

DIRECTOR'S REPORT
Northern Lights Library Network (NLLN)
Kathy Brock Enger, M.L.S., Ph.D., Executive Director
December 14, 2024



Audit and 990 Form

The fiscal year 2024 audit is complete. NLLN is fully in compliance with generally accepted accounting standards. The result of the audit was an unmodified (clean) opinion, which is the best result possible. NLLN's 990 tax exempt form for the tax year beginning July 1, 2023, and ending June 30, 2024, is complete and ready to be sent to the Internal Revenue Service.

Legislative Visit

On October 15, Senator Kunesh, Chair of the Minnesota Senate Education Finance Committee visited Osakis School, Moorhead Public Schools, and Minnesota State University Moorhead (MSUM). Senator Kunesh learned about the work at the Osakis School Library after NLLN sponsored collection development initiatives there.

Her visit to Osakis School is encapsulated in the following press release, written by Northern Lights Library Network Executive Director, Kathy Enger. Lisa Johnson from Echo Press interviewed Kathy Enger and will be writing an article based on the interview and the information below.

“On October 15, 2024, Osakis Public School was honored with a visit from Senator Mary Kunesh (39, DFL), Chair of the Minnesota Senate Education Finance Committee. The purpose of her visit was to observe work in the school library and visit with library staff, Jennifer Otremba and Chris Alverson, as well as Superintendent Justin Dahlheimer and others. Senator Kunesh was instrumental in securing funds for school districts across the state to build school library resources and support additional personnel in libraries. The goal is to help students learn how to access valid information, acquire digital literacy, and discover clear pathways to reading – skills necessary for success in a world challenged by information intelligence.

Osakis Public School used funding allocated by the Minnesota Legislature to hire Jennifer Otremba, a part-time certified teacher, who is currently completing the graduate course work necessary to become a licensed media specialist.

Over the last 20 years, school districts across the nation have lost certified media specialists due to budgetary constraints. Consequently, many students no longer receive the instruction needed to navigate information resources successfully. Fortunately, this is not the case at Osakis Public School. Since hiring Ms. Otremba, students in Osakis have received weekly instruction. They have been introduced to many new books and reading resources. Superintendent Dahlheimer says, “I’m a graduate of Osakis (’02) and spent a lot of time in that library ... I had hour-long school bus rides and devoured many of its books. Jennifer is the star of our show. The dedicated funding from the State helped our

School Board support bringing her in, which I think was the best-case scenario! I want to make sure our community continues to sew creativity into people we grow.”

Indeed, creativity resounds from Osakis School graduates. Both Leif and Lin Enger attended Osakis Public School as students in the K – 12 system. One would venture to guess they read nearly every book of fiction in the Osakis School Library, the only library available to Osakis children growing up in the 1960s and 1970s, when Osakis had a licensed media specialist managing its library. Leif Enger debuted on the national scene with his bestselling book, *Peace Like a River*, and went on to publish *So Brave, Young and Handsome*, *Virgil Wander*, and most recently, *I Cheerfully Refuse*. His latest book was chosen as one of 22 National Endowment of the Arts (NEA) 2025-2026 Big Read selections.

Lin Enger is a professor of English at Minnesota State University Moorhead (MSUM). A graduate of the Iowa Writer’s Workshop, Lin has published three novels, *Undiscovered Country*, *The High Divide*, and *American Gospel*. Enger says of his library experience in Osakis, “The best part of my school week was the hour or two I spent there, reading and checking out the books I found interesting. The Osakis school library fueled my love of reading.”

Minnesota is fortunate to have a senator like Mary Kunesh who cares about students and does what it takes to help them develop the skills to become life-long learners. She is an advocate for our students and is making a difference here in rural Minnesota.”

Following her visit to Osakis and Moorhead Public Schools, Senator Kunesh and legislative staff, along with Senator Kupec, had dinner at Minnesota State University Moorhead (MSUM). The following schedules summarize the dinner:

Dinner with Senator Kunesh

October 15, 2024

4:30 p.m.

Room 105, Comstock Memorial Union, Minnesota State University Moorhead (MSUM)

Sponsored by Northern Lights Library Network (NLLN)

Introductions

Over salad and dessert, please introduce yourself and who you represent, along with 2 – 3 sentences concerning the needs and accomplishments of the people you serve.

In Attendance

Senator Mary Kunesh, District 39, Chair, Minnesota Senate Education Finance Committee; Assistant Majority Leader; Member, Education Policy Committee

Sami Rajab, Committee Administrator for Minnesota Education Finance

Emma Zellmer, Minnesota Committee Legislative Assistant

Chelsea Barks, Assistant to Senator Cwodzinski

Senator Rob Kupec, District 4, Vice Chair Minnesota Agriculture, Broadband, and Rural Development

Representative Heather Keeler, District 4A, Vice Chair, Children and Families Finance and Policy

Gina Drellack, Educational Consultant, Northwest Service Cooperative

Julie Bauer, Library Specialist, Win-E-Mac School, Erskine

Justin Dahlheimer, Superintendent, Osakis School
Lori Handyside, Library Specialist, Mahnomen School
Amber Gordon, Library Specialist, Nevis School
Lisa Katzemeyer, Library Specialist, LaPorte School
Kim Lage, Child Care Licensor and Early Childhood Specialist, White Earth Child Care/Early Childhood,
Maamagin Achigaazo
Amber Maurstad, Library Specialist, Marshall County School
Linda Schell, NLLN Governing Board, Lake Agassiz Regional Library

Dr. Arrick Jackson, Provost & Senior VP for Academic and Student Affairs, MSUM
Dr. Ok-hee Lee, Dean, College of Education & Human Services, MSUM
Dr. Caitlen Johnson, Assistant Professor, MSUM, Enrolled Member of Turtle Mountain Band of
Chippewa Indians
Karen Qualey, Executive Director of Library and Online Learning, MSUM
Dr. Kathy Enger, Executive Director, NLLN & Assistant Professor, MSUM
Dr. Paul Harris, Emeritus, MSUM
Dr. Denise Lajimoidiere, Professor Emerita, NDSU, ND Poet Laureate, Citizen of Turtle Mountain Band
of Chippewa Indians

North Dakota Poet Laureate, Denise Lajimoidiere presented Senator Kunesh with a framed copy of her broadside, *Birch Bark Biting*, along with a copy of her books, *Stringing Roseries* and *Dragon Fly Dance*.

“Better Together” to be held at Lakes Country Service Cooperative on Wednesday, June 11, 2025, from 8:30 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Lynette Schwagerl, Campbell School, and Glenn Heinecke, Roseau School will be hosting another “Better Together” workshop on June 11th, 2025. Lynette comes from the southernmost area of the NLLN region and Glenn from the northernmost. This year, there will be two sections of conversation, in order to give colleagues an opportunity to discuss their work and find solace in shared experiences in schools and libraries. The main goal of the workshop is to bring library specialists and educators together to alleviate isolation they may feel, to create an atmosphere of collegiality, and to share resources. In addition to learning from each other, this year, we will be learning from children’s authors, Minitex, about ELA standards, and more about children and young adult literature.

Fundraising with the Friends of the Moorhead Public Library

Northern Lights Library Network is collaborating with the fundraising chairs of the Friends of the Moorhead Public Library, Linda Schell and Jeanne Aske, to develop the first fundraising effort staged by the Friends. *An Evening with Leif Enger and Lin Enger* will guide the dinner at the Christianson Alumni Center on the campus of MSUM. Authors Leif and Lin are both alumni of Minnesota State University Moorhead. The event will take place on January 23.

Pelican Rapids Public Library Children’s Room

NLLN sponsored rugs for the new Pelican Rapids Public Library Children’s Room.

Scholarships

Nearly \$6,500 has been committed for scholarships this fiscal year \$15,500 is allocated in the budget for educational support. Educational support includes programs and services associated with professional development activities, such as “Better Together”, as well as scholarships. Most of the scholarships this fiscal year supported attendance at the Minnesota Library Association (MLA) conference in Rochester in October. Attendees receiving scholarships note the value of connecting with other librarians, “it is nice to connect with other librarians to know that you are not alone out there. There are others who have gone through or are struggling with the same things you are.”

Membership List

NLLN’s membership list is comprised of 196 school libraries, 60 public libraries, 21 academic libraries, and 18 special libraries. All members have collections and most have a librarian, library staff, or collection staff managing the collections. A total of 295 collections are represented. The membership is updated yearly.

Reliable Planning: Tying Strategic Planning to Your Budget

Executive Director, Kathy Enger, will be presenting at the Minnesota Council of Nonprofit’s 2025 Nonprofit Finance and Sustainability Conference February 25 & 27, 2025, *Reliable Planning: Tying Strategic Planning to your Budget*: Strategic planning can be more than stakeholder opinions and ideas if you tie your data collection to qualitative measures and link those measures to quantitatively reliable surveys. Once your strategic plan is in place, an effective way to measure your success is to tie your strategic plan to your budget. With specific budgetary line items linked to your strategic plan, you have a measurable way to determine the financial success of your programs and services. This presentation will bring you through the process of designing a strategic plan that is scientifically reliable and discuss how to tie the strategic plan to your budget for measurable outcomes.

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, Mahnomon, 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.