

Bridges Library System Staff Reports

October 2026

Brittany Larson – Library System Director

2026 Jefferson County Library Budget: I presented the budget to the Jefferson County Finance Committee on Wednesday, September 16th. It went well, and there were many Jefferson County directors and trustees in attendance to help support the request and share updates from their libraries.

County Library Tax Exemptions: I requested and collected documentation on municipal exemptions for all Waukesha County municipalities and provided it to Waukesha County Administration. All 18 municipalities requested the exemption. Jefferson County municipal exemptions are due to Jefferson County by November 1st.

State Public Library System Plan: Each year, Wisconsin public library systems submit a plan to the Bureau of Libraries describing the program and budget for library service to be carried out in the subsequent year as required by Wisconsin Statutes. The staff and I worked to compile details of our 2027 service plans and budget information. This will be reviewed by the Bridges Board at their meeting this month for submission to the Bureau of Libraries by October 30th. The Bureau of Libraries must certify to the Department of Administration that the system plan conforms to [Chapter 43](#). Systems that submit plans by that date can expect to receive the first state aid payment no later than December 1st.

Professional Development: I attended Wisconsin Tech Days webinars on September 14th and 15th. I attended a Wiscnet Mini Conference on September 23rd where the main focus was on AI. As a reminder I will be at WLA October 20th-23rd and will be attending the Bridges Board meeting virtually.

Library Visits/Meetings: On September 10th Bridges staff held a New Director Orientation for the Watertown Library Director. I attended a COLAND (Council on Library and Network Development) meeting on September 11th. I attended an Eagle Library Board meeting on September 14th. I performed a site visit at the Prairie Lakes Library System and met with the System Director on September 24th.

Strategic Planning: The Bridges 2026 Strategic Planning Process is well underway. WiLS facilitated a discussion with the Bridges Board in September and also met with the Strategic Planning Team for a kick-off meeting to discuss framework on September 28th. I delivered a questionnaire to the Jefferson County Library Services Board in early October. At the November APL meeting WiLS will facilitate a discussion with the Bridges Member Library Directors. A survey will also go out to members in November and I met with WiLS on October 7th to discuss the building of this survey.

Kelly Nelson – Coordinator of Library Development

SEWI Libraries Healing Through Connection Discussion Panel – Hosted at the MLK branch of Milwaukee Public Library, this discussion panel talked about how libraries can support children and families. Largely organized by Milwaukee Public Library and MCFLS, I was able to support this event by offering it up to all SEWI Libraries providing advertising and registration.

SEWI Libraries Adult Public Programming Meetups – I hosted two Adult Public Programming Meetups at the Watertown and Waterford Public Libraries in September. Librarians discussed programming surrounding AI and education for the public as well as general programs they've done and ideas they're considering. Both were lively discussions.

Tech Days Wisconsin – I assisted Angela Schneider from the Winnefox Library System in organizing this year's Tech Days Wisconsin, a 2-day web conference dedicated to technology topics related to librarianship. Our topics ranged from AI and the importance of educating ourselves to help the public, to AI programming, to AI-generated materials and how we handle them as libraries. All recordings can be found at techdayswisc.org.

Trustee Appreciation Event – Thank you to everyone who made this year's Trustee Appreciation Event a success! 86 trustees, directors, and guests attended. We hope you had a fantastic time! [This year's slideshow of all the amazing things Bridges libraries have done this past year can be found here](#) or by visiting the Bridges Library System YouTube channel.

Watertown Visit – I visited the Watertown Public Library to discuss their upcoming staff in-service day and ideas for learning sessions.



Library Board Trustees watch a planetarium show at the Horwitz-Deremer Planetarium.

Upcoming 2026 Events

- Bridges Adult Services Meet-Up – Tuesday, November 10, 1:30-3:30 pm, Jefferson Public Library
- [SEWI Libraries Break-In Kit Workshop](#) – Wednesday, November 18, 1-4 pm, Sussex Civic Center

Angela Meyers – Coordinator of Youth and Inclusive Services

Inclusive Services

- Coordinated the seventh annual Fall Family Day for the Library Memory Project on Sunday, September 27, at Retzer Nature Center in Waukesha. The event drew 111 participants, including one family with more than 20 members in attendance. Activities included live music, Lotería with prizes, planetarium shows, a hand-warmer craft, and an educational presentation on fall bird migration.
- In the absence of Eagle's director, assisted with the Memory Café at Alice Baker Memorial Library. Participants enjoyed music bingo featuring songs from the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s. Eight people attended, including four who were new to Memory Cafés.



Kelly from Bridges sews scented handwarmers at Fall Family Day

Youth Services

- Facilitated the Youth Services Meet Up at Watertown Public Library on September 17 with Matt from Bridges. We had representatives from seven member libraries across both counties. Also facilitated the Teen Think Tank Meeting at New Berlin Public Library on September 23 with Kelly



Amanda from the Waterloo library selects books at The Community Space

and Matt from Bridges, with staff from six libraries across both counties. At both meetings, Matt introduced himself and we briefly discussed AI and publishing.

- Coordinated fall book browsing for youth services librarians at The Community Space in Whitewater. Staff from five libraries selected close to 900 books at no cost to add to their collections or use as reading program incentives.
- The Kids' Choice 2026–27 book list is now available on the Bridges Library System website, and public libraries have received their printed promotional materials.
- Collaborated with the Milwaukee County Federated Library System (MCFLS) and Bridges Library System to plan the Mock Awards program, scheduled for Wednesday, January 13, 2027, at Franklin Public Library. The Mock Awards provide an opportunity for library staff to read and discuss outstanding children's and teen literature.

Matthew Murphy – Database Management Librarian

Site Visits

In September, I started visiting Bridges libraries so I could introduce myself in person and get to know the library staff. I also asked each library a few questions about how I could best assist them in their day-to-day work.

As of September 30, I have visited 8 libraries: Big Bend, Butler, Eagle, Hartland, Pewaukee, Waukesha, Waterloo, and Watertown.

System Meetings

I attended the Youth Services Meetup at Watertown on September 17, and the Teen Think Tank at New Berlin on September 23. At both meetings, I introduced myself and discussed some ideas related to cataloging library materials that may have been wholly or partly created with generative AI.

Cataloging Requests and Backlogs

I began chipping away at tasks that have lain dormant since my predecessor's retirement; this includes Z records, bibliographic records with no items attached, and name/subject authorities. As of September 30, the name/subject authority work is all caught up, and work on Z records and bibs with no items continues; these are small backlogs and do not affect the day-to-day functionality or use of the catalog.

In addition to the above, I have been handling original cataloging requests from member libraries, in order to reduce their backlog of unique materials, mostly “Library of Things” items.

Polaris and Vega Enhancements

I’ve begun working with Shawn and Mellanie on custom TOMs (type of material) in Polaris, which will assist in rollup functionality in Vega. Additionally, I’ve begun testing out custom Polaris reports but building SQL queries; I plan to work with member libraries to see what custom reports would be most useful to them.

Emily Heller – Public Communications Coordinator

Outreach at Apple Harvest Festival

On Saturday, September 19, Kelly and I attended Apple Harvest Festival at Retzer Nature Center. Due to the rainy day, our booth was moved to a sidewalk to avoid any muddy conditions. Despite the weather, the event had a steady flow of people all day. We counted 501 interactions with attendees, and they had a good time filling our “bookshelf” with their favorite titles.



Story Hike

Our Fall Story Hike partnership continues through Oct. 31! Hikers are reading *The Acorn and the Oak*, by Rhonda Accardo, on newly designed signs on the white trail at Retzer Nature Center!

Kids’ Choice Award

I updated the Kids’ Choice Award posters, flyers, bookmarks, stickers and marketing materials. The promotions toolkit will also include some trending social media images carousel posts for use by member libraries.

Advertising - AM 620 “What’s on Tap” Radio Interview

Library Director Gerard Saylor from L. D. Fargo Public in Lake Mills joined WTMJ’s Sandy Maxx to discuss the library’s history and current “Build on a Legacy” capital campaign. It aired on September 21.

[Listen to the Lake Mills interview](#)

Consulting

On September 16, I held an in-person Marketing Meetup at Hartland Public Library. There were 15 attendees from 12 libraries. We had a great “Steal This Idea” Workshop where we all got to share marketing and promotions that have worked well in libraries. We all left with some fantastic ideas to try.

In the news:

- Local author wins awards in California book festivals: [Waukesha Freeman Article](#)
- World Cup fever leads local child to pen book about soccer tournament (Missed in July): [Waukesha Freeman Article](#)
- New Berlin library adds color analysis kits for checkout: [CBS 58 News Story](#)
- Delafield Public Library launches 1,000-mile hiking challenge: [Fox 6 News Story](#)
- The Delafield Public Library has a challenge for you in October: [Fox6's Bret Lemoine Facebook](#)
- There Are No Small Towns, Only Small Minds: [PEN America Article](#)

[News Archives](#)

Newsletter Data: Industry standard/goal is 44% Open Rate

- Marketing Magic:
 - Oct. 2: 61.45% Open Rate
 - Sept. 18: 55.42% Open Rate
 - Sept. 4: 55.42% Open Rate
- Monthly Bridges:
 - Oct. 5: 43.71% Open Rate
 - Sept. 9: 49.95% Open Rate
 - Aug. 14: 45.8% Open Rate
- Monthly Legislators:
 - Sept. 1 (Back to School):
Legislators – 33.33% Open Rate
Staff - 32.35% Open Rate