



Flickertale

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Public Libraries Survey

Submitted by Monica Struck

It's that time of year again ([insert Jaws theme here](#)). Public Libraries Survey season draws near, like a great white shark ready to devour your hopes and dreams...Just kidding! It really isn't that bad, and I am here for you every step of the way.

The Public Libraries Survey has been around since the beginning of time...1988 to be precise. This information was originally collected by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), but the Institute for Museum and Library Services (IMLS) took over officially in 2008. The purpose of the survey is to provide statistics on the status of public libraries in the United States and its territories. The information collected is made available in a number of ways. The data files are available on the [IMLS website](#). The information is also available using the [Search & Compare tool](#).

Why should you care about the Public Libraries Survey? I have several reasons for you.

1. The data helps libraries. IMLS uses this data to show national trends and historical patterns. Libraries can use this data to show this same information at a local level. Data is good for everyone!
2. I want the State Library to be able to give you money. Completing the Public Libraries Survey is part of the eligibility requirements for receiving State Aid to Public Libraries ([NDCC §54-24.2-01](#)).
3. I want you to be able to receive Library Vision Grants. I use the responses to establish the Public Library Standards levels for the coming fiscal year. Public Libraries must reach the Developing Level standards to be eligible for Library Vision Grants. I cannot establish which standards you are meeting if you do not fill out the Public Libraries Survey.

Are you still unconvinced? I saved the best reason for last. I love seeing how your libraries have grown and changed. I love helping you figure out what numbers go where. I love reading your increasingly snarky comments in your edit check notes. Basically, I am a library data nerd, and I want to see your numbers, so please give them to me!

I don't expect you to be library data experts overnight. You have several tools at your disposal that can be used on your annual quest for numbers. First, I hope you are able to attend our annual [Public Libraries Survey Walkthrough webinar](#) on January 28, 2026, at 2 PM. If this doesn't work in your schedule, don't worry! It will be recorded for later viewing. Second, take a minute to peruse our [PLS LibGuide](#). Here you will find tools, general survey information, and updates. Finally, you have me! Please contact your friendly Public Library Specialist with any questions.

The Public Libraries Survey opens February 1 and closes March 31. The survey is located in [Counting Opinions](#). If you are having trouble logging in or have any questions whatsoever, please contact Monica Struck at 701-328-4680 or ndsl-id@nd.gov. Let's rock this coming PLS season. [We've got this!](#)

[Learn More](#)

The ND State Library Presents:

PATHWAYS THROUGH THE PRAIRIE

PODCAST



EPISODE 36: EMILY STENBERG BROWN
ND VISION SERVICES/SCHOOL
FOR THE BLIND

HOSTED BY ND STATE
LIBRARIAN MARY SOUCIE

AI Insights

Submitted by Trevor Martinson

Article Summaries

One positive aspect of generative artificial intelligence (or GenAI) is that it can process massive amounts of data in a short period of time and generate responses based on that input.

Large companies like Amazon are utilizing this feature for their websites. In the case of Amazon, a particular product may have hundreds, if not thousands, of customer reviews. It would take an incredible amount of time for the average person to sift through all of them. Amazon and other companies use AI to analyze the reviews and provide a concise summary of them.

When you do a search on Google, the company's built-in "AI Overview" instantly browses the internet and provides a breakdown or review of its findings. This feature is handy, but it is not welcomed by all. There are some who claim that Google's AI Overview is crawling websites without their permission and siphoning traffic away from their sites. In September 2025, Penske (the parent company of Rolling Stone, Billboard, and Variety) [filed a lawsuit](#) against Google and its AI Overview over these reasons.

[Continue Reading](#)



Oodles of Noodles

January 4 is Spaghetti Day. As such, January's *Top Picks* is dedicated to noodles! If you have a topic for *Top Picks*, please email me at tlkruger@nd.gov.

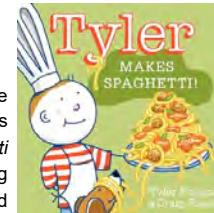
Tyler Makes Spaghetti by Tyler Florence and Craig Frazier

Publish Date: 2013

Publisher: Harper

Summary: Tyler loves spaghetti and meatballs! So, when the chef of his favorite restaurant offers to teach him how to cook his favorite dish, Tyler jumps at the chance. *Tyler Makes Spaghetti* takes readers through the spaghetti and meatball-making process, throwing in dashes of information about ingredients and pinches of Italian vocabulary. Tyler's Spaghetti and Meatballs Recipe is posted in the book for learners to make their own!

Best For: Preschool through Second Grade



[Continue Reading](#)

Help Decide North Dakota's Next "I Voted" Sticker

Submitted by North Dakota Office of the Secretary of State

The North Dakota Secretary of State's "I Voted" More Than Just a Sticker contest is down to five finalists—and now it's time for North Dakotans to help decide the winning design!

When someone wears an "I Voted" sticker to work, the grocery store, or to pick up their kids, they're inspiring others. It's a 2-inch declaration that says, "I matter, my voice counts, and I'm part of something bigger than myself."

Go to sos.nd.gov/stickervote by January 23 to vote for your favorite sticker. The winning design will be announced in March 2026 and will debut at the polls during the 2026 Primary Election on June 9.

[Vote Today](#)

Essay... What's That?

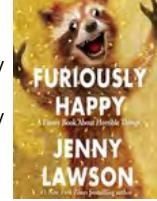
Submitted by Tammy Kruger

Have you signed up for 2026's *40 Books Reading Challenge* through Beanstack? Perhaps you have noticed that essay is one of the genres... no need to fear, we are not sending you back to school!

What is a Book of Essays?

A book of essays is quite simple – it's basically a collection of short stories that are true! Essays often discuss culture, history, or even the writing of others. They can be written by one author or a collection of authors. They can be serious or humorous, and many are a combination of the two. Here is an incomplete list of essays available through NDSL:

- *White Album* by Joan Didion (e-resource)
- *Everyone's Favorite* by Lillian Stone (e-resource)
- *The Good Immigrant: 26 Writers Reflect on America* edited by Nikesh Shukla and Chimene Suleyman
- *Furiously Happy: A Funny Book about Horrible Things* by Jenny Lawson
- *Men Explain Things to Me* by Rebecca Solnit (e-resource)
- *Small Wonder* by Barbara Kingsolver (e-resource)
- *I'd Rather be Reading* by Anne Bogel (e-resource)
- *I Curse You with Joy* by Tiffany Haddish (e-resource)
- *Talking as Fast as I Can* by Lauren Graham (e-resource)
- *Fifty Things that Aren't My Fault: Essays from the Grown-Up Years* by Cathy Guisewite
- *When You Are Engulfed in Flames* by David Sedaris (e-resource)
- *Alaskan Stories by a Little School Up North: Student Reflections of the Alaska Interior* compiled by Cory Neumiller and Cindy Ronnander
- *Trick Mirror* by Jia Tolentino (e-resource)
- *Sharing Too Much: Musings from an Unlikely Life* by Richard Paul Evans
- *We Are Never Meeting in Real Life* by Samantha Irby (e-resource)
- *Stranger Than Fiction* by Chuck Palahniuk (e-resource)
- *Wow, No Thank You* by Samantha Irby (e-resource)
- *Hungry Heart* by Jennifer Weiner (e-resource)
- *How Y'all Doing?* by Leslie Jordan (e-resource)
- *I'll Show Myself Out* by Jessie Klein (e-resource)



Happy Reading!

[Sign Up For The Reading Challenge](#)

In Other News

On Thursday, January 22, at 1:00 PM, the Braille Institute is hosting a [panel with four thriller and suspense novelists](#): Dan Fesperman, a former foreign correspondent and author of "Pariah (DB130816); Cindy R.X. He, a Daphne du Maurier Award finalist for "Perfect Little Monsters (DB121488); K.T. Nguyen, a former Glamour editor and author of "You Know What You Did (DB120643); Piper L. White, who debuted as a novelist with "All (Dead) Girls Lie (DB130727)."

The North Dakota Department of Water Resources is hosting a hands-on workshop in Bismarck on February 20-22. [Project WET Facilitator Leadership Training](#) is for K-12 teachers, informal educators, and leaders who work with kids and want to share the importance of water in our lives.

[Engineers Week](#) is taking place on February 22-28. Learn how to talk about engineering so kids will listen, how to lead hands-on activities, and other ways you can get involved at the [Engineers Week 2026: Being an Effective Volunteer](#) webinar on January 21.

HHMI Tangled Bank Studios and The STAR Library Education Network are looking for applicants for the [Science Across America campaign](#).

Niche Academy Highlight

by Al Peterson

What's New in Niche Academy

We're starting the New Year in Niche with a couple of new tutorials in the North Dakota Library Academy.

Category: Library Directors

Subcategory: Hiring Staff

New Tutorial: Negotiation Skills and Tactics

The skills presented in this webinar are helpful if you're new to management or need a refresher or some pointers on the topic of negotiations.

Category: Library Board, Friends Groups and Volunteers

Subcategory: Working with Volunteers

New Tutorial: Recruiting and Engaging Volunteers

It's hard to recruit enough people but then add the challenge of keeping them motivated and engaged. If you find yourself in a tailspin with finding and keeping volunteers, this tutorial may be just what you are looking for.

Category: Literacy Development

Subcategory: Beanstack

New Tutorial: Using Beanstack for Summer Reading and Beyond

In this ND State Library webinar from December 17, Tammy Kruger presents how to set up Beanstack accounts, log reading, winter and summer reading challenges, and how to design your own challenges.

Niche Academy

WordPress Help

By BreAnne Meier

Domain Invoice

This is just a reminder that if your public library has a WordPress website through the ND State Library, your website's domain is paid for by the State Library. If you receive a bill in the mail saying that your domain has expired, please contact me prior to sending payment. The only time your library will need to pay for the website is if you have a paid plan.

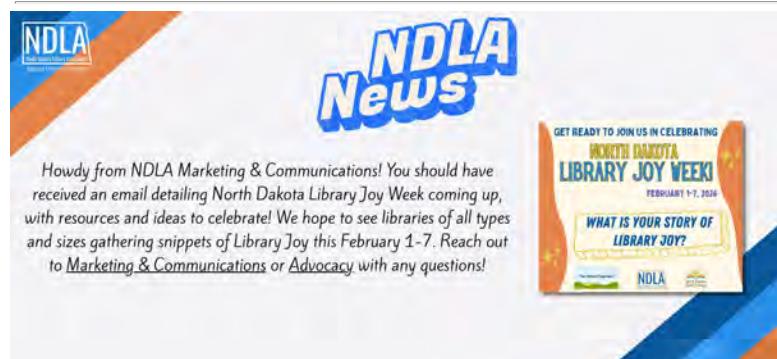
If you have any questions or concerns about your library's WordPress website, there are multiple ways to get answers:

- Monthly WordPress Q&As - the next one will take place on Tuesday, January 13, at 1:00 PM. Register at <https://www.library.nd.gov/events/webinar20260113>
- Book a one-on-one meeting with me at <https://bit.ly/LibraryWebsiteSupport>
- Contact me via e-mail or phone at ndslpa@nd.gov or 701-328-4656

Library Tidbits

Fargo Public Library is celebrating their [125th anniversary](#) with an open house on January 10 (11:00 AM - 2:00 PM). They are also starting 2026 with [dual reading challenges](#) - "The Happy Birthday Fargo Public Library" Winter Reading Challenge and the 2026 Yearlong Reading Challenge.

Minot City Council and Ward County Commission are revisiting a [library merger](#) between Minot Public Library and Ward County Library. They have created a joint committee to discuss the merger.



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Mary J. Soucie, State Librarian

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Any mention of services or products in this newsletter does not constitute any endorsement or recommendation. The use of any services or products should be evaluated on an individual basis.

www.library.nd.gov

To submit content ideas/articles for a future issue of the Flickertale, please contact BreAnne at ndslpa@nd.gov.

Times referenced are Central Time.

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