

Illey Public Library

*Dana Hart, Director*

2025 has been a year of transition and growth for the library, defined by change, resilience, and the steady progress of creating a new library building for our community. While construction has reshaped our physical space, our relocation to the Duclos building has reaffirmed the library's role as a constant— adapting, evolving, and continuing to provide free access to information, resources, and a welcoming public space. Through it all, the library has remained a vital civic anchor, supporting learning, curiosity, and connection for people of all ages. Read on for more details on our progress and community impact this year!

## **Relocation**

We hit the ground running and relocated the library in the first quarter of 2025. During the month of January, the library remained open, but with a few reductions in service: the Community Meeting Room became a staging area; much of the older furniture was sold off to community members; and the last day to return materials was January 30. In February, the library closed to the public, and the Sarah Partridge Branch Library in East Middlebury began offering extended hours, Monday through Saturday. The move was officially underway!

Relocating a library is never an easy task, and this move was particularly challenging. Roughly 25% of the library collection was being moved to the Duclos building in Middlebury, while the remaining 75% was being moved to a storage facility in Vergennes. The library's shelving also had to be broken down, transported, and set back up in the Duclos building, and donated shelving from Middlebury College had to be moved to the Vergennes location.



Empty rolling carts were filled with books, labeled, wrapped in plastic, and loaded onto a truck.

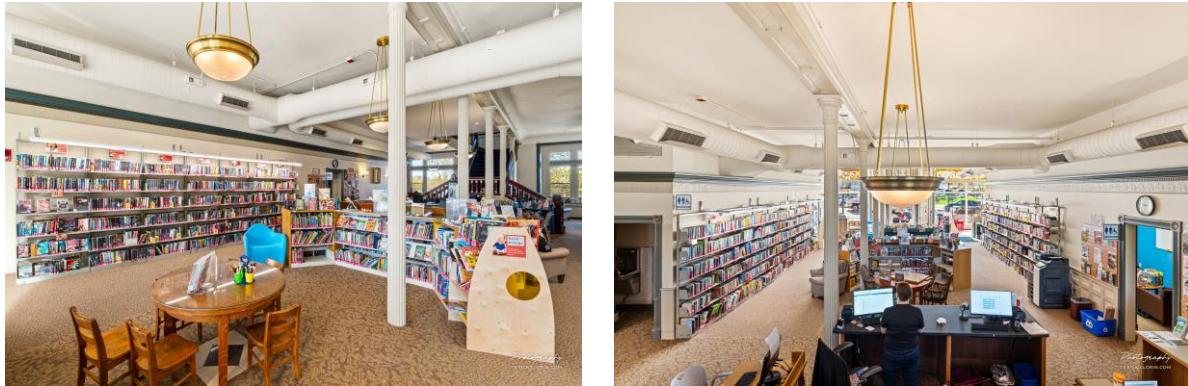
The librarians worked with Meyer, a library moving company, to relocate roughly 45,000 physical items. It took about three weeks to complete the move and setup the Mini Library. The highlight was the dramatic move of the library's circulation desk. The giant front desk was put on a dolly and rolled right down Main Street to its temporary home!



Filling the shelves at the storage site in Vergennes!

### **Mini IIsley**

In March, the library began operating out of the Duclos building, where we were warmly welcomed by the National Bank of Middlebury team. I want to extend my heartfelt thanks to the NBM board of directors, bank president Caroline Carpenter, and Chief Project Officer Jamie McKenna for their generosity and support. Operating out of "Mini IIsley" has been a joy! Community members have praised the cozy interior, the lively library scenes in the front windows, and the open floor plan, which has fostered greater connection across generations. Many of the program and service outcomes reflected in this report would not have been possible without the bank's involvement, and I am deeply grateful for their partnership.



Views of the Mini Library at the Duclos building. Photos by Eric Killorin.

While a sampling of each part of the library collection is at Mini Ilsley, the majority of the books are stored at a facility in Vergennes. Thanks to Vermont Industrial Parks, who generously offered to donate this space, we are able to provide full access to the collection via a book transfer system between the two facilities. Community members request books online, and once a day a librarian drives to Vergennes to collect the books and bring them back to Middlebury. In 2025, community members requested and borrowed 8,799 items from our offsite storage facility!

### **Our Impact**

This special and unique time has created surprising opportunities for the library. We're holding more programs offsite, with locations including the Teen Center, Project Independence, and the Marquis Cinema. Interest in youth Storytimes has increased tremendously, likely because of the visibility of the children's spaces through the front windows, and the library currently offers five Storytimes a week. Though Ilsley is currently mini, it remains mighty!



Storytime with Miss Tricia!

In 2025, the library welcomed 75,797 visitors—about 60% of the attendance we would expect in a typical year in the old building—while community members checked out 109,333 items, roughly 90% of our usual annual circulation. This contrast helps tell the story of how people are using the library during construction. While borrowing habits have remained remarkably consistent, overall visits have declined because many patrons rely on the library for more than books. At Mini Ilsley, we do not have community rooms, study spaces, or flexible areas that support meetings, programs, and remote work, and those users have understandably had to look elsewhere during this period.

Even within these constraints, library services remained strong. Librarians planned 531 programs (6,401 attendees!) and answered 336 reference questions. With just four public access computers available at Mini Ilsley, those workstations were used 3,001 times, underscoring the ongoing demand for technology access. Free Wi-Fi—another critical resource—was accessed 6,676 times, highlighting the library's essential role in providing connectivity, even in a temporary and limited space.

Our Summer Reading Program was especially popular this year, thanks in part to the generous underwriting from the National Bank of Middlebury. For the first time, we distributed summer reading materials through the schools. The 370 students who completed the summer reading challenge were able to walk into the National Bank of Middlebury to collect their grand prize directly from a bank teller—a special partnership made possible by our temporary location and an experience that proved to be a memorable highlight. We launched our first-ever “Dog Days of Summer,” a joyful event that welcomed dogs into the library for a day of canine-friendly fun. Middlebury’s Dog

Mayor crowned the winner of a dog photo contest, followed by a lively parade down Main Street and a special dog-friendly Storytime. Another special event, MiddPride—run in conjunction with the Teen Center—continued to be a well-attended and meaningful celebration.



Dog Days of Summer at the library!

The most checked out books for adults in 2025 were: *James*, by Percival Everett; *The Grey Wolf*, by Louise Penny; and *The Jackal's Mistress*, by Chris Bohjalian. For teens, the most checked out book was *Gather*, by Kenneth M. Cadow, for the second year in a row! The most popular books in the children's room this year were *Moon Rising*, by Tui Sutherland; *Secret of the Water Dragon*, by Tracey West; and *Orris and Thimble*, by Kate DiCamillo. The most read picture book this year was *Bruce's Big Storm*, by Ryan Higgins.

Our Library of Things continued to grow this year, expanding the ways the library supports everyday needs in our community. We added a Wi-Fi hotspot that patrons can check out, as well as umbrellas that patrons can borrow when they're caught in the rain. With more space in the new building, we'll be able to expand the Library of Things significantly, and we invite the community to start imagining what tools, equipment, or resources you'd like to see available for shared use in the future.

### **Construction Updates**

Over the past year, the Ilsley 100 Project has moved from early site preparation into full-scale construction, with visible progress at every stage. In March, construction fencing went up along Main Street as ReArch Company mobilized onsite, asbestos abatement was completed, and utilities were relocated to prepare the site. In April, the 1977 and 1988 additions were carefully demolished, leaving the historic 1924 building standing on its own

once again. Many materials from demolition were reused or recycled, including marble cladding that will be repurposed for the new library's staircase.



Aerial view of the historic 1924 library building, after the 1977 and 1988 additions were demolished. Photo by Eric Killorin.

With demolition complete, work shifted below ground for the summer. Geothermal wells were drilled and tested with excellent results. Site work continued with the construction of a new retaining wall between the upper and lower parking lots, installation of underground utilities, and the pouring of footings, foundation walls, and the elevator pit. Though much of this work was hidden from view, it established the essential infrastructure that will support the building for decades to come.



Aerial view of the new addition's foundation. Photo by Eric Killorin.

By early fall, the project reached a major turning point as the foundation was completed, and construction went vertical. Steel beams and columns rose quickly, forming the structural skeleton of the new addition, followed by exterior wall framing and the installation of cross-laminated timber (CLT) panels for the second floor and roof deck. These sustainably sourced wood panels transformed the structure from an open frame into a recognizable building, defining interior spaces and giving the new addition its form.



View of the crane setting the steel structure for the addition. Photo by Eric Killorin.

As winter approached, the building was enclosed and made weather-tight, allowing interior work to move forward. Roofing, exterior panels, and windows began to take shape, while

inside, new staircases, polished concrete floors, and interior wall framing progressed steadily. Together, these milestones mark an extraordinary year of transformation—one that has taken the project from planning and preparation to a standing, enclosed building that is clearly becoming the new Ilsley Public Library.

### **Funding Updates**

Thanks to over 230 generous donors and contributors, we have raised an inspiring \$6.5 million, demonstrating a shared commitment to the future of the Ilsley Public Library. Lead donors David and Eleanor Ignat, along with major support from Middlebury College and Michael and Cindy Seligmann, have been instrumental in moving the project forward. During demolition, previously hidden conditions were discovered that made it clear the library's original 1924 roof would need to be fully replaced. While this unexpected development increased the overall project scope and cost, the community rose to the moment. Recent additional gifts, including a generous contribution from an anonymous donor, support from the local nonprofit Table 21, and a grant from the Department of Historic Preservation, made it possible to address the roof replacement without additional cost to Middlebury's taxpayers.

As work continues and our gorgeous new library takes shape, additional community support is warmly welcomed. It is not too late to add your support! All donors will be acknowledged on a donor wall in the new building. Additional gifts will help sustain our momentum by offsetting the cost of ongoing masonry repairs to the building's historic façade, while also ensuring the library remains a vibrant and well-cared-for community resource for generations to come.

### **Looking Forward**

2026 is the year we move into our new library. This is the year the doors open on a space that reflects not just bricks and beams, but the shared values, care, creativity, and persistence of the community that imagined it, supported it, and made it possible. We are now more than halfway through construction and can begin looking forward to our return to 75 Main Street!



Celebrating the official groundbreaking in May 2025. Photo by ReArch Construction.

The project remains on track for completion in late July. The Mini Library in the Duclos building will likely cease operations on August 1, and the Sarah Partridge Branch Library will again offer extended hours in East Middlebury. I anticipate that we will complete the relocation and library setup in about four weeks, with a grand opening planned for late August.

We are entering 2026 with tremendous momentum, eagerly anticipating the realization of this long-awaited project! I am profoundly thankful to the library's donors, Friends, trustees, volunteers, staff, and the entire community who stand behind this work. We look forward to celebrating our new library with you in 2026!