

2025 Annual Report of Jefferson County Library Service



LIBRARIES = STRONG COMMUNITIES

Mission: Jefferson County Library Service works to support and strengthen the municipal libraries, so all County residents receive quality public library service.

Jefferson County public libraries, except for Cambridge Community Library, are members of the Bridges Library System which serves and supports libraries in Jefferson and Waukesha Counties. System membership provides access for all county residents to more than 2 million items, digital resources, coordinated marketing, and support for library boards and staffs throughout both counties. Cambridge Community Library is a member of the South Central Library System.

Circulation of Library Materials

In 2025, the total circulation of physical and digital materials in Jefferson County decreased by 2% from the previous year. Physical circulation decreased from 819,156 to 788,583 items checked out of the nine county libraries. It is important to note that in 2025 the Whitewater Public Library was closed to the public from late May to late June, curbside only for a few months, and closed for two weeks in Fall 2025 due to their expansion. This contributed to a 25.55% decrease in their total circulation from 2024.

Digital circulation continues to increase. In 2025, 177,052 digital books, audiobooks, and videos were checked out, compared to 166,194 in 2024. In 2025 digital materials were available for borrowing from the Wisconsin Digital Library (Overdrive/Libby) and Hoopla by downloading to a computer or mobile device. Despite the popularity of the Hoopla platform, the cost structure made it unaffordable and access to this service ended at the beginning of 2026. Investment in Overdrive/Libby continues.

Of the total physical and digital circulation, 215,157 (which represents 22.28% of the total) were checked out by Jefferson County residents who live in municipalities without their own libraries. This same population represented nearly 25.66% of digital usage in 2025. This ratio represents a higher ratio than for physical circulations (21.52%).

Table 1. Circulation at Jefferson County Libraries – 2025

Library	2025 Total Circulation (Physical & Digital)	2025 Circulation to Jefferson County Non- librariated Communities (Physical & Digital)	Non-librariated Resident % of Total Circulation
Cambridge*	38,169	15,531	40.69%
Fort Atkinson	199,152	57,419	28.70%
Jefferson	87,591	25,528	29.14%
Johnson Creek	41,022	10,984	26.78%
Lake Mills	102,982	26,268	25.51%
Palmyra	38,955	21,084	54.12%
Waterloo	66,884	5,984	8.95%
Watertown	328,699	48,175	14.66%
Whitewater	62,181	4,454	7.16%
Totals	965,635	215,157	22.28%

*Cambridge does not circulate digital items to Jefferson County residents.

Countywide Library Service Highlights from 2025

Jefferson County residents had ready access to more than 2 million items and integrated access to the Wisconsin Digital Library, all via the CAFÉ catalog. In 2025, Bridges Library System upgraded the CAFÉ catalog to include the Vega Discover interface to improve catalog searching and bring different formats of the same title into one place.

Libraries received the following Bridges Library System services and programs:

- Improvement and innovation grants
- eContent grants
- Coordinated public relations efforts & library advocacy
- Technology support for CAFÉ, OverDrive, Hoopla, and the wide area network
- Annual report data pre-population, monthly data reports, and data dashboard access
- Youth services coordination
- Inclusive services coordination
- Workforce development coordination
- Professional development opportunities
- Access to a library event calendar and meeting room reservation platform
- Coordinated meetings for staff members and subject-specific listservs and groups
- Backup reference assistance
- Access to a professional collection for librarians
- Consultation on library services and library administration
- Access to special equipment
- Interlibrary loan software
- New library director orientation
- County library budgeting and planning assistance
- Web hosting, website assistance, and email service

Additional electronic resources for all county residents offered in 2025 included:

- Overdrive/Libby – Access to eBooks and digital audiobooks
- Udemy – Access to online, on-demand courses
- Ancestry.com – Research family history
- Consumer Reports – Make smart buying decisions
- Cypress Resume – Utilize job coaching, resume critiquing, and mock interview sessions
- Morningstar Investment Research – Research current or prospective holdings
- NoveList Plus – Find recommended reads, reviews, and book discussion guides

Cambridge Community Library

2025 brought some new faces and exciting updates to the Cambridge Community Library. The library was finally able to start and complete construction on its drive-up window after over a year of creative functionality. This unique service is one the library's community absolutely adores and was a welcome improvement for staff and patrons alike.



Cambridge Community Library saw several staffing changes throughout the year. Longtime library assistant Robin and newer library assistant/programmer Stephanie both moved on at the beginning of the year. New library assistants Amanda (starting in March) and Sarah (starting in November) have been wonderful additions to the library's staff, with Amanda handling programming and Sarah taking over all marketing for the library. The library also had a change in Page staff this year as well.

Despite construction both at the library and in the surrounding area in town, Cambridge Community Library still had over 20,000 visits throughout the year, 564 more than the year prior. The library continued to expand its program offerings by 24% and had 3,133 people attend across 234 programs. The highest attended programs for the year were Yellow Brick Road story and songs with CD Players, storytime with special guest Officer Tony, Magical Art with Mrs. K, Badger Talks with Mike Leckrone, and Cat in the Hat Storytime with Miss Geri. The library closed out the year with its second Noon Year's Eve celebration.



Thanks to the Cambridge Foundation, the library was able to develop and introduce a new collection this year! Staff purchased three Yoto minis with headphones and protective cases, adding them, plus over 100 cards, to the collection. While the devices themselves are exciting, the community also really appreciates being able to check out the cards for the devices they already have at home.



Dwight Foster Public Library (Fort Atkinson)

The Dwight Foster Public Library, located in Fort Atkinson in south central Jefferson County, proudly continued to serve the Fort Atkinson area to the best of its ability in 2025.

The library added a circulating puzzle collection in the summer of 2025 consisting of a large number of donated puzzles and 22 new large format puzzles purchased using funds from a Bridges Library System grant. The library's puzzle collection quickly grew in both size and popularity, and the Dwight Foster Public Library now hosts the largest circulating puzzle collection in the system.



Dwight Foster Public Library staff coordinated a wide variety of programs and events in 2025. The library partnered with the School District of Fort Atkinson to host a 4K Art Gala that drew in 220 attendees and featured original art created by 4K students, a red carpet, a balloon arch, a craft, and storytelling performances by 4K teachers. In April, the library hosted Jefferson County's Library Memory Project Family Day which invited individuals with memory loss and their families to a free outing at the library that featured activities such as bingo, therapy dogs, art projects, and a performance by an Elvis impersonator. In the summer, the library welcomed authors Geo Rutherford and Nickolas Butler and poet Nick Gulig to lead fun and informative programs about their creative works and processes. In the fall, with the financial support of an adult program grant from Bridges Library System, the library offered an antiques appraisal event led by antiques expert Mark Moran.

The library implemented several technology and facility upgrades in 2025. In July, the library enabled the "Reserve a Room" feature on the library's website calendar, allowing members of the public to book their own meeting rooms if they feel comfortable doing so. The library applied for and received a Bridges Library System innovation grant to purchase two Meeting OWL 3s for use by staff and members of the public in the library's meeting rooms. The Meeting OWL 3s complement the four new laptops that the library acquired this year. Library staff oversaw projects to reupholster furniture in the teen room and replace the library's main server. The library also installed beautiful new area rugs in the second floor reference room and the storytime room, thanks to funding from the Friends of the Library group. Following a surprise mechanical malfunction, library staff coordinated the emergency replacement of the library's rooftop condenser. Library staff works to wisely use funds to maintain and improve the library's warm, welcoming, and clean environment.



Jefferson Public Library



The Jefferson Public Library experienced a successful year in 2025, marked by enhancements to facilities, expanded services, and strong community engagement. One of the most significant improvements was the construction of two new private meeting rooms, each accommodating up to four individuals. This addition has addressed a growing demand for flexible, quiet spaces where patrons can work remotely, conduct job interviews, participate in tutoring sessions, or gather socially.

The Library also enhanced its front entrance by commissioning Madison-based artist Emily Balsley to design and install a vibrant mural at the front entrance, creating a welcoming and visually engaging first impression for visitors.



In support of improved accessibility and user experience, the Library launched a redesigned website. Also, Magic Desktop software was installed on two youth computers, providing children with a safe, structured digital environment that encourages learning, creativity, and play.



Programming expanded significantly in 2025, with new offerings designed to engage patrons of all ages. Younger audiences enjoyed programs such as Little Movers Storytime, Hot Wheels Club, and Barbie Club, all of which have seen enthusiastic participation. Adults also benefited from new opportunities, including a cookbook club, a hands-on crafting series featuring needle felting, glass etching, and diamond painting, and the Friends of the Library Puzzle Competition.

Summer remained the Library's busiest season, highlighted by a well-attended Summer Reading Program Kickoff Party. Families enjoyed ice cream, face painting, and outdoor games, creating excitement and momentum for summer reading.

Overall, the Library offered 214 programs in 2025, drawing a total attendance of 4,679 participants. These numbers reflect a strong commitment to serving the community through diverse, engaging, and meaningful experiences.



Johnson Creek Public Library

In 2025, following a period of transition, the library welcomed new staff members. Three staff members departed, prompting changes within the team and the addition of new personnel. The library welcomed Jacki Haberman as a Library Assistant, sharing the position with Mindy Markus. Ella Bachim joined the library as a Circulation Clerk. Both Jacki and Ella joined the library in October.



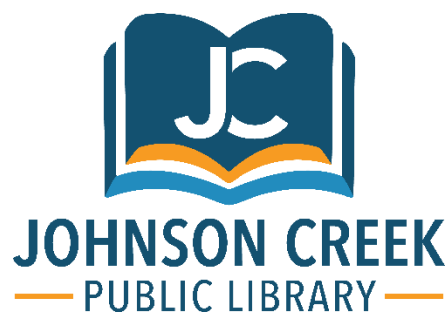
Johnson Creek Public Library partnered with Village of Johnson Creek Tourism for the library's first "Wellness in the Creek" in September. It was a major success bringing together more than 25 agencies, organizations and businesses, such as Jefferson County Head Start, Johnson Creek Food Pantry, Fort Health, Habitat for Humanity, and many emergency service agencies, including Flight for Life. The library had live music, inflatables for the kids, and free food for everyone!



Thanks to Bridges' financial support and participation in WiLS's Small Library Strategic Planning Cohort, the library's 2026-2030 Strategic Plan was approved in August.

Regular programs continued with a monthly PAWS and READ with a therapy dog, Family Fun, Legos, and the new Busy Fingers program which began in September. The library continued its weekly Storytime and Snack and Chat for 6-12 graders. Community outreach also continued with weekly visits to Crossroads Kid's Connection Daycare, Crossroads Annual Spring Carnival, Johnson Creek Elementary Literacy Night, Johnson Creek Middle School Family Night, Johnson Creek Schools Mental Health Awareness Night, and the community Nickel Night. New in 2025 was participation in the village's Independence Day Celebration and Holidays in the Creek.

Through a generous grant from Bridges Library System, the Johnson Creek Public Library updated its logo and purchased apparel for staff and swag to hand out to patrons.



L.D. Fargo Public Library (Lake Mills)

Lake Mills continues to work on expanding the library building with an addition to the North side of the existing library. The library heavily focused on capital fundraising and building design during 2025.

Throughout the year, the library continued to excel in children's programming opportunities with its annual Summer Reading Program as well as regular craft, Teen Theater, Toddler and Baby Story Time, Escape Rooms, Story Walks, and more.

Adult programming included two book club meetings per month, monthly textiles club, Memory Cafes for people with dementia, a jigsaw competition, local history, library open houses, bookmaking and other special events.

Physical circulation took a slight dip in 2025 compared to 2024 but electronic usage rises every year. The library had new 3D sensors installed at the entryways, enabling staff to keep accurate statistics on foot traffic.



Powers Memorial Library (Palmyra)

Powers Memorial Library is located in the village of Palmyra in the southeast corner of Jefferson County.

Powers Memorial Library continued to be a hub for the community in 2025. The library and staff participated in community outreach programs and also provided exceptional patron services.



Powers Memorial Library continued to upgrade its collection of materials for reading, viewing, and listening as well as its Library of Things. The library also offered an extensive array of programming for patrons of all ages. The library continued to supply experience passes for free entry into the Milwaukee County Zoo and 12 Wisconsin historical sites. In 2025, the library added the Horwitz-Deremer Planetarium pass as well as Wisconsin park day passes.

Through the efforts of the library director and many community members, Palmyra became an Ice Age Trail Community. In the fall, a team of staff and patrons completed the Ice Age Trail Mammoth Challenge.

A perpetual book sale through the Friends of the Library was established for the first time in 2025. A local artist painted a mural in the entrance to the children's library, making it more inviting.

The Summer Reading Program continued to be a big hit in the community topped off by Family Fun Day in mid-August. In the winter, Powers Memorial Library hosted two hygge events with music, food, self-care and camaraderie.

2025 was also a year of cultural exchange at Powers Memorial Library. The library invited foreign exchange students to present highlights of life in their home countries. The library also had a presentation from an American exchange host family who traveled to Turkey and Malaysia.



Karl Junginger Memorial Library (Waterloo)



The Karl Junginger Memorial Library, located in Waterloo in the northwestern region of Jefferson County, experienced a strong year of growth and community engagement in 2025. Physical circulation increased by 7.7% compared to 2024, reflecting continued community use and interest in library resources.

With the support of a grant from the Bridges Library System, the library partnered with WiLS to develop a new strategic plan covering 2026-2030. This plan will guide the library's priorities and services in the coming years.

In collaboration with the Bridges Library System, the system libraries implemented an upgraded library catalog interface for library users. The new system features a simplified, user-friendly design, improved search capabilities that combine formats and editions, enhanced discovery tools for related materials, and mobile-friendly access for users on any device.

Programming remained a key strength in 2025. The library is grateful to the Bridges Library System for its continued support during the summer months, which made it possible to offer three paid children's performances—including a highly popular magician—along with a young adult program where participants learned professional cookie decorating techniques. In addition, grant funding supported a variety of adult programs, including well-attended events such as Yoga on the Lawn and a beginner sourdough class.



Community partnerships also expanded, highlighted by the launch of "Bingo 4 Books" in collaboration with local first responders. This event drew strong participation and fostered meaningful connections with the Waterloo Fire and Rescue Department and the Waterloo Police Department.

Overall, 2025 was a year of growth, innovation, and strengthened community relationships for the Karl Junginger Memorial Library.



Watertown Public Library

Watertown Public Library, located on the northern border of Jefferson County, was pleased to serve residents with a variety of essential services and innovative programs.

In 2025, Watertown Public Library had 174,664 total visits, averaging 495 visitors each day, and checked out 274,944 physical materials. Through the Libby and Hoopla apps, Watertown checked out 60,386 digital materials. In total, Watertown Public Library had 13,288 registered cardholders in 2025 and created 1,490 new library cards. Meeting the technology needs of patrons, Watertown Public Library saw 62,000 wireless uses and 1,310 mobile print users.



Watertown Public Library offered 601 programs for children, teens, and adults in 2025. Program highlights included a storytime with Watertown Fire and EMS, the second annual (and very successful) WPL Film Festival, and a special spring storytime featuring a lamb from Jelli's market.



The staff at Watertown Public Library continue to take pride in their beautiful library and explore new ways to better serve their community.

A special spring storytime visitor from Jelli's Market. We all know that "Ewe belong at the library! Baaa."



Whitewater Public Library

The Whitewater Public Library completed a 13-month building expansion and renovation project and fully reopened to the public on Monday, December 8, 2025. The expansion added an additional 4,400 square feet to the library. The new spaces

include three additional study rooms, two of which are equipped with HDMI TVs, an expanded Makerspace, a new Teen Area, an expanded Children's Area, meeting rooms equipped with upgraded AV, a full kitchen, and a hearing loop. A grand opening event took place on February 6, 2026 with over 200 people in attendance.



In addition to the new space, the library also changed its name from Irvin L. Young Memorial Library to Whitewater Public Library and adopted a new logo. The existing library building that was built in 1990 has been named the Irvin L. Young Memorial Wing.

The library received a grant from the Bridges Library System to help fund the state-of-the-art hearing loop that was installed in the meeting rooms in the new addition.

The library was awarded a Whitewater Community Foundation Community Action Grant of \$4,500 for a bilingual AWE Literacy Station. AWE Learning provides literacy-focused digital learning solutions for early learners in public libraries. The library now has two literacy stations.

The library renewed and revitalized the Friends of the Whitewater Public Library, which was one of the 2025 strategic goals. The Friends have a bookshop located just inside the library's entrance.

Sarah French was accepted as an ambassador in the Library Makers Ambassador program. The goal for each Library Makers Ambassador is to provide support for the outreach and programming efforts of the Library Makers community by promoting the platform in their personal networks and helping create content and facilitate programs for their members.

Sarah French was promoted to Assistant Library Director in June. She worked as the Programming & Makerspace Librarian for over three years. She graduated with a Master of Library & Information Science degree from UW-Milwaukee in 2024 and has worked in public libraries since 2017.

Hunter Swanson was hired as the new Programming & Makerspace Librarian and began his duties in September of 2025. Hunter graduated from UW-Milwaukee with a Master of Library and Information Science degree in 2022 and spent two years as a Young Adult Librarian in North Lake, WI. During his time there, he fell in love with his work in the Library's Makerspace.