



Meeting Minutes
Tri-Township Public Library District
Tuesday, June 17, 2025
6:00 p.m. Special Meeting
Genealogical & Historical Society Special Meeting
Meeting Room, Lower Level

Library Board Present: President Michele Erschen, Vice-President Mary Ellen Akridge, Secretary Katie Devany, Treasurer Liz Compton, Trustee Linda Taake, Trustee Elizabeth Mascote. **Absent:** Trustee Katie Serrano

A. Special Meeting

A special meeting was called by the Genealogical and Historical societies to discuss the official notice from the Tri-Township Library to vacate by August 17, 2025. Members from both societies, the Library Board, and general public were in attendance.

B. Current Library Usage and Needs

Erschen explained the rationale behind asking the Genealogical and Historical Societies to vacate their space in the library. With community growth, the library is expanding its collections, programs and services and needs to utilize all available space. Compton added that a new in-house bookkeeper requires a private, secure area for confidential documents. The meeting room on the lower level is one of the few lockable areas, which makes it suitable for such use. Akridge reported that 1,404 people attended library programs last month (May), reflecting high community engagement and we anticipate that only growing. Compton reiterated the need for reallocating space to support programming and possibly additional employees.

C. Public Access to Society Collections

Currently, members of the public must contact society members to gain access to documents. Three members of the public have requested to meet with members about historical/genealogical materials. Access to the collection is not available online and is limited to members of the Genealogical society. A review of 49 area libraries by Akridge revealed that most (44 libraries) do not store genealogical and/or historical community collections in the library. Some house them in separate facilities (e.g., Madison County). It was also mentioned that some local genealogical societies, such as Edwardsville and Highland, have recently disbanded, signaling broader regional challenges in maintaining such collections.

D. Society Concerns and Suggestions

Members of the societies expressed concern that they were not part of a discussion prior to being asked to vacate the library. One member suggested that a collaborative conversation prior to the letter could have led to digitization and consolidation efforts. Another highlighted that climate-controlled storage is essential, yet difficult and expensive to secure locally. A question was raised about whether any public buildings could house the collection, and if an extension of 60 days (to October 17, 2025) could be granted. Members also questioned whether the societies are formal partners or programs of the library.

E. Library Board and Staff Responses

Library Director Fischer stated the library can help with training society members in scanning documents but not reallocate staff time to do that scanning. Library Director Fischer also agreed to reach out to Storied about the possibility of digitizing the collection. It was

made clear that the expense would fall to the societies unless there was a way to incorporate the digitized collections into the library offerings. Attendees agreed it would be helpful to have the materials indexed to allow for ease of searching. Library Director Fischer also suggested that the old Ministries Unlimited building might be an option to house the collection once their new building is complete.

Akridge noted that members of the Library Board facilitated delivery of four dozen boxes to aid in moving and asked if additional boxes were needed. The societies responded that they had collected enough boxes at this time. Akridge provided her contact information to each society and encouraged them to reach out when they were ready to coordinate volunteers for packing the collections. Additionally, the Friends of the Library presented each society with a check for \$100 to help offset moving expenses.

F. Next Steps

Both societies and the Library Board agreed the process could have been handled more collaboratively with increased communication across all fronts. All parties are aligned in moving forward cohesively and have identified the following items to discuss in their respective board meetings:

- Digitization
 - Library staff to assist with training society members on using software and equipment to scan documents.
 - Library Director Fischer to contact Storied for digital platform recommendations to house and index documents online.
 - Confirm digital hosting capability at the library. Items may be able to be uploaded to the cloud.
- Storage Alternatives
 - Societies explore use of Ministries Unlimited's old building.
 - Societies continue searching for local, climate-controlled storage.
- Program/Partnership Clarification
 - Determine the societies' official status with the library. They are welcome to have their meetings and programs at the library with coordination with the library staff and scheduling.
- Extension Request
 - Review feasibility of extending move-out deadline to October 17, 2025. This will be put on the Library Board's July meeting agenda for discussion.
- Ongoing Communication
 - Schedule follow-up joint meeting with representatives from all three boards (i.e.: library, genealogical, and historical societies) to continue conversations and provide all parties with relevant updates.