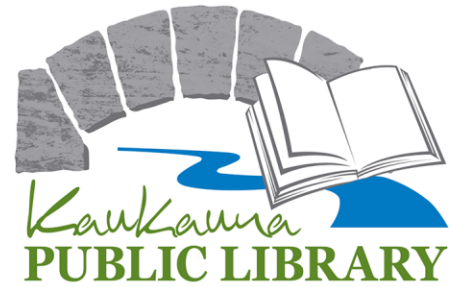


To: Kaukauna Public Library Board of Trustee
From: Library Director Ashley Thiem-Menning
Date: 4/2/2026
Re: Public Library Association (PLA) Conference



The PLA conference was quite bountiful for the KPL. With the proximity of Minneapolis, combined with having our own vehicle, we were able to bring back 47 brand new adult books for the collection, worth a total of: \$1,064.14. Even greater, we were able to bring back 117 brand new children's books for the collection, worth a total of: \$2,630.90.

In total, we have added 164 new books to our collection from PLA worth \$3,695.04. At the end of the conference, the exhibit hall vendors often allow librarians to take the new display materials at their vendor stalls. We came prepared with suitcases and bins. We filled an entire tote bin, two large suitcases, two small suitcases, as well as vendor promo bags filled with books.

This does not even include the ARC's we got. ARC's are advanced reader copies, which means they have not yet been published, and it is the unedited version being prepped for the future publish date. The youth ARC's will go as Summer Reading Program prize books and the other ARCs were staff swag and book sale items. ARC's cannot be put into collections.

While I attended many sessions, the standout session for me was titled *Creating Inclusive Collections for Patrons with Disabilities*. This session was outstanding. It was presented by Plano Public Library System and Libraries for All, and it focused on creating adaptable books for people with other abilities. The founder of Libraries for All discussed her experiences as a school librarian working with students with severe disabilities. Her moment of change came when a parent sent a note to school asking that her child not be sent home with library books because they were too scared they were going to wreck them.

This impacted her greatly, because libraries and books are for everyone, so she began to think about ways in which she could develop a sturdier book that was appealing to her students, which is how adaptable books were born. Adaptable books are laminated and rebound with sensory items added to each page. Currently, Plano Library System is the only system in the nation with an entire adaptable book collection. This is a collection that we will eventually be starting at KPL.

While we can purchase some books at an elevated cost, it is possible to create these books in house. Essentially, we purchase a high interest picture book, cut it apart, laminate each page and then bind it with our spiral binder. Once the book is together and laminated, the sensory part comes in. Items like glitter, buttons, textured paper, stickers, yarn, fur, puffy paint, google eyes, and jewels are added for a heightened sensory experience. These books are circulated in clear bags so that if any pieces fall off, they can be left in the bag for staff to fix, with a clear expectation to parents that stuff will fall off, and we don't care!

If you want to tear up and maybe cry a little, like I did during the presentation in a room full of people, check out this video the group put together to announce their new collection: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SmzU00Jj028>.

The second standout program for me was titled *Creating Library Safety Through Partnerships, Planning and Training*. This session was presented by two public libraries, Boulder, Colorado and Loudon County, Virginia. The session focused on some of the pretty intense incidents that had occurred at their libraries including a shut down from meth contamination and a fight involving teens with machetes. While I was relieved listening to the presentation to see that our library is doing extremely well in this part of being a public facility, I did have a few key takeaways. First, we need to begin documenting the amount of time we are spending on incident reporting, as this can sometimes take several hours. Larger incidents may involve speaking with law enforcement, writing an incident report, writing ban notices, camera footage review and exportation, or even at times meeting with the patrons to discuss the incident. If we begin to collect this data, we will have a better sense of how much time we are spending on incidents in the building.

They also focused heavily on incident reporting. We have been lucky that our incidents are often small and have not been violent unlike the presenting libraries. However, incidents do occur and are almost entirely documented by me. We do not currently have a specific form beyond the accident report form to use for incidents. Staff usually tell me in person, email, text or call me, and then I take over from there. If we begin to track these incidents, we will get a better sense of what is occurring throughout the course of the year in the building. The group specifically mentioned how helpful this is to notice trends.

The restrooms were among their highest locations for incidents, with both libraries noting that at one time they had an incident a day in their restrooms because they lack staff presence and exist as private spaces. While not a major issue here, we do tend to have a lot of vaping occurring in the restrooms here. Part of the discussion also included how facilities can be improved for safety physically. After one library had the meth contamination, which occurred in the bathroom, they completely redesigned the space to ensure that the spaces were still private, but more open, and they included systems to alarm for smoke or vapor.

The last takeaway I had from the session was in terms of safety training. While we do a lot of safety training, I liked the fact that they mentioned having an actual plan for the calendar year. While I am a part of the City Safety Committee and we complete all the required City safety training annually, much of that training does not focus on items like deescalation or even building specific items like tornado or fire drills. While we do practice these annually, we do not currently have anything in writing, which I will be adding to my list. Overall, it was an extremely good presentation, which I think helps libraries be more proactive with incidents versus reactive.

Most of the other sessions I attended had to do with leadership and strategic planning and intention. I did take a lot of notes and plan to incorporate some of it into our future strategic plan.

The conference had an app and from the app, I was able to email myself the slides and handouts from every session that had attached them. In total, I sent myself 96 pieces of content from the conference to be sifted through later.

Overall, the conference was pretty great and paid for itself based on the number of new titles we were able to add to the collection from it.

