

Bridges Library System Staff Reports

September 2025

Brittany Larson – Library System Director

2026 Bridges Library System Budget

The preliminary 2026 Bridges Program Plan and Budget was shown to member library directors at their APL meeting, with a follow up at the September APL meeting. The Bridges Board reviewed the preliminary program plan and budget in July with a final approval option at the September board meeting. The final budget presentation to the Waukesha County Finance Committee will be on October 27th. I have also 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 board meeting.

2025 Jefferson County Library Budget

I will present the budget to the Jefferson County Finance Committee on Wednesday, September 17th.

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. There were larger increases in the equalized value in Waukesha County municipalities compared to last year, resulting in increases in the minimum appropriation required to exempt for most Waukesha County municipalities with 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

Kelsey Butterfield, new Muskego 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. Kelsey was previously the Head of Reference at the Oconomowoc Public Library.

Professional Development

I attended several Trustee Training Week Sessions on “Wisconsin Library Law” and “Trustee 101: An Introduction to Being a Wisconsin Library Trustee”. I also attended a two-part training offered by Waukesha County called “Emotional Intelligence and Difficult Conversations” and a second two-part training called “Mastering Challenging Conversations”. I participated in the SEWI Directors Retreat which included sessions on library advocacy and storytelling, an overview of the state of Wisconsin’s Bureau of Libraries, and a session on energy efficiency in libraries. I have had two meetings this month with different Bureau of Library consultants to discuss topics related to library system reporting and state statute analysis.

Library Visits

I visited the L.D. Fargo Public Library in Lake Mills for the first time. I also visited the Jefferson Public Library to see the completion of their library innovation project on the marketing signage wrap of their

outdoor holds lockers and creation of new study rooms. Both library directors were gracious with their time and gave me tours and time to talk about their libraries. I also had a variety of phone or email consultations with directors in the month of August.

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.

Kelly Nelson – Coordinator of Library Development

Adult Services Meeting

I facilitated an Adult Services Meeting at the Pewaukee Public Library. We discussed the upcoming Vega Discovery Layer, the new interface for Novelist Plus, and shared what kind of programs and reading challenges were offered to adults this summer. 12 library staff from 9 libraries were in attendance.

Visit Palmyra and Eagle

I have resumed visiting Bridges Libraries to introduce myself with a visit to the Powers Memorial Library in Palmyra and the Alice Baker Memorial Library in Eagle. It was good to visit each library and learn a little about them and their staff.

Kenosha County Library System Visit

I have made plans to visit each Library System within the SEWI (Southeastern Wisconsin) region to introduce myself, explain what SEWI is, and share upcoming professional development events. I began by visiting the Kenosha County Library System. Because this is a smaller library system, I had the opportunity to meet with their two directors and entire management team. We had a great discussion about professional development offerings and what they might be looking for in the future.

SEWI Libraries Director Retreat

The SEWI Libraries Director Retreat was held on August 22nd at the New Berlin Public Library. This retreat, open to all directors in the SEWI Region, was an all-day event featuring 3 learning sessions:

- Dawn Tevis, LaCrosse Public Library - Library Advocacy & Story Making
- Tom Dragotta & Chris Seitz, Focus on Energy – Top 5 Energy Efficient Solutions for Library Facilities
- Teresa Schmidt, WI Department of Public Instruction - The Bureau of Libraries & You: DPI and its role with Wisconsin's Public Libraries

I received positive feedback both verbally and in the follow-up survey as well as several ideas for next year's retreat.



Library Directors from the Southeastern Wisconsin Region met for a day of learning, sharing, and collaboration.

Repair Café Interest Group

I recently had the opportunity to attend the Neenah Public Library's Repair Café; an event where attendees can bring items in need of repair and volunteers with expertise in a specific area will look at the item and make their best attempt at repairing it. At the end of August, I held a Repair Café Interest Group meeting to discuss how we might bring repair cafes to Bridges libraries. Staff from 11 libraries were in attendance and we began the discussion process. I'm excited to see where this will go and will update as this potential project progresses.

Upcoming Events

- **SEWI Book Repair Workshops, September 23rd** – Two identical workshops will be offered to help SEWI staff learn book damage prevention tools and simple repairs.
- **SEWI Adult Public Program Meetup, September 29th** – SEWI adult services librarians are invited to meet and share their programming experiences and ideas.
- **Bridges Trustee Appreciation Event, September 30th** – Invitations have gone out! This event will take place at the Johnson Creek Community Center on Tuesday, September 30, 6-8 pm. You and a guest are invited!

Angela Meyers – Coordinator of Youth and Inclusive Services

Youth Services

I coordinated a Horticulture Tour at Bookworm Gardens in Sheboygan in collaboration with Monarch Library System, highlighting over 80 children's books for staff working with youth. Post-tour, we traveled to Mead Public Library in Sheboygan for a joint Youth Services Programming meeting. During the meeting, library staff delivered 10 lightning talks — concise five-minute presentations — on various programs and projects underway at their libraries. Additionally, we toured the children's room, the Imaginarium makerspace, and explored the new outdoor pickup lockers, which can be accessed by staff from within the building.

In mid-August, Youth Services staff convened at Johnson Creek Public Library to conclude their summer library programs during the Summer Celebration. Discussions focused on successes, areas for improvement, and new ideas to explore for the following summer.

Inclusive Services

This fall, the Library Memory Project took the opportunity to feature a 30-second advertisement at the five Marcus Cinemas in Waukesha County before movie screenings. Bridges reached out to 3 Barn, the



A group of youth services librarians from Bridges and Monarch Library Systems gather for a photo at Bookworm Gardens in Sheboygan.

creators of our original 3-minute promotional video from a few years ago, requesting a condensed 30-second version, which they successfully produced. [Watch the 30-second video.](#)

The 6th annual Fall Family Day for the Library Memory Project is coming up on Sunday, September 28th 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.](#)

Presentations

I partnered with Emily from Bridges to present a presentation titled “Beyond the Bookshelf: 10 Amazing Library Benefits” to staff working at Waukesha County’s Health and Human Services building. I presented the same topic to the Aging and Disability Resource Center’s Advisory Board.

Professional Development

Completed “Financial Management in Government” as part of Waukesha County Standards of Service Excellence (SOSE) and the 2025 Q3 Security Training. I also watched the Tech Days webinar titled “Ancient Worlds, New Tech: Bringing History to Life with AR and MR in the Library.”

Beth Bechtel – Database Management Librarian

Library Visits and Meetings

Three of our libraries have new catalogers who will be my main contact at their libraries. This month, I had an initial cataloging consultation in Oconomowoc. September consultations are scheduled with the new catalogers in Sussex and Fort Atkinson.

Fifteen libraries were represented at the August online CAFÉ catalogers’ meetup. A main discussion topic was adding notes to the catalog when an ISBN has been used on different titles. The group also reviewed the month-long project of removing OverDrive bib records from the catalog.

Outagamie Waupaca Library System is investigating the use of Polaris and Leap. I attended two virtual meetings to answer OWLS’ questions about our use of the Polaris ILS.

In the WLA Technical Services Section virtual meeting, the main topics of discussion were the forthcoming annual conference and cleanup of library catalog data.

Catalog Updates and Maintenance

In preparation for the Vega Discover catalog, I continue to remove OverDrive item and bibliographic records from the CAFÉ catalog. The new Discover catalog can automatically connect to our OverDrive titles, so bibliographic records for each OverDrive offering no longer need to be added and managed in the CAFÉ catalog. Removing the existing records has been a careful process of deleting more than 180,000 bib records and all their attached items.

I searched for item barcodes that started with "978" or "979" because those were likely to have been ISBNs inadvertently scanned into a barcode field. I emailed catalogers about items needing barcode correction at their libraries.

Emily Heller – Public Communications Coordinator

Update: "Speak Up for Libraries" Postcard Campaign

I received the final numbers from across the state for the "Speak Up For Libraries" Postcard Campaign! Wisconsin showed up, sending stories and support for their libraries, and it worked! Subcommittees in both the Senate and the House have voted to continue funding the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) in the new budget. If it passes, this would reverse the intent of the Executive Order signed in March, which would defund and close IMLS.

Results:

- 35,335 mywisconsinlibrary.org website visits
- 29 Media Interviews
- Total = 11,840 postcards statewide sent to Federal Officials
(Wave #1 = 2,353 postcards sent / Wave #2 = 8,766 postcards sent / + 721 additional sent)

Journey of Dragons has come to an end!

The Journey of Dragons Library Challenge event ended on Friday, August 29.

We received 317 August prize entry forms for a total of 958 entries (so far)! We have also tallied 4,828 participant interactions from libraries that have submitted their counts. The August prize winners will be drawn on 9/10 and will be announced by 9/12.

The 2025 numbers are lower than the 2024 Treasure Adventure, receiving about half as many entry forms this year. The committee anticipated lower numbers due to the event being a little more challenging with the addition of solving the passwords. While the numbers were lower, we are still happy with the results and will be having a recap meeting on September 15!

September is Library Card Sign-up Month

We will be sharing the 'endless possibilities' of a library card on social media all month! Some member libraries are using the new stickers for their promotions, too.

[Check out Brookfield Public Library's offer.](#)



New Vega Library Catalog is live!

The online library catalog changed over on September 8 to the new and improved version. I assisted with the toolkit, resized logos, made a short video tutorial, and shared on social media. I also added a new page with the new information on Bridges website:

<https://bridgeslibrarysystem.org/library-resources/library-catalog/>

Community Outreach

On August 28th, Angela and I presented to Waukesha County's Health and Human Services staff at one of their Strategic Planning 'Lunch and Learn' events. We counted down 10 Amazing Library Benefits and gave away some library swag for participation prizes. We had a small group, but each person learned something new about libraries.

In the News:

- Senator Julian Bradley presented the 'Forward28 Award' to Carol Jilek, President of the Friends of Muskego Library: [Facebook Post](#) & [Facebook Post](#)
- Whitewater library wrapping up expansion, renovation: [Daily Jefferson County Union Article](#)
- Whitewater Public Library offers storytimes: [Daily Jefferson County Union Article](#)
- This week at the Dwight Foster Public Library: [Daily Jefferson County Union Article](#)

[News Archives](#)

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

- Marketing Magic:
 - August 22: 67.47% Open Rate
 - August 8: 67.47% Open Rate
 - July 18: 67.47% Open Rate
- Monthly Bridges:
 - August 21: 47.68% Open Rate
 - July 10: 49.82% Open Rate
- Monthly Legislators – 'Back to School' Edition
 - Legislators: 44.44% Open Rate
 - Staff: 39.02% Open Rate