

U.S. Treasury Capital Projects Fund for Libraries: Jeudevine Memorial Library

In September 2024, the Department awarded \$15.9 million dollars in competitive grant monies to 14 public libraries in Vermont with funding from the U.S. Department of the Treasury through the American Rescue Plan Act. The Department awarded these substantial grants to address critical building improvements ensuring Vermonters in these communities have continued access to high-speed internet for the purposes of work, education, and health monitoring at their local public libraries.

Hardwick's Jeudevine Memorial Library in Caledonia County received a grant award of \$725,000 to support its renovation and expansion, including a two-story addition, four ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act) compliant bathrooms, HVAC, plumbing, and electrical updates. Find out more about the project in our interview with director Diane Grenkow (DG).

What inspired the library to pursue this project?



DG: The Jeudevine, built in 1896, had long since outgrown its space. Not only did getting around the library require doing the "Jeudevine Jig" (where two people had to turn sideways to pass each other in the stacks or behind the desk), but the building itself was only accessible by a set of granite steps, and accessing the bathroom required navigating a winding staircase into the basement! After school, the library would fill up with kids who wanted to play on the computers (noisy then for the adults), but there still wasn't enough room, so some kids would look in and then leave because there was nowhere to sit. All programming had to happen outside of regular library hours because it was impossible to do it any other way. It wasn't ideal for anyone, including patrons and staff, and it was inaccessible to those with mobility issues.



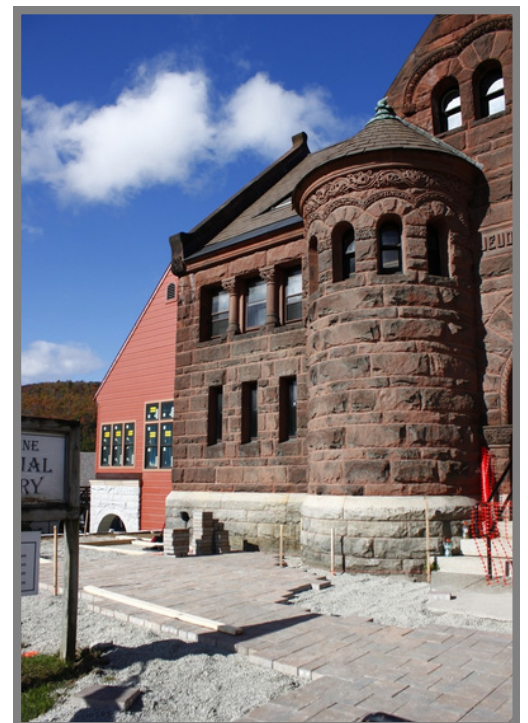
Tell us about any community collaborations with partners, donors, or volunteers who helped make this happen.



DG: This was truly a community effort. Input from all stakeholders was an essential first step in moving forward with the idea of an expansion: library trustees, Friends, and community members dreamt up what the library could and should be in Hardwick. Funds were raised from every imaginable place: state and federal grants, individual donors, bequests, and a town bond. It was a challenging time to build, as the pandemic repeatedly drove prices up. We were fortunate to have donors step in at just the right moment, time and again, keeping things moving forward. While our floors were being refurbished, and as the stone cutters worked their way through from the old building into the new, the town allowed us to move into the Memorial Building. The only time we had to close down was at the very end, for one week, while a big crew of volunteers helped move and organize every book and piece of furniture that we have!

Are there new programs or plans that are now made possible with the new space and upgrades?

DG: EVERYTHING is possible now that we have the new space! We now have a beautiful, light-filled addition that houses board books for babies up through novels for young adults with strategically placed bookcases to separate the age groups. There are public access computers available for use in the kids' room, where they can enjoy themselves without worrying about being too loud for the adults. The historic building now features recently restored, beautiful wood floors and newly renovated stained glass windows. It's now lovely and spacious! A place to work or read quietly. We added two meeting rooms on the lower level, which have proven to be very necessary for our community.





These rooms have already allowed for private healthcare meetings via Zoom and tutoring. We've hosted many different kinds of classes, workshops, and programs since we opened the addition in July, including tai chi, a quilting group, a four-week series sponsored by the town on watershed issues, in addition to our own library programs. We held two fundraisers recently that leaned heavily on serving hot meals, and we got to do it in the new building! But most importantly, accessible entrances and a lift to take people from floor to floor finally make the Jeudevine a place that is truly accessible for everyone.



What is your biggest piece of advice for others embarking on a project like this?



DG: Be sure to gather as much input as possible from as many stakeholders as possible, and designate someone to serve as the point of contact who can bridge the gap between trustees and staff who may not have experience with construction, and the builders who may not be familiar with modern library operations. Communication is the key. It's not always easy, but it's always better to have clear lines of communication and to take the time needed to understand the process, so you end up with the building that everyone wants and needs.

