

Bridges Library System Staff Reports

October 2025

Brittany Larson – Library System Director

2025 Jefferson County Library Budget: I presented the budget to the Jefferson County Finance Committee on Wednesday, September 17th. It went well, and there were many Bridges directors and trustees in attendance to help support the request and share amazing things libraries are doing.

County Library Tax Exemptions: Documentation on municipal exemptions for all Waukesha County municipalities with a library was provided to the County. 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 2026 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 a training held by Waukesha County on how to do evaluations with the new software system Workday. I also attended a webinar on Collection Management Self Censorship.

Library Visits: I visited the Menomonee Falls Public Library on September 24th and met with the director and representatives from the DPI's Bureau of Libraries. I visited the Waukesha Public Library and met with the director to talk about resource library services. I visited the Muskego Public Library to attend their ribbon cutting ceremony for their new Job Pod space.

Waukesha County Act 150 Committee: The second Waukesha County Act 150 Committee met on October 14th. The main topics discussed included the County collection and distribution formulas and the minimum to exempt standards, along with the Library Services Effort Ratio.

Mellanie Mercier – Automation Coordinator & Assistant Director

Increase bandwidth on Wide Area Network: We have requested, from TEACH Wisconsin, additional bandwidth for the Wide Area Network. This increase will double our bandwidth from 1GB to 2GB.

Wiscnet miniconnections conference: On October 1st I attended the Wiscnet miniconnections conference at Retzer Nature Center. During the afternoon session Wiscnet demonstrated an AI tabletop exercise that they have created for Cybersecurity attacks. This exercise allowed users to simulate the response to a cybersecurity attack without having to have one. The exercise also allowed for random responses from the attacker and you could work through your response. In the end you could ask AI what you could do better and get a summary of how you responded.

AI Made Simple webinar: On October 7th I attended a webinar on AI Made Simple with David Lee King from the Topeka Shawnee County Public Library. David went over how AI is being used in everyday life, AI tools that libraries can use and AI policy. Of note was a program that the Palo Alto Library (California) has done on AI Storytelling, you can see more about the project and how the tools have evolved in the finished product from 2023 to 2025 at <https://library.cityofpaloalto.org/blogs/post/ai-storytelling-2-0-reimagining-creativity-in-2025/>. David also highlighted the AI policy of the Galena Public Library District, their policy can be found at <https://galenalibrary.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/08/AI-Policy-1.pdf>

Kelly Nelson – Coordinator of Library Development

Library Visits: I visited the Muskego and Brookfield Public Libraries to introduce myself, share my role with Bridges, SEWI Libraries, and the state, and learn more about their needs.

SEWI Libraries System Director Meeting Visits: I had the opportunity to visit Prairie Lakes and Milwaukee County Library Systems' during their September director meetings. I introduced myself, shared my role and upcoming SEWI Libraries events, and encouraged them to reach out with any professional development needs and ideas.

SEWI Book Repair Workshop: Two book repair workshops were held on September 23 at the Wauwatosa Public Library. These workshops were led by Kary Barth, an independent consultant. In addition to her instructional workshop, attendees got a chance to view the Cover One book repair machine that was recently acquired by the Wauwatosa Public Library. Attendees left with valuable tips for repairing and extending the life of their collections.



Library staff from the Southeastern Wisconsin region gathered at the Wauwatosa Library to learn tips for extending the life of their collection.

SEWI Adult Public Programming

Meetup: A bi-annual meetup, library staff gathered at the Burlington Public Library to share programming ideas for adults. We had a great discussion and participants walked away with ideas for future events.

Bridges Trustee Appreciation Event: Our annual Trustee Appreciation Event was held on September 30 at the Johnson Creek Community Center. A special thanks to Betsy Bleck, Deputy Director of the Brookfield Public Library, our speaker for the evening, who inspired us to advocate for our libraries in a variety of ways. Hopefully, you get a chance to view the slideshow filled with photos of library events from around the system. The video can be found on the Bridges Library System YouTube page.

Upcoming Events

- **SEWI CCBC Presents: Great New for Children and Teens, October 21st** – Two workshops presented by the Children's Cooperative Book Center to highlight upcoming books for children and teens.

Professional Development

- **Horror Reader's Advisory Webinar** – Presented by Becky Spratford for the South Central Library System
- **Tech Days Webinars** – I attended several Wisconsin Tech Days webinars, all on the topic of Artificial Intelligence.

Photo to insert by the book repair workshop section...Library staff from the Southeastern Wisconsin region gathered at the Wauwatosa Library to learn tips for extending the life of their collection.

Angela Meyers – Coordinator of Youth and Inclusive Services

Inclusive Services

I coordinated the 6th annual Fall Family Day for the Library Memory Project on Sunday, September 28th, at Retzer Nature Center in Waukesha. The Hispanic Health Resource Center, a previous partner for the Hug a Horse memory café, sent invitations to their memory café attendees. The event was bilingual, offered in both English and Spanish, and attracted 95 participants. It featured live music, bingo with prizes, planetarium shows, and an educational program on fall trees, seeds, and leaves.



A family of 10 gather for Fall Family Day at Retzer Nature Center

Youth Services



Library staff participated in a live American Sign Language workshop

Fifteen library staff from 12 libraries participated in a virtual workshop titled "Little Hands Signing," conducted by American Sign Language interpreter and educator Kathy MacMiller. The recording will be available for three months, and each member library can submit a 10-minute video of their use of ASL for Kathy to provide feedback.

Nine library libraries joined a virtual Teen Think Tank meeting to discuss summer

reading programs, techniques for engaging teens, teen advisory boards, and various programs. Maura Flanagan presented her well-received teen volunteer program from the Pauline Haass Public Library.

Public library and school staff gathered at Oconomowoc Public Library for the annual School and Public Library Partnership Meeting. Michele Gagner from Waukesha Public Library shared strategies for collaborating with schools. The meeting included discussions on various partnership ideas, such as offering Kids' Choice Awards.

Beth Bechtel – Database Management Librarian

Library Visits and Meetings: This month, I had initial consultations with new catalogers at the libraries in Sussex and Fort Atkinson. I also had a virtual consultation with a Mukwonago cataloger about book club books and provided a demonstration on cataloging with Leap to staff members at Brookfield Public Library.

Catalog Updates and Maintenance: I completed the months-long project of removing all the OverDrive titles and items from the CAFÉ catalog. The new Discover catalog automatically connects to our OverDrive titles, so bibliographic records for each OverDrive offering no longer need to be managed within the CAFÉ catalog.

Emily Heller – Public Communications Coordinator

Kids' Choice Award

I updated the 2025-2026 [Kids' Choice Award](#) posters, flyers, bookmarks, stickers and marketing materials for Angela and created Book Talk Videos for each title to help promote them to area students. Watch the videos: <https://bridgeslibrarysystem.org/booktalks>

Outreach

On Saturday, September 20th, I attended Apple Harvest Festival at Retzer Nature Center. Our outreach booth in "The Pines" activity area was very successful.

Attendees had fun with our "Fill Our Bookshelf" activity by sharing their favorite book or designing their own. It was a great way to ask people about the books they like and how they use their libraries. We counted 715 interactions with people at our booth. (There may have been more, but it got busy a few times and we lost count.)



Our Fall Story Hike partnership continues through October 31st! Hikers are reading *Fungi Grow* by Maria Gianferrari, with illustrations by Diana Sudyka, on the Orange trail at Retzer Nature Center!

Consulting

On Monday, September 22nd, I held an in-person Marketing Meetup at Waukesha Public Library. There were 20 attendees from 15 libraries. We broke into small groups and had successful social media content brainstorming sessions which resulted in a shared spreadsheet of ideas for all to use.

Advertising

The systemwide YouTube “Expect the Unexpected” pilot campaign is running and we had good results in the first 6 days of the run. We are expecting 33,000+ total views during campaign, running through December 31, 2025. So far it has been:

- Encountered 2,074 times
- Engaged with or seen in its entirety 1,052 times
- Clicked on 16 times

View the ad here: <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1zGPYAUUPWJ8ke1lRnrJpwG0YhZPc4k3M/view>

If this pilot is successful, my aim is to run a series of library services ads to use in 2026 on YouTube and social media channels.

In the News:

- New Berlin Public Library’s viral trust fall reel: Watch on [Facebook](#) or [Instagram](#)
- Waukesha Reads returns in October with ‘The Seed Keeper’: [Waukesha Freeman Article](#)
- Library learning at Dwight Foster Public Library: [Daily Jefferson County Union Photo](#)
- Apple Harvest Festival draws big crowd to Retzer Nature Center: [Waukesha Freeman Article](#)
- Waukesha Public Library celebrates 20 years of public art with special reception: [Waukesha Freeman Article](#)

[News Archives](#)

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

- Marketing Magic:
 - September 26: 60.24% Open Rate
 - September 12: 62.65% Open Rate
 - August 22: 67.47% Open Rate
- Monthly Bridges:
 - October 3: 47.37% Open Rate
 - September 18: 49.6% Open Rate
 - August 21: 47.94% Open Rate
- Monthly Legislators – ‘Back to School’ Edition
 - Legislators: 44.44% Open Rate
 - Staff: 39.02% Open Rate