



LAKELAND LIBRARY COOPERATIVE

LEADING ♦ LEARNING ♦ LENDING

BOARD MONTHLY MEETING

Thursday, July 10th, 2025

9:30 a.m.

ADVISORY COUNCIL TO FOLLOW

Kent District Library Service Center

814 W River Center NE

Comstock Park, MI 49321

AGENDA

1) CALL TO ORDER AND ROLL CALL

- a) Introduce New Members and Board Members

2) APPROVAL OF AGENDA

3) PUBLIC COMMENTS

4) APPROVAL OF MINUTES

June 12th 2025 Unofficial Board Minutes

(m) PAGE 2-3

5) FINANCIAL REPORT

(m) PAGES 4-10

June 2025 Financials and Check Register

6) PRESIDENT'S REPORT

(i)

7) COOPERATIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

(i)

PAGES 11-18

8) COUNCIL/COMMITTEE REPORTS

- a) Advisory Council Official Minutes- April 10th, 2025

(i)

PAGES 19-20

9) ONGOING/NEW BUSINESS

- a) Procurement Policy Review

(m)

PAGES 21-29

- b) Board Development: "What's happening to reading?" from The New Yorker Magazine

(i)

PAGES 30-43

10) PUBLIC COMMENTS

11) BOARD MEMBER COMMENTS

12) NEXT MEETING: August 14th at the Kent District Library Service Center

13) ADJOURNMENT

(m)

**LAKELAND LIBRARY COOPERATIVE
ADVISORY COUNCIL MINUTES – Official
Thursday, April 10, 2025 at 9:30 a.m.
At the KDL Service Center
As Amended**

Council Members Present: Elyshia Hoekstra (OC), Stef Reed (MG), Joe Zappacosta (SM)

Lakeland Staff Present: Amber McLain, Ann Langlois

- 1) **CALL TO ORDER AND ROLL CALL:** The meeting was called to order at 10:15 by **Elyshia Hoekstra**.
- 2) **APPROVAL OF AGENDA:** Karen McKinnon moved, supported by Kevin Meyer to approve the agenda - *motion carried*.
- 3) **PUBLIC COMMENTS:**
 - a) Merri Jo Tuinstra shared that Sparta's budget passed with an increased millage.
- 4) **APPROVAL OF MINUTES:** Ellen Peters moved, supported by Virginia DeMumbrum, to approve the Advisory Council minutes from March 13, 2025 – *motion carried*.
- 5) **COUNCIL PRESIDENT REPORTS:** Elyshia shared that she will be going on maternity leave, so please direct questions to Carol, Stef, or Joe.
- 6) **BOARD REPORT:** Nothing to report.
- 7) **ILS MANAGER'S REPORT:** Ann shared that she is seeing an increase in library consults. We recently upgraded to Sierra 6.3. Some are seeing MeL holds on items that are checked out – this is usually because these holds were placed before the upgrade but if the holds were placed **after** the upgrade, please open a ticket to report. Ann also shared that she attended IUG and learned about the 6.4 upgrade, which should be coming in the next few months. In 6.4, there will be a back button in the record creation screen, web management reports will be “modernized,” and Ill also said the disconnection issue between Sierra and BiblioApps should be resolved with 6.4. Ann also re-emphasized that the inventory project goal end date is March 2026. Ann also shared that the ILS steering committee is being established and will meet soon.
- 8) **MEMBER SERVICE MANAGER'S REPORT:** Amber shared that Bibliocommons, Bibliosuggest, and Biblioapps are functioning as expected. A BiblioApps update is upcoming and will solve a known bug with multiple cards in the app. The Patron Point email issue has been resolved with the issue being isolated as the engineers tinkering around in the backend. There will be a CE Event on May 8 with Sax Mahoney from MADL regarding Accessibility in the Library.
- 9) **COOPERATIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT:** Carol shared that the upcoming millage program (April 29, 10 AM) mentioned in her report **will not** be recorded, so attend if you are interested or have questions. She also reminded that she does board and staff development. We are also looking at a Unique service that would mail a promotional library postcard to new movers. Amber and Carol are looking into a shared discovery layer with KDL and GRPL within BiblioCommons as well.
- 10) **COMMITTEE REPORTS:**
 - a) CE Committee – no quorum
 - b) Adult services committee minutes included for information
- 11) **OTHER REPORTS:**
 - a) **MLA:** No new information is available at this time. Dale shared that libraries have withstood heavy issues in the past, and they are resilient. A discussion ensued about how to respond to patron questions and concerns.
- 12) **NEW AND ONGOING BUSINESS**
 - a) Committee Officers for Approval – Mary Cook moved, supported by Kevin Meyer, to approve the presented slate of officers.
 - b) Amber shared that she has edited the main LLC GIS to include links to each library's application links.

13) **PUBLIC COMMENTS:**

a) None

14) **NEXT MEETING:** Thursday date, following the 9:30 a.m. Board Meeting at Kent District Library Service Center.

15) **ADJOURNMENT:** Ellen Peters moved, supported by Cierra Bakovka, to adjourn at 11:00 - *motion carried.*

Respectfully submitted by,
Amber McLain

Lakeland Library Cooperative
Operating Fund Balance Sheet
As of June 30, 2025

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ASSETS

Current Assets

Checking/Savings

001 · Checking Accounts 90,503

002 · Savings Accounts 550,610

Total Checking/Savings 641,112

Accounts Receivable 4,351

Other Current Assets

084 · Due from Other Funds 74,429

123 · Prepaid Expenses 61,504

Total Other Current Assets 135,933

Total Current Assets 781,396

Fixed Assets 508,367

TOTAL ASSETS \$ 1,289,763

LIABILITIES & EQUITY

Liabilities

Current Liabilities

Other Current Liabilities

214 · Due to Other Funds 20,365

231 · Payroll Liabilities 2,431

237 · Benefit Liabilities 3,947

Total Other Current Liabilities 26,743

Total Current Liabilities 26,743

Total Liabilities \$ 26,743

Equity

370 · Nonspendable Funds 82,547

371 · Property 508,367

390 · Unassigned Funds 893,138

Net Income (221,032)

Total Equity \$ 1,263,020

TOTAL LIABILITIES & EQUITY \$ 1,289,763

Lakeland Library Cooperative
Operating Budget vs. Actual
October 2024 through June 2025

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	YTD	Budget	%
Income			
566 · State Aid Revenue	376,516	758,052	49.7%
631 · Administrative Services	91,211	127,372	71.6%
632 · Delivery Services	93,945	124,156	75.7%
633 · ILS & IT Services	424,743	563,689	75.4%
665 · Interest Revenue	19,919	13,450	148.1%
672 · Other Revenue	-	100	0.0%
Total Income	\$ 1,006,333	\$ 1,586,819	63.4%
Expense			
702 · Salaries & Wages	530,072	782,770	67.7%
710 · Benefits	88,670	111,477	79.5%
719 · Mileage	1,690	3,450	49.0%
720 · Professional Development	3,590	8,000	44.9%
726 · Supplies	6,400	3,340	191.6%
801 · Professional Services	55,725	70,920	78.6%
810 · Insurance	17,252	19,595	88.0%
817 · ILS & IT Expenses	352,977	369,312	95.6%
831 · RIDES	8,819	9,065	97.3%
860 · Delivery Expenses	25,152	56,635	44.4%
880 · Member Development	837	6,000	13.9%
920 · Facility Expenses	21,911	38,035	57.6%
Total Expense	\$ 1,113,095	\$ 1,478,599	75.3%
Net Ordinary Income	\$ (106,762)	\$ 108,220	-98.7%
Other Income/Expense			
690 · Other Financing Sources	-	6,050	0.0%
Total Other Income	-	6,050	0.0%
990 · DS-SBITA (Bibliocore)	114,270	114,270	100.0%
Total Other Expense	114,270	114,270	100.0%
Net Other Income	\$ (114,270)	\$ (108,220)	105.6%
Net Income	\$ (221,032)	\$ -	100.0%

Lakeland Library Cooperative
Operating Checks for the Month
As of June 30, 2025

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Date	Name	Memo	Account	Amount
001.01 · Main Checking-Sweep Acct				
06/03/2025	Payroll		-SPLIT-	18,319.74
06/03/2025	United States Treasury		Payroll Liabilities	6,392.84
06/03/2025	MERS 401/457		Payroll Liabilities	2,176.88
06/03/2025	Cornell, Janet - vendor		Mileage	32.20
06/03/2025	Langlois, Ann - Vendor		Mileage	53.20
06/03/2025	First National Bank	Membership, IT, phones, supplies	-SPLIT-	3,573.32
06/03/2025	Flyers Energy		Vehicle Fuel	882.44
06/03/2025	Home Depot	delivery and truck supplies	Supplies	141.51
06/03/2025	Standard Insurance	LTD/Life Insurance	Benefits	269.55
06/11/2025	Printing Productions Ink	Registraton cards, Pink slips	Supplies	1,181.45
06/13/2025	MERS	Pension	Benefits	3,943.63
06/13/2025	State of Michigan--Vendor		Payroll Liabilities	1,999.18
06/16/2025	Allied Universal (Midstate)	Building Security	Facility Contracts	121.56
06/16/2025	Coverall - New Dreams, Inc.	Janitorial service	Facility Contracts	170.00
06/16/2025	Heimler Consulting	IT Consulting	IT Consulting	3,230.00
06/16/2025	MCLS		RIDES	8,818.80
06/17/2025	Payroll		-SPLIT-	18,741.38
06/17/2025	United States Treasury		Payroll Liabilities	6,471.38
06/17/2025	MERS 401/457		Payroll Liabilities	2,176.88
06/17/2025	Aflac		Payroll Liabilities	255.28
06/17/2025	BCBS	Health Insurance	Benefits	2,947.76
06/17/2025	BCN	Health Insurance	Benefits	3,016.15
06/17/2025	Berger Chevrolet		Vehicle Repairs/Maintenance	1,525.47
06/17/2025	Cintas	Floor mats	Facility Contracts	119.20
06/17/2025	Comcast-Data Lines	Data Lines	IT Operations	575.00
06/17/2025	Consumers Energy		Utilities	496.93
06/17/2025	Flyers Energy		Vehicle Fuel	858.32
06/17/2025	Granger	Waste services	Facility Contracts	55.62
06/17/2025	Healthiest You	Telehealth app	Benefits	76.50
06/17/2025	Overdrive	content credits	Overdrive Platform	1,330.00
06/17/2025	Ricoh USA Inc.	Copier	IT Operations	31.05
06/17/2025	SS Power Wash	Truck wash	Vehicle Repairs/Maintenance	90.00
06/25/2025	Bloom Sluggett		Legal	4,054.00
06/27/2025	Grand Rapids Income Tax Dept.		Payroll Liabilities	172.68
06/27/2025	Walker City Treasurer		Payroll Liabilities	239.41
06/27/2025	MI-Unemployment Insurance Agency		Payroll Liabilities	169.00
06/27/2025	Berger Chevrolet		Vehicle Repairs/Maintenance	88.15
06/27/2025	Delta Dental	Dental/Vision Insurance	Benefits	260.76
06/27/2025	DTE Energy		Utilities	55.75
06/27/2025	DTE Energy		Utilities	107.82
06/27/2025	First National Bank	IT, phones, fees	-SPLIT-	908.60
06/27/2025	Flyers Energy		Vehicle Fuel	835.09
06/27/2025	Standard Insurance - MERS group	LTD/Life Insurance	Benefits	269.55
06/27/2025	Suran Systems Inc.	IT software	IT Operations	50.00

Lakeland Library Cooperative
Operating Checks for the Month
As of June 30, 2025

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Date	Name	Memo	Account	Amount
06/30/2025	Backstage Library Works		Authority Control	257.30
06/30/2025	MCLS		Memberships	125.00
06/30/2025	The Library Network - TLN	MI Activity Pass	Memberships	484.11
			TOTAL	<u>98,150.44</u>

Lakeland Library Cooperative
Pass Through & Capital Funds Balance Sheet
As of June 30, 2025

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	<u>Pass Through</u>	<u>Capital</u>
ASSETS		
Current Assets		
Checking/Savings		
001 · Checking Accounts		
001.1 · Fund - Checking	29,122	2,234
001.3 · eCommerce - Checking	5,641	
Total 001 · Checking Accounts	<u>34,764</u>	<u>2,234</u>
002 · Savings Accounts		49,689
Total Checking/Savings	<u>34,764</u>	<u>51,923</u>
Accounts Receivable	5,743	
Other Current Assets		
084 · Due From Other Funds		10,250
111 · *Undeposited Funds	1,125	
123 · Prepaid Expense		11,087
Total Other Current Assets	<u>1,125</u>	<u>21,337</u>
Total Current Assets	<u>41,632</u>	<u>73,260</u>
TOTAL ASSETS	<u><u>\$ 41,632</u></u>	<u><u>\$ 73,260</u></u>
LIABILITIES & EQUITY		
Liabilities		
Current Liabilities		
Other Current Liabilities		
214 · Due To Other Funds	40,000	34,429
Total Other Current Liabilities	<u>40,000</u>	<u>34,429</u>
Total Current Liabilities	<u>40,000</u>	<u>34,429</u>
Total Liabilities	<u><u>\$ 40,000</u></u>	<u><u>\$ 34,429</u></u>
Equity		
370 · Nonspendable Funds		11,087
390 · Unassigned Funds		15,675
Net Income	1,632	12,069
Total Equity	<u><u>\$ 1,632</u></u>	<u><u>\$ 38,831</u></u>
TOTAL LIABILITIES & EQUITY	<u><u>\$ 41,632</u></u>	<u><u>\$ 73,260</u></u>

Lakeland Library Cooperative
Pass Through & Capital Budget vs. Actual
October 2024 through June 2025

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	Pass Through			Capital & Growth		
	YTD	Budget	%	YTD	Budget	%
Income						
628 · Group Supply Revenue	8,627	10,700	80.6%			
629 · Group Collections	65,587	94,000	69.8%			
635 · Group Services	19,293	36,000	53.6%			
637 · Ecommerce Fines	26,229	28,000	93.7%			
643 · Shared System Options				10,250	20,500	50.0%
645 · IT Services	-	350	0.0%			
665 · Interest Revenue				1,819	2,000	90.9%
672 · Other Revenue	-	1,750	0.0%	-	-	0.0%
Total Income	\$ 119,736	\$ 170,800	70.1%	\$ 12,069	\$ 22,500	53.6%
Expense						
728 · Library Supply Expense	8,627	10,700	80.6%			
729 · Collection Expenses	69,549	94,000	74.0%			
805 · Group Subscriptions	19,293	36,000	53.6%			
807 · Fines Paid	20,636	28,000	73.7%			
830 · IT Services Expense	-	350	0.0%			
880 · Member Development	-	1,000	0.0%			
965 · Information Technology				-	-	0.0%
969 · Other Services	-	750	0.0%			
970 · Capital Outlay						
971 · Building/Grounds Improvements				-	7,500	0.0%
975 · Technology				-	15,000	0.0%
980 · Vehicles				-	-	0.0%
Total 970 · Capital Outlay	-	-	0.0%	-	22,500	0.0%
Total Expense	\$ 118,104	\$ 170,800	69.1%	\$ -	\$ 22,500	0.0%
Net Ordinary Income	\$ 1,632	\$ -	100.0%	\$ 12,069	\$ -	100.0%
Other Income/Expense						
Other Income	-	-	0.0%	-	-	0.0%
Net Other Income	\$ -	\$ -	0.0%	\$ -	\$ -	0.0%
Net Income	\$ 1,632	\$ -	100.0%	\$ 12,069	\$ -	100.0%

Lakeland Library Cooperative
Pass Through & Capital - Monthly Checks
As of June 30, 2025

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Date	Name	Memo	Account	Amount
001 · Checking Accounts				
001.1 · Fund - Checking				
001.11 · Checking - Pass Through				
06/03/2025	OverDrive	Audio and Ebooks	-SPLIT-	5,219.58
06/16/2025	Coopersville Area District Library-Vendor	ACH June 25 Fines	Ecommerce Fines	77.46
06/16/2025	Fennville District Library-Vendor	ACH June 25 Fines	Ecommerce Fines	182.19
06/16/2025	Gary Byker Memorial Library-Vendor	ACH June 25 Fines	Ecommerce Fines	100.45
06/16/2025	Ionia Community Library-Vendor	ACH June 25 Fines	Ecommerce Fines	120.42
06/16/2025	Leighton Township Library-Vendor	ACH June 25 Fines	Ecommerce Fines	39.66
06/16/2025	Patmos Library-Vendor	ACH June 25 Fines	Ecommerce Fines	162.48
06/16/2025	Saugatuck--Douglas District Library-Vendo	ACH June 25 Fines	Ecommerce Fines	41.07
06/16/2025	Sparta Township Library--Vendor	ACH June 25 Fines	Ecommerce Fines	114.18
06/16/2025	TCH Reynolds Township Library-Vendor	ACH June 25 Fines	Ecommerce Fines	152.10
06/16/2025	White Lake Community Library-Vendor	ACH June 25 Fines	Ecommerce Fines	132.43
06/25/2025	Interactive Sciences-Wowbrary	Wowbrary	Group Subscription	5,623.83
06/27/2025	OverDrive	Audio and Ebooks	-SPLIT-	6,123.51
Total 001.11 · Checking - Pass Through				18,089.36
001.12 · Checking - Capital				
Total 001.12 · Checking - Capital				0.00
Total 001.1 · Fund - Checking				18,089.36
001.3 · eCommerce - Checking				
06/11/2025	Allendale Township Library-Vendor	June 25 Fines	Ecommerce Fines	144.98
06/11/2025	Alvah N. Belding Library--Vendor	June 25 Fines	Ecommerce Fines	40.23
06/11/2025	Carson City Public Library-Vendor	June 25 Fines	Ecommerce Fines	48.22
06/11/2025	Cedar Springs Public Library-Vendor	June 25 Fines	Ecommerce Fines	58.84
06/11/2025	Croton Township Library - Vendor	June 25 Fines	Ecommerce Fines	25.16
06/11/2025	Flat River Community Library-Vendor	June 25 Fines	Ecommerce Fines	36.85
06/11/2025	Fremont Area District Library-Vendor	June 25 Fines	Ecommerce Fines	141.32
06/11/2025	Fruitport District Library - Vendor	June 25 Fines	Ecommerce Fines	44.81
06/11/2025	Georgetown Twp Public Library-Vendor	June 25 Fines	Ecommerce Fines	750.24
06/11/2025	Hackley Public Library-Vendor	June 25 Fines	Ecommerce Fines	224.51
06/11/2025	Hastings Public Library-Vendor	June 25 Fines	Ecommerce Fines	69.97
06/11/2025	Herrick District Library-Vendor	June 25 Fines	Ecommerce Fines	1,009.57
06/11/2025	Howard Miller Library-Vendor	June 25 Fines	Ecommerce Fines	284.53
06/11/2025	Loutit District Library--Vendor	June 25 Fines	Ecommerce Fines	116.02
06/11/2025	Muskegon Area District Library-Vendor	June 25 Fines	Ecommerce Fines	927.73
06/11/2025	Newaygo Area District Library-Vendor	June 25 Fines	Ecommerce Fines	59.11
06/11/2025	Salem Township Library-Vendor	June 25 Fines	Ecommerce Fines	251.29
06/11/2025	Spring Lake District Library-Vendor	June 25 Fines	Ecommerce Fines	195.92
Total 001.3 · eCommerce - Checking				4,429.30
TOTAL				22,518.66



COOPERATIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT July 10th, 2025

It's been another busy month for all of us. I have been focusing on assisting the LLC team, policies, strategic plans, succession planning and other nuts and bolts issues while you all focus on summer reading. I am working with libraries on some internal issues, staffing and board development and also just trying to find some work/life balance. It's a struggle for all of us at times but when we can spend time with people we love, it is such a balm! I was in Chicago a couple weeks ago and I posted on Facebook a view from my hotel. A friend, who I met there 40 years ago when we both volunteered at a women and family shelter, responded that she was in Chicago too visiting from Cincinnati. Turns out she was staying at the hotel next door. We have a delightful 45-minute coffee the next morning and caught up some since it had been 6 years since we had visited in person! Serendipity is my favorite word and this is a great example as to why. I hope serendipity visits you this summer as well.

Agenda items:

Board:

Policies:

I hope to bring a revised policy to each meeting between now and the end of the year and into next year. With all due respect, a lot of the LLC policies are very lengthy, wordy and dated. Some, such as the confidentiality policy was revised with legal assistance. Going forward, we will have separate policies for the issues that are now in the one very long Administrative Policy. (Please see here for the current policies:

https://llcoop.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/admin_policies_2017_09.pdf.)

Ann and Amber will continue to focus on ILS policies for approval by the Advisory Council.

This month I would like the board to focus on procurement and because ours was in multiple sections and didn't really flow well, Janet and I used TLN's policy as a sample. None of the cost requirement amounts changed except we increased the need for multiple quotes to \$1,000.00. Please let me know if you have questions.

Board Development:

John brought the attached article from The New Yorker to my attention so we thought if the board could take the time to read it, we could share our thoughts at the meeting.

Advisory:

Manager Reports:

Please read our reports and attend for up to the minute information and updates. The agenda may be light but the content in our written and oral reports is not!

Elections:

According to our bylaws and plan of service, one class IV board representative and the Class I,II&III board representative are up for election in odd numbered years. Dale Parus (Class IV) has chosen not to run again. Jessica Hunt (Class I,II& III) will run for her 2nd term. Class I,II&III will caucus as a group in August, as will Class IV libraries. Class 5 libraries voted last year, along with Class IV. Class IV libraries essentially vote every year. Class 6 libraries have fixed seats so no election is required.

For Advisory Officers, each has a two-year term so we are set. It might be advised to stagger these but we can address this next year.

Please attend in August so that we have a quorum for all the elections. Thank you!

If you have questions about the caucusing or the role of a board meeting or AC officer, this is the time to ask. (You can always call me too but it's good to discuss this in an open meeting too.)

ALA Annual Conference:

We will open the floor for those that attended ALA in Philly so you can share what you learned, observed and can't wait to try!

Other Items of Note:

Budget: We will have a finance committee meeting late July or early August and then present the budget to Advisory in August.

Staff: Everyone is giving so much. The work ethic, enthusiasm and teamwork is an absolute gift each day. I am so pleased to work for this organization amongst all of you and the LLC team!

Strategic plans for several are moving forward. I am a bit behind on updating ours but now I think I can move forward and should submit something in August.

LCM: The Library Cooperatives of Michigan are excited to meet for our annual retreat in August and to decide how to use the GIS maps that Amber has almost completed for all 395 public libraries. We hope to have a big announcement at MLA in Lansing in October.

MLA Leadership: I was remiss at not mentioning this in June. I think I was in denial on two levels. First, Debbie Mikula retired and I found that difficult to grasp. Second, Dillon Geshel has left his role as the Superiorland Cooperative Director to be the interim director at MLA. As my mother used to say "De Nile is a big river" and she knew since she was queen of it...but I digress. I think the board made such a good choice when they voted to make Dillon (He had been president of MLA at the time.) the interim director. He is extremely capable, has a very layered set of skills, has both a passion for libraries and a very practical approach and he is very accessible too. I think we are in very good hands. I've assisted with the Superiorland search in small ways and I think they will announce next steps shortly.

Board training and development: Please let me know if you would like me to work with you and your board on training. I am happy to tailor a session to your specific needs. I do this for each presentation. I am happy to report that the board members and directors do see the benefits of it. A few board members have commented that they use the tools provided and that it has been helpful. I have been asked back to several libraries in the past few years. I will be visiting KDL (2nd year in a row) and Dorr in July and August. Since October, I have visited Saranac Clarksville*, Hackley, Henika, Hopkins, Cedar Springs*, Belding*, and Grand Rapids*. Forgive me if I didn't list your library. Please let me know how I can help! All of the cooperative directors feel this is our number one priority.

Have a good 3-day weekend and see you next week. Please keep reading!

Manager/Specialist Reports:

Cataloging Services Manager - Jeff Lezman

June 2025 activities

E-mail & telephone consulting contacts: 23

Sierra records manually edited: 78

Hoopla records added to Sierra: 43

Jeff trained the staff at the Patmos District Library on how to attach item records to bibliographic records in Sierra.

May 2025 Statistics

The statistics for May 2025 show a decrease in the number of cataloging requests we received, with an accompanying decrease in the number of records cataloged compared to May of last year. This change is likely due to MADL becoming a cataloging center as well as the cataloging center guidelines implemented in October 2024.

The number of requests received to be cataloged in May was down by 44% compared to May 2024. The number of requests received that were already in the database decreased by 40%.

The number of records copy-cataloged in May was down by 44% compared to May 2024, while the number of original records cataloged was up by 19%. The total number of records cataloged was down by 33% compared to May 2024.

Cataloging	May 2025	YTD	May 2024	YTD	Monthly %	YTD PCT
Requests Received	1164	11097	2088	13858	-44%	-20%
Requests already in database	38	802	63	683	-40%	17%
Requests to be cataloged	1126	10295	2025	13175	-44%	-19%
Copy Cataloging	956	8661	1606	11546	-40%	-22%
Original Cataloging	267	2514	225	1805	19%	42%
Total Cataloged	1223	11175	1831	13351	-33%	-14%

Cataloging Center Statistics

These statistics show the number of bibliographic records cataloged monthly by Lakeland and the other Cataloging Centers (Hackley, Herrick, Loutit, and MADL). The chart shows how the workload of cataloging is becoming more equitably distributed among all of the Cataloging Centers.

Month	Total	Lakeland Cataloging	Other Cataloging Centers
January	3372	1632	870
February	2837	1299	769
March	2102	1179	923
May	2399	1229	1170
May	<u>2453</u>	1157	1296
June	2406	1162	1244
Total	13930	7658	6272

Delivery & Facility Manager - Terry Cross

June 2025 – Number of Bags & Bins Loaded Daily on the Trucks at Lakeland

	June – 2025	June – 2024	Difference	% Change
Total Book Bags & Bins	2,830	2,815	15	1%

In June 2025, there were 2,830 book bags and bins sorted, loaded, and delivered to member libraries. This represents less than a 1% increase as compared to the 2,815 bags and bins that were sorted and delivered in June of the prior year.

MelCat/Rides Statistics

	# Of Incoming Bins Received from Rides Courier	# Of Outgoing Bins Received from Member Libraries
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	June 2025	June 2024	Difference	June 2025	June 2024	Difference
# Of Bins	186	158	28	167	133	34

In addition to the book bags and bins that were received from member libraries, there were 186 MelCat bins that were received and sorted in June 2025. This was an increase of 28 bins as compared to the 158 bins that were received in June 2024. Also in June 2025, 167 bins were sent out, which was 34 more bins than the 133 bins that were sent out in June 2024.

Both of the trucks received oil changes in June and are current with their respective preventative maintenance schedules. Also in June, Truck # 37 had a flat tire repaired and the windshield was replaced. On Truck #37, the battery, drive belt and headlight assembly were replaced.

I drove for 12 days and helped sort for 4 days in June covering for time off taken by both of the Drivers and the Sorters.

There were five e-mail and or phone contacts with member libraires in June.

In June, there were 17 Labor Law Posters purchased and distributed to member libraries.

On behalf of our insurance company, a building inspector spent a couple of hours surveying the building. I am not aware of any negative findings.

Weeds were pulled and mulch was spread in the flower beds. Also in June, I cleaned the carpets and washed the windows and window blinds.

Finance & HR Assistant - Janet Cornell

Progress in the accounting software migration came to a grinding halt near the end of June. A glitch came up in the payroll program and I was not enthused by their support response. Payroll is something that has to be correct because it is very difficult to fix if wrong, so I have started looking at possible alternatives for running payroll. Our QuickBooks payroll subscription expires October 1st so an alternative solution is on my priority list. Payroll can be run in a separate software system with a journal entry into the accounting program. I came across a few solutions when looking for QB alternatives so it shouldn't take as long to consider some possibilities. My goal is to get an alternative in place yet for this fiscal year.

Carol and I have just started the budgeting process. We do not anticipate much change so the process should go quickly, and we will have the draft ready for the August meeting. Carol also asked for my help in updating the Administrative Policy since many relate to how financials are handled. This should also go quickly as we are using samples from other's active policies as a template to work from.

Ecommerce fines were sent out earlier in June, and quarterly billing along with an account summary were sent out last week. Check your email for details if you haven't received them yet.

Email and phone consults with Member libraries and vendors: 13

ILS Manager – Ann Langlois

June email, Zoom, and phone consults: member libraries: 47 ; vendors: 3

June help tickets opened: 171

June help tickets closed: 169

ILS Evaluation Committee: has been working diligently since April to develop requirements for what Lakeland needs for an ILS and have created a document with the requirements. All members have been invited to add input on the requirements.

Circulation Policies: the Advisory Council voted to accept the changes to the ILS Circulation Policies in June. As a result of some policy updates, the Patron Registration document has also changed. Both updated versions are available on the [ILS Information page](#).

Quarterly Meeting: the next meeting will be July 17 at 1:30 p.m. [Here is the link](#) to register. All members are welcome to attend.

Member Services Manager – Amber McLain

Email/Phone Consults with Libraries: 34

Email/Phone Consults with Vendors: 12

BiblioCommons

BiblioCommons continues to function as expected.

BiblioSuggest

BiblioSuggest continues to function as expected. LLC parent catalog suggestions have been sent out for the month. These seem to be slowing down as more users use their individual libraries on the app.

BiblioApp

BiblioApp continues to function as expected. As mentioned at last month's board meeting, the App Development team is currently working on developing push notifications - once ready, users will be able to opt-in to receiving notifications for things like upcoming due dates and hold ready notices.

Self Checkout Stats -

BiblioCommons will begin giving us checkout stats for the app monthly. Fulfillment location is where the item was checked out from.

Month	Fulfillment Location	Items Checked Out	Total checkout users
May-25	AB	8	1
May-25	AF	1	1
May-25	AL	2	2
May-25	AS	21	5
May-25	AW	26	7
May-25	BH	28	6
May-25	BM	1	1
May-25	ES	2	2
May-25	HO	1	1
May-25	IC	1	1
May-25	IL	16	7
May-25	ME	1	1
May-25	MG	6	3
May-25	NF	2	2
May-25	NG	6	1
May-25	NN	5	1

May-25	OA	1	1
May-25	OG	1	1
May-25	OH	12	4
May-25	OJ	1	1
May-25	OL	136	31
May-25	OS	65	26
May-25	OZ	6	5
May-25	SM	2	2
May-25	UB	1	1
May-25	UE	1	1
May-25	UN	3	2
May-25	UV	1	1

Users

This is a list of how many active users each library has. This is **active users** on the app - meaning those who have opened the app and done an action within the specified month.

Library	iOS	Android	Total
Allendale Township Library	176	90	266
Alvah N Belding Memorial Library	40	44	84
Carson City Public Library	25	13	38
Cedar Springs Public Library	120	58	178
Coopersville Area District Library	62	42	104
Croton Township Library	9	6	15
Dorr Township Library	23	9	32
Fennville District Library and Enrichment Center	39	19	58
Flat River Community Library	96	88	184
Freeport District Library	24	8	32
Fremont Area District Library	62	35	97
Fruitport District Library	59	45	104
Gary Byker Library of Hudsonville	178	72	250
Georgetown Township Public Library	784	362	1146
Grant Area District Library	28	39	67
Hackley Public Library	48	43	91
Hastings Public Library	92	71	163
Henika District Library	43	30	73
Herrick District Library	279	110	389
Hesperia Community Library	13	5	18
Home Township Library	4	7	11
Hopkins District Library	10	10	20
Howard Miller Public Library	393	163	556
Ionia Community Library	57	59	116

Lake Odessa Community Library	48	18	66
Leighton Township Library	44	19	63
Lakeland Community Cooperative	1028	477	1505
Loutit District Library	443	229	672
Newago Area District Library	47	31	78
Patmos Library	129	45	174
Salem Township Library	80	36	116
Saranac Clarksville District Library	52	45	97
Saugatuck Douglas District Library	97	15	112
Sparta Carnegie Township Library	38	20	58
Spring Lake District Library	398	134	532
Tamarack District Library	22	26	48
Timothy C. Hauenstein Reynolds Township	53	52	105
Thornapple Kellogg Community Library	21	11	32
White Cloud Community Library	21	33	54
White Lake Community Library	23	11	34

Patron Point

Patron Point continues to function as expected. Please note that you may notice a slight jump in active patrons in your June and July reports. I am currently cleaning up Patron Point patrons in the system.

Number of Applications in June 2025: 964

Number of Auto-Renews in June 2025: 2119

Respectfully submitted,

Carol Dawe

**LAKELAND LIBRARY COOPERATIVE
BOARD MINUTES – Unofficial
Thursday, June 12, 2025 at 9:30 a.m.
Kent District Library Service Center**

Present: Jessica Hunt (NG), Dale Parus (IC), Carol Dawe (LLC), John McNaughton (GRPL), Lance Werner (KDL), Diane Kooiker (HDL), Maggie McKeithan (OS)
Lakeland Staff Present: Amber McLain, Ann Langlois
Absent: Rob Bristow (OG), Abby Black (OA), Ron Suszek (MADL)

- 1) CALL TO ORDER AND ROLL CALL:** The meeting was called to order at 9:30 AM by John McNaughton.
- 2) APPROVAL OF AGENDA:** Lance Werner moved, supported by Maggie McKeithan, to approve the agenda as presented - *motion carried*.
- 3) PUBLIC COMMENTS:** There were no public comments.
- 4) APPROVAL OF MINUTES:** Lance Werner moved, supported by Jessica Hunt to approve the board minutes from April 10, 2025 – *motion carried*.
- 5) CLOSED SESSION:** John McNaughton moved to go into closed session at 9:37 a.m. to consider material exempt from disclosure under the Michigan Freedom of Information Act, being a privileged memorandum from the Cooperative Board's attorney, pursuant to Section 8(1)(h) of the Open Meetings Act.
 - a) Roll call vote: Jessica Hunt – Y; Dale Parus – Y; John McNaughton – Y; Lance Werner – Y; Diane Kooiker – Y; Maggie McKeithan – Y; Ron Suszek – Y.
 - b) Board moved to closed session.
 - c) John McNaughton made the motion, supported by Lance Werner, to return to open session at 10:20 a.m. – *motion carried*.
 - d) Roll call vote: Jessica Hunt – Y; Dale Parus – Y; John McNaughton – Y; Lance Werner – Y; Diane Kooiker – Y; Maggie McKeithan – Y; Ron Suszek – Y.
- 6) FINANCIAL REPORT:**
 - a) April and May 2025 Financials and Check Register: Lance Werner moved, supported by Ron Suszek, to approve the April and May 2025 Financials as presented - *motion carried*.
- 7) PRESIDENT'S REPORT**
 - a) Nothing to report.
- 8) DIRECTOR'S REPORT**
 - a) Nothing to report.
- 9) COUNCIL/COMMITTEE REPORTS**
 - a) Official Advisory Board minutes from March 2025 included for information.
- 10) ONGOING/NEW BUSINESS:**
 - a) *Review, Discussion and Possible Action on Revised Confidentiality Policy*
 - i) Lance Werner made the motion to approve the proposed revised confidentiality policy under, seconded by Jessica Hunt – *motion carried*.
 - b) *Review, Discussion and Possible Action on Revised Plan of Service*
 - i) Lance Werner made the motion to approve the revised plan of service, seconded by Jessica Hunt – *motion carried*.
 - c) *Review, Discussion and Possible Action on Resolution for Revised Plan of Service*
 - i) Lance Werner made the motion to accept the revised plan of service, seconded by Maggie McKeithan – *motion carried*.
 - (1) Roll call vote: Jessica Hunt – Y; Dale Parus – Y; John McNaughton – Y; Lance Werner – Y; Diane Kooiker – Y; Maggie McKeithan – Y; Ron Suszek – Y.
- 11) PUBLIC COMMENTS:** None
- 12) BOARD MEMBER COMMENTS:**
 - a) Dale Parus announced that ICL has gained a service contract with Ronald Township.
- 13) NEXT MEETING:** Thursday, July 10, at 9:30 a.m. at Kent District Library Service Center.

14) ADJOURNMENT: Lance Werner moved, supported by Ron Suszek, to adjourn at 10:30 - *motion carried.*

Respectfully submitted by,
Amber McLain



LAKELAND LIBRARY COOPERATIVE

LEADING ♦ LEARNING ♦ LENDING

PROCUREMENT POLICY AND PROCEDURES 2025 DRAFT #1

Purpose

This policy provides standards for buying goods and services in a manner that promotes the prudent use of funds, quality control, accurate recordkeeping and reporting, sound business practices, and efficiency. This policy is also designed to reduce opportunities for unauthorized spending, waste, fraud, and conflicts of interest.

Applicability

LLC staff, Board members, council and committee officers must abide by this policy when involved in LLC purchase decisions. Violators are subject to disciplinary action as defined by LLC policies on discipline and dismissal and the LLC Plan of Service and Bylaws.

General Standards

- a) All purchases made on behalf of LLC shall be both necessary and reasonable, and purchase decisions should be made both conservatively and with prudence.
- b) Proposals will be evaluated by LLC staff. Proposals will be evaluated based on technical specifications, vendor reliability and cost. The respondent selected will be chosen on the basis of the greatest benefit to LLC and its members, not necessarily on the basis of the lowest price. Any or all bids may be rejected due to failure to respond adequately to the RFI, RFP or inquiries. LLC reserves the right to contact parties who have used the respondent's previous services and use any other information that would assist in the evaluation. LLC reserves the right to interview respondents to clarify proposals.
- c) Non-Discrimination Clause. The accepted respondent agrees not to discriminate against any employee or applicant for employment, with respect to their hire, tenure, terms, conditions or privileges of employment, or any

matter directly or indirectly related to employment because of race, color, religion, national origin, ancestry, age, sex, *sexual orientation*, *veterans status*, genetic information, citizenship, height, weight, marital status or physical or mental disability.

All procurement transactions shall be documented in writing either on forms designed for that purpose or by memo or e-mail, and saved as mandated by state law and LLC's retention policy.

Ethical Conduct

- a) No LLC staff, Board member, council and committee officer may participate in the selection of a vendor or the administration of a lease agreement with a vendor when:
 - o That individual, a close relative, or member of their household, has a financial or owning interest in the prospective vendor;
 - o A prospective vendor is owned or managed by a close relative or member of the household;
 - o The prospective vendor employs or is about to employ the individual, a close relative, or member of their household.
- b) No vendor shall be given advance notice of upcoming price comparisons, facts concerning other vendors' prices, or any other information that may limit or which may appear to limit open and free competition.
- c) No LLC staff, Board member, council or committee officer may accept a gift, gratuity or favor, including meals, greater than \$20, and there can be no accumulation of more than \$50.00 in one year, from a vendor who has responded to or may respond to a request for bids. If an individual knowingly and willingly accepts such a gift, gratuity, or favor, the vendor shall be barred from future bidding for a period of three years or until the Board lifts the prohibition. The offending LLC staff, Board member or council or committee officer shall be considered in breach of LLC ethics and shall be subject to disciplinary action under the appropriate LLC policies.

Contract Monitoring and Close-Out

- a) LLC, for each contract entered into, will appoint an internal contract manager.

- b) The contract manager shall work with the contractor to achieve satisfactory results, and should recommend termination of the agreement any time the contractor becomes unable or unwilling to meet appropriate standards of quality, timeliness or cost.
- c) Requests for early contract termination from the contractor or the staff contract manager shall be submitted in writing and reviewed by the Board, with advice from legal counsel. The Board's decision is final and shall be documented in writing and placed in the contract file.
- d) The contract manager shall prepare a close-out letter to each contractor when the contract has either expired or been terminated as needed. At a minimum, the letter shall state the contract end date, the status of any outstanding payments, whether deliverables have been received and approved or are pending, and any contingencies that must be resolved before the contract can be formally closed out. A copy of the letter shall be maintained in the contract files.

Controls

Board Approval

Prior Board approval is required for the purchase of any single item or service with a cost equal to or greater than \$20,000. Such purchases also must follow all other applicable provisions required by this policy.

In the case of purchases, contracts, or agreements valued over \$20,000, deemed by the Lakeland Library Cooperative Director to be of an emergency nature, and normally requiring Lakeland Library Cooperative Board approval, the Lakeland Library Cooperative Board shall be polled (telephone, email, etc.) prior to action being taken, with formal Lakeland Library Cooperative Board approval at the next regular or special Lakeland Library Cooperative Board meeting.

LLC Director Approval

LLC Director shall be authorized to purchase an item or service which costs less than \$20,000, without specific authorization from the Board, provided that all the following conditions are met:

- o The expenditure is clearly allowed by the current Board-approved budget
- o Funds are currently available to make the purchase
- o The LLC Director can document both the need for and the prudence of the purchase
- o No other provision of the bylaws, organizational policy, or other laws or

- regulations prohibit the purchase, and
- o All procurement procedures that apply are followed during the purchase.

Manager Approval

LLC Managers shall be authorized to purchase an item or service which costs \$5,000 or less, without specific authorization from the LLC Director, provided that all the following conditions are met:

- o The director is not available and the purchase is urgent, then the Board President and Treasurer should be contacted for permission.
- o The expenditure is clearly allowed by the current Board-approved budget
- o Funds are currently available to make the purchase
- o The Manager can document both the need for and the prudence of the purchase
- o All procurement procedures that apply are followed during the purchase.

Regular Purchase Review

Each year, the finance staff member shall review all LLC purchases to ensure the following:

- o That each purchase was properly authorized
- o That each purchase fell within budget limits
- o That there was no abuse or misuse of purchase authority, and
- o That the staff followed procurement policy procedures.

Types of Procurement:

- o **Supplies**
- o **Equipment and Furnishings**
- o **Professional Services**
- o **Software/Technology**

Definitions

SUPPLIES The term “supplies” refers to consumable products that are necessary for routine LLC administration and communications. Individual supply items are usually modestly priced, and shall be purchased by the methods described below.

EQUIPMENT For the purpose of this policy, “equipment” refers to non-consumable tools needed to carry out routine LLC administration and communications.

PROFESSIONAL SERVICES For the purpose of this policy, the term “professional services” refers to those services that require specialized training and skill, experience or knowledge, and often licensing, certification, and/or bonding. These services may be provided by individuals or firms. Examples of professional services include accounting, technology consulting, legal, plumbing and insurance services.

SOFTWARE/TECHNOLOGY For the purpose of this policy, the term “software” refers to a generic term for organized collections of computer data and instructions, often broken into two major categories: system software that provides the basic non-task-specific functions of the computer, and application software which is used by users to accomplish specific tasks. “Technology” refers to other electronic or digital products or systems.

Procedures for Purchases Costing less than \$20,000

Step 1: Purchase Request

Any staff member may request items by completing a purchase order form or approved e-mail request and submitting it to the Manager or LLC Director for approval. The request must identify the specific item(s) requested, the cost of each item, and the appropriate general ledger account.

Step 2: Simple Price Comparison

Price quotes for purchases over \$1,000.00 must be obtained from two or more vendors prior to purchase unless it is from an established vendor. The following rules apply:

- a) The staff must give each vendor complete specifications and request prices based on those specifications.

Staff may obtain verbal, electronic or written price quotes, so long as there is maximum opportunity for open and free competition. Each verbal quote shall be documented in writing and filed, and shall include the following:

- o date and time of the conversation
- o name and telephone number of the company
- o title of the person who provided pricing information
- o name of the staff person making the inquiry
- o specifications given to the vendor, and
- o vendor’s exact price quote.

- b) Each vendor should be told when and in what form pricing information must be submitted to be eligible for consideration.

Step 3: Purchase Approval/Denial

- a) The LLC Director shall review each purchase request, with related price comparisons, and approve or deny the purchase based on the following:
 - o Need for the requested item(s)
 - o Prudence of making the purchase at the time of the request
 - o Whether the purchase falls within budget limits
 - o Evidence of waste or misuse of items
 - o Availability of cash to fulfill the request, and
 - o Restrictions imposed by grant or loan agreements or federal, state, or local regulations.
- b) The LLC Director shall complete and sign the authorization section of the purchase order or e-mail, indicating approval or denial and briefly noting any reason for denial in the space provided.

Step 4: The Purchase

- a) The LLC Director shall assign the task of placing purchase orders, receiving and examining those orders to the finance staff member.
- b) The designated staff member who places the order shall use the approved Purchase Order to place the order with the vendor. If required by the vendor, the staff member may also attach the vendor's order form. The shipment shall be addressed to a staff member designated to receive such shipments.

Step 5: Record Keeping

The finance staff member shall maintain a file containing the following items related to each item purchased under this section:

- o proof of purchase authorization
- o a description of the comparison process-including the specifications used
- o price quotes, along with the dates they were requested and received
- o the basis for the final purchase decision
- o the original invoice or bill of lading, and
- o a check voucher used to pay for the order.

Procedures for Purchases Equal to or Greater Than \$20,000

Lease versus Purchase

For items equal to or greater than \$20,000 each, the staff shall analyze the financial and practical considerations of leasing and purchasing and shall recommend the best option.

Competitive Bids: Purchasing

Competitive bids are required prior to the purchase of any item equal to or greater than \$20,000. The following steps, apply to such a purchase:

Step 1: Purchase Request

Any staff member may request items equal to or greater than \$20,000 by completing a purchase order form and submitting it to the LLC Director for approval. The purchase order must identify the specific item(s) requested, the cost of each item, and the appropriate general ledger account.

Step 2: LLC Director's Review

Follow step 3 of "Procedures for Purchases Costing Less Than \$20,000."

Step 3: Request for Quote or Request for Proposal

- a) The designated staff person shall prepare a request for quote, ensure that it is posted on the LLC website, and send to vendors as deemed appropriate.
- b) Each request for bids shall include, at a minimum, the following information and shall not contain language that unduly restricts competition:
 - o Clear and accurate description of each item sought
 - o When practicable, description of the functions to be performed or performance required, and the range of acceptable characteristics or minimum standards
 - o Desired date and manner of delivery
 - o Quantity desired
 - o Any other requirements that the successful bidder must fulfill
 - o Terms of the sale (*cash or credit*)
 - o Bid format and acceptable submission methods (mail, fax, etc.)
 - o Deadline for receipt of bids
 - o Description of the bid review process
 - o Time and manner in which the successful bidder will be notified

Step 4: Receiving the Bids

- a) For each published request for bids, the designated staff member shall create a log of all bids received. The log shall include the following data:

- o a copy of the request for bids
- o date and time each bid is received
- o delivery method of each bid
- o indication of whether the bid meets the published criteria.

Step 5: Bid Review and Selection

The LLC Director or appointed review committee shall review only those bids which were received by the published deadline, submitted in an acceptable format, and delivered by one of the methods prescribed in the request for bids.

- a) The respondent selected will be chosen on the basis of the greatest benefit to LLC and its members, not necessarily on the basis of the lowest price. Any or all bids may be rejected due to failure to respond adequately to the RFP. LLC reserves the right to contact parties that have used the respondent's previous services and use any other information that would assist in the evaluation. LLC reserves the right to interview respondents to clarify proposals.
- b) If the amount of the purchase is less than \$20,000, the LLC Director shall review the bids, select the bid which most closely matches the bid criteria and follow the procedures and guidelines detailed below.
- c) If the amount of the purchase is equal to or greater than \$20,000, the LLC Director shall review the bids as above, select the best bid, and submit a brief written recommendation along with the bids named in Step 5 above to the Board. The Board will evaluate the bids based on bid specifications, vendor reliability and cost. Once a decision is made, the LLC Director will follow the procedures and guidelines detailed below.
- d) The LLC Director and the Board may reject any and all bids when doing so serves the best interest of LLC. The LLC Director and the Board shall record their respective reasons for each rejection and shall be kept in the office files for at least three years from the date of the Request for Bids, along with a copy of the originally published Request for Bids.
- e) The LLC Director shall sign the purchase order form, completing the "Vendor Selection Rationale" section, and shall return the approved packet to the staff person authorized to make the purchase.

Step 6: The Purchase

Orders for items shall be placed and reviewed according to all applicable steps contained in Step 4 of "Procedures for Purchases Costing Less Than \$20,000." The

receiving staff person shall compare the invoice to the amount(s) bid by the vendor and follow the steps above for resolving any discrepancies.

Step 7: Record Keeping

Follow step 5 of “Procedures for Purchases Costing Less Than \$20,000.”

Competitive Bids: Leasing

Competitive bids are required prior to the lease of any item equal to or greater than \$20,000 in total lease payments. The steps outlined in the section above apply to leasing, along with the following:

- a) **Leasing Terms:** The request for bids shall include the length of time the item will be leased and shall request information on delivery, set-up, maintenance, repair, and other leasing costs and benefits.
- b) **Lease Agreement:** When a supplier has been chosen, and legal review is deemed necessary, the lease agreement shall be reviewed by LLC’s legal counsel or another attorney authorized by the Board prior to execution.

Approved by the LLC Board on _____.

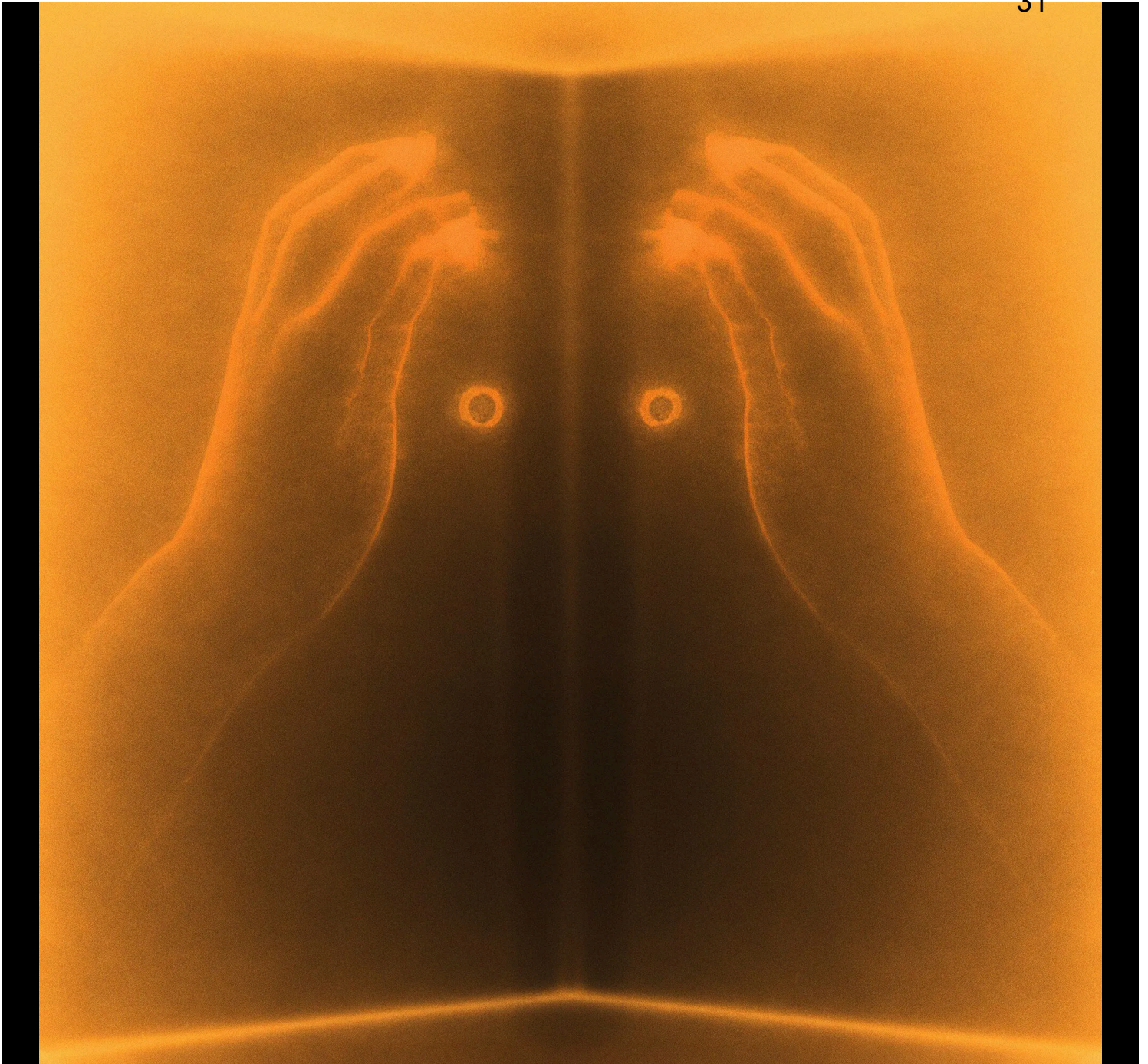
OPEN QUESTIONS

WHAT'S HAPPENING TO READING?

For many people, A.I. may be bringing the age of traditional text to an end.

By Joshua Rothman

June 17, 2025



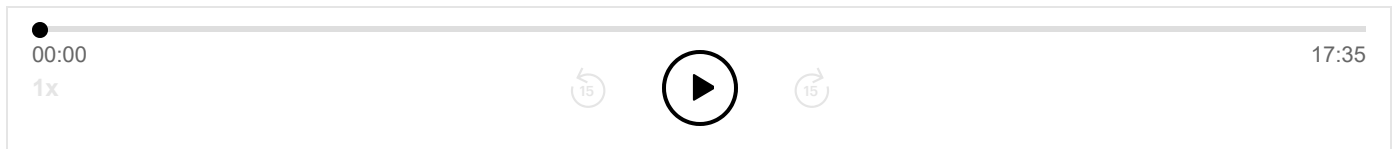
Photograph by Balarama Heller



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*You're reading **Open Questions**, Joshua Rothman's weekly column exploring what it means to be human.*

Listen to this story



What do you read, and why? A few decades ago, these weren't urgent questions. Reading was an unremarkable activity, essentially unchanged since the advent of the modern publishing industry, in the nineteenth century. In a 2017 *Shouts & Murmurs* titled "Before the Internet," the writer Emma Rathbone captured the spirit of reading as it used to be: "Before the Internet, you could laze around on a park bench in Chicago reading some Dean Koontz, and that would be a legit thing to do and no one would ever know you had done it unless you told them." Reading was just reading, and no matter what you chose to read—the paper, Proust, "The Power Broker"—you basically did it by moving your eyes across a page, in silence, at your own pace and on your own schedule.

Today, the nature of reading has shifted. Plenty of people still enjoy traditional books and periodicals, and there are even readers for whom the networked age has enabled a kind of hyper-literacy; for them, a smartphone is a library in their pocket. For others, however, the old-fashioned, ideal sort of reading—intense, extended, beginning-to-end encounters with carefully crafted texts—has become almost anachronistic. These readers might start a book on an e-reader and then continue it on the go, via audio narration. Or they might forgo books entirely, spending evenings browsing Apple News and Substack before drifting down Reddit's lazy river. There's something both diffuse and concentrated about reading now; it involves a lot of random words flowing across a screen, while the lurking presence of YouTube, Fortnite, Netflix, and the like insures that, once we've begun to read, we must continually choose not to stop.

This shift has taken decades, and it's been driven by technologies that have been disproportionately adopted by the young. Perhaps for these reasons, its momentousness has been obscured. In 2023, the National Endowment for the

Arts reported that, over the preceding decade, the proportion of adults who read at least one book a year had fallen from fifty-five per cent to forty-eight per cent. That's a striking change, but modest compared to what's happened among teenagers: the National Center for Education Statistics—which has recently been gutted by the Trump Administration—found that, over roughly the same period, the number of thirteen-year-olds who read for fun “almost every day” fell from twenty-seven per cent to fourteen per cent. Predictably, college professors have been complaining with more than usual urgency about phone-addled students who struggle to read anything of substantial length or complexity.

Some of the evidence for the drop in literacy is thin. One widely discussed study, for instance, judges students on their ability to parse the muddy and semantically tortuous opening of “Bleak House”; this is a little like assessing swimmers on their ability to cross fifty yards of molasses. And there are other reasons to be sanguine about the slide away from books, given what so many of us actually like to read. If we binge “Stranger Things” instead of reading Stephen King, or listen to self-help podcasts instead of buying self-help books, is that the end of civilization? On some level, declines in traditional reading are connected to the efflorescence of information in the digital age. Do we really want to return to a time when there was less to read, watch, hear, and learn?

Still, whatever we think of these changes, they seem likely to accelerate. Over the past few decades, many scholars have seen the decline in reading as the closing of the “Gutenberg Parenthesis”—a period of history, inaugurated by the invention of the printing press, during which a structured ecosystem of published print ruled. The internet, the theory went, closed the parenthesis by returning us to a more free-flowing, decentralized, and conversational mode of communication. Instead of reading books, we can argue in the comments. Some theorists have even proposed that we're returning to a kind of oral culture—what the historian Walter Ong described as a “secondary orality,” in which gab and give-and-take are enhanced by the presence of text. The ascendance of podcasts, newsletters, and

memes has lent credence to this view. “The Joe Rogan Experience” could be understood as a couple of guys around a campfire, passing on knowledge through conversation, like the ancient Greeks.

In retrospect, though, there’s something almost quaint about the oral-culture hypothesis. We might say that it was largely developed during the Zuckerberg Parenthesis—a period of history, inaugurated by the invention of Facebook, in which social media ruled. No one inside this parenthesis imagined how much of a threat artificial intelligence would soon pose to the conversational internet. We have already entered a world in which the people you encounter online are sometimes not actually people; instead, they are conjured using A.I. that’s been trained on unimaginably vast quantities of text. It’s as though the books have come to life, and are getting revenge by creating something new—a marriage of text, thought, and conversation that will revise the utility and value of the written word.

In January, the economist and blogger Tyler Cowen announced that he’d begun “writing for the AIs.” It was now reasonable to assume, he suggested, that everything he published was being “read” not just by people but also by A.I. systems—and he’d come to regard this second kind of readership as important. “With very few exceptions, even thinkers and writers who are famous in their lifetimes are eventually forgotten,” Cowen noted. But A.I.s might not forget; in fact, if you furnished them with enough of your text, they might extract from it “a model of how you think,” with which future readers could interact. “Your descendants, or maybe future fans, won’t have to page through a lot of dusty old books to get an inkling of your ideas,” Cowen wrote. Around this time, he began posting on his blog about mostly unremarkable periods of his life—ages four to seven, say. His human readers might not care about such posts, but the entries could make it possible “for the advanced A.I.s of the near future to write a very good Tyler Cowen biography.”

Cowen can think this way because large language models, such as OpenAI's ChatGPT or Anthropic's Claude, are, among other things, reading machines. It's not exactly right to say that they "read," in the human sense: an L.L.M. can't be moved by what it reads, because it has no emotions, and its heart can't race in suspense. But it's also undeniable that there are aspects of reading at which A.I.s excel at a superhuman level. During its training, an L.L.M. will "read" and "understand" an unimaginably large quantity of text. Later, it will be able to recall the substance of that text instantaneously (if not always perfectly), and to draw connections, make comparisons, and extract insights, which it can bring to bear on new pieces of text, on which it hasn't been trained, at outrageous speed. The systems are like college graduates who, while they were at school, literally did *all* the reading. And they can read more, if you give them assignments.

I've known a few people who seem to have read everything, and learning from them has been life-changing. A.I. can't substitute for those individuals because it's essentially generic and consensus-driven; you won't look to ChatGPT as a role model for the life of the mind, or thrill to Gemini's grand theories or idiosyncratic insights. But A.I. has readerly strengths that lie precisely in its impersonality. On David Perell's "How I Write" podcast, Cowen explains that, as he reads, he peppers a chatbot with questions about whatever he doesn't understand; the A.I. never tires of such questions and, in answering them, draws on a range of knowledge that no human being could access so quickly. This turns any text into a kind of springboard or syllabus. But A.I. can also simplify: if you're struggling with the opening of "Bleak House," you can ask for it to be rewritten using easier, more modern English. "Gas looming through the fog in divers places in the streets, much as the sun may, from the spongy fields, be seen to loom by husbandman and ploughboy," Dickens wrote. Claude takes a more direct path: "Gas lamps glow dimly through the fog at various spots throughout the streets, much like how the sun might appear to farmers working in misty fields."

In this way, readers who are armed with A.I. may find themselves blurring the line between primary and secondary sources—especially if they read material for which they believe it's possible to separate form from content. Many people are already comfortable doing this: since 2012, the Berlin-based company Blinkist, which touts itself as “the future of reading,” has been offering fifteen-minute summaries of popular nonfiction books, in both text and audio format. (In a “blink” lasting a quarter of an hour, you may be able to come to grips with Ryan Holiday’s exploration of Stoic and Buddhist philosophy, “Stillness is the Key.”) Or consider *Reader’s Digest* Condensed Books, a subscription-based anthology which published, on a seasonal basis, handsome hardcover volumes containing four or five novels that had been trimmed to roughly half their original size. The books were popular—in 1987, the *Times* reported that one and a half million readers bought ten million volumes annually—and, when I was growing up, my parents kept a shelf of them in our house; without really thinking about it, I read a few “condensed” thrillers by Dick Francis and Nora Roberts. (The series is still offered today, as *Reader’s Digest* Fiction Favorites.) If I were writing an academic paper on Francis’s novel “Whip Hand,” from 1979, I’d get in big trouble for relying on the condensed version. But if what I’m after is the story, the vibe, the suspense, I might be justified in feeling that I’d “read” the book. Certainly, I’d be unlikely to seek out the unabridged version.

In our current reading regime, summarized or altered texts are the exception, not the rule. But over the next decade or so, that polarity may well reverse: we may routinely start with alternative texts and only later decide to seek out originals, in roughly the same way that we now download samples of new books to our Kindles before committing to them. Because A.I. can generate abridgments, summaries, and other condensed editions on demand, we may even switch between versions as circumstances dictate—the way that, today, you might decide to listen to a podcast at “2x” speed, or quit a boring TV show and turn to Wikipedia to find out how it ended. Pop songs often come in different edits—the clean edit, and various E.D.M. remixes. As a writer, I may not want to see my text

refracted in this way. But the power of refraction won't be mine to control; it will lay with readers and their A.I.s. Together, they will collapse the space between reading and editing.

It's reasonable to argue that some kinds of writing shouldn't, or perhaps can't, be summarized. If you read a summary of Elena Ferrante's Neapolitan novels—Lila did this, Lenù did that—you cheat yourself. Perhaps Douglas R. Hofstadter's "Gödel, Escher, Bach: An Eternal Golden Braid" could be boiled down to its key concepts, and maybe a chatbot could explain them to you more clearly than Hofstadter does—but length and difficulty are part of the point of that book. And surely readers will continue to value the authentic voices of their fellow human beings. Recently, I've been reading Tolstoy's "Childhood, Boyhood, Youth." It's full of German phrases, odd historical details, and Russian cultural nuances that I don't understand. Even so, I like to skip the footnotes; I want to stay in the flow of the story, and under Tolstoy's spell. The proportion of people who simply love old-fashioned reading may be shrinking, but it won't shrink to zero, or anywhere near it.

Still, I can't help wondering if the intrinsic integrity of writing might prove to be less powerful than it seems. There was a time when it was hard to imagine that whole songs might someday be composed around, or of, samples; today, sampling is unremarkable, and we perceive the fluidity of musical production as a feature, not a bug. Is it such a stretch to imagine remix culture coming to reading? Which of the many versions of New Order's "Blue Monday" is the real one? Does it matter, as long as you love the song? Similarly, if I read my version of "My Brilliant Friend," and you read yours, aren't we both fans of Ferrante? Henry James revised many of his novels when they were republished later in his life; Taylor Swift gave us "Taylor's versions." We care about a writer's intentions, identity, and ownership; we know that a piece of writing is a particular arrangement of words, which becomes less particular, and in many cases less valuable, as it's rearranged. But we may also enjoy becoming the A.I.-assisted editors of what we read.

My peak as a reader came before entering journalism, when I was pursuing a Ph.D in English. About midway through my graduate program, I had to sit for a general exam—an hours-long cross-examination conducted by three professors. The exam was based on a reading list, distributed a year in advance, that spanned nearly the whole of English literature, from Beowulf to “Beloved,” and included items like “Joyce, *Ulysses*,” and “Yeats, *Poems*.” I read day and night; to persevere without eyestrain, I had to buy a special lamp, and a magnifying glass on a stand. A couple of years later, I sat for a second exam—a field exam, focussed on a literary subfield—based on a list that I was charged with drawing up. This second list was also expected to map out a year’s worth of reading, and mine included perhaps two dozen novels and a seemingly endless quantity of literary criticism. I started reading standing up, to spare my back.

The human version of reading involves finitude. It was thrilling to discover how much I could read, and studying for the exams put me on the path to becoming one of those people who’s “read everything.” Yet, even as I made my way through a substantial part of the canon, I couldn’t help noticing that I was reading only a small portion of what existed. The library at my university was comically vast, with many underground levels, and deep in the stacks the lights flickered on to reveal whole shelves of books that I doubted anyone had read, at least not anytime recently. And today, looking back, another kind of limitation reveals itself: memory. I may have read Edmund Spenser’s “The Faerie Queene,” but do I recall more than the gist? There’s a reason why, in midlife, I spend as much time rereading the great books I’ve read (like “Childhood, Boyhood, Youth”) as I do seeking out new ones.

Does A.I. fundamentally challenge these limitations? It’s certainly possible to imagine that intelligent reading machines will help us find value in texts that would otherwise go unread. (The process could be a little like fossil-fuel extraction: old, specialized, or difficult writing could be utilized, in condensed form, to power new thinking.) And there could also be scenarios in which

L.L.M.s extend and deepen our reading memories. If I'd studied for my exams with an A.I. by my side, and then kept discussing my reading with that same A.I. year after year, I might build something like a living commonplace book, a thinking diary. As it happens, however, I've been blessed with a human conversational partner—my wife, who was in my graduate program, too. Our relationship has been shaped by our reading. Artificial intelligence, in itself, is unmotivated; it reads, but is not a reader; its “interests,” at any given time, depend fundamentally on the questions it's asked. And so its usefulness as a reading tool depends on the existence of a culture of reading which it can't embody or perpetuate.

What will happen to reading culture as reading becomes automated? Suppose we're headed toward a future in which text is seen as fluid, fungible, refractable, abstractable. In this future, people will often read by asking for a text to be made shorter and more to-the-point, or to be changed into something different, like a podcast or multi-text report. It will be easy to get the gist of a piece of writing, to feel as if you know it, and so any decision to encounter the text itself will involve a positive acceptance of work. Some writers will respond by trying to beguile human readers through force of personality; others will simply assume that they're “writing for the A.I.s.” Perhaps new stylistic approaches will aim to repel automated reading, establishing zones of reading for humans only. The people who actually read “originals” will be rare, and they'll have insights others lack, and enjoy experiences others forgo—but the era in which being “well-read” is a proxy for being educated or intelligent will largely be over. It will be difficult to separate the deep readers from the superficial ones; perhaps, if A.I.-assisted reading proves useful enough, those terms won't necessarily apply. Text may get treated like a transitional medium, a temporary resting place for ideas. A piece of writing, which today is often seen as an end point, a culmination, a finished unit of effort, may, for better and worse, be experienced as a stepping stone to something else. ♦

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