Monroe County Library System
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Board of Trustees Meeting
Central Library, Rundel Arts Room
October 19, 2026, 5:00 PM
Agenda

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	b. From Rochester Public Library Board	Clasper	
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	2. Staff Reports		
	a. Director's Report	Clasper	
	b. MCLS Associate Director's Report	Smathers	
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	3. Other Reports or Discussion		
V.	**UNFINISHED BUSINESS**		
	None		
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VII.	**ANNOUNCEMENTS**		
VIII.	**ADJOURNMENT**		

Next Meeting:
November 16, 2026, 5:00 p.m.
Central Library, 115 South Avenue, 14604

Meeting of the MCLS Board of Trustees
Central Library, Rundel Memorial Library Building, Rundel Arts Room

September 28, 2026, 5:00 p.m.
Minutes

Trustees Present:	Christopher Corcoran, Sarah Evans, Amy Moffitt (President), Mei Qi (Vice President), Jacqueline Slifkin, Suzanne Stockman (quorum present)
Trustees Excused:	Francesca Padilla, Jamia Williams
Trustees Unexcused:	None
Staff and Guests:	Monroe County Law Dept. Liaison, Bridget Cook; staff members, Emily Clasper, Katy Hasselwander, Sarah Lehman, Debi Mansour, BJ Scanlon, Jennifer Smathers

President Moffitt called the meeting to order at 5:02 p.m., welcomed trustees, staff, and guests, and noted a quorum was present.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

The minutes of the August meeting were APPROVED AS PRESENTED.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

There were no members of the public wanting to address the board.

FINANCIAL CLAIMS

Finance Manager Hasselwander reviewed the financial claims with the trustees and offered to answer questions. After discussion, Trustee Corcoran MADE A MOTION to approve the financial claims as presented. Trustee Stockman SECONDED. THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

LIAISON REPORTS

Liaison to Rochester Regional Library Council (RRLC)

Trustee Qi referred to her written report and offered to answer questions. She reported that RRLC completed a clean audit, which was approved by its board in September. RRLC updated its handbook with policies addressing AI use, anti-nepotism, and discrimination. The Rochester Labor Library joined as a new member library.

RRLC's grant application period is open, with funding available for areas including innovation, capacity building, collections, access, internships, special projects, and professional development. Applications are expected to be due in November, with board review in January. Applications are also open for the Western Union Rural Library Grant Program. Lastly, RRLC plans to hold a grantee celebration and networking event on October 22, from 12:30–3:30 in the Kate Gleason Auditorium at the Central Library.

Liaison from the Rochester Public Library (RPL)

Director Emily Clasper reported that the Rochester Public Library Board approved New York State construction grant applications and the Direct Access Plan of Service section requiring member-library approval. The board

also approved RPL's holiday schedule, including closing the day after Thanksgiving and an early closing on New Year's Eve.

STAFF REPORTS

Director's Report

Director Clasper shared the Rochester Public Library's 2026 annual report, which is being distributed to donors, stakeholders, and elected officials as part of advocacy efforts. One key request is continued support for the countywide Wi-Fi program.

Clasper noted that NYLA is finalizing its advocacy priorities and that she will share them with stakeholders when available. She also encouraged public comments in support of continuing the federal E-rate program before the FCC's October 13 deadline and said she would provide instructions for submitting comments.

Clasper reported that contract negotiations for a new integrated library system are progressing. The contract is expected to come before the board for approval next month, followed by county procurement approval. A communications plan and public announcement are being prepared for after the necessary approvals.

MCLS Associate Director's Report

Associate Director Smathers reported that the Shipping Department hired part-time driver Chris Correa and has largely cleared its backlog. Additional sorting bins have also helped maintain operations. The department continues to support member libraries by delivering books and other materials, including Library of Things items and community information.

Smathers said staff are preparing for the integrated library system migration by reviewing workflows, identifying unnecessary processes, and planning staff communications and opportunities for input. She also reported strong recent outreach, with MCLS staff connecting with more than 600 people during a weekend that included a Harvest Fest and the Fringe Festival. Lastly, she shared that MCLS staff have returned to their offices on the third floor of the Rundel Building.

Central Associate Director's Report

Associate Director Lehman reported that *Spooky Stories in the Stacks* will take place at Central Library on October 23 from 6:00 to 7:15 p.m., and on October 24 from 6:00 to 7:15 p.m. and 8:00 to 9:15 p.m. Multiple sessions are being offered in response to strong attendance last year.

Lehman also noted that Central Library's Fringe Festival events were well attended. In addition, librarians from around the country attending the Association for Library Service to Children's national conference in Buffalo will visit Central Library for a tour of its spaces.

Other Discussion

President Moffitt asked whether MCLS should develop or implement AI policies at the system or network level. Director Emily Clasper said staff would consider whether any updates to network policies are needed, but most AI policies are expected to be developed by individual libraries. RPL is developing an acceptable-use policy and sharing its work as a model for other member libraries. Clasper also noted that ALA and New York State guidance strongly recommend addressing AI-generated content in collection development policies, though this is not a requirement.

The board discussed providing trustees with a resource explaining how libraries use AI and relevant best practices. Clasper agreed that such a resource could be developed. The discussion emphasized that MCLS is not establishing a system-wide requirement, but can offer guidance and support to member libraries.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

None

DRAFT

NEW BUSINESS

Nominating Committee Election

President Moffitt presented the item to the trustees and offered to answer questions. After discussion, Trustee Qi MADE A MOTION to appoint Trustees Jamia Williams, Jacqueline Slifkin, and Francesca Padilla to the Nominating Committee. Trustee Williams will serve as the chair. Trustee Corcoran SECONDED. THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

Nominating Committee Recommendation

Trustee Stockman presented the item to the trustees and offered to answer questions. After discussion, Trustee Moffitt MADE A MOTION to recommend Stephanie Woodward to the Monroe County Legislature for appointment to the Monroe County Library System Board of Trustees for a partial term effective immediately and ending June 30, 2028. Trustee Slifkin SECONDED. THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

AI Literacy Training Services

Director Clasper presented the item to the trustees and offered to answer questions. After discussion, Trustee Slifkin MADE A MOTION to authorize the MCLS Director to enter into a professional services agreement for staff development with David Lee King, for an amount not to exceed $4,500 and a term of September 28, 2026, through November 30, 2026. Trustee Evans SECONDED. THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

NYS Library Construction Grant Allocations

Associate Director Smathers presented the item to the trustees and offered to answer questions. After discussion, Trustee Stockman MADE A MOTION to allocate $1,757,857 in construction grant funding from New York State for MCLS libraries as follows: $1,323,527 to the Rochester Public Library for project 0386-27-2389; and $434,330 to the Rochester Public Library for project 0386-27-2390. Trustee Corcoran SECONDED. THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

Monroe County Capital Improvement Program (CIP) 2028–2033 Request

Finance Manager Hasselwander presented the item to the trustees and offered to answer questions. After discussion, Trustee Slifkin MADE A MOTION to authorize the MCLS Director to submit the MCLS 2028–2033 County CIP Request of $1,470,000 for Library Automation, $620,000 for Fleet Replacement, $772,000 for the Integrated Library System, and $90,000 for Central Library Furnishings for a total of $2,952,000. Trustee Evans SECONDED. THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

Other Business

None

ANNOUNCEMENTS

President Moffit encouraged trustees to sign up for the Library Trustee Handbook Book Club online seminar on October 29. She also reminded trustees that they can watch recordings of previous sessions and should report that to Ms. Mansour.

She reminded everyone that the next meeting is October 19, 2026.

Moffit also shared that Trustee Ichin Zinn has resigned from the MCLS Board due to conflict of interest with the FFRPL Board which she was a member of first. In addition, FFRPL has eliminated the MCLS Liaison position on their board therefore President Moffit is no longer serving in that capacity.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 6:10 p.m.

Emily Clasper, Secretary

DRAFT

MONROE COUNTY LIBRARY SYSTEM
FINANCIAL CLAIMS 2026

MON	DAY	CLAIM VO	VENDOR	DESCRIPTION	EXPENDED	REMARKS
7	24	2000691207	SHI - 11103982	MACBOOK NEO	$561.91	ARPA FUNDS
8	1				$925.71	County Journal for Fleet Maintenance Fuel & Repairs
9	1				$944.99	County Journal for Fleet Maintenance Fuel & Repairs
9	3	2000694868	Brockport Seymour Library - 11103615	2026-2027 LLSA 90%	$5,732.10	
9	3	2000694886	East Rochester Public Library - 11105288	2026-2027 LLSA 90%	$2,664.00	
9	3	2000694850	Fairport Public Library - 11101928	2026-2027 LLSA 90%	$11,686.50	
9	3	2000694875	Greece Public Library - 11104404	2026-2027 LLSA 90%	$27,576.90	
9	3	2000694847	Hamlin Public Library - 11101777	2026-2027 LLSA 90%	$2,618.10	
9	3	2000694883	Henrietta Public Library - 11105162	2026-2027 LLSA 90%	$13,399.20	
9	3	2000694892	Irondequoit Public Library - 11105989	2026-2027 LLSA 90%	$15,266.70	
9	3	2000694849	Ogden Farmer's Library - 11101918	2026-2027 LLSA 90%	$5,767.20	
9	3	2000694904	Parma Public Library - 11106907	2026-2027 LLSA 90%	$4,614.30	
9	3	2000694867	Pittsford Community Library - 11103572	2026-2027 LLSA 90%	$8,711.10	
9	3	2000694884	Rochester Public Library - 11105181	2026-2027 LLSA 90%	$97,264.80	
9	3	2000694873	Rush Public Library - 11104449	2026-2027 LLSA 90%	$1,377.00	
9	3	2000694483	Webster Public Library - 11105346	2026-2027 LLSA 90%	$12,896.10	
9	9	2000695005	BRILLIANT REPAIRS - 11127748	DIGITAL LITERACY CHROMEBOOK DISTRIBUTION - JUNE & JULY 2026	$2,100.00	ARPA FUNDS
9	9	2000695005	BRILLIANT REPAIRS - 11127748	DIGITAL LITERACY CLASSES - AUG 2026	$6,825.00	ARPA FUNDS
9	9	2000694098	DELL - 11126541	DELL PRO DOCK - WD25	$130.00	
9	9	2000695014	LITERACY ROC - 11128531	MCLS BRANCH HOURS - AUGUST 2026	$8,833.00	ARPA FUNDS
9	9	2000694935	OVERDRIVE - 11109903	MATERIALS HOLD	$990.21	
9	9	2000694935	OVERDRIVE - 11109903	MATERIALS HOLD	$988.38	
9	9	2000694935	OVERDRIVE - 11109903	MATERIALS HOLD	$161.46	
9	9	2000694440	SHI - 11103982	DELL MAINTENANCE	$6,157.76	
9	9	2000694956	TMOBILE- 11117594	MONTHLY MIFI CHARGES: AUG 2026	$25,491.10	ARPA FUNDS
9	9	2000694404	UNIQUE MANAGEMENT SERVICES - 1110254	MATERIAL RECOVERY	$1,814.40	
9	9	2000694665	ZAYO - 11129647	INTERNET - SEPT 2026 - MONTH TO MONTH UNTIL FIRSTLIGHT'S INSTALL	$2,075.00	
9	9	2000694665	ZAYO - 11129647	DIGITAL TRANSMISSION SEPT 2026	$16,187.26	
9	14	2000695146	DELL - 11126541	DELL PRO TOWER PLUS QBT1250	$2,350.00	
					$286,110.18	

MCLS LIAISON TO ROCHESTER REGIONAL LIBRARY COUNCIL BOARD OF DIRECTORS

REPORT TO THE MCLS BOARD SEPTEMBER 2026

MEI QI REPORTING

RRLC's Member Event & Celebration will take place on Thursday, October 22, 2026, at the Kate Gleason Auditorium, Bausch & Lomb Public Library Building, Central Library of Rochester & Monroe County, 12:30–3:30 p.m. with light refreshments. The event will feature presentations from members who received RRLC grants and honor Library of the Year and Library All Star winners.

RRLC just completed facilitation of the Harold Hacker Grant with Friends & Foundation of the RPL, with recipients of that grant to be announced this week.

Launching an RRLC Leadership Series, a series of leadership-focused webinars, which will open for registration soon.

NEW BUSINESS (BOARD ACTIONS)

2027 MCLS BOARD MEETING DATES (CLASPER)

Board Action Requested: A motion to approve the schedule of MCLS Board meetings for 2027.

Details: Meetings are held on the third Monday at 5:00 p.m. unless otherwise noted, with no meeting in July or December. Most meetings are held at the Central Library, with the occasional meeting scheduled at a member library.

The proposed Monroe County Library System Board meeting dates are:

January 25, 2027 (one week late due to MLK Jr. Day)

February 24, 2027 (9:00 a.m. on a Wednesday, joint budget meeting with RPL)

March 15, 2027

April 19, 2027

May 17, 2027

June 21, 2027

August 16, 2027

September 20, 2027

October 18, 2027

November 15, 2027

MCLS AT A GLANCE (JAN–SEP)

MCLS Libraries circulated **5,198,902** items YTD
Up **0.6%** from 2025

MCLS Libraries circulated **12,234** MiFis YTD
Up **55%** from 2025

MCLS Libraries issued **25,134** library cards YTD
Up **4.7%** from 2025

The Shipping Dept. moved **1,207,580** items YTD
Up **0.6%** from 2025

Technical Services added **28,183** items to the catalog YTD
Up **4.4%** from 2025

The Outreach Dept. provided **12,076** items YTD
Up **12%** from 2025

The Outreach Dept. made **165** in-home visits YTD
Up **21%** from 2025

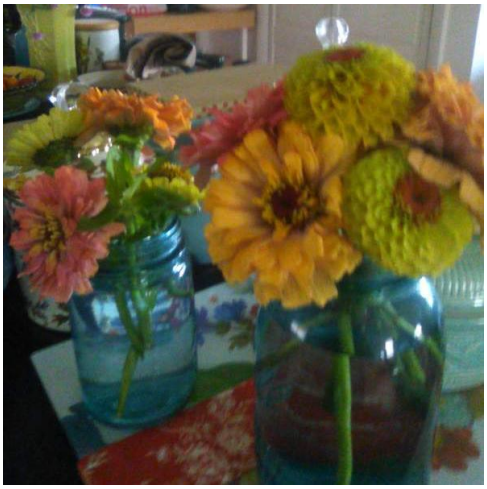
The Outreach Dept. made **118** facility visits YTD
Up **39%** from 2025

PATRON STORIES

A DELIVERY OF BOOKS, A BOUQUET OF FRIENDSHIP

For homebound patrons, library staff often become more than a connection to books. They become familiar, trusted faces who brighten the day. Outreach Coordinator Maren Kyle has developed a lovely connection with "N," a home delivery patron whose love of flowers is shared by friends and family, who send her arrangements from nearby Genrich's for special occasions.

When a previous meeting ran long, Kyle called N from her cellphone to let her know she would be arriving later than expected with her books. N was gracious and appreciative, and that simple courtesy blossomed into a sweet tradition. Now, whenever N receives a beautiful bouquet, she texts Kyle a photo to share the joy. It is a small but meaningful reminder that the relationships built through library outreach extend well beyond the delivery of books.



TIMELESS TREASURES SAVED BY OUTREACH WITH TECH HELP

During a joint visit from Outreach and Technology Center staff to Plymouth Gardens, Technology Service Specialist Trevor Johnson helped Doreen, an elderly resident and six-year cancer survivor, regain access to several older laptops she had given up trying to use. With Johnson's assistance, she retrieved and transferred files from the older devices to her current laptop, preserving cherished family photos and important documents she feared she might never see again. Johnson also taught her the difference between her grandson's Chromebook and a Windows laptop, helped her discover that her current laptop has a touchscreen, and showed her how to use her phone as a hotspot for her devices. Doreen praised Johnson's teaching style, saying, *"You were very calm and cool with explaining how to do all of this!"*

MCLS SERVICE & PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

HAVE LIBRARY, WILL TRAVEL

In September, the MCLS office took the library on the road, spending eight days at community events across Monroe County! With help from enthusiastic staff representing ten different libraries, we connected with more than 700 people beyond our library walls, sharing all the wonderful things their local libraries have to offer. Along the way, 12 people signed up for library cards or updated their accounts, and hundreds more got a friendly reminder that their library has something for everyone. Sometimes the best way to bring people into the library is to bring the library to them!

OUTREACH SURVEYS MCLS ASSISTIVE TECH & LAS SERVES IT UP

The MCLS Assistive Technology page is now live. There is also a link to the page under the "Using the Library" menu on the home page. Patrons (and staff) can use this page to determine what assistive devices and tech are available at libraries throughout the system. When there are changes to what technology is available at a member library, staff can open an LAS help desk ticket to request an update.

Big thanks to Jordan Dotson in LAS for taking the results of the system-wide survey from June and putting it into this excellent format. Thanks also to MCLS staff who filled out the survey to help make this much needed resource a reality.

CONNECTING KIDS TO RESOURCES FOR HEALTH

MCLS Children's Services Consultant Tonia Burton arranged to have URMC's Golisano Children's Pediatric Mobile Clinic visit the Central Library starting September 24. The mobile unit will visit on the 2nd and 4th Thursday of the month. The clinic intends to serve children and teens who are unhoused and/or between healthcare providers, but all will be welcomed. The mission of the clinic is, "To deliver compassionate and fair health care to youth and young adults by meeting them in places they trust, keeping their care private, removing obstacles, and making sure they get the help they need to grow and be healthy."

Central Library is honored to be recognized by this and future clinic visits as a place the community trusts.

SPECIAL INITIATIVES

WIRED FOR OPPORTUNITY

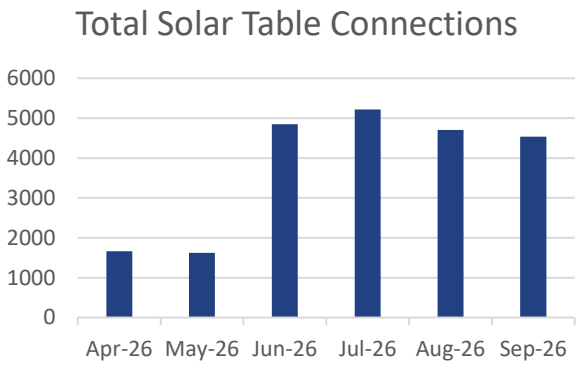
PROGRAM STATISTICS

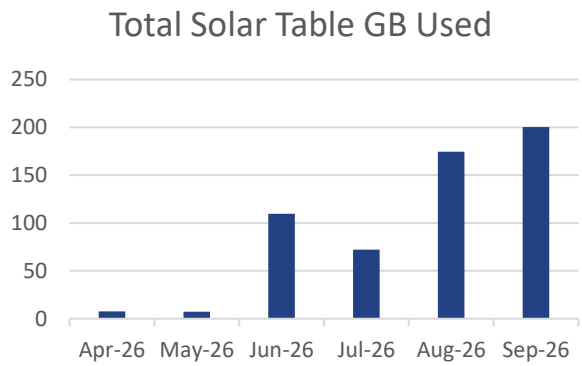
Class Topics

Intro to Computers	Computer Catch-Up	Library Resources	Online Job Search
Applying for Benefits	Scams and Security	Intro to Google	Phones & Tablets

Month	Classes	Attendance	Month	Classes	Attendance
Jul-2025	25	170	Mar-2026	50	240
Aug-2025	23	146	Apr-2026	17	106
Sept-2025	26	175	May-2026	30	191
Oct-2025	23	161	Jun-2026	31	205
Nov-2025	35	252	Jul-2026	28	234
Dec-2025	21	109	Aug-2026	24	205
Jan-2026	27	178	Sep-2026	27	162
Feb-2026	35	229			

SOLAR TABLE USAGE





INTEGRATED LIBRARY SYSTEM (ILS) RFP

Negotiations continued in September, with requests for Best and Final Offers sent to vendors. As MCLS prepares for a year-long migration to a new ILS, strong communication among member libraries and MCLS staff will be essential. The Directors' Council is expected to discuss the need for designated points of contact who can facilitate the exchange of information between member libraries and the ILS implementation team.

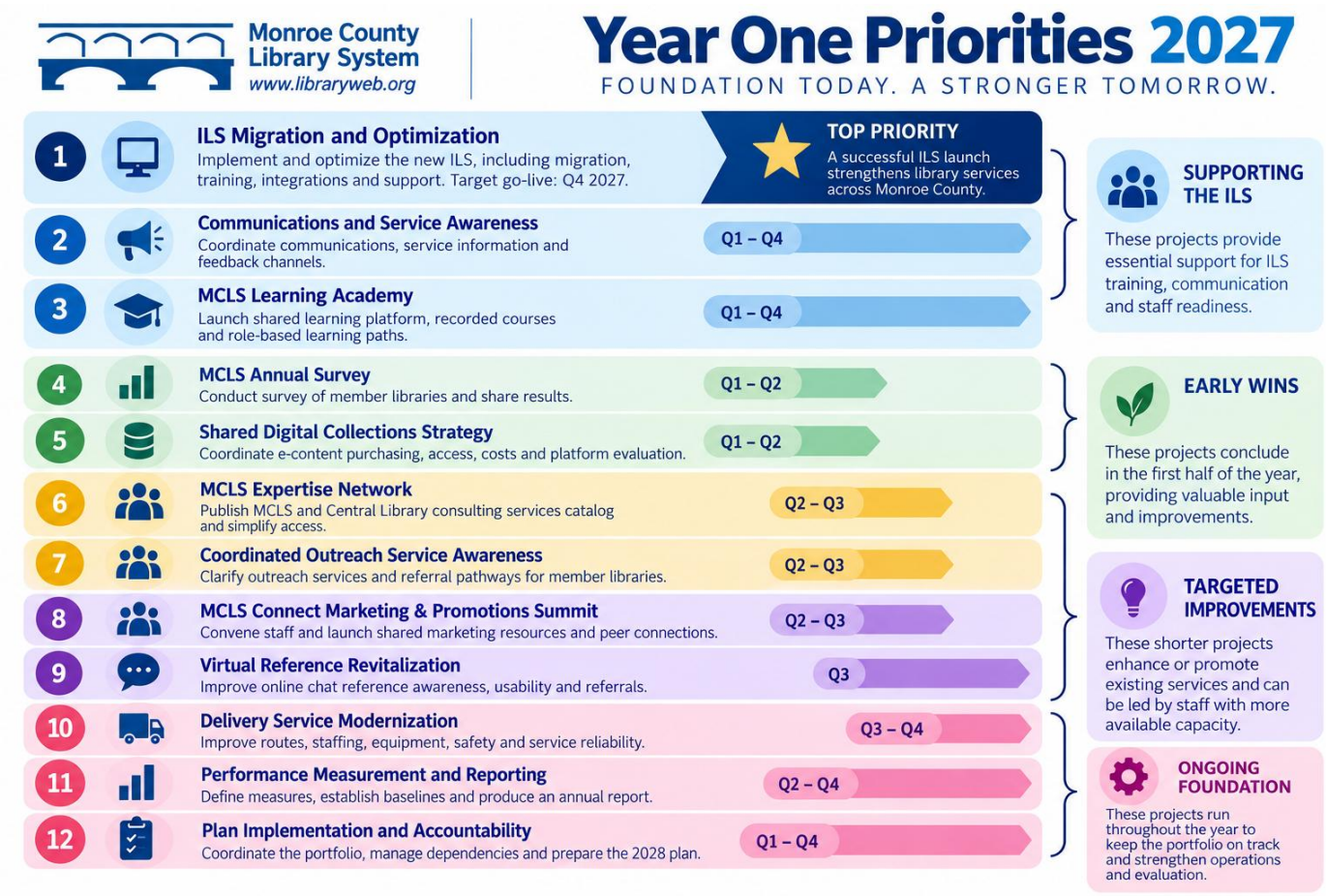
Excitement among staff at all levels is encouraging, balanced by an understanding of the significant work ahead. This substantial undertaking is expected to result in a new ILS that offers an improved experience for library staff and patrons alike.

MCLS PLAN OF SERVICE: YEAR 1

Planning is underway for the first year of implementation of the new MCLS Plan of Service. A Strategic Team composed of MCLS staff who lead major areas of System service has been formed to guide this work. The team has identified priorities aligned with the Plan of Service's key areas, which will serve as the foundation for Year 1 activities within the broader five-year implementation plan.

The top priority for 2027 will be implementing the new Integrated Library System (ILS). However, smaller projects may move forward concurrently, particularly those that can be shared across teams or that support the ILS implementation.

The team is eager to advance this work and make meaningful improvements that benefit every library in the System. Updates on major projects will be shared with the Board as implementation progresses.



STAFF HIGHLIGHTS

CITY RECOGNIZES WIRED FOR OPPORTUNITY TEAM

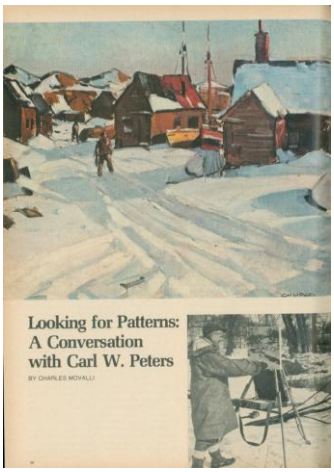
The *Wired for Opportunity* team was recognized by the City of Rochester for their service to the community at the City's Employee Recognition Ceremony. Jennifer Byrnes, Stephanie Lane, Rich Mangione, and Anna Neumaier were given a team plaque and individual certificates signed by the Mayor and City Council President "For bridging the digital divide with innovative internet access opportunities, expanding the mobile hotspot lending program and installing public solar-powered Wi-Fi tables. Together with digital literacy education, this team has helped thousands of residents connect to education, employment, healthcare, and essential services." As the Mayor, Council President, and Library Director were waiting on stage for the team to come up after the announcement of the award, Mayor Evans turned to Director Clasper and said, *"Wow, this is such a great program. I wish we could keep this going forever."*

MCLS MEMBER LIBRARY HIGHLIGHTS

THE MCLS BOOK BIKE IS MAGIC

The Book Fairies from the Mendon Public Library used the MCLS Book Bike once again for the community's Fall Weekend Parade! Director Lyla Grills said, *"We really appreciate the opportunity to borrow the MCLS Book Bike and the delivery of it from the wonderful shipping staff."*

TEAMWORK ACROSS LIBRARIES PRESERVES LOCAL HISTORY



When the Perinton Historical Society, which operates the Fairport Museum in the former Works Progress Administration (WPA) library building, sought a clearer copy of a 1977 article about the building's history, Fairport Library Director Carl Gouveia reached out to Central Library's Arts & Literature Division for help. The article, "Looking for Patterns," featured an interview with artist Carl Peters, who painted the mural above the circulation desk in the old library.

Central staff member Erin Clarke quickly located the magazine in the collection and worked closely with Gouveia to provide the article. Although a page was missing from Central's copy, Clarke promptly communicated the limitation and helped move the search forward. Through additional interlibrary loan assistance, Fairport ultimately obtained a complete PDF of the article.

The effort highlights the value of collaboration across the Monroe County Library System, with Central staff providing responsive, thoughtful service to a member library and helping preserve an important piece of local history.

LIBRARY DIRECTOR'S CORNER: EMILY CLASPER

TRUSTEE CALL TO ACTION

The New York Library Association (NYLA) and Public Library System Directors Organization (PULISDO) are working together to advocate for increased funding for New York State Library Systems. Funding for Library Systems has an outsized impact by allowing member libraries to share resources, technology, expertise, and services at a fraction of what they would cost the libraries individually. This investment creates significant savings for member libraries and their communities while ensuring that residents have access to high-quality library services regardless of the size or wealth of their community.

We are reaching out to Governor Hochul's regional representatives to advocate for increases to funding granted to our Library Systems as a powerful and cost-effective way to benefit all libraries across the state. **A letter on behalf of MCLS sent to the Finger Lakes Representative listed below would help a great deal in this effort.**

JW Cook
Finger Lakes Regional Representative
New York State Executive Chamber
255 East Avenue, Suite 101, Rochester, NY 14604

RECOMMENDED READING

AP News: PEN America: Nearly 12,000 school book bans in a year, a record high

New York Times: Librarians on Libraries

Publishers Weekly: Clarivate Report Assesses Libraries' Adoption, Implementation of AI

American Libraries: By the Numbers: Banned Books Week 2026

MCLS IN THE NEWS

Rochester Beacon: Renewal of A Community Hub

News 10 WHEC: Rochester World Homeless Day event connects people to housing resources at Central Library

Westside News: Monroe County Launches Parks 100

13 WHAM: Monroe County marks 100 years of parks system with yearlong celebration

Rochester First: Monroe County park system marks 100 years

Rochester First: Webster library board identifies preferred site for new building

IMPORTANT DATES

Wed, October 21, 5:00–7:00: Art of The Book & Paper Opening Reception, Hacker Hall, Central Library

Thur, October 22, 12:30–3:30: RRLC Member Event & Celebration, Kate Gleason Auditorium, Central Library

Thur, October 22, 5:00–8:00: 26th Annual Brain Game trivia tournament by Literacy Rochester, Hyatt Regency

Fri, October 23: All RPL locations closed to the public for Staff Day

Tue, November 10, 6:00: County Legislature Meeting

Wed, November 11: Veterans Day, Closed Libraries: E. Rochester, Greece, Ogden, Parma, RPL, and Scottsville

UPCOMING LIBRARY PROGRAMMING

Find Upcoming Library Programming Here

DIRECTOR'S UPDATES

One of the things I enjoy most about this job is that I never quite know where a conversation or meeting might lead. A discussion about downtown economic development turns into a possible improvement to the Central Library's reading garden. A chance encounter at a museum gala opens the door to potential grant funding. A meeting with colleagues from another part of the state generates ideas we might borrow for our own libraries. This month offered plenty of examples of how getting out into the community, building relationships, and sharing ideas can create unexpected opportunities for RPL and MCLS.

Community Partnerships and Engagement

I recently took Brie Harrison's place on the Board of the Rochester Downtown Development Corporation (RDDC) and attended my first meeting, where I learned about changing downtown demographics and ongoing economic development efforts. I followed up with a productive meeting with Interim President and CEO Heidi Zimmer-Meyer to discuss advocacy for the Central Library, potential partnerships and revenue opportunities, grant funding, and connections that could help raise the library's profile downtown.

RPL also sponsored a table at RDDC's State of Rochester's Economy event, which I attended with several staff members and a Board member. It was an excellent opportunity to connect with downtown leaders and learn about projects shaping the City's future. In fact, one of the connections made there has already led to discussions about a possible project to refresh the Central Library's reading garden! I am excited about the opportunities that may come from strengthening our relationship with RDDC and ensuring that the Central Library has a voice in downtown Rochester's future.

I was also delighted to participate in the announcement of the Rochester Playground Library series, a new partnership between MCLS and the Monroe County Parks Department celebrating 100 years of County parks. Parks and libraries have a great deal in common. Both are free, welcoming public spaces where people can explore, learn, play, and connect with their communities. Building on our longstanding tradition of offering storytimes in local parks, this new initiative will bring monthly interactive storytimes to pavilions and lodges at ten different County parks beginning in January. Library staff from across Monroe County will introduce families to both our parks and libraries, encourage exploration of the natural world, and highlight library resources that can enrich outdoor experiences. With 22 County parks and 30 public libraries, there are certainly plenty of places for families to discover!

We have also been making encouraging progress in our relationship with the Rochester Historical Society (RHS). Several recent meetings have focused on establishing a stronger, more collaborative relationship between our organizations. There have been challenges in the past, but newer leadership on both sides is interested in moving beyond previous disagreements and finding ways to work together. We are developing a new legal agreement to replace the previous one, which contained provisions that had become problematic for both parties. I am optimistic that this fresh start will lead to a more positive, mutually beneficial relationship that improves public access to the history of Rochester and Monroe County.

My involvement with the Rochester Museum & Science Center (RMSC) Board has also provided opportunities to share expertise and make connections. I am serving on the search committee for the organization's next President and CEO, contributing my experience leading an institution focused on education, public service, and collections management. I have also advised RMSC leadership on operational matters during this transition, including grant funding and relationships with the City of Rochester. At the recent RMSC Gala, I made several promising connections, including one with someone who has ideas about potential grant funding for MCLS. We are planning to meet soon to explore those possibilities further.

Staff Development and Organizational Improvement

Our planning team has been working hard to prepare for RPL Staff Day on October 23! This year's theme focuses on embracing positive change, with a program designed to give staff practical tools for navigating change while providing opportunities to collaborate, connect, and have some fun. Board members are warmly invited to stop by for any portion of the day, whether to join us for lunch, participate in a session, or simply spend some time connecting with staff.

The day will feature a guest speaker who will lead an interactive change management workshop, some games and lighter activities, a delicious buffet lunch, and small-group problem-solving sessions. Staff will work together to identify realistic improvements they can make to their work, our services, or the patron experience. We will wrap up by sharing some of the ideas generated and holding staff appreciation raffles.

Speaking of raffles, we are happily accepting donations of prizes! These are fun ways to recognize the incredible work our staff do every day, particularly when public funding does not always allow us to show our appreciation in the ways we would like.

Deputy Director Scanlon and I also participated in a full-day cybersecurity workshop sponsored by the City of Rochester's IT Department. The workshop provided valuable information about current and emerging cybersecurity threats, including some risks that were new to us. Although the focus was on the City's network, much of the information was directly applicable to MCLS, which operates its own network. We brought back several useful insights to share with our technology team as we continue strengthening the security of our countywide systems.

Supporting Our Member Libraries and Regional Colleagues

In late September, I traveled to Mendon Public Library to facilitate a strategic planning session with its Board of Trustees, focused on developing a vision for the library's future. The Board was a delight to work with! Members were enthusiastic, thoughtful, and passionate about their library and its role in the community. We had a lively discussion about what they value, what they hope to preserve, and what they would like their library to become over the next five years.

Following the session, I developed a report summarizing the discussion, identifying emerging strategic themes, and recommending next steps. The Board will use this work to guide additional community engagement before finalizing its vision and strategic priorities. I may continue assisting as the planning process moves forward. This is a great example of the consulting and leadership support MCLS can provide to strengthen our member libraries.

For the second consecutive year, I was invited to help the Western New York Library Resources Council (WNYLRC) evaluate applications and make funding decisions for its Action in Innovation Grants. This is always an enjoyable experience, offering a chance to see the creative projects being developed by our colleagues in western New York and help support worthwhile initiatives. Several proposals also sparked ideas that RPL or MCLS might explore in the future. It was wonderful to collaborate with library leaders from other parts of the state and bring home some fresh inspiration.

Statewide Leadership and Advocacy

As a member of the New York State Regents Advisory Council on Libraries, I recently participated in a discussion with members of the Board of Regents about incorporating social workers into public libraries. Much of the conversation focused on the need for social services and the use of social work interns. I was able to offer a different perspective by describing RPL's successful model of contracting with an outside organization to provide regular professional services delivered by licensed social workers.

Our program has expanded incrementally over the past several years and provides an established approach to connecting patrons with professional assistance while allowing library staff to focus on their own areas of expertise. I was pleased that RPL's approach was recognized during the discussion as a model of best practice. It is gratifying to see work developed here in Rochester helping inform conversations about library services across New York State.

MCLS Policy and Resource Management

Alicia Gunther and I have been leading a group of MCLS member library directors through a much-needed revision of our Shared Digital Collections Development Policy. The existing policy had become quite outdated and no longer adequately reflected how our member libraries develop and manage shared digital collections, particularly OverDrive.

Over several meetings, the group reviewed current practices and developed recommendations to clarify MCLS's and individual libraries' roles in selecting materials, modernize selection criteria, and establish clearer procedures for handling requests to reconsider materials. The proposed revisions will next be reviewed by County Law before returning to the MCLS Directors' Council for endorsement and, ultimately, the MCLS Board for approval. This work will provide clearer guidance for collection development and help ensure that we are prepared to respond consistently and appropriately to future challenges.

We have also begun examining an emerging issue involving out-of-area library cards and OverDrive usage. Staff recently noticed an unusual increase in applications from people outside our region, many apparently seeking access to our digital collections, possibly driven by social media attention. We dug into the data and confirmed that both the number of out-of-area users and the number of their digital checkouts have increased significantly.

While we appreciate the enthusiasm for library services, this raises concerns about the sustainability of our digital collections. Digital resources have finite budgets and borrowing capacity, and increased demand from outside our service area could affect availability for local residents. We have formed a committee to investigate the issue more thoroughly and recommend a thoughtful, data-informed response that balances access with our responsibility to the communities funding these resources. I will keep the Board informed as this work progresses.

Looking Ahead

A common thread through many of this month's activities has been the value of building relationships, both within the library community and beyond it. Some of these connections are already producing tangible opportunities, while others may take time to develop. All of them help strengthen our position as an engaged community partner and create possibilities for the future.

I am particularly looking forward to RPL Staff Day on October 23, when we will have an opportunity to bring our staff together, celebrate their contributions, and generate practical ideas for making RPL even stronger. I hope to see some of our Board members there!

~Emily

MCLS OFFICE ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR'S UPDATE: JENNIFER SMATHERS

Finance Fuge State

At a recent meeting with the City's Budget Equity Program team, they mentioned that fall sees the start of budget season for the City which runs a July-June fiscal year. In reality, MCLS is never out of budget season, with our overlapping budgets consisting of a variety of fiscal years. MCLS gets System Operating Aid from NYS, which we promote with our state Senators and Assemblypersons starting in the fall, which is then subject to the NYS budget being passed by both houses and signed by the governor. Ideally, by the start of the state fiscal year in April. The Monroe County budget runs on a calendar year, with public hearings on the operating budgets in May and the capital budgets in December. The County shutdown for fiscal year rollover leaves the finance office unable to pay MCLS bills for most of the month of January.

Thus, part of our ILS negotiations included nailing down what a payment schedule might look like, so that the vendor and MCLS are both planning to work within the limitations placed on the finance department for payment. This year, that includes an increase in the capital requests to the County, to better reflect the cost of running our enterprise system, after several years of having those costs represented within the more restrictive operating budget. Finally, the finance office helped cover the accounting clerk's responsibilities during the employee's medical leave. Kudos to Katy Hasselwander and her team for keeping MCLS and RPL on our budgetary toes.

Together Again: Librarians Serving Young Adult and Juvenile

September saw the first combined Young Adult and Juvenile librarians meeting for MCLS. This mirrors changes occurring on the national level of the American Library Association (ALA). On September 1, 2026, all Young Adult Library Services Association (YALSA) members automatically became members of Association for Library Service to Children (ALSC). The local combined meeting was held at Central Library, hosted by Tonia Burton and Chelsea Arnold. I was honored to be able to address the attendees at the start of their day. They have the job that inspired me to become a librarian. I emphasized that they not only get to influence the next generation of lifelong learnings, but the next generations of librarians. Then I reminded the room that their input will be needed as decisions are made about how to implement the new ILS. MCLS can always count on a room full of Children's and YA librarians to bring their enthusiasm in response to a challenging project.

Ship Shape in Shipping

I'm pleased to report that Supervising Library Materials Handler Tom Grossman, along with the help of our assiduous truck drivers and diligent sorting team, has overcome the delivery backlog. There's more room for improvement in staffing levels; we hope to see that come to fruition in October.

~Jennifer

CENTRAL LIBRARY ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR'S UPDATE: SARAH LEHMAN

Two Retirements and a New Start

Throughout the end of August and September, the Central Library saw the retirement of two division heads (Jay Osborne in the Technology Center and Bob Scheffel in the Science Division). Mid-September also saw the start for our new Historical Services Coordinator, Joshua Tomaszewski (former Librarian I in the Technology Center). Since I began in this position roughly a year ago, we have seen five public service division heads (of nine divisions) either retire or move on to other positions. With all these changes in management throughout Central we are seeing an exciting time of change creating an opportunity to examine how we are working to serve our community and how we can shift to new ways. With the completion of our most recent Plan of Service for both Central and MCLS, I am excited to explore how we can utilize this time to meet the goals and plans for service not just within the City of Rochester but in our role as a Central Library serving MCLS as well.

Budget Equity Planning and Programming Committee

As part of the annual budget process with the City of Rochester, the library annually submits several key initiative goals focused on equity and diversity. This past year, the City's Budget Equity Team worked with all City departments to develop equity goals from a more data-based lens and the library chose programming as a focus. Katy Hasselwander and I were chosen to lead a team of Branch and Central staff to audit and assess the programming currently happening throughout the Rochester Public Library with the goal of making recommendations on how staff can effectively diversify their existing programming from a more equity focused position. The group began meeting in September and has already jumped right into the work. While the bulk of this work focuses on Rochester Public Library programming, we plan to share this out among the County libraries as a whole through more robust categories among MCLS wide tools such as LibCal and sharing our findings with MCLS partners in the hope that they will be able to utilize these findings for their own programming as well.

***Art of the Book & Paper* at the Central Library**

The Central Library has opened its annual juried art exhibition, *Art of the Book & Paper* (AOB&P), which was first held in 2011, in honor of the 100th anniversary of the Rochester Public Library and features extraordinary works inspired by books and stories. This year's exhibition marks the first since the retirement of longtime employee Corinne Clar, who previously led the project. The public is invited to attend the exhibition reception on Wednesday, October 21, from 5:30 to 7:00 p.m. in Harold Hacker Hall on the first floor of the Rundel Memorial Library Building.

~Sarah

Town Libraries				
	Sep-26	**Sep-25**	**+/-**	**%**
Brighton	50,944	50,005	939	1.9%
Seymour	11,942	11,965	-23	-0.2%
Chili	21,776	21,005	771	3.7%
East Rochester	4,690	4,117	573	13.9%
Fairport	56,478	55,615	863	1.6%
Gates	20,777	20,556	221	1.1%
Greece	48,524	50,990	-2466	-4.8%
Hamlin	4,977	4,648	329	7.1%
Henrietta	40,857	41,993	-1136	-2.7%
Irondequoit	40,041	38,833	1208	3.1%
Mendon	9,874	9,520	354	3.7%
Newman Riga	2,487	2,155	332	15.4%
Ogden	11,982	11,573	409	3.5%
Parma	8,540	7,799	741	9.5%
Penfield	42,166	39,626	2540	6.4%
Pittsford	48,137	49,872	-1735	-3.5%
Rush	2,671	2,612	59	2.3%
Mumford	407	631	-224	-35.5%
Scottsville	3,120	2,943	177	6.0%
Webster	39,551	38,586	965	2.5%
Towns Subtotal	*469,941*	*465,044*	*4897*	1.1%
RPL Subtotal	*87,868*	*78,910*	*8958*	11.4%
MCLS Total	**557,809**	**543,954**	**13855**	**2.5%**