deliveries of hold items. And you may note that, as expected, Wednesday and Friday nights from 7-8 were significantly lower than any other time slot, averaging only one person an hour. Keeping the library open during such a slow time is hard to justify. What's more, in recent years we've increased the number of classroom visits from the elementary school, which can

often be difficult to schedule. Because of this, we were already looking for some overlap between school and library hours on Wednesdays and Fridays. After a consultation with the Board of Trustees, we made the decision to shift our Wednesday and Friday from 2-8 to 1-7. This change has already been put in effect and has met with a positive response from our patrons.

Shifting around our schedule to accommodate changing usage patterns is important, but it can only do so much. Luckily we have other options. Libraries around the country are looking beyond traditional library hours. Some are doing self-service hours, lobby pick-ups, even kiosk vending machines for holds. While we don't have tens of thousands of dollars for a lobby vending machine, these options are still worth exploring. We already provide some library services outside of hours. Patrons can sign into their library account to place holds. They can check out e-books through Libby, and stream movies through Kanopy. But in our focus groups, several people wished for one specific service: the ability to pick up hold items outside of library hours. Could there be a way to make that happen—and mitigate our limited accessibility issues as well? We'll examine this question and more in the next section as we look at what concrete action items we can take as the result of this report.

Action Items and Next Steps

After looking at all our data, we can identify three main areas of improvement.

- Teen use. As explored in Data Analysis, there has been a decline in how many teens use the library and its resources.
- Library Programs. A success in terms of attendance and positive feedback, but some patrons expressed a desire for more, and others were unaware of programs and services we already offered.
- Building access. We have no current plan for a new or renovated building, but it is important to acknowledge the severe limits of our building and our complete lack of handicapped access. This is especially important when you consider Hatfield's demographic shift towards an aging population.

With this in mind, we can formulate some action items for the coming years.

Teens

Although teen programming and circulation numbers are low, there is a bright spot hidden within the larger picture: a strong increase in programming numbers for older kids, specifically grades 4-6. Circulation of chapter books, including those aimed at grades 4-6, is also up, increasing 27% from FY23 to FY24. These numbers show us something we already see at the library every week: an enthusiastic cohort of pre-teens for whom the library is an important part of their life. In a few years, they will be teenagers, and one of our number one goals is to keep them involved with the library, either through programming, volunteer hours, or simply listening to their needs and figuring out how we can help. This doesn't mean we are giving up on today's teens: we're still going to be working with our amazing group of teen volunteers and encouraging more to join, as well as working with the schools to find other ways to get students involved with the library. Our goal for the coming years is to have a core group of teen library users who use the library on a regular basis and help us develop programs and services that will appeal to them and meet their needs, as well as outreach to educate non-library teens on the ways the library could help meet their needs.

Specific action items include:

- Continuing with our successful pre-teen programs
- Supporting our amazing teen volunteers
- Outreach to Smith Academy to remind middle and high school students about library services for teens
- Focusing on maintaining a collection of up-to-date materials which will appeal to teens

Programming

Our number one goal for programming is to continue with the programs that are already a hit. Let us just take a moment to acknowledge the success of our Library Book Club, which has met for 14 years and counting, and our annual gingerbread-house making event, which has been running almost as long and seems to bring in bigger crowds every year. Our Luminarium event brought in more than 130 people last year, some of them families coming to do the craft, other adults stopping by to see the library and chat. We have our Thursday playgroup, Music & Movement, Popcorn & Pokemon, Minecraft Club, Knit & Crochet . . . really there are too many to list. Our goal is to continue with all of these, but also to ask: what more can we do?

Here are some specific action items:

- Do more outreach for promotional services that are already in place but that patrons may not know about, including our monthly [Mailchimp](#) newsletter and our [Remind](#) text message service.
- Get a third sandwich board to put out by the road in front of the library, since seeing the sandwich boards was named as one of the most common ways patrons learn about programs. Explore the possibility of a sandwich board or other sign out on 5 & 10 (for people who don't drive through town).
- Use our newsletter to promote free local programming at near-by institutions, since we live in a culturally-rich area with author talks, history lectures, artisan workshops and more within a short drive.

Access

Here we have two problems, one temporal and one physical. We want to give people the most flexible access possible to our library services, but can only be open a limited number of hours. And we want to make it possible for every individual to access our building, but we can't change our physical structure without a multi-million dollar project.

How to target this multifaceted problem? We actually have a number of work-arounds already in place, so our first goal is to make sure we are effectively promoting these services:

They include:

- Home delivery. We will coordinate with the Council on Aging to deliver books directly to your home and pick up returns. For patrons who are under age 60, a library staff member or volunteer will deliver to your home.
- Curbside pick-up. All you have to do is call from the parking lot and a staff member will come out with your items (limited to open hours).
- [Wowbrary Newsletter](#). Wowbrary makes a list of new books and DVDs cataloged every week and sends them in an email on Wednesdays. If you can't come to the library and want to know what's new, Wowbrary is a great option.
- [Unboxing Youtube](#) videos. Every week, our library director does a quick video where she takes new books and DVDs out of their shipping box and shares the

title and a few interesting details. If you want to get a quick introduction to new items each week, this is another great option.

- [Catalog Homepage](#). Our library catalog homepage is customized to highlight new titles. While there, you can log into your account and place holds directly on titles.
- Customized service. Call or email with your reading tastes, and we will pull together a selection of books for home or library pick-up.

To add to this, we are planning to build an after-hours repository for hold items, which we have nicknamed the “holds hut.” Patrons with hold items will be able to request that their items be left in the holds hut, where they can pick them up during or outside library hours. The holds hut will have a coded door, with the code provided by staff through phone or email, but otherwise will be self-service. There will also be a receptacle at the bottom of the structure for returning items, which will not require a code. Since the holds hut will be at ground level, this means patrons will be able to both return and pick up their items without navigating stairs. We are already in the process of commissioning this structure, and funding will come from State Aid.

Staff Benefits

As we interviewed library staff on how to improve library services for patrons, we also considered how to make the library better for them. After all, one of the strengths in our library, as frequently mentioned in both the focus groups and surveys, is our friendly and knowledgeable staff. Although many staff have worked a regular weekly schedule at the library for years, they receive no benefits because they work less than 20 hours a week. Since 2015, the state of Massachusetts has mandated sick time for part-time employees, but municipalities are exempt. Even so, in recent years many towns in the area, including Northampton, Amherst and Leverett, have started offering sick time, both out of a desire to keep their jobs competitive and for the health of their employees. In our library, staff working less than 20 hours a week who get sick have to choose between going without pay or coming to work sick, which many choose not to do since we are in a small public space and want to protect our patrons and fellow staff from contagion.

For this reason, we would like to meet the minimum state standards and offer all employees 1 hour of sick time for every hour worked. We have run the numbers and even if every employee used every hour of sick time on offer, this would still cost less than \$2,000. However, this change will require adoption by the Hatfield Selectboard, since it would affect all part-time employees in the town. Over the next year, Library

Trustees plan to work with the Selectboard to encourage this update to employee policies for the town.

Federal Funding

Just one last note: as we were compiling this report, President Trump moved to eliminate the Institute of Museum and Library Services, which provides federal funding for libraries on a state-level. Even though we in Hatfield do not receive federal funding directly, our patrons rely on services which receive funding through these monies, including e-books, interlibrary loan, summer reading and databases. We do not know the long-term impact of these cuts.

This document is meant to serve as our guide for the coming years, but it is difficult, at this point in time, to know what those coming years will bring. Democracy can only exist when we have freedom of speech. Freedom of speech, in turn, relies on free and unfettered access to information. And for that free access to information, we need libraries. For all the fun things we provide—from storytimes to scavenger hunts to the latest bestseller—there is a more serious side to what we do. We might be a small library in a small town, but we are vital. And we may soon need your support more than ever.

Acknowledgements

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Governing Body Approval

Approved by the Library Board of Trustees, 5/6/25