

2024 Annual Report of Jefferson County Library Service



LIBRARIES = STRONG COMMUNITIES

Mission: Jefferson County Library Service works to support and strengthen the municipal libraries, so all County residents receive quality public library service.

Jefferson County public libraries, except for Cambridge Community Library, are members of the Bridges Library System which serves and supports libraries in Jefferson and Waukesha Counties. System membership provides access for all county residents to more than 2 million items, digital resources, coordinated marketing, and support for library boards and staffs throughout both counties. Cambridge Community Library is a member of the South Central Library System.

Circulation of Library Materials

In 2024, the total circulation of physical and digital materials in Jefferson County increased slightly by 0.11% from the previous year. Physical circulation decreased from 850,410 to 819,156 items checked out of the nine county libraries. It is important to note that Irvin L. Young Memorial Library in Whitewater was closed to the public for several weeks due to an ongoing renovation and expansion project resulting in a nearly 19% decrease in their total physical circulation.

Digital circulation continues to increase. In fact, the number of digital checkouts by Jefferson County residents was at an all-time high. In 2024, 166,194 digital books, audiobooks, and videos were checked out, compared to 133,859 in 2023. Digital materials are available for borrowing from the Wisconsin Digital Library (Overdrive/Libby) and Hoopla by downloading to a computer or mobile device. 2024 was the first year Hoopla circulation has been included in digital circulation totals.

Of the total physical and digital circulation, 218,449 (which represents 22.17% of the total) were checked out by Jefferson County residents who live in municipalities without their own libraries. This same population represented nearly 26% of digital usage in 2024. This ratio has been consistent and represents a higher ratio than for physical circulations.

Table 1. Circulation at Jefferson County Libraries – 2024

Library	2024 Total Circulation (Physical & Digital)	2024 Circulation to Jefferson County Non- librarianed Communities (Physical & Digital)	Non-librarianed Resident % of Total Circulation
Cambridge*	39,806	17,019	42.75%
Fort Atkinson	199,806	60,394	30.23%
Jefferson	84,589	23,813	28.15%
Johnson Creek	43,990	12,947	29.43%
Lake Mills	101,807	24,554	24.12%
Palmyra	36,194	17,628	48.70%
Waterloo	61,703	5,831	9.45%
Watertown	333,940	49,200	14.73%
Whitewater	83,515	7,063	8.46%
Totals	985,350	218,449	22.17%

*Cambridge does not circulate digital items to Jefferson County residents.

Countywide Library Service Highlights from 2024

Jefferson County residents had ready access to more than 2 million items and integrated access to the Wisconsin Digital Library, all via the CAFÉ catalog.

Libraries received the following Bridges Library System services and programs:

- Improvement and innovation grants
- eContent grants
- Coordinated public relations efforts & library advocacy
- Technology support for CAFÉ, OverDrive, Hoopla, and the wide area network
- Annual report data pre-population, monthly data reports, and data dashboard access
- Youth services coordination
- Inclusive services coordination
- Workforce development coordination
- Professional development opportunities
- Coordinated meetings for staffs & subject-specific listservs and groups
- Backup reference assistance
- Access to a professional collection for librarians
- Consultation on library services
- Access to special equipment
- Interlibrary loan software
- New library director orientation
- County library budgeting & planning assistance
- Web hosting, website assistance, & email service

Additional electronic resources for all county residents offered in 2024 included:

- Overdrive/Libby – Access to eBooks and digital audiobooks
- Hoopla – Stream digital movies, music, eBooks, and audiobooks
- Udemy – Access online, on-demand courses
- Ancestry.com – Research family history
- Consumer Reports – Make smart buying decisions
- Cypress Resume – Utilize job coaching, resume critiquing, and mock interview sessions
- Morningstar Investment Research – Research current or prospective holdings
- NoveList Plus – Find recommended reads, reviews, and book discussion guides

Cambridge Community Library



2024 was a whirlwind in Cambridge! We kicked off the year by extending our hours so that we are open 4 evenings a week until 7 p.m. and open longer on Saturdays. We offered almost 30 more programs than last year and saw almost 400 more people attending events because of it. More hours paired with expansion of program offerings resulted in 1,660 more people through our doors in 2024 than in 2023.



Our Summer Library Program exploded with participation this year! We had over 250 people sign up (up from just about 100 last year) and doubled our number of finishers.



In November, we unveiled our World Language Collection thanks to a donation from the Flynn Family in memory of their mother Lucy. To celebrate, we had the family attend a special bilingual storytime, where we launched our collection of fully Spanish and bilingual Spanish/English children's books (for a variety of ages).

Finally, we closed out the year with an exciting countdown at our Noon Year's Eve celebration!



Dwight Foster Public Library (Fort Atkinson)

The Dwight Foster Public Library served the Fort Atkinson area to the best of its ability in 2024 by providing access to materials, resources, opportunities, and gathering spaces.

In addition to curating collections of high interest, Dwight Foster Public Library staff coordinated a wide variety of programs and events in 2024 to provide information, education, entertainment, and connection for our community. The program with the highest attendance was the 4K Art Gala with 254 attendees. Through a partnership with the School District of Fort Atkinson, the 4K Art Gala invites 4-year-old kindergarten students and their families to the library on a special evening to view their artwork on display in the children's area. The adult program with the highest attendance was a presentation about Hiking the Appalachian Trail with 66 attendees.



We made several improvements to our space in 2025 with the goal of continuing to foster a welcoming



environment. We replaced brick pavers on the northwest corner of the library's lawn. We also installed a beautiful new luxury vinyl tile floor in the second floor computer lab. Utilizing funding from



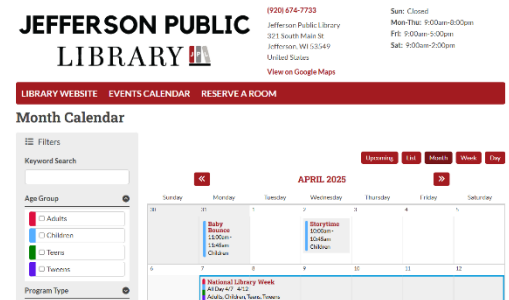
an Improvement and Innovation Grant from the Bridges Library System, library staff purchased portable table lighting for the second floor reading room, large print keyboards, trackball mice, and lighted magnifiers. These technological enhancements all aim to improve accessibility in our space and better meet the needs of our patrons.

The Dwight Foster Public Library weathered several bigger staffing changes in 2024. Former Library Director Eric Robinson left the Dwight Foster Public Library in May, and the Board of Trustees appointed Minetta Lippert as the new Library Director in July. Daphne Sieren joined the Dwight Foster Public Library team as the Youth Services Librarian in October.

Library staff looks forward to continuing to serve our community in 2025.

Jefferson Public Library

Jefferson Public Library had a very exciting 2024. Here are just a few of the highlights. 2024 was the year of technology. Jefferson was awarded the Bridges Innovation and Technology grant for the purchase of a holds lockers system that allows patrons to pick up their holds whenever is convenient for them. Other improvements that were added to the Library with the help from the Bridges Library System include door counters, a hearing loop for the meeting rooms, an events calendar, and a reservation program. The Library also updated all lighting to LED, creating a welcoming environment by brightening up the Library while reducing monthly electricity costs. Wayfinding signage was also added to include Spanish and braille throughout the Library.



Jefferson Public Library also had an engaging year in programs and outreach. Adult programming included yoga and book clubs. Youth programming included the always favorite Storytime, Lego Club, and Baby Bounce. The Library partnered with several local organizations and participated in Goat Fest, Gemuetlichkeit Family Fun Night, Boo Bash, and National Night Out to name a few. Jefferson also visited local schools by doing monthly visits to 4K classes, attending family event nights, and job and collage fairs. The Library also partnered with the Jefferson County Food Pantry as a pick-up site for bread and other dry goods.



Johnson Creek Public Library

In 2024, Johnson Creek Public Library experienced strong growth. Visitor numbers rose by 9.83%, physical circulation increased by 2.03%, and overall circulation (physical and electronic) went up by 3.23%. Program attendance grew by 5.50%, while the Summer Learning Program saw a 23% increase in participation and a 29% rise in program attendees compared to 2023.



Johnson Creek joined Lake Mills, Waterloo, and Watertown in the Running Waters Project of the Library Memory Café. I am happy to partner with one of our Library Board Members, Amy Robb, to host our three cafés a year.

Regular programs continued with a monthly PAWS and READ with therapy dogs, Family Fun, Legos, and Homeschool Craft Buffets. We continued our weekly Storytime and Snack and Chat for 6-12 graders. Our community outreach also continued with weekly visits to Crossroads Kid's Connection Daycare, Crossroads Annual Spring Carnival, Johnson Creek Elementary Literacy Night, Johnson Creek Schools Mental Health Awareness Night, and our community Nickel Night.

Our Friends group continued to support us by sponsoring our Dolly Parton Imagination Library (DPIL), Summer Learning Program, two Crafting with Kayte programs, and our Coffee Station. They also purchased books to hand out at Trick or Treat, two Milwaukee County Zoo passes, a Wisconsin Historical Society pass, and renewed our Schlitz Audubon pass.

Through a generous grant from Bridges Library System, equally generous sponsorship from local business owner, Lyle Wuestenberg, and a lot of hard work from our DPW, we were able to clear out an overgrown area and put in an Outdoor Courtyard for everyone to enjoy.



Thanks to Bridges' financial support we are participating in WiLS Small Library Strategic Planning Cohort. Work on a new Strategic Plan began in 2024 and continues in 2025. Our new plan is on schedule to be in place beginning in 2026.

We had two great part-time employees leave in 2024 to work in other careers. We welcomed part-time employee Baelyn Elkins to our team in November!



L.D. Fargo Public Library (Lake Mills)

L.D. Fargo Library has been moving forward on designing and building a library expansion. Much of 2024 was working with the City administration and Council, architects, and a professional fundraiser to develop a budget, building design, and fundraising campaign. The library building has not expanded since a 1965 addition to the north side and is half the size needed for our 10,000-person service area. Our expansion design has been revised over time from doubling in size with a two-story addition, to our current goal of adding 50% more square footage.

The library continues to focus on programming and building a popular reading collection. Outreach to the community to promote and encourage early literacy includes two weekly story times and regular visits to preschools and kindergartens. Year-round activities of crafting, makerspace, escape rooms, and more bring visitors to the library. Our young adult teen theater program ran for three months and included both teens and adult volunteers who took a play from the script to full production and performance. Children and Teen program attendance for 2024 programs was 4,609.

Our Summer Reading Program (SRP) continues to engage the community, and our program attendance has outgrown our meeting space. We have partnered with the Parks Department to host our larger SRP programs at Wallace Park's outdoor pavilion. SRP is our biggest annual event and continues to drive a spike in library usage from June through August. Adult programs include educational and recreational programs with partnerships with Wisconsin Science Festival and our own book clubs, crafting programs, and Memory Cafes.

The library staff work hard to make the library a welcoming and relaxing place for families, children, and adults. Our study tables are used for meetings, study, remote work, and more. The library is literally the center of Lake Mills and remains the single public space where anyone can visit and be without expectation of commerce or membership. We are regularly thanked by customers for our service.



Powers Memorial Library (Palmyra)

In 2024 the village of Palmyra had a full year sesquicentennial celebration. In the spring, a Japanese Maple tree was planted in front of the library with a ceremony celebrating the oldest and youngest current village residents. March 14th, 2024 marked our inaugural Pi/Pie Day fundraiser. The event was such a success that it has become an annual event. On April 8th we witnessed the solar eclipse. We had 500 pairs of eclipse glasses that I ordered in October of 2023. By April 8, we had people driving in from hours away to get a pair of glasses to see the eclipse. All glasses were distributed.



In early summer we won a grant for a privacy pod that can accommodate up to four people. In May we celebrated the 150th anniversary of Palmyra with cake and events at the library. Our Olympics themed summer reading program included many programs on-site and off. We offered geocaching, paper circuit Olympic torch making, slime creation,

bird identification, a treasure hunt, fort making, a visit to the fire house, and many more popular programs.

We had a special “Junior Librarian”—who was here from North Dakota visiting her grandma for the summer—volunteer extensively to help with the summer festivities. We held our annual end of summer Family Fun Night celebration at the library because of extreme weather conditions.

In the fall we offered pumpkin painting and hosted a Memory café where participants shared thankful moments and made gratitude trees. We wound down the year with our active fiber arts group making 22 book pillows to sell during the holidays with the proceeds going to the Friends of Powers Memorial Library. PML continues to be a hub of the community hosting trivia, open mic/open jams where musicians can come and play or sing, game day, D&D, local authors and much more.



PML continues to strive toward our mission statement of Community, Connection and Collaboration.

Karl Junginger Memorial Library (Waterloo)

Karl Junginger Memorial Library (KJML), located in Waterloo in the far northwestern part of Jefferson County, hosted many amazing programs in 2024. We had a wonderful year partnering with local businesses and county resources to help educate and entertain our community.

The Library celebrated its 30th anniversary in the dedicated Karl Junginger Memorial Library Building with the Evelyn Kading Clark Children's Wing. We are very thankful to both Karl and Evelyn, Waterloo community members, who generously donated in order to have this beautiful building built back in 1994. We are very fortunate to have the Karl Junginger foundation continue to help with our funding, and the Evelyn Kading Trust, which provides all of our youth materials and other youth items.



Our small community is very fortunate to have a couple of larger businesses that support the library. The KJM Library, partnering with Crave Brothers Cheese, hosted a charcuterie board making class and tasting. Crave Brothers Cheese donated all the cheese, meats, and other items needed to taste test and create these beautifully crafted charcuterie boards. It was a well-attended community-centered event, and everyone walked away full and became cheese enthusiasts.



Watertown Public Library

Community building perfectly captures the spirit of our library highlights from 2024.

We launched several new programs as we pivoted to provide innovative offerings for all ages! New additions this year included:

- A Tea Library: A curated collection of teas available for patrons to explore and enjoy.
- Social Media Outreach: We expanded our presence with engaging Facebook Reels. Staff created a variety of entertaining videos to highlight library services—and we even went viral!
- The Silent Book Club: A designated time for people to quietly read together while enjoying light snacks.
- A Book Lover's Retreat: A cozy, after-hours event celebrating books and the joy of reading.
- Thrifters and Pickers: A roundtable discussion group for patrons who love thrifting and collecting antiques.
- 500 Books Before Middle School: A program encouraging independent reading for children in Kindergarten through 5th grade.

We also welcomed several special visitors throughout the year, including Llama Llama, Anna and Elsa, Bluey, Waldo, a lamb from Jelli's Farm, and ballet dancers from the Milwaukee Ballet.

Our Homeschool Tuesday program was a standout, culminating in two exciting events: the Homeschool Art Gallery Show and a Science Fair.

We take pride in our beautiful library and are continually exploring new ways to better serve our community.



Irvin L. Young Memorial Library (Whitewater)

2024 Highlights

- Our mocktail program was featured in the article, “Spirit-Free Spaces: Libraries Shake Things Up with Mocktail Programs” in the January/February 2024 issue of *American Libraries* Magazine.
- We collaborated with over 25 community organizations and individuals to provide over 120 library programs and events for children, teens, adults, and all ages.
- Staff members served on the library’s building committee, the ALSC Programs and Services Recognition committee, the CSLP Early Literacy Manual committee, the Whitewater City leadership committee, the Whitewater LEADS board, and the WLA Children’s Book Awards committee.
- We created and implemented a monthly library newsletter.
- We implemented a new events calendar and room reservation software which makes it easier for patrons to find events and book our rooms and makerspace equipment.
- For Library Lovers’ Month in February, we created a giving tree where patrons could choose an item to donate, which resulted in many donations that offset costs for library programming.
- Our Itty Bitty Art Show in March had 44 community participants.
- Our library board approved a Land Acknowledgement Statement and Commitment to Action, which includes a new tab on the library’s website with links to resources about local Indigenous history (including book lists and highlights from our library’s collection) and current issues for further research and education. This page will be continually updated as needed.
- We purchased new equipment for the Makerspace with a Bridges grant, including an embroidery machine, upgraded scanner, a sublimation printer, heat press, and printmaking supplies.
- Our Summer Reading Program was a success. From June 10-July 20 we had 251 youth participants, 123 adult participants, 397 Bingo sheets turned in for prizes, 909 attendees at library events, and 10,415 material checkouts.
- The Library Expansion & Renovation Project began on September 9th and a groundbreaking event was held on October 5th.

