Utica Public Library
Long-Range Plan 2027-2030

With over a century of service to the Greater Utica Area, The Library remains dedicated to providing information and learning experiences throughout our diverse community.

Executive Summary

As the Utica Public Library ("The Library") prepares to embark on its 134th year of service to the communities of the Mohawk Valley region, The Library offers its Long-Range Plan 2027-2030 (the "Plan") to outline The Library's plans to ensure the continuation of customer-oriented service to Utica, NY, and the Mid York Library system.

As a public association library chartered in New York State, The Library must ensure compliance with New York Education Law and the Regulations of the Commissioner of Education. In furtherance of its compliance efforts, The Library must have a long-range plan informed by community input that outlines its plan of service for the future. The Plan affords the opportunity for The Library to review and assess its performance with respect to the goals set forth in the Plan.

Since 1893, The Library has been a pillar of public service by stewarding sources and artifacts of knowledge and creating learning opportunities for all ages. As a community resource, it continues to adapt to the needs of its surrounding communities and enhance its capabilities to address those needs in an age of rapid digital evolution.

Currently, The Library's priorities include, but are not limited to, the expansion of Marketing and Outreach Services; enhancing staff training; addressing facility needs; and increasing awareness of The Library's programs for children, teenagers, and adults. The Library is constantly adjusting its goals and priorities according to the issues which presently challenge The Library—this begins with targeted investment in The Library's personnel, physical space, and content capabilities.

Planning Process

The Plan is a collaborative effort spearheaded by The Library's Board of Trustees and Library Staff. The Governance Committee of the Board of Trustees, which - together with staff - communicated with and gathered information from the community through multiple mediums, including a community stakeholder focus group and a community survey.

The individuals listed below agreed to participate and attend a Community

Stakeholder Focus Group meeting organized and hosted by Library Staff. This eclectic group of individuals includes representatives of local institutions that have a significant interest in the quality of life of the populace served by The Library. Their attendance and participation in the Community Stakeholder Focus Group was central to the development and implementation of the Plan.

· Kari Puleo, *Executive Director of the Utica Chamber of Commerce*

· Heather Hage, *President & CEO of Griffiss Institute*

· John Murphy, *Director of Development & Donor Relations at Munson*

· Megan McGrogan, *Executive Director of Utica Children's Museum*

· Kevin Alexander, *ALEX Advisor at Hamilton College*

The questions that formed the basis of discussion in the Community Stakeholder Focus Group emphasized community perception of The Library, The Library's services, and the effectiveness of The Library's channels of communication:

1) What are the services you believe a library provides today, generally?

2) What local needs can you identify that you believe The Library can satisfy?

3) How can The Library satisfy those needs? / How can The Library demonstrate value to those who are not already library users?

The Library also facilitated conversations between The Library Board of Trustees and Library Staff to ensure that the implementation of the Plan is consistent across all Library departments. Once The Library gathered sufficient information from the community, the Governance Committee and Library Staff developed this Plan to create a path forward with actionable items and bases for analysis of services to gauge The Library's progress in achieving each facet of the Plan.

Monitoring Progress

It is expected that goals and the metrics measuring those goals may change with the course of time. As a public entity, The Library is susceptible to change based on local needs and governmental regulations. The Library shall monitor progress in accomplishing the goals set forth in this Plan. The Board's Long-Range Plan Committee shall assess progress on a quarterly basis and engage with Library Staff as necessary to monitor progress and adherence to the Plan.

As The Library implements new protocols in adherence to the Plan, The Library will also develop the proper monitoring infrastructure to assess The Library's

progress in meeting its goals and find ways to use the information gathered in the assessment process.

Goals

1. Content and Programming
    - Ensure the quality, quantity, and accessibility of The Library's content.
    - Perform a full audit of The Library materials.
    - Perform a diversity audit of the circulating collection.
    - Explore options for serving users who may not be readers with alternative circulating items and programming.
    - Provide programs that address health and wellbeing, including a plan to integrate The Library's garden space on Park Avenue into its programming.
    - A customer satisfaction survey will be done once a year to assess the adequacy of materials including the accessibility of content.
    - Further opportunities for The Library to work on a Community Calendar.
    - Create exhibits that draw in visitors and capitalize on downtown's new attractions.

The Library boasts a wide variety of items for all ages spanning paper and digital content. The Library hosts several reading clubs of various styles of reading and has a loyal group of readers. The Library's ability to develop and maintain a quality collection of diverse content across all information mediums is paramount.

2. Technology
    - Maintain cutting-edge quality in The Library's internal operations and capabilities.
    - Provide the public with access to hardware and software that keeps pace with growing use of technology in everyday life.
    - Establish infrastructure to implement digital skills to benefit The Library's constituents.

The Library is a community resource. As such, The Library provides access to the technology required for people to participate in society to their fullest potential. To that end, The Library must maintain excellent broadband capabilities and ensure the ease of accessibility for The Library's constituents.

3. Event/Community Space
    - Broaden the community's presence in The Library building.
    - Explore new events to host in The Library and investigate necessary items for hosting private events, particular staffing and energy use requirements.
    - Create more community spaces.

The Library takes pride in its history and its welcoming presence. The Library is working constantly to improve its physical space for its constituents to host community events or to provide a quiet space for individuals.

4. Marketing and Outreach
    - Establish and maintain communication channels at various levels throughout the community.
    - Establish collaborative networks throughout the community.
    - Create a new website.
    - Institute new branding and create brand awareness.
    - Improve social media messaging and marketing.
    - Enhance The Library's social media presence.
    - Create internal infrastructure to manage The Library's digital footprint.
    - Conduct satisfaction or community surveys.

Building and maintaining awareness of our programming and our collections is a constant challenge for The Library. A lot of our survey respondents replied that they found out about what is happening at The Library by social media. Just as significantly a large number of respondents indicated they are unaware of programs and find information in printed form. With an improved online presence, particularly on social media, The Library is expanding its methods of outreach and communication with donors, prospective donors, current and potential users.

5. Investing in Staff and Facility
    - Enhance staff training and staff support and continue to send staff to conferences and trainings where appropriate.
    - Conduct an employee engagement survey once a year to understand employee satisfaction and concerns.
    - Provide ongoing coaching conversations and performance feedback to employees.
    - Put new policies in place for: social media, disaster plan, evacuation plan, security plan, technology plan.
    - Review and address facility needs and concerns and establish a prioritized list of projects including cost and desired timelines for completion.
    - Develop a new signage plan including multilingual signage.
    - Continue progress on elevator retrofit.
    - Improve lighting and exit signs.
    - Upgrade gallery.

The Library would not be the valuable resource it is without its staff. The Library is animated by the passion and dedication of the small number of individuals who know how to tailor The Library's capabilities to the needs of the community. By investing in staff and closely monitoring the needs of the building The Library ensures a bright future of stellar community service.

6. Partnerships, Collaborations, Outreach, Board Planning, and Funding
    - Identify long-term funding avenues through grants and improved donor relations.
    - Make an additional annual request to donors to supplement the annual appeal letter.
    - Identify long-term partners and collaborators through evaluation of current and future partnership.

- Identify new outreach opportunities, expand outreach potential, evaluate current outreach.
- Continue board planning through succession planning, search for potential trustees, and cultivating future officers.

The Library is already a vibrant part of the community and partners with many other local institutions. It is vital to expand its outreach and funding to continue its work into the future.

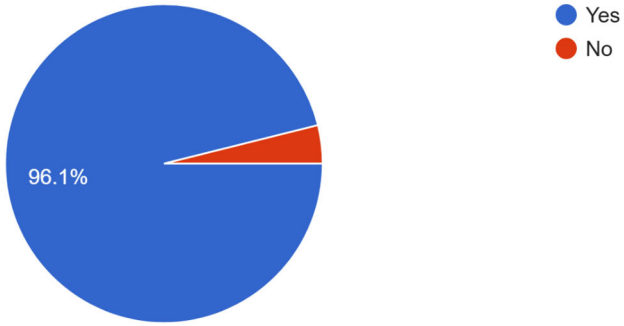
The Library by the Numbers:

- Population served: 65,283
- Number of active cardholders: 18,860
- Size of collection (print, AV, digital): 76,068
- Weekly hours of service: 55
- Annual Circulation: 74,312
- Number of employees: 18 Full-Time Equivalents
- Size of building: 30,500 square feet

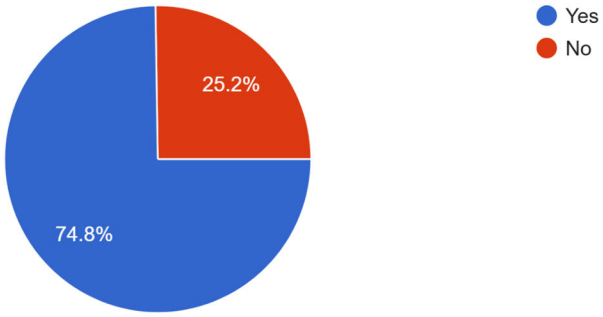
Utica Public Library Community Survey 2026

THE LIBRARY
utica public library

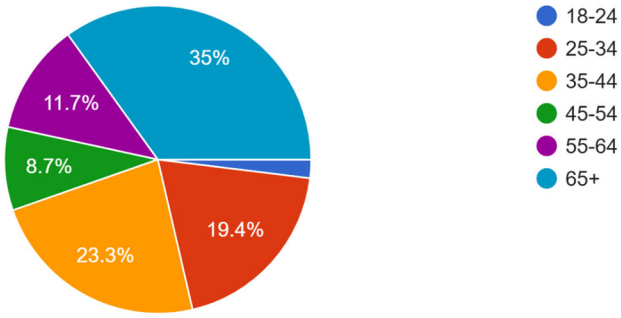
Do you have a library card?
103 responses



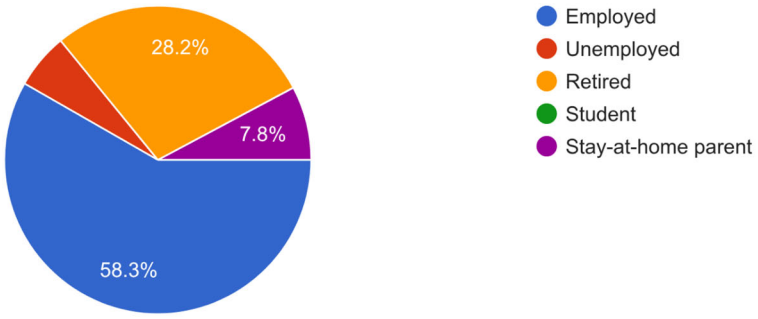
Do you live in the city limits of Utica?
103 responses



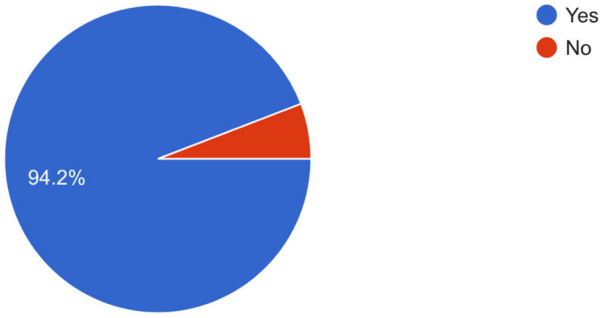
What is your age range?
103 responses



Employment Status
103 responses



Are you a library User?
103 responses



If yes, which service(s) do you use at the library? Check all that apply.
(97 responses; can check multiple options)

Content (books, museum passes, DVDs, etc.)	81	83.5%
E-content (Libby, New York Times, Comics Plus, etc.)	45	46.4%
Event space (classes, group meetings, private/public events)	51	52.6%
Child programs/services	27	27.8%
Adult programs/services	44	45.4%
Notary services and printing services	17	17.5%
Computer/internet access	22	22.7%
Technology help (at The Library or 50 Memorial Parkway)	7	7.2%
Other	8	8.2%

Other responses included:

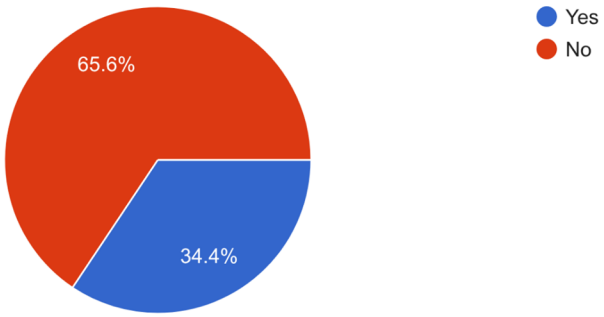
- “I bring my construction students in to talk about the building and its construction”

- "Use of copy machine"
- "Genealogy Services"
- "PokemonGo Gym"
- "Borrowing Books"

Which programs/services do you associate with libraries? Check all that apply.
(99 responses; can check multiple options)

Child education/programming	82	82.8%
Adult education/programming	78	78.8%
Technology use assistance	66	66.7%
Printing and computer services	66	66.7%
Borrowing items (books, DVDs, library of things)	94	94.9%
Community meeting space	69	69.7%

In your opinion, is there a service The Library does NOT offer which would be beneficial to the community?
96 responses



Yes responses included (Respondents who do not live within Utica City limits were not counted):

Introductory language or greater in Spanish, Bosnian, Burmese, and Arabic
Live local music, perhaps attached to a fundraising event
Have you ever thought about a tool borrowing program?
More children's programs
Coworking space on the weekend or evenings
Teach and display what is going on in the community, as well as educating people on what they can do to be an active participant in the community
Borrowing items, rather than just books

Making it easier to access digital collections remotely
Child dance lessons or child music classes. Child instrument rentals and or lessons
I think it would greatly benefit Utica to have Mental Health programming for all ages. Or designate a location in the library where people can get mental health services like MVCAA
Places to sit and read the paper and other periodicals
Community garden/clothing closet/health & wellness programs
This probably falls under education, but having indoor/ outdoor gardening glasses so people could start growing their own food and learn when to start and plan a garden
A small cafe/snack bar
Spanish community books and newspapers
Healthcare options, Social Security, Wills, Trusts
More advanced, detailed circulation software
Not sure if Utica does this yet but music instrument rentals
Community Action. Volunteer opportunities. Garden, picking up litter, reading in schools
A tool library, maybe a clothes library
The chairs in the reading room are impossible to sit in and read in. The ambiance is not restful, the room is too loud. I understand that in the past some unhoused persons sat all day in the chairs and so they were replaced. This is at a detriment to the reading public, especially persons who are older and or disabled. Another way has to be found to discourage the unhoused from using the chairs all day, so that the reading public can be accommodated. I do not actively stay at the library because of this fact. Thank you.
Very akin to what you already do with the gardening supplies, but for...everything? Baking pans, ladders, knitting needles, etc. that folks can rent out. There's a library that does it in another state and it was HUGELY successful. I think it's something we could really use in Utica with the wild cost of living.
More variety in the Library of Things
Perhaps hosting field trips to students which includes a tour and some instruction on using the library
Your hours are too limited, I'd visit more often if you had more hours on Saturday and Sunday
More study spaces
Tenant Right Classes, Utica History Classes/Days

Where do you get updates on the library and what's happening there? Check all that apply. (103 responses)

Social media	70	68%
Print media	21	20.4%

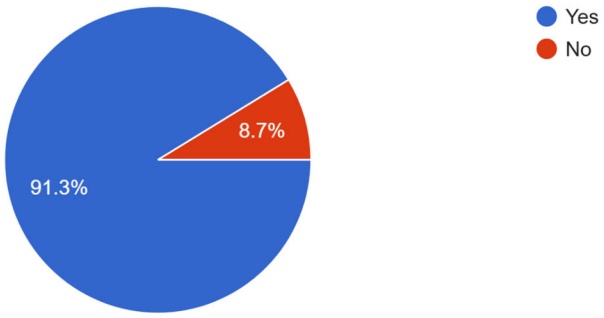
Library website	71	68.9%
Community events	25	24.3%
Word of mouth.	39	37.9%
Other	17	16.5%

Other responses included:

- “Posters at library”
- “Newsletter; e-newsletter”
- “Event boards”
- “Library visits”
- “Staff”

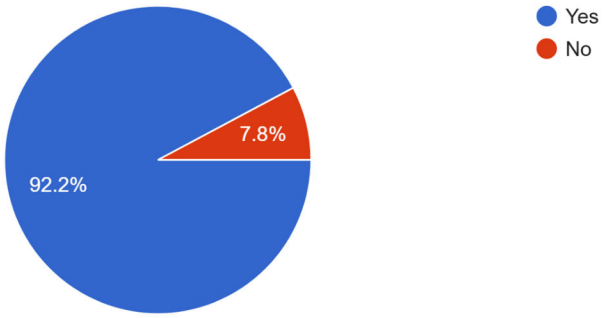
If there were public events (haunted house, community celebrations, job fairs, etc.) held at The Library, would you attend?

103 responses

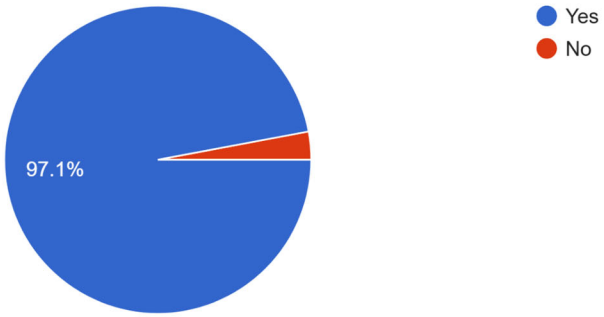


In your opinion, is The Library a welcoming space for everyone?

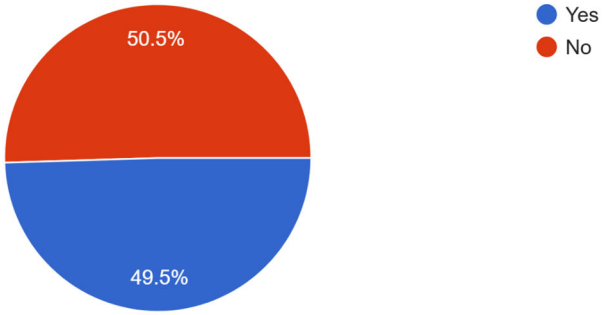
103 responses



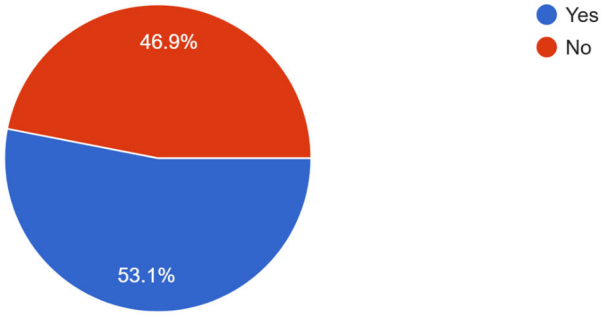
In your opinion, is The Library in need of more funding?
102 responses



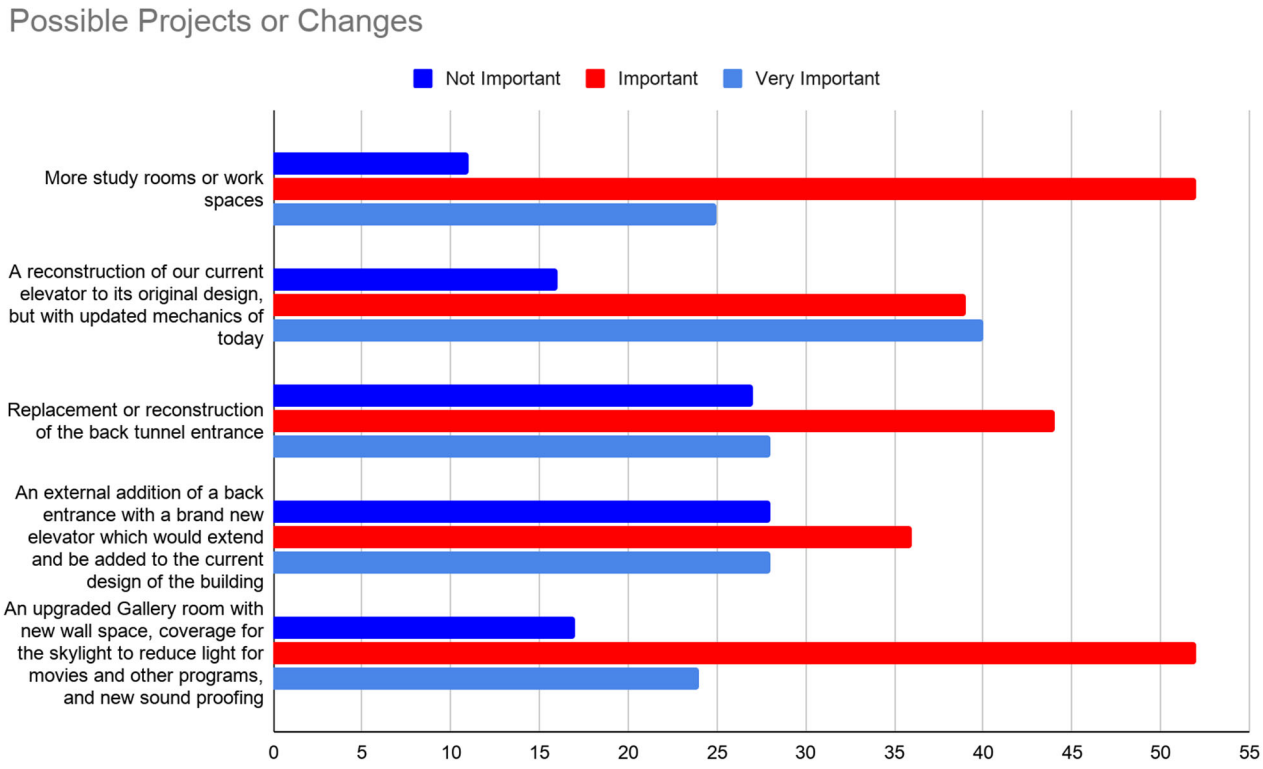
Are you aware of the library's annual appeal?
103 responses



Have you ever given or considered giving to support such appeal?
98 responses



If the library were to look at possible projects or changes, please rate the following in terms of most necessary or importance:



Is there anything else you'd like to share with us about the Utica Public Library? (45 Responses; respondents who do not live within Utica City limits were not counted.)

The Library is a welcoming place but I do think the current design of the front entrance is confusing. The doors that don't work and the lack of signage at the front don't make it obvious where to go, even for simple things like returning books. I recently visited The Library to return a book for the first time and legitimately didn't know where to do that.
Longer hours please. Remodeling if nearby real estate seems better than a new addition.
There used to be contests for kids when I was a kid - like read a book and then make a silly hat or something. Maybe I have missed it in your activities, but that was a nice thing that didn't require coming at a specific time but we could still participate.
There used to be contests for kids when I was a kid - like read a book and then make a silly hat or something. Maybe I have missed it in your activities, but that was a nice thing that didn't require coming at a specific time but we could still participate.
Sara Billman and all the staff are a pleasure and create a welcoming atmosphere for guests.
Love our libraries
UPL is one of the most important places in the city.
Keep up the good work!
Thank you for all the work that you do. My kids and I adore our library
Whatever upgrades are done should be done to preserve historic significance.

Local libraries are so important to our communities. This is a safe place for everyone and for some people the only place they have access to books or the internet. Always underfunded. Maybe a fundraiser that regular people could afford to attend would bring in some money.
I love it here.
I Love the Utica Public Library!
Libraries like Utica's are one of the last remaining public spaces that serve the community at large, and I think that is especially important given today's sociopolitical climate
We love the library!!
I am 77 years old. I have been going to the library for 72 years. Let's keep it friendly and open to all as not only a library but a learning and growing space. Let's make it more comfortable for old backs and make it quieter... a whole lot quieter, especially in the reading room next to the computers. Also, very important: The staff need to STAY OFF THERE CELL PHONES and pay attention to what's going on around them. This irritates me to no end. All for now and thank you. See you soon.
I would like to see the library expand its social media to places like bluesky, so that having a meta account (insta/facebook) is not required to see updates. If you don't you can only see a couple of post before it ask you to make an account. Email updates are nice, but they don't always cover as much as social media does. It would also be nice to see the bonfire be set up again or a different print on demand option like threadless that lets you support causes, as an additional way to support the library
I enjoy the community programs and participate whenever I can. I love the Tiny Art project, the lectures, and the yoga classes. The library is a community treasure
Your library is very pretty
Today was my first time walking into the Utica Public Library. Being someone who is not originally from this area, I think the library is just beautiful the way it is! Yes it could always benefit from improvements, but you all are already doing an amazing job. When I walked in and saw the computer room being almost at full capacity, I thought how great it was to see individuals getting their use of the library. I also liked seeing the plenty of events and services offered, maybe we can do some more focus on mental health awareness and combat screen time.
Thank you for everything you do for this community. Not enough people realize the beautiful resource that you are and what libraries do for, as dramatic as it sounds, humanity. Thank you.
Thank you for all you do!
You provide important resources to our community. Keep up the good work!!
STOP discarding good books! You need more and better book acquisitions.
I highly commend the librarians. They are helpful, knowledgeable, and friendly. They readily suggest book titles for book clubs and facilitate putting books on hold. I greatly appreciate all the assistance the librarians cheerfully provide.
I recently relocated here from NC; tops on my wish list is high-end circulation software with added perks such as my permanent history and the ability to modify holds-and to be able to view holds that expired. Every time I walk into the library, I feel peaceful and calm! Thank you for always welcoming Utica's People to enter and take a break!
UPL has the most engaging story time for littles in the area.

Friends mentioned no comfortable reading chairs at our library
Some staff members are not very friendly.
Awesome children's programs!
One of my first beloved memories as a child
Hope the library will be around for a very long time!!
Rooms available to community a little larger and better seating. More room to move around.
Reuse of basement; monthly tours; more field trips for students of all ages
Longer hours Saturday or Sunday afternoon; Greater connection with Munson Events
need restrooms-monitored
Potentially consider more collaborative events with local groups to get new folks in, cultural groups, art collectives, mom and me groups - to host pop-up gatherings or events.
I'm not sure of the accessibility of the building, so if the proposed modifications are for accessibility needs, then that's very important. Otherwise, what's cool about the library is getting help from local artists and professionals, so funding would probably be best spent to get helpful and knowledgeable experts who can lead people in crafting, signing up for Medicaid, what have you. Or just getting more people through the door and committed to events so that when people host things for free, it's worthwhile.
We are very lucky to have such a beautiful and longstanding library, that is not only an important value to the community, but a historical landmark in the city.
Libraries build communities.
You need to have more hours on the weekend and evenings
No comfortable chairs to encourage reading at our branch....noticed by a friend visiting.
You have very friendly staff
Add water area to drink
I thank the staff; they are great