

# ASSOCIATION OF WISCONSIN SPECIAL LIBRARIANS | AWSL

A DIVISION OF THE WISCONSIN LIBRARY ASSOCIATION

## Leadership

CHAIR 2024  
Steven Rice

PAST CHAIR  
Anne Moser

WLA BOARD LIAISON  
Carrie Doyle

## Committees

CONFERENCE PLANNING  
Team Awesome AWSL!

NEWSLETTER  
Carol Hassler

## Next Business Meeting

The next business meeting of AWSL will take place in December. Watch the listserv for date and connection details!

All AWSL members and interested WLA members are encouraged to attend!

## Meet Up at WLA!

We're so excited to meet you at the WLA Annual Conference in beautiful Green Bay! Be sure to check out the Special Libraries programming track, and add our social event to your calendar. <https://www.wisconsinlibraries.org/2024-wla-conference>

## AWSL Social Meetup

Thursday, November 7  
5:00 - 6:00 PM in the Riverview 1 room

Our featured program is an evening meetup for all WLA members to mingle and learn more about special librarianship. Join us on Thursday from 5:00-6:00 to meet your fellow librarians, enjoy refreshments, and enter a special raffle!

### Enter to Win!

Stop by the WLA booth on Wednesday and Thursday to fill out a book recommendation form for your chance to win a fabulous gift bag of special library and location themed goodies. We'll announce the winner at our Thursday evening social. Just like last year, we'll share your fantastic book recommendations in upcoming newsletters.

## Why attend WLA?

Enjoy a dynamic lineup of keynote speakers, including Dave Delaney, Dr. Brandy McNeil, and Dr. Alonzo Kelly, plus over 55 breakout sessions tailored to a variety of library types and roles. Your registration includes access to keynotes and luncheons with excellent speakers, educational breakout sessions, including a special libraries track, exhibits and vendors, plus raffles, special events, and networking opportunities to connect with libraries around the state. Visit the Conference Website to learn more.

<https://www.wisconsinlibraries.org/2024-wla-conference>

## Lead a Town Hall!

Would you like to lead a Town Hall for your fellow special librarians? To sign up, contact Carol Hassler at [carol.hassler@wicourts.gov](mailto:carol.hassler@wicourts.gov)

## Join our Board!

Becoming a member of the AWSL leadership team is a great way to meet new people and to provide opportunities for your fellow special librarians to get together to have fun, to learn, and to socialize. Being an AWSL leader is a great way to get in some professional development in a low-key, low-stress, high-reward way. The time commitment is minimal. The board meets twice a year: once in the spring and once at the annual WLA conference in the fall. All other duties can be completed remotely.

## Share Your Stories & Pictures!

Do you have a story to tell about your library or collection? How are you helping your users? What programs are you offering, or what does your space or collection look like? Send us your stories and pictures to include in our next newsletter!

Email the newsletter chair, Carol Hassler, at [carol.hassler@wicourts.gov](mailto:carol.hassler@wicourts.gov).

## Explore the Braille Library

*By Carol Hassler*

This spring I had the opportunity to tour the Braille Library & Transcribing Services. Located in Madison, Wisconsin, this is a non-profit lending library and transcription service. Established in 1971, the library began when its founders noticed a need to support local children who were blind or had low vision. Inspired to meet this need, Marion Hong, one of the original founders, began to teach a group how to transcribe braille for local schools. They started creating worksheets and other educational materials, and branched out from there into braille and recorded books.

The library lends all-braille books in addition to embossed/print combinations. Readers enjoy a variety of fiction and non-fiction genres for all age levels, including a robust cookbook and craft collection. At the time of this interview, transcriptions were just completed for two large latch hook rug charts, for example.



Borrowers can call or email to request items, and use the online catalog to search for and request books. Readers with the library also rely on librarian recommendations. Don't know what to read next? Drop a genre or a read-alike, and a librarian will choose a book to ship out based on the patron's profile or preferences.

*Braille Library continued on page 6*

## About AWSL

The Association of Wisconsin Special Librarians (AWSL) is a division of the Wisconsin Library Association. Established in October 1986, AWSL exists to focus on the activities and issues of special libraries and librarianship and to provide a forum for exchange of ideas among persons involved with special libraries and collections.

## Membership

Membership is open to all WLA members. Anyone who maintains a specialized collection of materials is considered a special librarian -- whether they're a trained and certified librarian managing a library's special collection, or a person in charge of specialized materials in a church, museum, prison, hospital, corporation, foundation, newspaper, government office, or other organization.

## Join AWSL

Make the most of your WLA membership and join AWSL through the WLA website:

[www.wisconsinlibraries.org/awsl](http://www.wisconsinlibraries.org/awsl)

# Are you curious about the Great Lakes?

*By Anne Moser*

This year the Wisconsin Water Library at the University of Wisconsin-Madison and the Wisconsin Library Association launched **Great Lakes, Great Read**, a one book, one community pilot for everyone in Wisconsin.

The books chosen for this communal reading initiative were announced on Earth Day in April. The spring 2024 adult selection is "The Best Part of Us" by Sally Cole-Misch. This novel explores family ties — to each other, a common heritage and culture, and the natural world.

The children's selection is "The Water Walker" by Anishinaabe author, illustrator and water-protection activist Joanne Robertson. Her book is based on the true story of Josephine Manadamin who, along with others, walked around all the Great Lakes in honor of water and the planet.

While approximately 34 million people in the U.S. and Canada live in the Great Lakes basin, recent surveys, such as the International Joint Commission Great Lakes Regional Poll in 2021, show a lack of understanding of the threats facing the greatest freshwater resource in the world.

"It's difficult to care about something you know nothing about," said Moser. "Education, in this case, environmental literacy, is central to cultivating stewardship of the Great Lakes and of water resources more broadly."

WLA Executive Director Laura Sauser said the "one book, one community" model, adopted by many libraries, is a natural fit for a basin-wide community read. She noted that Wisconsin is the perfect state to pilot this idea, catalyzing other Upper Midwestern states and Canadian provinces to engage and inspire passion and connection to the freshwater seas through reading.

"Wisconsinites have a deep connection to water through culture, economy, tourism and way of life. This connection, coupled with the WLA's network of academic, public and special libraries, gives us a strong foundation for success," Moser said.

All Wisconsinites are encouraged to read these titles, and libraries around the state are encouraged to engage their residents through book discussions and related activities such as public presentations.

Join the Great Lakes, Great Read 2024 email list for updates. And visit <https://greatlakesgratread.org> to learn more. Interested in getting more involved? Contact AWSL member Anne Moser at [akmoser@aquawisc.edu](mailto:akmoser@aquawisc.edu)

## Remembering Betsy Didrickson, Crane Conservation Champion

*By Barbara Arnold*

Baraboo, WI resident Betsy Didrickson, a UW-Madison School of Library and Information Studies graduate (1980s), passed away in 2022. Hired as the International Crane Foundation's (ICF) special librarian, she played a pivotal role in establishing the Ron Sauvey Memorial Library for Bird Conservation. A skilled writer and editor, Betsy also served as editor of the ICF Bugle newsletter. Her talent and dedication made her a valuable member of the ICF team.

She is survived by her son, daughter, and ex-husband, as well as a global network of "Craniacs." We are proud to have known Betsy, an exceptional librarian and UW-Madison Badger. Read about Betsy's life and work at the International Crane Foundation's newsletter memorial: <https://savingcranes.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/The-Bugle-Nov-2022.pdf>



## Use Google Analytics to create reports

*By Val Magno*

About a decade ago, I used Libguides to create our library website, <https://library.fvtc.edu/Start>

Libguides has an internal statistical tool, but I decided to add Google Analytics since it was free, and knowledge is power, right? If you have not set up Google Analytics, I recommend that you do it because it lets you know where traffic is coming from, how long users engage with your website, and which pages are traffic magnets.

## Google Analytics Continued...

Google Support does a fine job of explaining how to Set up Analytics, which begins with placing your customized Google Analytics tag on your web pages. Once you have set up a property associated with your professional Gmail account, you can put the tag script into Libguides in the Administrative settings of your account. A Google Analytics tag looks something like this:

```
<!--Google Analytics 4 Google tag (gtag.js) -->
<script async src=https://www.googletagmanager.com/gtag/js?id=G-YourTAGcode></script>
<script>
  window.dataLayer = window.dataLayer || [];
  function gtag(){dataLayer.push(arguments);}
  gtag('js', new Date());
  gtag('config', 'G- YourTAGcode ');
</script>
```

I've mostly used default settings for my Google Analytics tracking. If you have more than one person working with data, it's easy to add additional users to your Google Analytics account!

### Resources

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Set up Analytics

<https://support.google.com/analytics/answer/9304153>

Google Analytics account and property setup examples

<https://support.google.com/analytics/answer/9679158>

Setup Assistant

<https://support.google.com/analytics/answer/10110290>

## Report from the AWSL representative to the WLA Board of Directors

*By Carrie Doyle*

Thank you to everyone who completed the 2023 Belonging Survey. Our partners at the University of Wisconsin-Madison Extension Organizational and Leadership Development Program did a fantastic job compiling and synthesizing the results into a final report that was submitted to the Board in March. The

WLA Executive Committee is going over the results and, in consultation with the entire Board, will figure out the best way to share the results with the entire membership. Besides providing answers to the questions as presented, many respondents also took the time to write thoughtful comments. These comments provide additional ideas to consider and possible avenues of exploration in the future.

AWSL member Anne Moser, with support from WLA, has spearheaded a wonderful project called Great Lakes, Great Read. It is a shared reading initiative that focuses on the Great Lakes basin. “The Water Walker” by Joanne Robertson is the children’s selection and the adult selection is “The Best Part of Us” by Sally Cole-Misch. The Great Lakes, Great Read website, <https://www.greatlakesgreatread.org>, offers further details on the authors, their books, book discussion questions, an email list signup option and other resources. This is an exciting and impressive initiative. Way to go, Anne!

Be sure to join AWSL members at the WLA annual conference social on Thursday, November 7! It’s always fun to get together with other librarians to network and laugh, and perhaps even learn something.

Please always feel free to let me know if you have any questions, concerns, or issues you would like me to take to the WLA Board. I am happy to help.

## Braille Library (Continued)...

Do you know a reader who needs access to braille books? Frequent patrons can get a full catalog of the library’s holdings, which gets sent out every other year. For annual updates, the library sends out a supplement with new additions.

Children’s books are a staple of the collection. A picture book outfitted with braille overlays creates an enjoyable reading experience for both sighted and unsighted readers. The library creates its own overlays, using an embosser to create sticky tactile sheets that can be carefully placed on each page. In addition to these print braille books, the library includes a collection of braille-only books for readers from preschool through middle school. This includes a growing collection of bilingual English/Spanish books.

General, adult, and books for older children are typically loaned one at a time for between one and two months. Frequent readers can leave a request list on file with the Braille Library, so when they finish one book, then the next one in their list can be sent out immediately. Crafting and cookery can fill different needs, however, and are often loaned simultaneously to a fiction or nonfiction prose book. Children’s picture books are loaned six books at a time, in a bundle, and the library loans bundles of books for the length of a semester.



Weeding is a routine part of the management of the library. Like every library, the Braille Library has finite space. Volunteers assess the collection and determine what isn't circulating, or may have outdated content. When books are removed from the collection, a remote book sale list is sent to their readers .

## Braille Transcription

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The lending library is just one part of the operation.

A reader can contact the library to request that a book they want to read be transcribed into braille. Anybody living in the United States or Canada can contact the library to request a book.

It can take many hours of work to transcribe materials into braille. To get an idea of their production time, an order from a school would need to be received in early spring in order to be ready by the start of school.

When a request is first received, it's assigned to a volunteer transcriber. Even when specialized software does the first transcription, a transcriber has a lot to do to from there to correct errors and finish the transcription. Formatting is a big part of braille transcription.

All braille can be created with six keys on a keyboard. At the Braille Library, they have a Perkins Brailier used to create punched braille communication. Watching it being used is a little like watching a dance, with fingers precisely placed on the correct keys and pressed at the same time to make the first cell. Just like other forms of writing, braille has contractions, shorthand, and more conventions that support the breadth of language.

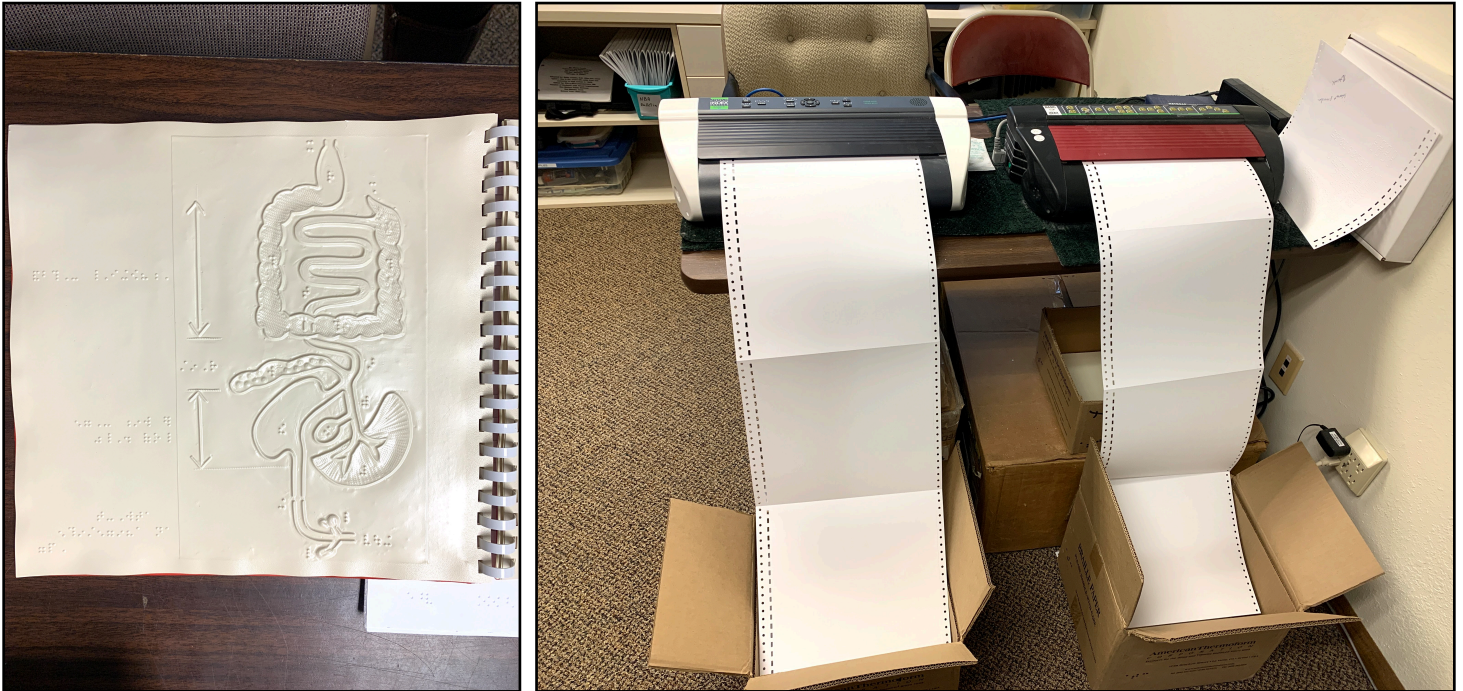
For example, a paragraph in a braille text starts 3 cells in. If the text is centered instead, that indicates a heading. A list has a blank line before and after it, and starts at cell one.

When the manuscript is completed, it's sent as a digital file to a paid proofreader, who may send corrections back to the transcriber. Once the corrections are made, the digital file is ready for printing and shipping to readers.

The ultimate goal of braille transcription is to give a blind person an experience as true to what a sighted person sees as possible. For graphic-heavy projects, this can be challenging. Images, charts, illustrations, emojis, and similar visuals can be difficult to transcribe. Part of the work of a transcriber is to evaluate the purpose of the image, and decide what information it conveys.



Once the translation is finished, the book can go into printed production. The library has two embossing machines, one of which was printing a book during my visit! All of their embossing at the library is done interpoint, which means that the pages can be embossed on both sides. The embossed book can be sent to users, but the library keeps a digital primary file for everything in their inventory. If a book gets lost in the mail or suffers another catastrophe, they can emboss a replacement copy.



*Left: An embossed diagram. Right: Embossing machines at work*

## A Volunteer-Powered Organization

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The Braille Library & Transcribing Services is mostly a volunteer organization, and they have a lot of opportunities for people who want to help. Volunteers can help collate books, or pack, open, and re-shelve books shipped to readers. If you would like to volunteer as a transcriber, their annual transcription course begins every fall. The library's community of volunteers enjoy in-person events and virtual meetups to socialize and brainstorm transcription challenges.

The nonprofit channels their years of experience into training. The facility includes space to instruct people who want to learn to transcribe printed matter into braille. Transcribers are valuable volunteers at the library. The transcription program is a year long class, with twenty lessons created by the National Federation of the Blind. The training culminates in a final project: transcribers must produce a braille transcription and then submit it to the Library of Congress braille program. If the transcriber earns a passing grade, they become a certified transcriber, and can then volunteer with the Braille Library.



Volunteers can specialize in the braille they can produce. Literary braille may dominate the library collection, but music or math braille are unique specialties that enhance school collections. Nemeth, or math braille, translates charts, diagrams, and other mathematical graphical concepts. While I was there, I had an opportunity to look at an embossed pie chart, which included a tactile title, plus the outline of the chart and the values within it.

You can learn more about what the library does by checking out their website and Facebook page, linked below. Braille materials can be large. Librarians who want to serve their blind and visually impaired patrons don't have to house these in their collections. They can help their users to reach the Braille Library & Transcribing Services, a free lending library for children and adults who want to read braille.

Website:

<https://bltsinc.org/>

Facebook:

<https://www.facebook.com/bltsinc/>



*Send us your stories and pictures to include in our next newsletter! Email the newsletter chair, Carol Hassler, at [carol.bassler@wicourts.gov](mailto:carol.bassler@wicourts.gov).*