



Guille-Allès  
Public Library

# ANNUAL REPORT

2023

# A WORD FROM CORNELIA JAMES, CHIEF LIBRARIAN

2023 has been an exceptionally busy year for the Library. Looking back, it's amazing to think how much has been achieved.

I'm very happy to report another **significant increase in usage** this year. **Footfall** totalled 161,909, a remarkable 6.5% higher than 2022. That's also 8% above the 5-year average before the pandemic, and is higher even than 2019, the first year in the life of the new Children's Library.

**Book loans**, meanwhile, rose 9%, while **membership** now exceeds 18,500 – an increase of 27% over the last five years. Per head of population, these numbers are substantially higher than the UK average. Per 1,000 people, the UK averages 2,082 library visits, compared to 2,540 visits here – a difference of 22%.

At the beginning of the year the high footfall was driven in part by the tail end of our successful **Boundless Curiosity exhibition**, which attracted more than 8,500 visitors to celebrate the Library's 140th anniversary and discover its fascinating history. But things got even busier in the summer. More than 16,000 people came through the doors in August alone, the highest monthly figure for over a decade. And more than 2,000 children signed up for the **Summer Reading Challenge**, smashing our previous record by 15%.

Such strong usage figures are very pleasing, and of course they are more than just numbers – each visit and each loan make a difference in people's lives, sometimes in small ways and sometimes in transformative ways. From young children falling in love with reading in the Children's Library, to students camping out in the Hayward Room to revise for their

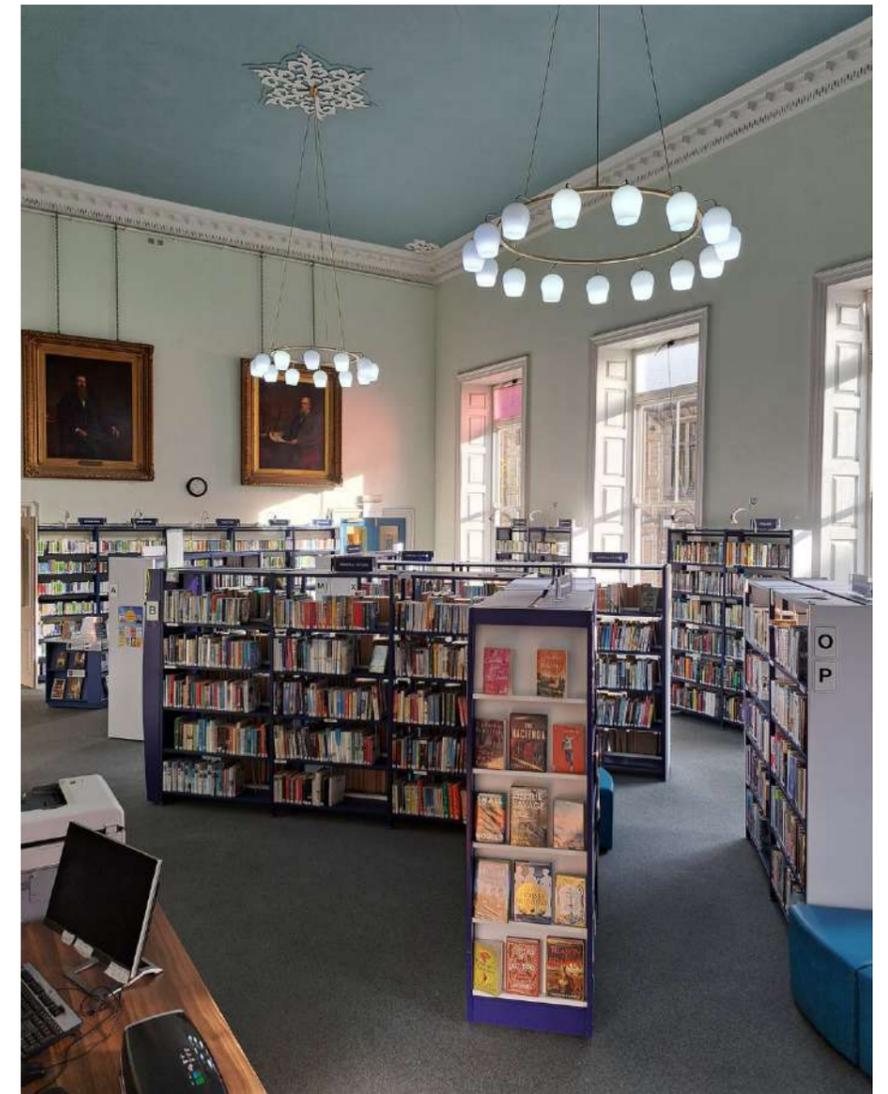


A-levels, to older people learning how to FaceTime their grandchildren at one of our IT Help sessions – libraries change lives.

It's been wonderful to hear stories like these from our community this year – a selection of feedback is included in this report. Meanwhile on our annual **customer survey**, our net promoter score (a trusted metric for measuring customer satisfaction) was 84.8, four points higher than last year and firmly in the 'world class' category. Clearly, the people of Guernsey love their Library, and they need their Library.

I am very lucky to have an incredible team of skilled and passionate staff, who I know will always strive to meet that need, and to deliver the library service that this community deserves. I would like to thank them all for their hard work this year.

*Cornelia James*





# 2023 IN NUMBERS

**161,909** visits



**176,556** loans



**2,337** new members



**92,675** website visits



**313** children's activity sessions

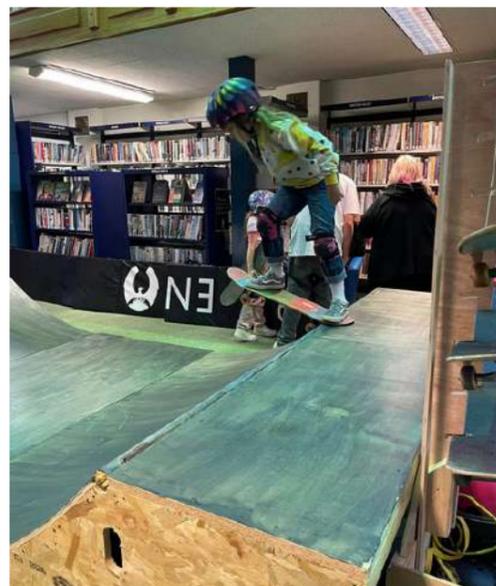


**2,000** Summer Reading Challenge participants



*The Library is a gem. Friendly, interesting. I would hate to be without it. "*





# 1. HIGHLIGHTS

Undoubtedly one of the highlights of the year came in June, when the project team behind our Boundless Curiosity exhibition were announced as winners at the prestigious **Libraries Connected Awards** – known as ‘the library Oscars.’ In the Culture & Creativity category the team were up against fellow professionals from library services around the UK, including London and Manchester. Winning against such stiff competition reflected both the high quality of the exhibition and the dedication, skill, and creativity of the team. That success – plus a second nomination for our Community & Wellbeing Lead for another project, Tea & Tales – brought national recognition to the work of the Guille-Allès team, putting Guernsey ‘on the map’ in the library world, as well as generating substantial publicity locally.

One of my favourite things about the library service is the sheer variety of events that we offer – and that has certainly been the case this year. From author talks at the **Literary Festival**, to a sold-out **Lord of the Rings Quiz Night**, to the first person ever to **skateboard in the Library** – there’s been something for everyone.

Another memorable, albeit sad moment this year came when we said a fond farewell to Ann Goulding, our Senior Library Assistant, who retired in June after an astonishing **49 years** at the Library. Having started as a 16-year-old in 1974, Ann described our building as being “like a family member”. She trained all the existing staff when they first started, myself included, so it was hard for us all to say goodbye – but we did our best to give her the send-off she deserved, including a guard of honour in the Entrance Hall.

Most popular book: **The Bullet That Missed** – Richard Osman  
Most popular children’s book: **The Highway Rat** – Julia Donaldson

*“The more dealings I have with the Guille-Allès, the more I realise how lucky Guernsey is. Shine on.”*



## 2. ADULT SERVICES

### GUERNSEY LITERARY FESTIVAL

The Guernsey Literary Festival returned in May, with 65 events taking place around the island. There were **10 events at the Library**, including talks from visiting novelists Abigail Burdess and Liz Hyder, poet Jackie Kay, and acclaimed children's authors Onjali Rauf and Sita Brahmachari.

Our team worked together to facilitate the running of these events, as well as coordinating 17 sessions for the Festival's ever-expanding **schools programme**, helping to run an event in **Guernsey Prison**, and organising three **Tea & Tales** events with authors in care homes. Meanwhile, Children's Laureate Joseph Coelho visited the Children's Library and signed up for a library card – the 163rd he'd collected as part of his nationwide Library Marathon.

The Festival was a huge success once again, with more than 7,000 people attending the events this year.

### VISUALLY IMPAIRED SERVICES

In June we were delighted to be awarded a grant of £2,500 from the Pargiter Trust to support our **Stories on USB service**, which supplies free audiobooks to people who are visually impaired. There are currently 28 active users, with more than 100 USBs posted out each month. The grant has enabled us to expand the service to reach more people in need.

Stories on USB has also been boosted by a new partnership with the **RNIB (Royal National Institute for Blind People)**, who have given us free access to their digital catalogue of audiobooks. This provides substantially more choice for service users, many of whom get through several books a week. The RNIB have also offered advice on Braille signage and visually impaired events, as well as providing training for staff.



*“The Library is a treasure trove. I'm impressed by the number of new books that are available.”*

### EVENTS PROGRAMME

Throughout the year we worked hard to expand and diversify our events programme. To mark the start of Spring, in March we hosted an event to relaunch our **seed library**, which allows people to take seeds home for free and donate what they do not need. The guest speaker was Sarah Breton from Edible Guernsey, who shared her knowledge of permaculture and companion planting with a deeply engaged audience.

In June we partnered with local gaming group Meeple People to organise **Board Games Day** on a busy Saturday. Numerous games were played including Perudo, Jenga, Sushi Go, and Zombie Dice, with many people taking the opportunity to try new games for the first time. Feedback was very positive, and we plan to repeat the event annually.

In the autumn we hosted a **creative writing course** led by acclaimed novelist Ben Hinshaw. Ben's 2022 debut *Exactly What You Mean* was selected for BBC Two's books discussion programme *Under the Covers*, and was given a glowing review by the late Hilary Mantel. The 10-week course covered all aspects of fiction writing. It sold out quickly, and we hope to run it again next year.

## BUSKING KITS

In October we launched a new initiative to support local musicians and street performers, partnering with Guernsey Arts, who donated two busking kits to join our **'library of things'** collection. Each kit includes an amp, microphone, and microphone stand, as well as a user guide and information on how to secure a busking permit. The kits can be borrowed for up to five days at a time.

We look forward to seeing how much interest these receive next year, particularly during the busy summer season.

## SPORT IN THE LIBRARY

On Saturday 25 November, staff from the Guernsey Sports Commission descended on the Library for our first ever 'Sports Day'. The Hayward, Dorey and Rowsell Rooms were transformed into arenas for six sports including table tennis, darts, curling, and even skateboarding. The intention was to give people the chance to try sports they might not have thought about trying before, and to show that **sport can be played by anyone, anytime, anywhere.**

The event was hugely popular, with fantastic feedback from the many families and others who attended. We intend to organise a repeat next year.

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*"I'm a lifelong user of the library. I am so grateful for everything the library has given me over the past 39 years and hopefully for the next!"*

## LORD OF THE RINGS QUIZ

On Friday 17 November we welcomed more than 60 Tolkien fans to the Library for a Lord of the Rings Quiz Night. Staff stepped into character as Wizards, Elves, and Hobbits, and the Hayward Room was **transformed into Middle-earth.**

In 2019 we hosted similar themed quizzes on Game of Thrones and Star Wars, but our ambition to make this a regular fixture in our events programme was thwarted by the pandemic. This was the first quiz since then, and it was a huge success – tickets sold out rapidly, and the feedback from guests was excellent.



# 3. CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE'S SERVICES

## SUMMER READING CHALLENGE

Just over 2,000 children took part in this year's Summer Reading Challenge – a huge **new record** for the event, nearly 15% above the previous mark from 2022. More than 1,000 went on to complete the challenge of reading six books, another significant increase. It was fantastic to see so many children getting involved in the event and enjoying reading over the summer.

Perhaps one of the reasons for the high take-up was the theme of **Ready, Set, Read**, a sporting focus which tied in brilliantly with Guernsey's hosting of the Island Games in July. Shortly after the launch, Guernsey football star and avid reader Ross Allen visited the Library to sign children up, talk to them about what they'd been reading, and generally get them excited to be taking part. Lots of keen footballers came to meet Ross and some even asked him to sign their football shirts.

In addition to our hard-working Children's Library staff, the Challenge also enjoyed support from a team of volunteers. These included secondary school students as well as office workers and other adults who donated their time through our valuable partnership with the charity **Bright Beginnings**.

This year we worked to maximise the impact of the Challenge through promotion at a variety of outreach settings, including Homestart Dragonflies and the Kindred Family Centre. Meanwhile the Early Years Lead trialled offering the Challenge to families visiting the **Prison** – children from three of these families went on to finish the Challenge and receive their medals.



## NEW LIBRARY CARDS

In June we launched new library cards. Three designs aimed at children feature a new **'Library crab'** created for us by acclaimed illustrator Garry Parsons, who visited the Island for our Book Week in 2022. To promote the launch, we ran a competition for children aged 12 and under to name the crab – we had 75 entries, with eight-year-old Rosie submitting the winning entry, Coral.

Alongside Coral the crab, there are three further designs inspired by our Boundless Curiosity exhibition, including two that showcase images from *The Birds of America*. The new cards have proved extremely popular with both children and adults – the choice of design is always a talking point (and a tough decision!) when somebody joins the Library.

## HOLIDAY ACTIVITIES

As ever, the Children's Library was extremely busy in school holidays throughout 2023.

The team organised a huge variety of events for families to enjoy, including **nature themed activities** in February to tie in with the Guernsey Literary Festival's Writestuff competition; a new **meditation session** for children aged 6-10; a hugely popular **Dinosaur Morning** (with a fossil station) in the summer; Halloween and Christmas Story Walks around St Peter Port; craft activities at our community libraries; and an event called Ready, Teddy, Go involving teddy bears flying across the Hayward Room on a zip wire. Plus, numerous iterations of our Chatterbooks book clubs, Baby Social events for under-1s, Little Puffin Signing sessions, and Sensory Story Times for children with additional needs.



*“Met some friends for life - mamas and children - at baby bounce!”*

*“The children have loved being able to read their books in the nooks, climb the castle, and meet other children whilst colouring at the table.”*

## YEAR 7 VISITS

November saw the return of our annual Year 7 event, with the new intake of students from the three States High Schools all visiting the Library over a two-week period. In recent years these events have proven successful in showcasing everything the Library has to offer to this age group – including graphic novels, homework resources, and the Fab Lab – at a time when their engagement with the service might otherwise start to dip.

This year we welcomed a total of **425 students**, many of whom have since been observed returning in their own time. Year 7 students from Le Murier, Les Voies, and the private schools will all be offered the same opportunity before the end of the academic year.

## PRIAULX PREMATURE BABY FOUNDATION BOOK BAGS

This year we worked with the Priaulx Premature Baby Foundation to supply free book bags for **families at the Hospital’s Neonatal Unit**. The Early Years Lead curated a special selection of picture books and rhyming sheets for families of premature and seriously unwell babies. Reading these aloud can help with bonding at a time when parents and siblings can’t cuddle their babies in the usual way.

## CHILDREN’S LIBRARY BIRTHDAY

The first week of December marked the **fifth anniversary** of the opening of the new Children’s Library. To celebrate the occasion we hosted a ‘birthday party’ on Saturday 9 December, with special themed stories and the opportunity for children to make a birthday card to hang on the Reading Tree.

The anniversary was a nice opportunity to reflect on the impact of the project and its contribution to the increased usage of the Library in recent years. The event received positive coverage in the local media, including reports on both television stations.



# 4. SCHOOLS

## BOOK WEEK

In March we welcomed visits from three popular authors for our annual Book Week. In total they engaged with more than **5,000 children and young people**. As ever, it proved a valuable and rare opportunity for children to meet and be inspired by nationally acclaimed authors. Without this event, local children would have very few such opportunities compared to their peers on the mainland. Author visits are known to create a lasting impression – they develop children’s reading skills, boost their enjoyment and confidence in reading and writing, and encourage them to read for pleasure.

This year, **Ellie Sandall** spoke to Key Stage 1 students about becoming an illustrator and how to find your own artistic style. She also ran a small illustration workshop at the Library.

Acclaimed writer, poet and performer **A.F. Harrold** spoke to students in Key Stage 2. He last visited Guernsey for Book Week in 2018, when he proved a huge hit in schools, so we were very glad to welcome him back.

Author **Stewart Foster** visited Key Stage 3 students, discussing his writing process and important topics like mental health. Bad weather prevented his visit to St Anne’s in Alderney, but he delivered his sessions virtually so the students did not miss out. Stewart made a big impact on the students, and they seemed to make an impact on him, too – he enjoyed his session with a small group of Year 10s at Le Murier so much that he asked to go back the next day to offer them free signed copies of his books, which they were absolutely thrilled to receive.





## SCHOOL LIBRARY PROJECTS

It's been encouraging to see many schools investing in their school libraries this year, with our Schools Librarians involved in several significant projects. The biggest of these was at **Le Murier School**, who received a large donation to fund a complete redesign of their school library. The Schools Lead worked with both Le Murier and with UK company FG Library & Learning to create a design with new furniture, shelving, and IT equipment, modernising the library and making it more accessible and engaging for students.

Meanwhile, **Vauvert Primary** moved their library to a new, bigger location within the school, and **St Martin's Primary** recognised that their old library wasn't suitable to accommodate their large number of students - to address this, they made an extra room available and worked with the Schools Team to create a second library. They allocated funds to acquire new furniture and used our Centralised Purchasing scheme to invest in boosting their book collection.

## DIGITAL LEADERSHIP DAY

In May the first Digital Leadership Day took place at Beau Sejour. The goal of the day was to cultivate the leadership skills of the 'digital leaders' in Years 4 and 5, who assume responsibility for various digital and technology-related tasks within their schools.

Our Schools Team and Head of Learning & Development played a key role throughout the planning of the event, as well as leading one of the four sessions conducted on the day. Our session focused on imparting valuable **information research skills**, emphasising the importance of using reliable sources when searching for information for homework and schoolwork. The event will run again in 2024, this time expanding to include larger numbers of students.





## 5. LEARNING & DEVELOPMENT

### FAB LAB

In 2023 the Fab Lab saw a significant **increase in usage**, reflecting growing public awareness of its existence and the opportunities it provides. In total, bookings rose 45% on 2022.

The summer holidays were a particularly busy period, thanks not least to a new **Maker Club** for teenagers. Over six weeks, attendees learned various traditional crafts including macramé and paper quilling. Feedback was extremely positive, and as such we plan to both repeat the event for teens and start a new version for adults in 2024.

Also this year, the Fab Lab team have worked hard to establish **new partnerships** with organisations including Autism Guernsey and the Guernsey Institute, both of which now bring students to regular weekly sessions, as well as ad hoc link-ups with a Ukrainian ESOL group and with Art for Guernsey. The latter used the Fab Lab to print more than 500 tiles of artwork created by Year 3 students as part of the States of Guernsey's Cultural Enrichment programme. The tiles were displayed in the Art for Guernsey Gallery in the lead-up to their landmark Renoir exhibition.

Meanwhile, we offered numerous **workshops** on 3D printing and sublimation, most of which sold out. And we were grateful for the help of volunteers with expertise on sewing, music production, and video editing, who each offered a series of popular one-to-one lessons.

*"I have been able to teach myself to use a sewing machine completely free of charge, and the staff are wonderfully helpful."*

Increasing numbers of **small businesses and charities** are using the Fab Lab to support their activities. For example, ahead of the Island Games the Guernsey Tennis Club used the sublimation printer to produce bunting and flags, and created event banners and promotional posters using the A1 printer.

One final boost to the Fab Lab this year was the introduction in February of a **new passport photo service**. The equipment was purchased from Guernsey Photographics after the closure of their shop in the Arcade. As one of the few places on the island where this service is available, interest has been high, with more than 800 photos taken by the end of the year. This has the double benefit of both generating income for the Library and bringing people up to the Fab Lab, many of whom have never visited before.



### ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

Throughout 2023 we kept a close eye on the emergence of **ChatGPT** and other artificial intelligence systems. As information professionals, it's important that librarians stay abreast of developments and can help people understand and make the most of this revolutionary new technology. The Head of Learning & Development led a working group to develop a strategy for the Library, which led to the creation of a new page on our website with a layman's guide to ChatGPT and useful resources for students and teachers. We will continue monitoring developments in this space next year.

# 6. MARKETING & COMMS

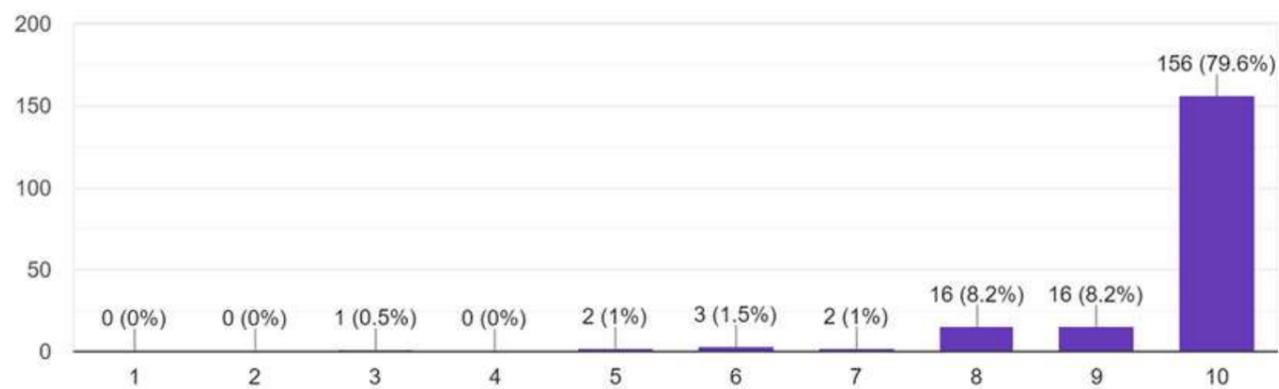
## CUSTOMER SURVEY

In January we ran a customer survey, seeking **user feedback on the library service**. The survey was posted on our social media and email newsletter. Questions included how often people visit the Library, how they stay up to date with what's happening, whether they've used the Fab Lab, and how they rate their experience. The overwhelming majority of feedback was extremely positive.

The final question on the survey asked, 'How likely are you to recommend the Library to friends or family?' This phrasing is used to determine an organisation's **'Net Promoter Score'** - the percentage of 'promoters' (giving a score of 9-10) minus the percentage of 'detractors' (1-6). A Net Promoter Score above 0 is considered good, above 20 favourable, above 50 excellent, and above 80 world class. The Library's score came in at 84.8 - four points higher than last year.

12. Based on your experiences, how likely are you to recommend the Library to friends or family?

196 responses



*"The Library is genuinely one of my favourite places on our island - the staff are brilliant and they make it such a magical place for children. It brings our family joy every time we visit!"*

*"Such a fantastic resource for people of all ages, and how amazing that it's free."*

*"We are so incredibly fortunate to have such a beautiful library that is also innovative with highly skilled people."*



## 7. FUTURE

2024 will be the third year of our ongoing strategy to raise our profile, harness our uniqueness, and position the Library as one of Guernsey's top destinations. Throughout the year we will endeavour to further those objectives – and plans are already in place to do just that.

A key project next year will be the launch of a new **Library app**, which will allow customers to search the collection, renew their loans, browse our events, and even borrow and return books with their device. We had hoped to roll this out in 2023, but some technical issues led to delays; these have now been resolved, and we look forward to launching in the early part of next year. We expect the app to deliver a significant improvement to our customer experience, as well as providing another opportunity to generate publicity and raise our profile.

Also on the IT front, we will shortly be upgrading our public computers, thanks to a generous award from Dougie's Grant. Our current set of ageing PCs will be replaced by brand new top-of-the-range machines, greatly enhancing the user experience for the large number of Islanders that rely on this vital service.

Another priority project will be to convert the Rowsell Rooms on the second floor into a new **learning & development suite**. The new rooms will be available for hire for meetings, classes, and training days. Improving our provision for learning & development would ideally extend to upgrading the study facilities in the Hayward Room, though this will require a significant sponsorship drive.

At the same time, of course, the service will continue to grow and diversify, with a wide range of events planned including another Guernsey Literary Festival and another Summer Reading Challenge – we look forward to seeing if we can break another record!

Whatever happens, I'm certain that our wonderful, talented team will keep working hard to ensure that the Library carries on moving with the times, and provides the kind of service that our community needs. I look forward to another successful and exciting year in 2024.



THE JODIE KNIGHT

FAB  
LAB



THANK  
YOU

ANY QUESTIONS?  
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