

Director's report

Submitted by Natalie Draper, Director of Library Services

- Update on sales tax ballot issue: City Council voted on 1/20 to approve three projects identified as priorities with sufficient regional benefit for inclusion on the ballot in November for a local sales tax. One of those projects is the library's site renewal. There was more discussion at the Council meeting on 3/3, mostly focused on the riverfront parks.
- A patron satisfaction survey has gone out with the email newsletter ([link to survey](#)) and we are up to 179 responses. We would like to have well over 200 so we have a little way to go and will push it out on social media as well. Board members are encouraged to take the survey and share it with others. This will help guide us as we work on the next strategic plan. SELCO director Krista Ross is available in October to facilitate a strategic plan workshop for the board.
- The library will be adding hearing loop to the Bunday Room in April and it has been added to service desks and passport office. A hearing loop (or induction loop) is an assistive listening system that sends clear audio directly to telecoil-equipped hearing aids or cochlear implants, cutting out background noise by using a wire loop to create a magnetic field in a room. Users activate the "T-switch" on their device to receive sound wirelessly from a microphone or audio system, making public spaces more accessible and inclusive for people with hearing loss, often without needing separate equipment. We are also testing out a "caption companion", an AI captioning device for those with hearing loss. We have added text to our event posts to make requests for ASL interpretation and other accommodation easier as well.
- Library Legislative Day went well, and it was a pleasure to meet with both legislators and talk statewide and local priorities. Rep. Pursell has agreed to sign on as a co-author to the e-book bill so we are optimistic that will make it through.
- The Minnesota Dept of Education (MDE) has reached out to offer us the opportunity to request additional funds for the community facility grant we are working on. Assuming our request is approved, this would bring the total budget for interior improvements to \$500,000.

Staff reports

Leadership Team

Submitted by Laurie Kodet, Library Services Manager

Hiring Summer Students

We are pleased to share that we have hired two Carleton students as Shelving/Circulation Assistants for the summer. They will assist with reshelving

materials, performing minor item repairs, and supporting daily circulation tasks. In addition, they will have the opportunity to learn about the many roles our staff fulfill to ensure the library, outreach services, and programming run smoothly. We look forward to welcoming Jess and Alonna to the team.

Passports

This is an especially busy time for our passport acceptance agents. Appointments are currently booking approximately two weeks in advance. January was our busiest month on record, with 168 passports processed.

Submitted by Tyler Gardner, Emerging Technology Librarian

*An **included community** is a community in which every person is seen, heard, and engaged.*

I have selected a student worker, Jackie Faust of Carleton College, to assist with projects relating to the accessibility of our website and collection management projects as assigned by Katlin. Jackie is studying computer science and will make a great partner in working towards updating our website to meet WCAG standards. They start sometime in June.

*A **connected community** is a community with access to needed resources for all.*

New SELCO app is now totally live, and the old app is no longer supported or available for download on Google or Apple app stores.

*An **empowered community** is a community that is equipped for a changing world.*

With the prospect of the Poet Laureate no longer being organized and sponsored by the library, we have worked with Michael Johnson at the Northfield Arts Guild to take over the responsibility of overseeing that program. Conversations are still happening, but I believe the Guild will be taking it over and the library will remain a partner, at least in terms of being willing and able to host poetry events and the monthly Open Mic Poetry Event. As it stands, FFoL funds are available until the end of June to pay Poet Laureate stipend.

Outreach Services

Submitted by Angelica Linder, Outreach Manager & Alexis Kreft Adult Programming & Outreach Librarian

Outreach Report – February 2026

Submitted by Angelica Linder, Alexis Kreft, Karin Bartlett, Steve Maus and Francisco Murillo

*An **empowered community** is equipped for the changing world*

I collaborated with Professor Beatriz Pariente-Beltrán from Carleton College to connect students with Northfield Cocina through the program Tardes de Cocina. During these events, students cook alongside guest chefs while engaging entirely in Spanish around food, culture, migration, and lived experience. By centering local Spanish-speaking community members as experts and educators, the program strengthens intercultural dialogue and builds meaningful bridges between campus and community.

*An **included and invited community** is seen, heard, and engaged by their library*

We hosted the exhibit Chicāhuac: Women's Stories of Strength & Sacrifice from Rural Mexico to the Midwest and worked on the bilingual exhibit and reception in collaboration with Puentes/Bridges. The exhibit created space to honor women's stories of resilience while welcoming both Spanish- and English-speaking community members into a shared cultural experience.

The Latino choir Sabios Cantores performed in January at Imminent Brewing to raise funds for the CAC and NSN and celebrate community voices through music. The choir, composed largely of older adults, continues to show strong commitment. For many members, rehearsal time provides a sense of safety, belonging, and connection during a time when feeling isolated is a real concern.

Francisco shared:

Rafa and Gerardo have come back to work at the library. Rafa started doing the computer class over at St. Dominic's and it has been going great so far. The Spanish conversation table has been going well too. Gerardo has been helping with programming in the library, mainly with Sabios Cantores. The English conversation table will be getting shifted into a new program for the month of March. The visit to Valley View went well with a handful of checkouts and a couple of returns. The Bookmobile visit to the Nerstrand Big Woods State Park candlelight event had to be rescheduled due to weather, but the new date drew over 700 attendees and remains an important outreach opportunity. Storytime at Head Start was great, with 26 happy kiddos dancing, singing, and enjoying a couple of books.

*An **informed community** understands what their library offers and has opportunities to shape the library with feedback*

Alexus shared:

Folks at the Rice County Historical Society and Carleton College's Serena Zabin reached out about installing a Wish Wall, a space for people to make a wish for the future of our country on our 250th anniversary. Students stop by weekly to gather the data, spotlight a few comment cards, and restock materials. The display will be up until February 20th, and it's proven an excellent spot for people to share their thoughts and feelings, and for college students to get a feel for our community.

I hosted our second Book Bingo at Imminent Brewing on January 22nd. Despite the frigid temperatures, we had almost 40 people attend to win free books and learn more about library services. It was lovely to see both regulars and new faces and to continue our fruitful partnership with Imminent.

Natalia and I hosted a Canva training for staff as part of our new quarterly opt-in learning. We are pivoting away from using Adobe products and towards using Canva, which saves us a good chunk of money and allows for all staff to use the same tool, but there is a lot for all of us to learn.

*A **connected community** has access to the resources they need*

Karin shared:

Home delivery continues to be up over last year. This month we made 84 deliveries compared to 64 last year. I have a full complement of volunteers, including two new this month. Now everyone should be delivering once a month, unless something comes up. Bookmobile traffic continues to rise, with between 60–80 contacts made on the longer all-day Thursday route. Checkouts and requests appear to be increasing as well. Looking forward to seeing what Millstream is like after our absence.



Sabios Cantores – Latino Choir





Chicāhuac Exhibition: Women's Stories of Strength & Sacrifice from Rural Mexico to the Midwest



Presentation about exhibit with Puentes/Bridges



Book Bingo

Youth Services

February-March 2026

Submitted by Amy Nelson, Emily Lloyd, Cat Sebright

*An **invited community** is a community that feels at home in their library.*

Work has continued with ISG, Inc., the architects who are helping develop the vision for the refreshed children's area. Shelving layouts have been reviewed, and preliminary future furniture placement, built-ins, and paths of travel have been established. We look forward to meeting with ISG in the coming weeks and months to finalize the vision and see some of the pieces start to come together. This refresh is being funded by federal grant funds, distributed through the Minnesota Department of Education.

As a part of creating more meeting room spaces (work also supported by the grant), teens will be invited to an expanded teen room space in the spring. Collections will be moving upstairs in April to get the ball rolling on this. Moving spaces provide the opportunity for some teen programming to happen in the new teen room that currently can only take place in the Bunday Room. Cat's expertise and relationships with library teens have been helpful in determining the best placement of teen collections and selecting furnishings. The gift from the Carnegie Corporation of New York to commemorate the 250th anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence will fund the purchase of new furnishings.

*An **included community** is a community in which every person is seen, heard, and engaged.*

Emily says, "One of the most engaging events of any library year for young children is the Stuffed Animal Sleepover, held in January. Adults as well as kids love to see the photos of the stuffies' exciting night. This program generates a lot of voiced appreciation for what we do, which is nice to hear.

At Tween Thursday, we had our first "Choose Your Own Adventure Book Club," where we came together to listen to a Choose Your Own Adventure book read aloud and choose as a group which paths to take. I was thrilled at how many tweens showed up really excited to do this together—more than showed up for LEGO or Switch Gaming this month. I've wanted to try it for a long time, and kids asked to do another in the future, now on the schedule."

Our Potato Derby Orientation capped off the month of February, with an engaging, hands-on physics lesson from St. Olaf's Eric Hazlett. Kids will use guidance from that lesson to engineer their potato cars and return for Race Day on March 14. Family Fare supplied potatoes and Emily gave both the store and produce manager Maya a shout-out on the library's social channels. Emily says, "Get ready for some great pics in next month's report!"

Progress on the 6 hole mini golf course is going well! Teens are making props that will serve as tunnels and obstacles for the course, with lots of support from Cat and Sophia. We are repurposing the train engine from December's dramatic play scene to create one train-themed section. The course will debut over spring break and we are excited to see it all come together!

At the end of 2025, Amy met with Jake Odell, the Work-Based Learning Coordinator for Northfield Schools, about the possibility of having a few students placed at the library. We had three students start at the beginning of February who will continue through June. The students come for about 35-40 minutes three days per week, some with a job coach; others can work independently. They are assisting with collection maintenance (making sure the books on the shelves are in good condition and the shelves are free of dust and debris), locating materials from staff-curated lists, and various other "duties as assigned." All three students got to help set up the Science Lab, the current rotating play scenario in the children's area. We are enjoying getting to know them and showing them what library work is like.

*A **connected community** is a community with access to needed resources for all.*

Emily says, "Towards the end of the month, ARSL approached me for an interview "Spotlight" feature on their blog as a result of positive buzz around my presentation on TELL at the 2025 ARSL Conference in September 2025. [Amy included the post at the end of the update 😊]. I'm excited to share more about NPL and TELL (which falls under NPL's "connected community" priority) to a broader audience. I'll be submitting a proposal to present at the 2026 ARSL conference, too—proposals due this month, conference in September—about annual events that become town traditions (not simply "library traditions", like the Stuffed Animal Sleepover). This summer we'll hold Northfield's 10th Annual Worm Races with partner Ziggy's gas & bait, an event that draws "non-library people" as well as library regulars and takes place in the town square. (On a larger scale, the Hispanic Heritage Celebration and the first few Pride celebrations fit in this category, too)."

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To celebrate I Love to Read Month in February, Emily visited second grade classrooms across Northfield to give book talks with cliffhangers and to promote Tween Tuesday and the Potato Derby.

Cat says "TAB teens have come up with some new program ideas! We are debuting "Creator Club" in April, a space for teens to share their art-- be that crafts, writing, or short films. In May we'll try out "Fandom Friday," as space for teens to come and share their enthusiasm for various niche or nerdy interests. We are still figuring out if each event will focus on a certain fandom or if it will be a more general space. It's exciting to be creating some new spaces for the teens to share the things they are passionate about and I'm interested to see how these events turn out."

ARSL Spotlight: Emily Lloyd

by: [Association for Rural & Small Libraries](#)



ARSL SPOTLIGHT



ARSL Rural Routes

Emily Lloyd — *Northfield Public Library, Youth Services Librarian in Northfield, MN*



Emily Lloyd is a Youth Services Librarian at Northfield Public Library in Northfield, Minnesota, a town of about 40 miles south of Minneapolis that blends college-town energy with deep farming and factory roots. The library itself has earned national recognition, was named a runner-up for ALA's Best Small Libraries in 2024, and is home to not one but two [2025 Library Journal Movers and Shakers](#). Emily is proud to be part of a staff that listens closely to what their community needs and finds a way to make it happen.

A big part of what drew Emily to small library work was the chance to wear every hat. Before Northfield, she worked in large urban library systems where the person doing storytime was never the same person making purchasing decisions or shaping policy. At a small, independent library, you get to be all of those people at once. For Emily, that was a feature, not a bug.

Her work with youth and caregivers reflects that hands-on spirit. At the [2025 ARSL Conference](#), she presented on TELL, a Traveling Early Literacy Library she developed for in-home daycare providers and the children in their care. Many of these providers serve as a de facto preschool for young children who can't easily get to the library. TELL delivers early literacy tips and 100 carefully selected books to their doorsteps over the course of a year. Every provider who has participated reports that their storytimes have become more interactive and the kids more engaged. It's a quiet impact, Emily says, but it's real.

When asked about libraries' role during times of uncertainty, Emily doesn't shy away from the question. She points to the example of Ferguson Library staying open as a community resource after the killing of Michael Brown, and she sees that same responsibility in her own community today. With ICE active in Northfield, her library has been distributing [Know Your Rights cards](#) and promoting services people can access from home.

Her advice to other small and rural library workers is simple: **find each other**. ARSL's [professional networking groups](#), she says, offer both solidarity and practical guidance from people who truly understand what you're up against.

Written by the ARSL Office