

Bridges Library System Staff Reports

September 2026

Brittany Larson – Library System Director

State Budget Planning: I have begun work on the state-required annual plan and budget. The DPI deadline for this is October 30th and will be reviewed at the October Bridges Board meeting. On August 20th I met with the other System Directors in Wausau for budget planning for the next public library system state biennial budget, and attended a follow up SRLAAW meeting on August 21st.

2027 Waukesha County Library Budget: I will discuss the budget with the Waukesha County Executive and Finance Committees on October 13th.

2027 Jefferson County Library Budget: I discussed the budget with the Jefferson County Executive and Finance Director on August 12th and to the Jefferson County Finance Committee on Wednesday, September 16th.

County Library Tax Exemptions: I completed the Waukesha County library tax exemption calculations and sent the information to each municipality with a library. Municipalities with a library are allowed to exempt their residents from the county library tax if they levy and expend an amount equal to or greater than the mill rate set by Waukesha County in the preceding year AND if they meet the Waukesha County library minimum to exempt standards. Standards certification has been received from all Waukesha County libraries. Waukesha County municipal exemptions are due at our office by September 30th. Jefferson County handles the county library tax exemption work in their county. Jefferson County municipal exemptions are due to Jefferson County by November 1st.

New Director Orientation: Mary Lopez, the new Watertown Public Library director, attended a system orientation session at the Bridges office. She had an opportunity learn about system services and to spend a little one-on-one time with Bridges staff. Mary was previously a Branch Manager for Milwaukee Public Library.

Professional Development: I attended several Trustee Training Week Sessions on “Wisconsin Library Law”, “AI and Libraries”, “Board Documents 101”, and “Collaborating for Community Success”.

Library Visits: I visited the Alice Baker Memorial Library in Eagle.

Waukesha County Act 150 Committee: The second Waukesha County Act 150 Committee met on September 9th. The main topics discussed included the County collection and distribution formulas. In October the minimum to exempt standards will be discussed, along with the Library Services Effort Ratio.

Mellanie Mercier – Automation Coordinator & Assistant Director

Polaris Software Upgrades: On the evening of August 25th we had three software upgrades to the Polaris software. While the patron experience did not visually change, there were many staff enhancements and a new feature to allow us to be able to separate formats that are appearing on the same tab of the Vega Discover catalog. Some examples are board books with picture books, Wonderbooks and Playaways, etc.

It will take us some time to configure the new material types, but hopefully by the end of the year there will be a better experience for the public requesting items and getting the format that they wanted. One immediate change was that 4k blu-rays are now their own tab, so users aren't being surprised by a format that they don't have a player for.

Kelly Nelson – Coordinator of Library Development

SEWI Libraries Director Retreat - The SEWI Libraries Director Retreat was held on August 7 at the Franklin Public Library. This retreat, open to all directors in the SEWI Region, was an all-day event featuring 3 learning sessions:

- Laura Damon-Moore & Melissa McLimons, WiLS – Planning to Plan: Strategic Planning
- Sameer Bhajji & Brandi Hernandez, DVR – Reasonable Accommodations
- Melissa Bohse & Jen Reinke, CVMIC – Interviewing Best Practices



Library directors discuss "Library Hot Takes" during the SEWI Libraries Director Retreat at the Franklin Public Library.

We also opened the day with Library Hot Takes. This was a great way to get people talking about library issues and topics. I received positive feedback both verbally and in the follow-up survey as well as several ideas for next year's retreat.

Bridges Adult Services Meet-Up - I facilitated an Adult Services Meet-Up at the Hartland Public Library. We discussed system updates including the recent Polaris upgrade. Shawn Carlson joined us to share how he does Libby Advantage purchasing and we talked in-depth about AI-generated books and collection development.

SEWI Libraries Demco Book Doctor Workshop – Library staff from the SEWI Region gathered at the Waukesha Public Library at the end of August for a book care and repair workshop hosted by Demco. This was an incredibly valuable workshop with lots of hands-on activity for everyone. 40 staff members from across the region attended.

WCTC Library Visit – Mellanie Mercier and I visited WCTC's library and met with it's Library Director and two Reference Librarians. We learned about the services they provide to both students and the community, got a tour of the space, and discussed possible collaborations in the future.



Staff members from across the region gathered at the Waukesha Public Library to learn book repair and care techniques from Demco's Book Doctor.

Upcoming 2026 Events

- Adult Public Programming Meet-Ups
 - Tuesday, September 22, 1:30 – 3:30 pm, Watertown Public Library
 - Thursday, September 24, 1:30 – 3:30 pm, Waterford Public Library
- Trustee Appreciation Event – Tuesday, September 29, 6 – 8 pm, Retzer Nature Center
- CCBC Presents: Great New Books for Children and Teens - Tuesday, October 13, 9 am – 4 pm, 2 sessions, New Berlin Public Library

Angela Meyers – Coordinator of Youth and Inclusive Services

Youth Services

In mid-August, 19 Youth Services staff from 15 libraries convened at Oconomowoc Public Library to discuss their summer library programs during the Summer Celebration. Discussions focused on successes, areas for improvement, and new ideas to explore for the following summer.

Upcoming Meetings:

Youth Services Meet Up Watertown Public Library September 17 1:30-3:30 p.m.

Teen Think Tank Meeting New Berlin Public Library September 23 1:30-3:30 p.m.

Inclusive Services

Library Memory Project:

The 7th annual Fall Family Day for the Library Memory Project is coming up on Sunday, September 27 at Retzer Nature Center in Waukesha. This event is specifically designed for those living with memory loss and their care partners. [More information and registration.](#)

I continue to provide training and support to new memory café facilitators including Jade at Mukwonago, Michelle at Eagle, and Natalie at Oconomowoc.



Annual check-in meetings with the five projects within the Library Memory Project are underway. At these meetings we discuss what is going well, what needs attention, and plans for 2027.

Committee Work

I was invited to serve on the Infrastructure Workgroup of the Standards Steering Committee for the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction's Bureau for Libraries. The workgroup reviewed state library standards related to accessibility and technology. Although Bridges Library System maintains its own standards, I was able to contribute particularly to the accessibility related sections. The nine month committee process has now concluded.

Matthew Murphy – Database Management Librarian

Onboarding

I started as the new Database Management Librarian on August 27, 2026. I spend the last few days of the month getting accounts set up and software installed.

Mellanie spent a lot of time with me walking through the various signups, installs, committees, and tasks in my role. I appreciate the time she spent getting me up to speed.

I've also begun reviewing the documentation outlining the Database Management Librarians responsibilities, as well as the cataloging manual that exists for Bridges member libraries.

Standard Workflows

I have started doing the weekly and monthly tasks that Beth so helpfully outlined before her retirement. Some of these tasks may take a few more days than normal, in order to address small backlogs that were built because of said work being outside of the scope of the MOU with Waukesha Public Library.

Emily Heller – Public Communications Coordinator

Tracks in the Stacks Bigfoot Hunt has ended

The Bigfoot Hunt ended on Friday, August 21 and was a great success! We collected 6,438 prize entry forms and pulled 12 winners to receive \$50 Kwik Trip Gift Cards.

I had the pleasure of meeting Matt and Lydia at Pewaukee Public Library at the same time they had completed their Bigfoot Maps.

They told me about their trip to six libraries that day to finish the hunt. They also shared their love of libraries overall and how much fun they had exploring all the locations. Lydia is also an involved library kid, she hosts a book club with her friends at Pewaukee Public Library!



Matt and Lydia, a father-and-daughter team, completed their Bigfoot Hunt at Pewaukee Public Library!

September is Library Card Sign-up Month

Bridges Library System is looking for library cards on the loose! Patrons are encouraged to take their CAFE Card along for all the adventures and share with us where it ends up. Library card adventures will be featured in our end-of-month round-up!

[Email us your library card photos](#)

We also have an ad in the Freeman's Fall Fun Guide, and I will be sharing posts on social media throughout the month about library card perks.



1 Library Card
24 Libraries

Bridges Library System

Use your library card at any of the 24 public libraries in Bridges Library System

Alice Baker Memorial Library • Eagle 262.594.2800 • alicebaker.lib.wi.us	Menomonee Falls Public Library 262.532.8900 • menomoneefallslibrary.org
Big Bend Village Library 262.662.3571 • bigbend.lib.wi.us	Mukwonago Community Library 262.363.6411 • mukwonagolibrary.org
Brookfield Public Library 262.782.4140 • brookfieldlibrary.com	Muskego Public Library 262.971.2100 • library.muskego.wi.gov
Butler Public Library 262.783.2535 • butler.lib.wi.us	New Berlin Public Library 262.785.4980 • newberlinlibrary.org
Delafield Public Library 262.646.6230 • delafieldlibrary.org	Oconomowoc Public Library 262.569.2193 • oconomowoclibrary.org
Dwight Foster Public Library • Fort Atkinson 920.563.7790 • fortlibrary.org	Pauline Haass Public Library • Sussex 262.246.5180 • phplonline.org
Elm Grove Public Library 262.782.6717 • elmgrovelibrary.org	Pewaukee Public Library 262.691.5670 • pewaukeelibrary.org
Hartland Public Library 262.367.3350 • hartlandlibrary.org	Powers Memorial Library • Palmyra 262.495.4605 • palmyra.lib.wi.us
Jefferson Public Library 920.674.7733 • jeffersonwillibrary.org	Town Hall Library • North Lake 262.966.2933 • townhalllibrary.org
Johnson Creek Public Library 920.699.3741 • johnsoncreeklibrary.org	Watertown Public Library 920.262.4090 • watertownpubliclibrary.org
Karl Junginger Memorial Library • Waterloo 920.478.3344 • waterloo.lib.wi.us	Waukesha Public Library 262.524.3680 • waukeshapubliclibrary.org
L.D. Fargo Public Library • Lake Mills 920.648.2166 • lakemills.lib.wi.us	Whitewater Public Library* 262.473.0530 • whitewaterlibrary.org

*Formerly Irvin L. Young Memorial Library**

BridgesLibrarySystem.org

In the news:

- Lopez begins as new Watertown Public Library director: [Watertown Daily Times Article](#)
- A financial look at the Whitewater Public Library: [Royal Purple News Article](#)

[News Archives](#)

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

- Marketing Magic:
 - Sept. 4: 44.58% Open Rate
 - Aug. 21: 63.86% Open Rate
 - Aug. 7: 48.19% Open Rate
- Monthly Bridges:
 - Aug. 14: 45.71% Open Rate
 - July 5: 42.62% Open Rate
 - June 5: 50.23% Open Rate
- Monthly Legislators:
 - Sept. 1 (Back to School): Legislators – 33.33% Open Rate / Staff - 32.35% Open Rate
 - July 16: Legislators – 27.78% Open Rate / Staff – 38.89% Open Rate