Bridges Library System Staff Reports
November 2026

Brittany Larson – Library System Director

2026 Evaluations: I am working on writing staff evaluations now and they will be scheduled with staff in early December.

Strategic Planning Update: Bridges Staff met with WiLS at the end of October to go through a SOAR (Strength, Opportunities, Aspirations, Results) discussion. On November 13th WiLS will facilitate a strategic planning discussion with member library directors. A member library survey was also distributed November 2nd, as well as a Jefferson County Library Services questionnaire in the weeks prior. We will soon be moving to the next phase, data theming and analysis.

Bridges Staff In-Service: The Bridges staff in-service will be scheduled for December. The goal is to schedule it after the majority of the strategic planning data is collected.

Professional Development: I attended the Wisconsin Library Association (WLA) conference at the end of October. I focused on sessions related to the new state library standards, policy, and library state budget advocacy. We also had a SRLAAW meeting where we discussed such topics as the resource library function and electronic materials affordability.

9-Month Budget Status Report: Waukesha County trained us on a new procedure for developing the 9-month budget status reports. I worked with the Bridges staff and Waukesha County budget analyst Josh Selje 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.

Library Visits: On November 4th I visited the Milwaukee County Federated Library System (MCFLS) to meet with their staff. On November 5th I attended a Jefferson County Library Services Board meeting at the Dwight Foster Public Library. I virtually attended and spoke at WLA's Intellectual Freedom Committee meeting on November 9th. On November 9th I attended the Alice Baker Memorial Library Board meeting. I will be visiting the Pewaukee Public Library Board meeting on November 18th.

Save the Date: February 9th is Library Legislative Day in Madison! Please consider attending to help advocate for public libraries and public library system funding.

Congratulations! Mellanie Mercier celebrated her 30th work anniversary with the library system this month! Thank you to Mellanie for her impressive years of dedication and support of libraries.

Kelly Nelson – Coordinator of Library Development

SEWI Libraries CCBC Presents – 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. 39 library staff members from around the SEWI region attended this annual event.



Staff from the SEWI Libraries Region learned about new and notable titles for children and teens from CCBC.



Friends members and library directors had lively group discussions about how to support their libraries.

Bridges Friends Coffee & Chat - **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 38 enthusiastic people in attendance with a wide variety of discussion topics.

Waukesha County Business Alliance, Meet New Mayors Event – I was able to attend a recent event from the Waukesha County Business Alliance featuring a discussion with the new mayors from Waukesha and Oconomowoc. It was a very interesting event and allowed me to touch base with local organizations and businesses and promote our libraries.

Statewide Learning Management System – I have been working with a small group of colleagues throughout the state since August to create a statewide Learning Management System. This project will bring together statewide web conferences and other virtual learning options onto one platform. It will allow learners to track what they've watched, making certification requirements simpler for library directors. This project is extensive, but we are excited about the outcome. We hope to unveil it to library staff in late January. More to come!

Professional Development

- **WLA Conference** – 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.
- **Timeslips** – I attended a recent training and became certified as a Timeslips facilitator. This is a training that can be used at our Memory Cafes and being certified will help provide support to those libraries where needed.

Upcoming 2026 Events

- 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

Work is underway on the *Serving Underserved Populations* grant through Bader Philanthropies, Inc. Jennifer Flamboe of Equalingua, LLC, and I met with a group of Spanish-speaking caregivers of people living with memory loss through the Hispanic Health Resource Center. We discussed caregivers' perceptions of and experiences using the public library, as well as the resources and support they are seeking in their caregiving roles. Additional input is being gathered through group interviews and surveys. Findings will help inform future library services, outreach, and resource development for families living with memory loss.



TimeSlips is a creative storytelling approach founded by Dr. Anne Basting of Milwaukee. The Library Memory Project was selected to receive no-cost facilitator training for up to 15 participants. The training was held at the Pewaukee Public Library, with 11 people participating. The techniques are grounded in "beautiful questions"—open-ended questions with no wrong answers—and can be used in brief, 30-second interactions or as group activities lasting 30–45 minutes.

I also facilitated a virtual Inclusive Services meeting in October, with nine attendees representing eight libraries.

Youth Services

The next Youth Services Meeting will be held Monday, November 16, from 1:30–3:00 p.m. A guest speaker from the Jefferson County Fair will discuss partnership opportunities and outreach. Please register through **Staff Resources/Calendar** on the Bridges website.

Summer Library Program performer scheduling is underway. I am approximately halfway through booking performers for member libraries. My goal is to have all 72 family programs and 24 teen/tween workshops scheduled by year-end.

Professional Development

In October, I attended the Wisconsin Library Association Annual Conference in Middleton. The conference provided valuable opportunities for professional learning, networking, and volunteer service as a room monitor for several sessions.

I also participated in the following webinars:

- *The Loneliness Epidemic: How to Be Intentional in Connecting Library Users* (LibraryWorks, Inc.)

- *Navigating Common Legal Issues for County Employees* (Waukesha County)
- *Effectively Measuring Outreach Impact* (Outreach Services Roundtable/Wisconsin Library Association)

Matthew Murphy – Database Management Librarian

Site Visits
In October, I continued 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 October 31, I have visited all member libraries except New Berlin, which will be visited on November 6. These visits have been very helpful for prioritizing member library needs and getting to know common concerns among member libraries.

System Meetings
I attended the APL meeting in Oconomowoc on October 16, and the Bridges Board Meeting at Brookfield on October 21. At these meetings, I introduced myself and talked about projects I am currently working on. On October 27, we held an in-person CAFÉ Cats meeting at Oconomowoc. At this meeting, we discussed custom TOMs, publications created with AI, and resuming the Acquisitions and Serials committee meetings.

Courses and Learning
On October 13 and 14, Mellanie and I attended a Polaris reports webinar hosted by Innovative. As a result of this webinar, Mellanie and I have set up a web-based reports interface that allows for more flexibility and serves as a parallel resource to the reports available in SimplyReports. On October 16 I attended a WILIUG seminar that went over best practices for implementing custom TOMs.

Cataloging Requests and Backlogs
I‘ve continued to work on Z records, bibliographic records with no items attached, and name/subject authorities. I have also continued providing original cataloging to member libraries as requested.

Training Sessions
On October 12, I visited Big Bend to conduct a training session for staff. In this session, I reviewed using Polaris Leap and the Polaris client for searching and extracting single records from OCLC for cataloging. I also reviewed using WebDewey for creating call numbers.

Polaris and Vega Enhancements
Work on custom TOMs continues, and Mellanie and I have continued to explore custom Vega interfaces for specific user groups or materials, such as a children’s catalog, and Spanish-language materials catalog, and a Library of Things catalog.

Emily Heller – Public Communications Coordinator

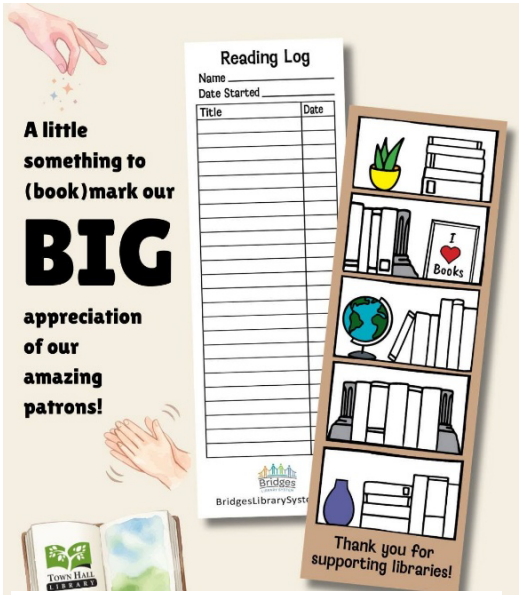
Thankful for our Library Patrons

We are thanking our library patrons again this year throughout November for being library supporters with Book Tracker bookmarks. Bridges provided member libraries with the bookmarks to use as thank you gifts at circulation desks, in holds, at programs, or for community partners.

The front says; "Thank you for supporting libraries." The back side has a reading log with space to track titles of books read.

Patrons are invited to pick up reading tracker bookmarks as a small thank-you for being part of our library story!

Bridges is also publishing thank you messages on social media throughout the month.



Town Hall Library's [Facebook post](#).

Library Access and Engagement Grant

We are thrilled to be able to offer member libraries funding to improve accessibility and encourage community engagement through marketing and outreach. This grant became available in the fourth quarter following the acceptance of WISE Grant funding from the State of Wisconsin for Bridges' digital accessibility initiatives. These funds may now be used to support accessibility, marketing, and outreach projects at member libraries.

The awarded grants will support ADA improvements, assistive technology and equipment, large-print materials, bilingual resources, and sensory-friendly features. They will also improve outreach and awareness with community display enhancements, advertising and promotional materials.

New Story Hike Added for Winter

We will be partnering with Retzer Nature Center again this winter for another Story Hike! It will begin with the City of Waukesha's Janboree event on January 22-31 through the end of February. It will feature local author, Peter Dargatz, and his new book, *Winter Friends,* published by Orange Hat publishers in Wauwatosa.

Advertising - AM 620 "What's on Tap" Radio Interview

The next Spotlight Interview with Sandy Maxx will be recorded with Melissa Anderson, Director of Jefferson Public Library on Monday, November 16. The edited interview will then air on the radio and YouTube on November 24.

Outreach
On October 29, Brittany and Mellanie attended the "Discover & Do Spectacular" event hosted by Waukesha County Health and Human Services at the Waukesha County Expo Center. The event brought local families together for a free evening of fun, entertainment, games, learning and connection to valuable community resources.

The event had 204 attendees. 100% of surveyed families said they had a spectacular time and 85% connected with a new helper, service or organization.



Mellanie at the Bridges booth during the Discover & Do event.

Professional Development
I attended the Wisconsin Library Association Annual Conference in Middleton from October 20-23. I attended sessions on the State Budget and Advocacy, Accessible Digital Documents, Outreach, Partnerships and Social Media Marketing. I was also able to volunteer as a Conference Ambassador and attend a tour of Raven Software.

360 Library Tours are Compliant
All member libraries using the hosted library 360 tours have all be transitioned to a fully ADA compliant tour platform by Midwest Pano. The new platform allows for screen readers to navigate the spaces.

In the News

- New Berlin Public Library's expansive Library of Things collection: CBS 58 interview
- Wisconsin library systems explore merger: Action News 2 News Story
- Public Library Association and Microsoft announce effort to build responsible AI skills through libraries: ALA News Blog

News Archives

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

- Marketing Magic:
  - Nov. 6: 59.04% Open Rate
  - Oct. 16: 61.45% Open Rate
  - Oct. 2: 62.65% Open Rate
- Monthly Bridges:
  - Nov.: To come
  - Oct. 5: 44.73% Open Rate
- Monthly Legislators:
  - October 27:
    Legislators – 27.78% Open Rate
    Staff – 33.33% Open Rate