

Library Director Report

February 2026

Prepared by Tana Elias, March 2, 2026



MADISON
PUBLIC
LIBRARY



1 Black History Month display

Black History Month Celebrations

We celebrated Black History Month with library events, book festival events, book displays, reading recommendations, and more. Events included Cooking with Chef Angela preparing Black cuisine staples, Art After Overture with educational rapper (and former library intern) L.E.X., multiple film showings and book discussions, and a Wisconsin Book Festival event with Ethelene Whitmire for her book *The Remarkable Life of Reed Peggram*. Nearly every library hosted a book display on a different theme, including anime, Rosa Parks, transportation equity, art and more.

We also hosted the Unjust Deeds traveling exhibit at the Central Library in February and a related presentation about racial covenants and offered the opportunity to file the state form to remove discriminatory language from your property deed through a partnership with Dane County and Beyond the Page. See all events and reading recommendations at our [Black History Month](#) page. We don't just celebrate events during the month of February, though – our [African American Culture newsletter](#) highlights events and reading selections monthly, and our Black and Brown and Mae Mitchell collections highlight Black history, literature and culture all year long.



2 left: exterior of Imagination Center; right: Imagination Center collection arriving on loading dock

Imagination Center at Reindahl Park Update

Construction at the Imagination Center at Reindahl Park continues to advance as crews make steady progress on both interior systems and exterior building elements. Work over the past month has focused on completing early-stage interior utilities and preparing the facility for enclosure and finish activities. Mechanical, electrical, and plumbing wall rough-ins are now complete, along with Phase 1 insulation and various wall blocking and infill work. These steps have provided interior spaces and support with necessary utilities and support the transition into drywall installation and overhead system work.

Crews are actively installing overhead plumbing, mechanical, and electrical systems throughout the building. Storefront framing and glazing are underway, giving clearer definition to the building's exterior. Phase 2 roof installation is progressing as well. Inside, drywall installation has begun, marking a visible shift toward shaping interior rooms and corridors. Exterior stormwater and sanitary sewer work also remains in progress as part of the broader site infrastructure.

Collection work is progressing with hundreds of boxes arriving at the Central library, where the books inside will be processed, linked, and repackaged to sent to our storage facility until August, when they'll be moved to their new home. We are beginning the process of selecting all the furniture that will go into the building as well. If you'd like to learn more about the collection and the sustainability features of the library, the February newsletter has [two great stories](#) on these topics.

We've also begun hiring staff for the new library. Rosemary Medrano was hired as the new supervisor for the Imagination Center. She officially begins on March 2 but will spend the month of March transitioning from her current role as Community Engagement Librarian at the Meadowridge Library. We look forward to introducing her to all things Imagination Center this spring! She'll be joined by Librarians Sean Ottosen, Jamie Stanaway, and Mary Todd, all of whom will officially transfer into their new positions on July 1. External hiring for their positions has begun, and hiring for additional positions will commence through the spring and summer. Much appreciation to Krissy Wick, Director of Public Services, for managing this herculean staff hiring and training project.

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

Legislative Advocacy Update

I had the opportunity to attend two advocacy events this month – Wisconsin's Library Legislative Day at the State Capitol in Madison, and National Library Legislative Day in Washington, DC. At the state level, this was a "thank you year" – a chance to thank legislators for their continued support of public libraries and for increased funding to the Bureau of Libraries in 2026 and 2027. At the national level, this will be an important year to continue to advocate for libraries to keep IMLS and LSTA funding (through IMLS) in the federal budget for 2027 and beyond, to reauthorize the Museum and Library Services Act to ensure continued support to public libraries, and to advocate for Innovative Approaches to Literacy (IAL) for school library funding and E-rate funding for school and library technology, the latter of which is experiencing a second challenge in the courts. That process begins this March by asking Congress members to sign Dear Appropriator letters for LSTA and IAL.

What stands out from both experiences is that speaking up makes a difference and relationships matter. Libraries continue to be supported at both state and federal levels because librarians and library patrons speak up to highlight the importance of public libraries to the American economy, to civic and cultural engagement, and to lifelong learning and education. And building relationships with legislators to show the value of libraries makes a difference when we need to ask for funding. It was an honor to meet colleagues doing this work across all fifty states, connect with American Library Association leadership, and to work together in Washington to continue the work. I've included a one-page handout from American Library Association at the end of this board report.

LINKcat Migration Update

The LINKcat migration preparation continues to move along. Staff have access to the sandbox for exploration and training, Borrower Services manager Margie Navarre Saaf is training staff at each location who will then help train other staff, and we have an upcoming two days of training for Madison staff. We've had a first look at the "discovery layer" which is what library patrons will see. Two big public-facing changes are the need for a new PIN number for most library patrons, and the integration of Overdrive into the LINKcat catalog.

Publicity has started to alert the public about upcoming changes, and publicity efforts will increase as the transition time gets closer. Due dates will be extended during the transition time, and there will be a week where we encourage patrons NOT to return materials. 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

At the same time, we're experiencing a huge influx of materials for the Imagination Center and we're trying to get as many processed, linked, cataloged, and in our current database by March 31, at which time all technical services activity will freeze until we implement the new software. The timing couldn't be more difficult, and Library Collection Manager Molly Warren is pulling out all the stops to manage the transition as best we can. This perfect storm of materials processing during a major software migration is likely to have a noticeable effect on our salary budget this year. Learn more about the migration at <https://help.linkcat.info/>

AI Update

I am joined by several library staff and manager Michael Spelman in learning more about AI in libraries through a five-part UW-Madison continuing education series, AI in Libraries. I'll be asking the Information Connection & Referral team to discuss and make recommendations on ways we could/should do more work on patron education about AI based on the types of questions we're seeing in our libraries, as well as come up with staff training recommendations.

Some libraries are developing AI policies. Since the City will have its own policy, I'd rather incorporate AI into several of our existing policies, including our reference policy, computer use policy, and collection development policy. City guidance, when complete, will guide AI use in the workplace for library staff, and AI will eventually be incorporated into other city guidance as well, such as in Human Resources and hiring.

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, March 5, 5pm, Lakeview Library and April 9, 5pm, Central Library
- National Library Week is April 6-12, 2026
- [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 soon

Press Releases & News Stories

Library Press Releases

- [Share your thoughts on Public Art Designs for the Imagination Center at Reindahl Park](#) (posted January 30, 2026)
- [Two-Time National Book Award Winner Jesmyn Ward Headlines Lunch for Libraries on May 5](#) (posted February 10, 2026)
- [New Software Chosen to Support LINKcat Changes this Spring for South Central Library Users](#) (posted February 17, 2026)
- [Madison Public Library Receives \\$20,000 from the Carnegie Corporation of New York](#) (posted February 10, 2026)
- [Madison Public Library Celebrates the Legacy of Agatha Christie at Meadowridge Library This March](#) (posted February 20, 2026)

News Coverage

- [Conectando con tu Ciudad de Madison](#) (La Movida, February 4, 2026)
- [MMSD Students Compete in Book Bowl at Madison Public Library](#) (WMTV, February 10, 2026)
- [Three video artists tap into personal histories in the 150 Artists x 150 Years exhibition](#) (Tone Madison, February 16, 2026)
- [Madison Public Library Encourages Youth Literacy through Read to a Dog Events](#) (Daily Cardinal, February 16, 2026)
- [Madison Public Library receives \\$20K donation from Carnegie Corporation](#) (WKOW, February 16, 2026)
- [\\$20,000 donated to Madison Public Library](#) (Channel 3000, February 16, 2026)
- [Photo of the Day: Creating Collaboratively](#) (Wisconsin State Journal, February 24, 2026)
- [\\$20,000 Carnegie Corporation gift highlights Madison Public Library work](#) (Daily Cardinal, February 25, 2026)