

DIRECTOR'S REPORT
Northern Lights Library Network (NLLN)
Kathy B. Enger
September 20, 2025

Audit

The NLLN yearly audit is completed by Carpenter, Evert, and Associates, CPA. A report on the audit from Marc Colin, CPA, will take place at the September 20 NLLN Governing Board Meeting. The following policies are reviewed and approved by the NLLN Governing Board: Conflict of Interest, Whistleblower, Fund Balance, Document Retention and Destruction.

Home Office Move to 265C MacLean at MSUM

With Office Manager/Bookkeeper Deb Keena's retirement, materials from her home office were moved to NLLN's main office at 265C Maclean on the campus of Minnesota State University Moorhead (MSUM) the day she retired, August 15.

Online Bookkeeping and Accounting

NLLN's bookkeeping and accounting has moved online with Olsen, Thielen & Associates (OTA). NLLN has worked with Olsen, Thielen & Associates weekly for five years. A similar process continues, with weekly meetings, review, and processing with an accountant at OTA. Currently, there is only one payroll item for Executive Director, Kathy Enger. Payroll is processed every two weeks and since the bookkeeper's retirement, two accountants at OTA process the payroll electronically and NLLN's treasurer and executive director review it, before it is finalized. Payment requests for the executive director's expenses are reviewed by NLLN's treasurer before processing. In addition, OTA has two more accountants who support and back up the work that is performed, so the online process has improved the transparency for NLLN's accounting procedures. Thank you to NLLN's treasurer, Karen Qualey (MSUM), for her participation in the process, and thank you to the NLLN Governing Board for reviewing NLLN's monthly financial statements.

New CD Account

Upon the recommendation of NLLN's auditor, a new FDIC insured CD account was opened.

Retirement Payout

Deb Keena's retirement payout includes unused vacation and sick leave. Magen Koepp, CPA, Olsen, Thielen, & Associates, will explain details of the payout at the September 20 NLLN Governing Board Meeting.

Report of Results

NLLN's Report of Results is completed and ready to be submitted to the Minnesota Department of Education (MDE) State Library Services due October 1. Additional funds were allocated during FY2024, so there is an additional report for that.

Strategic Plan

An email was sent to NLLN Governing Board members to complete the qualitative portion of the strategic plan, including an IRB release form to use the results in a publication. Only 3 board members completed the questions and form. The request will be re-sent.

The Moorhead Public Library and Community Center

The City of Moorhead is in the process of building a new library and community center. Northern Lights Library Network (NLLN) supports this new initiative and will be donating funds toward the library's development. Moorhead Public Library is a member of Northern Lights Library Network. A representative from the city will join the NLLN Governing Board at the September 20 meeting to discuss NLLN's participation. Thank you to NLLN Governing Board member and LARL representative, Chizuko Shastri, for presenting this possibility to NLLN.

Cass Lake School Library

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. More information will follow as the situation unfolds. Cass Lake Public Schools are members of Northern Lights Library Network. Thank you to NLLN Governing Board member, Joe Gould, for bringing this opportunity to NLLN. Joe represents the Kitchigami Regional Library System on the NLLN Governing Board.

Learning in the Age of AI: Artificial Intelligence Education Event at MSUM October 28 MSUM Comstock Memorial Union Ballroom 8:30 a.m. – 3 p.m.

MSUM is hosting an AI in Education event that will explore how AI is transforming education across k-12 and higher education. It will be October 28th at Moorhead State in the Comstock Memorial Union Ballroom from 8:30 a.m. – 3 p.m. NLLN will facilitate 6 CEUs for the full day and support a stipend for K-12 teacher subs to promote the school district's willingness to send folks to the event.

The Rourke Museum Library

The Rourke Museum and Art Gallery library in Moorhead is a new member of Northern Lights Library Network. The museum has a collection of titles that are curated. Thank you to Chizuko Shastri for making this connection possible. See: <https://www.therourke.org/>

Tracing Your Family History Workshop: Heritage Education Commission

NLLN is sponsoring the 49th Family History Workshop in the Comstock Memorial Union at Minnesota State University on September 20. From the website, “The Family History Workshop is a one-day genealogy workshop. Breakout sessions run in four concurrent tracks, including a Beginner Track for those new to or interested in genealogy, a featured main speaker, and everything in between, giving attendees a wide variety of topic to choose from” (<https://heritageed.com/family-history-workshop>). The workshop is a program of the Heritage Education Commission (<https://heritageed.com/>).

Conversation about A.I. Conversation with Alexander Gulbrandsen Held September 18 at 3:30 p.m. CDT

An hour-long conversation about Artificial Intelligence took place with Alexander Gulbrandsen on September 18th. Alexander is a computer software engineer well-versed in artificial intelligence (A.I.). Alexander gave us an overview of his knowledge and understanding of A.I. -- I met Alexander while traveling to Oslo this summer and am impressed with how much he knows. There were two CEUs available for school staff attending.

Alexander is a software engineer with a background in cybersecurity, systems, and networking who is currently 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.

Great NorthStar Read Together

<https://sites.google.com/umn.edu/greatnorthstarreadtogether/home>

On September 20, Minnesotans from across the state were invited to gather at libraries to show their support for libraries and the pivotal role libraries play in their communities. Each participating library hosted a local event. Attendance data will be collected by the individual sites, and there will be a follow-up survey asking how the planning process and other aspects of the program can be improved. Libraries from the NLLN region included Moorhead Public Library, Thorson Memorial Library in Elbow Lake, New York Mills Public Library, Crookston Public Library, and Detroit Lakes Public Library.

<https://sites.google.com/umn.edu/greatnorthstarreadtogether/participating-libraries?authuser=0>

Minnesota Library Association Fall Conference October 9 – 10, St. Cloud River’s Edge Convention Center

The Annual Minnesota Library Association Fall Conference will be held October 9 – 10 at the St. Cloud Convention Center. The theme of the conference is “Cultivation Connections: Stronger Together.” An in-person meeting of the MCMT directors will be held Wednesday, October 8, at 10 a.m. - 2 p.m. at Resource Training & Solutions in the Legacy Board Room. A joint dinner between CRPSLA and MCMT Librarians will take place at 6:30 p.m. that evening. NLLN Governing Board members are invited to attend and attendance can be covered by NLLN.

Communities Collaborative Brain Development Conference

The Brain Conference was completed in mid-August. NLLN supported a keynote speaker, the silent auction (quilt donation), and posters displaying the 20-year history of the conference. NLLN Governing Board member, Joe Gould, attended the conference.

From Joe Gould:

“I attended the Brain Conference this past August for the second time. It was the 21st year they have been putting on this wonderful conference. As a teacher and county commissioner/libraries board member I found the conference most valuable because of the presenters' knowledge and experience, emphasis on American Indian cultural programming, networking with a diverse group of attendees that work in early childhood education, social services, libraries, higher education, childcare, nonprofits, and business. I estimated 400 attendees. The workshop I found most valuable was taught by two women that work for the White Earth Tribe and used to teach. They stressed how important it is to get kids outside for learning, fun, and social interaction. This is important for kids of all ages. The more you can connect to the land for young Native students the more they will engage with you and others.

I definitely plan to attend again in future years. I encourage board members and others to consider attending. There is something for everyone at this conference.”

Collection Support

In addition to supporting the Northwest Regional Library System (NWRL) collections as reported earlier, NLLN also supports collections at other public libraries throughout the region.

NLLN supports Hoopla (streaming audiobooks, ebooks, music, and video) for Wheaton Public Library and Browns Valley Public Library. Between the two libraries, 1,887 electronic items circulated in the region.

The bookmobile from Viking Library System (VLS) stops at Campbell Tintah Public School (in LARL region) twice a month during the school year. This year, approximately 523 items circulated. Campbell is located in the LARL region and since NLLN crosses geographic boundaries, the VLS bookmobile can stop in Campbell with NLLN's support. NLLN funds were also used to support interlibrary loan (ILL) in the VLS region, helping the VLS system provide, innovate, and improve its ILL service to its member libraries, schools, and area community colleges. Communities receiving interlibrary loan support include: Browns Valley, Alexandria, Fergus Falls, Glenwood, Hancock, Morris, New York Mills, Pelican Rapids, Perham, Elbow Lake, Wheaton.

Licensed Media Specialist (LMS) Scholarships

In 2023, the Minnesota Multicounty, Multitype Library Systems (MCMTs) received funding to conduct the census and to create a mechanism to bring licensed media specialists back into Minnesota's school libraries. The MCMTs worked with Dr. Michelle Wang, Education Director, Resource Training & Solutions and Dr. Jenny Hill, Graduate Director of the School Library

Media Program, St. Cloud State University, to design a model similar to the Special Education licensure tuition support used by the nine Minnesota service cooperatives. As it turns out, the proposal didn't meet detailed specifications discussed by the MCMTs and didn't fall within the mission of Resource Training & Solutions. Kathy Enger is drawing up guidelines based on the current MCMT scholarships in each region for the MCMT's consideration. The MCMTs will be reviewing software proposals to manage the scholarships.

The appropriation state Laws of MN 2023, chapter 55, article 9, section 18, subd.5:

Subd. 5.

Licensed library media specialists.

(a) For aid to multicounty, multitype library systems to increase the number of licensed library media specialists:

\$ 1,000,000 2024..... 2024

\$ 0 2025..... 2025

(b) The aid awarded under this subdivision must be used for activities associated with increasing the number of licensed library media specialists, including but not limited to conducting a census of licensed library media specialists currently working in Minnesota schools, conducting a needs-based assessment to identify gaps in licensed library media specialist services, providing professional development opportunities for licensed library media specialists, and providing tuition support to candidates seeking to attain school library media specialist licensure.

(c) This is a onetime appropriation.

Lajimodiere Broadside Donation

As part of NLLN's *Poets Across Minnesota* early initiative, twenty-five broadsides from six regional poets were designed and printed. The signed and numbered broadsides were created by Patrick Vincent, former professor of visual arts at MSUM and are for sale for \$25 each to raise funds for NLLN's scholarships. Recently, NLLN donated one broadside by North Dakota Poet Laureate, Dr. Denise Lajimodiere to the Plains Art Museum. Dr. Lajimodiere's dissertation and accompanying books were also donated.

The following are NLLN's broadsides:

**Birch Bark Biting
Denise Lajimodiere**

"Birch Bark Biting" tells the experience of gathering birch bark in the spring and creating art.

Birch Bark Biting is a pre-contact Ojibwe and Cree art. Following a ceremony, bark was gathered in the spring of the year. Thin Layers are then folded and bitten with eye teeth to make designs. Bitings were used as patterns for quill and beadwork.

A traditional Jingle Dress dancer and Ojibwe Birch Bark Biting artist, Dr. Denise Lajimodiere is an enrolled Citizen of the Turtle Mountain of Chippewa, Belcourt, North Dakota. Dr. Lajimodiere earned her Bachelor's, Master's, and Doctoral degrees from the University of North Dakota, and was an educator for forty-four years as an Elementary teacher, Principal, and Professor at North Dakota State University. Lajimodiere holds the title of North Dakota Poet Laureate from 2023 – 2025. Her published books of poetry include *Dragonfly Dance*, *His Feathers Were Chains*, *Bitter Tears*, and *Thunderbird*.

“Thunderbirds, wings spread wide, gaze back at me.”

Size: 8.5 X 8.5

Paper: French paper, Speckle Tone, Sweet Tooth (100# cover)

Typeface: Thonburi

Ink: Oil-based (dark brown) and acrylic (brown/light blue)

Print media: Photo-polymer letterpress and screen-print

Limited edition of thirty-five numbered prints commissioned by Northern Lights Library Network.

At the Library Lina Belar

“At the Library” is about two sisters spending a summer reading everything in the library.

“At the Library” brings us back to the quiet peacefulness of growing up at the community library. The two sisters featured in the poem read through all the books gracing a library's shelves in a summer's time.

Lina Belar is an accomplished historian curating, developing, and directing museums in central Minnesota. An alumna of Columbia University, she has published two books of poetry, *Rural Score and Other Poems*, and *At the Crossroads*. She has written for newspapers across lakes country in west-central Minnesota. Belar's passion for reading and preserving history is evident in how she writes about traversing the globe, one page at a time.

“We breathe a sigh of relief knowing there are more worlds left to travel than the ones that await us in this quiet town.”

Size: 8 ½ X 11

Paper: French paper, Dur-O-Tone, Butcher White (100# cover)

Typeface: Century

Ink: Oil-based (blue and orange) and acrylic (blue and orange)

Print Media: Photo-polymer letterpress and screen-print

Limited edition of thirty-five numbered prints commissioned by Northern Lights Library Network.

Carnegie Libraries
Ken Bennett

“Carnegie Libraries” touches on the architectural beauty of Carnegie libraries, and the people, young and old, who enjoy them.

A formidable presence in many communities dotting the country, Carnegie libraries were houses of knowledge everyone had a key to enter. This poem speaks of their beauty in knowledge and visual detail. This is all met with the innocence of someone spilling their favorite drink on the steps leading to higher learning.

Ken Bennett is a former English professor at universities throughout the Midwest and in more tropical climates such as Puerto Rico. With Master’s degrees in Spanish and Mass Communications, Dr. Ken Bennett also holds a Ph.D. in English from Kent State University. His works are literary perfection anyone can enjoy.

“O Andrew, I didn’t mean to stain your steps with pink rain from Woolworth’s soda fountain.”

Size: 7 X 11

Paper: French paper, Smart White (110# cover)

Typeface: Cochin

Ink: Oil-based (magenta and violet) and acrylic (magenta and violet)

Print media: Photo-polymer letterpress and screen-print

Limited edition of thirty-five numbered prints commissioned by Northern Lights Library Network.

North of North
Mark Vinz

“North of North” displays a people’s attitude toward the unthinkable cold winters in the Northern Great Plains.

Winter in the Northern Great Plains is a thing of beauty and pain. “North of North” captures the feelings of those living through the chill, making it relatable for those who never experienced the negative temperatures met with positive attitudes.

Mark Vinz is a national award-winning writer, editor, and former English professor at Minnesota State University Moorhead. With more than fifty years of creative work under his literary belt, he continues to convey the wide range of emotions found in the people who live on the prairies of Minnesota and North Dakota. Vinz is the author or editor of more than twenty collections of poetry and prose, most recently *The Trouble with Daydreams: Selected and New Poems*.

“It’s always colder somewhere else. We raise our plows and furnaces, fall back again on what we know.”

Size: 7 X 11

Paper: French paper, Pop Tone, Sweet Tooth (100# cover)

Typeface: Avenir Light

Ink: Oil-based (dark blue) and acrylic (gray/blue)

Print media: Photo-polymer letterpress and screen-print

Limited edition of thirty-five numbered prints commissioned by Northern Lights Library Network.

The Longest Hour (Friday, 4:00 p.m.)
Travis Dolence

“The Longest Hour” portrays the dedication of librarians everywhere.

Travis Dolence, former Director of New Rivers Press, is an academic librarian at Minnesota State University Moorhead (MSUM). Along with a Master of Science degree in Library Science, Professor Dolence holds a Master of Science in Geography and a Master of Fine Arts in Creative Writing, with an emphasis in poetry. His work has appeared in *The MacGuffin*, *Burningword*, and in the chapbook, *The Lyrical Librarian: Verses from the Stacks*, published by Consortium.

“Sitting at the library reference desk, waiting to answer the unasked.”

Size: 7 X 11

Paper: French paper, Dur-O-Tone, Butcher Blue (100# cover)

Typeface: Didot

Ink: Oil-based (dark blue) and acrylic (orange/blue)

Print media: Photo-polymer letterpress and screen-print.

Limited edition of thirty-five numbered prints commissioned by Northern Lights Library Network.

Used Poetry
Kevin Zepper

“Used Poetry” speaks of the poet’s experience with poetry as if it were a used car.

“Used Poetry” makes the creation and editing of a poem relatable to any who’s ever had vehicle woes. The incredible parallels between poetry and parts of an automobile will make readers remember writing their first poem and buying a first car—both situations one may fret over, now looking back with a smile.

Kevin Zepper is an English professor at Minnesota State University Moorhead. His work has been featured at national conferences, television stations, and radio stations throughout the upper-Midwest and the southwest. He is the author of five chapbooks of poems, most recently *The Shaman Said*, as well as *Moonman*, a full-length collection.

“Here I am with a poem all smashed in the rear end, and a bent frame to boot.”

Size: 8 ½ X 11

Paper: French paper, Speckletone, True White (100# cover)

Typeface: Perpetua

Ink: Oil-based (dark and violet) and acrylic (light brown and light blue)

Print media: Photo-polymer letterpress and screen-print

Limited edition of thirty-five numbered prints commissioned by Northern Lights Library Network.

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.