

**WVLS Leadership and Relationship Building  
MCPL Task Force Meeting  
August 17, 2020**

**QUESTION**

We will have what may be our final meeting on the 17th. We've got one last question for you: "MCPL and Marathon County have invested nearly a decade in improving their organizational culture. For example, all county employees who serve in leadership roles have been through leadership training provided by consulting firms like Lighthouse Consulting and Lumin Advantage Consulting. Among the most productive tools gained by that organization-wide consulting was the practice of "Rounding." The library was among the five original county teams to use the rounding method, and they have statistical evidence to verify an almost unprecedented cultural turnaround over the past 10 years. ***How does your system address their leadership role in working with their member libraries, and how do you build strong relationships with those member libraries?***

**INTRODUCTION**

The goal of library systems is to provide all Wisconsin residents with access to the high-quality library service needed to meet personal, work, educational, and community goals. WVLS strives each day to enable its 25 member libraries to deliver stellar services to their unique communities, through dedicated outreach to build strong relationships within the seven counties it serves and enhance leadership skills at all levels.

**LEADERSHIP STARTS WITHIN**

WVLS values the leadership of its staff and board of trustees. Providing educational opportunities for people to expand their horizons and challenge their assumptions, while growing and developing in their roles, facilitates better decision making. Experiences that place staff and board members in leadership roles are encouraged. Within the WVLS culture, healthy relationships and strong teams are cultivated through humility, honesty, trust, respect and open communication. Seeking compromise is recognized as an asset rather than a weakness. Expressing gratitude for the work our staff and member library staffs do to serve their public is a bedrock concept. There is no imbalance of power when everyone on the organizational chart recognizes they are important and that they are valued. Staff are encouraged and empowered to assume increased responsibility and independence for they oversee, and to explore new projects and make decisions without fear of retribution or retaliation. Working in an environment that strives to optimize collaboration, cooperation, and teamwork, staff freely share concerns, perspectives and ideas with one another, and generously offer skills and expertise when called upon.

**LEADERSHIP IS DEMONSTRATED THROUGH SERVICE**

With a strong sense of responsibility to best serve our diverse communities, WVLS provides innovative and impactful leadership that empowers individual libraries in their pursuit of excellence. The WVLS team is constantly challenged to critically assess our system services and suggest improvements, identify new resources needed to implement those improvements, make programs that are working well even better, and think outside the box to inspire our member libraries.

To help lead its members through services innovations, community conversations, and daily operational challenges, WVLS provides in-depth consulting, relevant outcome based continuing education and trainings, and frequent opportunities to network with WVLS staff, as well as colleagues within our system and throughout the state. For further information on WVLS staff leadership credentials, as well as the examples of collaborative projects created to help lead and develop libraries and their staffs, please refer the information WVLS provided at the [December 2019 MCPL Board of Trustees meeting](#) as well as the [February 2020 MCPL Task Force meeting](#) (see attached).

**WVLS BUILDS STRONG RELATIONSHIPS**

WVLS strives to build healthy relationships with all its member libraries, based on the above cultural tenants and utilizing available tools and networking channels. Recognizing that relationship-building is a two-way proposition, here are some examples of WVLS outreach opportunities that encourage members to build wider, deeper professional connections in ways that best suit them at any given time.

- Mentorship opportunities that match new library staff with experienced peers
- Orientations of new public library directors and board members
- Collaborative education and training opportunities
- Provide a Retreat for Public Library Directors, a premier opportunity that brings together WVLS staff and directors from libraries both within and outside WVLS to talk about relevant topics of mutual interest
- Scholarships to attend and network at Wisconsin's Library Legislative Day, and state and national conferences
- Coaching in library advocacy, marketing, and public speaking
- Opportunities to serve in leadership roles on various WVLS committees and workgroups
- Opportunities to present at WVLS workshops and webinars, to the WVLS Board of trustees and at WLA conferences
- Establishment of multi-system partnerships for enhanced sharing of resources and expertise
- Facilitated networking between WVLS libraries and peer sized libraries outside WVLS
- Impromptu in-office and in-person visits (something staff at the MCPL Wausau branch have frequently taken advantage of over the years due to our proximity and availability)
- Scheduled "visits", in-person and online, such as Youth Services check-ins, Website Office Hours for staff responsible for managing and updating library websites, WVLS Listening Sessions and, most recently, the weekly "Staying Together" discussions
- Email and Facebook Groups such as those WVLS established for youth services colleagues, V-Cat consortium members, cataloging staff and public library directors to communicate shared interests with colleagues and system staff

## **CONCLUSION**

WVLS takes our leadership roll very seriously. Member libraries value the leadership and services WVLS provides as evidenced by the reviews public libraries provide in their public library annual reports. For at least the last 10 years, the MCPL Board has checked the box on its annual report that WVLS has provided effective leadership. The following correspondence shared at recent meetings of the WVLS Board of Trustees is a further testament to the leadership of the WVLS team.

In closing, I would like to congratulate MCPL administration on its culture change attributed to using county "rounding" tools to help implement improvement and measure its progress. Marathon County's application of this process to assess county government culture was new and interesting information to WVLS. We would welcome MCPL taking a lead role in sharing what they have learned from this exercise with WVLS staff and member libraries. Perhaps a virtual presentation developed by MCPL staff would enhance the development of stronger cultural relationships among MCPL, other WVLS libraries and WVLS staff. Please feel free to reach out if you think a presentation of this nature would be helpful!

## **MEMBERSHIP APPRECIATES WVLS LEADERSHIP AND OUTREACH**

**Shared with the WVLS Board of Trustees, August 2020**

### **Letter of Resignation from Marathon Co. Representative to the WVLS Board**

*"Marla, Associates, Colleagues & Friends,*

*It is with distinct regret & a range of conflicting emotions that I submit my resignation from the Wisconsin Valley Library Service Board of Trustees.*

*Events have been progressing much faster than anticipated & have taken on a life of their own but I'm afraid at the very least these developments will force my resignation from the WVLS Board with very little prior notice, starting with my inability to attend the August 15 Trustees meeting to announce my departure in person. ...*

*... I very much regret the lack of advance notice but if nothing else, such an abrupt departure will spare me the spectacle of losing my composure if I were to try to bid farewell to the entire group at once.*

*In truth, I simply don't know how to gracefully withdraw from an organization & group of library proponents that have been so much a part of my life for longer than I dare admit and for which I am inexpressibly grateful.*

*It has been an honor to collaborate with such an agreeable & dedicated coterie of librarians & trustees. In terms of professional growth & insight, I have received far more from WVLS than I could possibly have given in return.*

*Thank you with gratitude for your association as colleagues, role models, committed trustees, consummately professional library staff & not least of all, as friends.*

*Best wishes to all, " -- **Douglas Lay**, Marathon County Representative on the WVLS Board of Trustees, 1982-1987; 1991-2020*

### **Note of Appreciation**

*"As life slowly starts to resemble a new normal, I wanted to take a moment to acknowledge the wonderful way each of handled the closing of our libraries. Learning new ways of doing things as well as keeping each of us sane must have been challenging, but you did it well. I am hoping we are a better group of people and our libraries are better because of the support and leadership you have shown us. I greatly appreciate each of you and your talents." -- **Teresa Hall**, Loyal Public Library Director*

*"Thought you might like to see some of the comments on your videos. 😊 There are more positive thoughts on other threads. Yay for you!" -- **Cindy Fesemyer**, Adult and Community Services Consultant at DPI, to Jamie Matczak for the two *Digital Byte* training videos she produced on customer service entitled "Having Unpleasant Conversations (During a Pandemic)" and "Communication Tips (While Wearing a Mask)". The videos were shared with DPI's contacts in other states.*

*"Katie, you are awesome! I appreciate you so much. We really could not do this without you and all your hard work." -- **Dominic Frandrup**, Antigo Public Library Director to Katie Zimmermann for the work she did in the online catalog to prepare the library for reopening*

*"Thank you for all of the work you are doing to keep our online programming up to date and cool looking! Thank you, thank you, thank you!!!" -- **Su Leslie**, St. Croix Falls Public Library (in the IFLS Library System) Director, to Anne Hamland*

*"Thanks for this latest *Digital Byte* video [called "Unpleasant Conversations (During a Pandemic)]. These were good tips, and I plan to have my staff watch this, too. The 'but' habit is a hard one to get out of, and I'm working on it! -- **Teresa Schmidt**; Mercer Public Library (in the Northern Waters Library System) Director, to Jamie Matczak*

*"Rachel, Thank you for explaining the ecommerce. I know I will be asked about it by the board. I'm sure life is stressful; working full time with 2 littles – you deserve a raise if you haven't gotten one ..." -- **Kim Metzke**, Greenwood Public Library Director to Rachel Metzler*

## Shared with the WVLS Board of Trustees, May 2020

*"The System staff has been amazing through this."* --**Tammie Blomberg**, Rib Lake Public Library Director

*"Thank you for all your help with everything during this chaotic COVID-19 crisis. You are truly a godsend for keeping our website up to date all while managing many many other websites and tackling what I'm sure is a million other tasks. Your work, guidance, and support does not go unnoticed. You make my life so much easier! THANK YOU THANK YOU THANK YOU!"* --**Stephanie Schmidt**, Crandon Public Library Director, to Anne Hamland

*"I know how hard it is to keep everyone informed every day. It is mentally exhausting. I really appreciate the news we can use --as does RDL staff. "* -- **Virginia Roberts**, Rhinelander District Library Director, to Jamie Matczak

*"Thank you for continuing to provide wonderful webinar and CE opportunities for library staff across Wisconsin. I appreciated the content provided by **Pat Wagner** during 'The Ethics of Library Customer Service' [webinar]."* -- Danielle Zeamer, Brown County Library Service Associate, to Jamie Matczak

## Shared with the WVLS Board, April 2020

The **WVLS Annual Report Team** received several thank you cards for the support they provided to area library staffs to complete the 2019 public library annual report. Sample comments include:

*"Thank you for your time and effort in putting together the numbers necessary to complete our annual report. I very much appreciate how straight forward you make everything. Furthermore, I appreciate knowing that the staff at WVLS always has the best interest of the libraries in our system in the forefront of everything that they do. Thank you!"* – **Teresa Hall**, Loyal Public Library Director

*"I would like to extend a BIG Thank You to everyone involved with generating and dispensing data for the Colby Community Annual Report 2019. Your help has made this process so much easier than "back in the 'old days.' You are appreciated!!"* – **Vicky Calmes**, Colby Community Library Director

*"Thank you again for all [your] help on the annual report. It may not have felt like it, but with this and all the prior year's help, [we] didn't have as many questions and ... felt way more confident in our notes."* –**Virginia Woods Roberts**, Rhinelander District Library

**Carolyn Forde**, Youth Services Librarian at the T.B. Scott Free Library (Merrill), sent a note to staff at her library and **Joshua Klingbeil** expressing appreciation for the support provided for the library's Minecraft program. She stated, *"I just want to take a moment out of my day to commend you all for working hard together to support the Educational Minecraft program initiative:*

- *Thanks for your commitment to public service*
- *Thanks for your commitment to each other to do your part to make it all happen*
- *I am hearing how wonderfully things went Friday when this program premiered in Merrill, so kudos to all of you."*

## **Digital Byte on Recording Program Stats in the WI Public Library Annual Report**

The training video developed by **Anne Hamland** and Public Library Development Team Consultant **Tessa Michaelson Schmidt**, for tracking program statistics in the public library annual report was well received by the library community. Tessa shared her thanks with Anne, stating, *"Gorgeous! Thank you. Our humble appreciation for your leadership and collaboration."* Tessa received an email of thanks from

**Joy Schnupp**, Barrett Memorial Library Director (Williams Bay) which said, *“I just have to thank you for the fabulous statistics tracker! It’s going to be a huge timesaver, and I so appreciate all your hard work making it the best tool ever! My staff and I watched the video you and Anne put together, and midway through we were high-fiving each other, no lie! We have been using our own method via Google Sheets, but boy, yours is way better. And the fact that it populates the annual report – well, it’s just fantastic.”* The training video was shared by public library systems with their members, posted to some system web pages and shared via the WLA Youth Services Section blog. You can view the training on YouTube, <https://youtu.be/vOgKrgo11v4>, and view the transcript at <https://wvls.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/Keeping-Track.pdf>.

## Shared with the WVLS Board of Trustees, January 2020

### Notes of Appreciation

Following an announcement to system colleagues that **Anne Hamland** had created a **NEW** 2020 Census page on the WVLS website and that they were welcome to use and/or share with their member libraries, WVLS received email notes of appreciation from several systems and public libraries. The new website (<https://wvls.org/2020-census/>) includes a census project timeline, social media shares and other resources, and will expand as more information becomes available.

**Lisa Haessly**, MCPL Marathon City Branch Coordinator, sent **Jamie Matczak** a note of thanks for taking the time to keep her informed of courier-related matters.

Rhineland District Library Director **Virginia Roberts** expressed her gratitude to **Marla Sepnafski** for the information shared in the WVLS Director Reports, *“Thank you once again to you and the WVLS staff for sending out clear information and a very complete report and exhibits. These items truly help my staff, BOT, and affiliated organizations know what is happening, going to happen, and needs help to happen in our library and other libraries served by WVLS. Ideas are forged and brought forward. Opportunities are had.”*

## Shared with the WVLS Board of Trustees, November 2019

### Notes of Appreciation

**Mary Jo Netzer**, Stratford Branch Coordinator, and **Taylor Weinfurter**, Youth Services Librarian (MCPL), sent **Anne Hamland** notes of thanks for her support and ideas following a youth services consult. **Jamie Matczak** also received a note from Greenwood Public Library Director **Kim Metzke** thanking her for keeping her informed and learning what she needs to do her job. Several area colleagues expressed appreciation to **Rachel Metzler** for editing receipts for items checked out to include the amount saved at the bottom of receipts, and for adding bibliographic records to the V-Cat database for 2020 magazines.

**Kristie Hauer**, Shawano County Library Director, sent a card to **Marla Sepnafski** stating, *“Thank you so much for the invite to the recent WVLS Director’s Retreat. It was a great day of learning and a wonderful opportunity to interact with other library directors from outside my own system. **You have an excellent staff that set the bar high!**”* Kristie also sent Jamie an email regarding the Breakout EDU kits WVLS makes available for WVLS and IFLS Library System members saying *“I got super-excited to see you have the Breakout EDU kit for libraries that want to do escape room programming. Your librarians can feel free to pick Nancy and Paige’s brains if that is helpful for escape room programs. They have a TON of plans that could be shared with other librarians and adapted to fit different libraries. We could also present our workshop to librarians or if anyone wanted to tour/experience our escape room in Shawano we could arrange for that.”*

**Jamie Matczak** received feedback from **Kristina Kelley-Johnson**, Grantsburg Public Library Director, regarding a recent NFLS/SWLS/WVLS webinar. Kristina stated, *“I just viewed the recording How (and*



*Why) to Do a Simple External Communications Audit.* Lots of good stuff there. Thanks for bringing that webinar to us.” Also, **Kathy Dempsey**, one of the presenters for the NWLS/SWLS/WVLS marketing webinar series sent Jamie a note thanking her for “... *caring enough about marketing and advocacy to feature them in a series. It was a great idea, well-executed. And thanks for inviting me (and my esteemed colleagues) to be a part of this.*”

Recent WVLS Digital Bytes, “Free Stock Photos” and “MailChimp” by **Jamie Matczak**, and “Print Friendly” by **Anne Hamland** were recently shared in South Central Library System’s “Tech Bits: Bits of Technology for Your Library”.

### Shared with the WVLS Board of Trustees, September 2019

#### Appreciation from Former Director

**Julie Beloungy**, former director of the Thorp Public Library, sent a card to the WVLS staff which said, “*Your support and guidance over the years made my job so much easier and our library so much better. Thank you for all you have done to make libraries great and I look forward to keeping in touch (and taking advantage of WVLS services) while I’m at the school!*” Julie resigned from the position to take a position in the Thorp Public School System.



Pictured from left to right: Jamie Matczak, WVLS Continuing Education Consultant; Lorelee Petersen, Owen Public Library Director; Dominic Frandrup, Antigo Public Library Director; Erica Brewster, Demmer Memorial Library [Three Lakes] Director; Heather Bain, Marathon County Public Library – Hatley Branch Manager; and Teresa Hall, Loyal Public Library Director

#### ARSL Conference a Success!

On September 4-7, **Jamie Matczak** and **Teresa Hall** (Loyal) attended the Association of Small and Rural Libraries (ARSL) Conference in Burlington (VT) with WVLS Scholarship winners **Dominic Frandrup** (Antigo), **Erica Brewster** (Three Lakes), **Heather Bain** (MCPL-Hatley) and **Lorelee Petersen** (Owen). The conference provided an opportunity for networking, attending excellent sessions, and listening to keynote speakers. Travel went smoothly for the WVLS attendees, and the weather during the conference was pleasant and sunny.

The WVLS attendees gathered for several meals at the conference center to talk about sessions they attended. Following the sessions one evening, the group enjoyed a tour of the original Ben and Jerry's Ice Cream Factory, as well as dinner at a Himalayan/Indian restaurant. **Loralee Petersen** said, *"The conference was great, but sharing it with a fantastic group made it even better."* **Heather Bain** said, after arriving back in Wisconsin, *"I just want to say thank you to all for making this a memorable and fun first library conference for me."*

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