LIBRARY COOPERATIVES of Michigan

*Working Together to Empower Libraries!*

**Report to Library of Michigan Board of Trustees**
**November 2025**

For this quarterly report, please find the individual reports from each cooperative attached. The individual cooperative directors are excited to continue our work together as LCM.

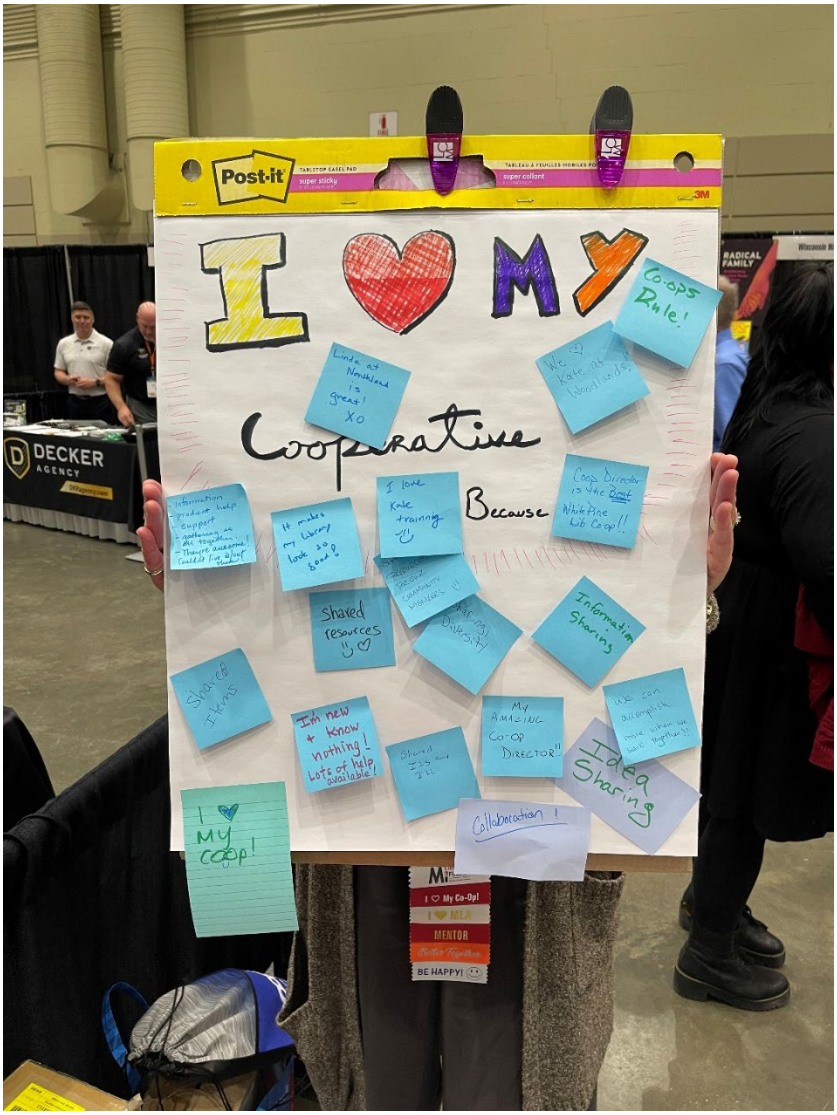
MI LIBRARY FINDER

Sign up, Connect, Explore.

The Library Cooperatives of Michigan exhibited at the annual Michigan Library Association Conference in Lansing on October 29-31st.

We used this opportunity to roll out our beta version of milibraryfinder.org!

This website will provide all residents of Michigan an easy way to FIND their home library so they can sign up for a library card, connect with library services and their community and explore resources for unlimited access to literature, information, and learning!




Our booth was busy! Over 100 MiLibraryFinder or I Love my Coop badges were distributed after the MiLibraryFinder Demo! 73 people signed up for two raffles. 70 plus clips, 75 pens and 139 post-it notes were given out too. We also asked people why they love their coop and this visual says it all. So many people said, “These Post-its say it all.”

Here is further information from our website about our purpose, goals and governance.

The Library Cooperatives of Michigan (LCM) stands as a cornerstone in Michigan’s library community, recognizing the autonomy of the state’s eleven library cooperatives while highlighting our combined impact and contribution to strengthening our statewide network.

Library directors often look to their cooperatives as primary sources of support and guidance, as well as trusted advisors for the multitude of tasks and challenges they face, solidifying each cooperative director’s status as the first line of inquiry—the librarian’s librarian.

Drawing from our diverse backgrounds and unwavering passion and dedication to libraries, LCM stays abreast of current trends and actively seeks opportunities to enhance library services. Our cooperative approach fosters a culture of mutual respect, creating an environment beneficial to the cultivation of innovative ideas. By promoting open dialogue, LCM champions honesty and transparency, encouraging effective communication and collaborative advancement within the library community.

Established in Michigan by PA 89 of 1977, library cooperatives were created to provide member libraries with access to resource sharing, training, communications, and library development. More details on our history can be found here.
Michigan's library cooperatives are funded by a portion of state aid based on the population served by the cooperative and a portion of state aid paid to member libraries for the purchase of cooperative services. The cooperative approach preserves local initiative and control while taking full advantage of the wealth of resources that a larger service area makes possible. Michigan's eleven regional library cooperatives work in concert with partner organizations to facilitate access to library resources, programs and services throughout the state of Michigan.

Each cooperative is governed by a nine-member governing board. The governing board hires the director to manage the cooperative and enacts bylaws, rules, and regulations as necessary.

Detroit Library Cooperative
Lakeland Library Cooperative
The Library Network
Mideastern Michigan Library Cooperative
Mid-Michigan Library League
Northland Library Cooperative
Superiorland Library Cooperative
Southwest Michigan Library Cooperative
Suburban Library Cooperative
White Pine Library Cooperative
Woodlands Library Cooperative

Respectfully submitted,

**Jennifer Balcom**
President, Library Cooperatives of Michigan
Director, Mid-Michigan Library League

LAKELAND LIBRARY COOPERATIVE
LEADING • LEARNING • LENDING

October 31, 2025

Members of the Board of the Library Michigan,

I am submitting an edited and condensed version of my annual review of Lakeland for your information.

Here is a sampling of projects from the LLC staff. We have 15 dedicated individuals or 12.5 FTEs.

- Our part-time digital services and group purchases specialist has taken over coordinating most of the group purchasing. Nicki also manages Overdrive and our 3 volunteer selectors and Hoopla (although we don't have a shared collection) but we offer help to our members when needed.) and works with Jim Flury at TLN as needed. She was helpful in finally getting good statistics from Overdrive for all the shared borrowing that happens with the RLA group (Reciprocal Library Agreement, which was started in 2018 between Overdrive, MCLS and Lakeland) which is now at 14 participants. Overdrive now has quarterly meetings with the entire RLA leadership too due to Nicki's suggestions.

- Our ILS Manager is leading the ILS Evaluation Project Committee while managing the ILS, inventory project, reports, upgrades and a plethora of other issues and concerns. Under Ann's leadership, the ILS Eval committee is making huge progress. She will continue to update the Advisory Council. Ann also supports the Circulation Services Committee and runs our quarterly coop-wide meetings.

- Our Member Services Manager is focusing on our web page, training and managing all our Bibliocommons products and services and PatronPoint. She rolled out the BC App, BiblioSuggest and some upgrades and worked on other issues as well. Training is a priority but she also rebranded and reformatted our internal documents so that they are easier to use for staff and members. Amber has worked tirelessly on MiLibraryFinder.org for the statewide initiative to make it easier to find your home library and register for a library card. She also provides support for our Adult, Continuing Education and Youth Services committees.

- Our Delivery and Facilities Manager is responsible for the building and the 6 members of his delivery staff and the trucks. We have purchased a new truck and sold an older one this year. We keep a third as a back-up to save on rental costs. Ron, Jeff, Jill, Tish, Mae and Craig are hard working, reliable and embrace the culture that Terry provides. Terry and I are also setting up a training refresher course for our drivers that we hope to implement this November. The building is in terrific shape including a newly surfaced parking lot.

- Our Cataloging Services Manager manages the two catalogers and the cataloging centers at 4 of our libraries. This group under Jeff's guidance now meets bi-monthly. He and Ann have helped libraries with the cataloging and acquisitions workload and Jeff had taken on a number of projects moving huge collections from monographs to serials at the request of our member libraries. Julie and Allison, our catalogers keep up with the cataloging and the backlog is minimal.

- Our Finance and HR specialists, Janet manages our finances and HR needs. We have migrated to a new payroll system after trying to migrate to a new accounting system and then we realized it was too much and not a good product. The audits are always exemplary and so is her professionalism and work ethic. She runs the finances like the captain of a ship and also knows when to give the admiral (me) the stink eye. In all seriousness, she keeps us on the straight and narrow in terms of budget, employment requirements and is overhauling the financial policies too.

- Nick Heimler is our IT consultant but he participates in weekly team meetings and is available every Tuesday and when needed during an outage, unforeseen issue etc. He has updated our laptops, firewall, UPS and switches and keeps our e-mail and local VPN robust and reliable. It is wonderful how well he works with everyone on the team and at our member libraries. We all appreciate him so much.

- I conduct scheduled bi-weekly one-on-ones with all seven direct reports. If something comes up that can't wait, we jump on Zoom with our team link. Six of us meet as a team weekly on Tuesdays so we can information-share, troubleshoot and collaborate at these Zoom meetings. Janet and Terry join us as needed. The staff is incredibly productive and happy working from home. People come into work when needed. I am there about 2 times a month, sometimes more. Terry and his team are there every day.

My two board-directed goals for this past year were to create a succession plan and to have an alternative budget ready in case funding changed. The succession plan will be finalized this month and we have keep costs down year after year.

What did I do all year? The numbers are interesting to me. One eye-opener was how often I asked other cooperative directors and LLC directors and MLA and LM colleagues to share their knowledge and expertise. Yes, most of the issues are asked of me but there were dozens of instances where I reached out to others on major concerns. I should also add that I meet in person monthly with John McNaughton, as board president and these meetings are very helpful and productive. For example, he was instrumental in the completion of the strategic plan update. The entire board which is made up of 9 library directors and the Advisory Council officers are also very helpful.

In fiscal year 2024-2025, I had at least one, if not more than one phone call, Zoom or in person meeting with 26 out of the 42 libraries. I had substantive email or text conversations with an additional 12 library directors or their staff members. In terms of total interactions, I don't add up all my emails or brief phone calls but in terms of issues of substance, 139 were logged and I believe I had contact with all 42 libraries! Of those, 25 were Zoom or in person visits for strategic planning and 15 had direct board contact for board development or board chair conversations. I participated in board retreats at GRPL and KDL and a staff in-service day at Hackley. I attended board meetings at Allendale, Belding, Cedar Springs, Gary Byker, Hackley, Hastings, Henika, Hopkins, Leighton, and White Lake. This past year, I helped 7 libraries with strategic planning. (4 other libraries completed their plans last year or the year before.)

In terms of advocacy, I attended the MLA Advocacy Day in Lansing and spoke with legislators and guided some of our new directors. I tend to hold coats and let them talk or I get the ball rolling and then step back. It is incredible to see how these directors take charge and share their stories. I do believe state aid is NOW on the radar of these legislators and in a very positive and proactive way. I participated in 2 press inquiries about IMLS funding and multiple state wide meetings. I attended MLA in Traverse City and worked the LCM booth. I attended the monthly LM director calls, the LCM retreat and monthly meetings and led my fellow directors through a GIS map project that we unveiled at MLA in Lansing at the end of October. W are all very excited about making it easier for Michiganders to use "MiLibraryFinder" to know which library can provide them with a library card! I was also on the MLA nominating committee and finished the U of M Post Pandemic Public Libraries Cohort in January. I also supported school librarian, Christine Beachler who works at Lowell Schools by attending a school board meeting regarding intellectual freedom. I am also volunteering my services to Suburban Library Cooperative in their current director search. I feel that strong coops make strong libraries and capable leadership is essential.

The entire LLC Staff and membership should be commended for their dedication, professionalism, extraordinary effort, and customer service. We look forward to improving our service model even further to meet the needs of our members as we lead, learn and lend!

Respectfully submitted,

Carol Dawe

**Executive Director's Report**
**Jennifer Balcom**
**October 2025**

The Annual Luncheon and Membership Meeting was Thursday, September 11, 2025, at the Fox Hill Event Center in Cadillac, with eighty staff and trustees in attendance. Dillon Geshel, Interim Executive Director of the Michigan Library Association, shared updates on MLA's strategic priorities, and Angela Semifero, Director of the Marshall District Library, presented innovative community engagement strategies. Follow-up survey results indicated that attendees considered this one of the most relevant and engaging Annual Luncheons to date.

This fall, Jennifer attended the Upper Peninsula Region of Library Cooperation (UPRLC) Conference in Iron Mountain and began her term as Chair of the Library Cooperatives of Michigan (LCM). She also attended the LCM Directors' Retreat in Mt. Pleasant, which included a tour of the Saginaw Chippewa Tribal College Library, led by Tribal Librarian Anne Heidemann.

MMLL's monthly Advisory Council meetings continue to feature a professional development component. Recent sessions included presentations by Shay Kovacs from Feeding West Michigan's *Gather to Grow* program and Lauren Gangarz from *Transparent Online*.

On November 7, MMLL will host a half-day workshop, *Collection Development for Small Libraries*, at the Cadillac-Wexford Public Library. The program will feature a panel discussion with MMLL member librarians and a keynote presentation by Alison Kuchta, Collection Development Librarian at Kent District Library. The program will explore how small and rural libraries can effectively balance their print and digital collections to meet evolving community needs.

In 2025, Jennifer became a Certified Working Genius Facilitator to support libraries with familiar challenges such as staff fatigue, communication gaps, and the constant pressure to do more with limited resources. The Working Genius model offers a simple yet powerful framework for connecting people's natural strengths with organizational goals.

Since earning her certification, Jennifer has facilitated three Working Genius sessions: one for MMLL Library Directors, one for LCM Directors, and one for the Cadillac-Wexford Public Library staff during their in-service day. Each workshop provided tools to help teams work with greater overall effectiveness.

Mid-Michigan LIBRARY LEAGUE

Jennifer continues to provide consulting and advisory support to member library directors and trustees. Common consultation topics include personnel policies, director and board roles, social media guidelines, board bylaws, signage, and vendor transitions (including alternatives to Baker & Taylor).

The Hart Area Public Library received the 2025 Michigan Library Association Intellectual Freedom Award. In addition, Manistee County Library, Mason County District Library, and Mancelona Township Library each received a $10,000 Carnegie Corporation grant in celebration of Carnegie's 250th anniversary.

Jennifer also attended the grand opening of Seville Township Public Library's StoryWalk in Riverdale, a collaborative project developed in partnership with the Fred Meijer Heartland Trail.

**Library of Michigan Report**
**Northland Library Cooperative**
**November 2025**

- Virtual Northland Chats:
  - Directors met to discuss a possible collaboration with the Great Lakes Center for the Arts
  - Directors met to discuss options for a shared northern MI history platform
  - Circulation staff met to discuss online library registrations/procedures
- Completed State Aid Report
- Hosted a hands-on webinar on how to make your website more accessible
- Planned Notary Education Seminars for November 2025
- Developed FY 24-25 budget amendments and FY 25-26 Budget for review at the August NLC Board meeting. Fine-tuned the services for next year based on results of member survey and usage statistics.
- Began audit for FY 24-25
- Processed NLC enhancement grants for 24 public libraries.
- Developed google shared document to better inform members on policies, workshops, programs, procedures, etc.
- State and federal budget issues are a continued concerns for all libraries.
- Monthly Northland News eNewsletters to all libraries
- Provided consulting services to directors and trustees: 33 contacts July- September. Example of consulting service: Solicitation policies, understanding FOIA requests, roles of director/Board, etc. Support and networking continue to be a valued service of the cooperative.

**Superiorland Library Cooperative**

Library of Michigan Board Report, October 2025

- The UPRLC Annual Conference held September 17-18 at Bay College in Iron Mountain had 90 registrants. Each day we had a different keynote speaker: Kristin Fontichiaro and Cathy Russ. There were 24 total educational breakout sessions on topics ranging from collection development, cataloging, library law, public speaking, social services, and more. Michelle Bradley from the Library of Michigan, Scott Garrison from MCLS, and Dillon Geshel from MLA participated in a panel discussion. The conference included an after-hours tour of the Cornish Pump & Mining Museum and WWII Glider & Military Museum sponsored by the Friends of the Dickinson County Library and included refreshments. Post-conference surveys indicated that attendees liked the venue, variety of breakout sessions, time to network, and keynote speakers. Evelyn Gathu of Crystal Falls Public Library was awarded Librarian of the Year, Superior District Library staff were awarded Program of the Year, and Fran Lukkarinen of Forsyth Township was awarded Community Champion of the Year.

- The Superiorland Board of Directors met in September and approved the final budget for FY2026.

- I have visited the following libraries so far: Richmond Township, Peter White, West Iron, Crystal Falls, Negaunee, and Forsyth Township. I will continue with on-site visits following the MLA Conference. I attended the LCM retreat in August and new director training at the Library of Michigan in September. I have completed the New Director's Pathway training in Niche Academy. I have also joined the UPLINK board and attended their annual meeting.

- Jeremy Morelock continues to refine the new Superiorland patron app and facilitate WorkFlows ILS assistance and new developments. Ellen Moore has visited libraries to assist with cataloging training as well as presented four breakout sessions at the UPRLC conference. She also provides database and digital collection management. Gordon Tellefson and Joshua Collins continue to visit libraries regularly, providing tech support on-site and remotely as needed. Pamela Malmsten continues to provide assistance with financial management, the e-rate application process, and more, providing continuing excellence to Superiorland and its libraries for over 30 years. Mia Brodeur, Great Lakes Talking Books coordinator, is facilitating a new monthly support group held in person in Superiorland's conference room as well as

via Zoom for people who have vision impairments and is working with a local reader to create digital recordings of more UP-themed books for her GLTB patrons. I get many compliments from member libraries about Superiorland's staff members.

- Superiorland will provide digital access to the Library Journal beginning soon following inquiries from library staff about collection development resources.

- Superiorland has agreed to work with Molina Cares to help administer grants to Michigan libraries.

- Negaunee Public Library is hosting an event on Wednesday November 19th at the Negaunee Senior Citizens Center featuring *The Wreck of the Edmund Fitzgerald* author Frederick Stonehouse.

Library of Michigan Report
10/24/2025

- SMLC has gained 501c3 status!
- SMLC has transitioned grant payments to ACH. Was able to get all libraries in coop except one (which refused) paid their grants by ACH.
- In 2025, SMLC invited John Chrastka from Everylibrary to discuss Library Advocacy and Everylibrary. All Michigan libraries were invited to join this and it was well attended.
- Other special trainings in 2025 included: Cyber Security with Michigan Par Plan, Reader's Advisory with Trish Reid from KDL, Succession Planning with Liz Breed and Garrett Hungerford, and Facilities Management with Andrea Bono-Bunker and Heather Backman.
- A Robert's Rules Trustee Training session with Michigan Parliamentarian was offered.
- Advisory Council Speaker's in 2025 included: Clare M from LofM on Policies and Boards, A Facilities Manager from St Jo County library on Facilities Mgmt., and Amber McClain – MI Library Finder sneak preview.
- SMLC offers annually an Ask-An-Attorney session each fall with Anne Seurynck.
- SMLC has 8 new Directors in 2025. A SMLC New Directors Group was formed and will meet on Zoom 6 times over 2026. Veteran Directors will speak to the group on various topics.
- Current SMLC Committees include: Continuing Education, Youth Programs, Adult Programs, and Technology. These groups mostly meet on Zoom.
- A Front Lines workshop will be offered to SMLC staff in November on the topics: Making Decisions, Soft Skills, Enforcing Policy, Confidence Booster and De-escalation.
- Topics for Directors for Director Chats throughout 2025 include: Weeding and Right-sizing Collections, Ask an Attorney, and Professional Development of Staff/Staff Training Days.
- SMLC will offer one professional development book from ALA to each library per year, which is done as a group purchase at a discount.
- SMLC's 2026 Budget was approved at the August Board Meeting and Siegfried Crandall was selected to do the 2025 audit.
- The cooperative earned over $14,000 in interest in FY 2025 – very happy with Consumers Credit Union and using high interest municipal savings.

# Executive Director's Report

Steven K. Bowers
October 2025

**TLN Delivers Welcome to New Members**

The TLN Delivery truck made the routes to Capital Area District Library (CADL) and Holly Township Library to deliver welcome materials from TLN to library employees at all buildings/branches. Although CADL will not be using TLN Delivery Services at this time, Holly started up on delivery this month. TLN also sent a team to Holly to begin project planning for their migration to the TLN Shared Automation System (SAS) shared catalog. Anticipated go-live date in the shared catalog for Holly is next summer (2026).

**TLN Automated Materials Handling (AMH) Machine Request for Proposals (RFP)**

TLN is now nearly ¾ of the way done tagging all SAS items (3 million out of 4 million). With the RFID tagging moving along, and goals on-target, TLN has released its RFP for acquiring a new AMH system to automatically sort delivery materials using RFID. Once the RFP responses are received and assessed it is anticipated that the Board will be brought a recommendation and request for approval to purchase a system at their next meeting, scheduled for December. To access the RFP, visit: TLN.org/BIDS

**TLN SAS Library Directors Recommend Contract Extension for CARL**

After review of the information received from the TLN catalog software Request for Quotes (RFQ) the SAS Library Directors have voted unanimously to continue using the CARL software and to seek a multi-year contract extension with our current vendor. TLN will work on contract negotiations this year, including working with member libraries to identify possible new enhancement features to add to the contract extension. The current contract has seen all deliverables completed and runs through Spring of 2027. TLN will seek a renewal beyond the current contract.

### TLN Launches new Substitute Pool Services Application




TLN was excited to launch our new Sub-Shift substitute services app at the end of the fiscal year last month. So far there are about a dozen libraries using the service and approximately 150 substitutes that have added their availability to the pool database. Congratulations to TLN's **Kelly Bennett** for her development of the app. More info on the service can be found online at: TLN.org/subs

### The Book and Author Society Presents an Evening with Kate Quinn This Month

The Book and Author Society has scheduled an unforgettable evening this month with Kate Quinn, one of historical fiction's brightest stars. This special event will feature an engaging on-stage conversation between Kate Quinn and Cathy Russ, Executive Director of the West Bloomfield Township Public Library. They will discuss Kate's celebrated novels, her intensive research process, the art of bringing history to life, and much more. Kate will be signing books for attendees after the conversation.




### Suburban Search

**Steven Bowers** is serving on the search committee for the next Suburban Library Cooperative (SLC) Executive Director. The search is being led by Lakeland Library Cooperative Director, Carol Dawe. A national search is planned with the hope of hiring a new director for SLC by next spring, 2026.

### Tech Forum 2025 Held in September




The 2025 TLN Tech Forum was held at the end of September, with approximately 50 people in attendance. The day's programming focused on exploring topics in technology surrounding this year's theme, The Human Side of Artificial Intelligence: Decoding AI Without Losing Your Humanity. Thanks to everyone on the Tech Forum committee and all the TLN employees that worked to make this another successful annual event.

**TLN Hosted Webinar: First-Time Supervisors**




This past month, TLN hosted a webinar with our Employee Assistance Program (EAP) provider, AllOne Health! Counselor Gary Atkins talked about the tools and tips that first time supervisors need to know as they begin their work. Discussion included an overview of transitioning to a new managerial role, communication skills for managers, and successfully supervising employees.

Webinar recording available on the TLN YouTube channel: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dEOQZGGtKh0

**Bowers Wraps up Work as Chair of the Library Cooperatives of Michigan**

Steven has the privilege of serving as Chair of the Library Cooperatives of Michigan (LCM), the informal group of all the cooperatives working together. He worked over the rebranding of the group over his two-year tenure and looks forward to continued work with the group. This month LCM will launch their new MI Library Finder, which is scheduled to make a sneak-peak debut at the Michigan Library Association (MLA) Annual Conference this month.

LIBRARY COOPERATIVES of Michigan
*Working Together to Empower Libraries!*

**Bowers to Receive Distinguished Alumni Award from Wayne State University School of Information Sciences**

WAYNE STATE School of Information Sciences

"Presented to a SIS graduate who has made outstanding contributions to the library and information science field. It recognizes those who have achieved distinction in the profession based on job performance, service, publications or other relevant professional activity." Steven will be honored, among others, at a dinner on October 27, 2025, and will present a brief overview of the work that TLN does.

**Report to the Library of Michigan Board of Directors**
**October 2025**

Our strategic planning and plan of service update is moving along swimmingly. Regional conversations are happening, surveys have been done and members are helping drive how the cooperative serves them in the future.

After what felt like forever on Zoom, our bi-monthly Advisory Council meetings are being held in-person again at member library locations throughout the cooperative. The hybrid option will always be available for the meeting portion of the day. We are offering different networking opportunities for our members, including library tours and safe space chat sessions, in order to make it worth the commute for in-person attendance.

We will be revisiting our webpage, as the update was less than satisfactory. It will be wrapped into the cooperative's overall digital strategy, where we can truly serve as a resource and repository for our member libraries and the various tools they can use and share.

Kate drove approximately 2953.98 miles for cooperative business in FY 2025. Those miles included 10 board development sessions, 4 face to face coaching sessions with member directors, and four governing board meetings and two council meetings. It's impossible to quantify the immense value these in-person interactions have had in rebuilding momentum and excitement for our cooperative. When the latest round of the Carnegie grants was announced, a member director called me first, concerned that it might be a scam. When we worked together to determine it was legit, she exclaimed, "oh! I need to call my board!"  Cooperative directors get the call first.

White Pine Library Cooperative

October 2025

- Continued to work on the OCLC ILL program that we provide to our members and other libraries across the state. Our portal, the Peabody ILL system, needs to be replaced due to aging technology. Our research so far has shown that the Clio system has strong potential, and we are additionally reviewing Tapasa with OCLC.
- Enjoyed an excellent turnout for our Annual Meeting, held this year at Saginaw Valley State University's Conference Center. Over 70 Directors, staff, and trustees from member libraries attended. Presentations included De-escalation Training, Ask the Attorney, an interactive comic illustration session, and a lively discussion on writing and publishing a best-selling novel with an engaging author.
- Visited Sherman Township Library to view progress on their renovation and addition project. Since the library is currently without a Director, I've been in regular contact with the Board Chair and have offered guidance and support throughout their search process.
- Provided Board Development training for the Sebewaing Township Library Board.
- Joined the Traveling Librarians group from our Cooperative at Sebewaing Township Library. Ten Directors attended as we welcomed their new Director and shared valuable discussions about current challenges and opportunities in their libraries.
- Attended the LCM Retreat in Mt. Pleasant, which included a visit and tour of the Saginaw Chippewa Community College and Library with Anne Heidemann, Tribal Librarian.
- Completed the Plan of Service Survey and submitted it to LOM.
- Hosted Roy Serrao, Senior Library Consultant at Bibliolabs, who presented BiblioBoard to our Advisory Council in September.
- Hosted a webinar with Rich Baran from Streamline for our members, focusing on upcoming ADA compliance requirements for library websites.
- I continue to share updates through weekly communications, hold virtual chats as needed, and travel throughout the Cooperative to connect with and support our member libraries.