

LIBRARIES

ROBBINS AND FOX LIBRARIES

The library's mission is to be a vital resource for Arlington, creating opportunities for lifelong learning, meaningful connection, and discovery for all. The Robbins Library and Fox Branch Library strive to offer outstanding collections and services to meet the evolving interests and needs of the community. To accomplish its mission, the library relies on a variety of resources including volunteer support, library trust funds, grants from the Arlington Libraries Foundation, the Friends of the Robbins Library, the Fox and Robbin Shop, and an annual grant for state aid to libraries.

Library Board of Trustees

Under trustee bylaws and consistent with Section 22 of the Arlington Town Manager Act, the seven-member Board of Trustees establishes general operating and administrative policies, advocates for excellent library services, plans and anticipates the future needs of the library, and administers all restricted and unrestricted contributions to the library and all restricted and unrestricted Library Trust Funds.



Library Board of Trustees

Department Overview

Under the administration of the director and assistant director, the library serves the community through two branches and online at robbinslibrary.org. The library's six service departments and the Fox Branch Library work together to meet the library's mission. The library aims to provide excellent and equitable service to all residents and visitors.

The Circulation Department is responsible for customer service and functions related to checking out and

returning hundreds of thousands of items at the Robbins Library circulation desk and at the Fox Branch Library, issuing library cards, and maintaining order on the shelves with assistance from library pages and volunteers. The Department also processes the daily Massachusetts Library System delivery of outgoing and returned items and items on hold from other Minuteman Library Network libraries.

The Children's Services and Teen Services Departments support early childhood literacy skills and builds to support the needs of older youth. The departments are responsible for collection development and services for children, teens and families, and outreach to schools. The Children's Services Department oversees the distinctive Anne A. Russell Children's Educational and Cultural Enrichment Fund, which sponsors a program coordinator and special programs and services for children and teens on an annual basis.

The Adult Services Department provides reference services and public technology support on site at the main reference desk and by phone, email, and chat. The department includes the Local History librarian and the Local History Room collection and resources, plus oversees book clubs and programs for adults and the library's array of online databases.

The Technical Services Department receives and processes shipments of new library materials including books, audiovisual items, unusual collections like the Library of Things, and other library materials. In 2023 the department processed over 19,000 new items, maintained catalog records, served as a key connection between the library and the Minuteman Library Network. The department also manages invoices and accounts in coordination with the library Office Manager.

All of the library's public-facing and staff-facing technology equipment, systems, and peripherals are managed by the Information Technology (IT) Department. The department ensures that Robbins and Fox equipment meet the Minuteman Library Network's management system requirements to support all library cataloging, purchasing, collection management and circulation functions. The department manages important public facing technology including internet connected desktop and laptop computers and printing and scanning solutions.

The Fox Branch Library manager plans collections and services at the branch and works with all de-

Library Statistics	FY20 Actual	FY21 Actual	FY22 Actual	FY23 Actual
Total Materials Circulated	669,692	707,033	939,396	950,249
Digital Materials	149,612	190,899	182,233	202,427
Program attendance	6,432	4,729	14,442	25,670
Annual Visitors	204,164	68,189	233,595	261,187

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partments to ensure smooth and consistent delivery of library services in East Arlington.

Communications

The library is committed to a communication plan that helps all residents find and access library materials, programs, and resources. The library's communication tools include; a robust website with dynamic content, an outreach procedure that includes communication with local news outlets, an active newsletter with over 6,000 subscribers, and social media channels.

Major Accomplishments for 2023

- Increased materials circulation, program attendance, and daily visitors each year since COVID closures.
- Achieved a second straight year of record-breaking circulation at Robbins Library in FY2023 with a total circulation of 950,249 physical and electronic items.
- Arlington is a circulation leader for the Minuteman Library Network and the Commonwealth, and ranks 5th in statewide circulation, surpassing communities with much larger populations including neighbors like Medford and Somerville.
- Per-capita leader in the Minuteman Library Network in circulation of e-content via OverDrive and Libby

Providing Core Services

Created new programs, services, and collections to support evolving community interests and needs. Highlights include:

- A "learning abilities" collection in the Children's room, offering materials designed for children with dyslexia and other language-based learning disabilities.
- Launched new Children's programs including "Rainbow Readers," a book program for 3rd-5th graders on the gender spectrum and "Readers Theater," for 7-10 year-olds supporting fluency and increasing their reading comprehension and confidence in public speaking.
- New Teen Advisory Board (TAB) gives teens the opportunity to create teen-led programs for middle and high school patrons, expanding the options for library programs and giving students the ability to receive volunteer credit and take on leadership roles in the community.

Improving Library Spaces

- Submitted a Letter of Intent to apply for Massachusetts Public Library Construction Program Grant funds for renovations at the Fox Branch Library.
- Formed a Fox Branch Library Facility Needs Committee to complete the Building Program, as specified in the Massachusetts Public Library Construction Program grant application
- Released an RFP and secured a consultant to complete a needs assessment study at Fox Branch Library.
- Launched community engagement project with focus groups of Town stakeholders, parents, business and arts leaders, and others in Town to identify community needs and envision library services and spaces to respond to needs at the Fox Branch Library.
- Applied for and received CDBG funding to renovate and bring to code first floor restrooms at Robbins Library.
- Applied for and received Capital funding to install more efficient and brighter lighting throughout Robbins Library. Lights were installed in December 2023
- Refreshed the Teen space by removing shelving and adding new Arlington Libraries Foundation funded tables and chairs.



(Left to right) Assistant Director of Libraries Amanda Troha, Trustee Amy Hampe, and Director of Libraries Anna Litten meeting with State Representative Sean Garballey at Library Legislative Day.

Staff Engagement and Learning

- Director of Libraries Anna Litten, Assistant Director Amanda Troha, and Trustee Amy Hampe attended Library Legislative Day and met with State Legislators to advocate for State budgets supporting library services.
- Adult Services Librarian Veronica Rodriguez serves on the Minuteman Library Network's Digital Content Working Group and selects Overdrive titles for patrons across the network.

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- Head of Technical Services Beverly Thompson serves on the Minuteman Library Network's Standards Working Group. The Standards Working Group is responsible for investigating, reviewing and making recommendations to the Board of Directors in the areas of circulation parameters, database integrity and management, and resource sharing.
- Staff attended many continuing education opportunities throughout the year. Highlights include:
 - Anna Litten attended the annual Massachusetts Library Association conference.
 - Stephen Toropov attended the annual Massachusetts "Teen Summit."

Partnering with Town departments, boards, commissions, and other organizations to better serve Arlington.

- Hosted a local children's book author for an event co-sponsored with Arlington EATS.
- Co-sponsored an Indigenous Peoples Day program with the Cyrus Dallin Museum and the Human Rights Commission.
- Partnered with the Arlington Disability Commission, the Arlington Libraries Foundation, and other Town bodies to present the 2023 Arlington Reads Together program, featuring the ART book pick, *Being Heumann* by noted disability activist Judy Heumann.
- Hosted an Arlington High School intern via the internship program for High School seniors.
- Adult Services Librarian Julia Starkey attends meeting of Arlington's Rainbow Commission to better plan programs serving LGBTQ+ residents.

Future Goals

The library completed a new Strategic Plan in 2021 with extensive community feedback. The following goals and objectives for FY23 and beyond were defined by staff and library Trustees based on the Strategic Plan. The complete plan can be found on the library website at robbinslibrary.org.

- Ensure programs and collections evolve to better meet residents' needs.
 - Expand co-creation of program and events using community expertise and partner resources.
 - Reevaluate and balance physical and digital/downloadable collections, in keeping with sustained and projected usage trends.
 - Take a leadership role in the community

to offer services and resources that spark conversation and critical thinking around issues facing Arlington.

- Increase library access for and use by all community members.
 - Develop and implement a marketing plan, with a focus on increasing use and awareness among underserved audiences and non-users.
 - Direct additional staff time to targeting outreach efforts towards underserved populations.
 - Further grow the resources and accessibility of the website as the library's third branch.
- Transform library spaces to improve services and better meet residents' needs
 - Develop an action plan for incremental and long-term physical upgrades at both branches to better serve and support people of all abilities and build towards the "Reimagining Our Libraries" vision.
 - Promote all capital projects and work with library support groups and stakeholders to advance these initiatives through community connections and advocacy.

Acknowledgements

The Library Board of Trustees and library administration recognize that special grants, gifts, and bequests do not take the place of public support, but help to further enhance library facilities, services and collections. These library support organizations and their volunteer boards, advisors and members are gratefully acknowledged:

Arlington Libraries Foundation

The Arlington Libraries Foundation fulfilled the library's fiscal year 2023 grant request, funding materials and various initiatives including the Arlington Reads Together program. Established in 2013, the Arlington Libraries Foundation conducts fundraising appeals and campaigns, and secures and stewards the gifts, grants and endowments that provide essential funds toward the library's current and long-term goals.



Friends of the Library

In 2023 the Friends of the Robbins Library granted funds for expanded Library of Things collections at Robbins and Fox and continued funding signature initiatives such as the library's 3rd floor balcony beehives and the popular museum pass program. The Friends of the Robbins Library is a membership-driven non-profit that also runs ongoing book sales for the benefit of the library.



The Fox & Robbin Shop

The Fox & Robbin Shop is a children's resale shop within the Fox Branch Library. The shop is operated by a nonprofit with paid and volunteer staff whose primary mission is to support services at the Fox Library with proceeds from the shop, including an offset for Saturday staffing hours.



Volunteers

Volunteers support the library's mission in many capacities. Trustees are grateful to the many volunteers who shelf materials, support the Homebound Delivery program by delivering library materials to some of our most vulnerable residents, and run library supported programs including books groups and English language learning groups.

Recognitions

In 2023 the library also honored Trustee Joyce Radochia for 40 years of volunteer service and Trustee Kathy Fennelly for 20 years of volunteer service. In addition, the library recognized Jennifer Arthur and Deborah Scannell for service of 20 years, and staff members

Lynne Arnold, Liz Dellanno, Lee Faunce, and Katherine Krister for 10 years of service to the community. The Trustees are grateful to these volunteers and staff members for their years of service and dedication.

The Trustees would like to extend heartfelt thanks to library employees who make sure the library is a true destination for materials, programs, and community connections. Their efforts contribute to making Arlington an attractive and welcoming community for all.



Students working on the 3rd Floor at Robbins Library.



Child playing at the Fox Branch Library.



Robbins Library Reading Room.