Monthly Road Map Report
September, 2026

midlibrary.org/board

Prepared by Director J. Sansing

MIDDLETON PUBLIC LIBRARY

Month in Review & Highlights:

Seasonal Sunday hours, 1-5pm, resumed after Labor Day and the month's programming themes across all ages supported the upcoming Renaissance Faire. The Bookmobile made a splash at the Stone Horse Green Night Market reaching 283 people while regular youth community partners included local businesses like Little Gym, Kindermusik, Toddler Yoga and CI Pediatric. Tiny Tots Storytimes ranged in attendance from 40 to 92 while adult programming also saw high turnouts with 51 at the Badger Talks event, over 114 people at four Manhattan Short Film Festival screenings, and 103 people for standing room only to learn more about how to support food and housing security with WayForward Resources in honor of Hunger Action Month. Here is a quick breakdown by program format:

- In person: 60 programs, 2,234 attendees
- Outreach: 8 programs, 401 attendees
- Self-directed: 5 programs, 210 attendees
- Virtual: 5 programs, 79 attendees
- Bookmobile: 3 visits, 324 people

The demand for programs continues, especially for youth programming - 82% of all youth programs in the month of September had a waitlist for registration. Programs like the Chess Club use spaces such as the Mack Reading Room to gather, which limits the availability of this quiet space to the public. The Middleton library does not publish programs in the local Middleton Times Tribune nor advertise widely due to these capacity challenges.

Looking Ahead:

*September means scheduling second grade school tours for every 2nd grade student in MCPASD, along with offering library card registration.

*The 2026 WLA Conference is held in Middleton this year and the library has a great representation of efforts that include everything from the planning committee to session proposals, a keynote, and a special welcome from Mayor Janairo.

*Ren Faire recap – and fabulous photos coming in the October report…

*The new AMH (automated materials handler) /sorter install is happening the first full week of October.

*****The library welcomed the final artist for 2026, Kurt Schneider. 2027 artists to be announced in October.

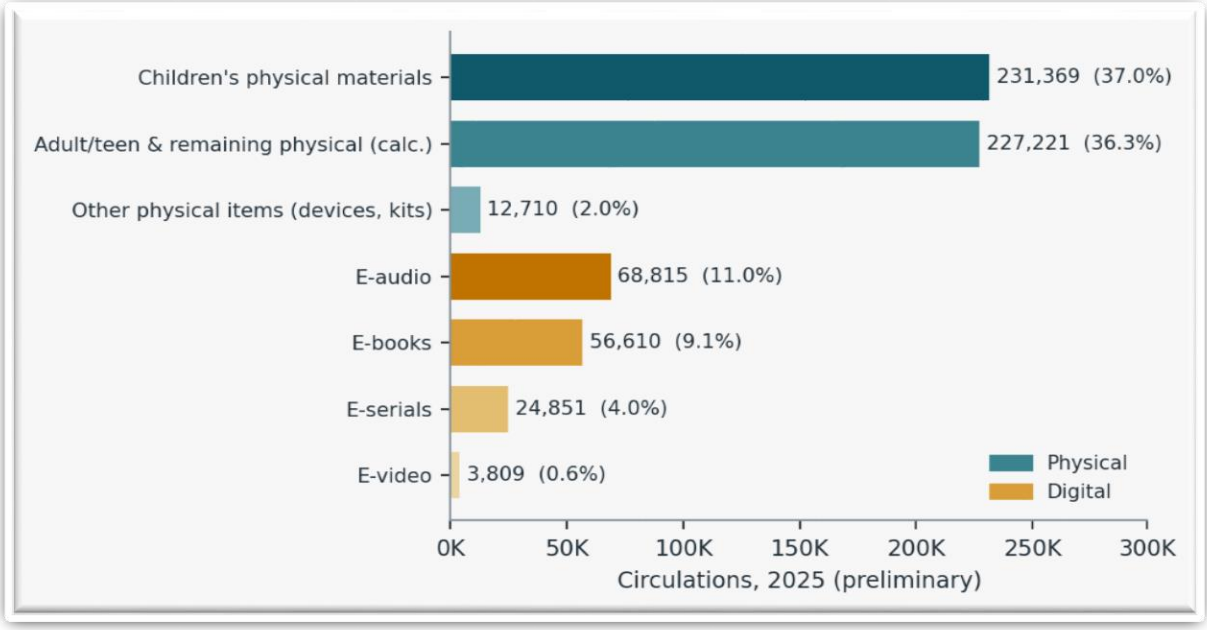
By the Numbers:

Each year public libraries across North America submit reports to the IMLS (Institute of Museum and Library Services). At the state level in Wisconsin the Bureau of Libraries collects this data, reports, and makes it available to the public through 115 data elements grouped by general categories. The data below is based on the preliminary 2025 data submitted by the WI DPI, unverified by the IMLS, and is kept only for reference, research, or recordkeeping.

Here is a specific snapshot of Middleton's preliminary 2025 circulation and cost comparisons amongst Dane County and statewide peers. A note on peer groups:

- Statewide size peers (29 libraries, 17 counties). Libraries whose service-area population is within ±25% of Middleton's 33,882 (a range of 25,412 to 42,353). Service-area population includes both the municipal population and the additional population served by contract or county arrangements.
- Dane County libraries include: Waunakee, Verona, Fitchburg and Sun Prairie. These libraries share a regional labor market, a regional user base and the Dane County library funding environment. Verona and Waunakee fall just below the statewide size window (by less than 5%) and Sun Prairie falls above it, so this group is intentionally broader than the size-based statewide group. Madison libraries are included as a reference only.

Middleton circulation:



Data shows (cost per circulation reflects the total cost of delivering all formats):

- Physical materials remain three quarters of Middleton's circulation (471,300), and
- Children's materials alone account for 231,369, or 37% of all circulation.
- Digital circulation totals 154,085 (24.6%);
- e-audio is the largest digital format (45% of digital use), followed by e-books (37%), e-serials (16%) and e-video (2%).
- Middleton leads the statewide peer group in both physical circulation per resident (13.9 vs. a 7.3 median) and digital circulation per resident (4.5 vs. a 1.9 median).

Middleton and statewide peer median:

Measure	Middleton	Statewide peer median	Middleton rank (1 = lowest)
Cost per circulation (all formats)	**$4.40**	$4.63	13 of 29
Cost per visit	**$9.98**	$10.29	13 of 29
Cost per program attendee	**$46.94**	$102.76	3 of 29
Cost per resident served	**$81.22**	$43.91	29 of 29
Circulation per resident served (all formats)	**18.5**	9.7	29 of 29
Visits per resident served	**8.1**	4.1	29 of 29
Programs per 1,000 residents served	**32.3**	15.6	29 of 29
Digital share of total circulation	**24.6%**	20.7%	22 of 29

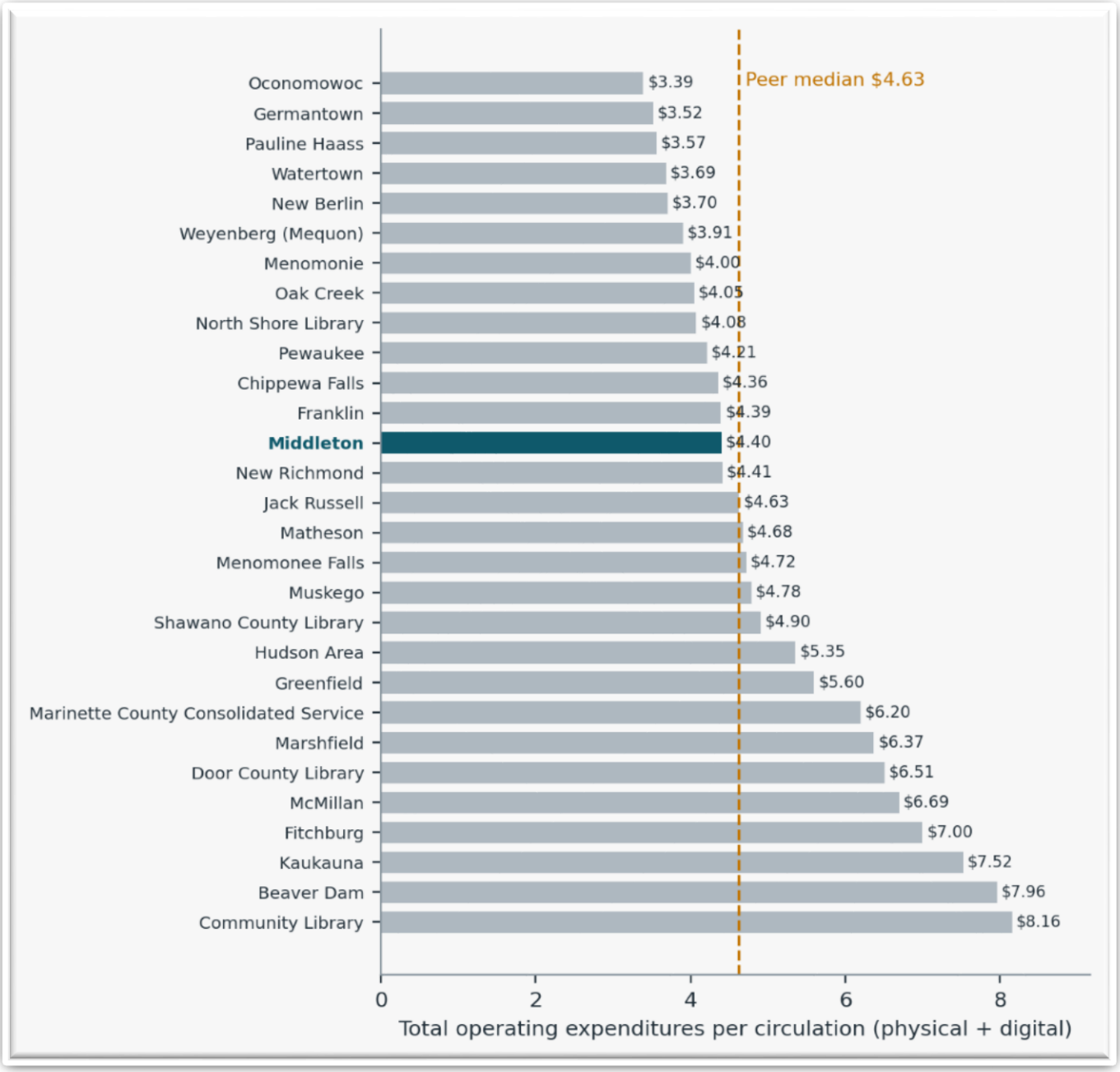
Middleton and Dane County peer median:

Measure	Waunakee	Verona	Middleton	Fitchburg	Sun Prairie	Madison (ref.)
Service-area population	24,268	24,685	**33,882**	37,460	51,675	311,323
Total operating expenditures	$1,602,469	$2,828,209	**$2,751,795**	$2,534,404	$3,175,654	$23,440,716
Total circulation (physical + digital)	353,117	709,863	**625,385**	362,159	616,707	3,279,906
Part of total that is digital	70,992	120,760	**154,085**	71,433	143,914	1,081,588
Library visits	164,941	239,254	**275,784**	139,875	204,347	1,418,189
Programs offered	752	1,243	**1,095**	553	588	3,932
Program attendance	23,332	35,219	**58,622**	12,917	21,008	82,084
Staff (FTE)	15.1	24.7	**26.4**	19.6	27.0	179.7
Physical items held	68,200	120,520	**82,512**	109,056	131,991	743,696

Other key findings from preliminary 2025 data:

- Cost per circulation is in line with peers statewide. At $4.40 per circulation (physical + digital), Middleton ranks 13th lowest of 29 statewide peers, about 5% below the median. Among Dane County peers it is second lowest, behind Verona ($3.98).
- Middleton is the highest-volume library in its peer group. It leads all 29 peers in total circulation (625,385), visits (275,784), registered borrowers (20,353), programs (1,095), program attendance (58,622) and total operating expenditures ($2.75M).
- Cost per resident and per hour are the highest in the peer group. This is driven by service level: more staff per resident (7.8 FTE per 10,000 vs. 4.6 median), longer hours (3,328 vs. 3,068 median), and a higher share of the budget spent on materials (11.4% vs. 8.4%).
- Cost per physical item held is the highest of 29 peers ($33.35). This measure penalizes a collection that works hard: Middleton holds fewer physical items than the median peer but circulates far more per item. This is also taxing on other libraries who are sending their collections to Middleton to fill the high holds volume.
- Digital is one quarter of circulation. 154,085 digital circulations (24.6%) compare with a statewide peer median share of 20.7%. E-audio is the largest digital format.
- Forty percent of circulation goes to non-residents. This is above the statewide peer median (27.9%) and is reflective of the growing urban environment.
- Twenty-nine Wisconsin libraries serve communities within ±25% of Middleton's service-area size. Middleton is the highest-spending and highest-volume library in this group.

Cost per circulation statewide peers:



Here is how the data is calculated:

Measure	Calculation	What it Demonstrates
Cost per circulation	Total operating expenditures ÷ total circulation (physical + digital)	Core efficiency measure; cost of each checkout, download or stream

Measure	Calculation	What it Demonstrates
Cost per visit	Total operating expenditures ÷ library visits	Cost of serving each in-person visit
Cost per program / attendee	Total operating expenditures ÷ programs (or program attendance)	Programming reach relative to total cost; not a measure of direct program cost
Cost per physical item held	Total operating expenditures ÷ physical items in the collection	Scale measure; high values can indicate a small collection that is heavily used
Cost per resident served	Total operating expenditures ÷ service-area population	Level of local investment per person in the service area
Cost per hour open	Total operating expenditures ÷ hours open per year	Cost of keeping the library open; reflects staffing model
Circulation / visits / programs per resident	Measure ÷ service-area population (programs and attendance per 1,000)	Use of the library relative to community size

The median is used rather than the average so that a few unusually large or small libraries do not distort the comparison. A rank of 1 is the lowest value in the group, so for cost measures a low rank is favorable, while for use measures (circulation, visits, programs) a high rank number reflects more use.

Middleton spends about 85% more per resident served than the statewide peer median, and delivers about 91% more circulation per resident served. As a result, its cost per circulation ($4.40) is close to the peer median ($4.63). The higher budget reflects a higher level of service, not higher cost per unit of service.

Down the road: More data evaluation of services and programming, hiring/staffing updates.

Strategic Focus:

Middleton Public Library has a variety of volunteer opportunities that include the Library Board of Trustees, the Friends of the Library, home delivery, and things for teens. In September volunteers put in 42 hours, 15 of which were teens.

The Friends of the Library are off and running with 'Friends Community Bookshelves' at five locations around town including both laundromats, a hotel, and WayForward Resources!

Patron Spotlight:

"Thank you for hosting the event with WayForward. It was such a depressing and tough topic, but so important to our community and neighbors. I was heartened to see so many people come to hear the program in person. Middleton is just full of great people. Those students!" – Bonnie, attended WayForward Resources Panel