

2026 Ferndale Area District Library - Library Board Candidate Questionnaire
FairFerndale.org

Dr. Denise Coté Candidate for Board of Directors

1. What experiences have led you to run/rerun for Library Board?

I have been an academic librarian for 25 years, specifically in community colleges. I was appointed to the board in 2025 to fill a vacancy. I've decided to run for a full term because I believe in the library's mission and its relationship with the community. And I believe my experience as a librarian can be of use to the library and the board.

2. What do you see are the strengths and weaknesses of the Ferndale Area District Library?

Like all public libraries, FADL could benefit from more staff, more resources, and a perfectly maintained physical space. FADL does an excellent job supporting the cultural and educational needs of the community and the library administration quite creatively uses its budget and staff time.

I believe that one of the weaknesses of the City of Ferndale is the expectation that the Library can and should function as a replacement for the closed community center. The library fills that gap admirably, I think, but I have concerns about the sustainability of these efforts if the City does not reopen the Center.

3. Ferndale voters recently voted to approve a library millage. How does this affect library operations? How can voters expect to see this millage used?

Ferndale voters approved a renewal of the Library's operating budget beginning in 2027, so we should expect its current services, collections, and staff size to be maintained. The second smaller mill request will be used to repair and maintain the aging building infrastructure. Since building maintenance and repair has been coming out of the operating budget (the funds that pay for collections, subscriptions, salaries, etc.), I am expecting that the library will be able to use those additional operating funds on expanding the collection, improve and increase its digital collections, and put funds into the improvement of its online services overall.

4. How do you see collaboration between the Ferndale Library and city governments/ other local stakeholders?

Libraries, as politically neutral entities, facilitate community action by serving as a meeting space and as a place to find objective information. The FADL librarians and administration seem to be proactive about their relationship with our city government and community leaders/groups. And, as I stated previously, FADL is an active participant in the cultural life of the city. In the wider library community, FADL participates as a valued member of a large cooperative of Michigan public libraries, which includes a shared catalog and shared resources. I would like to see FADL take a more active leadership role in that organization in the future.

5. What are your thoughts on the way FADL provides accommodations for patrons and others with disabilities (physical/mental/emotional)?

The Ferndale Accessibility and Inclusion Advisory Committee recently recognized the FADL with an award for excellence in service. The library staff works very hard to meet and exceed standards in serving this population, and the board of directors is very proud of their achievements. Librarians actively look for ways to remove boundaries to learning and, in my view, FADL has been doing an excellent job.

6. What role does AI (artificial intelligence) have in library operations?

In the larger world of libraries, AI currently has a role in cataloging particularly in archive work. As to the role of AI in public library services, we'll have to wait and see what the future holds. I do know that academic librarians focus much energy on teaching students how to responsibly use AI tools and how to discern AI from reality in information seeking. I would like to see FADL partner with schools and colleges as appropriate to address the challenges of AI and to maximize its potential uses. I can envision the FADL librarians offering workshops and educational information on AI for our community but I'd like to see that done in partnership with other educators.

7. In what ways do you see FADL working toward racial equity?

FADL welcomes and serves all users of the library with respect and dignity. Discrimination of any kind is not tolerated. Libraries serve a very important role in a democratic society and I take this extremely seriously. I am comfortable with FADL's approach to racial equity and its sensitive handling of the library's collections and services.

8. How do you see FADL working toward climate sustainability?

The library board decided many years ago to build a LEED-certified building and a green roof. The goal of the current board is to maintain the building infrastructure which includes geothermal heating and cooling and many other complicated processes that I do not pretend to completely understand. What I do know is that maintaining these systems is expensive since green public buildings are unfortunately quite rare in our state. I also know that the library is not saving on its utility bills by using this technology but it is good that the former board recognized the profound importance of climate sustainability and set us on this path.

9. Are there any additional thoughts you would like to share?

I am pleased to participate in my community by giving my time and experience to the Library. It's been exciting and challenging to learn about the differences and similarities between academic and public librarianship. I'm looking forward to serving the library as a board member and am confident that I can be useful.