

Today's Skills for Tomorrow's Libraries

April 29, 2026

8:30 AM – 9:00 AM Registration

9:00 AM – 9:30 AM Welcome by Superintendent Levi Bachmeier

Mary's Welcome and State of Libraries Update

Levi Bachmeier is the state school superintendent and administrator of the North Dakota Department of Public Instruction. The superintendent and his team oversee the education of public and nonpublic school students in more than 220 districts and systems across the state. Bachmeier was appointed superintendent by Gov. Kelly Armstrong on Oct. 21, 2025. He took office Nov. 24, 2025. He began his career teaching high school social studies and coaching football and track and field at Crazy Horse School in Wanblee, S.D., on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation. He later served as a policy advisor to North Dakota Gov. Doug Burgum, focusing on K–12 education, and rose to become director of the governor's policy team. Bachmeier returned to West Fargo in the fall of 2019, where he grew up and graduated from West Fargo High School in 2010, to serve as business manager for the West Fargo Public Schools

Superintendent Bachmeier is a native of West Fargo, N.D. He graduated from Concordia College in Moorhead, MN, with a degree in social studies education and a minor in coaching in 2014. He holds a certificate in educational finance from Georgetown University in Washington, D.C. Levi is blessed with

four wonderful females in his life: wife Rachel, daughters Linden and Roslin, and rescue pup Sunka. In their free time, the Bachmeiers can be found hiking the North Dakota Badlands and attending high school activities.

Mary Soucie has served as the State Librarian of North Dakota since 2014. She believes that libraries serve as community centers, connecting all the parts of the community that they serve. When she's not traveling for work, she loves to read, bake and be creative in the form of scrapbooking and paper crafting. Mary loves to spend time with her family- included the 4 footed members- and friends.

9:30 AM - 9:55 AM – Icebreaker/activity

10:05 AM -10:55 AM

The Future of Local News

The North Dakota Newspaper Association has just wrapped up a year-long research project on the Future of Local News, from the state of the industry In the eyes of publishers and journalists; to the preferences of readers; to the experience of people living in “news deserts” – counties that no longer have a newspaper. NDNA Executive Director will share some of the most tantalizing results and also talk about the solutions NDNA hopes to implement to address concerns raised. From serving 43,000 K-6 students with Kid Scoop News, to pursuing legislation to support journalism in rural areas, newspapers are not dying, they’re evolving.

Cecile Wehrman, Executive Director

ND Newspaper Association

Nature's Classroom Comes Alive with Project Learning Tree and Project WILD

Want to provide more hands-on nature programs to the students at your library? Project Learning Tree and Project WILD are here to give educators the confidence to take students outdoors and design dynamic, interactive learning experiences that spark students' engagement. With resources for early childhood through high school, these activities identify explicit connections to academic standards, develop literacy skills, and connect students with realistic career pathways. Build your library's educational programming through ready-to-use lessons, using forests and wildlife as windows into the world.

*Beth Hill, Outreach and Education Manager
North Dakota Forest Service*

11:05 AM – 12:00 PM

Partnerships with Purpose: Expanding Library Impact Through Brain Health and Dementia Capable Communities

Libraries are essential community partners, supporting not only lifelong learning, but lifelong well-being. As the number of individuals living with Alzheimer's disease and other dementias continues to grow, libraries are uniquely positioned to promote brain health, reduce stigma, and serve as welcoming, dementia capable spaces for individuals and families.

In this session, we will explore how libraries can partner with the Association to expand their impact through innovative, inclusive

programming. Attendees will learn about practical collaboration opportunities, including evidence-based brain health education, support groups, community listening sessions, and the development of memory kits and dementia friendly resources.

*Joan Danks, North Dakota Program Director
Alzheimer Association*

Building a Library Ecosystem in North Dakota

Join me for Building a Library Ecosystem in North Dakota, a session offering a broad overview of [Strengthening Library Ecosystems: Collaborate for Advocacy and Impact](#). I'll explain the main points behind the ecosystem model and what it can mean for libraries across our state. This session is an invitation for librarians of all types—public, school, academic, and special—to consider how we can work together to create a stronger, more connected library ecosystem in North Dakota. By sharing perspectives, identifying common needs, and supporting one another's strengths, we can begin building a collaborative foundation that benefits every library and the communities we serve.

*Kathy Cline, School Library Specialist
North Dakota State Library*

1:05 PM - 1:55 PM

Caught in the Web: How algorithms affect our online experience

In this session, Theroux will talk about how browser and social media algorithms can drastically affect the content that we see online. Algorithms learn what kind of information we like and eventually only show us that kind of information, even if it is not real. Everything we do online is interconnected in ways we may be unaware of, and that means the filter can follow us wherever we go online. I will show examples of how this works, and some ways to avoid the filter bubble so that we can all be well informed and start to see more of what we've been missing.

*Shari Theroux, Systems and Discovery Assistant Librarian
South Dakota State University*

Literacy Roundtable

Want to learn how other libraries tackle literacy activities? Or, are you interested in learning more about literacy programs put on by NDSL? If either of these apply to you, join Literacy Specialist, Tammy Kruger, for a virtual roundtable discussion on trending topics such as Summer Reading, North Dakota's Battle of the Books, STEM or Book Clubs, and the College SAVE Program. This time is set aside for you to network with you colleagues, talk about your opinions of the changing landscape of libraries, and explore what skills you need today to provide tomorrow's library services.

*Tammy Kruger, Literacy Specialist
North Dakota State Library*

2:05 PM - 2:55 PM

Unboxing Joy: "Novel(ties)" Book Boxes for Teens and Adults Encourage Love of Reading

Novel(ties) Book Boxes for teens and adults are like VIP subscription boxes - free with your library card! Patrons sign up and tell us their reading preferences, and librarians handpick a book and pair it with fun bookish and quirky surprises. In this presentation, we will show you how we implement this popular program.

*Erica Sodeyama and Jacey Atilano
Grand Forks Public Library*

AI Literacy

Artificial intelligence is changing how we learn and work. In this session, we'll explore the benefits of AI literacy for K–12 students, why understanding AI is important for the future workforce, and practical ways schools can begin thoughtfully integrating AI into teaching and learning.

*Misti Frink, District Library Media Coordinator
Bismarck Public School District*

3:05 PM - 4:00 PM

Academic, Tribal, and Special Libraries Roundtable

Join Academic, Special, and Tribal Library Specialist Bethany Rants for a virtual roundtable discussion on trending topics such as Artificial Intelligence, Libraries of Things, and helping students succeed in the academic world. This time is set aside is for you to network with you colleagues, talk about your opinions of the changing landscape of libraries, and explore what skills you need today to provide tomorrow's library services.

*Bethany Rants, Academic, Tribal, and Special Libraries Specialist
North Dakota State Library*

School Library Roundtable

Join Kathy Cline, School Library Specialist, for a virtual roundtable dedicated to providing school librarians with an opportunity to connect, network, and engage in conversation, reflection, and shared learning. The session will focus on the following topics:

- How school libraries and librarians are adjusting to the changing library and educational landscape
- Skills school librarians need today to provide tomorrow's library services
- Trending topics such as:
 - School library and librarian advocacy
 - Collaboration and instructional partnerships

- Fewer certified staff amidst a rising demand for information, AI, and digital literacy support

Attendees will be encouraged to share ideas on how the State Library can best support school librarians and library programs as we work together to navigate the evolving school library landscape.

*Kathy Cline, School Library Specialist
North Dakota State Library*