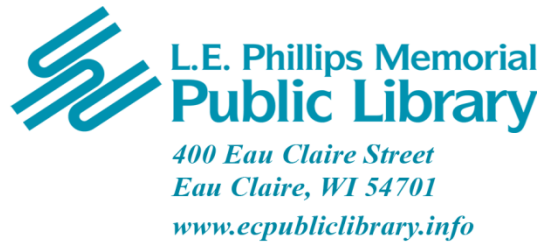


News Release

For Immediate Release



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New Library Book Collection Speaks the Languages of Our Community

In an effort to better serve residents whose first language is not English, the L.E. Phillips Memorial Public Library in downtown Eau Claire has launched a new Community Languages Collection, available for checkout as of early June.

After analyzing language data from area schools, as well as surveys of local communities and support groups, the library identified a gap in materials available in the primary languages spoken at home. The result: a carefully curated collection of popular fiction and nonfiction for all ages in Hmong, Spanish, French, and Ojibwe.

“This collection serves our mission and reflects the unique needs of our community,” said Programming & Communications Services Manager Isa Small. “It aligns directly with our strategic goals to identify barriers to access and to educate users on foundational library skills.”

Rather than focusing on materials for English speakers learning a new language, the collection was built for first-language speakers. Spanish and Hmong were prioritized based on local school data, while French was included as it’s a common bridge language for many multilingual households. The inclusion of Ojibwe materials underscores the library’s commitment to Indigenous representation.

“Ojibwe may not be the most widely spoken non-English language in Eau Claire, but we recognize the history of colonization behind that,” said Small. “We’re committed to ensuring Indigenous voices are present on our shelves—language is a vital part of that.”

The new titles were sourced from a combination of the library’s regular vendors and smaller, BIPOC-owned bookstores—especially for the Hmong and Ojibwe titles, many of which were found in the Twin Cities area.

The initial investment of \$12,000, funded through American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) allocations via the City of Eau Claire, covers 2025 and 2026. Ongoing support will come from the library's operational budget beginning in 2027.

Early response has been strong. From the new collection in June:

68% of checkouts were for children's books

19% for adult materials

13% for young adults

68% were standard print books

20% board books

10% graphic novels

2% read-alongs

"Public libraries have long embraced equity, diversity, and inclusion—even before those became buzzwords," said Library Director Nancy Kerr. "We want everyone in our community to feel welcome here—and that includes seeing themselves, their languages, and their stories on our shelves."

For other library information, contact Information & Reference by calling 715-839-5004, emailing librarian@eauclaire.lib.wi.us, or visiting the library's website at www.ecpubliclibrary.info.

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