

How Does Anyone Do All of This?

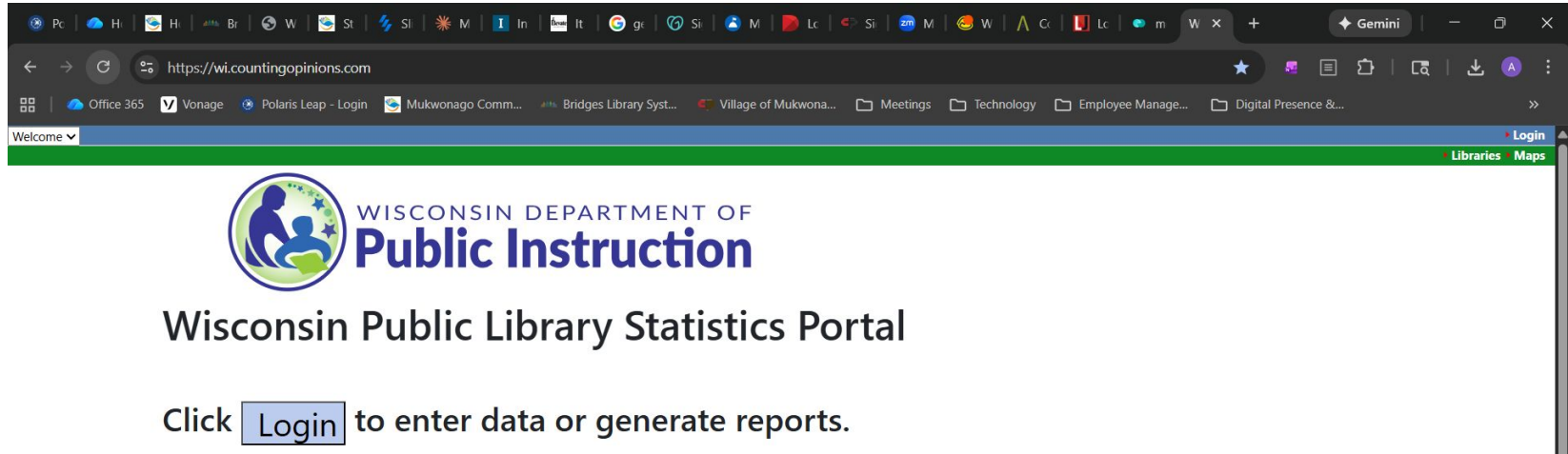
Practical Organizational Strategies for Library Leaders

Abby Armour

Library Director, Mukwonago Community Library



What Does Your Brain Look Like Right Now?



Wisconsin Department of
Public Instruction

Wisconsin Public Library Statistics Portal

Click [Login](#) to enter data or generate reports.

Imagine dozens of browser tabs open
Each tab is something you're trying not to forget

How many browser tabs do you have open right now?

Why Your Brain “Fails” You

Your brain is brilliant at **THINKING**

Your brain is terrible at **REMEMBERING**

The more you try to hold in your head,
the less brain power you have for actual thinking

PART ONE

Mindset Shifts Before Methods

Shift #1: Thinking IS an Action

Ask yourself “What actually needs to happen?”

VAGUE TOPIC

“Strategic Plan”

“Board relations”

NEXT ACTION

“Email Maria three potential vision statements”

“Text Susan to confirm coffee Tuesday 9am”

Taking time to think will save you a lot of headache later!

What's one item on your to-do list? Is it a topic or a next action?

Shift #2: Building "Places" for Your Thoughts



Librarians already know how to do this

Books have a system: cataloging, call numbers, designated locations

A gardening book has a HOME—and because of that, books never get lost

Where do your random thoughts go right now?

A Place for Everything

NEXT ACTIONS

Things you need to DO

WAITING FOR

Things you're waiting on

SOMEDAY/MAYBE

Things you might want later

PROJECTS

Outcomes requiring multiple steps

CALENDAR

Time-specific commitments

REFERENCE

Information to keep

Where do your random thoughts go right now?

Shift #3: What's Worth YOUR Time?

What can ONLY you do?

- Only you can navigate board relations
- Only you can set strategic direction
- Only you can mentor your leadership team

- Someone else can format that spreadsheet
- Someone else can set up chairs

What are you doing that someone else could do?

Shift #4: Capture Everywhere

Methods

- Your phone
- Voice recorder
- A pocket notebook
- Binder with looseleaf

Situations

- Shower thoughts
- Driving in your car
- At the grocery store

If your system isn't accessible, you'll go back to using your brain

PART TWO

Building Your Second Brain

What IS a Second Brain?

An external, trusted system for capturing, organizing, and retrieving everything you need to remember

**It's not your brain replacement—
it's your brain's support system**

The Non-Negotiables

1

Externalized

Not in your head

2

Accessible

Available when you need it

3

Trusted

You believe it's complete

4

Organized

Things have homes

Capture: Get It Out of Your Head

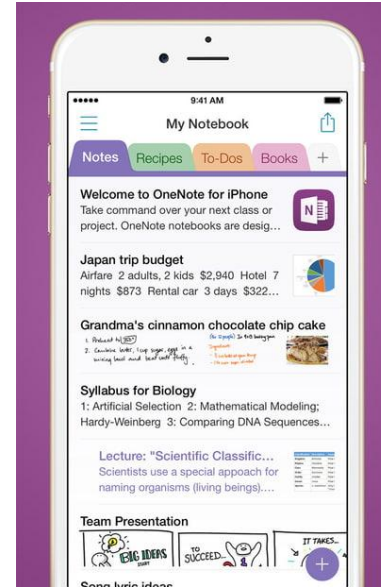
The moment something enters your mind, you have two choices:

Hold onto it
Mental energy drain

Capture it
Freedom

Take the 20 seconds now to write it down to save yourself 20 minutes later!

Capture: Get It Out of Your Head



The tool doesn't matter—just get it OUT

Process: What Does This Mean?

Once a day (or a few times a week),
PROCESS what you've captured

- Is it actionable? → Next Actions, Calendar, or Waiting For
- Not actionable? → Reference, Trash, or Someday/Maybe
- Does it belong to a project? → Link it

Organize: Homes for Everything

NEXT ACTIONS

At Computer, Calls, Errands, With Staff

PROJECTS

Complete 2026 budget, Summer Library Program

CALENDAR

Time-specific commitments ONLY

WAITING FOR

Budget numbers, Board feedback

SOMEDAY/MAYBE

Spanish storytimes, Garden project

Review: The Weekly Review



One hour, once a week

The most powerful hour in your calendar

From Chaos to Clarity

BEFORE

"Board relations..."

"Staff development..."

"Budget..."

"Programming..."

AFTER (organized)

Next Actions:

- Email Susan 3 agenda topics

Projects:

- FY26 Budget, Summer Reading

Waiting For:

- Board feedback (due 1/25)

A Second Brain Example

January 2026 - OneNote

File Home Insert Draw History Review View Help

SecondBrainExample ▾ Inbox Next Action Projects Waiting For... Someday Maybe +

January 2026

Tuesday, May 18, 2021 10:46 AM

FOR JANUARY AGENDA

- Meeting minutes
- Invoices and Executive Summary
- Committee and Community Reports
- Director's Report
- Strategic Plan updates
- Discussion & Action
 - Capital Campaign updates and information on providing first gifts
 - Approve final draft of Strategic Plan 2026-2028

Next Action: When December minutes are approved:

- upload to Q: drive December 2025 folder
- update entire 2025 Library Board archive to:
 - Q: drive
 - Board [Sharepoint](#)

+ Add Page

- @ Work
- @ Home
- @ Smartphone
- @ Errands
- Talk To...
 - Talk to...Friends of the Library
 - Talk to...Macy
 - Talk to...Emma
 - Talk to...Haley
 - Talk to...Emily
 - Talk to...Cathryn
- Library Board
- January 2026
- February 2026
- March 2026
- April 2026
- Ad Hoc Capital Campaign Committee
- Building & Grounds
- Finance Committee
- Grutzmacher Collection Committee
- Personnel Committee
- Policy Committee
- JOINT Personnel/Policy Committee

PART THREE

Protecting Your Second Brain

The Cost of Interruptions





23 MIN

It takes 23 minutes to refocus after an interruption*

Every notification is a tax on your brain

The Notification Audit

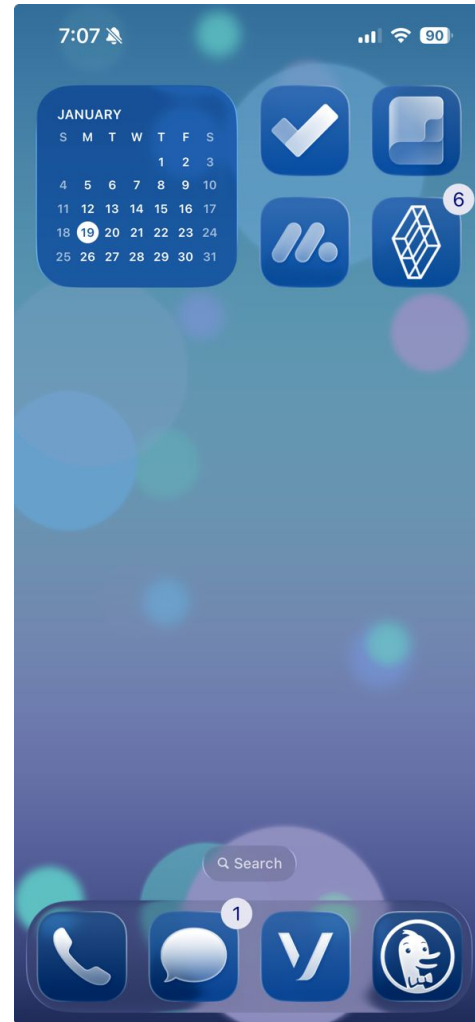
Do you **ACTUALLY** need to be interrupted in real-time?

-  Email — Check on YOUR schedule
-  Social media — Absolutely not
-  News apps — No
-  Calendar alerts — 15 min before meetings

The Notification Audit

This is my actual phone screen

- Control what I see
- Search for what I need
- Only important communications on homepage



AI as Your Thought Partner

This presentation started as random thoughts in OneNote

Claude.ai helped spot patterns, organize themes, and build structure

Use tools for the thinking you don't need to do yourself

Small Habits: The "One Thing" Trick

Moving through your house?

Take ONE thing with you

Small actions, done consistently, prevent chaos

PART FOUR

Your Next Steps

If You Do Nothing Else...

- 1** Start capturing everything for one week
- 2** Turn off three notifications or unsubscribe from three junk mail lists today
- 3** Schedule your first weekly review

For Those Who Want to Go Deeper

Getting Things Done
the art of stress-free
productivity

from the New York Times bestselling author

David Allen

An all-new
updated
edition ✓



Book: "Getting Things Done" by David Allen



Apps: Todoist, Things, Notion, OneNote, Obsidian



Your Library Skills: You already know how to organize



Questions & Discussion

Let's discuss your challenges

Thank You!

Abby Armour
Library Director, Mukwonago Community Library

aarmour@mukwonagolibrary.org

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