MILL VALLEY
PUBLIC LIBRARY

Mill Valley Library Foundation & Friends of the Mill Valley Library Funding Report 2025-2026

ABOUT THE SUPPORT GROUPS

Since their inception in 1967, the Friends of the Mill Valley Library have contributed over $2.5 million to the Library through membership dues and book sales. Generated revenue supports library programming, the collection, services, and special projects beyond what the City's budget provides and helps assure the Library's continued excellence. The Friends is a 100% volunteer organization that hosts regular in-person book sales and an annual member appreciation event. It also promotes community activism in support of the Library.

Since its founding in 1983, the Mill Valley Library Foundation has built an endowment of over $6 million through a combination of annual giving, legacy giving, and investment income to provide support to the Library in perpetuity. Annual grants from the endowment, totaling over $1.5 million since 2011, are used to provide critical financial support for the Library's award-winning programs, events, and other services beyond what the City's budget provides. The non-profit volunteer organization is dedicated to supporting a modern library that is an educational, cultural, and literary center for all members of our community, now and in the future.

EXPANDING THE LIBRARY OF THINGS

During the 2025/2026 fiscal year, the Library pursued an expansion of its Library of Things to include tools to help with accessibility built on Artificial Intelligence. While these items can be cost-prohibitive to the average user, funds from the Foundation have enabled us to hire an expert to research a variety of "AI wearables." These wearables include haptic feedback knee braces, digital magnifiers, and glasses that provide instant, computer-generated captions for the hard-of-hearing. These tools are intended to bridge the gap between technology and its end users in a safe and stable environment without expecting them to foot the bill. These tools will also assist those with disabilities by enabling them to participate more fully in society regardless of their limitations.

In addition to the AI devices which we hope to launch to the public soon, we also added a brand new GoPro camera kit, a woodburning kit, radon detectors, and a brand new sewing machine. Sewing machines continue to be one of the most well-loved items in the Library of Things, proving that hand-made items are still in fashion.



Ecoblu Digital Radon Gas Monitor acquired by the Mill Valley Public Library this Summer.

COLLECTION (DIGITAL & PHYSICAL): $222,654

Friends funding grew our newest children's collections: Wonderbooks and Playaways, two easy-to-use audiobook devices that make stories accessible wherever families go. Both formats have been extremely popular, especially with those who are learning to read, who struggle with reading, or who simply enjoy being able to follow along via audio.



The Friends and the Foundation also support databases and eContent. Databases include Consumer Reports, JSTOR, Britannica, Ancestry, and the Oxford English Dictionary online. Access to these databases is typically behind a paywall but the Library is able to provide free access to our patrons thanks to the Friends and Foundation contributions. Our eBooks, eAudio, and eMagazines circulation continues to increase with an annual circulation of 972,380 borrows in Libby alone and the year isn't even over. This year MARINet consortium members met and reduced the number of holds and checkouts which reduced the time patrons will have to wait for popular titles and will hopefully improve the experience for all users.

The physical collection--books, DVDs, CDs, and more--continue to be our most popular asset. Not only are we a net-lender within the consortium and the reciprocal lending program Link+, but we receive compliments daily about the depth and breadth of our collection. While the world continues to progress and become more tech-focused, it's heart-warming to know that people still love the feel of a paper book in their hands.

PHYSICAL COLLECTION: $146,669

BOOKS: $125,479

- FRIENDS: $19,505
- CITY: $98,733
- ZIP BOOK GRANT: $7,242

MAGAZINES: $8,834

- FRIENDS: $8,834

AUDIOVISUAL: $12,356

- FRIENDS: $7,451
- CITY: $4,905

DIGITAL CONTENT: $75,985

ECONTENT: $36,171

- FRIENDS: $14,211
- FOUNDATION: $17,209
- STATE FUNDS: $4,751

DATABASES: $39,814

- FRIENDS: $13,914
- FOUNDATION: $18,467
- CITY: $7,433

STAFF DEVELOPMENT: $30,344

The Friends once again supported the Library's Staff Day. This is a full day of training for all library staff, full and part-time. It's a great opportunity to bring all staff together to socialize and disseminate important information regarding customer service, emergency preparedness, and library trends. The Friends also supported summer reading planning for both adult services and youth services.

- FRIENDS: $4,322
- CITY: $24,041
- DONATION: $1,981

ADULT PROGRAMMING & SERVICES: $74,559

FRIENDS: $34,112

FOUNDATION: $40,047

DONATION: $400

In the 2025/2026 fiscal year, the Library saw even greater interest in community-oriented, in-person programming. As a learning institution we focused heavily on providing spaces where people could gather, contemplate, and discuss myriad topics from poetry and plays to crafts and current events. Author Tanya Žilinskas held a successful series that taught amateur authors how to bring their stories to life while various other authors filled the Creekside Room with discussions about the natural world, death and dying, and fiction of all types. We strengthened our partnership with the California Writers Club of Marin and utilized their wide-reaching network to bring in authors, agents, and publishers to provide patrons with an in-depth look at bringing a book from its inception all the way to finding it on the shelves. The most ambitious writers attended many of these programs, putting together information from each one to get their foot in the door and make it in the literary industry.



Indigenous Cooking workshop with Sara Calvosa Olson

Those who wanted a lighter experience at the library built community through arts and crafts, whether that was being a regular during the Fiber Arts group or attending one of the monthly Adult Arts & Crafts programs. Attendees not only learned new skills but made new friends as well, with many adults coming back each month to unplug and get their hands dirty. Over the year we hired five different artists to bring their skills to the library and teach adults from 18-88 how to design, imagine, and craft with their minds and their hands. These activities included needle felting, cross-stitch, and indigo dyeing.

While educating and entertaining are both big parts of the library's role in the community, we wanted to make sure that we still focused on our main priority: books. The Summer Reading Program theme this year was "Read Around the World" and encouraged participants to expand their world views through a variety of literary challenges in the form of a bingo card. Those who completed at least one row on their bingo card received branded tote bags and we raffled off a limited number of gift cards to some lucky winners. Along with the reading challenge, adult patrons could partake in many different programs like a wildlife hike hosted by WildCare or exploring indigenous foodways and shucking acorns with chef Sara Calvosa-Olsen.

After Hours continues to be our most cherished and well-attended adult program. This past year over 2300 patrons attended 13 After Hours events including retrospectives on Mill Valley's own Curtain Theatre and the Dipsea Race, discussions on economics and politics with Jon Haveman, and the After Hours mainstay: Naked Truth. Whether it's hard-hitting political discussions or light-hearted comedy, there's something for everyone at the Mill Valley Public Library.

CHILDREN'S PROGRAMMING: $56,599

FOUNDATION: $53,615

FRIENDS: $2984

This year's Summer Reading Program, "Read Around the World," invited children and families to explore a new continent each week through stories, science, and hands-on experiences. Thanks to Foundation support, the library became a place where families could travel the world without leaving Mill Valley. Participants learned Afghan dance, created Adire-inspired wax-resist art, listened to an Australian didgeridoo, and cheered on Oakland Originalz breakdancers. The Friends of the Library continued to make many of our most beloved children's services possible including supplying free books to kids joining the program.



Summer Reading performance by A Tale from The Wylding Woods.

Foundation funding also supported our year-round after-school programs, which helped children discover new interests and build confidence. In Nature Club, kids explored the changing seasons, gardening, and local wildlife. Full STEAM Ahead brought science to life with activities like designing bridges, mapping constellations and tides, and investigating egg-laying animals. World of Wonder continued to expand children's understanding of everyday life around the globe through books and creative projects inspired by cultures from the Andes to Tokyo to Ethiopia. Our partnership with SEEDS helped both neurodivergent and neurotypical children develop mindfulness, emotional awareness, and self-confidence through breathing exercises, movement, and guided reflection.

TEEN/TWEEN PROGRAMMING: $10,023

FOUNDATION: $10,023

Foundation funding made many educational programs for teens and tweens possible this year. Some of our beloved tween favorites include Tween Hangout, Books and Bites, and LEGO Club. Dungeons and Dragons continues to lead the charge by being our most attended and consistently loved club for tweens. We have dedicated members that stay for years until they age out of the program. One of the more popular one-off teen programs was the Antarctic Ice Cream Lab where teens mixed science and fun to make their own ice cream from scratch! The Foundation also supports an active Teen Advisory Board (TAB) of more than 30 members! TAB members make recommendations to the Youth Services Librarian, volunteer in the library shelving and shelf-reading, and help support programs. Many teens have said that these meetings are the first time they've been given the opportunity to give feedback on the types of books and activities they care about.



Tweens channel their inner pop star at our K-Pop Café.

TECHNOLOGY: $27,736

Foundation funding supported 25 classes taught by artificial intelligence expert Bridget Burke. Bridget's informative presentations offered a considered, balanced view of the potential and perils of AI development and kept patrons apprised of the latest news in this fast-moving field at monthly AI News "Happy Hours." Funding also supported 23 classes by independent Apple consultant Jon Hartman, who showed patrons the ropes of their Mac computers, iPhones, iPads, and Apple services as well as offered freeform Q&A sessions.

The Library's Tech to Go program circulates Wi-Fi hotspots, USB power banks, and Chromebook/hotspot kits so patrons can have access to reliable internet access if their own coverage is spotty or non-existent. Using these resources, patrons apply for jobs, navigate government websites, do schoolwork, attend telehealth appointments, and stay in touch with family and friends. Demand is high and steady in a world more and more oriented online. Funding also supports the ongoing cost of data plans as well as hardware replacements when necessary so we can continue to offer this resource to our community.

TECH TO GO: $11,706

FOUNDATION: $11,706

COMPUTER/AI CLASSES: $10,064

FOUNDATION: $10,064

WI-FI IN THE PLAZA: $5,966

FRIENDS: $2,570

FOUNDATION: $3,396



The Friends and Foundation jointly fund Wi-Fi on the Plaza, a free Wi-Fi network broadcast in the Lytton Square area. Users began 10,115 unique sessions in 2025-26. Friends and Foundation support pays for internet service provider costs and support for Cisco network hardware so that the public can enjoy library-sponsored access outside the walls of the building.

CIRCULATION STATISTICS: 7/1/25 - 6/30/26

Chromebook Kits: 163
Hotspots: 566
Device Charger: 142

EXTENDED HOURS: $4,015

Due to generous contributions from the Friends and Foundation, the Library was able to conduct a six-month pilot program of extended hours on Thursdays and Saturdays. Both days we opened two hours earlier than usual: 8am on Thursdays and 10am on Saturdays. While the initial fervor for early Saturdays was clear, it took a while for patrons to come around to the idea of an 8am open on Thursdays. Over the course of this six-month trial period, we had an average of 50 more people in the first two hours on Thursdays and 210 more people on Saturdays. Unfortunately, the Thursday statistics didn't merit maintaining the changed hours, so come November we will swap back to opening at 10am. The Saturday hours will remain intact. While our pilot program was successful in some ways and less so in others, we and the public are grateful to be able to add hours in a time when many libraries are being asked to reduce hours, services, and staff.

FRIENDS: $1,891

FOUNDATION: $2,124