

# WVLS Presentation

## Marathon County Public Library Board of Trustees Meeting

### December 16, 2019

#### INTRODUCTION

WVLS began as a federally funded pilot project in 1961 to provide reference and interlibrary loan services over a large rural area shipping the resources of a large library via U.S. mail to smaller libraries in the region. The project was very successful. So successful in fact, that when the federal dollars dried up in 1964, counties decided to pick up the tab and fully support what was then called the “Regional Reference Service – Wausau Area.” From 1965-1972, this system was totally supported by our member counties. After eight years of county funding, WVLS and three other system pilots - Northern Waters Library Service (Ashland), Southwest Library System (Fennimore) and Milwaukee County Federated Library System (Milwaukee) – received their first state aid. In 1972, Wisconsin’s legislature formalized and legalized public library systems, and were charged with:

- Promotion the development of strong local libraries
- Facilitating cooperative service development between libraries
- Enabling resource sharing
- Providing services from a central point when it makes most economic sense to do so
- Advocating on behalf of libraries.

This was the charge to systems in 1972, and it remains our charge or 25 years later.

Counties join systems and, as such, each member county has representation on system governing boards. The WVLS Board 15-member board has seven representatives from Marathon County. Additionally, Marathon County has a voice in system matters through the library’s participation on WVLS Committees. In 2019, MCPL Chaired the WVLS Advisory Committee, a 15-member multitype group that advises the WVLS Board on service and budget priorities. MCPL is a voting member of the ILS Consortium known as the V-Cat Council and chairs two V-Cat Council committees, the V-Cat Bibliographic Control Committee and V-Cat Cooperative Circulation Committee. Also, MCPL is a member of the WVLS/V-Cat Steering Committee. Along with 5 other libraries in the ILS Consortium, WVLS staff and board members, this group advises the V-Cat Council and WVLS Board on annual V-Cat budgets, member library fees and other matters.

To maintain eligibility for state aid, all public library systems are required to submit an annual system plan to DPI that details how they will fulfill service requirements outlined in Wis. Stat 43.24(2). To qualify for and maintain eligibility for state aid, all systems must provide for:

- ...backup reference, information and interlibrary services from the system resource library
- ...referral or routing of reference and interlibrary loan requests from libraries within the system to libraries within and outside the system
- ...in-service training and consultation to public library personnel and trustees
- ...electronic delivery of information and physical delivery of library materials to participating libraries
- ...professional consultant services to participating public libraries
- ...promotion and facilitation of library services to users with special needs

...cooperation and continuous planning with other types of libraries in the system area  
...planning with the Division and with participating public libraries and other types of libraries in the area regarding library technology and the sharing of resources

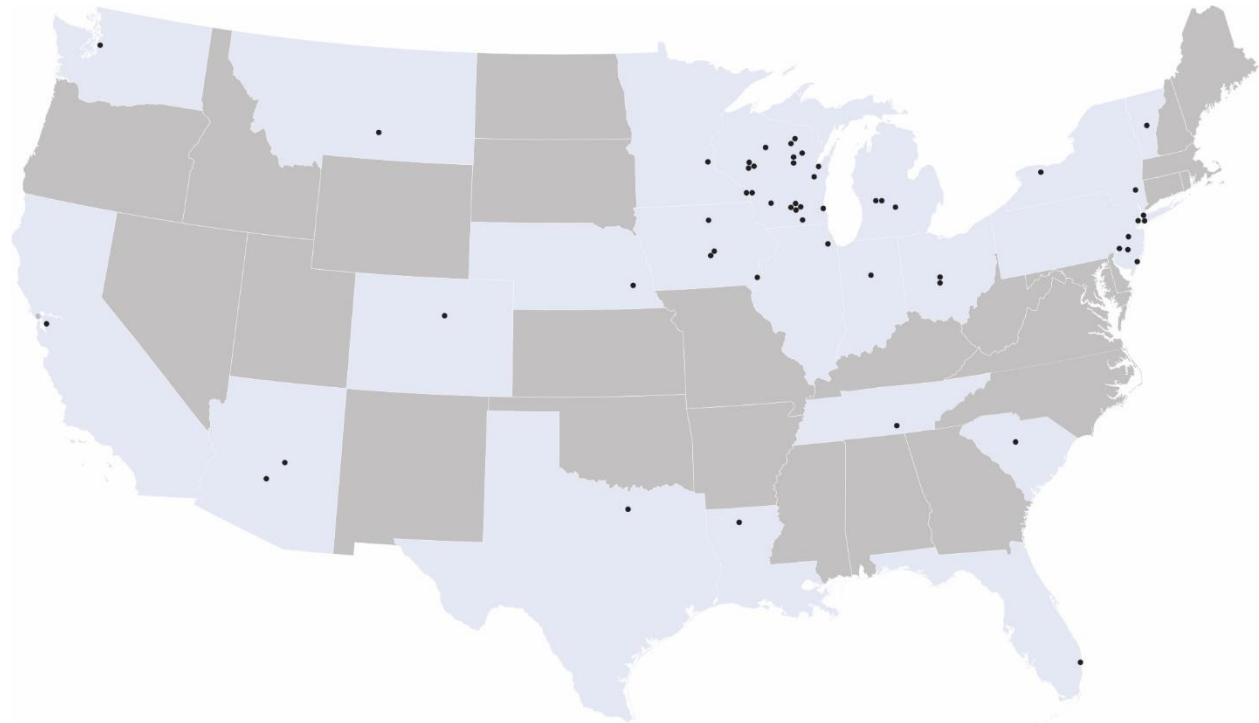
How these requirements are fulfilled in each system varies and is dependent on the preferences and priorities of the libraries in the system.

Over the last several years, I have routinely shared information about WVLS with this Board. As such, and because WVLS service is not what has prompted MCPL Administration's investigation of joining another system, this presentation will respond to issues raised in the November 2019 letter the WVLS Board President Tom Bobrofsky received from MCPL Director Ralph Illick which stated "...there may be added benefit to our membership [in the South Central Library System], based on factors that would include the potential for collaborating with many other peer-sized libraries, a significantly larger aggregate system collection, and other factors to be explored."

WVLS Consultants Kris Adams Wendt, Jamie Matczak and Anne Hamland will present ways in which WVLS collaborates with state and national colleagues to provide service; share how the state's largest aggregate collection, WISCAT is used by MCPL; report ways in which three resource libraries in Wisconsin network and collaborate with peer libraries: and suggest ways in which WVLS might be able to help MCPL.

Please be assured that additional information about WVLS and services to our members will be shared with this Board at the end of this presentation.

## Continuing Education and Training



Blue: States with organizations WVLS has collaborated and consulted with in Continuing Education in 2018-2019

WVLS offers robust continuing education and training opportunities. Along with workshops and webinars, WVLS leads the coordination of the Wild Wisconsin Winter Web Conference, a state-wide web conference that attracts presenters and participants from all over the U.S. WVLS created Digital Bytes in 2018 - short, archived digital trainings produced twice a month on topics ranging from customer service to technology tools.

Creating an influential regional/state/national network of professional capital is accomplished by actively participating in state and national conferences, presenting workshops, teaching courses through the iSchool at UW-Madison, and being involved in the Wisconsin Library Association.

Following is a list of organizations that WVLS has collaborated and consulted with in continuing education in 2018-19.

## **WVLS Continuing Education and Training Services Collaborative Partners**

Altoona Public Library  
Altoona, IA

Antigo Public Library  
Antigo, WI

Avon Free Library  
Avon, NY

Billings Public Library  
Billings, MT

Brewer Public Library  
Richland Center, WI

Brooklyn Public Library  
Brooklyn, NY

Brown County Library  
Green Bay, WI

Bubbler @ Madison Public Library  
Madison, WI

Burlington Public Library  
Burlington, IA

California Digital Library  
Oakland, CA

Capital University  
Columbus, OH

Carolyn Brewer Outreach Consulting  
Fort Worth, TX

Capital Area District Libraries  
Lansing, MI

Central Kansas Library System  
Great Bend, KS

Colorado State Library  
Denver, CO

Cooperative Children's Book Center  
Madison, WI

Chippewa Valley Technical College  
Chippewa Valley, WI

EveryLibrary  
Riverside, IL

Evenly Distributed LLC  
Sewanee, TN

Grand Rapids Public Library  
Grand Rapids, MI

Indiana State Library  
Indianapolis, IN

IntelliCraft Research LLC  
Philadelphia, PA

Kent District Library  
East Grand Rapids, MI

Kokomo-Howard County Public Library  
Kokomo, IN

La Crosse Public Library  
La Crosse, WI

L.E. Phillips Memorial Public Library  
Eau Claire, WI

Libraries Are Essential Consulting  
Medford, NJ

Lifetime Arts  
New York, NY

Lincoln Parish Library  
Ruston, LA

Loch-Works Consulting  
La Crescent, MN

Marathon County Public Library  
Wausau, WI

Maricopa County Library District  
Phoenix, AZ

Meservey Public Library  
Meservey, Iowa

Mid-Hudson Library System  
Poughkeepsie, NY

Milwaukee Public Library  
Milwaukee, WI

Mind Positive Parenting  
Minneapolis, MN

New Jersey State Library  
Trenton, NJ

Northcentral Technical College  
Wausau, WI

Ocean City County Library  
Ocean City, NJ

OPLIN (Ohio Public Library Information Network)  
Columbus, OH

Nebraska Library Commission  
Lincoln, NE

Palm Beach County Library System  
Palm Beach County, FL

Qatar National Library  
Doha, Qatar

Randolph Technical Career Center  
Randolph, VT

Rhineland Public Library  
Rhineland, WI

Rib Lake Public Library  
Rib Lake, WI

Roselle Park High School  
Roselle Park, NJ

San Rafael Public Library  
San Rafael, CA

South Carolina State Library  
Columbia, SC

Star City Branch Library  
Star City, AR

State Library of Iowa  
Des Moines, IA

Tomahawk Public Library  
Tomahawk, WI

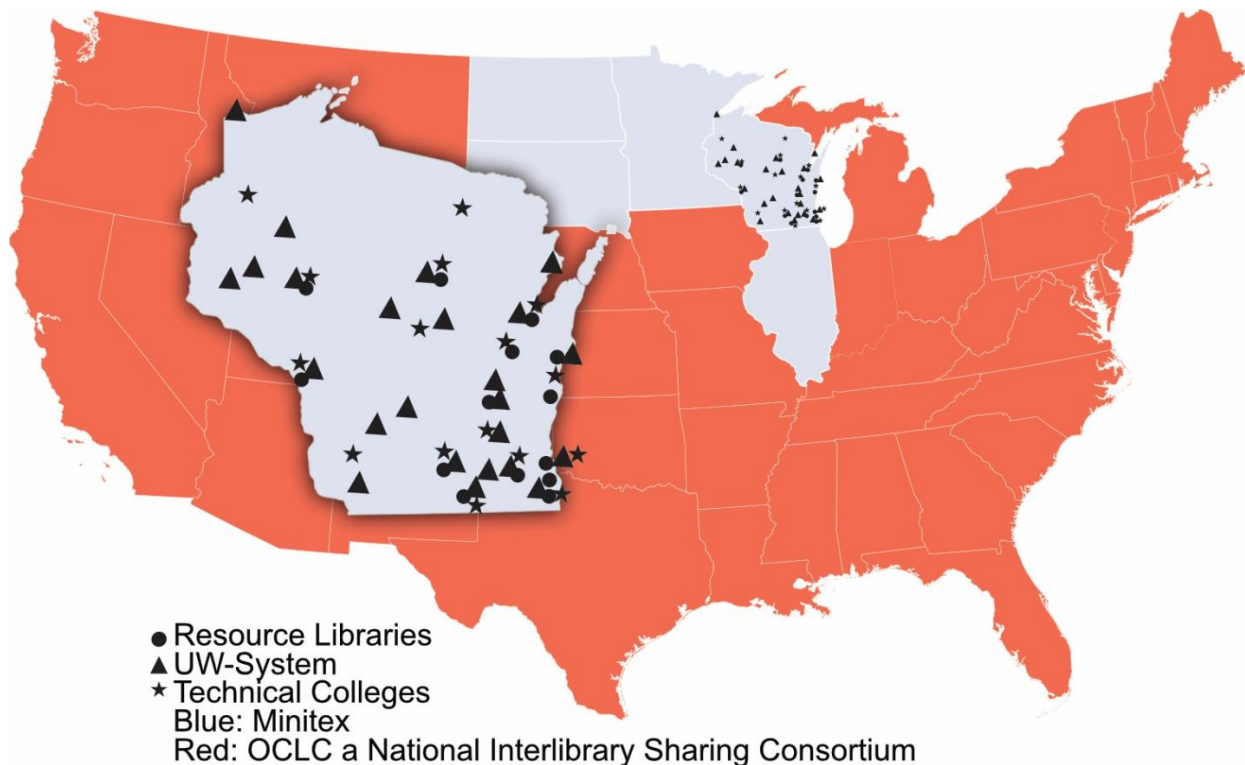
WebJunction National Continuing Education Network  
Seattle, WA

University of Cape Town Libraries  
Cape Town, South Africa

University of Wisconsin - Madison iSchool  
Madison, WI

University of Wisconsin Law School Library  
Madison, WI

## Resource Sharing (V-Cat and WISCAT)



Wisconsin has one of the most robust resource sharing and interlibrary loan (ILL) networks in the nation. Interlibrary loan is a way for MCPL users to borrow items not owned or available at their local library from another library outside Marathon County.

MCPL users have access to over one million items in the regional online catalog known as V-Cat, which records the holdings of 25 public libraries in the WVLS consortium. Users also have access to Wisconsin's resource sharing platform known as WISCAT. Administered by the Resources for Libraries and Lifelong Learning (RL&LL) team at the Department of Public Instruction, the WISCAT database is the largest aggregate collection of library resources in Wisconsin and contains over 7 million titles, and more than **33** million holdings from over **1,200** contributing libraries across the state.

The resources of the Marathon County Public Library as well as those of the other 14 resource libraries in Wisconsin are recorded in WISCAT. And, through DPI contracts, the holdings of Wisconsin's University and Technical College libraries and those from with MINITEX (which includes libraries in Minnesota, North and South Dakota, Lakehead University in Thunder Bay, Ontario and the Illinois State Library) are also available upon request. Should library users wish to receive items not owned or available through the V-Cat and WISCAT databases, requests may be referred to the national database, OCLC.

Marathon County Public Library users can initiate their own requests for items available through WISCAT simply by completing an online interlibrary loan form. MCPL staff then review the completed forms prior to sending them to potential lending libraries. In 2018, an impressive **89.5%** of MCPL users' requests for materials were filled by participating WISCAT libraries!



How does WVLS fit in this picture? We act as a conduit for ILL support between DPI and member libraries. As such, we participate in state-sponsored ILL meetings and training sessions, provide training to member libraries upon request and aggregates data on interlibrary loan activity that is shared at state and national levels. For example, in 2018, Marathon County received 72,677 items from other libraries for its users and shared 56,368 items with other libraries. The number of items requested by MCPL users in 2018 represented approximately 9.04% of the library's circulation. Also, over the last several years, MCPL's circulation numbers and those interlibrary loan items received, have been in decline. When comparing 2014 data with that of 2018, there was been a 16.61% drop in circulation, and 7.95% reduction in items received. This downward trend in demand for physical materials is not remarkable. From state and national statistics, the MCPL data reflects a pervasive trend in library users' increasing preference for downloadable content in book, magazine, audio and video format versus that for physical materials.

### RESOURCE LIBRARIES

Appleton Public Library, Appleton  
 Brown County Public Library, Green Bay  
 Hedberg Public Library, Janesville  
 Kenosha Public Library, Kenosha  
 La Crosse Public Library, La Crosse  
 L.E. Phillips Memorial Library, Eau Claire  
 Madison Public Library, Madison  
 Manitowoc Public Library, Manitowoc

Marathon County Public Library, Wausau  
 Mead Public Library, Sheboygan  
 Milwaukee Public Library, Milwaukee  
 Oshkosh Public Library, Oshkosh  
 Racine Public Library, Racine  
 Superior Public Library, Superior  
 Waukesha Public Library, Waukesha

### UW-SYSTEM

UW-Eau Claire  
 UW-Eau Claire – Barron County  
 UW-Green Bay  
 UW-Green Bay Manitowoc Campus  
 UW-Green Bay Marinette Campus  
 UW-Green Bay Sheboygan Campus  
 UW-La Crosse  
 UW-Madison  
 UW-Milwaukee  
 UW-Milwaukee – Washington County  
 UW-Milwaukee at Waukesha  
 UW-Oshkosh  
 UW-Oshkosh Fox Cities  
 UW-Oshkosh Fond du Lac  
 UW-Whitewater – Rock County

UW-Parkside  
 UW-Platteville  
 UW-Platteville Baraboo Sauk County  
 UW-Platteville at Richland  
 UW-River Falls  
 UW-Stevens Point  
 UW-Stevens Point at Marshfield  
 UW-Stevens Point at Wausau  
 UW-Stout  
 UW-Superior  
 UW-Whitewater  
 UW-Whitewater – Rock County

### TECHNICAL COLLEGE DISTRICTS

Blackhawk Technical College, Janesville  
 Chippewa Valley Technical College, Eau Claire  
 Fox Valley Technical College, Appleton  
 Gateway Technical College, Kenosha

Moraine Park Technical College, Fond du Lac  
 Nicolet Area Technical College, Rhinelander  
 Northcentral Technical College, Wausau  
 Northeast WI Technical College, Green Bay

Lakeshore Technical College, Cleveland  
Madison Area Technical College, Madison  
Mid-State Technical College, Wisconsin Rapids  
Milwaukee Area Technical College, Milwaukee

Southwest WI Technical College, Fennimore  
Waukesha County Technical College, Pewaukee  
Western Technical College, La Crosse  
WI Indianhead Technical College, Shell Lake

### **MINITEX LOCATIONS**

Canada / Illinois / Minnesota/ North Dakota / South Dakota

## **WVLS Fosters Civic Engagement and Proactive Legislative Relationships**

WVLS staff expertise and proactive commitment to legislative relationship building has directly impacted Marathon County Public Library in two notable ways during the past five years.

- 2014 Act 157, a negotiated compromise regarding cross-county payment rules, prevented a potential revenue loss to MCPL estimated at a minimum of \$87,135
- 2015 Act 169 finally enabled public libraries like MCPL to legally share limited information regarding delinquent borrower accounts with a law enforcement or a collection agency

WVLS mentors an engaged regional network of library administrators and staff, library trustees and community members to initiate civic action for libraries.

WVLS assists member libraries in diplomatically and successfully navigating issues related to local government budget requests, county payments, and capital improvement projects.

WVLS provides member libraries with timely voter registration and election reference resources. Most recently, in partnership with the League of Wisconsin Women Voters of the Northwoods, WVLS distributed a set of voter registration tools to our members, including all MCPL branches.

WVLS coordinates participation from member counties in annual WLA Library Legislative Day meetings with 11 legislators whose senate and assembly districts fall within our borders. As a member of the Wisconsin Library Association's Legislative Development & Legislation Committee (WLA LD&L), as well as the Library Legislative Day team, WVLS consultant Kris Adams Wendt networks with other systems to achieve 100% statewide coverage of all 132 legislators.

WVLS encourages member libraries to host and participate in listening sessions scheduled by state legislators in their home districts.

WVLS organizes member library support for Department of Public Instruction library funding initiatives in the state biennial budget, including increases in public library system aids and maintenance of core statewide library services such as BadgerLink, Newsline for the Blind and the four statewide resource contracts (Cooperative Children's Book Center, Wisconsin Talking

Book and Braille Library, and inter-library loan access to Milwaukee Public Library and UW-Madison collections).

WVLS networks with WLA LD&L and other library systems to provide leadership and expertise on other statewide library initiatives and library related legislation.

WVLS informs member libraries of federal level library action items monitored by the American Library Association and of importance to the 7th U.S. Congressional District.

## Youth Services

WVLS Youth Services is robust and collaborative. In 2017, WVLS Public Library Services Consultant Anne Hamland moved to Eau Claire, Wisconsin as her husband started a new position. Since that time, she has worked out of the IFLS Library System offices. She brainstorms, bounces ideas, and collaborates with the IFLS youth services consultant and the entire staff daily. Due in part to working out of a partner office, Anne reaches out and works with librarians from Minnesota and Wisconsin, north to south.

Libraries or organizations WVLS has collaborated with in Youth Services in 2018-2019



The WVLS Board of Trustees has supported success in youth services by approving the Innovation and Collaboration Literacy Grant mentioned and the WLA Membership/Development Scholarship mentioned previously. In 2019, the Board of Trustees approved the **Youth Services WLA Membership/Professional Development Scholarship** specifically to send a youth librarian to a conference and purchase a WLA professional membership for a year. Experiences like this can change and inspire a person for their entire career.

Erica Dischinger, the 2019 Youth Services WLA Scholarship recipient describes her experience:

*Even though I have met Denise Chojnacki (Rhineland District Library) and Annette Miller (Tomahawk Public Library) before, I really enjoyed getting to know them better and developing a closer relationship with them. I attended sessions with them and we enjoyed each others' company in between sessions as well. It was really neat to compare the different services we offer at our respective libraries, since we are in three libraries in the far north of our library system and serve similar populations. I learned, for example, that Annette does her "storytime" as more of a "drop in play time" and not a structured program with a theme. We all discussed how the kids we have attending our programs seem to be getting younger and younger and how we have adapted, or could further adapt, to this change. We also discussed things we liked and didn't like about the sessions we attended together and different ideas that we feel we could implement at our libraries. Getting to know these two better and chatting with them really made the conference more fun for me.*

...

What kind of support is needed for you to implement these three things? Support from your staff? Your Board of Trustees? Assistance from WVLS?

*Another thing I would like to do is to work with Anne Hamland from WVLS. She has been a sort of "mentor" to me since I became a Youth Services Coordinator, and I know she would be willing to chat with me about where to begin and how to accomplish things if I get "stuck". Also, attending different meetups and workshops through WVLS has allowed me to get to know other librarians in our system (and other systems as well) who have offered great advice and ideas on how to get programs up-and-running, so turning to my network of fellow librarians will be a big help as well.*

WVLS offers an **annual youth services workshop** based on topics and issues discussed at YSIE gatherings and communications from WVLS member libraries. WVLS invites expert speakers from surrounding states, complimentary disciplines, special libraries, Wisconsin systems, in addition to librarians excelling in our field.

The December 4, 2019 Super Storytimes! Workshop held at Marathon County Public Library's Wausau location featured speakers from Arrowhead Library System in Minnesota's far north, a branch coordinator from Hastings, Minnesota, the Early Literacy and Outreach Librarian from Eau Claire, Wisconsin (which happens to be the 2019 Wisconsin Library of the Year), and youth services librarians from Marathon County Public Library, Wausau, Rib Lake, Tomahawk, and Rhinelander. Further, eight library systems were represented with 43 attendees. This workshop focused on intentionality and early literacy practices for librarians working with youth. The speakers from Minnesota were trained via a national train-the-trainer program with Saroj Ghoting, the premier early literacy expert, and consultants from the American Library Association in 2018.

This workshop was a success.

*I'm very glad I came! I have a list of more resources and appreciate that the tips and information apply to libraries of all sizes. The sessions were very positive.*

Nicolet Federated Library System Youth Librarian, 2019

*Great day of ideas and new resources. Especially for someone just over a year into doing storytimes!*

Outagamie- Waupaca Library System Youth Librarian, 2019

*I really enjoyed today's workshop and feel inspired!*

Minocqua Public Library, 2019

*Loved today—thank you! I appreciate everyone's efforts!*

MCPL Branch Coordinator, 2019

*This was an excellent workshop! I learned a lot! Thank you!*

MCPL Branch Coordinator, 2019

*... I made a goal from that experience was to develop a connection with a youth services mentor as well as others serving youth in my system and in our state. It turned out that when I contacted Anne Hamland, the youth services coordinator in the WVLS system, I discovered not only a "built in mentor", but a whole world of support and connection right in my area. The annual WVLS youth services workshop is one of the opportunities I appreciate for growth and learning each year. This year Anne Hamland asked me to share my experience doing STEAM storytimes. Her belief in me, helped me feel more confident that I could accomplish it. This was another leap of growth in my journey in the youth services field. This adds perspective and joy to the work I do here in a rural Wisconsin library.*

Krista Blomberg, Rib Lake Public Library, December 2019

## Technology

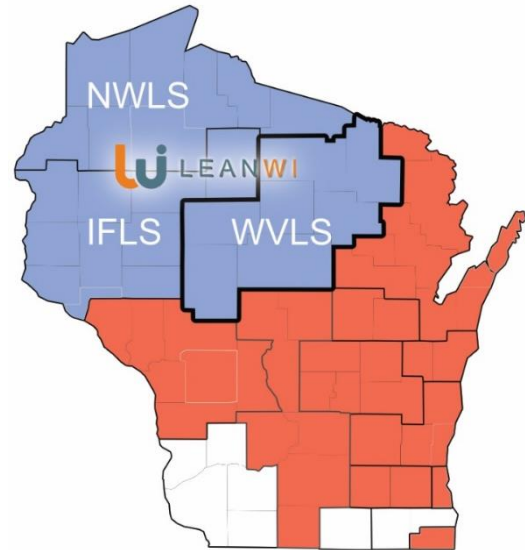
WVLS Technology Support and Consultation, branded as “Libraries Win Technology Services” under Libraries and Enterprise Applications Nexus of Wisconsin (LEAN WI) technology resource sharing partnership with IFLS Library System (IFLS) and Northern Waters Library Service (NWLS) are offered as optional services (sometimes referred to as “a la carte”). It is one of the most transparent, flexible, adaptive technology servicing models in the State of Wisconsin. It is also one of the most cost efficient. We have successfully pushed our service planning and budgeting out two years, empowering our membership with an eighteen-month budget planning window. Our innovative and responsive service initiatives enable member libraries to procure technology capital directly or cost-distributed over its lifecycle.

Libraries Win Technology services are supported by the LEAN WI partnership. LEAN WI comprises three Wisconsin Library Systems supporting over one hundred public libraries across twenty-five counties and by most measures constitutes the largest and most singularly influential Public Library Technology Services operations in Wisconsin. The partnership is one of coequality and equity among partners. WVLS plays a vital role in maintaining and managing the partnership, but all partners play major roles for their own parts which is the source of our strength. We are effectively disrupting the older Business-Consumer service model engaged by the more resourced system(s) in Wisconsin.

The CIO for WVLS, Joshua Klingbeil, presents a strong leadership presence on behalf of the LEAN WI partners engaging in state-level and regional councils, committees, and other such bodies. This presence and the WVLS drive over the past decade for growing collaboration and service efficiencies that come with it have and continue to prove highly successful.

Libraries Win Core Technology Services Include:

- General technical support, priority for Core Technology standards
- Local and wide area network equipment and operations management
- Computer procurement, staging, deployment, and maintenance
- Fileserver / Filesharing hosting
- Computer state preservation management
- Antivirus software management
- Computer access/session software management
- Automated installation and update maintenance for various third-party software applications
- No cost Office 365 email account hosting for library staff
- No cost Office 365 desktop Licensing for library staff



Blue: LeanWI Partnership  
Red: Collaborative Computer Purchasing  
All 16 library systems participate in the Statewide Backup and Archive Collaboration

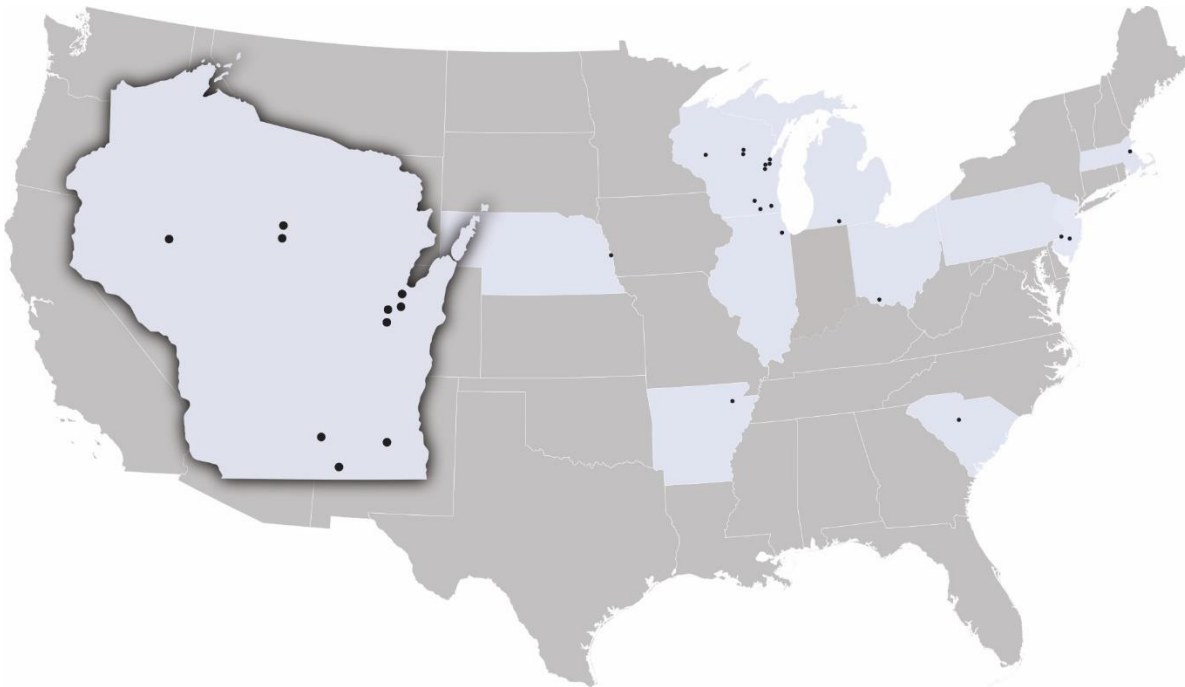
Libraries Win Specialized Technology Services Include:

- Illuminating Our Northwoods History (ION History) Digitized Content Repository (<https://ion.librarieswin.org/>)
- Website hosting (including website migration assistance and website management training)
- SharePoint Online Teams and Sites hosting
- Custom-use virtual server hosting

Libraries Win Technology Consultation Services Include:

- Long and short-range technology plan review, assessment, and/or development
- Computer, software licensing, and other technology-related lifecycle planning and budgeting guidance
- Grant management assistance
- Collaboration facilitation
- Technology infrastructure improvement projects (including as part of new building or major renovation projects)

## Marketing and Communications



Blue: States with organizations WVLS has collaborated and consulted with in Marketing and Communications in 2018-2019

WVLS Marketing and Communications has three intentions.

1. To share system, state and national events, initiatives and information with our member libraries, using the following:

- Monday Mentions: a weekly email sent every Monday at 12 pm with upcoming news and events
  - WVLS Facebook Page
  - Digital Lites: Weekly blog posts on library news and events.
  - Monthly Newsletter: email newsletter sent at the beginning of each month.
2. To provide resources and tools to our member libraries for their own marketing purposes, including the following:
    - Social Media Shares (Gale Courses, 2020 Census Information, Holiday Closures)
    - Website Services
    - Logo Creation
    - Press Releases (2019 AP Style Guide is available through WVLS)
    - Training on Marketing Design Tools (Canva)
    - Continuing Education on Marketing
    - Marketing Consultation
    - Proofreading
  3. To promote the important work of our member libraries, using the following:
    - WVLS Facebook page
    - Monthly Newsletter

In addition, in 2018, WVLS led the creation of a state-wide public library system marketing cohort, which in its early stages, is in the process of developing a marketing plan template for all public libraries in Wisconsin.

Following is a list of organizations that WVLS has collaborated and consulted with in marketing and communications in 2018-19.

## CONVERSATIONS WITH PEER LIBRARIES

For this presentation, Jamie Matczak conducted interviews with colleagues from three resource libraries in Wisconsin:

1. Emily Rogers, Deputy Director, Brown County Library in Green Bay (part of the Nicolet Federated Library System),
2. Bruce Gay, Director, Waukesha Public Library in Waukesha (part of the Bridges Library System), and
3. Rachel Arndt, Public Services Area Manager of the Central Library, Milwaukee Public Library in Milwaukee, (part of Milwaukee County Federated Library System).

During the interviews, the three colleagues were asked these two questions:

1. Being a resource library, and the largest library in your public library system, how do you currently collaborate with peers and libraries of your size?



2. How do you encourage your staff to collaborate and build relationships with libraries of your size?

All three of the libraries gave me permission to use their responses in today's presentation. In these conversations, three major themes came up.

**The first major theme is that all three libraries and their staff don't hesitate to reach out to libraries outside of their system,** to academic libraries, and in some cases, to libraries in other states. Bruce Gay, Director of the Waukesha County Public Library, said he often reaches out to other directors for advice. He said: *"In the last several months, I have spoken to Milwaukee for advice on what they are doing. I regularly meet with Paula Kiely, (Director of the Milwaukee Public Library). I talk to Nick (Dimassis) in Beloit quite a bit about what they are doing, and Pamela (Westby) in Eau Claire about Fines Free initiatives. Jessica (MacPhail) in Racine has been helpful. I have met with Jon-Mark Bolthouse in Fond du Lac to discuss maker spaces."*

Paula, Nick, Pamela, Jessica and Jon-Mark are all directors from public libraries outside of the Bridges Library System.

Rachel Arndt, Public Services Area Manager of the Central Library at Milwaukee, said that Milwaukee Public Library is currently working on redoing their meeting room and they are going to contact libraries across the state, and to several academic libraries like UW-Milwaukee and ask, "what do you think?"

*"I plan on doing some brainstorming and talk to other libraries about spaces we have seen across the state, even spaces that aren't library-related," she said. "We are using the relationships that our system has to build rapport with these organizations."*

Emily Rogers, Deputy Director at Brown County Library mentioned in the last two years, the Duluth Public Library (Minnesota) contacted them about safety and security programs, and the Collection Development manager recently emailed a library in Dallas with questions. This particular library in Dallas has similarities to Brown County Library.

As a follow-up question, the staff at the three resource libraries were asked if they are concerned they are being bothersome when they call or email a library with questions. All three said, no, because it's part of what libraries do. Bruce said, *"Librarians are such accommodating people. I've never had a library director respond to me with, 'I'm sorry, I won't help you.'"*

**The second major theme is that all three of these libraries attend and encourage staff participation in continuing education** and are fortunate to have budgets to send staff to not only state conferences, but national ones. Why is this important? Professionally speaking, as a continuing education consultant for the last 13 years, Jamie has witnessed the value of people from different-sized libraries talking, sharing, and networking. She encourages staff from member libraries to attend workshops and conferences because it provides the chance to meet new people and for opportunities to build their professional capital. Jamie has been fortunate enough to have attended over 40 state and national conferences over her career in libraries, and that has without a doubt, contributed to her development of successful collaborations and partnerships.

Bruce said that Waukesha Public Library regularly encourages staff to attend workshops and conferences. As an example, they sent three staff to the Public Library Association Conference in 2018 in Philadelphia.

This past year, they had 8 staff members attend the fall Wisconsin Library Association Conference in Wisconsin Dells and 5 of their staff attend the spring Wisconsin Association of Public Libraries Conference held in Rothschild. He feels that the state conferences offer the most bang for your buck. Several months ago, a few of his staff members visited the Fond du Lac Public Library to check out its maker space area, because Waukesha is interested in developing something similar.

Rachel noted that the Milwaukee County Federated Library System doesn't have a dedicated continuing education consultant, so librarians at Milwaukee Public rely on the continuing education that the neighboring Bridges Library System provides.

Emily said that Brown County Library closes three times per year to conduct all-staff training. Members of the administrative team frequently share continuing education opportunities with staff that they receive by their system (NFLS) newsletter.

**The third theme in these conversations was that even though these libraries are the largest in their systems and do not always have a lot in common with the other member libraries, it doesn't have an impact on the services they currently provide.** For example, Milwaukee Public is unique compared to all the libraries in Wisconsin.

Rachel said, *"There isn't a library comparable to Milwaukee Public Library in the state in terms of demographics and population, but there are lessons we can learn through our peers in the state."* Bruce made a similar statement, with *"There might not be libraries our size in our system, but it doesn't really matter. There are also system-led adult services and youth services meetings that we send people to. This is all part of a benefit of being in our system."*

All three of these colleagues said that Marathon County Public Library is absolutely welcome to contact them or staff members with questions or assistance.

## WVLS CONNECTS

WVLS consultants work closely with colleagues from all Wisconsin systems and participate at regional and state levels on statewide initiatives.

WVLS staff have recently served on:

- WLA Conference Planning Committees: Marketing/Publicity and Partnerships
- The WLA Library Development & Legislation Committee (LD&L)
- Membership on the gubernatorial appointed Council on Library and Network Development (COLAND)
- DPI initiatives:
  - Youth Services Leadership Institute
  - Wisconsin Public Library Director Bootcamp
  - Several Public Library System Redesign Project (PLSR) Committees
- DPI's LSTA Advisory Committee
- DPI and Workforce Development Libraries Activating Workforce Development Skills (LAWDS)
- Wisconsin Humanities Council
- WiscNet Board of Directors and Work Groups

Through these experiences, WVLS staff continues to build has led to depth of knowledge, expertise and resource sharing, creative partnerships, collaboration and friendships.

WVLS is involved and invested in the health of public libraries in Wisconsin and across the United States. The WVLS Board of Trustees and the Director of WVLS demonstrate this belief by encouraging WVLS staff to reach out and get involved in opportunities that work to strengthen Wisconsin libraries.

WVLS connects libraries across Wisconsin by providing and facilitating opportunities throughout the year. Examples not covered in other areas of this report include: Wild Wisconsin Winter Web Conference, Wisconsin Tech Days-West, and the Youth Services Annual Workshop.

**WVLS Mentoring Program.** The mentoring program connects WVLS directors with experienced colleagues. Based on the new director's needs, factors such as experience, geography, skills, and more are considered when selecting a mentor. In 2019 WVLS initiated a match between a WVLS director and a director outside the WVLS area in effort to fit a specific need of the library director with an appropriate and experienced director.

*The mentorship has been great. As a new director, you have so many questions about budgets and programming and things come up that you don't know what to do with. Jennifer is very helpful about what to expect and look out for.*

*I am very comfortable talking to her and sometimes I have anxiety when asking questions, but she is aware of my needs and she understands what I'm going through.*

*I email Jennifer every couple of weeks. I saw her at the WLA Conference in Wisconsin Dells and she asked how things were going, and we went to the trivia event together. She was able to introduce me to some new people, and having someone to "open that door" for me was great.*

Brandon Hardin, Withee Public Library Director, 2019

*The mentor/mentee program through WVLS is an opportunity for growth for both mentor and mentee. Each time I participate I gain a new relationship as well as learn something new, or am reminded of something that I should do/look at in my own library!*

Cara Hart, Black River Falls Public Library Director, WRLS, Mentor, 2019

**WVLS Wisconsin Library Association Membership/Professional Development Scholarship.** In 2018, the WVLS Board of Trustees approved the Wisconsin Library Association (WLA) Membership and Professional Development Scholarship to provide a WVLS colleague to attend a WLA-sponsored conference as well as a one-year membership to the Wisconsin Library Association (WLA). With the tightening of library budgets, many WVLS member libraries cannot afford to send a director or staff member to attend a conference or to purchase a professional library membership. The scholarship winners return from their experience with much more in addition to information from sessions:

*The conference overall was great. I came away with much insight and met many people from neighboring systems. The opportunities for networking were outstanding...*

Stephanie Schmidt, Crandon Public Library Director, 2019

*What comes to mind for a conference experience is being somewhat of a mentor to another librarian who is very new in the field. I stayed connected to her throughout the conference to help it not be quite so scary the first time and we were able to split sessions on a couple that were presented at the same time and share information. Networking is always a highlight of these events for me...A big thank you to WVLS for the scholarship and also for the WLA membership for the coming year. Continuing education is a driving force for me, and I'm grateful to be on the receiving end of such a wonderful opportunity.*

Denise Chojnacki, Rhinelander District Library, Library Assistant, 2019

*Even though I have met Denise Chojnacki (Rhinelander District Library) and Annette Miller (Tomahawk Public Library) before, I really enjoyed getting to know them better and developing a closer relationship with them. I attended sessions with them and we enjoyed each others' company in between sessions as well. It was really neat to compare the different services we offer at our respective libraries, since we are in three libraries in the far north of our library system and serve similar populations...We also discussed things we liked and didn't like about the sessions we attended together and different ideas that we feel we could implement at our libraries. Getting to know these two better and chatting with them really made the conference more fun for me.*

Erica Dischinger, Minocqua Public Library Children's Librarian, 2019

**WVLS Association for Rural and Small Libraries (ARSL) Conference Scholarship.** In 2015, the WVLS Board of Trustees approved the ARSL Conference Scholarship, a national conference specifically developed for small and rural libraries. Since its inception, 19 WVLS member librarians have received this scholarship, five scholarships to MCPL branch coordinators. WVLS conference attendees gain knowledge and build support networks and friendships both with fellow WVLS scholarship winners and conference attendees from across the United States. WVLS and all Wisconsin libraries are strengthened by the knowledge, experience, enthusiasm, and ideas for programs and services WVLS scholarship attendees bring home.

*Thank for the opportunity to attend this wonderful, engaging, and educational conference. I came back with a lot of information. I hope to be able to attend future library conferences to continue learning and growing as a librarian and branch manager.*

Heather Bain, MCPL-Hatley Branch Manager, 2019

*Overall, the conference left me assured that our small library is vital to our community yet there is much more that I might be able to offer. I have plans for our staff to be more proactive in listening to our patron's needs, engaging them to find out where the interests other than books and movies are. I would like us to be more involved in the activities of community organizations, bringing the library to them rather than hoping they come to us.*

*My biggest and most important goal is to become more involved with the staff and library at the public school. Thank you again to WVLS for the scholarship and opportunity to attend. The ARSL conference is a relevant, important resource that I can confidently recommend and look forward to in the future.*

Teresa Hall, Loyal Public Library Director, 2018

*Neillsville Public Library can only benefit from sending an attendee to ARSL. I'm confident in implementing the data and community partner tips, and curious about implementing the advice to get more teens in the library. As with ARSL 2017, I came home with more small library librarian*

*connections, and concrete ideas that can be put to use right away in our own library. Thank you for sending me to ARSL 2018! You can expect an application from me for ARSL 2019*

Cara Hart, Neillsville Public Library Director, 2018

*I am so thrilled and thankful to have received one of the six scholarships offered by WVLS this year. Attending the ARSL national conference in Utah has been one of the highlights of year. I was very excited to attend a national conference to learn about the struggles and successes of other libraries that face the same challenges as our small rural libraries here in Central Wisconsin. A bonus – the beautiful setting of St. George, Utah. In my “past life” as a teacher, I have attended conferences with a similar format: Key note [sic] speakers, exhibitors, and breakout sessions. The difference that I found with this conference, is that many of us faced the same challenges and obstacles. It seemed that we had more common threads and thus, more ways to connect with each other. I met some great people, had some wonderful conversations and took away a plethora of information that I will be able to adapt and implement at my library.*

Lisa Haessly, MCPL-Marathon City Branch Manager, 2017

**Wisconsin Libraries Backup and Archive Project.** WVLS and its LEAN WI partners continue to play critical leadership roles in the Statewide Backup and Archival project between all 16 systems. WVLS organized, and hosted a number of LSTA grant funding discussions including administrators and technology managers from library systems around the state, WVLS and its LEAN WI partners ensured that the group investigating products engaged in meaningful vendor relationship management, and WVLS and its LEAN WI partners continue to lead in execution and engineering development of the co-location, multi-tenant implementation.

**WVLS Director’s Retreat and Youth Services Information Exchange (YSIE).** WVLS organizes strategic gatherings for directors and librarians throughout the year. Librarians serving youth travel to varying WVLS host libraries for Youth Services Information Exchange (YSIE) gatherings to talk about pressing issues, share success stories and lessons learned, and tour the host libraries spaces. WVLS also organizes a bi-annual Director’s Retreat with featured speakers and discussion sessions planned around a pressing theme in the library field. The 2019 WVLS Director’s Retreat theme was “Maintain and Sustain.” The day focused on ways the library can remove barriers and become more welcoming, administrative practices and refreshing library spaces, and improving productivity. The day was well received. All the table topics received high evaluations in being “practical,” “engaging,” and that “new information was learned.” The guest speakers also received praise. One attendee wrote, “I loved everything about this retreat!” Another said, “I LOVED having library directors from other systems participate.” WVLS invites libraries from neighboring systems to all continuing education and youth services gatherings.

*I have connected on a more regular basis to youth services librarians in my area, working in libraries similar to the Rib Lake Public Library through the quarterly Youth Services Information Exchange. YSIE provides me with a chance to join in the sharing of ideas for programming and serving youth in person, through email, and a facebook group. It’s like a think tank and I love being able to visit other libraries as we rotate meeting locations. YSIE is one more resource that helps me provide quality youth services to our local community.*

Krista Blomberg, Rib Lake Public Library, December 2019

**WVLS Innovation and Collaboration Literacy Grant.**

In 2018, the WVLS Board of Trustees approved the WVLS Innovation and Collaboration Literacy Grant which requires partnering WVLS libraries to develop early literacy centers and early literacy programming through partnerships in their community. The Rib Lake Library and Tomahawk Public Library were awarded the pilot grant in early 2019 and have since re-envisioned their spaces.

The Tomahawk Public Library has repainted its entire children's area, built a log cabin imagination station and tree in their space, and reimagined the configuration of their space, and have many plans in the works. The Rib Lake Public Library hired a local artist to install a 17 foot long mural, refurbished and purchase natural furniture, installed a musical instrument wall, commissioned a local artist for signage promoting the "Talk, Read, Sing, Play" theme, and built literacy themed interaction stations for all ages to enjoy. The Rib Lake Library consulted with local leaders of the Hispanic population to create the mural, signage, and activities as bilingual features.

The youth librarians from Rib Lake and Tomahawk are partners, they visit each other's spaces to help brainstorm for their respective spaces, communicate constantly, and presented their work at the 2019 WLA Conference in the Wisconsin Dells. Rib Lake and Tomahawk are in the final stages of the grant and are planning grand openings for spring and summer 2020.

*You don't know how much your encourage continues to help me stay motivated and excited about this process. I guess we all need an "atta girl" sometimes and someone to help us know if we are "on the right track."*

Krista Blomberg, Rib Lake Public Library Children's Librarian, December 2019

*I am very pleased with how the grant is progressing. A few patrons were excited to contribute to the music wall and have dropped off some things I'll be able to use. People are excited to see the artist working on the mural when they come in. It brings such a positive/ creative feel to our library. I hear a lot of gasps as people come into the view of it. The "Wow" factor that I had wanted to create is there without a doubt. The artist has offered to create some coloring pages from her animal designs especially for us to use, free of charge.*

Krista Blomberg, Rib Lake Public Library Children's Librarian, July 2019

*This was a big month for me [August, 2019] and the grant. I had a break from summer programming and storytime so I put it to good use especially considering I was on vacation for a week. When I returned from vacation I took some time to just appreciate the mural and to read through the artist response notebook. It was a great confirmation that the mural has made the impact we hoped it would make. I am excited to have ways to also promote the grant through the use of FB, the WLA poster session, and the article for the WVLS newsletter. The mural itself has given us much opportunity to talk about the grant as we discussed how these additions and improvements to our library are made possible. I love that.*

Krista Blomberg, Rib Lake Public Library Children's Librarian, August 2019

*First, I would like to say that I appreciate this very generous grant and that our library is fortunate to have received it. I am proud of what has been completed so far and I am excited about the plan as well. However, I know that I have a long way to go and that is on me. The process for decision-making and purchases has been challenging for me. I also worry that what I do will not live up to the expectations of the grant. I'm sorry, I don't know a better way to express my thoughts. As is the case with many who work in small libraries, I have a lot of responsibilities and it has been easy*

*for me to put other things ahead of the grant. Although I am at fault here, I have to say that I feel the length of time to complete the grant is a bit long and that if the time frame were shorter it would be easier to make it more of a priority. As I said earlier, I am very pleased with what has been accomplished and with the plan, but what I am more happy about is the relationship that has developed between Krista Blomberg and myself. It has been wonderful working together and creating a partnership that goes beyond the grant and into our everyday life as librarians who serve children. The other important person in this experience is Anne Hamland. Anne is always ready to give support, ideas and praise. I couldn't ask for a better collaboration team. With the start of the new year approaching I just need to do my part and work hard to finish what's been started and live up to the expectations of those who awarded this grant to our library.*

Annette Miller, Tomahawk Public Library Children's Librarian, December 2019

## WVLS COLLABORATES

WVLS is a leader in statewide collaborations thanks to the guidance of the WVLS Board of Trustees and initiative of WVLS staff. Successful collaborations between WVLS and public libraries and systems has seen unprecedented implementation in recent years. Examples include:

WVLS was instrumental in forming the Public Library System Marketing Cohort. Developing a marketing plan template that can be used by all Wisconsin's public libraries is under development.

WVLS was instrumental in forming the LEAN WI partnership, a highly successful collaboration between the IFLS Library System, Northern Waters Library System and WVLS to provide support to, and advance technology at, 100 public libraries in central and northern Wisconsin.

WVLS and its LEAN WI partners were influential in developing a coordinated computer procurement partnership with 13 other public library systems and continue to help lead in product review and vendor relationship management.

WVLS was influential in developing a coordinated computer procurement partnership with 13 other public library systems and leads the technology backup and digital archives project between all 16 systems.

WVLS initiated a meeting of Sierra ILS administrators and support staff from six public library systems to explore ways of providing improved ILS services and support. The meeting was a success. WVLS subsequently established an email listserv for the group to be able to actively engage with each other as needed. Follow-up meetings are being planned for 2020 and beyond.

WVLS jumpstarted regional gatherings of youth services colleagues to share experiences, offer support and review service trends. These opportunities are now bringing in colleagues from neighboring systems.

WVLS collaborates. The WVLS team does its best work when collaborating and brainstorming with connections across the state as well as across the United States as shown in the collaboration maps throughout this document. WVLS can assist MCPL in brainstorming, learning, partnering and collaborating. We can work together to find opportunities that fit the needs of MCPL.

## FUTURE POSSIBILITIES

With input from MCPL, WVLS may be able to pursue these new initiatives:

- Develop a **mentorship program** where MCPL staff would partner with a librarian of their choosing from **any library** for support and advice.
- Provide new director and staff orientation.
- Feature Madison Public Library or large library staff in **workshops** every year. This program would be open to all, but held at MCPL, like the Bubbler workshop offered in 2019.
- Plan and coordinate an annual **staff in-service day** with a peer-sized library every year.
- **Assist with grant discovery and grant proposals** in such areas as:  
<https://www.ims.gov/grants/available/national-leadership-grants-libraries> in the areas of lifelong learning and **community catalyst**
  - One example fitting this type of grant would be the development of **Neighborhood Resource Teams** throughout Marathon County similar to the Madison Public Library Neighborhood Resource Teams (<https://www.cityofmadison.com/mayor/programs/neighborhood-resource-teams>), **Root for Columbus Project** from the Columbus Public Library (<http://www.ala.org/tools/librariestransform/blog/root-columbus-it-took-village-make-our-tree>) or **Building Merrill Together** from the T.B. Scott Free Library (<https://dev.tbscottlibrary.org/building-merrill-together/>).
- Offer **scholarships to attend additional national scholarships to attend conferences** such as American Library Association (ALA) (Chicago 2020 & 2021) and Public Library Association (PLA)
- Organize travel to national conference with peer-sized libraries to encourage networking and relationship building.
- **Facilitate on site visits to peer-sized libraries.** Learning from other libraries is powerful professional development. The most valuable aspect of onsite visits is not necessarily that they pose new questions for visitors, but rather that they suggest new answers to the specific issues already being discussed. They can challenge a way of thinking about a facility and services, and to think bigger about oft-discussed questions regarding access (relationships with agencies, policies, library card applications). Visit takeaways may be small in scale but large in impact. The perspective offered by stepping out of our own communities helps to ground us
  - IFLS Library system has organized a bus tour for library staff to visit member libraries.
  - A library in the Bridges Library System drove to as many libraries in their system for a staff development day in 2019.
  - Nicolet Federated Library System has organized bus tours for library staff to visit member libraries in the past.
- **Expand supply/equipment/database procurement.**
  - IFLS Library System organizes a collaborative Demco supply order.
  - Bridges Library System and Lakeshores Library System organize summer reading program performers for member libraries to secure group discounts.

As noted by the Madison Public Library, the Library *“is bigger than our buildings, though – our focus is community engagement and empowerment – both within and outside the library walls. We are in the business of changing lives.”* Marathon County Public Library is more than its buildings and walls. MCPL staff are doing great work across the county. Let’s work together to navigate the needs of all MCPL staff and libraries and see where our collaboration takes us.



## CONCLUSION

It is, indeed, an exciting time for public library systems and public libraries! Over the last several years we have seen unprecedented engagement by public library systems to come together to explore ways in which to partner to enhance services on behalf of our members. And, there are tremendous opportunities for public libraries to collaborate with public library systems, peer-sized libraries, educational institutions, businesses, nonprofits and community groups. And we are fortunate that DPI, through the Public Library System Redesign process, also recognizes the value of leveraging the expertise of public library system staff, best practices of systems, and lean processes in businesses to advance public library system success.

WVLS was very involved in the first phase of the PLSR process and we look forward to being just as involved with it over the next several years. We foresee more rigorous analysis of workgroup recommendations and outreach to field experts prior to any implementations, particularly those that are more complex. We also anticipate that any PLSR implementations will stay true to the goal of providing equitable, efficient and affordable service for all Wisconsin's public libraries, and not a select few.

While there are many reasons for Wisconsin's public libraries and systems to be optimistic about the future, MCPL Administration's intent to leave WVLS has cast a cloud of uncertainty over many libraries and systems near and far. The MCPL Board's development of a task force to investigate membership in another system, absent of any service issues with the current system, is unprecedented. The WVLS Board of Trustees and staff, member libraries, and systems across the state with whom we collaborate, are perplexed by this investigation and its motivations. We sincerely hope that the work of the task force will be transparent, studious and thorough, and that all parties who may be impacted, including Marathon County citizens, have a thorough awareness and understanding of the activities and decisions of this task force and Board.

Again, if there is any assistance we can provide, please let us know. The WVLS staff and Board of Trustees are always available to support a member library in any way possible. Help us to help you.

Thank you for your time.