

Bridges Library System Staff Reports

May 2025

Karol Kennedy – Library System Director

Library System Director Hiring/Transition: As you all know, Brittany Larson has been selected as the new Bridges Library System director. Brittany comes to this position with wonderful library and leadership experience. I am confident she will be incredibly successful in her new role. Thank you to all who participated in the search process. I've been working hard to document important tasks. Please know we will do everything we can to ensure a smooth transition for the system board, staff, and member libraries.

Since this will be my last official report as Bridges director, I want to say thank you to all who have made my time in the Bridges Library System such a wonderful experience. I feel so fortunate for the opportunity to do work I truly believe in with truly amazing people!

Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) Funding: On April 23rd, IMLS awarded the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction partial LSTA 2025 Grants to States funding. This is good news! However, based on the continued uncertainty of future funding, DPI is not planning to open the grant subawards to library systems in Wisconsin in July, as is typically done. The grant subawards to Bridges have included Professional Learning Support, currently being used for conference scholarships and MRA online learning, and the Core System Services Support, used to offset system delivery costs. The estimated grant amount anticipated for Bridges in the upcoming grant cycle (July 2025-June 2026) would have been about \$19,000. To read more about what's at stake for Wisconsin libraries and what you can do to help, please visit mywisconsinlibrary.org.

Butler Library Director: Library Director Beth Stavros will be stepping down from her position as director. Beth is a talented aerialist and instructor and has received an opportunity to work full-time in this field. We wish her all the best. Beth will continue to work at the library through August to give the board time to find a replacement. This is a 25-hour/week position that comes with an experienced staff, a supportive Board of Trustees, an involved Friends group, and patrons who treat the library as a Village treasure. Application information can be found at https://www.butlerwi.gov/job_detail_T8_R11.php. Priority will be given to applications received by June 7th.

Adjacent County Funding: I verified many adjacent county library funding requests over the last month. This is done for both Waukesha and Jefferson Counties as part of the annual budget process. The deadline for requests is July 1st each year. If a library hasn't yet made their requests, this is a reminder that the deadline is approaching. Having the requests filed early does help everyone as budgets are being developed now. I also have been working with the Prairie Lakes Library System (PLLS) Director to complete the requests between Waukesha, Racine, and Walworth counties.

Waukesha County Minimum to Exempt Standards: The annual library minimum to exempt standards calculations were sent to Waukesha County libraries on May 1st. Using information from each library's 2024 annual report, an overview is provided to library boards related to their specific minimum to exempt requirements. Each library board must certify they will meet their requirements in 2025 as a part of the Waukesha County library tax exemption process. The certification is due back to the library

system by August 31st. These minimum to exempt standards are an additional requirement in Waukesha County only. Details can be found in the [Waukesha County Library Service Plan](#).

Mellanie Mercier – Automation Coordinator & Assistant Director

Bridges Systemwide Event Calendar: Looking for something to do? We are excited to announce a webpage that brings together all 24 libraries event calendars that will display events for the coming 2 weeks. The calendar can be filtered by multiple locations, event types and age groups. We would like to thank Jim Novy of the Prairie Lakes Library System for his expertise in bringing the RSS feeds together to accomplish this. Check it out at: <https://bridgeslibrarysystem.org/bridgescalendar.php>.

Vega Discover Catalog: New Berlin and Jefferson Public Libraries are soft launching the Vega Discover catalog on May 19th. You can take a sneak peek of the catalog at <https://wauk.na5.iiivega.com/>. Libraries are continuing to create their catalog homepage until the full launch in September.

Kelly Nelson – Coordinator of Library Development

Hello! I'm excited to join the Bridges Library System team! I come to Bridges with over 17 years of experience working in libraries, most recently holding the position of Adult Services Manager at the Pewaukee Public Library.

Library Visits & Meetings: I have several library visits scheduled for May to meet with directors and adult services staff. I'm eager to find out what continuing education topics libraries are looking for and how I can provide them, as well as foster a spirit of collaboration among the adult services librarians. I have been asked to be part of the Vega Discovery Layer Committee. Our first meeting was held at the end of April.

SEWI Beyond the Flannel: Youth Services Workshop (April 16th): While I didn't plan this event, I was excited to execute it with the help of Angela Meyers. Allison Felchlin and Jessica Pyrek from the Brown County Library presented ways that youth services librarians can take their storytimes to the next level with new and exciting activities. Their presentation was followed by a hands-on activity; each participant made their own "Magic Envelope" to take back to their library and use at their storytime. 42 staff members from around the SEWI region attended this event.

CE Retreat: Continuing Ed cohorts from the state met before the WAPL Conference for two days of training to create goals for the coming year. We were able to create two attainable goals for the coming year: create a set of protocols for taking on new projects and create a single space repository for continuing education resources created by CE partners in the state. It was a great time of brainstorming, and I found it very valuable as someone who is just starting in this role.



Jessica Pyrek and Allison Felchlin presented Beyond the Flannel for youth services librarians, featuring their "Magic Oven" as pictured.

Continuing Education: I attended the WAPL Conference in Oshkosh, WI and attended several valuable sessions that may be beneficial to bring to the SEWI and Bridges librarians at future events.

Angela Meyers – Coordinator of Youth and Inclusive Services

Youth Services: A Facepainting and Balloon Tying workshop was conducted at the Jefferson Public Library, attended by 19 library staff representing 17 libraries. Amanda Wilz from Paint and Inflate, LLC instructed the participants on basic facepainting and balloon-tying techniques. Each participating library received a facepainting kit.

System staff have been working to improve resource accessibility for all program areas, including youth services. A new page for youth and teen services is now available on the password-protected section of the Bridges website.

Inclusive Services: The Library Memory Project (LMP), in partnership with the Hispanic Health Resource Center (HHRC), is organizing a gathering for individuals living with memory loss and their care partners at a memory café.

This event will be held on June 12th and is co-hosted by the Alice Baker Memorial Library at the Horse Power Healing Center in Eagle. To ensure language inclusivity, the HHRC will provide Spanish translation services. Bridges/LMP will manage logistics, including transportation and refreshments. Funding for transportation and refreshments is provided by Bader Philanthropies, Inc.

I am supporting three new LMP memory café facilitators at the Oconomowoc, North Lake, and Pewaukee libraries. This involves ensuring they have reviewed the Facilitator's Guide, addressing their questions, attending a memory café with them, and providing feedback on the café they facilitate.

In collaboration with Kelly Davis from the Waukesha Public Library, we trained five new facilitators under the Community Voices of Jefferson and Waukesha County initiative. Staff from North Lake, Whitewater, Elm Grove, Oconomowoc, and New Berlin are ready to recruit participants and record stories to be included in the StoryCorps archives, Library of Congress, Recollection Wisconsin, and Digital Public Library of America archive.

Professional Development: Knowb4 Q2 Training: *AI and Fostering Respect in the Workplace*, offered by Waukesha County and part of the Standards of Service Excellence program.



A group of library staff and instructor gather with their balloon creations

Beth Bechtel – Database Management Librarian

Library Visits and Meetings: On April 15th, the CAFÉ Cats met at Jefferson Public Library. Discussion included beginning sections of the cataloging manual, adding language about holds in bib record titles, Tonie and Yoto cataloging, keeping ISBNs in serial bib records, and a review of cataloging-related Leap upgrades.

At Brookfield Public Library, I met with the cataloger who started the process of moving Tonie figurines in our catalog from a generic group to individual titles. This effort is taking quite a bit of detailed work, but it will make specific Tonie figurines easier for catalog users to find.

Catalog Manual Updates: This month I added an appendix to the CAFÉ cataloging manual with links to instructions outside the scope of the manual, but useful to catalogers. Included are instructions on searching the catalog for missing items, information about removing bootleg DVDs from the catalog, an explanation on why an author's name could display differently in the catalog than on a book, and best practices for handling cancelled on-order titles. The new instructions for cataloging Tonies and Yotos have also been added to the cataloging manual.

Continuing Education: At the WAPL (Wisconsin Association of Public Libraries) Conference on May 1st-2nd in Oshkosh, I attended informative sessions about AI in libraries, advocacy, website accessibility, and strategic planning. Best of all were the sessions provided by staff from Bridges member libraries! Those included a session about optimizing library information on Google, and another about interactive children's audio devices such as Wonderbooks and Tonies.

Through funding from statewide LSTA cataloging grant, I completed the Library Juice Academy month-long online course "Authority Control." Authority control is a behind-the-scenes process to create consistent access points in a library catalog, so authors and subjects are easier to search and find good results. A Waukesha Public Library cataloger also took this class and it was wonderful to work together on shared assignments as we both learned more about improving information in our catalog.

Emily Heller – Public Communications Coordinator

Earth Day Celebration Outreach: Angela and I attended the Earth Day Celebration event at Retzer Nature Center on Sat., April 26th. We spoke with over 60 adults about library services, and many had young children with them.



We showcased "outdoorsy" Library of Things items on the table and had the giant Connect-4 yard game from Mukwonago Community Library and the Plinko game to play!

WAPL Presentation: I presented with Emma Plitzner from Mukwonago Community Library and Vince Sabatino from Midwest Pano at the WAPL Conference in Oshkosh on May 1st. Our session, *Search to Shelf: Optimizing Your Library on Google*, went well and we enjoyed sharing the successes our libraries have had using Google Business Profiles and the 360 Tours.

Google Interior Photo Tours: I am continuing the library photoshoots this spring and summer to get 360 images onto Google Profiles and build hosted tours for the libraries that added that option.

- Town Hall – Fri., April 25th
- Pewaukee – Tues., May 6th
- Menomonee Falls – Fri., May 9th
- New Berlin – Fri., May 16th
- Hartland – Mon., May 19th
- Johnson Creek – TBD (June)

“Speak Up for Libraries” Postcard Campaign: The State’s postcard campaign will be launched throughout the state in time for summer reading and increased traffic! All public libraries will provide postcards for patrons to fill out to share why their library is important to them and their community. These will be collected at libraries and then sent in bulk to our federal elected officials.

Summer Library Program: Bridges Summer Library Program webpage will have a flyer with the schedule of all the performers being sponsored by Bridges for reference by patrons and staff again this summer.

<https://bridgeslibrarysystem.org/summerlibraryprogram>

Canva is changing their service! The Canva templates I created for members libraries to easily customize and use to promote their Summer Library Performers and thank sponsors have been useful, but unfortunately the template link sharing option in Canva will be going away on June 1st for free accounts. They will continue to work for paid accounts. I am encouraging member libraries with free accounts to try to get into the non-profit program from Canva.

Consulting: I hosted a virtual Marketing Meetup on May 7th. We had a great discussion about library advocacy now and in the past that have worked well. We also went into the details of State’s “Speak Up For Libraries” campaign efforts and upcoming postcards.

Big Bend staff developed a great new logo design, and I assisted them with making the files usable in various formats based off their Canva design. I also helped Karla with some webpage edits.

Mukwonago is working on a photo contest event. I am helping them with some code from their Canva design to work on their website.



"Libraries and librarians have definitely changed my life,
and the lives of countless other Americans."
— Barbara Bush ☆

I am also working with LibraryAware to help Waukesha Public Library (and other libraries) get our catalog connected properly to the book jackets in the software for a more efficient process.

In the News:

- 'James.' Library hosting National Book Award winner Percival Everett: [Daily Union Article](#)
- 'Peep'-waukee Library showcases artwork based on favorite book: [Freeman Article](#)

March Newsletters:

Marketing Magic:

- May 9: 49.45% Open Rate
- April 25: 64.44.% Open Rate
- April 11: 61.54% Open Rate

Monthly Bridges:

- April 19: 47.54% Open Rate

Monthly Legislators:

- April 17: 29.41% Open Rate