SHELF LIFE

MOHAWK VALLEY LIBRARY SYSTEM

Fort Plain Free Library

LET INTELLECTUAL FREEDOM RING

From ALA.org/advocacy/intfreedom

The American Library Association (ALA) is committed to **intellectual freedom**, the rights of library users to read, seek information, and speak freely as guaranteed by the First Amendment. Libraries strive to meet the needs of **all people** by providing materials that are diverse and inclusive. Libraries should be:

- purposeful in providing comprehensive information to all people.
- representative of a wide array of people, cultures, and viewpoints.

"Libraries are major sources of information for society and they serve as guardians of the public's access to information," the ALA says. "Core values of the library community such as equal access to information, intellectual freedom, and the objective stewardship and provision of information must be preserved and strengthened, now more than ever."

Grant News

Amsterdam Free Library was awarded a CDLC Technology & Equipment Grant to purchase a locking phone charging station.

NEW

Locking Patron Charging Station

IN THIS ISSUE:

MOHAWK VALLEY LIBRARY SYSTEM
Connecting libraries to the future

LIBRARY BILL OF RIGHTS

American Library Association

In support of intellectual freedom, the ALA developed the **Library Bill of Rights**, a set of basic policies that libraries can use to guide their services.

I. Books and other library resources should be provided for the interest, information, and enlightenment of **all people of the community** the library serves. Materials should not be excluded because of the origin, background, or views of those contributing to their creation.

II. Libraries should provide materials and information presenting **all points of view** on current and historical issues. Materials should not be proscribed or removed because of partisan or doctrinal disapproval.

III. Libraries should **challenge censorship** in the fulfillment of their responsibility to provide information and enlightenment.

IV. Libraries should cooperate with all persons and groups concerned with resisting abridgment of **free expression and free access to ideas.**

V. A person's right to use a library should **not be denied** or abridged because of origin, age, background, or views.

VI. Libraries which make exhibit spaces and meeting rooms available to the public they serve should make such facilities available on an **equitable basis**, regardless of the beliefs or affiliations of individuals or groups requesting their use.

VII. **All people**, regardless of origin, age, background, or views, possess a **right to privacy and confidentiality** in their library use. Libraries should advocate for, educate about, and protect people's privacy, safeguarding all library use data, including personally identifiable information.

Find further interpretations of the Library Bill of Rights here.

CABIN FEVER CLUB WINTER 2026

Program details available on the MVLS website

CABIN FEVER CLUB
WINTER 2026
The Gilded Age

Kathryn Sheehan, Troy Historian & Executive Director, Hart Cluett Museum

Tuesday, 2/10, 11am-12pm

Virtual class - registration required.
Scan QR code to register or use
https://bit.ly/44cl5y6-GildedAge

MOHAWK VALLEY LIBRARY SYSTEM

HART CLUETT MUSEUM

CABIN FEVER CLUB
WINTER 2026
Revolutionary New York
The War and the Future Empire State

Christopher Tosh, Capital District Library Council (CDLC)

Wednesday, 2/18, 1-2pm

Virtual class - registration required.
Scan QR code to register or use
https://bit.ly/489lGSi-revolutionaryny

MOHAWK VALLEY LIBRARY SYSTEM

Capital District Library Council
Shared Collections, Local Connections.

CABIN FEVER CLUB
WINTER 2026
Strange History from Along the Erie Canal at Schoharie Crossing

David Brooks, Education Director, NYS Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation

Wednesday, 2/25, 11am-12pm

Virtual class - registration required.
Scan QR code to register or use
https://bit.ly/3K0p9e4-strangehistory

MOHAWK VALLEY LIBRARY SYSTEM

New York State Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation

NEW YORK STATE Department of Environmental Conservation

CABIN FEVER CLUB
WINTER 2026
AllWays Dance Program

Wednesday, 3/4, 12-12:45pm

Virtual class - registration required.
Scan QR code to register or use
https://bit.ly/4rOHRXe-AllwaysDanceMarch

MOHAWK VALLEY LIBRARY SYSTEM

ALLWAYS DANCE

A Bill -sometimes- Becomes a Law

If the title of this article brings back memories of School House Rock, you probably had a great childhood. If the reference does not make sense, you might have to find the clip on YouTube.

All joking aside, while advocacy efforts often focus on the New York State budget, advocacy for other legislation is just as important. Yet, getting a bill signed into law can be a frustrating and lengthy process.

The Process

This description is a bit oversimplified, but provides a good overview. A bill needs to be introduced by a member of the Assembly or Senate. Hopefully, identical bills are introduced in both houses. Those bills get assigned to a committee depending on the topic of the bill. Many of the bills we follow are likely to be reported to their respective Library Committees. The committee may choose to vote to move the bill to the floor of the Assembly or Senate for a full vote. If the bill is passed by both houses, it will move to the Governor to either be signed into law or be vetoed. If it is vetoed, the Legislature could override the Governor's veto with a supermajority vote, but that is extraordinarily rare.

If the bill fails to make it through the full process in a Legislative session, it has to begin the process again during the next session before it can become a law.

The Results

On occasion, a bill sails through the process. For example, in 2024, Assemblyman Santabarbara introduced a bill to expand state aid eligibility for library construction.

Thank you to everyone who came to Albany on February 3, 2026 for Library Advocacy Day!

2026 ADVOCACY - NY STATE BUDGET PRIORITIES

Library Operating Aid
$181.3 million

Library Construction Aid
$175 million

Office of Cultural Education Funding
$12 million

Library Materials Aid
$11.33 per pupil

NOVELny
$3.1 million

For a complete list of NYLA's legislative priorities, visit: https://www.nyla.org/2026-legislative-session

That bill quickly passed and became law.

More often, though, a bill might take years to get through the process. It might die in committee. It might get passed in one house, but fail in the other. Or it might be vetoed.

For example, A.3589 is the current version of a bill to improve the affordability and availability of eBooks/eAudiobooks for libraries. S.8630/A.9537 is the latest version of the "Freedom to Read Act."

Both bills were vetoed in recent years, both have been updated, and they remain priorities for libraries during this year's legislative session.

The Need for Advocacy
Ongoing advocacy can make the difference. Bills can be updated. Support can be built through diligent advocacy, and *eventually*, bills can make it through the process.

UNEARTH A STORY™

Save the Dates!

Monday, Feb. 9, 2026 9:30am - 12:30pm
Children's SRP Workshop (Virtual)

Wednesday, March 11, 2026 9:30 am - 12:30 pm
Teen SRP Workshop (Virtual)

RAWR

Staff Picks
What are you reading?

Beth: *September*
  by Rosamunde Pilcher

Mary: *A Calamity of Souls*
  by David Balducci

Eric: *The Unsettling of America*
  by Wendell Berry

Wade: *The Andromeda Strain*
  by Michael Crichton

Storytime Smarts!
click images for inspiration & resources

FRiENDS

BLACK HISTORY MONTH

StoryTime Skills: WRITING

Did you know there are five interactive practices that experts recommend to make the most of your library storytime's potential and build early literacy skills? Those skills are: Talking, Writing, Reading, Playing, and Singing!

Writing skills in children aged 0-5 develop in a predictable, developmental progression that moves from random scribbling to intentional, letter-like forms, and finally to recognizable letters, shapes, and words. This process is deeply tied to fine motor skills, hand-eye coordination, and cognitive development.

HOW CAN LIBRARIES HELP?

Provide a variety of paper and writing tools for children! Paper of all sizes, textures, and colors are great for early exploration. All kinds of writing implements can be helpful at this age: pencils, pens, markers, crayons, chalk, and colored pencils will all contribute to children's learning. Each one requires different pressure to use it successfully, and will help in developing stronger muscles in hands and fingers.

Use finger rhymes and songs in storytime to encourage fine motor skills and coordination! Favorites like The Itsy Bitsy Spider and Baby Shark are great choices.

Choose toys and activities that encourage developing fine motor skills! Here are some examples:

- Playdough and clay molding
- Squeezing sponges and stress balls
- Using tweezers and tongs for small objects
- Tracing lines and letters with fingers and crayons
- Cutting along straight and curved lines
- Snipping playdough or paper with safety scissors
- Stringing beads or macaroni on yarn
- Lacing cards and threading activities
- Pegboard games and puzzles
- Finger painting and using brushes for control
- Playing with kinetic sand or sensory bins
- Torn paper crafts

BUDGET SMART

Link: Dollar Store Sensory Bins

Link: Sensory Bins on a Budget

GENERATIVE AI'S IMPACT

From the Tech Tutor

Navigating Generative AI

The AI tools we interact with are known as AI chatbots. They use artificial intelligence, machine learning, and natural language processing to understand our queries . These AI chatbots learn from our interactions. Their programming hones and improves the results they provide based on our feedback.

ChatGPT, introduced in November 2022 was one of the first widely-used generative AI chatbots available for the general public. Since then, it's hard to avoid other AI chatbots that have been integrated with products used in our everyday life, such as:

- Microsoft Copilot (March 6, 2023)
- Claude (March 14, 2023): as of May 2025, the latest is Claude Opus 4.5 and Claude Sonnet 4.5
- Meta AI (September 2023): integrated with Facebook, Messenger, Instagram, and WhatsApp
- Google Gemini (February 8, 2024)

Many industries use generative AI and have customized AI integration for their products or business.

Check out this blog post for a full comparison of AI chatbots in 2026.

The use of generative AI has pros and cons to be aware of:

Pros:

- Can enhance or generate new ideas.
- Provides quick results as summaries or analysis.
- May be used to translate language and to communicate complex information.
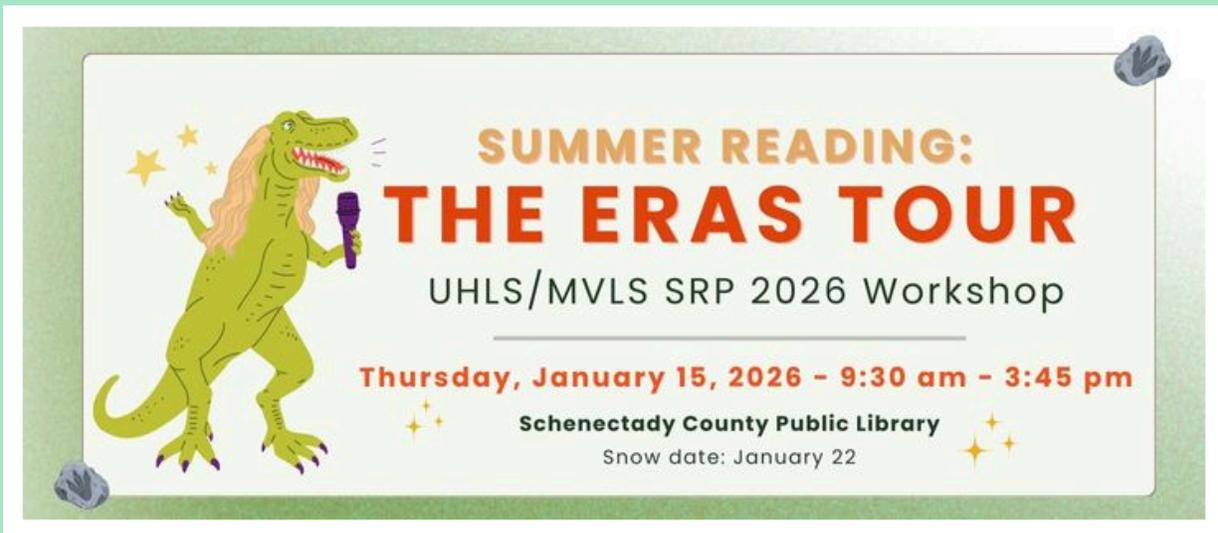
Cons:

- Ethical considerations of copyright and data protection.
- Inaccurate or biased information produced.
- Environmental costs due to energy consumption and the use of massive amounts of water to cool data servers.

How to discuss AI with patrons:

- Remind patrons to dig deeper beyond the AI Overview provided by Google. Check for links that support the AI summary.
- Point out that information generated by AI may be inaccurate.
- Tell patrons to be skeptical about what they see, particularly on social media. The band of racoons caught on video jumping on the trampoline in the backyard is funny, but not real.
- Share tips on privacy - use a private browser, turn off "Improve model for everyone" in Settings, Data Controls (for ChatGPT), or do not create an account and log in.
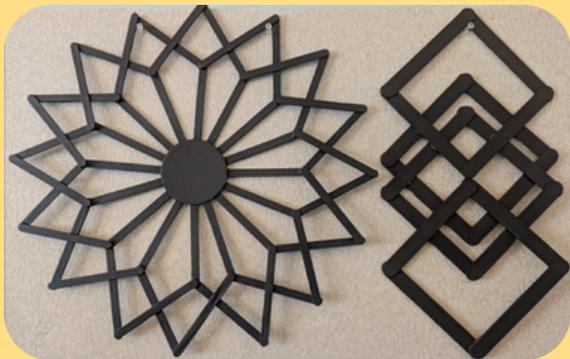
Keep in mind, our role is to provide AI literacy and support the learning process.

CAUGHT BEING CLEVERLY CREATIVE

SUMMER READING:
THE ERAS TOUR
UHLS/MVLS SRP 2026 Workshop

Thursday, January 15, 2026 - 9:30 am - 3:45 pm
Schenectady County Public Library
Snow date: January 22

Presented by Beth Rienti, MVLS
Mary Fellows, UHLS
Hosted by SCPL

INSPIRATIONS & IDEAS

Winter crafts at
Gloversville Public Library

Mixed Media Painting classes at
Fort Hunter Free Library

New library cards at Northville
Public Library

A new sign for
The Community Library

Winter Mini Canvas Reception at
Canajoharie Library

The History of Sled Dogs at
Middleburgh Library

Winter Reading Challenge at
Schenectady County Public Library

CONTACT US

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- **Wade Abbott**: Community Engagement & Communications Specialist, ext. 230, wabbott@mvls.info

Not sure who to contact?
Check out MVLS Staff At a Glance
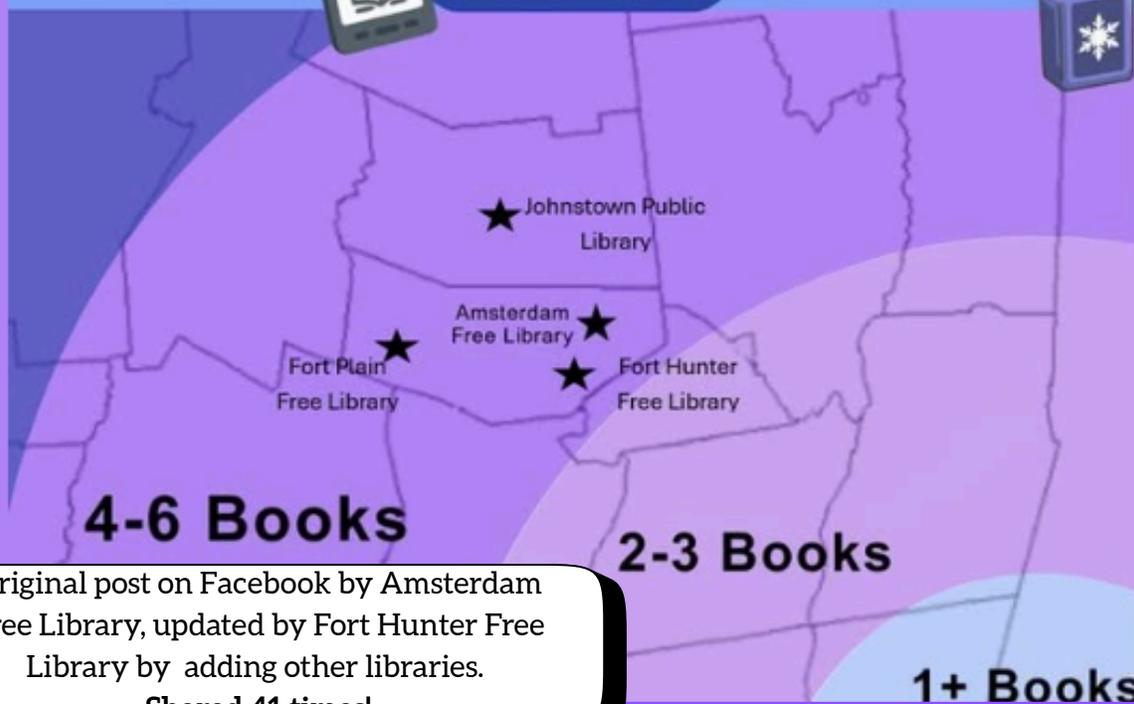
Fort Plain Library staff attending CPR training

Original post on Facebook by Amsterdam Free Library, updated by Fort Hunter Free Library by adding other libraries.
Shared 41 times!