

Finance

With the audit completed, you will see we continue to be in a good position. We came in under budget last year, but still managed to lower the overall fund balance by about \$37,000. We originally planned to lower it by about \$100,000 through special one-time projects, while keeping our operating expenditures balanced with revenue, so we are still in a very good position if any unexpected maintenance comes up this year, or any opportunities to seek an administration building.

MERS, the provider of our deferred compensation benefit, is switching their backend provider from Alerus to Empower. What this means for us is that we are currently in a "blackout" period where we cannot make any contributions. Employee withholding is still occurring, however, and we will make a large deposit to our accounts once the blackout period is over.

The Bronson Branch received the \$10,000 check from the Carnegie Foundation. Lynnell's party planning for America's 250th can really get going now!

At the Federal Level, budget numbers for IMLS for FY 2027 are out at approximately the same level as this year, so MeLCat should be fully funded until at least 9/30/27.

Personnel

As usual, the winter months bring sickness among staff and our families. Thankfully, we have been able to shuffle people around pretty effectively to cover our absences.

After a resignation, we have an opening at the Algansee Branch which we have posted for and should be conducting interviews soon. Due to a medical need, we have shuffled staff a bit to keep the bookmobile schedule going. I even got to drive a bit, which is always fun (when the weather is good, anyway!).

Facilities

Pest Control

In late January we had our quarterly Orkin inspection with the sniffer dogs. Surprisingly for winter, we had a smaller than usual number of hotspots. I have to attribute this in part to staff being very diligent at checking incoming books for contamination and treating materials as needed.

Floor Plans

New uniform, computer-generated floor plans are finally completed, just in time for our upcoming emergency manual update, way finding signs, IT network diagrams, and whatever

other uses we can have for that sort of thing. Some of the old floor plans we replaced were actually hand-drawn, so this should be a big improvement for usability!

Weather

There was a salt and ice melt shortage in the region recently. This caused our plow service to have to switch to sand for the last couple of snow events. While obviously not as effective at melting the snow and ice, it wasn't horrible and still provided some grip on the wet stuff. Nevertheless, we had our first—and, so far, only—closure due to the snow this season on Monday, January 26.

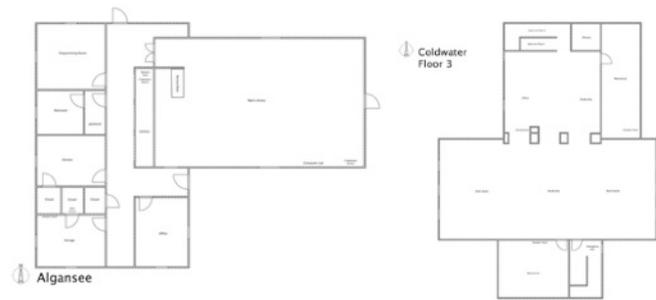
Bookmobile services, it turns out, are a little more susceptible to weather disruptions. We have had to cancel a route here and there because of road conditions and, more often, due to low temperatures. We have discovered that if the high temperature for the day does not reach at least 15 degrees, the onboard battery charging system for all the technology and hydraulic lift doesn't work. So that means no heat, no lift...no nothing, really. If we had an enclosed parking facility where we could reliably recharge the system battery on those cold days, we'd have no problems. But as is it, physics is the issue: batteries need to be above a certain temperature to charge. Modern electric vehicles have heaters to aid with this, but since our vehicle is a diesel drive train and just uses the battery for the onboard tech, we are at a disadvantage in extremely cold weather. Thankfully, this should only be a small number of days each year, and the rest of the year, we can enjoy the benefits of quiet, virtually maintenance-free operations of the interior equipment.

Coldwater Branch Security Officer

At the Coldwater Branch, we got a new security officer from Teachout Security in mid January. Trey has quickly made a positive impact on operations at the branch, not only with behavior, but general building security, too. He has noticed things, like small leaks, and alerted us to them far sooner than we would have probably noticed had he not been making regular rounds of the entire building. He has helped the IT department staff with some small maintenance issues, as well, including helping to assemble his new security desk. Glad he's here!

Sherwood

At the Sherwood Branch, the saga of the recent thefts continue. As a result, we have installed a safe at the library and installed physical locks on all of the computers and monitors in the building. I had a meeting with our Verkada camera system sales rep about additional monitoring services they can offer, and the Village is making similar meetings with security system consultants.



There was a third incident in February, following the break-ins in November and January. In early February, what appeared to be the same person could be seen from our cameras attempting to open the door to the library. After failing to do so, the person left, and moments later seems to have broken into the party store, where his mask slipped and his face was caught on their cameras. The Sheriff's Department got involved with an investigation and was able to identify and apprehend the suspect! A local resident found one of our stolen laptops in a ditch and returned it to the library, and the Sheriff's department said we should be getting some additional stolen equipment back from the thief himself.



We did receive an insurance settlement on the theft, so if the laptop is returned to us in working order we will certainly contact our insurance company about that.

Algansee

Finishing up our work at the old building, the broken window was replaced, the Internet tower removed, and yesterday the ramp was also removed. That leaves just needing to remove the post that the mailbox was on. Now that things are warming up enough for the ground to thaw, we can think about that, too!



Coldwater

We had our annual fire alarm system inspection, no issues. Our security officer, Trey, noticed that the water heater was badly corroded and leaking, so we also got that replaced. The replacement was difficult for our contractor, which resulted in some minor leaking the next day, which Trey also noted. Plumbers were back the next day to fix that up, too. I noted some deficiencies with our janitorial contractor, and Christina met with them to make sure things are being completed to our satisfaction. Things seems to be improved.



IT Department

All of the desktop computers have arrived, along with most of the other gear. Curtis is hard at work deploying software to them before the replacement and shuffle can begin.

We took in a new batch of hotspots to replace damaged or missing ones, so for the moment we are back up to full capacity there!

In addition to the usual monthly web site maintenance, we made some backend changes to help with an upcoming project suggested by Meghan Babbitt that she and the marketing team are working on. Stay tuned for more on that!

Meetings Attended

Library of Michigan Directors, Woodlands Library Cooperative

Submitted by John Rucker

Unique Collection Management Update

Since September 2025, the library has recovered \$839.24 in cash and \$3,243.95 in materials, for a total recovery value of \$4,083.19. This reflects an approximate 2:1 return on investment.

The library's primary goal is the recovery of materials. These results show a positive outcome from utilizing a collection management service. However, we have observed that the service is not currently as budget-neutral as originally projected. While patrons are returning materials, many are not paying the \$12 referral fee to Unique. When the fee is not collected, the library assumes the cost, reducing the overall financial benefit of the service.

MeLCat: 20th Anniversary Review

2025 was the celebration of MeLCat's 20th Anniversary. To celebrate Mittens, a new MeLCat mascot, traveled to libraries across the state. Mittens stop at BDL included some fun at the Coldwater Branch!

State wide more than 1 million items were requested by patrons and January 2025 was the busiest month, with 103,089 requests placed.

Looking at BDL, our patrons actively use MeL. We borrowed 6,977 items and lent 5,886 items.

The Michigan eLibrary (MeL) is made possible in part by the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS), which provides crucial federal funding for the service via the Library of Michigan. This funding supports 24/7 access to over 19 million electronic articles, journals, and resources, as well as MeLCat. As of late 2025, over 435 public, school, academic, and special libraries in Michigan participate in MeLCat, offering access to more than 34 million items.



Mittens on the famous green RIDES totes that bring materials to BDL from MeLCat.

Top 5 Most Requested Titles via MeLCat in 2025

- *The Frozen River* by Ariel Lawhon
- *James* by Percival Everett
- *The Women* by Kristin Hannah

- *Remarkably Bright Creatures* by Shelby Van Pelt
- *West with Giraffes* by Lynda Rutledge

Trainings/Meetings

- Kiwanis Club of Coldwater
- Foundations of the Science of Reading for Public Library Professionals with the Library of Michigan
- EquinoxEDU: Spotlight on New Features in Evergreen 3.15

Submitted,

Kimberly Feltner

- Take Your Child to the Library Day was on February 7, 2026. Every branch offered a craft and snacks, and one family completed the districtwide Scavenger Hunt! The Scavenger Hunt required each family to attend all of our BDL branches and find hidden themed stickers with a black flashlight. Several families completed hunts at more than one branch, but only one family made it to all 7 branches. Congratulations to that family! They will receive a gift card to a local store.
- Our 2026 One Book One County discussion dates have been published! BDL branches are finding that our 2026 OBOC book, *The Gales of November: The Untold Story of the Edmund Fitzgerald* by John U. Bacon, is hard to keep on our shelves. The discussions will be held as follows:
 - Alganssee: Wednesday, March 18, 2026 @ 5:30 PM
 - Bronson: Tuesday, March 31, 2026 @ 6PM
 - Coldwater: Tuesday, March 24, 2026 @ 10AM & Wednesday, March 25, 2026 @ 6PM at Trainwreck Grill House
 - Quincy: Monday, March 23, 2026 @ 5PM
 - Sherwood: Monday, March 30, 2026 @ 5PM
 - Union: Tuesday, March 24, 2026 @ 5PM
- Our first 2026 Summer Reading Program meeting will occur on March 9, 2026.
- Attended the Branch County Community Network (BCCN) meeting on 2/18.

