

DIRECTOR'S REPORT
Kathy Brock Enger
Northern Lights Library Network (NLLN)
June 20, 2026

Thank You

This time of year, as Fiscal Year 2026 comes to a close, there are many people to thank for making Northern Lights Library Network (NLLN) the strong organization that it is. First of all, thank you to the executive board: Joe Gould, President; Chizuko Shastri, Vice President; Christine Ayala-Zierke, Secretary; and Karen Qualey, Treasurer. Joe is a steady force of strong leadership; Chizuko advises and leads on many areas that improve the organization; Christine is present at every meeting, shapes positive outcomes, and stepped in when our secretary retired mid-year; and Karen is with us all the way, signing documents when needed, overseeing bi-weekly timesheets, and including NLLN members in forward-thinking initiatives that she leads at Minnesota State University Moorhead (MSUM). The entire board is proactive and inclusive, they share their intelligence and experience freely and extend their talent to make libraries in the region stronger. Thank you, too, to Charlie Lindgren and Ruth Holmgren who retired from the board this year after many fruitful years of service.

A special thank you to Aleta Sanford, former NLLN intern and Friend of NLLN, who takes notes and writes minutes at NLLN meetings. Thank you to Braden Kuznia, Steve Fox, and Jayce Branden of the MSUM Comstock Memorial Union who set up space for board meetings and accommodate our technological needs; and to Brenda Norris, George Tippins, Christina Lien, and Sarah Muehler who process and sign NLLN's 265C MacLean lease at MSUM. Thank you to Andy Mickel of Factor-of-4 who designed and supports NLLN's website and email and meets with Kathy to advise on technological issues. And ongoing thank you to Olsen Thielen and Associates, CPA, who support NLLN with clear, transparent financial statements and to Accountant Ronda Higgens, who meets with Kathy every week to review accounts, and Magen Koep who oversees all things IRS. Thank you to Marc Colin, CPA, at Carpenter, Evert, and Associates who conducts NLLN's yearly audit; David Crutchfield, Architect Professor at NDSU who consults on library projects in the region, donating his time; Senator Mary Kunesh for supporting libraries in the Minnesota Legislature; to all Minnesota legislators who support libraries, literacy, and learning throughout Minnesota. Strong nonprofit organizations like members of NLLN operate as a team of experts that collectively and individually come together to make a difference in the lives of citizens throughout the NLLN region. Thank you to this team of professionals who support the work Northern Lights Library Network is doing in the region.

Life Achievement Award

The Life Achievement Award from Northern Lights Library Network (NLLN) signifies a contribution to citizens in the NLLN region for a librarian who has given extraordinary service throughout a career. The award is given once a year or less, upon the recommendation of the Executive Director or member of the NLLN Governing Board. This year, the award goes to Charlie Lindberg and Lina Belar.

Charlie Lindberg

Charlie (Linda) Lindberg grew up in Robbinsdale, Minnesota, excelling at violin in the area youth orchestra. After graduating from high school, she attended Gustavas Adolphus College where she met the love of her life, Bill Lindberg. They both taught in suburban schools until moving to Bill's family farm in Kennedy, Minnesota, in 1973. At that time, Charlie went to work to open the Hallock Public Library, which she supports to this day through board membership and the Library Friends, which over the years has raised funds to support the library well.

While raising her two sons, Charlie completed her Library Media Master's degree from St. Cloud State University. She served as teacher and media specialist with Kittson Central School District for most of her career. At Kittson Central, Charlie began a STEM group and facilitated ongoing robotics training. She built a beautiful new library at Kittson Central and developed a refined collection that circulated frequently. An avid reader, Charlie was adept at advising her students in their reading choices.

Charlie was instrumental in bringing the NorthStar Library Consortium into existence at a time when school libraries needed online library catalogs. As a part of a Northern Lights Library Network (NLLN) team, Charlie visited libraries throughout the state to bring school library catalogs online. Today, over 100 rural libraries in the state belong to the NorthStar Library Consortium.

In addition to serving on the Hallock Library Board, Charlie served on the Northwest Regional Library Board (NWRL) and the NLLN Governing Board, often serving as an officer. Charlie's thoughtful insights resulted in solid, valuable decision-making for libraries throughout the Northern Lights Library Network Region.

From 1973 to the present, Charlie has been a valued member of the library community in Minnesota. Her contributions to citizens in the region through library service are greatly appreciated, and recognition for this work is well-deserved.

Lina Belar

Lina Belar has served the Northern Lights Library Network (NLLN) region and the State of Minnesota for over fifty years. Early on, she was responsible for starting the *In Their Own Words (ITOW) Museum* in Perham, as well as the *History Museum of East Otter Tail County*. Lina also served as Executive Director of the Wadena County Historical Society. All three became special members of Northern Lights Library Network. Lina received her education at Columbia University.

The *In Their Own Words Museum* documents the oral histories of America's veterans and provides a visual experience of wartime life. For instance, there is a WWI bunker that offers a true-to-life duplication of American soldiers' combat experience in France. Lina was responsible for bringing the full electronic and physical reality of the museum to fruition, often contributing her own resources to make the museum a reality.

Lina is a distinguished poet, having published several books, including *At the Crossroads* and *Rural Score*. Her new book in press is *Rift in the Universe*. During the COVID pandemic, Lina facilitated the publication of poetry collections from Minnesota poets, *Poems of Hope and Reassurance* and *More Poems of Hope and Reassurance*. Her poems have been translated into Slovenian and celebrated in a ceremony at the Triglav National Park, hosted by the government. Lina has also published many articles in regional newspapers and contributed articles to the Minnesota Historical Society, including *Little Round Hill Trading Site*; *Cadotte Trading Post*; *Joseph Reaume's Trading Post*.

In 1999, Lina received the Perham Area Chamber of Commerce Leadership Award and, in 2000, the Minnesota Library Association's Distinguished Achievement Category II Award. The Heartland Symphony Orchestra has named the Second Trumpet Chair in honor of Lina. For many years, Lina served on the board of Northern Lights Library Network, representing Special Libraries in the region. She has always been kind-hearted and brilliant in her willingness to share ideas that bring humanity to our collective lived experience. Lina is deserving of this recognition for her outstanding work preserving Minnesota collections. The following poem was a broadside commissioned by Northern Lights Library Network, designed and printed by Patric Vincent, Assistant Professor, Minnesota State University Moorhead in 2015. Thirty-five numbered and signed copies were printed.

At the Library
By Lina Belar

All summer long, my sister and I
read books that take us to places we have
never been and will likely never see.

I am to the T's in the
adult fiction section of the Public Library,
a faded Victorian house filled with books
tended by two maiden women
who sort and clean donated books
catalog them, honor Dewey.

I read everything by Erich Maria
Remarque, acquire a stunning
grasp of the vernacular that I expect
to keep well hidden.

My sister, two years younger,
is reading things like "The Bobbsey Twins"
and Nancy Drew mysteries.
"Is that a good one," I ask her one day.
"Oh yes," she answers, "I'm almost done.
But there's another book in the series."

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

Media Specialists Licensed

Congratulations to Christi Smith, Media Specialist with Alexandria Public Schools, who completed her Master's and Media Specialist certification from St. Cloud State University this spring. NLLN Executive Director, Kathy Enger, served on Christi's graduate committee.

Congratulations to Jennifer Otremba, Media Specialist at Osakis Public Schools, who just completed her media specialist certification requirements for K-12 Media Specialist licensure from MSU Mankato. Jennifer did not do the additional credits to attain the Master's degree since she has a Master's degree already.

Karen Qualey Receives Award

Karen Qualey, Executive Director of Library Services and Online Learning at MSU Moorhead, received MSUM's 2026 Dragon Excellence Award in Community Engagement this spring. Congratulations, Karen!

Architect Professor David Crutchfield

Several libraries have received expert advice from NDSU Architect Professor David Crutchfield, including Campbell School and Pine River Public Library. The Crookston High School may also be seeking his suggestions for space optimization and beautification.

Big Issues Summit

Librarians and library staff from around the state are meeting for the *Big Issues Summit* from 9:30 a.m. - 5 p.m. on June 22nd at the Brookdale Library. NLLN can sponsor librarians and library staff with mileage and lodging. See: <https://nlln.org/pdfs/NLLN-Scholarship-Application.pdf>

This unconference is free and open to all.

Registration:

<https://www.mnlibraryassociation.org/events/EventDetails.aspx?id=2061260&group=>

Librarians work closely with Minnesotans and hear about needs and issues that affect us, regularly. Please join the conversation and bring to light the conversations we have at the local level. NLLN and the multicounty, multitype systems (MCMTs) support this initiative.

From the Minnesota Library Association (MLA):

"This highly collaborative session invites participants to help shape the conversations, identify

emerging challenges, and surface opportunities for statewide action. The Summit is intended as a starting point for conversation—a space to surface ideas, share perspectives, and explore possibilities together. We don't expect to solve every issue in one session.

AI Spark: Education in the Age of AI
Thursday, August 6, 2026
at the MSUM Foundation
on the Campus of Minnesota State University Moorhead

Educators from PK-12 and higher education are invited to join Minnesota State Moorhead's Institute for Applied AI for a day-long training. Explore pedagogical approaches to AI education with hands on practical training. Breakout sessions will cover topics such as AI literacy, AI Agentic Architecture, and ethical AI Integration. CEUs are available. Lunch will be provided.

NLLN and MSUM is sponsoring 10 free registration passes for NLLN Members to attend *AI Spark* with the Promotion Code: "NLLN-26".

REGISTER HERE:

<https://engage.msumfoundation.org/e/ai-spark/>

With NLLN's sponsorship, MSUM is also offering six registration passes to each of the following school districts: Moorhead Public Schools, Detroit Lakes High School, Dilworth-Glyndon-Felton, Fergus Falls, East Grand Forks.

United for Children
The 22nd Annual Communities Collaborative Brain Development Conference
August 11 – 13, 2026
Shooting Star Casino, Mahnomon, Minnesota
Sponsored by the White Earth Child Care Early Childhood Program

Recognizing the importance of support throughout the life cycle, the *Brain Conference* brings together experts to discuss practices that enhance and improve lives of children. Presentations and break-out sessions recognize the cultural significance of Native American communities, and people who attend the conference leave with a deeper understanding of how to interact with one another in thoughtful and meaningful ways. Some of the topics this year include: Finding Joy: Reduce Stress, Break Through Barriers, and Increase Your Joy; Preventing Teacher Burnout and Increasing Student Engagement; In This Together: Strengthen Staff Culture with Purpose, Perspective and Positivity; Looking Beneath the Behavior; Healthy Habits for Growing Brains with Nutrition and Physical Activity; Building Lifelong Health Habits Rooted in Strength, Wellness and Culture; Conscious Discipline; Year-Round Outdoor Play.

NLLN can sponsor librarians and library staff with mileage and lodging.
See: <https://nlln.org/pdfs/NLLN-Scholarship-Application.pdf>

Register Here: <https://bit.ly/ccbdconference>

Minnesota Libraries Read Together: Celebrating Minnesota's Libraries September 18 - 20, 2026

Minnesota Libraries Read Together is calling on libraries to host an event celebrating libraries on September 18, 19, or 20, 2026. Host libraries will register as a site and sponsor an event that best fits their space: inviting the community to read together, reading together while including passive programming, or partnering with their Friends group to have active programming with invited local officials. Opportunities and ideas abound!

Sign up to host at this link:

https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSdqTgNyYElIBAn6fsstzvvJC069N_z0-G8zujv0GN7H4hjcjA/viewform

Minnesota Libraries Learning Network <https://mlln.org>

For practical professional development resources for library staff across the state, see Minnesota Libraries Learning Network at: <https://mlln.org/>

Browse the catalog:

<https://mlln.org/mllncatalog/>

View additions including the *Storytime Course*, *Summer Reading Camp*, and webinars for job seekers. New library staff may find *Minnesota Libraries Structure and Funding* useful, as will anyone looking to better understand how our libraries work. If you're looking for flexible learning opportunities that work for your schedule, NLLN has you covered with local, free, self-paced content.

ELM Expo

Minitex is planning an ELM Expo about ELibrary Minnesota in the NLLN region for August 11 from 9 a.m. – 12 noon. More to come as registration information becomes available.

eLibraryMN provides free information resources for all Minnesotans covering topics such as health, medicine, and nursing; job and career building; ebooks; news and magazines, and much more. Many Minnesotans don't realize they have these free resources available to them. See:

<https://elibrarymn.org/>

NLLN Scholarships

A total of \$13,228.62 was expended on scholarships Fiscal Year 2026. Scholarships were awarded for tuition, attendance at the Minnesota Library Association fall conference, the national Public Library Association conference in Minneapolis, the Fay B. Kaigler Children's Book Festival at the University of Southern Mississippi in Hattiesburg, Minitex technical serves event.

From the Minnesota Library Association Legislative Update

READ Act Update: Starting next school year, district literacy plans must include how school library media centers support foundational reading skills. While references to licensed media specialists were removed from the bill, this is still an important step in recognizing the role of school libraries.

Collection Support

NLLN received thank you notes from the Campbell-Tintah School Library Committee and Jacquie Peebles, Director of the Wheaton Community Library for supporting their collections.

Campbell-Tintah School: “We are incredibly grateful to receive the generous \$1,200 grant to support books for our elementary library at Campbell-Tintah School. Your kindness and support will help put engaging, meaningful books into the hands of our students and inspire love of reading for years to come. Thank you for investing in our children, our school, and the future of literacy in our community. Your support truly makes a difference.”

Campbell-Tintah School Library Committee was able to purchase 75 titles altogether on Spanish language and Bilingual (English/Spanish) books; graphic novels; high interest picture books; complete some of the current series in the library; easy-read chapter books (a “fast fiction” request from elementary teachers; replace some books that were weeded due to poor condition (high usage); and some titles related to agriculture, which is a particular interest in the region.

Wheaton Community Library: “Thank you so much for your generosity! Hoopla has become a patron favorite, and thanks to your support, our library is able to continue to offer this fantastic resource without us having to place spending limits on individual titles or reduce the number of patron borrows per month. We couldn’t do this without you.”

Wheaton Community Library circulated more than 1,413 items in 2025. The circulation is ongoing.

College & Research Libraries and Mixed Methods Research

Executive Director, Kathy Enger, continues to review articles for publication in *College & Research Libraries* and *Mixed Methods Research*.

NLLN Policy Updates

An attorney from LegalCORPs is reviewing NLLN’s policies. LegalCORPs provides free services to Minnesota nonprofits.

Executive Director Annual Review

A 2.5% increase in salary is recommended for Fiscal Year 2027. Cost of Living increase is 2.8%; Minnstate administrators receive 2.5% increase.

Executive Director Annual Review Summary

Board Evaluation Results from 4 Board Members



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Executive Director received highly positive feedback across key leadership, operational, financial, and communication competencies. The Board expresses strong confidence in the Executive Director's management of NLLN. Opportunities exist to strengthen targeted member engagement and ensure balanced representation among library sectors.

BOARD EVALUATION RESULTS

EVALUATION AREA	 STRONGLY AGREE	 SOMEWHAT AGREE	 NEUTRAL	 DISAGREE (SOMEWHAT/STRONGLY)
 Initiates, plans, and implements projects/ services	3	0	1	0
 Compliance with MN Statute 134.351	3	1	0	0
 Collaborates with diverse populations	3	0	1	0
 Stays current with technological developments	3	1	0	0
 Prepares Board meeting notices, agendas, and reports	4	0	0	0
 Effectively manages NLLN's financial processes	4	0	0	0
 Maintains open communication with the NLLN community	3	1	0	0
 Advocates for libraries at all levels	3	0	0	1
 Effective in leading and managing NLLN	3	0	1	0
TOTAL (out of 4)	31 (86%)	3 (8%)	3 (8%)	1 (3%)



Overall Rating (Average)

4.2 / 5.0

(Strong Performance)



KEY STRENGTHS



STRONG FINANCIAL & GOVERNANCE LEADERSHIP

Unanimous agreement in financial management and excellence in preparing Board materials.



EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION & MEMBER AWARENESS

Members feel informed, supported, and aware of opportunities through timely and reliable communication.



ADVOCACY & REGIONAL SUPPORT

Strong advocacy, professional learning, and support for underrepresented libraries and partnerships across the region.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR GROWTH



BALANCE REPRESENTATION ACROSS LIBRARY TYPES

Ensure equitable discussion time and clearer inclusion of public library perspectives in Board meetings and priorities.



INCREASE TARGETED MEMBER ENGAGEMENT

Enhance targeted communication and outreach to strengthen relevance and connection across all member groups.

WHAT BOARD MEMBERS ARE SAYING



WHAT IS WORKING WELL

- “NLLN is always great about letting the libraries know about upcoming workshops and webinars if staff wish to attend.”
- “Communication has been one of the strongest points of NLLN. I know what's going on, what's coming up, what's expected of me, and what opportunities are available.”
- “NLLN serves underrepresented libraries through political advocacy, resources, communication and professional learning. Also, a great partner to academic and school libraries.”



HOW NLLN COULD BE MORE EFFECTIVE

- “Board meetings often focus on school and academic libraries. As someone representing public libraries, their needs sometimes feel like ‘other business.’”
- “As a representative for public libraries in general, it's difficult to know what issues I should bring up versus what's best left to system representatives.”
- “Enhance communication toward TARGETED members.”

RECOMMENDED FOCUS AREAS FOR 2026

CONTINUE STRENGTHS



STRATEGIC GROWTH OPPORTUNITIES



MCMT Tuition Support Report - 6/6/2026

Spring 2026 is the first term that the MCMT were able to provide tuition support to students. Only those who are currently serving in the role of a library media specialist are eligible at this time. There are only two institutions accepting new students into their licensure programs right now, St. Catherine's University (St. Kate's) and St. Cloud State University (SCSU).

The MCMT provides tuition support for coursework and fees that are required for the media specialist licensure, but not the coursework for neither an initial teaching license nor an MLIS. Because St. Kate's is more expensive, the MCMT pays for the cost of the course and fee up to the cost per credit of SCSU, \$563.66.

Student Name	Institution	Current Employer	MCMT Region	Spring Term Reimbursement Amount
Lindsey Letcher	SCSU	Anoka-Hennepin	Metronet	\$3,840.14
Heather Thomson	SCSU	MPS	Metronet	\$1,960.25
Samantha Denney	St. Kate's	Chisago Lakes	CMLE	\$3,711.96
Taylor Fischer	St. Kate's	SPPS	Metronet	\$3,381.96
Hannah Gowan	SCSU	MN Internship Center	Metronet	\$1,960.25
Elizabeth Christensen	SCSU	MPS	Metronet	\$1,363.62
Mary Backstrom	SCSU	Duluth	ALS	\$1,990.25
Joshua Scharnberg	SCSU	Fergus Falls	NLLN	\$3,840.14
Laura Schwartz	St. Kate's	MPS	Metronet	\$2,020.98
				\$24,069.55

MPS = Minneapolis Public Schools

SPPS = St. Paul Public Schools