

Library Director Report

March 2026

Prepared by Tana Elias, April 6, 2026



1 left: seeds at Monroe Street Library, right: author visit at Mendota Elementary

Happening In Libraries

There was no shortage of things happening in libraries in March. A few highlights include:

- [Seed Library Launch](#) on March 2 – we’ve already given out thousands of packets of over 50 different species of seeds
- [Tax assistance](#) happening all month. Sean Ottosen from Central Library reported that “Department of Revenue Secretary David Casey stopped by today to see how Central Library VITA Tax Assistance is going and extend an enthusiastic THANK YOU to all volunteers and library staff that help make this happen. He was also impressed that he can vote early during his visit. Juan with VITA had a lot of kind things to say as well about the program and collaboration with library staff.”
- It’s been a busy month of author visits, too. Jane Rotonda, [Wisconsin Book Festival](#) Director shares a story about two author visits: “We took Kelly Starling Lyons to Mendota for TIARA’S HAT PARADE. One of the students -- an aspiring author -- got to show Kelly her own books she's written. [see photo above] And yesterday we took Maysa Odeh (in partnership with Jane Addams Peace Association) to Lake View for A MAP FOR FALASTEEN. Madison365 wrote [this article](#). And here's a quote from the author: "This was truly the best author visit I've had yet and completely worth the distance. Thank you all for making this happen. I think it's safe to say it's never been done before - not with this kind of book, not at any public school in America. You guys are legends."
- And Central Library adult and youth services staff have relaunched a pandemic favorite, the [Librarian's Picks](#) service. The service allows patrons to share books they've liked, and librarians will choose similar titles for them, and even place them on hold!

- And of course voting – all libraries hosted In Person Absentee Voting in the two weeks leading up to the April 7 election.

We've also weathered some weather emergencies, and I'd like to give a shout out to our facilities and custodial crew who arrived early during blizzard conditions to prepare our libraries for a snowy opening on March 16, and the supervisors who scrambled to fill gaps as staff called out due to weather conditions, as well as the staff who braved the snow by car, bus, or on foot to get to work on time.



2 left: Conor being interviewed by NBC 15 outside the Imagination Center Library's main entrance; right: Imagination Center Library staff Rosemary Medrano, Sean Ottosen, Jamie Stanaway (not pictured Mary Todd)

Imagination Center at Reindahl Park Update

Staffing: Many exciting things happened in March to move the Imagination Center project along. We have hired the library supervisor (Rosemary Medrano) and the three librarians (Sean Ottosen, Jamie Stanaway and Mary Todd), all of whom currently work for Madison Public Library at other libraries. Rosemary has already mostly moved into her new role, and Sean, Jamie and Mary will officially become Imagination Center staff at the end of June. They are going to be a wonderful team and are already attending meetings and sharing great ideas and connections. Hiring is underway for librarians to fill their positions, and will begin for Library Assistant and Clerk positions soon.

Art: Artist Nate Page's [The Passage of Being](#) was selected as the Percent for Art project finalist for the Imagination Center in Reindahl Park. The final design will have some adjustments from original designs based on community member and art commission member feedback. We are excited to see this project move forward and can't wait to see it installed in the park!

Collection: 11,005 items were added to the Imagination Center collection in the month of March before our ILS Migration technical services freeze began. Many staff members learned how to unpack and inventory boxes of new books and link items to the catalog in a last mad rush to get items added before the migration.

Building: Construction is progressing! You can see recent pictures of the inside and outside of the building in our [NBC15 TV spots](#) from April 1's Library Giving Day. Interior walls have been

drywalled and are being prepared for painting and tile. Roof work and storefront/window installation are in progress, and cabinetry is beginning to be installed.

Furniture, Technology & Operations: Shelving has been identified, other furniture selection work has begun, and technology is being planned. The fiber connection to the building is out for bid, and we are working through our E-Rate application for the new library to get discounted technology via SCLS, who oversees E-Rate for the whole system. There is a lot yet to figure out regarding the joint function of a Parks and Library facilities in a shared space and we are beginning operations meetings to make those many decisions which will inform facility operations, programming, interagency communication, and more. And we are also keeping a close eye on the progress and timeline for the nearby Bartillon Men's Shelter.

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

LINKcat Migration Update

We have focused on collection processing and training as we prepared in March for a three-day April down time (April 12, 5pm through April 16) and launching of the new SirsiDynix SymphonyWeb software. We will be closed on the morning of April 16 in order to train with the new software in libraries before opening our doors at noon – we are optimistic that when we open, we'll be doing so with our new software. LINKcat access will return to the public on Friday, April 17. Most noticeable changes, besides the downtime, will be a need for every patron to reset their PIN, and the integration of the Wisconsin's Digital Library collection into LINKcat, so customers can search, place holds, and return items from the library's online collection through LINKcat or Libby in the future.

Publicity began in early March and will continue through April and beyond to alert library patrons about the changes, the down time, and as features are restored. Due dates have been extended during the transition time. We check out over 10,000 items per day on average, so a down-time will be a significant effort, and the inability to check items in during this time will cause a significant backup of materials waiting to be checked in. We've reserved extra materials storage spaces in our buildings to work through that backlog. Library staff are going above and beyond at every level to make this happen while also planning to integrate a tenth library into regular operations. I'm so grateful for everyone's hard work to navigate these two transitions simultaneously.

Learn more about the migration at <https://www.madisonpubliclibrary.org/check-it-out/linkcat-updates-coming-april>

AI and Planning Updates

AI: The City has put a pause on City use of AI until the end of the year. However, City agencies can apply to be part of a pilot project, which would allow us to test using GovAI for a variety of

different purposes. We will apply to be part of this pilot and will propose three different projects to increase our chances of being selected. I'll work with our Library IT Specialist and Library managers to fine-tune our application before it is due on May 15.

Planning: The [City of Madison's Downtown Plan](#) and the [DMI Greater Downtown Economic Investment Strategy](#) planning continues to plan for the future growth of Madison's Downtown. If you live or work downtown, I encourage you to attend the Envision Downtown Open House event on Thursday, April 30, 5-7:30 pm at the Madison Municipal Building. [Registration is required](#). We're also promoting the community engagement around the plan, as we intend the findings to help inform our own planning process for a refresh of the Central Library, which we hope to begin in 2028.

Library Metrics

All monthly key metrics, by month and library, from 2015 to the previous month, are also 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:

- Upcoming Library Board meetings –Thursday, April 9, 5pm, Central Library and May 7, 5pm, Goodman South Madison Library
- April 12 (5pm) – April 16, LINKcat offline; April 17 – check out new LINKcat!
- National Library Week is April 19-25, 2026 including...
- Tuesday, April 21, 7-9pm: [Film Showing of The Librarians in partnership with PBS Wisconsin](#) [registration required]
- [Lunch for Libraries](#) with Jesmyn Ward, Tuesday, May 5, noon at Monona Terrace – please let me know if you need an at-cost ticket link
- Library Staff Day: Thursday, May 14, noon-5pm, Central Library – SAVE THE DATE registration link coming the week of April 13

Press Releases & News Stories

Library Press Releases

- [Pick Up Free Seeds for Your Garden from Eight Madison Public Library Locations Beginning March 2](#) (posted March 2, 2026)
- [A New Version of LINKcat Will Go Live on April 17](#) (posted March 17, 2026)

News Coverage

- [Conectando con tu Ciudad de Madison](#) (La Movida, March 3, 2026)

- [Uncover the mysteries of Agatha Christie at Meadowridge Library this March](#) (Isthmus, March 4, 2026)
- [Free seeds for your garden are now available at 8 Madison Public Library locations](#) (Madison365, March 6, 2026)
- [New version of LINKcat launching in April](#) (Channel3000.com, March 17, 2026)
- [South Central Wisconsin libraries upgrade software for better user experience](#) (WKOW.com, March 18, 2026)
- [Martín Alvarado on Libraries, Community & Book Picks](#) (Civic Media Network, March 26, 2026)
- [A Madison library inside a park: Construction progress continues on Imagination Center](#) (NBC15.com, April 1, 2026)