

Library Director Report

August 2025

Prepared by Tana Elias, August 29, 2025



Pictured: top left, Magic Pride Fest booth at Warner Park, 2024; top right: summer science with Dr. Jasmine Zapata at Goodman South Madison Library. Photos by library staff.

Program Highlights

We wrapped up another amazing summer of outreach, connection and youth literacy work at the end of August. A few highlights from August include our [Super Summer Science](#) series, the announcement of our [We Read Youth Voices Writing Contest](#) winners at Forward Madison FC's August 21 game, outreach at the Magic Pride Fest, Olbrich Gardens' Butterfly Day of Action, Operation Fresh Start & Reach Dane Community Block Party, Orton Park Festival, and various Parks Alive events, and a busy Dream Bus summer!

Staff Highlight

Craig Holler, Madison Public Library's Library Safety and Patron Resource Coordinator, has been awarded the City of Madison #TeamCity Mayor's Choice Award, a recognition given to city employees who demonstrate excellence, dedication, and a commitment to public service. In his role, Craig works every day to ensure the Central Library is both safe and welcoming for all who walk through our doors. He addresses behavior concerns, assists patrons who are struggling, and connects people to on-site community resources. Over the past year, he has launched partnerships with local agencies such as Madison Area Recovery Initiative, Madison Street Medicine, Work Smart, with additional partnerships



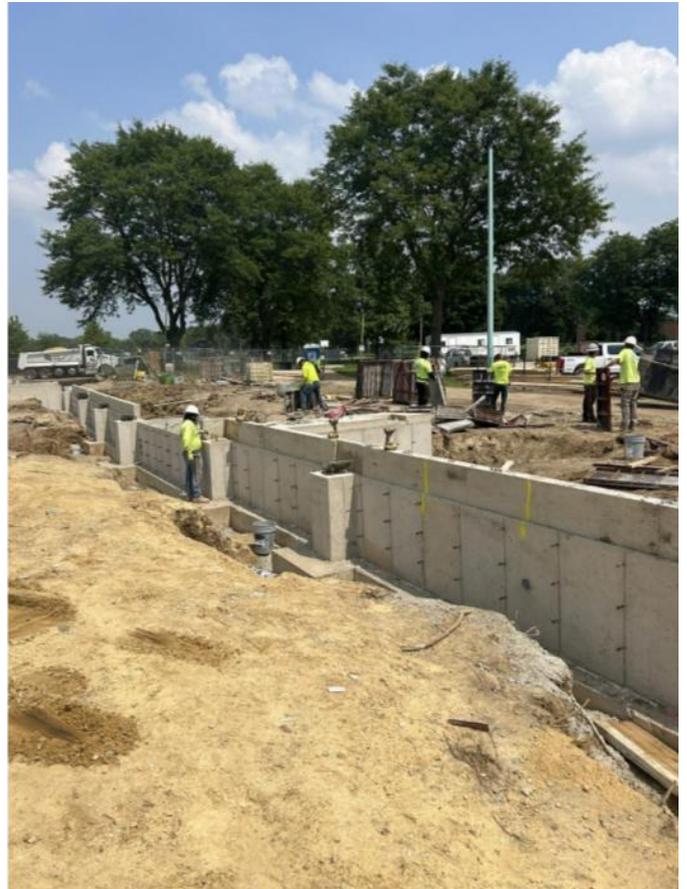
in progress to provide on-site help and harm reduction resources. One of his proudest projects is Coffee & Connection, a monthly program where patrons can meet with local social service providers, get information about recovery services, and build community. “It’s about meeting people where they’re at, listening without judgment, and helping them find the next step,” Craig says. Congratulations to Craig, and many thanks to the colleagues who nominated him for the award.

Pictured: Imagination Center footings. Photo credit CCI.

Imagination Center at Reindahl Park Update

Construction progress continues on schedule at the Imagination Center at Reindahl Park. Major foundational work is complete, including all building surveying, footing excavation, and foundation installation. The site has been transformed with new footings and foundations now in place across the entire building footprint. Upcoming work includes site utilities installation for storm sewer and water systems, as well as geo-thermal piping installation. Above ground, some interior masonry work will begin as work moves into the fall season.

We will begin reviewing the public art submissions in September, followed by a committee recommendation of several artists to be advanced through the process and submit concepts for consideration. This process is run through Madison Arts Commission and funded through the Percent for Art requirement.



Thanks to great community support, the Madison Public Library Foundation’s capital campaign has raised \$3.5 million of its \$4.5 million fundraising goal to date.

Monthly construction updates are available on the [Engineering Department’s project page](#) and shared out through the [Library’s email newsletter](#), too.

Library Budget Update

The executive capital budget will be announced on September 2, the executive operating budget will be announced on October 7, and both budgets will be finalized and approved by the Common Council on November 11-13. You can see the entire budget timeline and the library’s capital and operating requests at <https://www.cityofmadison.com/finance/budget>.

AI in Libraries

Based on the direction of the Library Board, I've waded into the waters of AI in libraries and will continue to share updates every few months through my board reports. Currently, all City of Madison employees must follow an interim Generative Artificial Intelligence (AI) Policy which establishes a six-month pause of use of generative AI for official city business that will expire in the fall. I've taken part in some preliminary conversations around the use of AI at the City, as has Pat Garvey, our Library IT Specialist 3.

There are some amazing opportunities to use generative AI in a public library setting, both in educating library patrons and in behind-the-scenes work, but it's also important that we maintain the privacy and confidentiality for which libraries are known.

The library has hosted a series of programs introducing library visitors and/or program partners to AI. Librarian Martín Alvarado presented on AI to the NewBridge's Senior Tech Club recently and coordinated several other programs for patrons wanting to explore AI, as well as spoke on a recent Channel 3 interview about his AI program for NewBridge seniors, which hasn't yet aired.

I encourage you to learn along with me if you are interested by starting with some of these resources:

- [DPI's AI Guidance for Enhancing K-12 and Library Education](#) (December 2024)
- [How ULC Members are Exploring Artificial Intelligence at the Library](#) report & interactive map (2024)
- [Leadership Brief: Explorations of Generative AI for Library Systems](#) (October 2023)

150th Anniversary Update

In honor of our 150th Anniversary, we're releasing a special edition library card for September Is Library Card Sign-Up Month. The card, designed by local artist, Jaundy Brunswick, will be available in two phases this fall:

- In September, NEW library card holders can get the 150th Anniversary card when they sign up for a library card
- In October, EXISTING library card holders can exchange their cards for the 150th Anniversary card while supplies last.



We see this special edition card as another way to thank existing library cardholders for supporting the library, while also inviting new Madisonians to discover, use, and embrace their local libraries. Artist Jaundy Brunswick's design was inspired by her own library memories and

incorporates historical images and symbols into the design. Learn more at madpl.org/new/library-card-sign-month

Library Metrics

All monthly key metrics, by month and library, from 2015 to the previous month, are available on our interactive dashboard: [MPL Monthly Metrics | Tableau Public](#).

For your calendar

Here are some dates you may want to save on your calendar:

- All Madison Libraries are closed Monday, September 1 for Labor Day
- Tour of Imagination Center – Thursday, October 9, 4-4:30pm, 1818 Portage Road
TENTATIVE tour of Imagination Center for Library Board in advance of 5pm Board meeting
- Library Board meeting – Thursday, October 9, 5pm, Sandburg Elementary, 4114 Donald Drive
- Sunday hours resume at Central, Goodman South Madison, and Lakeview Libraries on Sunday, September 7 from 1-5pm
- Wisconsin Book Festival schedule launch event, Thursday, September 11, 4-5:30pm
- Alicia Ashman Library 25th Anniversary Celebration, Saturday, October 11, 10am-12pm
- Wisconsin Book Festival, October 23-26
- Save the date: [Ex Libris](#), Friday, November 7, 7-10pm

Press Releases & News Stories

Library Press Releases

- [Alder Madison's Library Tour this Sunday](#) posted August 1, 2025 *posted August 1, 2025 (Alder Madison)*
- [Monroe Street Closed for Repair](#) *posted August 10, 2025*
- [Visiting Artist Zak Foster Confronts Family History in "Southern White America" Exhibition at Central Library](#) *posted August 15, 2025*
- [Period Party at Madison Public Library Set to Expand to Multi-Session Series This September](#) *posted August 18, 2025*
- [Winners of Madison Public Library's 2025 WE READ Youth Voices Writing Contest Announced](#) *posted August 22, 2025*
- [Madison Public Library Releases a Special Edition 150th Anniversary Library Card for NEW Cardholders in September](#) *posted August 25, 2025*

News Coverage

- [What's Happening with Federal Funding for Libraries?](#) *(Isthmus, August 11, 2025)*
- [Fake Bakery Fosters Creativity at Madison Public Library](#) *(WORT FM, August 11, 2025)*
- [A New Chapter for Madison Readers Starts this Fall](#) *(608Today, August 18, 2025)*
- [Madison Public Library Expands Period Party Multi-Session Series](#) *(WKOW 27, August 18, 2025)*

- [Madison Public Library Releases a Limited-Edition Library Card](#) (*Madison Magazine, August 25, 2025*)
- [Madison Public Library Rolls Out Special Card to Celebrate Anniversary](#) (*NBC 15, August 26, 2025*)