



Guille-Allès
Public Library

ANNUAL REPORT

2025

INTRODUCTION

CORNELIA JAMES, CHIEF LIBRARIAN

2025 was a milestone year for the Library.

It was marked by a series of significant upgrades within our building, beginning in January with the unveiling of our bigger and better **Fab Lab**. This new home for our community makerspace, right in the heart of the Library, makes it easier than ever for islanders to get creative with the cutting-edge technology on offer.

The Fab Lab upgrade was followed by a major refurbishment of the Hayward Room, a big step towards creating a **world-class study space** for the whole community. Other highlights included a popular exhibition to mark **Liberation 80**, another magnificent **Guernsey Literary Festival**, a trip to the 'Story Garden' for the **Summer Reading Challenge**, the visit of three fabulous children's authors for **Book Week**, and the launch of a new **Library App**, putting the Library in people's pockets.

Recent years have seen a notable increase in usage of our service, and I'm pleased to report that this continued in 2025. The numbers tell a compelling story: **more people used the Library this year** than at any time in our recent history.

Footfall climbed to 162,825, the highest figure for more than 25 years, and a remarkable 15% higher than a decade ago. Meanwhile, **book loans** rose to almost 150,000, up 1% on the previous year. There were 2,346 **new members** – a third higher than 2024 – while we were particularly delighted to see the number of **Fab Lab bookings** almost double, a strong testament to the success of the upgrade.

Per head of population, these numbers are all significantly above UK library averages. And of course, they're not just

numbers. Each visit and each loan makes a difference in somebody's life, sometimes in small ways and sometimes in big, transformational ways – whether that's a student looking for a quiet place to study, a parent coming to their first Baby Bounce session, an older person seeking IT advice, or a book lover hunting for their next great read.

I'm so proud of our incredible team, whose passion and professionalism ensure that the Library continues to evolve and deliver for the community. I'd like to thank them all for their hard work this year.

2026 is set to be another important year for the Library, as we get ready to celebrate the **National Year of Reading**. This high-profile campaign arrives in response to research showing that reading for pleasure is at an all-time low across the UK. Half of adults say they don't read regularly, and only one in three children say they enjoy reading in their free time.

As librarians, we know how alarming that is, because reading is vital to the health and happiness of both individuals and societies. Literacy is the foundation of education and opportunity, while reading for pleasure improves **wellbeing**, develops **empathy**, and unlocks so much else that's good for us. It's clear that there's an urgent need to reverse the decline in reading – and the good news is, it *can* be reversed. It will require a society-wide effort, but libraries can and must play an integral role – starting with the National Year of Reading.

We're ready to shout from the rooftops about reading in 2026. Alongside the States of Guernsey and other partners, we're developing a year-long programme of events to make the most of this amazing opportunity to champion reading across the island.





2025 IN NUMBERS

162,825 VISITS ↑ 1.6% 

149,989 LOANS ↑ 1.1% 

2,346 NEW MEMBERS ↑ 33% 

126,196 WEBSITE VISITS ↑ 29% 

1,848 FAB LAB BOOKINGS ↑ 91% 

1,764 SUMMER READING CHALLENGE SIGN-UPS ↑ 3 TIMES UK AVERAGE 





RICHARD HAMILTON, MANAGING DIRECTOR

The past year has been another encouraging one for the Library, with usage rising across the service.

More people are visiting the building, more books are being borrowed, and more islanders are enjoying our services both in-person and online. These figures underline that the Library continues to be an essential and valued part of island life – as vital today as when Thomas Guille and Frederick Allès first opened the doors in 1882.

Our core mission – to provide access to books, ideas, and trustworthy information – is as relevant as it has ever been. And the Library is not only a place for reading and learning, it’s also a safe, trusted space for the whole community. People of all ages rely on the Library to study, explore new ideas, discover new opportunities - and of course, find some great books to read. I am extremely proud to see the Library thriving as it has in 2025, and I continue to be struck by the remarkable breadth and depth of the services being delivered.

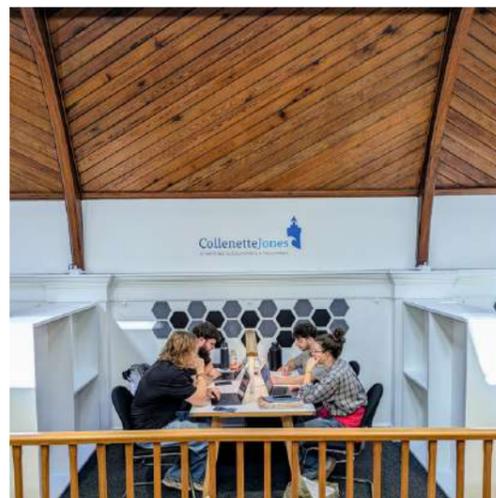
Of course, none of this would be possible without the hard work and dedication of our fantastic team of staff. Their passion, energy, and endlessly creative ideas ensure that the Library continues to adapt to meet the changing needs of the community.



The Board continues to work closely with the Library’s Senior Management Team to provide oversight, support, and strategic direction. Together, we are focused on ensuring that the Library remains both ambitious and financially sustainable in the years ahead. Maintaining and improving our historic building, developing new services, and strengthening partnerships across the island will all remain important priorities.

Speaking personally, I would like to thank the entire team for all their efforts this year and I am enormously proud to play a part in the ongoing success of our amazing Library. I can also confirm that the Board remain fiercely committed to ensuring one of the jewels in the crown of Guernsey’s community is protected, nurtured and enhanced both now and in the future, meeting the ever changing needs and expectations of the community we serve.

Looking ahead to 2026, the National Year of Reading provides an exciting opportunity to champion the importance of reading for pleasure – something that’s truly vital to the health of our society. The Board looks forward to supporting the Library team and our partners in making the most of this inspiring campaign.



Most Popular Book:

Orbital – Samantha Harvey

Most Popular Children's Book:

Shark in the Park on a Windy Day – Nick Sharratt

HIGHLIGHTS

FAB LAB UPGRADE

January saw the launch of our new, upgraded Fab Lab – the **community makerspace** that's home to a 3D printer, sublimation printer, and lots more cutting-edge technology.

Previously in a relatively small room on the top floor, the new space is larger, more accessible, and in a much more visible location in the heart of the Library.

The public response to the upgrade has been overwhelmingly positive, and **usage has soared**. There were more than 1,800 individual bookings throughout 2025 – an increase of 91% – plus numerous workshops, party bookings, and group visits from organisations like Autism Guernsey, Health Connections, the Youth Commission, the Guernsey Alzheimer's Association, the Guernsey Employment Trust, Art for Guernsey, and many more.

In addition to these bookings, we also welcomed more than 1,800 **passport photo** appointments, generating valuable income and introducing thousands more people to the Fab Lab and the opportunities it provides.

“The Fab Lab is a brilliant space with fabulous resources. Well done, Library team!”

“This is a great, great library service and I really appreciate all of you and all you do for our community.”



STUDY SPACE UPGRADE

This year our study facilities enjoyed a major refurbishment. The **Hayward Room** on the second floor has long been a quiet place for people to study, revise, and work remotely. However, while popular, in recent years the space had become somewhat tired, and it was badly in need of an upgrade.

Support from the **Social Investment Fund** and the **John Ramplin Charitable Trust** enabled an overhaul of the lighting, carpet, ceiling tiles, and much more. The result is a significantly brighter, more modern, and more welcoming environment – the first step towards transforming the Hayward Room into a **world-class learning space**.

The refurb was stage one. Stage two is to replace our ageing furniture with new **‘study pods’**: bespoke tables and chairs with built-in lighting and charging ports. Thanks to the generosity of **Officemaker, Collenette Jones**, and two anonymous donors, we have successfully added four study pods to the Gallery so far – and they’re proving extremely popular. We’ll continue fundraising for a final set of pods in 2026.



LIBERATION 80

This year, Guernsey’s libraries, museums and archives joined forces for a special exhibition to commemorate the 80th anniversary of Liberation.

The Liberation Trail: The Journey from Occupation to Freedom encompassed nine separate exhibits at the Library, Guernsey Museums, the Island Archives, the Priaulx Library, the Royal Court, and a variety of other venues. Visitors were encouraged to follow the Trail around St Peter Port to discover the full history of the island’s Occupation, Liberation, and Recovery.

Each venue focused on a different theme, including some lesser-known and untold aspects of the story. Our exhibit – **A Dark Chapter** – detailed the experience of the Deportees: the nearly 2,500 Channel Islanders who were deported to internment camps in Europe. We worked closely with Guernsey Museums to create a narrative and showcase some artefacts that brought the Deportation story to life.

The exhibition ran from April to June, proving popular with islanders and visitors alike.

“The Library’s study space is an outstanding and very valuable facility that Guernsey is privileged to have. I am deeply grateful, as I am also very happy, when I am here.”





LIBRARY APP

The new Library App launched in March. Supported by JT, the app makes using the Library easier than ever – it's the quickest way for readers to find books, renew their loans, download eBooks and audiobooks, and much more. People can also use their phone to **borrow items anywhere in the Library**, with no need to queue at the kiosks downstairs.

The app is proving popular – more than 2,000 people downloaded it in 2025.

LIBRARY OF THE YEAR

In February we were thrilled to be a regional finalist for Library of the Year at the **British Book Awards**. This new category at the book industry's leading awards ceremony celebrates impactful reading campaigns in UK and Irish libraries.

Alongside Bideford, Braunton, and Exeter, we were nominated for the success of our **Summer Reading Challenge**. At a time when many libraries are seeing declining participation in the Challenge – and the National Literacy Trust is reporting an alarming fall in the number of children reading for pleasure – in Guernsey our SRC figures remain extremely high.

In 2025, 1,764 children took part – per head of population, that's **three times above the UK average**.

This take-up carried over into membership and loan statistics too, with 202 children joining the Library over the holidays, and more than 13,000 children's book loans.



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"I absolutely love the Library, it's so professionally run and at the same time relaxed and friendly. It's a credit to the island."

ADULT SERVICES

GUERNSEY LITERARY FESTIVAL

This year's Guernsey Literary Festival was bigger and better than ever, with more than 70 events taking place around the island. Headline speakers included chef Tom Kerridge, Paralympian Jonnie Peacock, and human rights campaigner Baroness Shami Chakrabarti.

There were 19 events at the Library – a record number – including with bestselling novelists **Kit de Waal** and **Claire Mackintosh**, poet **Imtiaz Dharker**, children's authors **Robin Stevens** and **Louie Stowell**, and local writers Richard Graham and Gregory Stevens-Cox. As well as a record number of events, we also saw record attendance this year – almost all were sold out, with more than 1,300 people attending the Library.

Our Schools Team also led the delivery of the Festival's **Education programme**, which this year boasted 16 events with Jordan Stephens, Pari Thomson, Sophy Henn, and many more. Meanwhile, a special event at Beau Sejour with **Nadia Shireen** saw every Year 5 student in the Bailiwick given a copy of her hit novel, *Grimwood*.

The Festival has long since established itself as one of the most important cultural events in the Channel Islands – and the Library plays a pivotal role. Planning is already well underway for next year.

BRILLE 200

In May, we welcomed the **RNIB (Royal National Institute of Blind People)** and the Guernsey Blind Association for a very special event to mark the 200th anniversary of the invention of Braille.

Staff from the RNIB showcased Braille Lego and other modern reading technologies, with guest speakers providing valuable insights into the continued significance of Braille in helping blind and partially sighted people lead fulfilled lives.



“The Library does a fantastic job and provides a superb service to the community.”

TEA WITH JANE AUSTEN

2025 was the **250th anniversary** of the birth of Jane Austen. To celebrate the milestone, in September we welcomed dozens of Austen fans to a very special ‘tea party’ in the Hayward Room.

Dressed in their best bonnets and shawls, guests enjoyed tea, cake, and Austen-inspired crafts, including embroidery and silhouette portraits. Local dance troupe the Regency Dancers were also on hand to teach some classic steps, and prizes were awarded for the best costumes.

SUMMER READING CHALLENGE FOR GROWN-UPS

This summer we piloted a new ‘grown-up’ version of the Summer Reading Challenge. Adults were encouraged to ‘not let the kids have all the fun’ and get reading themselves. The goal was to read three books linked to the theme **Story Garden – Adventures in Nature & the Great Outdoors**. Challenge cards were available to collect from the Library or to download at home, with finishers entered into a prize draw to win a £50 voucher from Grow Limited.

WESTERN COMMUNITY LIBRARY

In November we celebrated the **20th anniversary** of our popular library at St Saviour's Community Centre.

It was first established in 2005 as part of our strategy to make Library services more accessible to the whole community, including those who find it difficult to get into Town. Originally based at Styx, it has since found a permanent home in St Saviour's, where it continues to thrive today.

To mark this significant milestone, we threw a ‘birthday party’ at the community centre for volunteers and regular users – which led to our longest-serving volunteer, 91-year-old Jill Stephenson, making a very well deserved appearance on the front page of the Guernsey Press.

CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE'S SERVICES

SUMMER READING CHALLENGE

It was another successful year for the Summer Reading Challenge, our biggest children's reading initiative. In total, **1,764 children** took part in the free challenge to read six books during the summer holidays, with 811 going on to complete it. While both figures were fractionally below last year's record-breaking totals, they remain significantly higher than prior years, and are more than three times above the UK average.

This year's theme was **Story Garden – Adventures in Nature and the Great Outdoors**. Throughout the holidays we ran a series of activities to tie in, including stories in the garden at St Saviour's Community Centre, a nature-themed craft session in the Hayward Room, and a special event in Candie Gardens organised in partnership with Guernsey Museums and Nature Guernsey.

To deliver the Challenge we were supported by a team of 22 volunteers in Guernsey, coordinated through literacy charity **Bright Beginnings**. We also relied on the 32 volunteers who run **Alderney Library**, where 44 children took part.



REGULAR ACTIVITIES

This year the Children's Team welcomed **2,361 children** to more than 200 sessions of our regular term-time activities, including Tots, Baby Bounce and Family Stories.

A further 732 children attended 38 rhyme time sessions at community settings, including **Bright Beginnings** and the **Kindred Family Centre**.

Meanwhile, over 60 children came along to occasional ad hoc after-school visits to the Library, including with groups like Squirrels and Beavers.

HOLIDAY ACTIVITIES

As ever, the Children's Library was a hive of activity during school holidays in 2025. The Children's Team organised a wide range of events for children of all ages, with the focus on creativity, inclusion, and fun.

Highlights included a spooky **Halloween story time** and numerous **craft activities** at our community libraries, as well as a variety of recurring events like Little Puffin Signing, Turbo Tots, the Fab Lab's **Teen Maker Club**, and our Chatterbooks book club.

"This is the best library in the world! It's such a marvellous place."

“We are so fortunate to have a library that is constantly upgrading itself to meet the needs of the community. Long may it continue!”



SPORT IN THE LIBRARY

In November we hosted our third annual Sport in the Library event, delivered in partnership with the **Guernsey Sports Commission**.

As in previous years, the aim was to demonstrate that sport is for everyone, and can be enjoyed almost anywhere – even in the most unexpected places. Sports on offer this year included **boxing**, **table tennis**, seated **volleyball**, and **golf**, with the Hayward Room transformed into a mini golf course using bookshelves as obstacles.

Attendance was slightly lower than previous years, likely due to the wretched weather on the day – but there was nevertheless a steady stream of visitors, with many families enjoying the opportunity to try new sports in the familiar surroundings of the Library.



RAISING READERS

This year we've been working with staff at **Guernsey Prison** to introduce Raising Readers, a new scheme enabling parents in custody to maintain family bonds through shared reading.

Prisoners select a book to send home to their child, each of which includes a bespoke **bookplate** where they can write a personal message. The child receives the book during visiting hours or via a support worker, while the parent also retains a copy so they can read the story together over the phone. The book becomes a tangible link between parent and child, despite the distance and difficult circumstances.

So far, 18 prisoners and 26 children have taken part in the project, with our Early Years Lead helping prisoners choose appropriate titles and write suitable messages.



SCHOOLS

BOOK WEEK

In October we were delighted to welcome three popular children's authors to the island for our annual Book Week, kindly supported by **Collas Crill**.

This event is a cornerstone of our reading and literacy programme. Together, this year's authors visited every school across the Bailiwick, reaching more than **5,000 children** from Reception to Year 9.

Author **Peter Bently** proved a hit with children aged 4-7 in Key Stage 1. They particularly enjoyed his rhyming picture books, including *Octopus Shocktopus* and *The Great Dog Bottom Swap*.

Jenny Pearson's high-energy, interactive sessions with Key Stage 2 pupils (ages 7-11) were well received by both students and staff, as she spoke about her love of reading and how she gets her ideas.

Meanwhile, **Ele Fountain** visited secondary schools, meeting students in Years 7-9 (ages 11-14). She offered a mix of writing workshops and presentations, showing how her own life experiences inspire her stories. Bad weather put paid to her planned visit to St Anne's School in Alderney, but she delivered these sessions remotely instead.





LIBRARY JOURNEY

This year a key focus for our Schools Team has been to develop a clearer, more structured **framework** for the services we provide to primary schools.

This framework outlines a 'Library Journey' for Key Stages 1 and 2, setting out what sessions and support will be delivered to each year group. It aligns with the curriculum and includes a mix of Library events, Cultural Enrichment activities, skills workshops, and topic-based sessions.

While the services themselves remain the same, we recognise that in the past it wasn't always easy for teachers to navigate what's available - this new structure clarifies what's on offer and when, as well as ensuring greater consistency of service across all primary schools.

LIBRARY VISITS

As part of our mission to inspire a love of reading, throughout the year the Schools Team provided numerous opportunities for students to visit the Library. Children from Reception to Year 3 all made at least one trip for either a **Christmas Stories** or **Summer Stories** session. This included visiting the Story Tower on the top floor of the building - a space off limits to parents and other grown-ups - causing great excitement on each occasion. In total, more than 1,000 children enjoyed these sessions over the course of the year.

For older children, the team delivered a wide range of Library-based initiatives to encourage reading for pleasure. As in previous years, students were invited to shadow two children's book awards - **Non-Fiction November** and the **Carnegie Medals** for fiction and illustration. Our librarians helped children in both primary and secondary schools to 'shadow' the awards by reading and reviewing the titles on the shortlists. They then came to the Library to discuss the shortlists as a whole and vote for their 'Guernsey winner'. 75 students took part in the **Non-Fiction November Quiz**, while 45 children from 12 different schools attended the **'Literary Lunch'** for the Carnegie Medals, which this year was kindly sponsored by Moore Stephens.

We also continued efforts to support students in their transition into secondary school. In the summer term we hosted a series of **Library induction events** for more than 300 Year 7 students. Activities included an introduction to the Fab Lab, a practical session with the coding robots, a visit to our special Liberation 80 exhibition, and a treasure hunt in the Children's Library. As always, these visits proved a great opportunity to introduce students to the wide range of library services that can support both their schoolwork and their wellbeing.

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"Book Week was wonderful! The children were fully engaged for the whole session, and they're now very excited to read the author's books. It was so inspiring."



FAB LAB

CULTURAL ENRICHMENT

In November, **all Year 5 children** in States-maintained primary schools visited the Library for a hands-on introduction to the Fab Lab. These visits were part of Education’s Cultural Enrichment Programme, which provides pupils with creative and cultural experiences beyond the classroom.

23 sessions were delivered, with students able to try out the coding robots and see their designs printed onto keyrings using the sublimation printer.

WORKSHOPS

The Fab Lab upgrade led to a huge expansion of our programme of events and educational workshops in 2025. The bigger and better space means we can cater for larger groups, and offer more frequent sessions on a wider range of topics.

Workshops on 3D printing and sublimation proved to be some of the most popular, particularly those focused on producing Christmas or Father’s Day gifts. There was also significant take-up for the **‘Meet the Robots’** coding sessions that were repeated throughout the year.

“The Fab Lab is truly an amazing space for everyone on our little island. We are so lucky to have such a beautiful, unique library.”



TRUSTEES

Caroline Lane, Chair of the Trustees

The Trustees would like to acknowledge the amazing work done by the management and staff of the Library. The range of services available is impressive, and ever expanding to keep up with an ever changing world. Thank you all.

The Trustees are charged with maintaining the fabric of the building, which is a constant challenge. We are grateful for the ongoing support of the States, and we're pleased to report that some progress has been made in this area in 2025.

Maintaining the lift and the ageing boiler is ongoing. The skylights on the top floor of the building have been replaced, and new blinds have been fitted. This was an expensive but necessary task. Meanwhile, old and decaying windows have been repaired and redecorated, as well as redecoration in other parts of the building.

Replacing failed lighting throughout the building with LED down lighters is now underway. Following on from an electrical survey, further works on the electrical infrastructure will be necessary in 2026.

We have an extensive list of further works for the current year. The age of the building means that there is a continual requirement of repair and maintenance to ensure we have a building fit for purpose.

The people of Guernsey deserve a library that they can be proud of and use to its fullest extent. Thank you to all those who help to make this possible.

With thanks to our Trustees:

Caroline Lane (Chair)	Simon Howitt
David Clark (Treasurer)	Steve Williams
Darryl Ogier	





FUTURE PLANS

Cornelia James, Chief Librarian

2026 promises to be another landmark year for the Library. Our chief focus will be the **National Year of Reading**, a major nationwide campaign encouraging people of all ages to read more. Alongside the States of Guernsey, the Guernsey Literary Festival, Bright Beginnings and Guernsey Arts, we're drawing up plans for a busy programme of events to celebrate the power of reading. In late 2025 we conducted an island-wide survey to find out more about people's current reading habits – the results will help to shape the plans for the campaign.

Another key project for 2026 will be to begin the development of a **Treasures Room** – a new exhibition space on the second floor of the Library. The success of *Boundless Curiosity* – the national award-winning exhibition to celebrate our 140th anniversary – showed that there is significant public interest in seeing the rare books and other treasures in our collection on a more regular basis. Creating a permanent, museum-quality gallery space will unlock the potential to stage themed exhibitions all year round, drawing more people into the Library as well as enhancing what's on offer for visitors and tourists in the heart of St Peter Port.

Other priorities include continuing to embed the new **Library Journey** in schools; further growing the **Fab Lab** through a programme of workshops and events; and expanding our **Library of Things** (physical objects available to borrow) to include

blood pressure monitors and other useful equipment that people may not have at home.

Each of these projects ties into a new three-year **Strategic Plan** for the Library, launching in 2026. The Strategy sets out how we plan to ensure that our service keeps evolving to meet the changing needs of the community, while at the same time that our core purpose – to provide free access to books, ideas, and trustworthy information – remains at the heart of what we do. It will be published later this year.

Of course, these services do require significant investment to keep thriving, which is why we've been so pleased to welcome support from sponsors, grant-funding bodies, and individual members of the community throughout 2025. I am particularly grateful to Collas Crill, Rawlinson & Hunter, JT, Collenette Jones, and the Trustees of St Martin's Community Centre for their support of, respectively, Book Week, the Summer Reading Challenge, the Library App, the study space upgrade, and our Little Readers book bags. In 2026 we will continue to seek support for projects like this, while at the same time working hard behind the scenes to manage costs and ensure financial sustainability.

Whatever happens, I'm certain that our dedicated and exceptionally talented team will keep striving to provide the best possible experience for everyone who comes through our doors – as well as coming up with new ideas for events and services that ensure the Library remains a vibrant and essential part of island life. We look forward to working with our community to make 2026 another year to remember.





Guille-Allès
Public Library

THANK YOU

Managing Director: Richard Hamilton

Chief Librarian: Cornelia James

Senior Management Team: Adam Bayfield, Jodie Hearn, Chris Jordan, Catherine Stuart

Trustees: Caroline Lane (Chair), David Clark (Treasurer), Simon Howitt, Darryl Ogier, Steve Williams

Readers' Representatives: Ric Carter, Rose Ann Moore, Natalia Tanser