

Community Connections

Senior Health Insurance Program/Medicare Counseling

Date: November 6, 13 & 20

Attendance: 18

Partner: Illinois Department on Aging

Staff: Katie Cortesi (Senior Outreach Librarian)

The Illinois Department on Aging arranges appointments for SHIP/Medicare counseling to occur at HPL. November is generally a higher-attendance month due to open enrollment.

Middle School Book Talks

Date: December 1

Attendance: 243

Partner: Glenn Westlake Middle School

Staff: Deidre Winterhalter (Elementary Services Librarian), Caitlin Atkinson (Teen Librarian) & Joey Vichio (YS Library Associate II)

Staff prepared and delivered Mystery Genre Book Talks to every 6th grade English Language Arts (ELA) class at Glenn Westlake Middle School. After the outreach event, a teacher dropped off a folder of handmade cards her ELA classes made to thank Library staff for visiting.

Mom and Baby Hour

Date: December 3

Attendance: 7

Partner: Edward Elmhurst Hospital

Staff: Tricia Nelson (Early Literacy Librarian) & Julia Kindelin (YS Library Associate II)

Staff highlighted ways the Library supports early literacy for families and led a baby storytime. Caregiver feedback inspired a new survey to shape services for families with infants (0-12 months).

Jingle Bell Jubilee

Date: December 6

Attendance: 649

Partners: Community-wide event

Lombardians of all ages made the Library a part of their *Jingle Bell Jubilee* celebration. The Library hosted the Glenbard East Eastwind Vocal Ensemble, popular snow princesses for a royal photo opportunity, winter ornament crafts, and a Jingle Bell Jubilee themed scavenger hunt. Light refracting glasses were a popular giveaway in advance of the lighting of Lilacia Park.

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Goodwill Workforce: Resume Drop-In

Date: December 9

Attendance: 5

Partner: Goodwill

Staff: Courtney Rose Welsh (ALS Programming Librarian)

Staff from Goodwill Workforce reviewed resumes for HPL patrons.

Westmore School Brownies and Daisies

Date: December 20

Attendance: 16

Partner: Girl Scouts

Staff: Deidre Winterhalter (Elementary Services Librarian)

Deidre presented a storytime and led activities focusing on friendship and movement.

Program Highlights

Early Literacy Program Highlights

Preschool Information Fair

Date: November 18

Attendance: 131

Staff: Tricia Nelson (Early Literacy Librarian) & Cate Hoadley (YS Assistant Manager)

The Library hosted 12 local preschools along with community organizations that support early childhood development. (See below image.)

Staff created an informational booklet that families can access through our website: [Preschool Resources Booklet](#). A post-event survey was sent to all participants, with overwhelmingly positive feedback. All participants indicated that they are eager to attend next year and were pleased with the Preschool Resources Booklet.



Participants connecting with local Early Childhood Organizations at the *Preschool Fair*.

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Elementary Program Highlights

Book Buddies

Date: November 15

Attendance: 11

Staff: Deidre Winterhalter (Elementary Services Librarian) & Caitlin Atkinson (Teen Librarian)

After completing training, teen volunteers were partnered with early readers to practice their reading skills. (See right image.) We look forward to offering this new literacy building experience again in the spring.



Book buddies reading.

Wrapped Yarn Painting

Date: November 16

Attendance: 19

Staff: Deidre Winterhalter (Elementary Services Librarian) & Chris Sowl (YS Library Associate II)

Students made impressionist birch tree forest paintings using yarn, canvas, paint, and cotton balls. (See right image.)



Participants enjoying *Wrapped Yarn Painting*.

Teen Program Highlights

Teen Advisory Board (TAB) Meeting

Date: November 14

Attendance: 14

Staff: Caitlin Atkinson (Teen Librarian)

A TAB Leader led a team building activity for the group before members added titles to the TAB Picks list. The TAB Picks list will be featured on an upcoming display and on the [Teen Volunteering](#) website page.

Rat Race

Date: December 17

Attendance: 4

Staff: Jeannie Arinyanontakoon (YS Library Associate II) and Mark Smith (YS Library Associate II)

Middle school students worked together to create a course for remote-controlled “rats.” They spent a lot of time creating the perfect course. Naturally, the program evolved into a Battle Bots program.

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Family Program Highlights

Family Building Fun

Date: November 24, 25 & 26

Attendance: 180 (3 sessions)

Staff: Tricia Nelson (Early Literacy Librarian), Cate Hoadley (YS Assistant Manager), Abi Caskey (YS Library Associate II) & Grace Zunkel (YS Seasonal Assistant)

Families used extra-large blocks and other building materials for some oversized fun. The program featured Library materials as well as an exhibit rental from the DuPage Children's Museum. (See right image.)



Families enjoy a variety of building activities, including an exhibit from the DuPage Children's Museum, at *Family Building Fun*.

Pokémon Party

Date: December 12

Attendance: 83

Staff: Julia Kindelin (YS Library Associate II) & Jeannie Arinyanontakoon (YS Library Associate II)

Celebrating 30 years of Pokémon, fans gathered for fun activities that included a DIY Poké Ball pocket craft, Evolution Sequencing, finding hidden Pokémon around the room, and more.

Family Science

Date: December 15 & 18

Attendance: 60 (2 sessions)

Staff: Julia Kindelin (YS Library Associate II), Chris Sowl (YS Library Associate II), Cate Hoadley (Assistant YS Manager) & Deidre Winterhalter (Elementary Services Librarian)

Families explored scientific principles such as chemical reactions and liquid density through self-led activities, including playing with a non-Newtonian liquid, melting ice with salt, and making Alka-Seltzer lava lamps. As a group, participants made elephant toothpaste with hydrogen peroxide and yeast.

Adult Program Highlights

Book Clubs

Date: November 4, 9, 19 & 20

Attendance: 36

Staff: Erin Bigger-Goldlust (Digital Services & Instruction Librarian), Stephanie Howes (ALS Assistant Manager) & Courtney Rose Welsh (ALS Programming Librarian)

Four book club sessions were hosted in November.

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November & December Computer Classes

Sessions: 12 (November) & 7 (December)

Attendance: 35 (November) & 25 (December)

Staff: Erin Bigger-Goldlust (Digital Services & Instruction Librarian) & Lance Garrison (ALS Librarian)

Popular classes included Chat GPT, Canva, and the Tech Help sessions.

Senior Program Highlights

Senior Social: The Women – A Story of Two Army Nurses in Vietnam

Date: November 17

Attendance: 64

Staff: Katie Cortesi (Senior Outreach Librarian)

Lynn Rymarz from Tales in History presented a portrayal of nurses in Vietnam, inspired by the popular book, *The Women*. (See right image.)



Patrons enjoy the November Senior Social on nurses during the Vietnam War.

Senior Social: The Legend of St. Nicholas

Date: December 15

Attendance: 53

Staff: Katie Cortesi (Senior Outreach Librarian)

Historical actor Terrance Lynch arrived as St. Nick and shared worldwide holiday traditions.

Presentations and Performances for Adults

Petra Sings, Andy Swings

Date: November 10

Attendance: 41

Staff: Courtney Rose Welsh (ALS Programming Librarian) & David Gogo (Local History and Genealogy Librarian)

Jazz duo Petra Van Nuis and Andy Brown performed for HPL patrons.

Illinois Libraries Presents (ILP): A Journey Through Food and Science with J. Kenji López-Alt

Date: November 18

Attendance: 37 (Virtual Program)

Staff: Michelle Kilty (ALS Manager)

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Cookbook Author and *New York Times* food columnist J. Kenji López-Alt presented virtually through the ILP program. Cooking programs are generally the best attended ILP programs for HPL.

Holiday Salads and Sides with Chef Susan Maddox

Date: December 3

Attendance: 68

Staff: Courtney Rose Welsh (ALS Programming Librarian) & Natalie Hernandez (ALS Library Associate)

Chef Maddox demonstrated how to prepare delicious holiday food. (See right image.)



Patrons enjoying Chef Maddox's cooking demonstration!

Mid-Century Christmas: Fads and Fun from 1945-70

Date: December 8

Attendance: 70

Staff: Courtney Rose Welsh (ALS Programming Librarian) & Natalie Hernandez (ALS Library Associate)

HPL favorite Leslie Goddard presented historical holiday traditions.

Jane Austen's 250th Birthday Special Program Series

A Visit with Jane Austen

Date: December 15

Attendance: 34

Staff: Courtney Rose Welsh (ALS Programming Librarian)

Historical actor, Debra Miller, portrayed Jane Austen. (See below image.) Kimberly Sipek, Community Outreach Coordinator, partnered with Prairie Food Co-op to offer treats for the event.



Debra Miller performs as Jane Austen.

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Pride and Prejudice Watch-Along

Date: December 17

Attendance: 8

Staff: Stephanie Howes (ALS Assistant Manager)

Attendees enjoyed the 2005 movie adaptation of *Pride & Prejudice* with light refreshments.

Vintage Inspired Teacup Candles (Studio 411)

Date: December 9 & 16

Attendance: 18

Staff: Melisa Martinez (Studio 411 Supervisor)

Crafters made a candle in a vintage teacup. (See right image.)



A floral teacup with candle making supplies.

Studio 411 Program Highlights

Studio 411: Wooden Thanksgiving Stand Decor

Date: November 7 & 14

Attendance: 30

Staff: Melisa Martinez (Studio 411 Supervisor) & Afra Siddiqui (ALS Library Associate II)

Patrons made a table decoration for Thanksgiving from pre-cut pieces.

Studio 411: Fall Paper Table Runner

Date: November 18

Attendance: 12

Staff: Melisa Martinez (Studio 411 Supervisor) & Afra Siddiqui (ALS Library Associate II)

This month's Cricut program made a seasonal paper table runner. (See right image.)



Red and gold paper table runner.

Studio 411: November & December Drop-in Hours

Attendance: 44 (November) & 35 (December)

Staff: Melisa Martinez (Studio 411 Supervisor) & Afra Siddiqui (ALS Library Associate II)

Studio 411 is open from 10am-8pm on most Mondays and Wednesdays. The most popular equipment was the electronic cutters (Cricut), followed by the laser cutters (both the Glowforge and Epilog), archival services, heat presses, and various sewing equipment.

Studio 411: Holiday Craft Drop-ins

Date: December 5, 12 & 19 (2–8pm)

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Attendance: 67

Staff: Melisa Martinez (Studio 411 Supervisor) & Afra Siddiqui (ALS Library Associate II)

Staff offered four holiday themed projects to pick from on three Fridays in December. This format allowed staff to provide patrons with more opportunities to complete instruction-based projects.

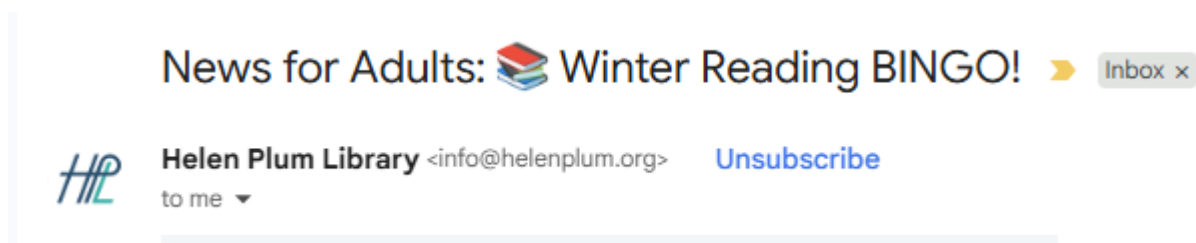
Collection Management

Aspen Search Result Ranking: In November, Tim Mayse-Lillig (Cataloging & Systems Librarian) implemented experimental changes to Aspen’s search ranking algorithm which should help boost popular items, physical material, and titles with multiple copies owned in search results.

Aspen “Shelved” Year-in-Review: For a second year, the Spotify Wrapped-inspired year-in-review feature will be available in our Aspen Discovery catalog. From Jan 1 through Feb 28, any patron who has opted-in to recording their reading history and checked out at least five titles in 2025 will be shown a slideshow summarizing their total checkouts; most active month; top formats, genres, authors, and series; and reading suggestions based on their borrowing history.

Email Branding & Security: HPL implemented Brand Indicators for Message Identification (BIMI), an emerging email standard which allows organizations to display their logo next to email messages, provided that the sender meets certain security requirements and the recipient’s mailbox provider supports BIMI. (See example below.) Currently, this includes Gmail, Yahoo, Apple, Comcast, and others.

To qualify for BIMI, we also had to fully implement Domain-based Message Authentication, Reporting and Conformance (DMARC), an email security standard which allows mail servers to verify that messages from helenplum.org addresses were truly sent by us. In addition to building brand recognition, BIMI helps patrons recognize legitimate messages from HPL, and DMARC prevents spam and phishing messages purporting to be from the Library.



Palace Project: In November, planning continued for the migration of RAILS ebooks and audiobooks from Baker & Taylor’s discontinued Boundless platform to the Palace Project. On December 15, over 50,000 Palace Project ebooks and audiobooks were added to our catalog. By the end of the month, HPL patrons borrowed 372 titles through the Palace app.

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StackMap: Staff completed shifting in the Adult Library Services nonfiction section. Tim Mayse-Lillig (Cataloging & Systems Librarian) updated StackMap to include these shelves. The entire first and second floors are now mapped except for some display shelves.

Sierra 6.5 Upgrade: We upgraded to the latest version of Sierra before opening on Monday, November 24.

Additional Services

Community Services Nook: The Adult Library Services nonfiction section was shifted to allow shelf space for community information. Positioned behind the computers, the display features information on job search assistance, local shelters, and services from organizations such as the People's Resource Center, DuPage County Health, IDHS Family and Community Services, and 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline. Stephanie Howes (ALS Assistant Manager) and Kimberly Sipek (Community Outreach Coordinator) are expanding available materials.

Mobile IDs: Patrons can now use Illinois Mobile IDs (secure digital driver's licenses and state IDs) when signing up for a library card.

Patron Engagement

Top Social Media Posts of November: The most-viewed post of November was an Instagram video about the [Library's open hours](#). It has over 6,700 views. On Facebook, the most-viewed post was the announcement of the newly expanded [Studio 411 Drop-in Hours](#), with over 5,900 views. The Facebook video about a patron using the [Recording Lab](#) to record an album received over 3,750 views and had many heartwarming comments.

Top Social Media Posts of December: Our most-viewed post on Instagram in December was a [Stranger Things-themed video](#) that featured our microfilm reader in '80s throwback fashion. It has received over 96K views. On Facebook, our most-viewed post was our [holiday card video](#), which received 2.5K views.

6-Month Social Media Snapshot: From July-December 2025, we grew our Instagram account by 1,879 followers, ending the year at a milestone of 15K followers, which is exceptional for a library of our size. Facebook grew by 103 followers, and LinkedIn by 46 followers. Our engagement rates were well above average. Facebook had an overall engagement rate of 7.83% (the average for 2025 according to Buffer is 5.07%), Instagram at 6.11% (average 1.16%), and LinkedIn at 17.91% (average 6.5%).

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Email Newsletters: Email newsletters are delivered to patrons every other week. Individual subscribers may receive more than one targeted email newsletter. Additionally, the NextReads newsletter is a reader’s advisory service with a total of **353** subscribers.

Email Newsletters Statistics Oct–Dec 2025					
Targeted Newsletters	Emails Sent	Emails Opened	Open Rate	Links Clicked	Click Rate
Birth through Preschool	3,987	1,708	42.8%	148	3.7%
Elementary School	9,515	3,666	38.5%	178	1.9%
Middle & High School	12,769	4,673	36.6%	157	1.2%
Adult	90,728	32,245	35.5%	1,449	1.6%
Adults 55+	39,027	13,461	34.5%	1,353	3.5%
Studio 411	2,258	1,131	50.1%	212	9.4%
NextReads	2,648	1,552	58.6%	115	4.3%
Total	160,932	58,436		3,612	
Average			36.3%		2.2%

Open rate: 42.35% | Non-profits: 46.49%

Click rate: 2% | Non-profits: 2.66%

Note on open rates: Since October, our email open rates have fallen significantly due to an update in data tracking. Our email marketing platform, SpringShare, reached out to all users to address this system-wide issue. The most significant impact identified was Apple’s Mail Privacy Protection (MPP). Past open rates were artificially high due to Apple’s MPP, which preloads email features to protect against spam. This translates to opens that didn’t actually happen. However, our engagement numbers (click rate) have remained consistent and strong. The same percentage of users continue to click through our emails to register for programs, view book lists, and engage with other email content, which is the ultimate goal of our eNewsletters.

Publicity Mention: On Dec 29, NPR published an article titled [“Genre fiction and female authors top U.S. libraries’ most-borrowed lists in 2025.”](#) The article references libraries’ top circulating lists for 2025 across the country, including [HPL Wrapped 2025!](#)

Facilities Updates

Drive-Thru Signage: Staff noticed an increase in patrons parking in the drive-thru lane during peak periods. Staff placed a sandwich board sign indicating no parking/idling. New, permanent signage and lot marking will be installed to better communicate expectations.

East Entryway Doors: The hinges on the entryway doors need replacement. Additionally, push-button door openers on new bollards will be installed closer to the doors to improve accessibility (as opposed to the wave open option currently located on the wall). The work on both projects will be completed at the same time to reduce disruption to patrons.

Building Updates: Phil Lucas (Facility & Security Services Manager) coordinates building maintenance, repair, and ongoing testing.

- Annual fire extinguishers and backflow preventers inspections were completed.
- Elevator certificates were updated for the new year.
- PremiStar completed quarterly preventative HVAC equipment maintenance.
- NIR Roof care completed scheduled, preventative maintenance.

Staff Updates

New Staff: Michelle Moreno, Patron Services Assistant (Part-Time)

Staff Recognition: On Dec 10, the Library celebrated the work of each staff member and acknowledged staff anniversaries. This year, we honored eight staff members:

- 5 Years: Adrienne Mohline (Patron Services Team Lead)
- 10 Years: Michelle Baumann (Business Office Manager & HR Coordinator)
- 10 Years: Kristie Leslie (Marketing Manager)
- 10 Years: Courtney Rose Welsh (Adult Library Services Programming Librarian)
- 20 Years: Deb Cimino (Technology & Metadata Services Processing Specialist)
- 20 Years: Chris King (Technology & Metadata Services Processing Specialist)
- 20 Years: Carol Spitler (Technology & Metadata Services Cataloger)
- 35 Years: Danielle Baldrige (Patron Services Shelver)

Meetings, Training, & Continuing Education

Staff Training

PIC Training: On Dec 18, Anne Luzeniecki trained Abi Caskey and Joey Vichio on Person-in-Charge (PIC) responsibilities. Jon Terrill provided a facilities tour. Abi and Joey accepted YS Library Associate II positions, which require that they act as PICs.

Meetings and Professional Development	
November 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Helen Plum Library Foundation Meeting (Anne Luzeniecki & Tyler Works)
November 5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Find Food IL Map Webinar for Community Board resources related to food insecurity and assistance (Steph Koblich & Jenn Ferguson)
November 6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Policy & Bylaws Committee Meeting
November 7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Moderated the ILA Marketing Forum Roundtable, “Marketing Lessons Learned in 2025” on Zoom (Emily Bradshaw)
November 10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Palace Project intro webinar hosted by Lyris and RAILS (Tim Mayse-Lillig coordinated)
November 12–13	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Library Marketing and Communications Conference in St. Louis, MO (Emily Bradshaw)
November 13	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> HR Source: Annual Law Conference (Anne Luzeniecki)
November 17	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Libraries & Immigration Enforcement Webinar (Anne Luzeniecki & Jenn Ferguson)
November 18	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Board of Trustees Meeting
November 19	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Patron Services department meeting
November 20	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All Staff Meetings
November 21	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> RAILS Board Meeting at Galesburg Public Library (Alex Vancina)
December 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ILA West Suburban Library Legislative Lunch in Oakbrook (Alex Vancina & Anne Luzeniecki; Trustees Kristin Aasmundstad Walsh, Ginger Kearney & Kelly Simms)
December 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> IUG Steering Committee Meeting (Alex Vancina)
December 8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Management Meeting

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December 10	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Staff Recognition Event
November 17 & December 15	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• ILA Conference 2026 Planning Committee Meeting (Alex Vancina)
November 19 & December 17	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• LACONI Governing Board meeting in Burr Ridge (Alex Vancina)

Staff Glossary:

ALS – Adult Library Services

Emily Bradshaw – Content Coordinator

Jenn Ferguson – Executive Assistant

Steph Koblich – Graphic Designer

Anne Luzeniecki – Executive Director

Tim Mayse-Lillig – Cataloging & Systems Librarian

Alex Vancina – Technology & Metadata Services Manager

Tyler Works – Assistant Director

YS – Youth Services