

2026

ANNUAL REPORT

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Northern
Lights
Library
Network

Expanding equitable access to library resources, information, and professional development across northwest and west-central Minnesota



Letter from the President and and Executive Director

Dear Partners and Community Members,

On behalf of the Northern Lights Library Network (NLLN) Governing Board and staff, we are pleased to present the Fiscal Year 2026 Annual Report. This report details our collective efforts to advance the mission of expanding equitable access to library resources, information, and professional development across the 23 counties of north-central, northwest, and west-central Minnesota.

FY2026 was a year of significant achievement and growth for NLLN. Through the dedication of our member libraries and the support of the Minnesota Legislature and the Minnesota Department of Education, we have strengthened the vital links between public, academic, school, tribal, and special libraries in our region.

Our work is focused on tangible, community-centered outcomes. This past year, we celebrated the expansion of access to digital materials through Hoopla, the revitalization of school library collections with hundreds of new books, and the crucial support of interlibrary loan and bookmobile services that connect our most rural communities to the world. We were proud to sponsor two major professional development events—the Heritage Education Workshop and the AI Innovation Summit—which brought together nearly 150 librarians and educators to learn and collaborate.

We also had the distinct honor of recognizing two pillars of our library community, Charlie Lindberg and Lina Belar, with Life Achievement Awards for their decades of extraordinary service and cultural preservation. Their contributions embody the spirit of collaboration and dedication that defines the Northern Lights Library Network.

None of this would be possible without the collaborative spirit of our 300 member libraries and the expert leadership of our Executive Director, Kathy Brock Enger. Together, we continue to ensure that libraries remain vibrant hubs of connection, community, and lifelong learning for all citizens in our region.

We invite you to review the accomplishments detailed in this report.

Sincerely,



Joe Gould President,
NLLN Governing Board



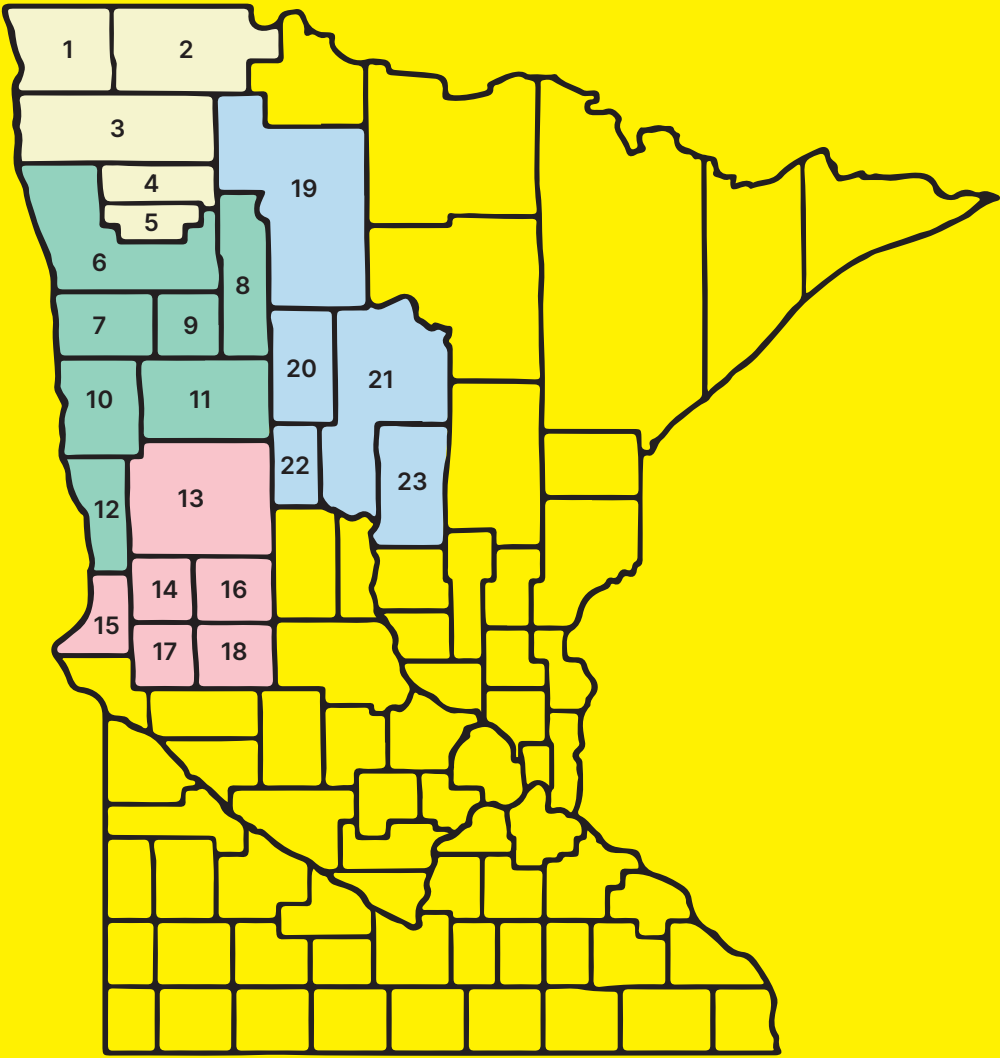
Kathy Brock Enger,
System Administrator / Executive Director

Who We Are

The **Northern Lights Library Network (NLLN)** is one of seven multicounty, multitype library systems in Minnesota, mandated by Minnesota Statute 134.351. We serve a vast geographic region of 26,950 square miles, encompassing 23 counties across north-central, northwest, and west-central Minnesota.

23 Counties Served //

Kittson	1
Roseau	2
Marshall	3
Pennington	4
Red Lake	5
Polk	6
Norman	7
Clearwater	8
Mahnomen	9
Clay	10
Becker	11
Wilkin	12
Otter Tail	13
Grant	14
Traverse	15
Douglas	16
Stevens	17
Pope	18
Beltrami	19
Hubbard	20
Cass	21
Wadena	22
Crow Wing	23



Minnesota

300 Member Libraries

Our members include four regional public library systems; two University of Minnesota campuses; four Minnesota State Colleges and Universities institutions; numerous private colleges; three tribal colleges and the Maamigin Achigaazo Community Library at White Earth; and a rich variety of special libraries in museums, county law libraries, hospitals, churches, and early childhood programs.

Northern Lights Library Network

Academic ●

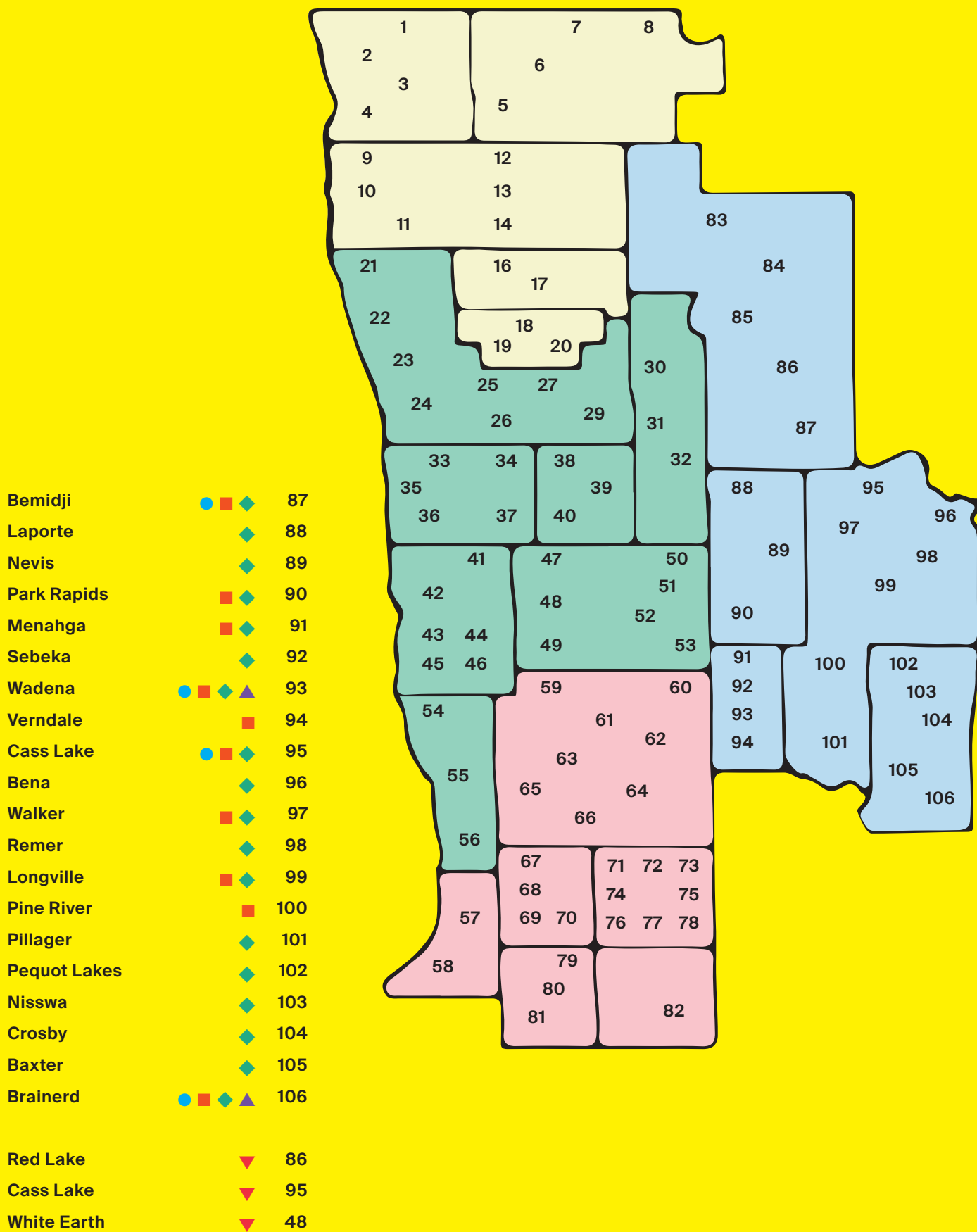
Public ■

(185 in 79 districts) School ◆

Special ▲

Tribal Nation ▼

Lancaster	◆	1	Glyndon	◆	44
Hallock	■◆	2	Hawley	■◆	45
Kennedy	◆	3	Barnesville	■	46
Karlstad	■◆	4	Lake Park	◆	47
Greenbush	◆	5	Audubon	◆	48
Badger	◆	6	Detroit Lakes	●■◆▲	49
Roseau	■◆	7	Ponsford	◆	50
Warroad	■◆	8	White Earth	◆▲	51
Stephen	◆	9	Frazer	■◆	52
Argyle	◆	10	Frazee	■◆	53
Warren	■◆	11	Rothsay	■◆	54
Middle River	◆	12	Breckenridge	■	55
Newfolden	◆	13	Campbell	◆	56
Grygla	■◆	14	Wheaton	■◆	57
Goodridge	◆	15	Browns Valley	■◆	58
Thief River Falls	●■◆▲	16	Pelican Rapids	■◆	59
Plummer	◆	17	Perham	■◆▲	60
Red Lake Falls	◆	18	New York Mills	■◆	61
Oklee	◆	19	Henning	◆	62
McIntosh	■	20	Underwood	◆	63
East Grand Forks	●◆	21	Battle Lake	◆	64
Fisher	◆	22	Fergus Falls	●■◆▲	65
Crookston	●■◆	23	Parkers Prairie	◆	66
Climax	■◆	24	Ashby	◆	67
Erskine	■◆	25	Elbow Lake	■◆	68
Fertile	◆	26	Barrett	◆	69
Mentor	■	27	Herman	◆	70
Fosston	■◆	28	Evansville	■◆	71
Mahnomen	◆	29	Brandon	■◆	72
Gonvick	■	30	Millerville	◆	73
Clearbrook	◆	31	Garfield	◆	74
Bagley	◆	32	Carlos	◆	75
Halstad	■	33	Alexandria	●■◆▲	76
Gary	◆	34	Kensington	◆	77
Hendrum	■	35	Osakis	◆▲	78
Ada	■◆	36	Morris	●■◆	79
Twin Valley	■◆	37	Chokio	◆	80
Naytahwaush	◆	38	Hancock	■◆	81
Waubun	◆	39	Glenwood	■◆	82
Ogema	■◆	40	Ponemah	◆	83
Ulen	■◆	41	Kelliher	◆	84
Moorhead	●■◆▲	42	Red Lake	●■◆▲	85
Dilworth	◆	43	Blackduck	■◆	86



_Mission Statement

**Expanding
equitable access to
library resources,
information,
and professional
development
across northwest
and west-central
Minnesota.**

Overall, NLLN's FY2026 activities strengthened access to library resources, enhanced professional development opportunities, expanded digital and physical collections, facilitated statewide collaboration, and improved communication services for libraries and communities throughout the region.

FY 2026 At a Glance_

21

Continuing education scholarships awarded (up from 18 in FY2025)

224

New book titles purchased to support library collections

3,165

Digital circulations through supported eBook and eAudio services

11,500

Communications distributed to librarians and member organizations statewide

29,648

Website visits (up from 15,961 in FY2025)

119,093

Website hits (up from 84,419 in FY2025)

24,017

Unique website visitors (up from 13,618 in FY2025)

Sharing Resources Among All Participating Libraries

“The Bookmobile stop is busy and efficient.” – Erin Smith, Viking Library System Director

Bookmobile & Interlibrary Loan Support

NLLN provided funding to the Viking Library System to support the Campbell-Tintah School Bookmobile stop and interlibrary loan services.

From Erin Smith, Viking Library System Director:

“The bookmobile Campbell-Tintah Public School Stop continues to be a vibrant Bookmobile stop for Viking Library System. VLS Bookmobile Drivers have established a good connection with the school’s teachers and administration, resulting in a stop that is busy and efficient. We especially appreciate our longstanding collaboration with Lynette Schwaerl, 7-12 Language Arts Instructor and School Librarian. The Bookmobile stops at Campbell-Tintah Public School twice a month during the school year.”

Outcomes:

Between July 1, 2025 and June 30, 2026, the Bookmobile stopped at the school 15 times and 847 items were checked out at Campbell-Tintah School.

In calendar year 2026 (VLS’s fiscal year), VLS budgeted \$4,175.00 of NLLN’s \$5,000.00 contribution to support the Campbell-Tintah Public School stop. The expenses covered include a portion (based on percentage of total stops) of the Bookmobile Department’s 2026 operating budgeted staff wages and benefits, collection purchases, communications costs, gasoline, public relations expenses, and vehicle maintenance and replacement.

As the six-county region’s Interlibrary Loan service hub, Viking Library System connects its Bookmobile and member libraries to library resources available throughout Minnesota and beyond. By paying a portion (\$825.00) of VLS’s ILL staff salaries, NLLN funding helps Viking Library System provide, innovate, and improve its ILL service to its member libraries, schools, and area community colleges. Support of these services helps us meet our vision of “providing local access to the world.”

Thank you!

Sincerely,

Erin Smith, VLS Director



Who Was Served //

**Campbell School and residents in the Campbell region;
all libraries and people in the Viking Library System.**

Sharing Resources Digital Access & School Collections

Online Resource Directories // Program

NLLN developed, updated, and made available the Directory of Cultural and Historical Organizations and Museums and the Legislative Directory on nlln.org. These resources enhance community access to information about cultural organizations and elected officials.

Digital Access Through Hoopla // Program

Remote access eliminates barriers for this widely dispersed geographic region where citizens drive a distance to access physical materials. NLLN funded Hoopla subscriptions for Wheaton Community Library and Browns Valley Public Library.

Wheaton Public Library (July 1, 2025 – June 30, 2026):

- Total Circulations: 1,446
- Total Cost of Circulations: \$3,459.16

Browns Valley Public Library (July 1, 2025 – June 30, 2026):

- Total Circulations: 872
- Unique Titles Accessed: 382

Hoopla gives free access to audiobooks, eBooks, comics, movies, TV, magazines, or music everywhere someone has a screen—on their computer, phone, car, or TV.

Who Was Served //

Patrons in the Wheaton and Browns Valley library regions.

Collection Support for Elementary Schools // Program

NLLN purchased 224 new books for four school libraries facing budget constraints.

Campbell Elementary Library:

40 books purchased, costing \$1,191.83. The elementary library was moved and redesigned.

Alexandria Public Schools (Miltona, Garfield, and Voyager Schools):

198 books purchased, totaling \$3,881.92.

From Christi Smith, Licensed Media Specialist for Alexandria Public Schools:

“Miltona Science Magnet: As an Environmental Learning School, our nonfiction section is extremely outdated. We also have a high interest in growing our fiction collection with books that have a science and environment background. These rural schools have had the lowest budgets for a few years. This is immediately noticed when entering our Media Centers. Major updating and new materials are needed.”

Osakis Public School:

66 books purchased, costing \$1,346.59.

Who Was Served //

Children attending Campbell School, Alexandria Public Schools, and Osakis Public School.

Facilities & Community Support // Program

NLLN provided financial support for The Loop community library project in Moorhead and the Friends of the Moorhead Public Library campaign for their new facility.

These contributions support the creation of modern, vibrant community hubs that serve as centers for connection and lifelong learning.

Who Was Served //

Citizens in the Moorhead region and throughout the NLLN region.

Strategic Leadership & Governance

Governing Board Leadership // Program

NLLN's 15-member Governing Board, representing all library types, met quarterly to guide the organization's strategic direction.

The board consists of representatives from four regional public library systems made up of citizen members and county commissioners; academic librarians from Minnesota State University Moorhead (MSUM) and the University of Minnesota Crookston; public librarians from Thief River Falls, Pelican Rapids, and Wheaton; school librarians from Morris and the Alexandria area; special library representation from the Beltrami County Law Library.

This collaborative governance ensures that NLLN's programs and services are aligned with the needs of all 300 member libraries and the communities they serve.

Who Was Served //

Libraries and librarians throughout the NLLN region and the State of Minnesota.

Executive Director Professional Engagement & Continuing Education // Program

The Executive Director attended over 60 regional and statewide meetings and maintained memberships in 5 state and local organizations. This engagement keeps NLLN at the forefront of library trends, facilitates collaboration on statewide initiatives, and advocates for the interests of all types of libraries in Minnesota.

The Executive Director also attended 5 conferences and taught one course to 15 doctoral students at Minnesota State University Moorhead. This professional development ensures NLLN leadership remains current with library trends and best practices, directly benefiting the libraries and communities in the region.

Who Was Served //

Libraries and librarians throughout the NLLN region and the State of Minnesota; citizens throughout the NLLN region.

Investing In Library Staff Professional Development

Continuing Education Scholarships // Program

NLLN awarded 21 scholarships (up from 18 in FY2025) to librarians from public, school, academic, and special libraries for professional development training.

These scholarships support the professional growth of library staff, ensuring they have the skills to provide excellent service and embrace evolving roles.

Who Was Served //

21 librarians from public, school, academic, and special libraries in the NLLN region.

Sponsoring Signature Events // Program

NLLN sponsored the Heritage Education Workshop and the AI Innovation Summit at Minnesota State University Moorhead.

These events were attended by approximately 150 librarians, educators, and community members. They provided critical, timely training on cutting-edge topics and cultural preservation, directly benefiting the professionals who serve our communities.

Who Was Served //

150 librarians, educators, and citizens in the NLLN region.

Professional Consultation Visits // Program

NLLN provided six professional consultation visits to libraries, including advice from a media specialist and an architect on collection development and facility planning.

These consultations provided hands-on, expert support to help libraries optimize their spaces and collections to better serve their patrons.

Who Was Served //

Libraries in the NLLN region.

Heritage Education Workshop // Program

Description: Sponsored the Heritage Education Workshop at Minnesota State University Moorhead (MSUM).

Goal: Development of a delivery system for programs and services.

Who Was Served //

95 librarians, educators, and citizens in the NLLN region.

Online A.I. Conversation with Alexander Gulbrandsen // Program

Description: Delivered an online A.I. conversation with Alexander Gulbrandsen, a Norwegian software engineer with a background in cybersecurity, systems, and networking who is building explainable, AI-driven career-intelligence systems—designing semantic graph models and data pipelines for skill-based occupation matching, gap analysis, and personalized training recommendations.

Goal: Development of a delivery system for programs and services.

Who Was Served //

6 librarians in the NLLN region.

AI Innovation Summit: Learning in the Age of AI // Program

Description: Supported the AI Innovation Summit: Learning in the Age of AI at Minnesota State University Moorhead (MSUM) that included high school students, educators, business community, and faculty. NLLN sponsored educator, student, and business attendance at the summit with a keynote and breakout session covering pedagogy, critical AI literacy, innovative teaching, and practical frameworks for evaluating AI tools.

Goal: Development of a delivery system for programs and services.

Who Was Served //

115 people in the NLLN region.

Native American Literature Online Learning Module // Program

Description: Sponsored the online learning module, “Native American Literature: American History and Culture for students and teachers” through Northwest Service Cooperative (NWSC), presented by Dr. J. from the Leadership & Learning program at Minnesota State University Moorhead (MSUM). The training seeks to align with MDE’s Indigenous Education for All by developing Tribally centered and professional development resources and making them accessible. The modules are free to participants. <https://nwsc-learning.teachable.com/p/native-american-literature>

Goal: Development of a delivery system for programs and services.

Who Was Served //

279 librarians, educators, and citizens throughout the State of Minnesota.

Destiny Library Manager Training // Program

Description: In collaboration with Northwest Service Cooperative (NWSC), Gina Drellack, and Glenn Heinecke, sponsored a free in-person Destiny Library Manager training for 12 librarians in the region on Monday, December 8.

Goal: Development of a delivery system for programs and services.

Who Was Served //

12 librarians in the NLLN region.

ISTE Certification Reimbursement Program // Program

Description: International Society of Technology Educators (ISTE) Certification Reimbursement Program. The Multicounty Multitype Library Systems reimburse library professionals for costs to pursue professional development and educator certification. The ISTE Certification Reimbursement Program is part of this program. Participants were reimbursed for their payment to ISTE. No other costs incurred will be reimbursed with this scholarship. This program is open to licensed School Library Media Specialists working in Minnesota schools or students in a Minnesota graduate program that leads to licensure as a School Library Media Specialist.

Goal: Development of a delivery system for programs and services.

Who Was Served //

School librarians in the State of Minnesota.

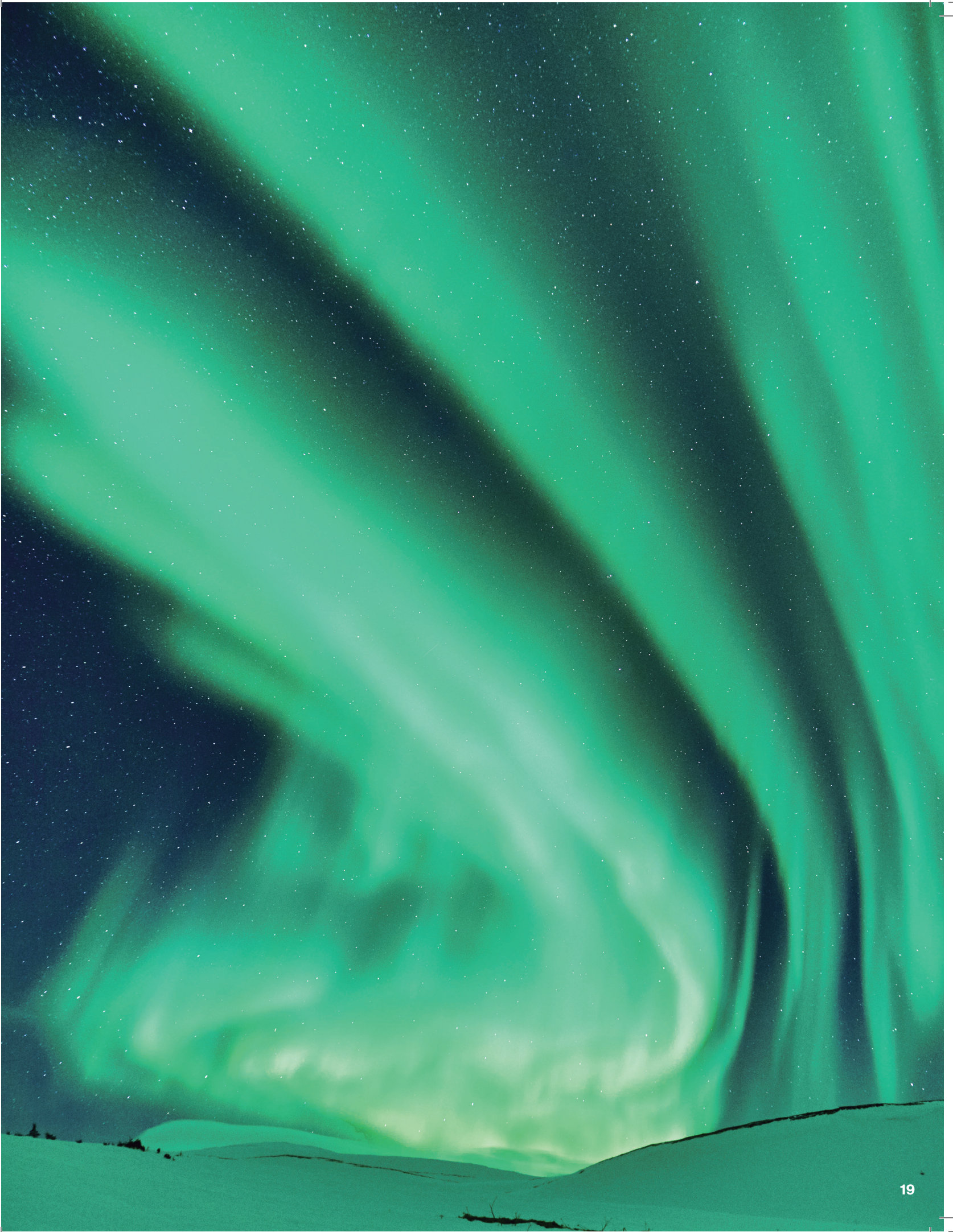
MCMT Media Specialist Licensure Scholarships // Program

Description: MCMT provided 11 scholarships to teachers seeking media specialist licensure. 8 teachers are attending St. Cloud State University; 3 are attending The University of St. Catherine.

Goal: Development of a delivery system for programs and services.

Who Was Served //

Schools in the State of Minnesota.



Life Achievement Awards

NLLN honored two pillars of the library community with Life Achievement Awards for their decades of extraordinary service and cultural preservation.

Charlie Lindberg – Profile

Charlie (Linda) Lindberg grew up in Robbinsdale, Minnesota, excelling at violin in the area youth orchestra. After graduating from high school, she attended Gustavus Adolphus College where she met the love of her life, Bill Lindberg. They both taught in suburban schools until moving to Bill's family farm in Kennedy, Minnesota, in 1973.

At that time, Charlie went to work to open the Hallock Public Library, which she supports to this day through board membership and the Library Friends, which over the years has raised funds to support the library well.

While raising her two sons, Charlie completed her Library Media Master's degree from St. Cloud State University. She served as teacher and media specialist with Kittson Central School District for most of her career. At Kittson Central, Charlie began a STEM group and facilitated ongoing robotics training. She built a beautiful new library at Kittson Central and developed a refined collection that circulated frequently. An avid reader, Charlie was adept at advising her students in their reading choices.

Charlie was instrumental in bringing the NorthStar Library Consortium into existence at a time when school libraries needed online library catalogs. As a part of a Northern Lights Library Network (NLLN) team, Charlie visited libraries throughout the state to bring school library catalogs online. Today, over 100 rural libraries in the state belong to the NorthStar Library Consortium.

In addition to serving on the Hallock Library Board, Charlie served on the Northwest Regional Library Board (NWRL) and the NLLN Governing Board, often serving as an officer. Charlie's thoughtful insights resulted in valuable decision-making for libraries throughout the Northern Lights Library Network Region.

From 1973 to the present, Charlie has been a valued member of the library community in Minnesota. Her contributions to citizens in the region through library service are greatly appreciated, and recognition for this work is well-deserved.

“Charlie's thoughtful insights resulted in valuable decision-making for libraries throughout the NLLN region.”

Lina Belar – Profile

Lina Belar has served the Northern Lights Library Network (NLLN) region and the State of Minnesota for over fifty years.

Early on, she was responsible for starting the In Their Own Words (ITow) Museum in Perham, as well as the History Museum of East Otter Tail County. Lina also served as Executive Director of the Wadena County Historical Society. All three museums became special members of Northern Lights Library Network.

Lina received her education at Columbia University. The In Their Own Words Museum documents the oral histories of America's veterans and provides a visual experience of wartime life. For instance, there is a WWI bunker that is a true-to-life duplication of American soldiers' combat experience in France. Lina was responsible for bringing the full electronic and physical reality of the museum to fruition, often contributing her own resources to make the museum a reality.

Lina is a distinguished poet, having published several books, including *At the Crossroads* and *Rural Score*. Her new book in press is *Rift in the Universe*. During the COVID pandemic, Lina facilitated the publication of poetry collections from Minnesota poets, *Poems of Hope and Reassurance* and *More Poems of Hope and Reassurance*. Her poems were translated in Slovenian and celebrated in a ceremony at the Triglav National Park, hosted by the Slovenian government.

Lina has also published many articles in regional newspapers and contributed articles to the Minnesota Historical Society, including *Little Round Hill Trading Site*; *Cadotte Trading Post*; and *Joseph Reaume's Trading Post*.

In 1999, Lina received the Perham Area Chamber of Commerce Leadership Award and in 2000, the Minnesota Library Association's Distinguished Achievement Category II Award. The Heartland Symphony Orchestra has named the Second Trumpet Chair in honor of Lina.

For many years, Lina served on the board of Northern Lights Library Network, representing Special Libraries in the region. She has always been kind-hearted and brilliant in her willingness to share ideas that bring humanity to our collective lived experience. Lina is deserving of this recognition for her outstanding work preserving Minnesota collections.

“Lina has always been kind-hearted and brilliant in her willingness to share ideas that bring humanity to our collective lived experience.”

Building The Backbone Infrastructure & Systems

NorthStar Library Consortium Union Catalog // Program

NLLN continued to support the NorthStar Library Consortium Union Catalog, providing shared online catalog access via Follett Destiny.

This service supports 112 school libraries throughout Minnesota. It provides cost-effective, centralized access to library catalogs for rural schools, enabling resource sharing and improved discovery for students and educators.

Visit the catalog at: northstarcatalog.org

Who Was Served //

112 school libraries in the State of Minnesota.

Multi-Platform Communications // Program

NLLN strengthened communication through its website, email, listservs, and social media.

Website:

- Unique Visitors: 24,017
- Number of Visits: 29,648
- Hits: 119,093

Listserv:

90 messages sent to public libraries, special libraries, academic libraries, the NorthStar Library Consortium, and libraries and legislators throughout Minnesota.

In total, approximately 11,500 communications were distributed to librarians and member organizations statewide, ensuring that all members are informed, connected, and have access to critical professional resources and updates.

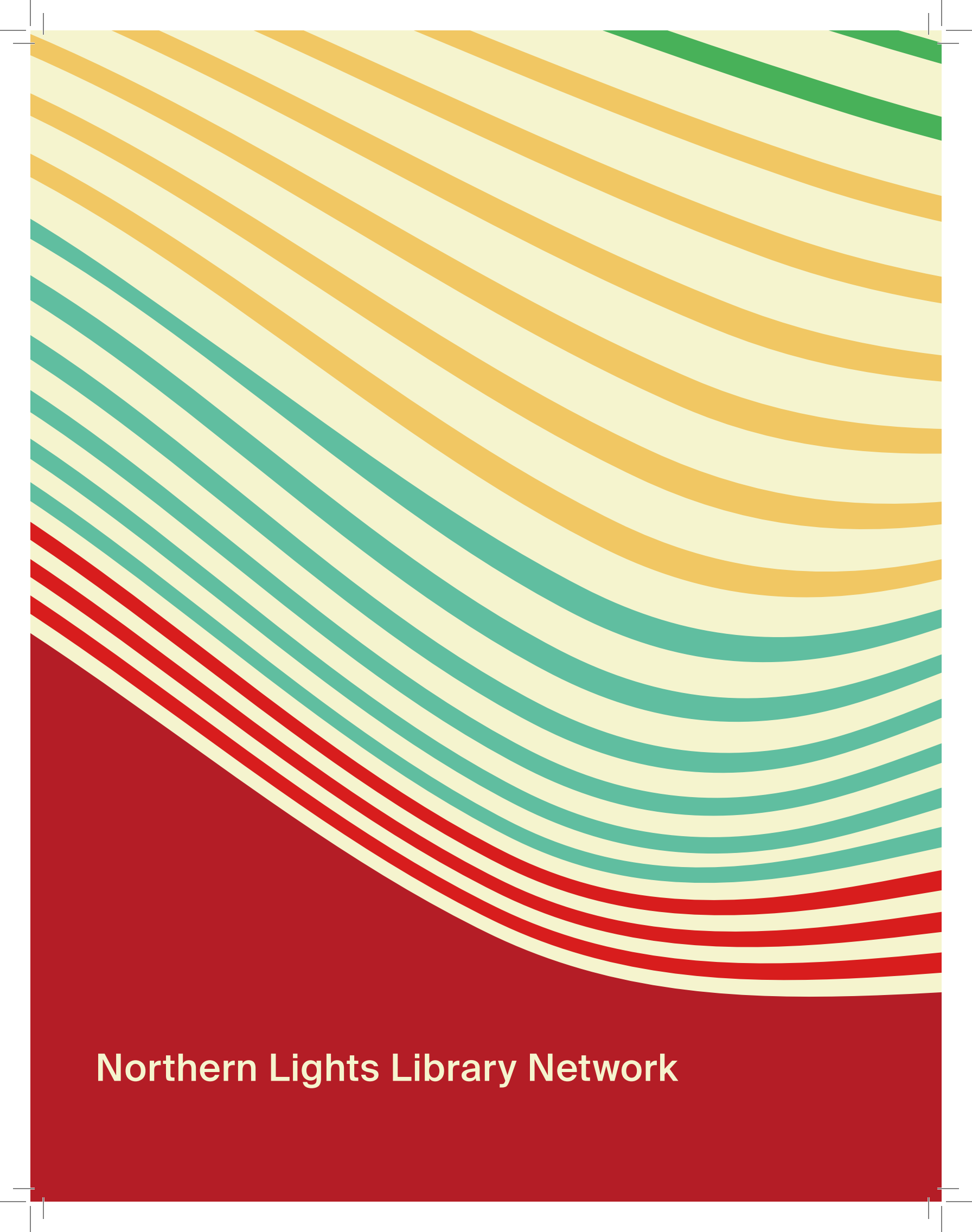
Who Was Served //

Libraries in the NLLN region and throughout the State of Minnesota.

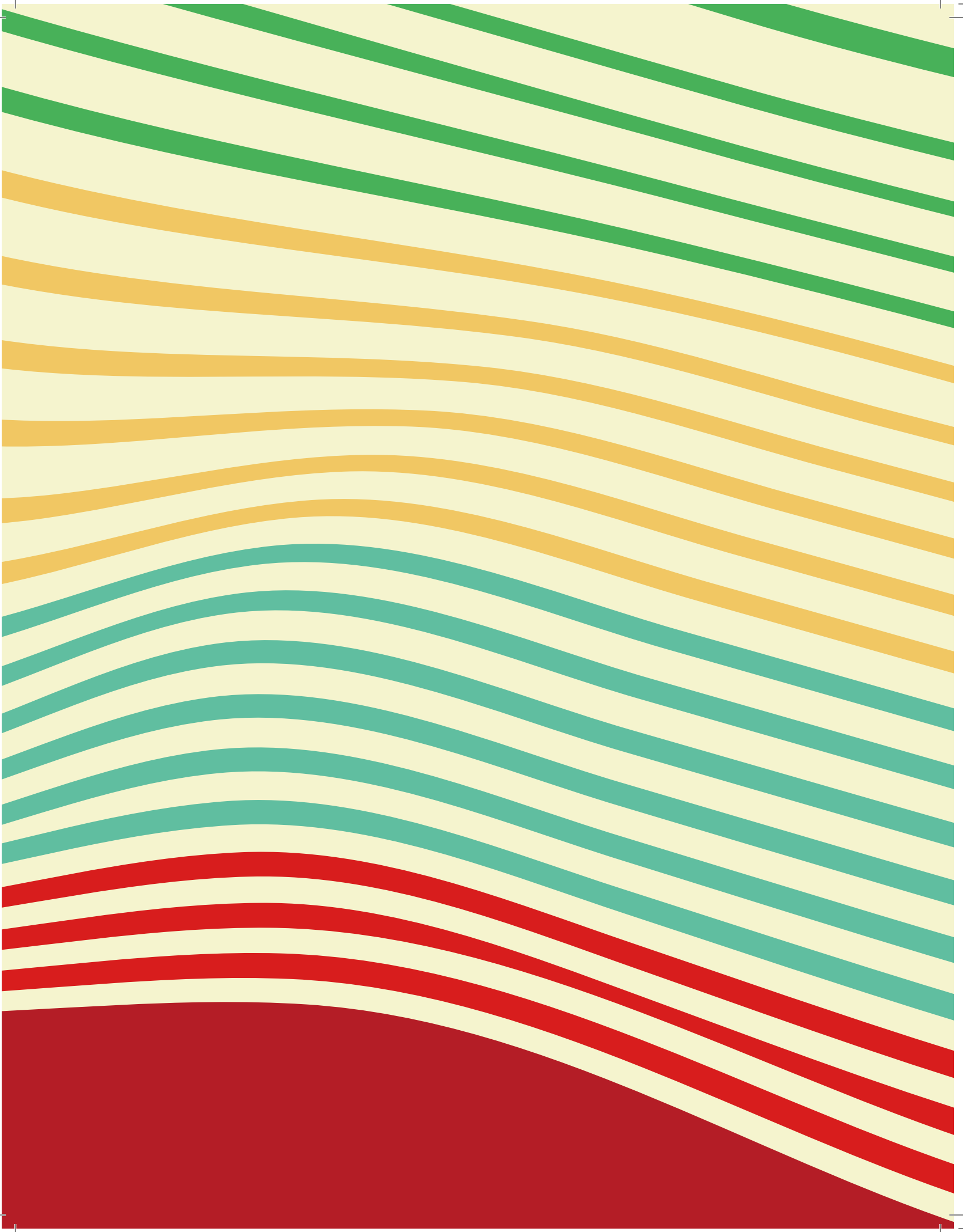


Program Outcomes

Name of Measure		FY25 Data	FY26 Data
Participants at training and workshops Continuing education scholarships eBook, eAudio circulations		731	588
		18	21
		3,200 circulations	3,165 circulations
Number of titles purchased to support library collections		—	224
Number of communications with NLLN members and librarians throughout the State of Minnesota through email, listserv, social media (approximate)		10,500	11,500
nlln.org	website	visits	29,648
		hits	119,093
		visitors	24,017

The image features a series of wavy, horizontal lines in yellow, green, and red, set against a dark red background. The lines are arranged in a way that suggests a stylized landscape or a network of paths. The yellow lines are at the top, followed by green, and then red at the bottom. The lines are wavy and curved, creating a sense of movement and flow. The overall composition is abstract and modern.

Northern Lights Library Network



Certification

The information contained in this report is true and correct to the best of our knowledge.



Joe Gould President,
NLLN Governing Board
September 19, 2026



Kathy Brock Enger
System Administrator / Executive Director
September 19, 2026

For a current list of NLLN Governing Board members, visit nlln.org

Northern Lights Library Network (NLLN)

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