

Library Director Report

February 2025

Prepared by Tana Elias, February 28, 2025



photo credit: top left Board Member Salud García, Director Elias, Library Supervisor Spelman; top right, SCLS Consulting Services Coordinator & Continuing Education Consultant Jean Anderson, Rep. Lisa Subeck, Director Elias; lower left; many librarians and over a dozen library school students visit the office of Sen. Kelda Roys; lower right, Director Elias, Rep. Shelia Stubbs, and SCLS Workforce Development Consultant Mark Jochem.

Library Legislative Day

Every year on a Tuesday in February, the Wisconsin Library Association (WLA) hosts Library Legislative Day. Library supporters from across the state gather in Madison to meet with state legislators and share the value of libraries in our communities.

This year, the event was held on Tuesday, February 11 and I attended with Central Supervisor Michael Spelman and Library Board member Salud García (Alicia Ashman/Sequoia Supervisor

Marc Gartler, who coached me through my first Library Legislative Day last year, was unable to attend at the last minute). Each of us had the opportunity to meet local elected officials and, in addition to letting them know how important state library aid is to local libraries, we were also able to invite them to our 150th Anniversary celebrations, share our Year in Review stories, and invite them to visit our libraries in person. In chatting with them, I heard first-hand how much they appreciate the work our staff do - our libraries serve as their meeting spaces, they're fans of Libby, they use Newspaper Archives weekly for their research, and how in one case, they include westside library events in their weekly emails to constituents.

[State aid](#) to libraries in Wisconsin funds library systems. In 2023, South Central Library System received almost [\\$2.75 million in state funds](#), which helped fund delivery, shared databases, outlibrary loan support, technology, continuing education, and consulting services - services which benefit Madison Public Library and provide better service for library visitors.

Thanks to State Senator Kelda Roys, Representatives Francesca Hong, Maureen McCarville, Shelia Stubbs, Renuta Mayadev, and Lisa Subeck, as well as their staff - all of whom we got to meet with during Library Legislative Day this year. I'm thankful for the Wisconsin Library Association and the Department of Public Instruction as well, for organizing the opportunity, which is unique among states and enjoys bipartisan support.

Federal Funding Update

I am now part of a group that meets weekly to share information about federally-funded programs at the City of Madison. We are all monitoring our existing or planned grants carefully and sharing information about changes so as to assess the citywide impact of any funding changes. For the library, the biggest direct impact is the Flexible Facilities Program grant for the Imagination Center. I'm also in contact with library directors across the state as well as the Department of Public Instruction to share information about the 35 FFP projects across the state. We're beyond thrilled to have a signed contract as of Tuesday, February 25 but that continues to be subject to availability of funds.

Programming Highlights

A team of staff led by Director of Public Services Krissy Wick has been meeting to set programming benchmarks for our nine libraries. In past years, our only metrics have been numbers of programs and attendees, but we have not had a framework to examine and evaluate our programming work as a whole, which limits our abilities to plan our programming strategically and accurately assess our programming capacity. Clarity around programming was one of the opportunities identified by last year's organizational assessment. This project, which will wrap up in March, will result in all libraries having target numbers of programs per year

based on size of location and staff capacity, will prioritize programs in Literacy, Community Building, Culture, and Wellbeing categories, and will include an annual evaluation. We'll present on this work in a board meeting later in the year.

Of course, numbers only highlight one aspect of our varied programming efforts, and nothing takes the place of a great story or photograph. For example, Early Learning Librarian Tracy Moore recently led a project where she and long-time Spanish Storytime facilitator Barb Alvarado visited each of the 4K classrooms at Henderson Elementary School over several months to offer storytimes based on the life and work of artist Frida Kahlo. They brought along a number of picture books featuring Kahlo from the library's collection to use as read-alouds at the visits and incorporated other early literacy skills and forms of creative expression into the programming. As a culmination, more than 75 students and caregivers visited Pinney Library on February 1 to exhibit self-portraits they had been working on at school. The whole library was filled with laughter, art, and color, and families had the opportunity to discover the library if they weren't already library users.



Left: Tracy Moore and Barb Alvarado at Henderson Elementary; right: a student shows off her self-portrait displayed at the Pinney Library.

150th Anniversary

We continue to highlight our 150th anniversary this year with a variety of outreach, in-library events, and social media promotion. I'll be on WISC-TV on Saturday highlighting the milestone and our interactive, historical timeline. If you haven't already, I encourage you to check it out at our [150th Anniversary web site](#).

Imagination Center at Reindahl Park Update

The Imagination Center at Reindahl Park has entered the first phase in the construction process with bid advertisement! City Engineering hosted a Bid Talk event on Thursday, February 27, and will host an in-person tour of the existing facility on Monday, March 3. The bid opening

date is currently scheduled for March 27, 2025. Read the full press release and learn more about the project at madpl.org/reindahl.

I'm in the process of creating a project video for new Alders that will offer a history of the project and plans for the next few years along with information about the staffing needs of the new library. I will share that video with you all when it's available. In April I will bring a detailed presentation of those staffing needs, updated costs, and proposed options for covering staffing costs to the Board meeting in preparation for our operating budget conversation this summer. The operating budget kickoff is June 16 and our budget is due to City Finance on July 18; in between, the Library Board will have to approve our budget submission. You can see the [entire budget timeline](#) on Legistar.

Library Metrics

Our Year in Review Impact story is online at madpl.org/impact, which offers a visual highlight of our stats for the year. As always, 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

There's a lot happening this spring! Here are some dates you may want to save on your calendar:

- [Lunch for Libraries](#) fundraiser – Tuesday, April 29, 11:30am-1:30pm
- Staff Day (Board members welcome) – Thursday, May 15, 9am-3pm – invitation coming soon
- Imagination Center groundbreaking – May TBD
- 150th anniversary [celebrations](#):

May 10

Alicia Ashman Library [733 N High Point Rd], 9-11am

Meadowridge Library [5726 Raymond Rd], 11am - 1pm

Sequoia Library [4340 Tokay Blvd], 1-3pm

Goodman South Madison Library [2222 S Park St], 3-5pm

May 17

Central Library [201 W Mifflin St], 10am - 2pm

May 31

Monroe Street Library [1705 Monroe St], 9-11am

Pinney Library [516 Cottage Grove Rd], 11am -1pm

Lakeview Library [2845 N Sherman Ave], 1-3pm

Hawthorne Library [2707 E Washington Ave], 3-5pm