

DIRECTOR'S REPORT
Northern Lights Library Network (NLLN)
Kathy B. Enger, Executive Director
December 13, 2025

Welcome to New Northern Lights Library Network Governing Board Members

Welcome to Christine Ayala-Zierke, NLLN School Library Representative, Morris Public Schools; Kayla Kami-Decker, NLLN Special Library Representative, Beltrami County Law Library.

Move from Bremer to Old National

On October 20, 2025, NLLN transitioned from Bremer Bank to Old National Bank as Bremer Bank was sold to Old National Bank.

Online Bookkeeping and Accounting with Olsen Thielen CPAs

NLLN continues to work with Olsen Thielen CPA to migrate to online bookkeeping and accounting, along with guidance from NLLN's auditor, Carpenter, Evert, and Associates. Thank you to Ronda Higgins and Magen Koep at Olsen Thielen and to Marc Colin at Carpenter, Evert, and Associates for their ongoing accounting expertise.

Paid Family and Medical Leave (PFML)

The Paid Family and Medical Leave (PFML) Act will go into effect in Minnesota the beginning of 2026. Paid Family and Medical Leave is a Minnesota payroll tax that gives Minnesotans up to 12 weeks of family leave and 12 weeks of medical leave per year, with a limit of 20 weeks, altogether. The maximum amount a person may receive is \$1,423 per week.

Since it is a payroll tax, NLLN will be required to pay the tax. NLLN can pay 100% of the tax or share the cost with the Executive Director (NLLN's sole employee) 50% - 50%. Since NLLN is a small agency, it will only be taxed at a .66% rate, instead of .88%. Calculation for NLLN: 100% NLLN, total cost to NLLN approximately \$700 ($\$106,000 \times .66\% = \699.60); 50/50 NLLN/Employee split NLLN cost approximately \$350 ($\$106,000 \times .66\% = \$699.60 / 2 = \349.80). This is an annual cost.

Grant Request Form

As NLLN sponsors library programs and services through grants in the NLLN region, two forms will be required for processing and payment:

Northern Lights Library Network Grant Request

Date:

Name, Address, and Website of Organization:

Requester Name, Title, Email, Phone Number:

Requested Amount:

Stated Need:

Main Objective of the Program or Service:

Specific Desired Outcomes:

Budget:

Summary of Program or Service When it is Completed:

List of Items Purchased and the Costs:

****Attach Invoices**

Date of NLLN Governing Board Approval:

Strategic Plan

The strategic plan is underway. Enough qualitative data has been collected to analyze and develop a valid survey to be sent to NLLN membership.

MCMT Meetings

The multicounty, multitype director's meetings have moved from bimonthly meetings to monthly meetings. Executive Director, Kathy Enger's chair duties wrap-up at the end of 2025.

Membership List

Stacy Voeller, Associate Professor and Director of University Writing & Electronic Resources Librarian at the Livingston Lord Library at Minnesota State University (MSM) is updating NLLN's membership list.

Grant for Alexandria Public Schools Library Collection

From Christi Smith, Media Specialist, Alexandria Public Schools: “I wanted to highlight how our K-8 schools could really use funding to expand our libraries. While our GMC rural locations are the ones with the most need, all of our schools are in a time of budget cuts. I always want to ensure that our libraries are staying relevant and meeting the needs of our students. here is a breakdown of areas we are lacking at each site:

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. [Request for \$2024.47 for 117 books through Follett.]

Garfield GES and Carlos Elementary Schools: 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. [Request for \$853.09 for 56 books through Follett.]

Woodland Elementary School: This is our newest elementary school and it has taken years to build the library. While we have grown it substantially, there is still a long way to go.

Voyager and Lincoln Elementary Schools: Our strongest libraries in the district, but their budgets have been cut quite a bit. [Request for \$1004.36 for 50 books through Follett.]

Discovery Middle School: seeking funding to address critical needs in high-demand collection areas, primarily graphic novels and nonfiction to expand its outdated and limited inventory. An up-to-date graphic novel collection is essential for fostering literacy and engaging diverse readers. Concurrently, the nonfiction collection, particularly in rapidly changing subjects like science, technology, and career development, is in need of refreshment. Ensuring that students have access to current, accurate, and diverse nonfiction materials is crucial for supporting lifelong learning, and educational pursuits.

Thank you for your time and consideration, Christi Smith”

Total Request: \$3,881.92.

Executive Director, Kathy Enger, visited with Christi at Discovery Middle School in September and is serving on Christi's graduate committee as she completes a Master's and Media Specialist Licensure at St. Cloud State University (SCSU).

A.I. Innovation Summit at Minnesota State University Moorhead (MSUM) Final Summary

NLLN was a sponsor of the AI Innovation Summit, October 27-29 held in the Comstock Memorial Union on the campus of Minnesota State University Moorhead (MSUM). Students from Grades 9 – 12 were invited to attend the last day of the conference and educators from Fergus Falls, Detroit Lakes, and Dilworth-Glyndon-Felton received release time to attend from Northern Lights Library Network.

Information from Karen Qualey was sent to NLLN's lists:

“Minnesota State Moorhead is hosting a three-day AI Innovation Summit, Oct. 27-29 in the Comstock Memorial Union, 615 14th St. S., Moorhead. The second day is an event specifically for educators in K-12 and higher education.

Learning in the Age of AI, 8:30 a.m. to 3 p.m. Tuesday, Oct. 28, will feature speakers from Minnesota Generative AI Alliance for Education (MNGAIA), several K-12 districts, and Minnesota State universities. The cost is \$15 and includes CEUs. See a full schedule and register at <https://www.msumfoundation.org/e/ai-innovation-summit>.

On Wednesday, Oct. 29, students in grades 9-12 can participate in the **AI High School Challenge**. Students learn about AI from top industry experts and educators and tackle solving real-world community issues using the latest AI tools. Prizes will be awarded to the winning school and students, including scholarships. Schools can register a team of students or students can register individually at <https://apply.mnstate.edu/register/AIHighSchoolChallenge>.”

32 business partners participated the first day and 83 educators participated the second.

MOORHEAD, Minn. (KVRR) — “As part of MSUM’s AI with Purpose initiative, the university is diving deep into learning about the technology with an AI Summit.

‘It is a developing technology, but it is also creating a major impact in not only business and education, but also in society. And we fear that which we do not understand. So it’s important that we understand it to recognize whether it is truly a force for good or is it something that we should really manage more and have a deeper understanding before we implement it into our daily lives,’ said David Groth, Director of Engineering for Advanced Business Methods AI.

ABM AI and MSUM have partnered together for the summit, the first one out of many planned future events, according to Dr. Joshua Reidy, the Executive Director for MSUM’s Institute for Applied AI. It brings together business leaders, teachers, and students to learn how AI has improved the workload and how to use it.

‘I want them to appreciate what AI is, how they can best use AI, and how, frankly, they can be more efficient and more effective at any given sector. Be it business, be it education, be it any other areas, such as nonprofit,’ said Dr. Joshua Riedy, Executive Director for Minnesota State Moorhead Institute for Applied Artificial Intelligence.

While AI is changing every single day, the team at ABM AI says that it is worth learning about the tool and using it to advance the work that you do.

‘Prompting is really the key, the way to get a response that you want. And so really working on making sure that you input a prompt is concise, specific, and really hones in on the information you’re looking for,’ said Jess Bartelt, Solution Architect at Advanced Business Methods AI.”

(<https://www.kvrr.com/2025/10/27/msum-hosts-first-ever-ai-summit-for-business-leaders-teachers-and-students/>).

Licensed Media Specialists Scholarships Update

The process for granting scholarships for licensed teachers to become licensed media specialists is underway. The MCMT Directors are hiring a consultant to manage the scholarships.

Conversations with Superintendent Cass Lake Update

More information to follow as the situation unfolds: the Area Learning Center with Cass Lake Public Schools is moving from a building in Cass Lake to the old elementary school building in Cass Lake. The elementary school has an existing library that teachers at the school would like to keep for the students and community. Thank you to NLLN Governing Board member, Joe Gould, Kitchigami Regional Library Representative for bringing this opportunity to the NLLN Governing Board at the September 20, 2025, meeting. The board approved support for the library for \$10,000 this year and \$10,000 next year.

The Loop Update

NLLN sponsored \$15,000 for support of the Moorhead Public Library and Community Center and will continue with support for a second year at the same amount. As a result of the support, Northern Lights Library Network will be featured on the donation wall of the new library. Thank you to Chizuko Shastri, NLLN's representative from the Lake Agassiz Regional Library (LARL), for bringing this to the NLLN Governing Board at the September 20, 2025, meeting. Thank you to the NLLN Governing Board for supporting the Moorhead Public Library.

Wifi Hotspots for Students at Park Rapids Schools Update

Laurie Conzemius, Park Rapids Area Schools District Media Specialist, is currently working with Verizon Wireless district partners to develop unlimited-data access for a yearly cost of \$2,200. Along with the purchase of 10 devices at \$150/each, the first-year costs are \$3,720. Yearly, ongoing costs will be \$2,200 to provide wireless access to students in Park Rapids. Thank you to Laurie Conzemius for bringing this opportunity to the NLLN Governing Board and to the board for supporting the initiative.

Scholarship Update

NLLN has awarded 21 scholarships since the beginning of the 2026 fiscal year on July 1, 2025, amounting to a total of \$9,372.62. Nearly all of the scholarships were awarded for attendance at the Fall Minnesota Library Association conference in St. Cloud, October 8-10.

Campbell School Libraries

On Wednesday, November 9, 2022, NLLN sent an email to NLLN members stating that Architect David Crutchfield is available to consult and advise on library projects in the region at no charge. David is a professor at North Dakota State University (NDSU), where he is Chair of the Architecture Department. He has consulted on several projects in the NLLN region and visited Campbell School at one time to advise on the high school library.

Educator Lynette Schwagerl and Superintendent McKittrick at Campbell School are working with a school committee to *Reimagine the Elementary Library* that will move the elementary library to a new location in the school, with an updated layout, shelving, furniture, theme, book collection, and programming. Donor funding is sought to make the project a reality. NLLN has offered to support this project.

This fall, David visited Campbell School once again on Tuesday, October 21, to see the elementary and high school library. He had his previous Campbell School recommendations with him. Campbell School provided David with ‘wishlists’ of planned or desired programmatic uses, items, functions, technologies, reading spaces, screen spaces, big screens, game areas including computer and board games.

The new library space is being cleared and flooring has been chosen. Campbell School continues to seek David’s suggestions for layout of the new room, lighting, and windows. More to come on this ongoing project.

Osakis Public School Library Collection

NLLN is committed to supporting library collections in the region. Recently, NLLN sent \$1,000 to Osakis School to support the purchase of books for the library. A final list of purchases will be sent to follow-up.

Destiny Training December 8, 2025

An online Destiny training took place on December 8 via Zoom, hosted by Northwest Service Cooperative (NWSC), Roseau School, and NLLN. Gina Drellack, Education Director with NWSC placed the recorded session on NWSC-Learning website. See: <https://nwsc-learning.teachable.com/>

Thank you to Glenn Heinecke, Media Specialist with Roseau School for providing the training.

College & Research Libraries

Kathy continues to review articles for publication in *College & Research Libraries*.

Area Library Directors Working Lunch: *Strengthening Our Regional Library Connections*

On November 4, 2025, Minnesota State Moorhead Library, along with the libraries at Concordia, Moorhead, and NDSU hosted a working lunch among regional library directors to determine the future of professional development for librarians in the region. There is a strong interest in professional learning and networking opportunities for libraries across our region. Past Tri-College Library programming has been successful; yet, broader representation from all types of libraries would make future efforts more impactful with the goal of professional learning and collaboration beyond the Tri-College model. Northern Lights Library Network could play an important role in executing professional development alongside area library directors. Designed by Karen Qualey, Executive Director of the MSM Library and Online Learning, the following objectives were designed and met:

Session Overview & Framing – 10 minutes

- Brief history of Tri-College professional learning events
- Why this transition is an opportunity
- Introduction to the Technology of Participation (ToP) Focused Conversation model

Structured Discussion: Objective, Reflective, Interpretive, and Decisional ORID Framework – 45 minutes

- **Objective:** What made the previous model effective? What resources supported it?
- **Reflective:** How do we feel about this transition? What excites or concerns us?
- **Interpretive:** What aspects are most important to preserve or evolve?
- **Decisional:** What concrete steps should we take next?

Report Out & Action Planning – 15 minutes

- Identify immediate next steps and roles
- Capture commitments and shared priorities

Closing Reflections & Next Steps – 5 minutes

- Summary of key insights
- Plan for follow-up communication

Outcomes

By the end of the session, participants:

- Shared reflections on past successes and current challenges.
- Identified opportunities for a more inclusive and sustainable professional learning model.
- Generated actionable next steps for collaborative planning.

Summary for Library Boards

NLLN Governing Board Member and LARL Representative, Chizuko Shastri, requested a summary of work conducted by NLLN in order to distribute it to people who may be interested in becoming an NLLN Governing Board member. The summary Chizuko distributed to LARL board members is posted, [here](#). Please feel welcome to use it in communication with interested parties.

Background Information on Northern Lights Library Network (NLLN)

It's About Libraries

It's About People

Northern Lights Library Network (NLLN) covers a geographic region of 26,950 square miles comprised of two hundred eighty academic, public, school, and special libraries in twenty-three counties in North-Central, Northwest, and West-Central Minnesota, including: Becker, Beltrami, Cass, Clay, Clearwater, Crow Wing, Douglas, Grant, Hubbard, Kittson, Mahnommen, Marshall, Norman, Otter Tail, Pennington, Polk, Pope, Red Lake, Roseau, Stevens, Traverse, Wadena, and Wilkin counties. Northern Lights Library Network is one of seven multicounty, multitype library systems in the state, serving altogether 1,700 libraries throughout Minnesota.

Entities with collections can become members of NLLN in order to bring resources from the state and national level to the local level and discover resources within the region to share them universally through all types of libraries.

Funding comes directly into the region from the Minnesota Legislature through biennial appropriations. Northern Lights Library Network acts as an arm of the Minnesota Legislature, serving the same citizens as Minnesota's appointed legislators.

Minnesota 134.351 Statute governs NLLN with the intent to bring together all types of libraries and collections in the region to discover, enhance, and share resources through administrative, technological, and educational support. All types of libraries with a collection in the region can be supported. Service occurs at the local level, ensuring that all communities in the region are strengthened and supported through their library networks. In this manner, the Minnesota Legislature can guarantee that all Minnesotans are served effectively and receive access to the information they need to improve their lives and communities. Although a complicated concept, NLLN exists to serve people through libraries of all types in their respective communities in the 23-county region. The Minnesota Legislature has successfully supported this initiative since 1980. In our region, it is clear that resources from the state level are reaching local citizens.

Some examples of NLLN's service with NLLN Governing Board approval:

- NLLN supported The Loop through a \$15,000 biennial grant to build the Moorhead Public Library and Community Center.
- Earlier, NLLN granted \$25,000 to the Lake Agassiz Regional Library (LARL) and Northwest Regional Library (NWRL) Systems to build an online catalog serving both systems.
- As cuts are occurring at the public library in Bemidji, NLLN is supporting a school library at the Area Learning Center with Cass Lake Public Schools. The Area Learning Center is moving to an elementary school building that has an existing library we hope to keep.
- Many Park Rapids Area Virtual Academy (PRAVA) students lack affordable, reliable internet at home and the school library media center is the heart of the solution. With support from Northern Lights Library Network, 10 devices will be purchased to loan through the library, giving students dependable, safe internet access year-round. Park Rapids is working with Verizon Wireless district partners introducing a new distance-learning program that offers filtered, unlimited-data devices for \$18.50 per month and a one-time equipment cost of \$150. This is a model for continued support for additional rural schools in the region.
- NLLN supports educational initiatives through local colleges, such as the recent Artificial Intelligence (A.I.) Institute at Minnesota State Moorhead (MSM) that brought educators and students from across the region onto campus to learn about the latest AI technologies. NLLN also sponsored a national family history conference at MSUM that brought people

interested in their family history to campus to educate them on the process of finding their roots.

- NLLN sponsors a yearly professional development conference that brings together librarians from across the 23-county region, including Concordia Moorhead, MSUM, and NDSU to learn about new library resources that they in turn can bring to their library. Yearly scholarships are available to all library members in the region to attend conferences and ongoing continuing education opportunities.
- Viking Library System brings bookmobile service to Campbell School, even though Campbell is located in the Lake Agassiz Regional Library System. Students, staff, and teachers at Campbell receive weekly book access through the bookmobile, in a region otherwise without access to books and curriculum materials.
- Early on, NLLN granted Viking Library System \$25,000 to purchase a new bookmobile.
- The Wheaton Public Library and the Browns Valley Public library receive NLLN grants to provide remote access to electronic resources, such as books, music, videos, etc.
- Through grants to schools, NLLN is building collections in school libraries throughout the region, including Ada High School, Osakis School, and Alexandria Schools, to name a few.
- NLLN was instrumental in bringing the Maamagin Achigazo, the community library, to White Earth. NLLN also played a pivotal role in reopening the school library at the Circle of Life Academy in White Earth.

Without NLLN's support, many of these initiatives would not have taken hold. It is with ongoing gratitude to the Minnesota Legislature that NLLN continues to support rural communities.

There are many additional ways Northern Lights Library Network supports libraries in rural communities throughout the region. If you know of areas in need of support, please feel welcome to contact NLLN's Executive Director, Kathy Enger at: Kathy.Enger@nlln.org

Northern Lights Library Network (NLLN)

Funded by the Minnesota Legislature through the Minnesota Department of Education, Northern Lights Library Network (NLLN) is one of seven Minnesota multicounty, multitype library cooperative systems. NLLN is comprised of two hundred eighty academic, public, school, and special libraries in twenty-three counties in North-Central, Northwest, and West-Central Minnesota. NLLN works at the grassroots level to bring together all types of libraries and collections in the region to discover, enhance, and share resources through administrative, technological, and educational support.

Northern Lights Library Network covers a geographic region of 26,950 square miles (Minnesota is comprised of 86,939 square miles), and includes the following twenty-three counties: Becker, Beltrami, Cass, Clay, Clearwater, Crow Wing, Douglas, Grant, Hubbard, Kittson, Mahnomen, Marshall, Norman, Otter Tail, Pennington, Polk, Pope, Red Lake, Roseau, Stevens, Traverse, Wadena, and Wilkin.

The Northern Lights Library Network system consists of four regional public library systems; academic libraries on two campuses of the University of Minnesota at Crookston and Morris; Minnesota State Colleges and Universities System institutions on four campuses, including Minnesota State University Moorhead, Bemidji State University, Northland Community College, Minnesota State Community and Technical College, all located across the region in Moorhead, Bemidji, Thief River Falls, Wadena, and Fergus Falls; numerous private colleges; three tribal colleges, including Leech Lake, Red Lake, and White Earth; the Maamigin Achigaazo Community Library at White Earth; one hundred-eighty-five school libraries in seventy-nine school districts, including public and charter schools, Bureau of Indian Affairs schools, and private schools; and a rich variety of special libraries in museums, county law libraries, hospitals, churches, and early childhood programs.

Northern Lights Library Network reduces duplication of services by enhancing coordination among libraries. As resources are shared among libraries, services are expanded, and efficiency is improved. As a result, libraries offer services or programs they may not otherwise be able to afford.

All of the work performed by Northern Lights Library Network affects the direct service of its members, and has an exponential effect on its client base. Northern Lights Library Network exists to recognize the kinds of library services people need at the local level and to determine the supporting structures required for local library systems to function successfully, taking into account the unique needs of people at the local level and the different types of libraries served.

A primary goal of Northern Lights Library Network is to bring resources from the state and national level to the local level. Another goal is to discover resources within the region and to share them universally.

Northern Lights Library Network is one of seven multi-county, multi-type library systems in Minnesota mandated by Minnesota Statute 134.351 to develop and maintain services including, but not limited to, “referral of users, intra-system

reciprocal borrowing, cooperative collection development, cooperative reference services, staff development, research and development, cooperative storage facilities, and publicity and community relations.”

The five goals outlined in Minnesota Statute 134.351 for multi-county, multi-type systems include:

- *• Sharing Resources Among all Participating Libraries*
- *• Providing Long-range Planning for Cooperative Programs*
- *• Developing a Delivery System for Services and Programs*
- *• Developing a Bibliographic Database*
- *• Maintaining a Communications System Among all Cooperating Libraries*

The seven multi-county, multi-type systems perform the following functions: Develop library staffs professionally; improve local library collections; sponsor and support funding for libraries; champion libraries; create, develop, and maintain library programs that enrich the lives of Minnesotans; move the discipline of Library and Information Science forward; and lead and administer their own nonprofit agencies. The seven systems are governed by regional boards.

There are twelve regional public library systems in Minnesota that serve public libraries, while the seven multi-type systems serve all types of libraries.