LIBRARY DIRECTOR
TERI DUGAN
OCTOBER 2026

The smart locker project is coming along very well. While the locker is being manufactured, we are busy preparing the site for installation. Electrical and data connections are in place, and our communications librarian, Lune Axelsen, is working on a custom wrap for the locker. As we get closer to installation, we will begin testing items in our catalog and making sure everything is working properly before we open it to the public. We are currently aiming for a December opening and look forward to celebrating with a grand opening. I'm happy to share more details as they come together.

We were pleased to host the Leadership Flathead class for their "Government Day." Tony and I had a great time giving the group a tour of our downtown library, sharing information about our services, and providing a behind-the-scenes look at what we do. The class included 50 leaders and business owners from across the valley, and the feedback we received was very positive and encouraging. As Leadership Flathead alumni, Tony and I especially enjoyed the opportunity to give back to a program that we both benefited from many years ago. We are also excited that our Children's Librarian, Becca Johnson, is currently participating in the Leadership Flathead program.

Our Friends of the Library voted this week to donate $17,000 to the library for this fiscal year. We are incredibly fortunate to have such wonderful support from this dedicated group of volunteers. Each year, the Friends help fund children's and Storytime supplies, staff memberships, and staff recognition. Their support makes a real difference in the work we are able to do. We are so grateful for both the Friends of the Library and the Library Foundation. Their continued support helps us provide excellent service to our community.

We are wrapping up our feasibility study with BrandRaise and look forward to receiving the final report at a special board meeting on November 10. The findings will help us better understand whether our community is ready to support and fund a new library. Could this lead to a capital campaign? We will know more soon. A new library has been part of the conversation for decades, and our current building has reached its limits. This study is an important step in determining what comes next and how we can plan for a library that will serve our community for the years to come.

Flathead County Library is part of a statewide consortium that allows participating libraries to share an integrated library system (ILS), catalogs, and collections. Through the coordination and support of the State Library, our cardholders have access to a much broader collection than we could provide as a standalone library. The consortium continues to grow. This year, Lewis & Clark Library in Helena is joining the consortium, and we have also been notified that an additional 16 libraries will be joining the shared resource group. This expansion is an exciting opportunity for libraries and library users across Montana, but it also has significant operational implications for Flathead County Library.

Our library serves as a hub for receiving, sorting, routing, and shipping library materials moving between libraries and cardholders throughout the state. As the consortium expands, the volume of materials handled through our Collection Services department will increase. Our current space is already constrained, and additional square footage will be necessary to safely and effectively receive, sort, stage, and ship these materials. The leadership team has given considerable thought to how we might accommodate this growth within our existing building. At this time, the public meeting room is the one area of the library that is not being utilized to its fullest capacity and therefore warrants consideration as part of a potential solution. I would like to bring this matter to the Library Board for a discussion at the December meeting. I plan to present our ideas and potential solutions and seek the Board's feedback and input as we consider how best to support the continued growth of this valuable statewide partnership

Public Services

On Friday, September 25, Public Services staff participated in a dementia simulation training with Flathead County Agency on Aging. We each came away with new empathy and understanding of what some can experience with dementia, which will help us to better speak to and assist some of our patrons.

Montana Library Count Week

Library Count Week provides Montana public libraries with a focused way to collect recurring operational statistics and patron stories that demonstrate the value and impact of library services. We collected data on:

- Hours open to the public
- Library visits
- Reference transactions
- Community resource referrals
- Public internet computers
- Wi-Fi sessions

While we have participated in this State Library Count Week for many years, this new format asked for more data, different questions, and provided a patron survey in both paper and digital formats that asked:

- Which library did you use today?
- Using the library today helped me (select from list)
- How often do you use the library?
- Want to share more? (open space for feedback)
- Would you like to share your name? (optional)

The results at the conclusion have provided useful data, though this is a historically slow period in the year for us, and begs the question of whether we should run an independent count in peak season. The Leadership Team discussed and approved conducting our own similar Count Week next summer to contrast historically busier times with this data. June 21-26, 2027 will be our target week, and we are excited to see what data that brings to the table.

Facilities

- Bear resistant container delivered to Bigfork location. No recent bear activity reported.
- Leaking toilet and urinal in Kalispell public restroom repaired. Issues acquiring parts, had to be special ordered by plumber. Warning that we may not be able to repair similar units in the future, which would then require replacement.
- Kalispell Library boiler functional, though still awaiting replacement seal kit on one pump.

- School district boiler (main heat for Kalispell Library) still undergoing upgrade and maintenance by district staff. This is a significant project, and Facilities Director for the district is in daily communication. Assures we will have heat in the building soon.

Interim Technology Support

With the retirement of our Systems Administrator, Director Teri Dugan and I have been handling technology needs and issues, while reviewing applicants for the open position. For my part, I am focused on day-to-day operations and responding to service interruptions. Below is a quick list of what that has looked like. Note that many low priority tasks are being compiled and staff notified that response will be delayed until Tech Manager position is filled. Overall, I received approximately ten hours of training, and have spent eleven and a quarter hours in the last two weeks on these issues.

- Public internet and Wi-Fi down (Charter support assist), updated MiCollab client on staff computer (County IT assist), reviewed network.

- Review security footage, reset staff computer access, reviewed network.

- Reviewed network, updated last staff MiCollab client remote to BF (County IT assist), reviewed security footage, mapped network drive (Home) to staff computer.

Reviewed network.

- Reviewed network, modified 365 distribution group entries (additions and deletions).

- Power outage caused brief service issues, replaced a scanner that would not work, rerouted power cable from a computer light, troubleshooting on several computers that did not come back on after power outage. Reviewed network.

- Troubleshoot public internet and wi-fi down, manual reboot of router, dashboard reboot of individual wi-fi clients and switches. Troubleshooting YS computer that wouldn't turn on, resolved by trying a different outlet, damaged power strip?

- Set up tech for meeting. Troubleshoot public internet and wi-fi down.

- Reviewed network. Worked with Charter support concerning drops in public internet. Issue escalated to engineering team, believed to be an upstream communication issue. They will diagnose and resolve, and contact with resolution. Set up tech for meeting.

COMMUNICATION LIBRARIAN
LUNE AXELSEN
OCTOBER 2026

This past month the Communications Team continued to promote new fall programming for kids, teens and adults. Fall is a busy time of year for families and it's a season of transitions. Kids and teens are getting back into the routine of school and extra-curricular activities. We do our best to keep the library on the top of people's minds when it comes to hands-on learning opportunities and literacy. We continue to create and modify flyers and handouts for each library location, update online calendars throughout the valley, keep a strong social media presence with up-to-date information, and be consistent with sending out our email newsletter. We're a couple months into the fall season so we're able to assess what's working as far as communication and marketing goes, and what needs to be modified.

The Communications Team has been creating new online library content in addition to promoting library programs and services. We've been consistently posting Librarian Book Recommendations on our blog from Deidre that offer her monthly To-Be-Read list for book enthusiasts. We're seeing more interactions with the post on social media and the October Librarian Book Recs blog post is the 5th top page on our website in the last 7 days! In addition, we are producing curated book lists on social media, and my Communications Assistant Morgan has created a post with relevant stats showing how patrons are using the library. That post will be out later next week.

I've also been working on designs for the new Smart Lockers and new Flathead County Library promotional banners to use at events.

Social Media Snap Shot
Our following continues to increase on both Facebook and Instagram. Engagement and views are down on both platforms, but our Reels reach is up on Instagram. Also, the number of people that are reposting our content on Instagram is up significantly this month, which means people are sharing our content.

Social Media Stats:

- **Facebook:**
  - 129 New Followers this period (1% increase in the last 28 days)
- **Facebook Views:**
  - 300K views this period (24% decrease in the last 28 days)
- **Instagram Followers:**
  - 33 new followers this period (1% increase in the last 28 days)
- **Instagram Reposts:**
  - 35 reposts this period (150% increase in the last 28 days)
- **Instagram Reels Reach:**
  - 2,774 accounts reached this period (60% increase in the last 28 days)
- **Website top 5 viewed pages in the last 28 days:**
  - **Teens**
  - **Kids**
  - **Request an Item**
  - **Events for September**
  - **Locations and hours**

COLLECTION SERVICES LIBRARIAN
KAT WILSON
OCTOBER 2026

September 2026 Circulation Statistics

	September 2026	September 2025	September 2024	September 2023
Juvenile	17495	17427	17056	15827
Young Adult	924	1089	1074	1082
Adult	11299	11363	11431	12949
Overdrive ebooks	4078	3941	4343	4493
Overdrive audiobooks	9237	8117	7345	6864
Overdrive magazines	2265	2105	1308	737
Total	45298	44042	42557	41952
ILLs Borrowed	76	49	46	52
ILLs Loaned	40	41	65	40
Outgoing Partners Crates	305	288	300	364
Incoming Partners Crates	315	298	298	329

Lakeside and Marion FY27 Circulation Statistics

	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June
Lakeside	149	232	293									
Marion	N/A*	N/A*	1									

*Marion closed first week of June through August.

ADULT PROGRAMMING LIBRARIAN
BIGFORK BRANCH MANAGER
DEIDRE MCMULLIN
OCTOBER 2026

Last month's talk about audiobooks went well and was attended by a small but interested group. People were eager to learn more about the Talking Books Library and how librarians can register eligible patrons. I feel like there are many people who likely would benefit from this service, and we will continue trying to get the word out.

Our art exhibit of local artist Jeanette Rehahn's work has been our most popular so far. We have had a number of visitors who come to the library for the first time for a chance to see her work. A handful of paintings have sold, and I wouldn't be surprised if even more sell by the end of the month. We are lucky that the three permanent paintings on display at our library are also her work, and that they are with us to stay.

We are strategizing about how to bring art and craft activities to the community in Kalispell. The spaces aren't especially accommodating, but I have some ideas of how we can try something like the Art Café we have in Bigfork to our spaces there. Ideally, I would like to try to have this programming on a Saturday, so more working people will be able to attend.

In the next two months we are planning some offerings that should appeal to the nature lovers in our community. Derrick from Montana Fish Wildlife and Parks is going to lead a beginners' fly-tying workshop, which is limited to 10 participants, in November. This class is aimed at beginners, but everyone else is welcome to spend the rest of the day working on their fly-tying projects in community. I'm told this is the perfect cozy winter activity for anglers, and I hope we see good interest. We are also looking to partner again with Rick Trembath, former Bigfork fire chief and wildfire fighter, and Lena Olsen, of Boreal Folkways, to lead a workshop on fire making, the history of fire in out region, and how to be safe and successful with fire. The details are still being worked out, but I imagine the community will enjoy this program.

COLUMBIA FALLS BRANCH MANAGER
LIZ CAMARILLO
OCTOBER 2026

In our youth services department, Liza once again had the opportunity to lead Firefighter Story Time, and as always, it was such a fun experience. The Columbia Falls Fire Department was an excellent host. Our young patrons got to see how a firefighter suits up for an emergency, and they even got to climb into the big red fire trucks.

We are also looking forward to being a part of Harvest Fest 2026 with the Columbia Falls Chamber of Commerce, happening in Hungry Horse on the 17th of October. Liza has some fun interactive program materials planned, along with an obstacle course. Being a part of this grants us the opportunity to connect with our community and remind everyone of the many great services and programs the library has to offer.

Looking ahead to the holiday season, Lisa M. has been embracing the lovely fall season and has been creating fun and engaging fall interactives for our young patrons. Liza is planning to once again do the Costume Parade story time. This gives our story time families the opportunity to walk through and visit every city department, collect treats, meet and say hello to all the great people that serve our local community.

Adult Programming is currently featuring a Fire Starter Zone. With campfire season in full swing and colder weather on the way, getting a campfire or wood stove started can sometimes be tricky. Fire starters have become increasingly popular because they are easy to transport and provide a reliable way to get a fire going quickly and efficiently. It's a practical skill they can use at home, at the campground, or take along on their next outdoor adventure.

Beginning October 22nd, as we do every year, we will start our Seed Packing Parties, where volunteers come to the library to process and package seeds with Land to Hand through the winter season. Last year, we packed approximately 15,000 to 20,000 seed packets. This work helps prepare for the annual Free the Seeds Fair, which is held on the first Saturday in March each year. It also fills up our seed library, where patrons come and take the seeds they need.

The staff here in Columbia Falls are excited and curious about potentially having a new library location. The library has been housed in the City building since 1971, over half a century, and it is incredible to imagine moving into a building of our own. While such a move would undoubtedly involve a great deal of work, it also presents an opportunity to design and modify the space to better meet the needs of the community, and that's exciting. We see firsthand the daily challenges of serving visitors and patrons in a space that was not designed specifically for library services. We are hopeful and confident in the City and our community leaders to keep the best interests of our patrons and seasonal visitors at the forefront as they make these important decisions.