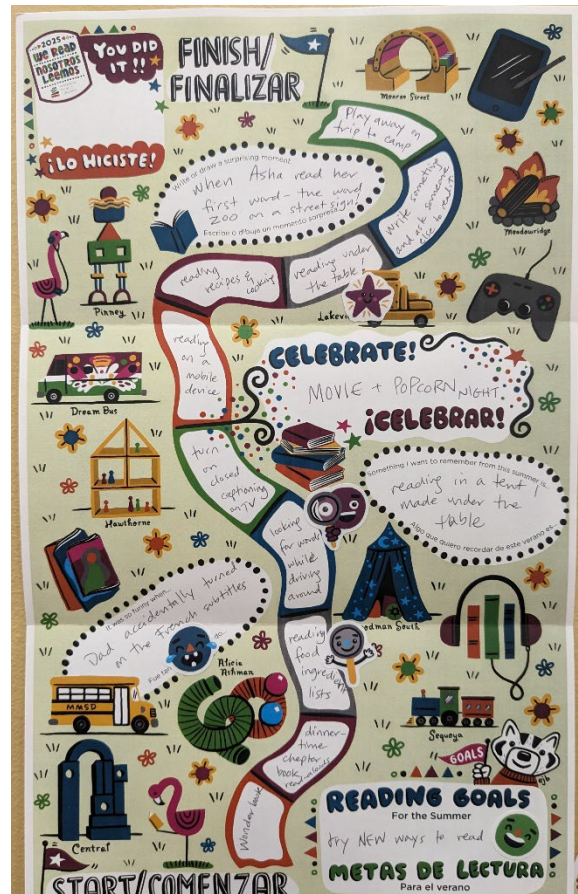


Library Director Report

July 2025

Prepared by Tana Elias, August 1, 2025



Pictured: top left, artists in residence; bottom left, WE READ souvenirs; right, completed WE READ journey map. Photos by library staff.

WE READ in Full Swing

Our summer reading and learning programs are in full swing, with story times, music classes, yoga and dance, lego, chess and science clubs, and our summer artists-in-residence programs keeping kids busy and learning throughout the summer. In August we introduced WE READ “souvenirs”. Here are just a few highlights:

- We had over 170 submissions for our [Youth Voices Writing Contest](#), winners to be announced at the end of August
- Libraries are displaying WE READ maps turned in by local kids
- We’re hosting [summer artist residencies](#) in eight libraries and on the Dream Bus

Pictured: Imagination Center site, looking toward library side. Photo credit CCI.

Imagination Center at Reindahl Park Update

The Imagination Center is taking shape! I toured the site on July 30 to see the progress as part of a regularly scheduled project check-in. Visitors can now see an outline of the building, which really helps to imagine the size of the space and the views from various perspectives. Despite a lot of rain recently, the project is progressing on timeline. Reviewing placement of all items in the building is crucial now before more concrete is poured and I've appreciated the opportunity to participate in this important stage of the process and learn from our Engineering, Library Facilities, and CCI teams.



As you know, our operating funding request continues to work through the city budget process. We are expecting final Council approval to hire our next two systemwide support positions – a full time Library IT Specialist 1 and a 60% Technical Services clerk – after August 5. We expect to have all three systemwide positions hired by the end of this year and will work this fall on having our 2026 hiring plan ready for the final budget approval in November. In other areas, Collection Manager Molly Warren has mobilized her team and selection work is starting for the new library's collection, IT Specialist 3 Pat Garvey is working with City IT, Engineering, and SCLS to make sure we have fiber to the building, and Facilities Coordinator Brian Jensen and Facilities Manager Mark Benno are making sure that all the little details are right at each step of the construction process. Madison Arts Commission, with support from Bubbler staff, is also leading a call for artist submissions for the Center required through the dedicated Percent for Art ordinance

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

And while there's been a lot of focus on the Imagination Center's construction, Goodman South Madison Library is also experiencing some construction in the form of a five-month renovation of the exterior parking lot, following the completion of a parking garage for Village on Park access to various businesses in that block earlier this year. You can follow along with the progress on the project's [live construction camera](#) or read more about the entire project on the Engineering Department's [project web site](#).

National Library Funding Update

Our second postcard advocacy campaign was successful in that we were able to send hundreds more postcards out in support of federal support for libraries.

For IMLS funding to continue, IMLS must both be included in the federal budget and be reauthorized as an agency by Congress. The Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) was eliminated in President Trump's "Big Beautiful Bill", however, a pending lawsuit (ALA vs. Sonderling) challenges the authority of eliminating the IMLS.

In the meantime, according to a recent email from the ALA Public Policy office, Congress has decided to push back their discussions on library funding until the first week of September. That means we'll continue to promote advocacy for federal funding for libraries during the month of August via library email, social media, and other efforts. And on Friday, August 1, I received an email from Brooks Rainwater indicated that on July 31, "the Senate Labor HHS ED committee recommended \$291,800,000 for the Institute of Museum and Library Services [IMLS]." That amount represents nearly the same amount of funding as 2025. This recommendations is one of many steps yet required; you can see all the steps in this [very useful graphic developed by ALA](#).

Library Budget Update

We submitted our final operating budget on July 18 and have been fielding questions from City Finance since that time. We also had our internal briefing on the Capital budget request and a check-in on the library's mid-year budget projection. On August 15, we'll have our agency operating briefing, an internal review of our operating request. If you'd like a bigger-picture view of the City's budget situation, I recommend watching a section of the [July 28 finance meeting](#), where City Finance gave a good overview of the mid-year budget outlook and what's next. (watch 51:20-1:32:00)

It is always a great time to talk to your Alder or email Council in support of the library and it's budget, but the most important times will be the period between when the executive budgets are announced and the final budgets are approved. 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 at <https://www.cityofmadison.com/finance/budget>.

Long Range Planning

With the elimination of the Library Planner position, I am working with managers and with City Planning to better integrate library planning efforts into the City's planning timeline. In the coming months I'll continue discussions with various city departments that can help us evaluate and plan to implement the recommendations of our not-yet-public West Side Plan that Library Planner Rynn Kerkhove presented to the Library Board last year in draft form. The City's 12

regional plans and timeline for completion of these plans are published on the City's [Planning web site](#). Something that is not reflected on this site is that the Downtown plan will begin earlier than anticipated (this fall) to align with Downtown Madison Inc.'s Greater Downtown Economic Investment Strategy work. I've had multiple meetings about this already and the library may partner with planners to explore a more engaging resident & visitor planning process, similar to the Southeast/Southwest [Madison Madness engagement effort](#) or the library's 150th anniversary "birthday cake" engagement project. And speaking of the 150th Anniversary...

150th Anniversary Update

At the end of August we'll debut a special 150th anniversary edition of our library card for a limited time. The card design, commissioned by a local artist with a personal connection to public libraries, is an effort to both celebrate September Is Library Card Signup Month and encourage people to get a free library card if they don't already have one. In September, NEW library card holders can get the 150th Anniversary edition card when signing up for a library card online or in-person. In October, EXISTING library card holders can swap out their library cards for the 150th Anniversary edition card while supplies last.

Library staff and trained volunteers have been busy all summer out in the community staffing library card signup booths at [dozens of neighborhood events and festivals](#). I've been out at Sandburg Park's Parks Alive events and plan to attend both AfricaFest and Magic Pride Fest in August.

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:

- Trustee Training Week, August 18-21, noon-1pm, online [[register in advance](#) for sessions]
- All Madison Libraries are closed Monday, September 1 for Labor Day
- Library Board meeting - September 4, 5pm, Alicia Ashman Library, 733 N. High Point Road
- 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
- 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)*
- [Applications Open for Imagination Center at Reindahl Park Public Art](#) *posted July 17, 2025 (Engineering)*

News Coverage

- [Wisconsin public library programs help kids maintain literacy goals during screen-filled summers](#) *posted July 7, 2025*
- [Speak up for Wisconsin public libraries with a postcard to your federal elected officials](#) *posted July 16, 2025*