

Bridges Library System Staff Reports

July 2026

Brittany Larson – Library System Director

2027 Budget: June and early July have been very busy. I am in the midst of finalizing the first draft of the 2027 Bridges budget, member library charges, county funding formulas for Waukesha and Jefferson County, and adjacent county reimbursements. I will then shift focus to the budget presentation portion of this process for both counties which will run from now through early Fall.

County Updates: I presented to the Finance and Executive Committees of Waukesha County to approve the acceptance of the federal LSTA Wisegrant (which the Bridges Board approved earlier this year). These dollars will help offset digital accessibility costs like our website redesign and accessibility updates to the member library virtual tours.

State Updates: It is time to start planning the next state biennial budget proposal for public library systems. I am working with other system directors to start this process alongside the 2027 budget planning process.

Consulting: I held 29 consulting appointments on library administration in the month of June.

Database Management Librarian Search: At the time of this report the search is ongoing.

Mellanie Mercier – Automation Coordinator & Assistant Director

Polaris upgrade: On Tuesday morning, August 25th, there will be an upgrade to the Polaris software. This will result in Café being down all morning. Some of the enhancements coming to the LEAP interface are: the ability to open multiple records in their own tabs, sorting by multiple columns on result screens, automatic patron aging (i.e. child to adult by birthdate), reason for canceled holds by staff, 4k BluRay type of material, the ability to create additional type of materials and find tool enhancements.

Kelly Nelson – Coordinator of Library Development

Library Visits – I visited the Pewaukee Library in June to share what I've been doing and ask about potential professional development needs.

Community Outreach – Angela and I staffed a table for Bridges at the United Way Read Under the Lights event at UW-Whitewater. This event was free for families to attend and offered free books, dinner, and story times. We chatted with attendees about our libraries and were encouraged to see such a great turnout supporting the love of reading.



Angela Meyers and Kelly Nelson staffing a booth representing Bridges at the United Way Reading Under the Lights event at UW-Whitewater.

Emily and I staffed the Bridges table at the Waukesha County Employee Health and Wellness Fair. We had the opportunity to chat with employees about our libraries and what they offer.

Collaborating for Community Success Webinar – I was scheduled to help a fellow continuing education colleague as a backup on a webinar about library and municipal partnerships. At the last minute, I ended up standing in for her as the host. I was happy to moderate this session and was encouraged to see a good number of participants with thoughtful questions.

Save the Date! Trustee Appreciation Event – It's never too early to put the Trustee Appreciation Event on your calendar! Please mark Tuesday, September 29, 6-8 pm at Retzer Nature Center. We'll serve refreshments and then watch a planetarium show!

Upcoming 2026 Events

- [SEWI Libraries Director Retreat](#) – Friday, August 7, 9 am – 4 pm, Franklin Public Library
- [Trustee Training Week](#) – Monday, August 10 – Thursday, August 13, Registration is now open for this free virtual conference. Register for each session individually. All sessions will be recorded.
 - [Wisconsin Library Law](#) – Monday, August 10, 12 - 1 pm, Presented by Kris Turner
 - [What You Need to Know about AI and Libraries](#) – Tuesday, August 11, 12 - 1 pm, Presented by Crystal Trice
 - [Board Documents 101](#) – Wednesday, August 12, 12 – 1 pm, Presented by Laura Meade
 - [All Playing in the Same Orchestra: Collaborating for Community Success](#) – Thursday, August 13, 12 – 1 pm, Presented by Kami Lynch and Teresa Schmidt

Professional Development

- Lead the Way Virtual Conference
- Designing Accessible Slide Decks (Webinar)
- Brief, But Descriptive Writing Effective Alt Text (Webinar)
- Beyond the Dewey: Nonfiction Readers' Advisory for Library Staff (Webinar)

Angela Meyers – Coordinator of Youth and Inclusive Services

Youth Services

Summer is the busiest season for libraries, and I have been visiting sites hosting Bridges sponsored summer performers. So far, I have attended Mark Hayward, the Yo-Yo Guy, in Whitewater; Dungeons & Dragons (D&D) in Eagle; and Boba Mixology in Delafield. Libraries are reporting strong attendance in the first weeks of summer, and patrons are enjoying the shows and workshops Bridges has booked.

Bridges Library System was also invited to host a table at Reading Under the Lights in Whitewater, a family event featuring free activities and reading stations on the football field at the University of Wisconsin–Whitewater. Kelly Nelson and I spoke with more than 130 attendees about library resources and their favorite books.



Participants pose with custom crafted boba drink

Inclusive Services

Alice Baker Memorial Library in Eagle held its annual *Hug a Horse Memory Café* at Horse Power Healing Center on June 16. More than 40 Library Memory Project participants attended, along with an ADRC Dementia Care Specialist from Waukesha County. The event provided a valuable opportunity for connection with animals, nature, and each other.

Professional Development

I completed the final workshops in Waukesha County's Standards of Service Excellence (SOSE) program, including Mastering the Work & Home Juggle, Rolling with Change in the Workplace, and 12 Strategies for Dealing with Difficult People.



Participant greets a donkey at the Hug a Horse Memory Café

Emily Heller – Public Communications Coordinator

Tracks in the Stacks Bigfoot Hunt

We have tallied over 1,330 interactions in June so far for people participating in the Bigfoot Hunt. We look forward to more hunters in July!

Delafield Public Library shared this from a patron:

"Every summer we participate in the Bridges challenge that takes us to all the libraries in the area and that is always a highlight for my kids they look forward to it every year getting to explore all the different libraries."

- Krista H.

New Berlin Public Library staff shared this:

"We featured our "Library of Things" collection and within an hour of creating the display, 7 of those items were checked out. We currently have 137 raffle entries. Patrons are delighted to learn about/see all the "Library Things" we have to offer!"



Muskego Public Library's Bigfoot display.

Outreach

Kelly, Mellanie and I staffed our table in shifts at the Waukesha County Employee Wellness Fair on June 25. We shared information on the many services libraries provide with a special focus on 1 card, 24 locations, Libby app, and the Consumer Reports database.

Our pickle-shaped and vintage catalog card-shaped *Jinkies* glasses cloths were the most popular giveaway items. The County reported that were 190 employees in attendance this year that turned in their prize form.



Statewide Marketing Cohort

We group designed some additional stickers to help promote Library Card Sign-up Month in September. Bridges and Milwaukee will do a joint order later this month to reduce the cost of the stickers.



In the news:

- How to stay cool in extreme heat: [Waukesha Freeman Article](#)
- What's on Tap Interview with Brookfield Public Library: [Spotlight Interview with Sandy Maxx](#)
- Hunt for Bigfoot with Bridges Library System: [Waukesha Freeman Article](#)

[News Archives](#)

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

- Marketing Magic:
 - June 26: 59.76% Open Rate
 - June 5: 51.22% Open Rate
 - May 15: 61.45% Open Rate
- Monthly Bridges:
 - June 5: 49.86% Open Rate
 - May 15: 44.42% Open Rate
- Monthly Legislators:
 - June: Legislators – 16.67% Open Rate / Staff – 33.33% Open Rate
 - May: Legislators – 27.78% Open Rate / Staff - 38.89% Open Rate