

Director's Report

February 2026

Respectfully submitted by Val Finkel on March 7, 2026.

Joys and successes:

- We're very grateful to the Mary Lyon Foundation for donating supplies to refill some of the empty pockets in our Community Health Closet.
- Many thanks to Chelsea, who continues to volunteer to offer our services at the Franklin County jail.
- Our Snow Hero Jade Mortimer continues to volunteer as shoveler, and has been doing an excellent job.
- We're grateful to Nancy & Haynes Turkle for a generous donation in the amount of \$500.
- Many thanks to the UMass Amherst Library's Common Seed Project for donating many packets of Hopi Black Dye Sunflower seeds to our new Seed Library. Inspired by "common read" programs that bring people together through shared reading experiences, Common Seed builds community through gardening and seed saving. Each year, they select a "common seed," and participants across western Massachusetts receive free seeds from participating libraries, along with access to local events, workshops, and resources.

Building & Grounds:

- The Cornerstone Committee met on February 18. The Committee decided to hold off on further exploration of the possibility of adding an accessible pathway between the sidewalk and the building. Stephen Larocque will meet with his team and submit an updated timeline for completion of the feasibility study.
- We experienced a leak in the sump pump pipe on Friday March 6 and had to unplug the pump as a result. This led to a basement flood over the weekend as the warm weather melted the snow on the grounds. Aaron Foster fixed the pipe on Monday, March 9; the water is being successfully ejected.

- In a possibly related incident, the breaker that controls the outlet the sump pump (as well as the alarm system and the modem) was plugged into, as well as two of the lampposts in front of the building, started having an issue shortly after the leak occurred. We left a message for the town Electrical Inspector, Jim Slowinski, to try to figure out next steps.

Programs and services:

- Our Black History Month display for February had very little engagement. We changed it to a display for Women's History Month for March, which has gotten slightly more engagement so far.
- We've offered info about the Mass Center for the Book's 2026 Reading Challenge for about a month, and have now become an official Challenge partner. There are 12 monthly challenges with different book topics. Participants read the book then fill out a form about it and can see the entries they've logged throughout the year. Dedicated readers will be invited to a year-end celebration hosted by Mass Center for the Book. They also draw two names in a raffle on the last day of each month to win a free book. If participants read a book in each of the 12 months, they will be entered in a drawing to win 1 of 2 totes filled with books. We've already had our first raffle winner: Dallas Looman!
- We will hold the Seed Library debut on Friday, March 20 from 3 PM - 5 PM. We will have a seed swap, a seed sorting demo and station to try out seed sifting screens, and a few seed-based snacks.
- We will hold Part 2 of our Sourdough Class from Hearthstone Artisan Bakery on Monday, March 30 from 6 PM - 8 PM. Participants in the earlier class will be invited to bring their questions about what they've learned from experimenting at home with what they learned in Part 1 (plus a bread they've baked to share, if they want) and the class will also be accessible to people who didn't make it to Part 1.
- Hannah Moushabeck has accepted our invitation to present to the younger grades (either K-3rd or K-4th) at Colrain Central in partnership with the school and the Mass Kids Lit Fest! She is scheduled to come on Monday, May 4 from 1 PM - 2 PM.
- Our "Knit with Friends" program, led by Jan Jones, continues on Wednesday evenings at 6:00. Attendance is low but steady.
- The Cyber-Seniors Tech Help program has had at least one booking most weeks, is booked for the next two weeks, and patrons have been telling us how much they get out of the sessions with Sasha.
- The fifth meeting of the new hybrid format Carol Purington Poetry Collective was held on 3/6, with four in attendance. We will consider returning to the virtual format for this

program, with occasional in-person meetings when we plan to invite local poets for readings.

- The Patron Picks displays continue to be popular, though we have not found people who wanted to sign up for March. We will leave February's up through March and will solicit people for April by talking about it more during checkout.
- Story Time is still going well. We've had several requests for Read to Lamby to come back and will discuss holding this program after Story Time once a month so kids can stay after and practice their reading.
- Planning for Earth Day is well underway, with Dominique running point. We have invited the Colrain Pollinators, the Colrain Water Dancers, Tesia Elani with her paper flower craft, Davis Bates with stories and songs, and either pizza from Catamount or the Fire Department Association with hamburgers and hot dogs.
- We have begun planning for William Apess Day and Candidates' Night.

Administration:

- We have updated restrictions on the Rokus to disallow purchasing as much as possible. They are now available for patrons to check out!
- The Town Administrator used the library and the smart whiteboard on two Thursday nights in February to hold Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness Core Team meetings. MVP Plans inform a community's long-term strategy to reduce damages from natural hazards such as flooding and wildfires, and Core Teams complete vulnerability assessments and develop resiliency projects.
- We have received an extension on GML's Annual Report for 2025 to the town.
- We attended a meeting of representatives of 17 town organizations called by the Friends for the Preservation of the Colrain Historical District on February 28 from 10 AM - 12 PM. Representatives were invited to present their organization's mission, priorities, and issues. We presented an "elevator pitch" of the Strategic Plan and highlighted as our primary issues outreach, the problem of getting people to the library in our vehicle-dependent community, and space constraints. We learned that these issues have significant overlap with the issues that the other organizations presented.
- We held a Community Forum on February 28 from 3 PM - 5 PM to present the updated draft of the new Strategic Plan to the Community. We had 18 attendees, plus Val and the facilitator from the Massachusetts Library System, Martha Meacham. We had a spirited discussion where very different viewpoints on the library's mission and priorities were shared. We gained much valuable feedback, including confusion about the land acknowledgement, the widely experienced value of the library as a space for community

(especially its inclusiveness and welcoming of new town neighbors) and connection (especially between generations and between other groups that might not usually spend time together), of its collection, programming, quiet hours, and as a place to get municipal information. We also received many suggestions about several topics including thoughts about outreach opportunities, ideas about how to address space constraints, and ways to improve access to our historical materials.

- We met with Public Health Nurse Meg Ryan on February 6 to discuss adding blood pressure cuffs to our Library of Things and an Epi-pen to our first aid kit. The blood pressure cuffs are in progress - we need to write and get signatures on a memo of understanding with the American Heart Association, and training on their use. The Epi-pen for the library's kit is not an option because it must be prescribed to an individual, but Val keeps one available and Meg says this would be an option if a patron is in need. Meg also recommended that we add Benadryl to our first aid kit.
- Val is working on completing the BLT courses, and is on Part 2 of all four. A one-month extension for their completion has been requested.
- We plan to submit an application to ARSL for their Sustainable & Resilient New England Libraries grants for \$10,000 to go toward the power arm door installation.
- We will attend a Financial Committee meeting on Thursday, March 12 to go over the library's FY27 budget.
- We will attend a webinar primer on Open Meeting Laws for Library Directors and Trustees hosted by the MBLC on March 20. Presenter from the Attorney General's office, Kerry Kilcoyne (Assistant Attorney General, Division of Open Government) will focus on how to properly conduct a meeting under the state's Open Meeting Laws, when executive sessions are and are not appropriate, and how to apply open meeting laws to committee and subcommittee meetings. This 75 minute presentation will also include time for questions. 12 seats remain available at the time of this writing; sign up here: <https://mblc.libcal.com/event/16530649?hs=a>.

Other Thoughts/Good to Know

- After blocking cuts to FY26 federal funding, library advocates - including our own Jim McGovern - call for boost in federal funding for FY27. [Link to full article from the ALA](#).
- ALA denounced federal book banning bill HR 7661, a federal bill targeting LGBTQ+ stories that would modify the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 to restrict "sexually oriented" materials. Link to full article from the ALA. [Link to full article from the ALA](#).
- Nonprofit Public Libraries Ordered to Shut Down Passport Services. [Link to full article from Publisher's Weekly](#).