

Bridges Library System Staff Reports

January 2026

Brittany Larson – Library System Director

Library Legislative Day (LLD) 2026: Registration has closed for Library Legislative Day which will take place on Tuesday, February 10th. Thank you for those of you that will attend to represent your library and community, sharing your library impact stories. If you cannot attend but have any stories to pass along, please email me. State library aid in the biennial state budget benefits all Wisconsin libraries. This year we are thanking legislators for the state aid increase provided!

We are partnering with the Milwaukee County Federated Library System (MCFLS) again this year to offer transportation to the event. The bus will pick up at Milwaukee Public Library and the Goerkes Corners and the Johnson Creek Park & Ride locations. Bridges and MCFLS will be sharing the cost of this service based on proportionate use. There is no additional cost for LLD attendees.

Annual Reports: We are in the process of gathering the statistics and information to pre-populate all the data we can for member libraries' annual reports. This information is due to the state by January 16th. DPI plans to open the annual report portal to libraries on or about January 23rd. State statutes require libraries to file their annual reports by March 1, 2026. Library System reports are due March 31st. Thank you to Mellanie who does so much to ensure these numbers are accurate and ready to go by the deadline and to Josh and Nicole for developing and reviewing newly designed financial reports with the transition to the Workday software with the County!

Annual Evaluations: I completed performance evaluations for staff and submitted documentation for any merit increases with Waukesha County. I met with each staff member to review the past year and talk about their goals for the year ahead. Rounding sessions will be scheduled throughout the year to check in on these goals, review other accomplishments, and discuss any other performance topics.

Presentations: I was invited to present about the Bridges Library System at a Waukesha Public Library Staff meeting on December 11th and a City of Waukesha senior recreation group on January 21st. I appreciate both groups giving me the opportunity to share more details about the system work and library services provided. Bridges Staff provided a new director orientation on January 8th to the new Elm Grove Library Director (a warm welcome to Sue!). I have also been meeting with each new library director one-on-one for a detailed walkthrough of the annual report and will meet with all directors to outline new updates to the annual report and important reminders.

Waukesha County Act 150 Update: The Committee held their latest meeting on January 13th at the New Berlin Public Library (thank you for hosting New Berlin!). Next steps include finalizing the draft based on Committee decisions, submitting standards to all Waukesha County Library Boards for approval, holding a public hearing on February 3rd on the plan at Mukwonago Community library (thank you for hosting Mukwonago!) and then bringing the plan before the County Board for approval.

Kelly Nelson – Coordinator of Library Development

Library Visits – I visited the Elm Grove and Menomonee Falls Libraries to meet with staff, share what I do, and learn a little more about each library. I visited 17 of the 24 Bridges libraries in 2025 and plan to visit the remaining 7 libraries in 2026.

Repair Café Interest Group – Library staff with an interest in starting Repair Cafes met virtually in December. Several libraries provided waivers that have been approved by their attorneys and we moved onto the volunteer recruitment process. Emily & I met to discuss marketing materials to use in the recruitment process.

WLA – Outreach Services Roundtable – In 2025 I served as the Secretary for the Wisconsin Library Association’s Outreach Services Roundtable. In 2026, I will be serving as the Vice Chair/Chair Elect. This group provides quarterly webinars to WLA members on a variety of topics related to libraries and outreach.

Upcoming 2026 Events

- **Bridges Adult Services Meetup, February 18** – Virtual
- **SEWI Libraries Maker Meetup, March 19** – Whitewater Public Library

Professional Development

- Collection Management Confidence: Confronting Self-Censorship Webinar
- Working Well with Your Team: How to Manage Your Staff Webinar
- Waukesha Service Excellence, Customer Service Webinar

Angela Meyers – Coordinator of Youth and Inclusive Services

Inclusive Services

Throughout December and early January, I visited various memory cafés to provide feedback to facilitators. Here’s a summary of the visits:

- Whitewater (Snowy Days)
- New Berlin (Snow Much Fun)
- Sussex (Holiday Joy with High School A Capella Choir)
- Waukesha (Holly Jolly Bingo)
- Mukwonago (Celebrate National Hot Tea Month)

While in Whitewater, I visited the Whitewater Public Library on their first day back open to the public. The newly expanded and renovated library is a must see.



Angela (Bridges) and Deb (Fort Atkinson) pose for a photo in a snow globe at the Whitewater Public Library's memory café.



Deputy Edwards accepts book donation delivery.

I personally delivered 2026 Library Memory Project schedules to multiple departments within Waukesha Memorial Hospital, ProHealth, and the Alzheimer's Association.

Annually, the Bridges Library System purchases reading and study materials for the Jefferson and Waukesha County Jails to enhance educational opportunities for incarcerated individuals. In Jefferson County, the jail collaborates with the Jefferson County Literacy Council (JCLC) to provide instructional support. Recently, I delivered these educational materials, along with 463 paperback books donated by member libraries. Deputy Edwards accepted the donations on behalf of the jail, as seen in the accompanying photo.

Youth Services

I met with the new youth services librarian at the Town Hall Library. I also finalized the schedule for Summer 2026, which includes 72 family programs and 24 teen programs for member libraries.

Beth Bechtel – Database Management Librarian

Cataloger Meetings

The last 2025 virtual CAFÉ cataloger meetup included a list of clean-up projects libraries can do for their catalog data, a recap of the virtual cataloging class four catalogers completed, and the recent announcement that mass market paperbacks will no longer be sold by their biggest retail distributor, ReaderLink.

I met in person with a cataloger at Mukwonago Community Library about the Polaris serials module and I met virtually with a Town Hall Library cataloger about adding audio-enabled books to the CAFÉ catalog.

In the WLA Technical Services Section meeting, the group brainstormed suggestions for next year's meetings. Ideas included how to address AI-generated material in library catalogs and having regular discussion of how to catalog new formats. The virtual state-wide TSS meetings are planned to continue bi-monthly in 2026.

Catalog Maintenance

In December, I worked on a project to find item record material codes that may have been used incorrectly in the last year. I contacted catalogers at almost half of the Bridges libraries so they could determine whether some of their item codes needed to be corrected. Fixing these stray codes before January helps make one of Mellanie's end-of-year reports more accurate. Cataloging staff in our member libraries use templates to create brief CAFE bibliographic records when full information about the book (or other material) is not available elsewhere. In 2025, I reviewed and/or enhanced 1,121 of these temporary bib records.

Emily Heller – Public Communications Coordinator

2025 is all wrapped up!

Jumping on the trend again this year, we shared the 2025 Bridges Wrapped lists on social media. It's a great way to highlight the system's collection and showcase the top items across all 24 libraries. See the full post on [Facebook](#) from Dec. 29. The Milwaukee Journal Sentinel also reached out to write an article based on our post. The [article](#) published on Jan. 7.



Advertising

The YouTube "Expect the Unexpected" pilot video ad campaign is complete! It ran for 97 days from September 26 – December 31, 2025. It was a very successful campaign with over half of the people who encountered the video on YouTube watched the full video or engaged with it. It had a great 53.76% views rating.

6-Days	43-Days	68-Days	97-Days
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Encountered 2,074 times	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Encountered 25,225 times	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Encountered 42,455 times	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Encountered 63,309 times
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Engaged with or seen in its entirety 1,052 times	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Engaged with or seen in its entirety 12,607 times	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Engaged with or seen in its entirety 22,050 times	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Engaged with or seen in its entirety 34,034 times
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Clicked on 16 times	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Clicked on 174 times	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Clicked on 269 times	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Clicked on 312 times

Web Accessibility Project

Bridges purchased DYNO Mapper to help audit and scan websites for accessibility. We can have multiple projects on the software, making it a great tool for Bridges managed websites and to support member libraries with compliance. I have built a resources tab and toolkit with additional information and materials and will be offering some training sessions for Bridges libraries based on what I learn from the trainings I attend.

- Jan. 13 & 27: LeanWI Website accessibility orientation, prioritization, review of tools for systems
- Jan 14: WiscNet: Preparing for Digital ADA Compliance

A screenshot of the DYNO Mapper web application showing an "Accessibility - Test Report" for the website bridgeslibrarysystem.org. The report is dated Jan 12, 2026 9:41 am. It displays a table of test results for three URLs, categorized by status (Failed, Passed, or Not Tested) and showing the number of known, likely, and potential problems. The left sidebar shows a navigation menu with options like Projects, Dashboard, Inventory, Audit, and Analytics. The top bar shows the current project and user information (Emily Heller, Bridges Library System).

In the news:

- Bridges Library System offers Memory Cafes: [Daily Union Article](#)
- Memory Cafés offer support for caregivers and those affected by memory loss: [WisBusiness Article](#)
- Library approves \$10K for Overdrive, providing more digital resources: [Watertown Daily Times Article](#)
- What were the most checked-out library books in 2025? [Milwaukee Journal Article](#)
- Want to read more in 2026? Here's how to revive your love of books: [AP News Article](#)
- Oconomowoc satellite library could provide more access: [Waukesha Freeman Article](#)
- Library keeping current levels of service after cuts: [Watertown Daily Times Article](#)
- Watertown Common Council compromises on budget cuts, reducing the amount cut from the Library: [TMJ4 News Story](#)
- One last chance; Council funds \$40K to library after cuts: [Watertown Daily Times Article](#)

[News Archives](#)

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

- Marketing Magic:
 - January 9: 59.04% Open Rate
 - December 19: 57.14% Open Rate
 - December 5: 54.76% Open Rate
- Monthly Bridges:
 - January: 46.8% Open Rate
 - December: 43.47% Open Rate
- Monthly Legislators - December 30:
 - Legislators: 16.67% Open Rate
 - Staff: 35% Open Rate