



Director's Report—Debbie Bird

Library Cleaning Staff and Direction

Owen Luschei and Ben Pennewell have both been hired on as employees of the library, beginning in April. Owen works four hours per week and Ben works six hours per week. Their coaches will remain in place for the foreseeable future. Both men were happy to become employees of the library. They currently are cleaning five bathrooms, emptying garbage throughout the library and performing spot sweeping, mopping and vacuuming. The quality of their work has improved since my discussion with Northwoods. At this time, I feel that this option is the most sensible, considering the reduced hours of the Maintenance Technician, the increased wages for the professional staff and the political and economic climate.

I requested a quote from Prototype Cleaning Services. They would provide considerably more services, but it would need to be budgeted for, in another fiscal year. Prototype seemed very interested in getting hired on in a City Department. Their services would include: bathroom cleaning, high-touch area disinfection, spot cleaning, vacuuming and trash removal. Their essentials package would cost \$1,200 per month. Once a year deep cleaning would cost approximately \$600.

LSTA Funding—Federal Grant Money


Currently, there is concern regarding the possible elimination of LSTA funding—a federal program that supports various library services. As is always the case, the unknown is concerning. Until all of these appointments are addressed (eliminated or returned to work), I feel that the Portage Public Library is sitting in a relatively stable spot. Portage has experienced enough positive improvements and notable upgrades to staunch reactions to the idea that library services are failing.

The City of Portage and most municipal services is dealing with more disruption than the library, at this point. Change can be stressful, but for Portage it is inevitable, since the community continues to grow in size, shape, thinking and direction. As director, I feel that my responsibility is becoming more about anticipating future growth, need and expectation. While the focus of the library remains fundamentally one of acceptance and accessibility, perception and growing concerns make that path more challenging to navigate AND TO BE UNDERSTOOD!

The Portage Public Library serves and supports the community through open access to resources, partnerships and technology.

Federal Funding Cuts Could Threaten the Public Libraries Wisconsin Loves

Tuesday, April 1, 2025

April 6-12, 2025 is National Library Week , a week to celebrate libraries and librarians, and to acknowledge their central role in our communities.

Recent executive orders issued by the President threaten the federal infrastructure our libraries rely on.

How are our libraries funded?

Our public libraries are funded through federal, state, and local funds. The impact of pausing or eliminating federal funding to Wisconsin's public libraries-- especially those in rural areas-- could be wide-reaching. **The Department of Public Instruction has released a new interactive map of federal funding resources for public library systems (<https://wi-dpi.maps.arcgis.com/apps/instance/media/index.html?appid=15c2bcc83d4f431580788b2a617d49ca>) in the state**, highlighting what is at stake for Wisconsin's 15 library systems that serve 467 branch libraries.

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Why are libraries important?

Libraries are critical to a community; they are the only freely accessible place where a person of any age, ability, and financial status can go for enjoyment, enrichment, or to meet **basic needs such as filing taxes or job searching**. The primary focus of libraries is providing **no cost access to all forms of literacy**, from traditional books to e-books and access to online news services and platforms. Many seniors and low-income residents rely on libraries for **internet access and technical support**, something that is becoming increasingly important as services keep moving online.

How might federal funding cuts impact our Wisconsin libraries?

Cuts could force libraries to either engage in **more local fundraising, lobby for increases to local taxes, or cut programming and services**. They would endanger **interlibrary loan services** causing residents to only have access to materials in their local library. Do you love your local

public library? Let people know! Share your library love on social media. Talk to your friends and family about what's at stake if federal library funding goes away. Wisconsinites deserve a robust, fully-funded library system.

Here's what library patrons in Wisconsin have to say about their local public libraries and why they love and support them.

"We're a single-income homeschooling family. The library has been pivotal in our family. Without the library, **we wouldn't be able to read and experience even a fraction of these books if we had to buy them on our own.** Our kids love the kits and technology they can check out as well."

"The first thing I did when I retired and moved to Polk County eight years ago was to get a library card. Since then, I've read hundreds of books that I can conveniently check out from my library or any of the MORE libraries in the system. **Without this service, I would have to travel to the Twin Cities** to get books as we do not have book stores in our area. Libraries are valuable to small communities and should be generously funded."

"I am a widow with no family. I regularly request books from The MORE system. **I feel that the librarians know me and always make me feel valued.**"

"Growing up in the country, and being homeschooled, my parents focused myself and my sisters on reading. We would read for hours. One day, we went to the library for an event, and looked around the library for things to read. That day, my sisters and I managed to load all the books to the front and check out with our youth librarian. We were told that it was the first time someone tried to check out 102 books one card. **After that, they had to cap the books you could check out thanks to my sisters and I.**"

"I am a distance education student at UW Madison's PA program. This program requires weekly proctoring for exams. The Chippewa Falls library is the only library in the region that **offers students proctoring services with dedicated spaces free of charge.**"

"**We do not have the internet at home** so I am so thankful they have computers that are available for patrons. We also love that we can check out hotspots and the Roku. These items help us with our day-to-day necessities. Thank you for your past and future support of our local libraries! They mean so much to our local community!"

"Last school year my daughter was a senior in high school. She's **autistic** and gets a lot of help from county services. One of those services, last year, was set up to help her attain real world job skills for herself so she can enter the workforce after graduation. The Ellsworth Public Library allowed for my kid to come and do a **paid internship** with them for a period of time. It was a

wonderful, positive experience for my girl. She worked mainly in the children's library. Everyone in that department gave her nothing but good support. Our family is very grateful our oldest got to have that time there and learn so much. It's literally a village pulling together to help a person in the community when they need it most; helping to raise a kid into a socially graceful and hardworking member of the adult world. Our family appreciates that effort more than words can say. There is a serious shortage of such opportunities for people with spectrum disorders. When someone is willing, able, and happy to help, offer a chance, to grow, and expand for one of those people it's life changing. Literally, the ripple effect from that goes out forever, for that person's lifetime, truly. Our daughter enjoyed it so much that even after the internship was finished, she stayed on as a volunteer for the rest of the year. She got even more experience under her belt and was really happy to have that."

"I have been bringing my daughters to the library about once or twice a week for the past year now. My oldest daughter was struggling learning how to talk. We were able to check out so many books that she enjoyed and **the more I read to her, the better her speech became**. Now my youngest daughter is starting to talk and we still read library books every day!"

" I am a **widowed senior citizen** with a compassion to help those less fortunate than myself who lives alone. In this coming week alone, four of the five "events" I will participate in would not be possible without my local library.... I'm both surprised by and appreciative of how many individuals in need seek the library for a place to rest, to have a beverage, to peruse the library's display rack of potential assistance sources, and speak with the library staff. In short, **my library is my lifeline to the community**."

"The library has helped me **fall in love with reading at the age of 34**. It helped me accomplish reading 26 books this last year. I truly believe this is because of the accessibility to using the MORE Library System - it's never been easier to access a ton of titles and place them on hold. The librarian and staff here are always offering suggestions and adding new reads to the shelves."

"We love the **library story time!** This is one of the only opportunities our community has for regularly **socializing babies and toddlers**."

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