

Library Director Report

December 2025

Prepared by Tana Elias, December 30, 2025



As we review the year behind us and look forward to the new year, it's important to celebrate some of the highlights. While we don't yet have our year-end statistics, here are some of our biggest accomplishments:

- We successfully secured funding for the Imagination Center without significant reductions in existing services, meaning we'll be able to provide neighborhood library service for an additional 20,000 residents in 2026.
- We celebrated 150 years of library service in Madison, bringing attention to public library service across the city and signing up new library card holders.
- We operated with very few service disruptions, providing thousands of hours of access to collections, expert staff assistance, computers, internet, programming, meeting rooms, and spaces to sit and read, study, or just be comfortable.



1 Wrapped gifts awaiting their recipient families. Photo credit library staff.

Some of these highlights are once in a generation or once in a century accomplishments, but I wanted to also highlight the day-to-day accomplishments that regular library service provides to library users. Our staff helped people find housing and jobs, helped thousands of people accomplish their personal goals and learn new things, helped children discover the joy of reading and adults the joys of connecting with authors, artists, and each other. These might be hard to measure empirically, but we regularly receive appreciation from the community, and the political support we have shows the value of library service. So, here's to another year!

Staff Highlight: A Generous December

For over a decade, library staff have participated in Holiday Host a Family activities through Dane County Department of Human Services, where social workers connect families in need with individuals, families, or businesses who provide wrapped presents for the family. This year Pinney, Central, and Sequoya libraries hosted families, raising over \$2,500 to support four families with gifts and gift cards.

Library staff also participated in the United Way of Dane County's Combined Giving Campaign as part of the City of Madison. The City raised \$81,859, with library staffers pledging a total of \$11,560, making the library responsible for 14% of all City of Madison donations.

A heartfelt thank you to all staff who contributed donations to either effort, coordinated shopping, and wrapped gifts. Their generosity helped make the holidays brighter for families in our community and shows the true heart of Madison Public Library.

And – thanks to the generosity of the Foundation, all library staffers received a commemorative 150th anniversary mug filled with sweet treats as a thank you gift at the end of the year.



2 Imagination Center, mid-December. Photo credit City of Madison Engineering

Imagination Center at Reindahl Park Update

From the most recent [engineering progress report](#):

The Imagination Center is taking shape! If you've been past the Imagination Center in the month of December, you saw Phase 2 of the steel installation completed, and the exterior envelope construction begin. Exterior materials and finishes are being tested, ensuring quality and performance for the final façade. Mechanical, electrical, and plumbing systems are also advancing, with ongoing installation of building infrastructure. Underground site utility work continues, supporting storm, sewer, and water connections essential for permanent operations.

We continue to request and receive grant funds through the Flexible Facilities Program grant and will begin hosting more regular tours in the spring and summer of 2026. Our collection management and technical services teams are busy buying and preparing materials for the new library, and we'll begin planning for furniture and programming in early 2026 as well as finalize the public art for the site. Hiring has begun for the new library, with the Library Supervisor position closing December 29. That new supervisor will help shape the future of programs and partnerships, as well as help hire additional staff so we're ready to open in September of 2026.

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

Advocacy

Last year underscored the power of advocacy as IMLS funding was threatened, taken away, and restored. Sequoya/Ashman manager Marc Gartler has participated in national advocacy efforts for multiple years, but is passing the torch to me this year. I'll be heading to Washington DC on February 25-26 to take part in a national advocacy day organized by the American Library Association. Closer to home, I'll also participate in the Library Legislative Day activities organized by the Wisconsin Library Association on February 10. **I invite you to join me at the Wisconsin State Capitol – registration costs \$50 and ends on January 9; registration info and event details: <https://www.wisconsinlibraries.org/library-legislative-day>**

Increasing advocacy efforts is also a strategic goal for the Madison Public Library Foundation. The Foundation will be forming an advocacy committee in the new year, and I look forward to being a part of that committee as well as connecting with new Common Council members after the April election.

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](#).

In February, we'll be able to share our year in review statistical overview.

For your calendar

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

- Libraries closed January 4 for the holiday and January 19 for Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Day
- Library Board meeting – Thursday, January 8, 5pm, Central Library
- Library Legislative Day: Tuesday, February 10 (register by January 9)
<https://www.wisconsinlibraries.org/library-legislative-day>
- Library Staff Day: Thursday, May 14, noon-5pm, Central Library – registration link coming soon

Press Releases & News Stories

Library Press Releases

- [New Snowplow Trading Cards Now Available!](#) (posted December 8, 2025)

News Coverage

- [150 Years X 150 Artists at Madison Public Library](#) (*WORT FM, November 17, 2025*) – not included in November board report
- [School boards are bastions of democracy, and libraries face funding cuts](#) (*Wisconsin Public Radio, December 2, 2025*)
- [Conectando con la Ciudad de Madison](#) (*La Movida, December 3, 2025*)
- [Madison library exhibit displays one word for each of its 150 years](#) (*Capital Times, December 3, 2025*)