

Bridges Library System Staff Reports

April 2025

Karol Kennedy – Library System Director

Joint Finance Committee Hearing: Approximately 20 representatives from southeastern Wisconsin libraries and systems came out to support state library system aid at the Joint Finance Committee hearing at State Fair Park on April 4th. Special thanks go to Abby Armour, Bruce Gay, and Nick Dimassis who spoke at the hearing.

IMLS: An executive order was signed on March 14th to, “reduce the performance of Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) statutory functions and associated personnel to the minimum presence and function required by law.” On March 31st, all IMLS employees were placed on administrative leave, with access to their work systems blocked. The IMLS is the federal agency that provides Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA) Grants to States funding. To read more about what’s at stake for Wisconsin libraries and what you can do to help, please visit mywisconsinlibrary.org.

System Director Search: The Search Committee has been busy with the interview process in March and April. Nicole and I assisted the committee with posting meetings and handling arrangements. We anticipate the board will review the committee’s recommendation at the April meeting.

Coordinator of Library Development Transition: We said farewell to Laurie Freund after 36 years of service to Waukesha County Federated and Bridges Library Systems. She had an amazing career, and we wish her all the best in retirement! We were happy to welcome Kelly Nelson to our team to fill this position. Fortunately, Kelly and Laurie had a few days together before Laurie’s departure. Kelly’s onboarding will continue over the coming weeks, but she is off to a great start!

Continuing Education: WLA held their inaugural WLA on the Road event at WCTC. Sue Gresham (The LinkedIn Lady) presented her program *Secrets for Making the Most Out of LinkedIn*. We also had a tour of the impressive WCTC library. I have also participated in many Workday webinars in preparation for the April 19th Waukesha County launch.

Mellanie Mercier – Automation Coordinator & Assistant Director

Library Improvement and Innovation Grants: This year Bridges received 16 grant proposals for Library Improvement and Innovation Grant for 2 awards per category sizes of up to \$5,000 each offered by the system. There were 6 applications for the large, 5 for the medium and 5 for the small population size categories. Information identifying the libraries was blacked out and given to 6 library professionals to evaluate and score, with 2 reviewers per size category. The reviewers did not review proposals for the population size that they had previously worked in.

We thank all libraries that took the time and effort to submit a proposal as they made it hard for the reviewers to select those being funded.

We are pleased to announce the six grantees and their projects:

Small Library: Karl Junginger Memorial Library “Technology-based new accessible door locks for the community room and staff doors”

Installation of a keyless locking system on both the community room and staff entrances.

Small Library: Town Hall Public Library “Makerspace Equipment Enhancement”

Upgrading 3D printers and installing a presentation screen.

Medium Library: Irvin L Young Library “Hearing Loop Installation”

Install hearing loops in the library's large meeting room in order to increase accessibility for people in our community who are experiencing hearing loss.

Medium Library: Pauline Haass Public Library “Shhhh!... Or Don't! Crafting Study Rooms for a Wide Range of User Needs”

Purchase and install sound absorbing panels in our study rooms, providing a better experience for the many patrons who utilize these spaces.

Large Library: Pewaukee Public Library “Enhancing Library Cleanliness and Efficiency with an AI-Powered Robotic Vacuum named Rosie”

Purchase Rosie, an AI-powered, commercial-grade robotic vacuum by Tailos. Rosie will not only enhance the cleanliness of our library spaces but will also transform our cleaning processes. Ultimately, this innovation has the potential to yield significant cost savings over time by streamlining our cleaning operations.

Large Library: Waukesha Public Library “Early Literacy Outreach Initiative”

The Early Literacy Outreach Initiative seeks to reduce barriers to accessing early literacy programs by partnering with laundromats. This project seeks to serve families with children ages 0-5 who experience barriers visiting the library. The library will distribute free books and promote 1,000 Books Before Kindergarten to laundromats in order to increase access to early literacy resources to families with limited time and financial resources.

Other projects that were submitted were:

- Everbright wall
- CoLab: Reservable space for 1 to 6 people, modernized space with a high-tech screen, powered furnishings, and a comfortable setting
- Wonderbooks collection
- Accessibility for Summer Outdoor Storytimes
- Creating a Community Garden and a More Sustainable Library
- Mobile Outreach
- Expanding Resources for Patrons with Low Vision, Vision Loss, and Color Blindness
- Digital Display and Programming to Go
- New Logo, Merchandise, and Outreach Bags

- Tech Education

IUG: Last month I attended the Innovative Interfaces User Group meeting in Denver. As we are implementing Vega, I attended many sessions on Vega Discover as well as LX Starter. Near the end of this year, they will be releasing analytics for the Vega Discover catalog as well as a new module for library fundraising, which will also include having a dropship storefront. Pricing on the fundraising module is not decided yet, but they will be offering it at cost (the third-party e-commerce part) so that libraries would receive the majority of the funds.

Systemwide calendar: Last year most of our libraries moved over to Library Calendar with the vision to be able to bring all of the calendars together for the public to explore events in one place throughout the system. In order to make this possible we needed to be able to bring utilize the RSS feeds of the calendars. We have been working with Waukesha County IT to make this happen, but they are busy implementing Workday as well as a new website. I reached out to Jim Novy at the Prairie Lakes Library system and the next morning he had created a site that brought together all of the events for the next two weeks for all of our libraries. We are currently working on tightening up the terminology that the libraires are using so it is less confusing for the public. You can take a look at the “first draft” at <https://www.lakeshores.lib.wi.us/test/testbridgescalendar.php>. When you use the filter boxes, you can click on multiple libraries, events, age groups to search multiple selections (i.e. all the libraries that you are interested in).

Angela Meyers – Coordinator of Youth and Inclusive Services

Youth Services: Six libraries participated in the Teen Think Tank meeting on March 18th at the L.D. Fargo Public Library in Lake Mills. Brianna, Lake Mills’ teen services librarian, talked about the success of her second annual teen theater program. We are also gearing up for some exciting plans for this summer’s library programs.

Inclusive Services: I collaborated with the Aging and Disability Resource Center and Drea Douglas from the North Bend Public Library (OR) for a webinar titled "Coffee and Conversation: Libraries Building Communities through Memory Cafes." It drew in 13 librarians and staff from the Aging and Disability Resource Centers around Wisconsin, and 27 others signed up for the recording.

April 6th was a fun day for families at the Spring Family Day offered by the Library Memory Project at Dwight Foster Public Library in Fort Atkinson. We had 22 people enjoying art, live music, therapy dogs, bingo with prizes, and more. It was a fantastic way to connect with our community!



Spring Family Day included a visit from therapy dogs, including Rylee as pictured on an attendee's lap

Professional Development: WLA on the Road with Sue Gresham, “The LinkedIn Lady,” offered some fantastic networking tips and included a tour of the WCTC campus library; PDF Accessibility 101: Making your documents more inclusive (SCLS); Introduction to Lean: Continuous Improvement Principles (Waukesha County); and the Symposium on Aging at St. John’s on the Lake.

Beth Bechtel – Database Management Librarian

Library Visits and Meetings: At the recent CAFÉ Cats virtual meetup, discussion included procedures for adding ISBNs to serial bibliographic records, incorrect repeated ISBN use in OCLC bib records, when to look for a serial bib record instead of a monograph record, and the planned Polaris upgrade.

Town Hall Library plans to add CAFÉ collection codes to their item records to provide patrons with another access point to their materials. This month I visited that library to work with the cataloger to plan and start this project.

Catalog Maintenance: Tonies and Yotos are two different brands of screen-free audio players for children. Tonie figurines need a Toniebox to play their audio content; Yoto cards are played with a Yoto player. These newer audio formats have gone from novelty educational toys to thriving collections in many Bridges libraries. This month I created templates and instructions for catalogers who are adding Tonie and Yoto materials to the CAFÉ catalog.

Continuing Education: March 12-15, I attended the IUG (Innovative Users Group) Conference in Denver, CO. The conference is for libraries using Innovative Interfaces (iii) software, including Polaris which we use, as well as Vega Discover and LX Starter, both new products for us. I attended useful sessions about customizing Vega Discover, forthcoming features in Leap, tips for authority control work with a vendor, using SQL to retrieve data, and discussion forums for cataloging, acquisitions, and circulation. Over the course of the conference, I had good conversations and shared ideas with peers who also use Polaris and Vega.

Emily Heller – Public Communications Coordinator

Joint Committee on Finance Public Hearing

I joined Bridges staff, library directors, trustees and other library supporters from around the State at the Joint Committee on Finance public hearing at Wisconsin State Fair Park on April 4th to advocate for continued state support of libraries. The librarians that spoke (including Abby Armour, Mukwonago Community Library Director), did a great job expressing the importance of funding libraries.

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“Speak Up for Libraries” State Campaign

I have been working with the State Marketing Cohort to prepare a unified campaign to rally support for libraries and IMLS throughout the state. A toolkit for libraries with logos, sample messaging, talking points, and social media materials has been produced. A public-facing website and postcards for patrons to send to legislators are coming soon! We aim to use it throughout this year. Consider sending a [short video testimonial into DPI](#) to show your support!



National Library Week: April 6-12, 2025

We'll be highlighting libraries all week on social media with ALA's "Drawn to the Library" graphics and celebrations and our own posts that encourage engagement by asking fun library questions.

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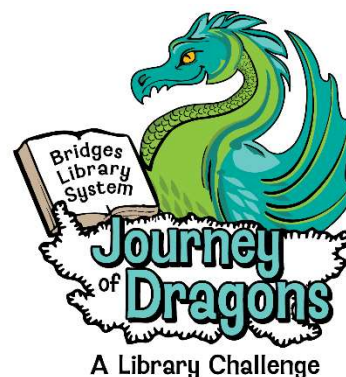


Journey of Dragons: A Library Challenge

The event will run Monday, June 2 – Friday, August 29, 2025.

Participants will follow the journey of a brave group of adventurers and play the game to piece together the hidden clues and unlock the mysteries the dragons left behind. Each library location holds a piece of the tale. Participants will locate and read the story, record the letters and get stamped at the participating libraries. When all letters in a realm are gathered, they will be unscrambled to reveal the password to unlock the final chapter and earn a prize entry form!

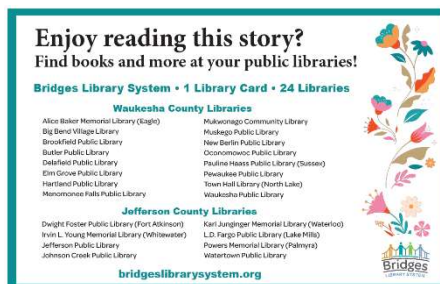
Learn more at BridgesLibrarySystem.org/Dragons



Spring Story Hike is Open April 1-30

The Spring Story Hike at Retzer was installed with our partners on March 31st.

It features the children's book is "A Place for Rain" by Michelle Schaub and illustrated by Blanca Gómez. Signs after the end of the book features a list of all 24 Bridges Libraries and Mukwonago Community Library's May Rain Garden Workshops as further promotions!



In the News:

- Bridges Library System adds hearing loop technology to 20 locations: [Freeman Article](#)
- Watertown Public Library hearing loops available: [Watertown Daily Times Article](#)

March Newsletters:

Marketing Magic:

- March 21: 61.96% Open Rate
- March 7: 64.13% Open Rate

Monthly Bridges:

- March 12: 49.96% Open Rate

Monthly Legislators:

- March 13: 35.29% Open Rate