



## HOURS: CHANGING ACCESS, 25 YEARS LATER

When is the library open?

Throughout the last year, our hours of operation have changed many times in response to the COVID pandemic.

The 2021 summer hours are the highest they've ever been, with our doors open 64 hours each week. Pre-pandemic, Rochester Public Library (RPL) was only open 58 hours a week during the summer months.

The current schedule (Monday-Thursday, 10AM-8PM and Friday-Sunday, 10AM-6PM) is a temporary solution.

"We know that, post-COVID, our community needs may be different," explains Library Director Audrey Betcher. "Now is our chance to take a fresh look at everything, including hours."

The discussion isn't one that Betcher is taking lightly. "We have to balance community need with available resources, such as the cost of staffing and 'keeping the lights on.'"

The conversation is reminiscent of one held almost 30 years ago, when RPL was preparing to move into a new building. Notes from a 1993 Library Board meeting describe the board's Policy Committee asking "Do you think the addition of up to four hours each Sunday should be a high priority as we prepare the staff budget for 1995?"

Back then, the board voted to research the question with a community-wide survey initiated three years later.

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# LONGTIME DIRECTOR ANNOUNCES RETIREMENT

After more than two decades at the helm of Rochester Public Library, Director Audrey Betcher has announced her retirement.

Betcher broke the news in July, almost 25 years after joining the RPL team, with 21 of those years spent leading the organization. She says the pandemic gave her a new perspective on what she wants to do in the coming years. "I'm ready to spend time with family and friends, and do more traveling and exploring," she says, adding, "I also have a few volunteer opportunities to keep me busy."

While working her full-time job, Betcher has been serving as a tutor with the Rochester Reading Champions program and as President of her Rotary Club.

Library Board President Antinea Ascione says Betcher is credited with guiding the library through significant changes over the last few years, earning the organization local, state, and national recognition. "Audrey is committed to serving the community by listening, learning, and taking action, all while keeping her large team focused on the overall library mission," explains Ascione.

When Betcher started at RPL as the Assistant Director in August of 1996, libraries across the nation were grappling with how technology might change community needs. According to Betcher, "We were still loaning out VHS tapes, audio cassettes, and vinyl records in 1996."



As the library's collection changed, so did the organization's role in the community. "Libraries were primarily focused on being repositories for books in the 1990s," says Betcher. "We know today's library serves a much broader purpose as a community gathering space and connector of people."

According to City Administrator Alison Zelms, Betcher has been a key collaborator bringing cohesion to the city leadership team. "While I've only had the last six months to work with her, it's clear that Audrey's commitment to serving the community has benefited the city. Her dedication to listening to community members and working with community partners has provided valuable insight to the leadership team," says Zelms, adding, "Her forward-thinking energy has been incredibly helpful in evolving relationships to assure continuous improvement, that embraces change, values innovation, and relies on teamwork to guarantee success reaches beyond the walls of the Library and across the city organization."

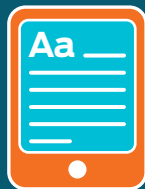
## YOUR LIBRARY BY THE NUMBERS



**100%**  
of all overdue  
fines were erased in  
June 2020



**60,081**  
cardholders



**35%**  
increase in digital  
collection use



**12,000**  
estimated number  
of seed packets  
distributed



**11,699**  
public computer  
sessions



**117,103**  
items borrowed from  
the Bookmobile



**1,452,551**  
total circulation



**466,966**  
total number of physical  
items in collection

*\*based on 2020 Annual Report*

## "Hours" continued from page 1.

At the time, being open on Sundays was a newer trend for libraries. In the 1996 survey, participants were asked to rank the importance of library services in relation to funding. Sunday hours ranked higher than children's programs and school visits, reserve services, and the internet.

Fast-forward more than two decades: the Library Board has directed staff to examine the library's hours once again. According to Board President Antinea Ascione, the impetus this time is simple: it's about equity. "Prior to the pandemic, we had just completed our strategic planning process. Rochester residents affirmed our decision to center equity and inclusion," explains Ascione. "Our long-term hours of operation is just

one area that we're reexamining, so we can ensure that our entire community has the access they need." This time around, library staff are working with the Diversity Council in Rochester to host focus groups and conduct a new survey.

Says Ascione, "We don't want to just pick new hours, we want to have community members to weigh in on the best path forward." As was the case in the early 1990s, budget constraints will still play a role in hours of operation. Leadership will also be reviewing the bus schedules, school hours, and other factors. The survey and other research will wrap up during the fall, with a decision about long-term hours expected at the beginning of 2022.

# NEWSBANK BRINGS FREE ACCESS TO LOCAL NEWS

Access local news from your phone, computer, or other device!

Use your library card to connect with news from the Post Bulletin (2006-present) and other news publications.

Get started by going to [www.rplmn.org/pb](http://www.rplmn.org/pb)



## WATER STORIES WINNERS ANNOUNCED

Three local authors were recognized in July as winners of 2021 Water Stories Memoir Writing Contest.

Melece Cheal Orme, Andrew Pruett, and Jan Wiersma were chosen for their water-related stories as part of We Are Water MN, a statewide initiative celebrating water. The stories are included in a published anthology, which has been added to the library's collection.

Contest organizer Lynette Perry says "As a library, we hoped this contest would challenge the writers of southeastern Minnesota to write a novella length memoir about local history, personal experiences, and our individual responsibilities to water. The publishing of this anthology allows us to recognize that the written word can be a powerful instrument and these authors have demonstrated their ability to mold words and memories to create three award-worthy memoirs. The authors of this book have done a great job sharing some very beautiful water stories



From left to right: Andrew Pruett, Melece Cheal Orme, and Jan Wiersma

about themselves, the people around them, their life events and the places they have been. These stories take us to ponds, lakes, rivers and oceans; from all over the world.



## LETTER FROM THE FOUNDATION DIRECTOR

Thank you to everyone who continues to support the Library and Foundation through charitable giving. Your gifts continue to help us make an impact in our community and as kids head back to school, we know library resources will again be vital to student success. It's also important that those experiencing financial hardship can find tools at the library to bridge budgetary gaps as well.

We are working to bring a new scanning station to the Library. It will help the library team scan and save archival materials that Post Bulletin could not take with them when they moved. This technology will be a wonderful addition for library visitors digital printing, and imaging needs and comes with translations into 100 languages.

Thank you for helping us to care and provide for our community!



**Brenda Kardock**  
Rochester Public Library  
Foundation, Executive Director

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Merl & Twila Winter



ROCHESTER  
PUBLIC LIBRARY  
FOUNDATION

Christine Wyatt  
J. Herman & Marilyn  
Yates

## IN APPRECIATION

Dr. Darryl & Joan Chutka  
*in appreciation of all library  
staff & volunteers*

Gwen Riffin  
*in appreciation of library  
staff during pandemic*

Jane & Mary Campion  
*in appreciation of Rochester  
Public Library Foundation*

Mr. & Mrs. Tom O'Brien  
*in appreciation of  
Bookmobile Staff*

Nancy J. Larson  
*in appreciation of all front-  
line workers during pandemic*

Susan Ahlquist  
*in appreciation of  
RPL leadership & staff*

William & Mary Schmidt  
*in appreciation of library  
employees during pandemic*

## IN MEMORY

Bob & Phyllis Beery  
*in memory of Sylvie Nickel*

Julia Britton  
*in memory of Emma & Janet*

Marsha Collins  
*in memory of Judy Collins*

Ms. Chris Cross  
*in memory of Mickey Cooney*

Steven & Susan Hansen  
*in memory of Mothers -  
Clarian & Mary*

Diane Harding  
*in memory of Sylvie Nickel*

Harriet Hodgson  
*in memory of  
Helen Hodgson Welby*

Kimberly Edson & Angela Joyce  
*in memory of Mary Fitzgerald*

Ms. Diana Kohrt  
*in memory of my parents*

Maureen & Wayne Lemens  
*in memory of Carole Madden*

Ms. Elva L. McFarlin  
*in memory of  
Robert F. McFarlin*

Frank & Judy McIlmail  
*in memory of Ethel McIlmail  
who taught me to read*

Roberta Otto  
*in memory of Sheila Mueller*

Irvin & Maureen Plitzuweit  
*in memory of Judy Collins*

Steve & Beth Robb  
*in memory of Fran Robb,  
Wayne & Viola Schuchart*

Dick & Joanne Rosener  
*in memory of Mary Rosener*

Kathy Rustad  
*in memory of Barbara M.  
Thompson for Homebound  
Program*

Ms. Ione Schloegel  
*in memory of Pauline Walle*

Ms. Jacque Sourkes  
*in memory of Rose Appel*

Don & Stephanie Supalla  
*in memory of Bob & Betty Supalla*

Doug Sween  
*in memory of Joan Sween*

Sandy Tschida  
*in memory of Tony Tschida, Sr.*

Cheryl Waldman  
*in memory of Judy Collins*

Gary & Deborah Westerland  
*in memory of John Henry*

Kathe Yoss  
*in memory of Dr. Robert E. Yoss*

Paulette & Mike Zenner  
*in memory of Amanda S.  
Carlson*

## IN CELEBRATION

Brenda Kardock  
*in celebration of Administrative  
Professionals Day & Malea*

Alexander Marquis  
*in celebration of reading  
to your kids!*

## IN HONOR

Richard & Betty Buri  
*in honor of our grandchildren &  
great-grandson*

Alan & Nancy Johnsrud  
*in honor of Sarah Johnsrud*

Kimberly Edson & Angela Joyce  
*in honor of The Foundation  
Events All Star Team!*

Brenda Kardock  
*in honor of Audrey Betcher's  
decades of service*

Brenda Kardock  
*in honor of Sheila, Karen, Malea,  
Ann, Catherine & Grace*

Brenda Kardock  
*in honor of The Library Team*

Shelley Mahannah  
*in honor of the fantastic events  
committee at RPLF!*

Gwen Riffin  
*in honor of Dick & Nancy Massaro*

Kristin Swenson  
*in honor of My Mom who taught  
me to love reading!*

Philip & Joanne Swenson  
*in honor of all the readers out  
there, thank a teacher!*

Carolyn Wall  
*in honor of all library staff*

Colleen Worisek  
*in honor of grandchildren; Madden  
& Easton Olson & Josie Worisek*

Bob Yates  
*in honor of Giudetta S. Collins*



**FRIENDS OF THE  
ROCHESTER  
PUBLIC LIBRARY**



## SIDEWALK SALES HELP FRIENDS' WITH INVENTORY BACKLOAD

A huge thank you to the volunteers who have been helping with and the customers who have been shopping at the Friends' sidewalk sales! This past May, as Olmsted County started reopening, the Friends borrowed an idea from other Friends' groups to plan themed summer sidewalk sales. The pilot "Road Trip" sale featured non-print items - audio books, music CDs and DVDs - and generated over \$600 in sales. The next two sales, "Father's Day" and "Back-to-School" generated \$1100 each. At press time, a "belated Mother's Day" sale was planned for August 13 & 14.

The income from these sales supports the Friends' mission of expanding the library's resources and supporting special projects. That is important since, like so many other organizations and events, they have been impacted by the pandemic. The Friends' Bookstore had to be closed and the auditorium sales cancelled. Additionally, the annual membership drive did not take place because Friends' members could not take advantage of their discount in the Friends' Bookstore or early admission to the auditorium sales. All memberships expiring in 2020 were extended, and now expire 12/31/2021.

Without their normal sales channels to move books out the door and with limited storage space at



the Library, additional donations still cannot be accepted. Work is ongoing to evaluate how the Friends' Bookstore can safely re-open, and when donations can again be accepted from the general public. Please watch the library website and Facebook (both the Library's & Friends') for more information as it becomes available.

Meanwhile, you can help clean out the storage closet to make room for more donations by shopping at the upcoming sale, shopping at the online eBay store, and by joining or renewing your Friends' membership!

Learn more at [www.rplmn.org/friends](http://www.rplmn.org/friends)

**SAVE THE DATE**

# AUTUMN BOOK SALE

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 7 | 5-7PM (MEMBERS' ONLY PREVIEW)

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 8 | 10-5:30PM

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 9 | 10-5:30PM

SUNDAY, OCTOBER 10 | 1-4PM

Memberships can be renewed or purchased at the door.  
[www.rplmn.org/friends](http://www.rplmn.org/friends)



**FRIENDS OF THE  
ROCHESTER  
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# WHAT WE'RE READING: LIGHT FICTION YOU MAY HAVE MISSED

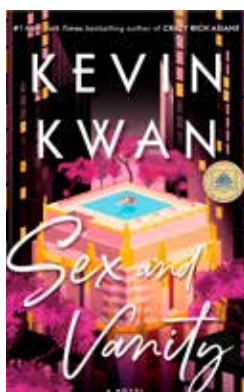
These new titles may have fallen off your radar this past year, but they're all worthy of adding to your to-be-read list.



## THE VANISHING HALF

by Brit Bennett

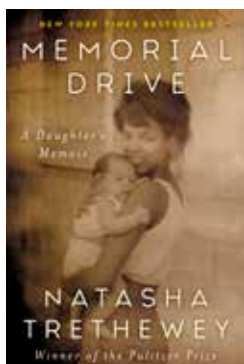
The Vignes sisters, Stella and Desiree, are identical twins growing up black in Louisiana in the Jim Crow era. Together they escape their small hometown for New Orleans but Stella disappears one night without a trace. Fourteen years later, in 1968, Desiree is back in their hometown raising her daughter, Jude. Jude also dreams of leaving small town life and heads west to UCLA. There she spots a woman who looks exactly like her mother, except this woman is white. Bennett follows up her award-winning debut *The Mothers* with an engaging, interwoven story of a family dealing with racism, colorism, and sexism over several generations.



## SEX AND VANITY

by Kevin Kwan

Kevin Kwan is the author of the hugely popular *Crazy Rich Asians* trilogy and his most recent book has all the same elements that made them popular – love, money, and drama. Lucie Churchill is the daughter of a Chinese-American mother and wealthy blue-blood New York father. After meeting George Zao at an opulent wedding on Capri, they have a brief romance. Several years later Lucie is set to marry WASPy Cecil who is mainly interested in his Instagram and finds her family irritating. When George moves to New York and runs into Lucie she finds herself questioning the future she had planned for herself. Loosely based on E.M. Forrester's *A Room with a View*, this is a perfect light summer read.



## MEMORIAL DRIVE: A DAUGHTER'S MEMOIR

by Natasha Trethewey

When former U.S. Poet Laureate and Pulitzer Prize winner Natasha Trethewey was nineteen her stepfather killed her mother. In this moving memoir Trethewey explores the complexities of domestic abuse, mental health, racism, and grief.

# HOLIDAY SHOPPING AUCTION

## WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 24 to TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 30



ROCHESTER  
PUBLIC LIBRARY  
FOUNDATION

Stay tuned for  
more details!

SAVE THE DATE



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Organization  
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## COMING SOON: NEW APP FOR FINDING BOOKS, OTHER RESOURCES

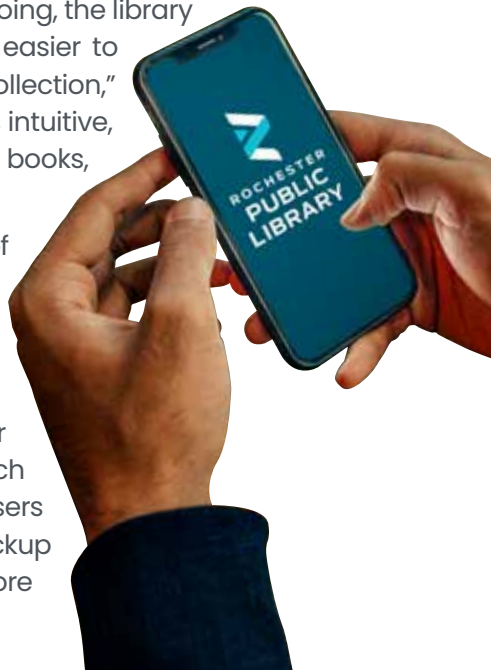
The library will soon bring the browsing experience to a new (digital) level.

Expected to launch later this year, the Rochester Public Library app will allow customers a better way to browse the library collection on mobile devices.

Despite having a completely redesigned website, the library's online catalog has remained relatively unchanged. RPL's Information Technology Services Manager, Steve Mosing, says the new RPLMN Mobile app will offer a completely new experience.

"Similar to what other industries are doing, the library will launch this new app to make it easier to see what we have available in our collection," explains Mosing. "The user interface is intuitive, making it easier for people to find books, DVDs, and audiobooks."

RPL currently offers this type of experience for the digital-only collection through the Libby app. Says Mosing, "People really find apps to be much more user-friendly. They tend to process information faster and allow for greater interactivity, which makes the entire experience better. Users save their library card number and pickup location, and limit searches to more easily find what they want."



## LIBRARY HOURS

**MONDAY-THURSDAY**  
10AM-8PM

**FRIDAY-SUNDAY**  
10AM-6PM



### TELL US WHAT OUR HOURS SHOULD BE

Take our hours survey  
[www.rplmn.org/hours](http://www.rplmn.org/hours)

507-328-2300 | [www.rplmn.org](http://www.rplmn.org)

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Nicole Henry, Layout/Design

**FIND US ONLINE**  
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