



Southeast Signal

News, Events, and Information from Around the System

From the Executive Director



On May 16, I will complete my first two months as Executive Director of the Southeast Library System (SELS). These first eight weeks have been both

productive and enlightening as I transition into this role and work to strengthen the foundation for our members.

My initial focus has centered on essential operational transitions and organizational learning. This work has included transferring account ownership, establishing new SELS staff email addresses connected to our new domain, selsne.org, with Todd's and Catherine's assistance, and navigating the process for bonding insurance with updates on our staff. I have spent time learning our phone and administrative systems, and gaining a deeper understanding of internal procedures related to invoices, payroll, and nonprofit compliance. We have submitted the required paperwork to update SELS's nonprofit agent information with the Nebraska Secretary of State's Office. We have also submitted our 2026–2027

e-Rate funding application, thanks to support from Christa Porter at the Nebraska Library Commission.

One practical takeaway from this transition is a reminder for all of us to review the documentation you rely on for key responsibilities in your office for the library. Access points, passwords, and vendors change over time, and the systems you know well may be difficult for colleagues to navigate in your absence. Clear, updated procedural documentation is an important investment in organizational continuity.

Beyond administrative priorities, relationship-building and system engagement have also been central to my work. I attended my first SELS Board meeting in April, where we began updating bylaws, actively recruiting candidates to fill board vacancies, and seeking insurance quotes to ensure SELS receives the strongest possible coverage and value. I have also connected with peer system directors to explore collaborative opportunities, met with regional librarians, and participated in a variety of

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Calendar

May 15, National Pizza Party Day

May 20, SELS Office, 2-4 p.m., Open House in honor of the retirement of Scott Childers

May 22, CASTL, Hebron Secrest Library, "[Empower Your Library: Technology & Digital Skills](#)"

May 24, National Scavenger Hunt Day

May 25, Memorial Day

May 27, [Golden Sower Reading Day, Seward Memorial Library](#) (Register by May 13)

June, Rainbow Book Month

National Safety Month

June 6, National Prairie Day

June 7, World Caring Day

June 9, National Donald Duck Day

June 12, National Peanut Butter Cookie Day



Photos of the Month



At the SELS Training Extravaganza. For more, see pages 11 & 12.

CASTL Wrap-up

Upcoming CASTL Meetings

May 22

Hebron Secret
Library
“Empower Your
Library:
Technology &
Digital Skills”

June 26

Via Zoom
“Open Meetings
Act Refresher”

Our April CASTL was hosted by Susie Kerner and Amanda Genuchi at Tecumseh Public Library on April 23. Lynda Clause gave a presentation on the topic of “Interlibrary Loan”. Lynda, who recently transitioned to the role of Continuing Education Coordinator at the Nebraska Library Commission, focused on ILL best practices and procedures.

Lynda used the ALA’s Interlibrary Loan Code for the United States as the basis of much of her presentation, and she discussed the responsibilities of requesting (borrowing) and supplying (lending) libraries, including policies for book condition, renewals, and handling damaged items.

In addition, the discussion covered book club kits as an alternative to individual book requests. When a book kit is requested from the NLC, one of the systems, or another library, each book will count as an ILL for Public Library Survey statistics. There was discussion about tracking returns, managing costs, and promoting ILL services to patrons, with particular attention to maintaining proper documentation and receipts for postal tracking numbers.

Lynda also mentioned that it is best practice for library staff to contact the Commission to request renewals 3-7 days before the due date, rather than waiting until the last minute. Lynda emphasized the importance of adhering to lending library conditions, particularly regarding "in library use only" restrictions, as violating these conditions can affect borrowing privileges for the entire state. Lynda concluded by explaining that the Commission processes ILL requests for items in WorldCat that are at least a year old and in physical format, but special cases like historical societies may require direct requests from patrons.

To view the recording (worth 1.5 CE), [click here](#).

Upcoming Basic Skills Courses:

Class	Class Dates	Registration Dates
Readers' Advisory	6/1—6/12	4/20—5/22
Reference	7/6—7/17	5/25—6/19
Library Policy	7/27—8/7	6/15—7/10

[For a complete list of classes, click here.](#)

From the Director

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professional development events, including CASTL, the PLTS Spring Unconference, the Apollo User Group Workshop, a Nebraska Library Association conference planning session, and multiple online meetings with Nebraska Library Association and Mountain Plains Library Association partners.

In the months ahead, our focus will balance planning with service delivery. Upcoming priorities include quarterly meetings with system administrators and Nebraska Library Commission staff, participation in the C&U Spring OER Convening and Nebraska Future Ready Conference, preparation of the 2026–2027 budget proposal for board review, completion of any required year-end reports and filings, and early planning for our annual system meeting.

One of my highest priorities is working collaboratively with SELS members to develop a strategic plan that reflects the needs of our libraries, their staff, and trustees. I have requested access to information gathered during last fall’s Listening and Planning for Our Future sessions to help guide this work, and I welcome your input as we shape future programming and priorities.

Todd has already started gathering ideas for upcoming CASTL meeting discussions, and I encourage you to share your thoughts as well. SELS exists to serve its members, and your feedback will help guide meaningful professional development opportunities.

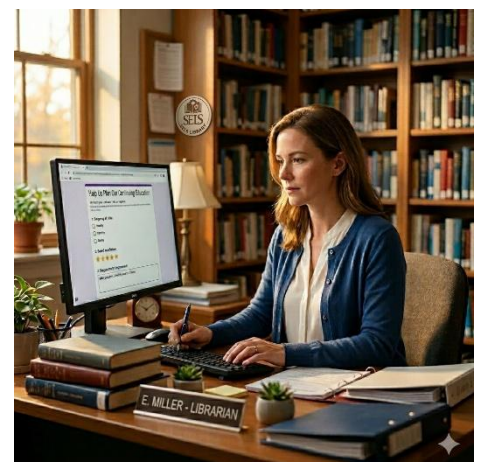
This is your system, and I want to hear from you. Please reach out at deb.robertson@selsne.org with topics you would like to explore, skills you would like to strengthen, or ideas that would help SELS better support your work. I look forward to building this next chapter together.

News Around the System

Tell Us about your Professional Development Needs!

[We have designed a brief survey](#) regarding the professional development opportunities offered by the Southeast Library System. While we consistently gather feedback through event evaluations and informal conversations, we value the chance to hear from you more directly.

Because we serve every participating library across our 20-county area, we invite all school, academic, and public library staff to share their thoughts. Whether you are a director, a youth services librarian, a solo practitioner, or serve in another vital role, your perspective is incredibly welcome and appreciated.



News Around the System



Call for Board Nominations

The Southeast Library System Board is accepting nominations to fill several current board vacancies.

If you or someone you know is interested in serving on the SELS Board, please submit the nominee's name and contact information to SELS Executive Director Deb Robertson at deb.robertson@selsne.org by June 1.

All nominations will be reviewed by the board, and individuals selected to fill current vacant positions will be notified by June 30 for interim terms running from July 1 through December 31, 2026. A full election process will be held later this year for terms beginning in 2027.

The SELS Board meets quarterly in January, April, July, and October. Full board terms are for three years, with a two-term limit. Board members must work at or serve a library within the twenty-county SELS region. The board strives to reflect the diversity of library types and communities served on its board, while also recognizing that participation can be challenging for solo librarians.

News Around the System

Chelsea Foust Wins National Honor

Chelsea Foust, Assistant Director at the Morton-James Public Library in Nebraska City, has been named the 2026 recipient of the prestigious **Ernest A. DiMattia, Jr. Award for Innovation and Service to Community and Profession**, presented by the American Library Association!

This national honor recognizes librarians who demonstrate exceptional leadership, foresight in adopting new services, and a deep, active commitment to their local communities.

Chelsea has been a driving force in making the Morton-James Public Library a vibrant, active hub for everyone in Nebraska City. Her philosophy is simple but powerful: libraries stay relevant when they evolve alongside the people they serve.

From her innovative programming to her civic leadership with groups like Leadership Nebraska City and Keep Nebraska City Beautiful—including the “Litter Bucket Brigade” program—Chelsea is constantly finding new ways for the library to make a positive impact.

Chelsea’s dedication has helped the Morton-James Public Library reach these milestones between 2022 and 2025:

- Library card registrations are up 14%.
- Circulation has increased by 15%.
- Program attendance has grown by 25%.

From standing-room-only "Winterpalooza" events to ongoing partnerships with Nebraska Humanities, it is clear that, as one library board member put it, “She brings a joyful love for all things library, and her excitement is contagious.”



Lincoln Public School Libraries Events and Displays

Provided by Joy Harvey

“Pages to Playlists!” Display at Standing Bear High School

Standing Bear High School’s Library Secretary, Andrea, hit all the right notes with their latest library display! Every book featured in this collection shares a title with a popular song.

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Andrea went the extra mile to make this an interactive experience:

- Scan & Listen: Each book cover features a custom QR code that links directly to its musical counterpart.
- Go Digital: The display includes physical books and eBooks, so students can jam out even while reading on a device.



Red Carpet Reads at Southwest High School

Lights, camera, action! The Southwest High School Library is bringing some Hollywood glamour to the stacks this month. Their latest featured display, "Oscars Red Carpet Looks and Their Matching Books," pairs iconic fashion moments with must-read titles.



Mini Golf Day at East



A Hole-in-One Kind of Day!

Mini Golf Day at Lincoln East High School

was a total hit (and maybe a few mulligans) this year! The energy was high, the putts were rolling, and the competition was as bright as the greens. [Take a look at this video of the event!](#)

Makerspaces at Clinton

Things got a little "wild" in the library recently! Our amazing librarian, **Laura**, sparked some serious creativity at Lincoln's Clinton Elementary by blending classic tales with hands-on engineering.

After diving into the trunk-filled pages of *Twenty-One Elephants and Still Standing* and the clattering hooves of *The Three Billy-Goats Gruff*, students headed straight to the **Makerspace**. Their mission? To



build sturdy structures capable of supporting their favorite storybook stars.

From elephant-proof bridges to goat-friendly lookouts, our student architects had a blast bringing these stories to life, one masterpiece at a time!

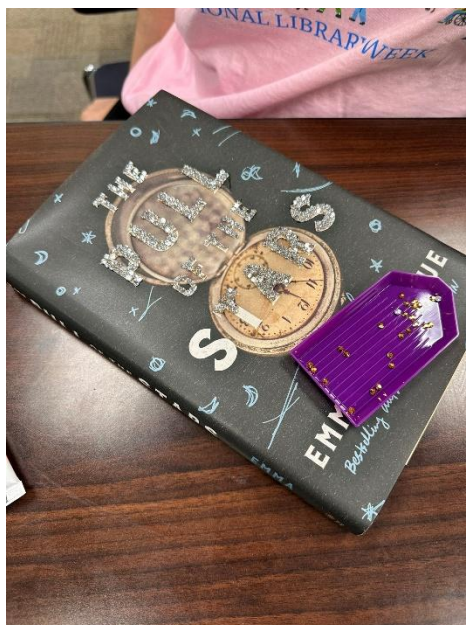
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National Library Week in York

By Monica Tidyman, pictures by Leah Bauder (puzzle competition), Carol Baker (York U Theatre), and Monica Tidyman (Blinged out Books and signs)

Kilgore Memorial Library celebrated National Library Week April 20 -25. In addition to our regular programming, we hosted a Puzzle Competition, a Blinged Out Books program, the York University Traveling Theatre Troupe and a Friday movie matinee.

Patrons could earn raffle tickets for one of two gift baskets put together by the staff by checking out books, attending library programs throughout the week, and for visiting the food trucks in the parking lot. They could earn extra tickets by completing a book bingo and the Storybook Scavenger Hunt in downtown businesses.



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Feathered Friends in the Library

Story and photos by Marie Fiala

Valparaiso Public Library hosted some cute, feathered friends in April. Five chicks were hatched at the library as part of the Saunders County Extension's Embryology Program. After they hatched, the Librarians took care of them at the library for ten days. Through a contest, our kids named them - Hey Hey, Tweet Tweet, Chicky, Abraham Chicken, and Daisy. The kids also enjoyed reading stories to the chicks. Librarians had pulled out several books with chickens as characters and they were available in a basket next to the chicks. When our time with the chicks was up, the Extension Program took them to live at a nearby farm. We requested their new owners continue to read to them every day.



SELS

New email addresses for the SELS office:

- 👤 Deb Robertson - deb.robertson@selsne.org
- 👤 Todd Schlechte - todd.schlechte@selsne.org
- 👤 Catherine Sokol - catherine.sokol@selsne.org
- 👤 General Office email - office@selsne.org

We are introducing these to match our new domain of selsne.org

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Wormy Wednesdays in Falls City

By Jayme Coonce, photo by Kathy O'Grady

Curious hands, a handful of soil, and a few hardworking composting worms are sparking discovery at Falls City Library & Arts Center during a hands-on activity at our weekly Wednesday morning story time. The worm farm and supporting materials and resources have been provided by a grant from "Let's Go Compost" STEM Soil Health Education Program.

Let's Go Compost is a national non-profit focused on soil science education through hands-on STEM learning.



Seward Celebrates National Library Week

Provided by Sherri Payne

National Library Week at Seward Memorial Library was a resounding success, marked by high attendance and a vibrant community spirit. The festivities kicked off with an insightful presentation on Artificial Intelligence. The presenter did a wonderful job of making this new technology easy to understand. The momentum continued with our puzzle tournament, featuring ten very competitive teams; the first-place winners set a blistering pace, completing a 500-piece puzzle in less than 34 minutes!



Puzzle Tournament



Adult Craft Night



A Novel Night of Trivia

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Creativity took center stage during our Adult Craft Night, a relaxing evening where patrons enjoyed painting terra cotta pots. It was a wonderful reminder that you are never too old to pick up a paintbrush and have a little fun. The enthusiasm continued with a record-breaking turnout for Book Review Bingo, giving patrons a first look at the exciting new titles arriving on our shelves, while "A



Novel Night of Trivia" kept the energy high with plenty of laughs and spirited competition. To close out the week on a high note, the York Children's Theater delivered a fantastic performance of "The Fisherman and His Wife," delighting guests of all ages and providing a perfect finale to our celebrations.

While the week has concluded, the library is already gearing up for a summer full of

excitement. We invite everyone to our Summer Kick-Off Party on May 30 as we prepare to "Unearth a Story." This summer's theme will transport us back in time to explore dinosaurs and archaeology through a variety of creative and fun events.

Learning about AI at the SELS Training Extravaganza

Although we can pretty much all agree that there are some extremely legitimate concerns about artificial intelligence, it is also true that we cannot expect AI to go away. So, we decided it was timely to offer a two-hour hands-on learning session with Dr. Lynne Herr at the Training Extravaganza. She presented ways librarians can use AI, specifically using Google's AI tool Gemini. After that, there were sessions on book clubs, the upcoming WCAG digital accessibility requirements, and a strategic planning session with our new executive director, Deb Robertson.



The example on the next page was produced by uploading Fairbury Public Library's Patron Behavior Policy, asking Gemini to summarize it, and then asking it to create a sketchnote that could be posted

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near the computers. What would you ask it to alter (it **will** make alterations, and you may have to make that request several times)!

Image produced by Google's Gemini after beginner's level human prompts.

..... FAIRBURY PUBLIC LIBRARY

LIBRARY COMPUTER AREA: QUICK GUIDE TO RESPECT.

1. KEEP IT QUIET.  Use Your "Inside Voice".
No Loud Talking/Shouting. 

2. PHONE ETIQUETTE.  Speak **QUIETLY** on Calls. 
Or... Take it to the HALLWAY/RESTROOM. 

3. AUDIO & COMPUTERS.  **HEADPHONES REQUIRED** 
for Audio (Games, Video, Music).
Limit: **ONE** person per Computer.

4. REFRESHMENTS.  **SEALED Containers Only.**  
Keep Drinks **AWAY FROM COMPUTERS.**
Minimal Mess & Odor Snacks.  

5. BE RESPECTFUL.  Use Respectful Language.  
 Keep Hands to Yourself (No Hitting)
 Wear Shoes & Shirt (No Swimwear) 

WARNING SYSTEM.

  ? 2 **VERBAL** Warnings, then...  serious
3rd Violation = LEAVE for Day  out behaviors
for the day

Empower Your Library

Technology & Digital Skills Workshop



Discover new resources, expand your toolkit, and shape future services and learning communities.

Join us for a two-hour hands-on session to explore tech trends and resources to tackle everything from computer basics to AI.

Explore innovative tools, spark ideas for new library services, and contribute to crafting ongoing support tailored to your needs.

CASTL

Hebron Secrest
Library

Date & Time

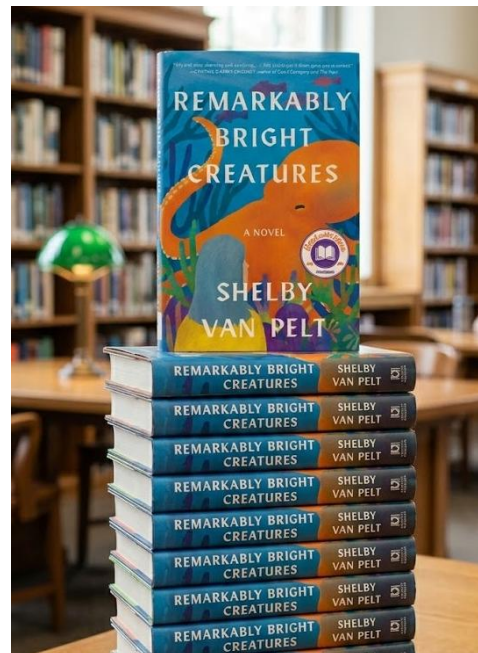
May 22
[Register here](#)

📍 Speaker: Amanda Sweet, Nebraska Library Commission

System Spotlight

Book Kits

Any school media center or public library within the Southeast Library System may borrow multiple copies of a book from us to use for classes, book clubs, or discussion groups. In some cases, we are able to send book kits to Nebraska libraries outside of our service area. Due dates are negotiable but are usually six weeks from the checkout date. To check out a book kit, please contact the SELS office by calling 402-467-6188, or send us an email at office@selsne.org. To see all the titles we have to offer, [go to our book kit page](#) (covers and descriptions are included as shown). If we don't have the book you would like, and neither does the NLC, we may be able to add it to our collection. Please contact our office at the above number or email to make your request!



Southeast Library System

Butler • Clay • Fillmore • Gage • Hamilton • Jefferson • Johnson • Lancaster • Merrick • Nemaha • Nuckolls •
Otoe • Pawnee • Polk • Richardson • Saline • Saunders • Seward • Thayer • York

Staff:

Executive Director — Deb Robertson
deb.robertson@selsne.org
Direct phone: 531 -530-3011

Assistant Director — Todd Schlechte
todd.schlechte@selsne.org
Direct phone: 531 -530-3010

Administrative Assistant — Catherine Sokol
catherine.sokol@selsne.org
402-467-6188

Contact Us:

Office Phone: 402-467-6188

office@selsne.org

5730 R St. Suite C-1
Lincoln, NE 68505

<https://selsne.org>