

John G. McCullough Free Library
2023 Report to Town of Bennington
December 4th, 2023

Library Contact Information:

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FY 2025 Community Appropriations Requested:

Town of Bennington: \$48,000.00 Received in 2023: \$42,500.00

Village of North Bennington: \$30,500.00 Received in 2023: \$27,500.00

Town of Shaftsbury: \$25,200.00 Received in 2023: \$25,200.00

How will these funds be used to support the Bennington community? Funds will be used to meet the library's operating expenses. All Bennington residents are encouraged to activate their McCullough Library memberships to take advantage of the library's wide array of resources, services and free events for all ages. Subscribing to the library's monthly e-newsletter is a great way to keep up-to-date with news, opportunities, and events. Examples of how the library has delivered on its mission of service to Bennington residents can be found below.

Mission:

The John G. McCullough Library is an essential community center: a comfortable and welcoming place where people of all ages can satisfy their curiosity, stimulate their imaginations, become better informed, and connect to the online world. Our library cultivates a stable, vital, and dynamic community by facilitating lifelong learning and literacy at all levels.

2023 Successes:

General Service Updates: The McCullough Library's building reopened to visitors on December 1st, 2022, after the completion of critical repairs, accessibility and air quality improvements. Since reopening, area residents eagerly returned to the library in record numbers. door traffic, use of the collection, and event attendance have reached an all-time high. Use of the library's digital collections (Libby for ebooks and digital audiobooks and Kanopy for video streaming) remained high, even after the building reopened.

Increased Hours of Operation: An exceptionally generous donation made it possible for the library to respond to the public's longstanding request for an increase in hours when it reopened in December 2022. The library is open Tuesdays 10:00 AM- 8:00 PM, Wednesdays, Thursdays, and Fridays 10:00 AM- 6:00 PM and Saturdays 10:00 AM to 2:00 PM. More information about this funding opportunity and related fundraising challenge can be found in the "Plans and Expectations" section of this report.

Youth Services: At a time when so many are concerned about the recent pandemic's lingering effects on the reading and social skills of young people, they may take heart in the rousing success of the McCullough Library's Youth Services department in the past year. The library's Summer Reading Program is a great example of these efforts and their impact on young people in our community. Organized and led by Youth Services Librarian Gizelle Guyette, 126 young people registered for Summer Reading. Together, they tracked 111,550 minutes of reading over the summer, and more than 800 people attended Summer Reading events hosted by the Library. Author visits to area schools, SuperbOwl Sunday (live owls!), and a host of other opportunities for young people and families rounded out a robust schedule of events.

Partnership with Village School of North Bennington: The library piloted a unique partnership with the Village School of North Bennington in January. The library's Assistant Director, Cassidy Kokasko, is also employed at the Village School as their school librarian. The Village School pays for Cassidy's work at the school, and the two organizations split the cost of benefits. This contract with the Village School has enabled both organizations to efficiently employ and retain a talented librarian on a full-time basis.

2023- 2026 Strategic Plan: The library completed its three-year Strategic Plan in June. This plan is available on the library's website.

Friends of the Library Auction Fundraiser: The Friends of the Library held a combination virtual/ live auction event in September, which was tremendously successful. With relatively few overhead expenses, the Friends of the Library surpassed their goal and raised over \$14,000 for library events, museum passes, craft supplies, and special projects. While the Friends remain on the lookout for an indoor space for book storage, sorting, and sale(s), auctions remain a viable fundraising option for this group.

Building improvements: A fresh coat of paint was applied walls of the lobby, staircase, and second floor landing. New carpeting on the first floor and the staircase will likely be installed by the end of 2023 or the beginning of 2024.

Collaborations: In addition to cooperating with the Bennington Free Library as a fellow member of Catamount Library Network, The McCullough Library has worked with a number of Bennington area organizations, such as the Vermont Department of Labor's Bennington office, Mount Anthony Middle School, Bennington Elementary and Molly Stark Schools, the Alliance for Community Transformations, the Better Bennington Corporation, Head Start, Sunrise Family Resource Center, Bennington Rec Center, Bennington County RSVP, Bennington Senior Center, and Bennington Queer Connect. We regularly collaborate with the Bennington Bookshop, and have hosted outreach booths at the Bennington Farmers' Market. In the year ahead, there are plans to collaborate with the Bennington Chapter of the American Association of University Women (AAUW), Bennington Theater, and Filmore Pond. Our collaboration with North Bennington groups and businesses for efforts such as WinterFest, Lake Paran's summer camp, and the Village-Wide Block Party remained strong in 2023.

Shortcomings:

Website Improvements: The library was unable to put in place accessibility and improved event promotions on its website without additional software and software subscriptions. Software costs for these improvements are included in this year's funding request.

Construction Delays: Supply chain and local skilled labor shortages delayed the completion of some parts of the recent building renovation and preservation project. Final components should be completed in early 2024.

Gift Card Fundraiser: A gift card fundraiser held in April 2023 to replace a gala dinner event at a local restaurant, was not successful. This effort raised only a few hundred dollars. The library's Trustees plan to return to gala dinners in 2024.

Plans and Expectations for 2024:

Bonnie Dundas Youth Room Project: Thanks to a generous donation from the family of former Children's Librarian Bonnie Dundas and gifts from other donors, much-needed repairs and updates to the youth services room will be made in 2024. Grant funding is being sought to supplement these donations. Guided by feedback from young people and caregivers, updates will include sanding and re-sealing the floors, new shades for the windows, a fresh coat of paint, uniform shelving on casters, and improved seating options for visitors of all ages.

Fundraising for Library Equity and Sustainability Fund: The increase in library hours described above is directly related to an extraordinary funding and fundraising opportunity. The McCullough Library's Equity and Sustainability Fund, established with the Vermont Community Foundation in early 2023, will create supplemental income for the library to guarantee benefits and competitive wages for staff, and provides the public with more opportunity to take advantage all the library offers. Bridge funding was given to put these changes in place immediately. A fundraising effort to supplement this large gift and make these improvements permanent launched its preliminary, "quiet" phase in early 2023. These first phases have been successful; as of this report, nearly \$200K has been raised. The second, more public phase of this campaign will commence in 2024.

Zinio: Building on the continued popularity of Libby, the library's ebook and digital audiobook lending app, we're planning to purchase a subscription to Zinio, a collection of more than 3,000 popular magazines, available on an unlimited basis to McCullough Library members.

Sustainable Libraries Initiative: The McCullough Library is the first library in the county and one of a handful in Vermont to join the Sustainable Libraries Initiative, a relatively new certification program through the American Library Association. The certification process enables the library to develop and advance environmentally sound, socially equitable, and economically feasible practices to intentionally address climate change and co-create thriving communities.

Accessibility and Energy Efficiency Upgrades: Building on the success of the recent renovation project, the library is actively preparing for the second phase of its accessibility project: the construction of an addition to the west street portion of the building. Plans include a new ramp and rear entry to the building, and an elevator to the second floor. Library staff are working to secure funding to guide this proposed

project through the review and document approval phases to put it in the best possible position when it applies for state and federal capital improvement grant funding through the Vermont Department of Libraries. In the meantime, smaller accessibility projects, including some new furnishings and a reconfiguration of the library's first floor, are pending grant funding. The library is also pursuing funding to assist with the cost of repairs to and better insulation for the building's many windows, which will help with energy costs and consumption.

Respectfully submitted,

-Jennie Rozycki, Library Director

12/4/2023

McCullough Free Library, Inc.
ANNUAL REVIEW
AND 2024 BUDGET

	2022	2023 Forecast	2023 Budget	2023 Variance		2024 Budget	2024 vs 2023 Budget	
Income								
4100 Interest Citizens	16	7		7		60	60	
4102 Investment Interest	14,230	14,000	11,400	2,600		14,000	2,600	
4200 Donation - Electric	2,800	2,760	3,000	(240)		3,000	0	
4300 Village NB Grant	20,000	35,000	27,500	7,500	1	30,500	3,000	A
4301 Shaftesbury Grant	25,200	25,200	25,200	0		25,200	0	
4302 Bennington Grant	42,500	42,500	42,500	0		48,000	5,500	
4400 Annual Fund	30,467	46,000	46,000	0		46,000	0	
4410 Other Donations	10,130	1,259	13,900	(12,641)	2a	3,500	(10,400)	B
4450 Grants	29,185	23,871	10,700	13,171	2b	22,800	12,100	C
1030 Village School NB		29,400	26,000	4,400		32,280	7,280	D
4800 Copley Income	8	314	200	114		300	100	
4810 Fines and Late Fees Income	53	235	200	35		200	0	
Total Income	174,587	220,547	205,600	14,947		225,840	20,240	
Expenses								
6000 Library Content/Material								
6001 Audio-Video Exp	1,239	3,000	3,000	0		4,000	1,000	
6005 Books - Adult	4,394	6,600	8,000	(1,500)		7,500	(500)	
6010 Books - Juvenile	3,222	5,000	5,000	0		5,000	0	
6020 Periodicals	537	500	500	0		2,000	1,500	
6022 Tool Collection	5,790	0	0	0		0	0	
6025 Subscription & Dues	969	1,950	1,500	450		4,000	2,500	
Total 6000 Library Content/Material	16,151	16,950	18,000	(1,050)		22,500	4,500	E
6100 Operations								
6105 Program Costs	10,186	10,000	6,000	4,000	3	10,000	4,000	F
6110 Salaries & Wages	127,714	188,000	203,000	(15,000)	4	200,000	(3,000)	
6112 Payroll Tax Expense	11,739	17,500	17,500	0		18,000	500	
6115 Employee Benefits	3,633	26,300	29,300	(3,000)		27,500	(1,800)	
6120 Conference, Travel & Membership	1,942	2,577	500	2,077		1,500	1,000	
6130 Office Supplies & Postage	6,473	6,500	3,500	3,000		6,500	3,000	
6140 Marketing & Promotion	4,648	8,000	12,500	(4,500)		12,000	(500)	
Total 6100 Operations	166,335	258,877	272,300	(13,423)		275,500	3,200	
6200 Facilities and Equipment								
6210 Equip & Computer Maintenance	4,824	895	1,200	(305)		1,000	(200)	
6220 Telephone & Internet	3,550	2,400	2,000	400		2,200	200	
6230 Janitorial Services	893	2,500	2,250	250		3,000	750	
6240 Building Maintenance	5,414	5,724	9,000	(3,276)	5	9,000	0	
6250 Insurance	4,769	5,600	5,000	600		6,000	1,000	
Total 6200 Facilities and Equipment	19,450	17,119	19,450	(2,331)		21,200	1,750	
6300 Utilities								
6310 Utilities - Electric	3,224	7,000	3,000	4,000	6	7,000	4,000	
6320 Utilities-Fuel Oil	9,371		3,000	(3,000)	6	1,000	(2,000)	
6330 Utilities- Trash Removal	766	1,158	1,200	(42)		1,200	0	
6340 Utilities Water & Sewer	625	800	800	0		800	0	
Total 6300 Utilities	13,986	8,958	8,000	958		10,000	2,000	
6400 Professional Services								
6410 Bank Service Charge	87	225	75	150		75	0	
6420 Payroll Fees	1,911	1,968	1,635	333		1,650	15	

	2022	2023 Forecast	2023 Budget	2023 Variance		2024 Budget	2024 vs 2023 Budget
6430 Legal & Accounting	7,076	7,165	6,500	665		6,500	0
Total 6400 Professional Services	9,074	9,358	8,210	1,148		8,228	16
Total Expenses	224,996	311,262	325,960	(14,698)		337,428	11,465
Net Operating Income	(50,409)	(90,715)	(120,360)	29,645		(111,685)	8,775
Other Income							
4850 Friends Events Income	9,883	17,329	9,000	8,329	7	9,000	0
6800 Donation-Restricted(Sustainability)	88,300	90,000	108,900	(18,900)	8	64,600	(44,300)
Total Other Income	98,183	107,329	117,900	(10,571)		73,600	(44,300)
Net Income	45,774	16,614	(2,460)	19,074		(37,985)	(35,525)

Construction (100% Donations/Grants) \$ 382,610 \$ 47,920 \$ 55,000

ENDOWMENTS:

Unrestricted - historical	\$ 338,300	\$ 363,000
Restricted - Sustainability		\$ 1,336,500
Restricted - Building		\$ 34,000

NOTES:

THIS YEAR BUDGET VARIANCES

- 1 Check for final portion of Village annual allocation deposited in 2023 versus 2022.
- 2 Additional fundraising effort shifted to auction event reported in Other Income - Friends Event. To fill the need for operating funds, Library Director got a \$15000 one-time grant from Vermont Arts Council.
- 3 In response to community requests and attendance, the library is adding and improving programs for all ages.
- 4 Salary adjustments budgeted for January aligned with performance reviews in June
- 5 Work on front entrance steps, sidewalk and brickwork deferred to 2024
- 6 More hours and HVAC increased electric bills; heat pump offsets oil usage, and there is a credit from 2022
- 7 Per note 2, auction event replaced annual book sale. On-premises book sale can no longer occur due to fire marshal prohibition for storing books in basement.
- 8 Anonymous donor provided bridge grant for 2021-2022 to launch Equity and Sustainability campaign.

2024 vs 2023 Budget Variances

- A Request Increase from municipalities: 8% overall. (Defer Shaftsbury increase this year)
- B One fundraising dinner is anticipated. Efforts this year will focus on endowment funding.
- C Grants are always being sought. 2024 includes \$16,000 from Dept of Libraries for new computer equipment and internet services.
- D Contract with Village School enables both organizations to efficiently employ and retain a talented full time librarian.
- E Focusing on funding on-line services including Kanopy, Libby, Zinio and Whofi
- F In response to community requests and attendance, the library is adding and improving programs for all ages.
- G The Equity and Sustainability endowment yields 5% of premium annually. The goal is to fully fund the endowment by the end of 2025 at which point we anticipate \$88,000/year.