

Libraries are Working

Ralph Illick, Library Director, Marathon County Public Library & Chair of the System and Resource Library Administrators Association of Wisconsin



If you live in Wisconsin, you likely have one of our 383 public libraries within a short distance of your home or workplace. At our public libraries, we Wisconsinites are able to access books, magazines, videos, audiobooks, and other forms of information and entertainment in order to improve our lives and continue the quest for lifelong learning. While the role of the community library has been changing over the years, libraries continue to offer a safe place to learn and to connect with ideas and one another in a dynamic environment.

Here in Marathon County, our consolidated county library (Wis. Stat. § 43.57), the Marathon County Public Library (MCPL), operates in the City of Wausau. MCPL has eight branch libraries serving our communities in Marathon County. By having one board and one administration, operational costs can be substantially reduced from the cost of having nine separate boards and administrative teams. Each of our nine libraries serves a unique community where we offer age-appropriate programming for children, as well as timely and topical programs for adults of all ages.

Our library has seen substantial changes during the past 20 years as the technology for storing and retrieving information has evolved. Marathon County is the largest county in Wisconsin, covering a little more than 1,500 square miles. We have about 134,000 residents (2010 U.S. Census) who enjoy local library services provided throughout the county. Wisconsin communities have a wide range of demographics and culture, and each library is sensitive to the unique needs of that community.

During an average weekday, MCPL will check out nearly 3,000 different items to the folks who visit our facilities. We will offer programs for early readers that are aligned with Wisconsin Department of Education standards for age-appropriate learning. We will deliver books and materials to dozens of homebound individuals who might otherwise not have access through our Homebound Program. We will provide meeting rooms to clubs and organizations that need a place to meet and connect. We also partner with local government agencies and nonprofit organizations to improve and strengthen our communities. In Marathon County,

some of our community partners include The United Way, Raise Great Kids, the Marathon County Health Department and Social Services Department, local school districts, Boys and Girls Clubs, the YMCA, and many others. By building and maintaining these important community partner collaborations, we are able to better maximize the return on taxpayers' investments in the services we provide.



This 650 gallon marine aquarium is located in the children's story time room at Marathon County Public Library (MCPL). The library uses the aquarium for biology-themed programming for children and adults of all ages. Local schools bring their students to the library to augment marine biology lessons.

Another way that libraries build their relevance within the communities they serve is by having active and engaged support organizations like the Friends of the MCPL, and the MCPL Foundation. These two volunteer organizations help MCPL by augmenting the county funding that we receive. Our Friends group uses items that we remove from the collection and books donated to the library to run a book sale several times per year. Funds raised from these sales are then used to pay for the programs that we offer to the public. The ever-popular Summer Library Program at MCPL, a primary target of the Friends of the Library fundraising, helps children and parents stay sharp academically over the summer months to better prepare them for the coming school year. Our foundation also helps to fill gaps in funding in ways that make us a better library, such as purchasing additional mobile

technology for use in our facilities and subsidizing significant renovations to our main meeting room and new Friends book sale room. The foundation will also be crucial this coming spring in helping us to replace all of the old public furnishings. Volunteer opportunities are a wonderful way to enhance and support your local library.

MCPL is a member of the Wisconsin Valley Library Service (WVLS), a federated public library system (Wis. Stat. § 43.19) that includes libraries in seven counties (Clark, Forest, Langlade, Lincoln, Marathon, Oneida, and Taylor). Our public library system serves member counties by pooling resources and services like the ILS (Integrated Library System, a shared database used to manage collections and library user data), delivery service, programming, continuing education, technology, and interlibrary loans. As the Resource Library (Wis. Stat. § 43.16) for this system, MCPL represents the largest financial contribution to the ILS at approximately 40% of any shared expenses. By combining and sharing resources, member libraries are able to afford the aforementioned resources and services at a scaled cost.

Wisconsin's 16 library systems offer opportunities to improve services for their member libraries in several ways. Systems help to expand and improve the networks for managing loans among libraries. Continuing education is mandated for library directors, and generally those learning opportunities fall under the stewardship of library systems. Training for all staff in various operational aspects also falls under the supervision of

systems. The system can tailor the training to fit the member libraries' needs. For example, if the members of the community are showing an appetite for digital products like downloads of audiobooks and streaming video, the system can identify training topics to enhance the skills of the staff of those member libraries. The system would also have the means for hiring technically skilled staff to properly manage the electronic resources like computers, patron computer timing software, printers, and various technology used by the member libraries. Another example of system support would be the scholarships provided by WVLS that MCPL has used during the past three years for training. Three of our branch library supervisors have been able to attend the Annual Association for Rural and Small Libraries Conference, and they have returned with valuable tools and ideas for improving our rural services models.

The environment for learning and the technology used to store and retrieve information is changing rapidly. Libraries will continue to offer access to information and entertainment across the spectrum of available media. Rest assured we will be prepared to help our users meet their information needs regardless of their affinity for, or their aversion to, technology. Libraries can change lives – whether you are a single parent going to school at night, or have just had an abrupt career change that requires a new resume and help looking for work, we can help you. If you are not seeing the kind of services and resources in your local library that you want to see, I

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Village of Egg Harbor Brings Community Together at New Pavilion

Megan Vandermause, Deputy Administrator/Deputy Clerk-Treasurer and Jess Reinke Kress Pavilion Event Director & Property Manager, Village of Egg Harbor

The Donald and Carol Kress Pavilion, a place to read, create, and celebrate, is located in the ♥ of Egg Harbor and is home to the Village Library and Community Center. The building, approximately 80 percent privately funded by over 300 donors, is to be completed in early 2018. The second floor Great Hall event space features wrap-around porches that offer sweeping views of the bay and surrounding orchards. In addition to the modern, customizable Great Hall space, visitors have access to two meeting spaces, a lounge, and living room with a fireplace within the library. The Kress Pavilion features the latest audio-visual equipment, flat screen TVs, and teleconferencing capabilities throughout. On the first floor is a Makers Space, offering a room for tech and hands-on programming. Transparent roll-down screens house the library's book collection so that the building can be enjoyed outside of library hours. Residents and tourists are welcome to host a small gathering, private meeting, or celebration, or simply enjoy the pavilion as a library patron. For hours or more information, visit Kresspavilion.org




respectfully encourage you to communicate your wishes to your local library director. Direct input from library patrons is always welcomed, and we want library services and collections to serve their communities uniquely.

We all recognize the challenges facing municipalities as departments and agencies vie for increasingly scarce funding. Libraries are using creative partnerships and collaborations and emerging technologies, to connect people with information and ideas, to serve as lifelong learning centers and to build strong communities. We remain committed to the ideal that a well-informed populace is a free populace, and that everyone should have equal access to information and ideas regardless of their ability to afford an Amazon Prime membership, a computer, or a cellphone. Let me now invite you to visit your local library soon. We have resources and programs here for the whole family to enjoy. We believe that there is no greater honor than to serve the public in Wisconsin communities. We look forward to seeing you soon!

About the author:

Ralph Illick has been working in libraries since 1988. He spent his first 14 years in the Orange County Library System in Orlando, Florida, where he served as a librarian. He and his wife Andrea relocated to Wisconsin in 2002, where he served as the Head of Adult Services at the Pauline Haass Public Library in Sussex until 2011. He has been the Director of the Marathon County Public Library since January 2011. Ralph currently serves as Chair of the System and Resource Library Administrators Association of Wisconsin.

He has a master's degree in information studies from Florida State University. His outside interests include playing guitar, reading, cooking, and spending time with his wife and two cats. Contact Ralph at Ralph.Illick@co.marathon.wi.us



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Engaging Minds. Connecting Community.

Todd Schmidt, Administrator/Economic Development Director and Erik Plumb, Library Director, Village of Waunakee



After many years of discussions and planning, the Village of Waunakee looks to break ground for its new

community library in the spring of 2018. Like other Dane County communities, Waunakee has grown tremendously in recent years, growing by over 50% in population since 2000. The current library, constructed in 1985, is too small for a growing community, lacking amenities such as reading rooms, meeting and study spaces, programming rooms, spaces for teens and 'tweens, and additional areas for technology use and collaboration. The current building does what it was built to do: namely, serve as a repository of books for the village and provide a small space for intimate library programs such as story times and book clubs. These needs have changed.

The role of a library in the 21st century is about much more than lending books. Today's library must be a more comprehensive resource, not only providing patrons a place to check out materials but also a place to comfortably and conveniently do things like access high-speed internet PCs and free Wi-Fi; attend events and programs that entertain, enlighten, and inspire; and, crucially, meet and connect with others in the community, whether for formal gatherings or through the magic of unplanned encounters and spontaneous conversations. Libraries have always engaged minds, but more than ever, they now connect people within their communities.

With a planned opening in mid-2019, a new Waunakee Public Library will fill all of these needs, while providing room for future growth. The village has been working with the design firm OPN Architects, to create a flexible, expandable, and dynamic community space. The building will provide over a dozen meeting and programming spaces, social areas, quiet reading nooks, and large community event spaces both indoors and out. The site, adjacent to Six Mile Creek, is the former Waunakee Alloy manufacturing plant. Formerly a contaminated brownfield, the library site will provide a pedestrian-friendly library-in-a-park setting, with access to a recreational trail, a cleaned up creek with greater public access, and a rebuilt neighborhood playground. When completed, the library will serve as the cultural ❤️ of Waunakee for decades to come.