

# Bridges Library System Staff Reports

## November 2025

### Brittany Larson – Library System Director

**2025 Evaluations:** I had a second round of 1:1 meetings with Bridges Staff in mid-October. I am working on writing staff evaluations now and they will be scheduled with staff in early December.

**Bridges Staff In-Service:** The Bridges staff in-service is scheduled for November 20<sup>th</sup>. It will be an all-day meeting, off-site for all or part of the day, and staff will be unavailable except for emergencies. With two new team members (Kelly and myself) it will be a good opportunity to do team exploration and future casting into 2026!

**Materials Purchasing:** With the closure of Baker and Taylor, libraries are exploring other solutions. Kelly put together a document with other vendors and their contact information and I arranged for a vendor webinar with Ingram, a contemporary of Baker and Taylor.

**Professional Development:** I attended the Wisconsin Library Association (WLA) conference at the end of October. I focused on sessions related to library standards, policy, staff and workflow management, and intellectual freedom. I also am ending my 3-year volunteer commitment to WLA this year with the Outreach Services Roundtable. I ended my term by presenting to library staff from across the state on the topic of intellectual property and library programming.

**9-Month Budget Status Report:** I worked with the Bridges staff and Waukesha County budget analyst Josh Selige to assess where we are at budget wise at the 9-month mark, and to make projections for the year end. We are projected to end on a favorable note despite the unbudgeted retirement payouts.

**Library Visits:** I met with the Carroll University Library Director and toured the library on November 11<sup>th</sup>.

**Waukesha County Act 150 Committee:** The fourth Waukesha County Act 150 Committee met on November 4<sup>th</sup>. The main topics discussed included the County distribution formula and the minimum to exempt standards. The next meeting is December 9<sup>th</sup>. I am working on crafting the narrative draft.

**Save the Date:** February 10<sup>th</sup> is Library Legislative Day in Madison!

### Mellanie Mercier – Automation Coordinator & Assistant Director

**Wide Area Network:** We are in the process of upgrading the Wide Area Network bandwidth from 1 GB to 2 GB, the upgrade may be done by the end of the year. 2025 was the year to replace routers in the Waukesha County libraries. I have met with Taylor Computers who manage the routers and we are going to redesign the network to make it less complex, something that has been talked about for the last few years. The first step of this process is to work on the firewall at the headend site (Waukesha PL) and then test with a library after removing the router at the headend using the firewall instead. This will result in an outage of 2-4 hours, and we will do it sometime in December in the morning to limit downtime. If the test is successful, we will then start working on the individual library side. Many libraries now have their own firewall and we are going to use those firewalls to connect libraries to the network. If a firewall is maintained by an entity other than Taylor Computers, we will work with that library's provider (company

or municipality) to complete the necessary work. If a library does not have a firewall we will continue to purchase a router, and those will be installed in 2026. Currently we have been purchasing Cisco equipment and the entire network had to be Cisco equipment. By taking the router out at the headend and connecting through that firewall, we will have flexibility to purchase routers by other companies – which could result in cost savings. Once this is complete for the Waukesha County libraries, we can start connecting those libraries in Jefferson County with firewalls, and then replace any routers when their life cycle is at an end in 3-4 years from now. By using existing firewalls, the network will become less complex, a little faster with one less hoop to go through, and less expensive to maintain as 23 routers will no longer need to be purchased. In 2026 we will also request bandwidth increases at libraries, with no extra cost to the libraries.

**Internet Librarian Conference:** Last month I attended the virtual Internet Librarian Conference. There were many sessions on AI, and two presenters mentioned that AI wants you to love it, so it won't correct you, so you will feed it more data. David Lee King of the Topeka Shawnee Library gave a session on AI policies and if libraries need to have one - not all libraries will need one. There was also a good session on building a virtual makerspace with virtual STEAM sites with video lessons for remote users, check out Prairie Stem at <https://prairiestem.org/virtual-steam/> for grade level STEM lessons.

## Kelly Nelson – Coordinator of Library Development

**Library Visits:** I visited four Waukesha County Libraries in October: Big Bend, Butler, Mukwonago, & New Berlin. It was great visiting library staff and learning a little more about each library and their needs.

**Acquisitions Visits:** In my previous role at the Pewaukee Public Library, I set up the use of the Polaris acquisitions module. Because of that previous knowledge, Beth invited me to join her as she visited Mukwonago and Sussex to get them started with acquisitions and answer questions.

**SEWI Libraries CCBC Event:** The Children's Cooperative Book Center (CCBC) visited the New Berlin Public Library and brought with them many great new books for children and teens. Librarians were able to look through the books and listen to book talks from CCBC staff. 40 library staff members from around the SEWI attended this annual event.

**SEWI Libraries Email Marketing Webinar:** Deb Maret, Public Information Coordinator with the Milwaukee County Federated Library System presented a very practical webinar on email marketing. She gave tips for formatting, frequency, reaching your audience, and finished by critiquing examples sent in by participants.

**Bridges Friends Coffee & Chat:** During National Friends of the Library Week, October 19-25, we hosted a Friends Coffee & Chat at the Delafield Public Library. Library directors and friends members were encouraged to attend. We had a lively group of 31 people who jumped right into discussing recruitment, how their groups are run, and many other topics.



*Library staff from around the southeastern Wisconsin region learn about great new books for children and teens from CCBC staff.*

**WI Libraries Buildings & Spaces Project, Space to Grow Webinar:** The Wisconsin Libraries Buildings & Spaces Project is active again after a brief break. We held a webinar to cover the revised Space Planning Outline and give examples of how this guide can be used.

### Upcoming Events

- **Bridges Adult Services Meeting, November 5** – Oconomowoc Public Library
- **SEWI Libraries - Sustainably Grow Your Summer Reading Program for Youth and Adults, November 17** – Brookfield Public Library

### Professional Development

- I attended the Wisconsin Library Association Annual Conference and attended several valuable sessions that may be beneficial to bring to the SEWI and Bridges library staff at future events.

## Angela Meyers – Coordinator of Youth and Inclusive Services



Library staff and partner organizations gather for the Library Memory Project Symposium in Johnson Creek

### Inclusive Services

The Library Memory Project hosted its third symposium—a half-day of learning and networking for library staff and partner organizations—at the Johnson Creek Community Center. The event drew 23 participants, including staff from 16 libraries, the Alzheimer’s Association, and the Aging and Disability Resource Centers of Jefferson and Waukesha counties.

Nineteen library staff representing 13 member libraries attended an Inclusive Services Meeting at the Jefferson Public Library.

I was invited to be a guest speaker at Carroll University’s Grant Writing course for undergraduate students. I spoke about my years of experience writing grants and how one opportunity can lead to another.

### Youth Services

Seven library staff gathered for a Youth Services Meeting held at the Hartland Public Library.

Youth services staff from member libraries visited the Community Space in Whitewater to select gently used books for their shelves and for incentives in programs like Winter Reading and 1,000 Books Before Kindergarten, resulting in 650+ books being repurposed across libraries.

### Professional Development

In October, I presented on the Library Memory Project with Jennie Fidler from the Oconomowoc Public Library at the Association of Bookmobiles and Outreach Services conference in St. Louis, MO, and I also attended the Wisconsin Library Association annual conference in Middleton, WI. I also participated in a Wisconsin ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act) Coordinators Association webinar titled “Building

Strong Community Relations” and a Wisconsin Dementia Resource Network webinar titled “Giving Voice Network.”

## **Beth Bechtel – Database Management Librarian**

**Meetings & Library Visits:** When the CAFE Catalogers group met on October 21 in Jefferson, discussion topics included statistical codes for nonfiction picture books, call number standardization within each library, cataloging books for book clubs, Vega Discover, and the election of officers for 2026.

Kelly Nelson and I had meetings at both Mukwonago Community Library and Pauline Haass Public Library in Sussex to help staff at those libraries set up the Polaris acquisitions module. Both Mukwonago and Sussex will practice using the module this fall, and then fully place orders and track funds with it starting January 2026.

I coordinated a meeting of existing and new Polaris acquisition module users. We met at Waukesha Public Library and discussed unfilled orders from Baker & Taylor, ordering instead from Ingram, planning for end-of-year budget expenditure, and rolling over funds at the fiscal year end. The group will meet again in the late winter or spring.

In the last month, I had virtual consultations with catalogers from Pewaukee, Fort Atkinson, and Waterloo libraries.

I attended the Statewide ILS Admin meeting virtual meeting. Main topics of discussion were the state annual report, sharing of ideas for training library staff to use ILS software, and presentation of a summary of database maintenance tasks performed by Wisconsin library systems and libraries.

**CAFÉ Projects:** This month I prepared bib records in the catalog for next year’s magazines with the most items in the most libraries. Duplicating these bib records each year keeps the number of items on each title manageable for catalog users.

**Conferences:** At the Wisconsin Library Association Conference in Middleton, I attended interesting sessions including “Indigenous Collection Stewardship for Libraries: Discovery to Repatriation,” “Cultural Connections and Digital Collections: Engaging Patrons with Local History,” and “Behind the Scenes, Front of Mind: Crafting Your Technical Services Elevator Speech.” As always, the conference was a useful way to connect and share ideas with peers from around the state.

The Wisconsin Illinois Innovative Users Group (WILIUG) hosted a free day-long online conference on October 24. I attended the business meeting, “Vega panel,” and “Polaris ILS Forum” sessions. It was great to hear about forthcoming software changes that will make our new Vega Discover public catalog even better. One of these will be the ability for catalogers to create more formats so catalog users can better differentiate between formats, such as print books and graphic novels. Also, forthcoming is a Discover account management page for patrons to use.

## **Emily Heller – Public Communications Coordinator**

**Thankful For Our Library Patrons:** We received tremendous support from our library patrons this summer during the statewide "Speak Up for Libraries" advocacy and postcard campaign. Rather than our usual "Why Are You Thankful for Your Library?" campaign, we wanted to express our gratitude with Thank You Bookmarks!

We provided the member libraries with five colorful designs to share with their patrons and supporters this month. The back side has a message of thanks that reads: "We appreciate the support of our patrons. Thank you for being part of our story!"

[Check out Bridges Facebook Thank You Reel](#)



**Advertising:** The systemwide YouTube "Expect the Unexpected" pilot campaign is now about halfway through the campaign. The impressions are looking good so far, and it has 49.98% engagement/view rate! View rates vary, but the overall average is 29.24% to 31.9%.

| 6-Days   | 43-Days   |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Encountered 2,074 times</li> </ul>                          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Encountered 25,225 times</li> </ul>                          |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Engaged with or seen in its entirety 1,052 times</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Engaged with or seen in its entirety 12,607 times</li> </ul> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Clicked on 16 times</li> </ul>                              | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Clicked on 174 times</li> </ul>                              |

### Professional Development

- October 27: ADA Website Accessibility Compliance**  
 This webinar by Mugo Web was very helpful for showcasing the first steps to take to improve website accessibility. I was able to share the recording and resources with member libraries, too.
- November 5: Adobe Creative Co-Lab Workshop with Waukesha County**  
 This was a fantastic in-person training with an Adobe Public Sector Team representative. He showed us all the newest features in Firefly, Photoshop, Express, Premiere Pro, and Podcasts. He also went over many of the AI supported changes. I have a lot of new, cool things to share with library staff. I would also like to have him host a session for libraries.
- November 11-13: Library Marketing and Communications Conference (LMCC)**  
 I will be attending LMCC from Nov. 11-13 in St. Louis again this year. I am looking forward to sessions on Website ADA Compliance, Accessible Graphic Design, Messaging, Video Creation, Social Media Best Practices, and Promotion ideas.

### In the News:

- How the New Berlin Library is bringing neighbors together in unexpected ways: [TMJ4 News Story](#)
- New Berlin Public Library creates witty social media videos to promote collections, programming: [Milwaukee Journal Article](#)
- New Berlin Library goes viral with 'trust fall' video: [Waukesha Freeman Article](#)
- Watertown Public Library endowment assistance requested in latest budget saga: [Daily Times Article](#)

## [News Archives](#)

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

- Marketing Magic:
  - November 7: 52.38% Open Rate
  - October 24: 65.06% Open Rate
  - October 10: 68.67% Open Rate
- Monthly Bridges:
  - November 7: 49.42% Open Rate
  - October 3: 49.51% Open Rate
- Monthly Legislators:  
October 16:
  - Legislators: 16.67% Open Rate
  - Staff: 40.48% Open Rate