

2022 WLA Conference Scholarship Reports



**Grand Geneva Resort and Spa
Lake Geneva, WI**

WVLS Post-Conference Report

Heather Bain, MCPL-Hatley Branch

1. Please highlight three sessions from the conference.

What were the session topics? Who presented them? What made these presentations effective and meaningful to you?

- This was a hard question to answer! There were so many good sessions and many of them overlapped each other so I wasn't able to get to all the ones that I had wanted to but here are the three that stood out to me the most.
 - On the first day of the conference I attended a session called: Getting in the Subscription Game: How You can Create a Book Subscription for Kids. This session was presented by Katrina Wulff and Jodi Leslie of the Neenah Public Library. Both Katrina and Jodi made this a very personable experience. They were very laid back in the way they presented. They were very candid in what worked and what didn't work with their Book Subscription idea and how it works currently, what they changed and what they still want to change in order to keep improving and meeting the needs of their patrons. The biggest take away was that this was a great way for them to go through their entire children's collection and really determine which books to weed. If they didn't grab it for subscription, then their patrons most likely wouldn't either. They also used the books that were still good and relevant over using just the new items.
 - On the second day of the conference I had the amazing opportunity to drive over and take a Tour of the School for the Deaf located in Delavan Wisconsin. This was led by the school's Librarian, Nell Fleming. Nell is also in charge of maintaining the Museum on site that shows the school's history. I did not know this school existed in Wisconsin. I do think it is amazing that our state has this offering for our residents. We had the opportunity to meet a couple of the students, take a tour of the school and see the history that has been collected through the years. Something that stood out to me and gave me a better understanding is that this school is mainly for people who are genetically predisposed to being deaf, born deaf. This is because if you are born deaf or lose your hearing before you have had a chance to learn to speak you are learning two languages, spoken/written word and sign language. If you lose your hearing after you have learned to speak you don't lose that ability you just have to learn how to sign all the language that you know. It gave me a better understanding of why I don't recall seeing many deaf students in school. This school does go from Pre-K through 12th grade but is also helps with the transition from school to college so there are also students up the age of 21. This was a great experience and one that I think more people need to enjoy.
 - The last day was a short day 2 sessions with the option of also going and touring the newly renovated Lake Geneva Library. While I was able to take the tour of the library I also enjoyed two different sessions, both of which were amazing but the one that really stood out to me was the one called: Ready, Set, Challenge: Materials Challenge Readiness. This is because of what has been going on within

the libraries and it not being a matter of “IF” but “WHEN” a challenge may come our way. This session was led by: Tracie Miller from the South Central Library System, Karli from the Milwaukee Public Library, Melissa Prentice from the Mead Public Library in Sheboygan, and Megan Schliesman from the CCBC. This session was full of wonderful resources and time to talk to other attendees about their experiences. I loved the scenario they gave us to think through about what steps we would take. It was wonderful to hear from some of the libraries that have already been dealing with patrons trying to challenge items within their collections and how they have dealt with them, as not everyone has the same policy and procedure. This session is also the one that gave me the idea to create a file folder or binder that is within reach of whoever is working the desk to have as a reference if/when needed.

- Overall this was a great conference with wonderful networking opportunities. I would love to be able to continue attending these conferences and each time you learn something new or even are possibly able to attend a session that you may not have been able to at a previous event.

2. Please highlight a conference experience, other than attending a conference session. Did you talk to someone you didn't know at a session? Sit next to someone at a luncheon and have a meaningful conversation? Visit with an exhibitor? How did **this** experience affect your overall outlook of the conference?

- I had the pleasure of driving over to the Wisconsin School for the Deaf with a fellow attendee. At the moment I cannot remember her name but do know that she was the Spooner Library. The whole experience was amazing and eye-opening. It was great to have a small amount of time to really talk with another attendee. She was great and was excited to see the school as she was hard of hearing. She shared her experience with having to navigate the barriers and masks during the beginning of the pandemic. I think that having the ability to drive or take a trip to a local establishment is a great way to enhance the conference experience, in a way of being able to connect more one on one with other attendees.

3. As a result of attending this conference, what three things do you plan on implementing at your library in the next six months?

There are for sure two things that I am currently working on implementing and two that I am trying to figure out if they are feasible and if so how to go about starting it.

- The first thing I am implementing is having a file folder within reach of the desk that has our policy regarding materials selection, policy regarding reviewing items being added into the collection, the policy and procedures dealing with when a patron wants to Challenge a book that is in our collection. These were all items that were brought up during the session called: Ready, Set, Challenge: Materials Challenge Readiness. This session was a great one to help understand the current divide there is within many of

communities and the Country. I loved this quote from one of the fellow attendees regarding being prepared, "It's not for if it happens. It's for WHEN it happens." I loved this! It's a matter of when not if a challenge of an item will happen. We need to be prepared and know our policies and tools to hopefully resolve the complaint before it gets to the official Challenge paperwork being filled out.

- The second item that I am starting to plan is to plan a program that utilizes PBS Kids media! I applied to hopefully be selected to part of the PBS Kids Library and Community Learning Cohort where individuals from around the state meet virtually multiple times during the upcoming year and are required to implement at least one program utilizing PBS Kids media. No matter if I am selected to be part of the cohort I will still be implementing a program using one of the step by step guides provided in a book that was given out!
 - One of the things I am hoping to implement is something I learned about during the Homeless Care Kits session. This session was all about how a library came to realize their homeless population needed a bit of extra help and they came up with a way to put together kits that can gotten at the front circulation desk as needed. These kits can have anything from toiletries to food to simple clothing items (gloves, socks, hats). The library does request their name so as to make sure they are not making these kits their sole way of getting items they need but are being used to help tide them over. Being out in the country we don't see many homeless patrons but we know that Wausau does have a growing population of homeless. I would love to somehow get something like together. Even it's just doing a drive of some sort at all the branches and making sure the supplies get to Wausau for use.
 - Another thing I am brainstorming is something called "Firsties" this where we connect with our local elementary school and work directly with the First Graders. The presenters for this session create monthly videos that are sent to local elementary schools to shown to the 1st graders. These videos are short and talk about upcoming events within that month, showcase an area/collection within the library and then a "password" is given. This password is then given the first time each student comes into the library each month and they get to put a gem into their schools cup to see which school gets the largest number of 1st graders into the local library. Being in Hatley we only have the one local elementary school with 1 class of 1st graders. The part that I am trying to figure out is whether or not it would work with just one class and how to create that incentive for them come in.
4. What kind of support is needed for you to implement these three things? Support from your staff? Your Board of Trustees? Assistance from WVLS?
- As far as support goes, the biggest one is time especially with the programming one. I have already been given the go ahead that if I am selected that I am able to participate in the virtual meetings on work time but that also then involves making sure that we have adequate coverage at the branch. For the two that I am still in the very early process of brainstorming, support needed would be someone to help brainstorm ways to make these work. Getting the connections within the school for "Firsties" but also from local community partnerships for the Homeless Care Kits and how it would like as I don't work in Wausau.

5. How might your conference experience been improved to be more beneficial/impactful to you?
- While I loved the experience, I think trying to fit all of sessions into 2 and a half days was hard and there was very little time to unwind and really take in what happened each day. Lengthening the last day may have helped. I unfortunately wasn't able to ride the bus down with the other attendees due to the time that the bus was leaving. I think if I had been able to ride with other attendees it would have helped with ability to absorb the information gained better as there would have been time to talk to others and just really start bouncing ideas off each other.

WVLS Post-Conference Report

Carsyn Soderstrom, MLIS, Director of Thorp Public Library

1. Highlighted Session #1: Transform Your Space on a Dime, presented by Mary Lopez, Jennifer Webb, and Liz Humphrey

I sought out this session because the presents promised to present low/no budget solutions to space within the library. They did not disappoint and focused on logical solutions and patron-centered design options. They recommended observing how patrons use the space, and re-organizing based on what best suits people's needs. The focus on how simple observational analysis can help improve your library's design with little to no budget was very insightful.

Session #2: Bored? Not When You Have Board Games! Presented by Amy Greatens and Katie Boettcher

This session was incredible fun and informative! The presenters were clearly passionate about how to utilize the resources in their library and make borrowing games and RPG's as easy and fun as possible. I especially appreciated how they took us through the entire process of researching, purchasing, cataloging, and advertising their collections. They were also thorough in explaining why board games have value to patrons and gave excellent examples of how to replicate their efforts in your own library.

Session #3: The Time Tax and Library Patrons: Easing the Stress presented by Brett Rohlwing

This session was extremely helpful to me, as my library is the main source of internet, copying, and printing for many in my community. The speaker talked about how difficult it can be for people to navigate complicated paperwork and bureaucracy just to access basic care and entitlements, not to mention job searching and schoolwork. He provided many examples from his own library, and how he sought to help patrons by assisting them in navigating these steps and providing organizational tips. While this session was more focused on the presence of a problem in the library information community than on actionable solutions, I still found it very enlightening to know that I was not the only one who has spent hours of my time trying to help a patron navigate a complicated website or fax important documents.

2. I had so many wonderful and valuable experiences at the conference that it's difficult to choose just one, but I have to say that I especially enjoyed the luncheon with special guest Speaker Kevin Henkes. As someone who is a major fan of his work as a children's author and illustrator, getting to hear him speak about his process was so fascinating. It was also really special to be in a room full of people who were just as excited about meeting him as I was. I felt very fortunate to have attended that luncheon.
3. Three things I plan on implementing at the library within the next six months: A) I plan on taking a complete inventory of our board game collection, making changes to the processing of board games, and increase advertising both within the library and outside it that we have a lendable collection of games. B) I plan on creating a booking service that will allow our patrons to "book" a block of time to work with me if they have issues or questions about paperwork, technology, email, or other services that the library provides. This way, I can plan ahead instead of being

taken by surprise or be forced to put other work aside to assist a patron for a lengthy period of time. C) I plan on revising the library's current challenges policy. While the current policy is adequate, it could benefit from more specific language and a wider array of options for both patrons issuing a challenge and myself as director.

4. To accomplish these goals, I would need assistance in a few different ways and sources. For the board game plan, I would need to work with my staff to make sure they were aware of how to check out the games versus our other materials, and how to answer questions about them from our patrons. For the booking service, I would likely need to work out a system with WVLS to add the option to our website to contact me for booking time. I would also need to work with my staff to make sure the rest of the patron's needs are being met while I'm working one on one with someone. As for our collections and challenges policy, I would need the support of my board to make those changes, and I currently believe that they would support me in this effort. I would also need to train my staff to be aware of how to handle a challenge if I am not there.
5. Overall, I had a very positive experience at the conference. I thought the use of the Whova app was extremely helpful; It was so easy to use and made everything from navigating the resort to finding interesting sessions super simple.

All I wish to say is that I heard direct feedback from some of the other attendees that they found the Geneva Grand Resort to be difficult to navigate from an accessibility standpoint. There were very few elevators, and uneven floors and stairs that made attendees who used canes and wheelchairs feel like they were not accounted for. I realize that this is in no way WVLS's fault, but perhaps going forward, the venue should be examined by someone who can check for these gaps in accessibility.

Again, I personally found this experience to be incredible, and I am grateful to WVLS for the opportunity to attend.

WVLS Post-Conference Report

Sarah Moscatello, MCPL - Mosinee Branch

1. Please highlight three sessions from the conference.

What were the session topics? Who presented them? What made these presentations effective and meaningful to you?

Spilling the T(ruth) on Management- Lessons Learned from Public & Academic Librarians, presented by Dr. Tammy Mays, Stephanie Harris, and Hermione Bell-Henderson was a fantastic session on how emotional intelligence improves resiliency, your skills as a manager, and your personal well-being. Each presenter talked about their own experiences being a supervisor, different challenges they faced, and how they dealt with them. I learned so many small but valuable pieces of knowledge from this presentation, and left the session feeling very encouraged to reach out to the presenters for any further questions I had or topics I wanted to connect with them on.

Similarly, *You are a Manager Now, Wait, What?* was a session where I learned so many tidbits of advice from presenters Ann Cooksey and Denise Chojnacki. I was excited to hear from Children's Department Head Denise Chojnacki particularly as she's as part of our system, and I feel they both had gems of advice I wrote down to remember, such as the important of explaining the 'why' behind decisions and tasks to your staff and why the feedback loop with staff is so important. Mostly, I just appreciated the opportunity to hear from other supervisors and their experiences through the pandemic, to know that we're not alone in our challenges the last couple of years.

Lastly, *The Librarians are Not Okay: Emotional Intelligence at Work* was a pivotal session for me. Not only did presenters Monica LaVold and Katherine Elchert give an impassioned session on the common automatic thoughts and distortions that affect many staff, they gave concrete advice on managing conflict and self-regulation that I found invaluable. They also gave really impactful resources for participants to work through after the session, so that we're able to put what they taught into action that will help us not only be better leaders, but be better humans.

2. Please highlight a conference experience, other than attending a conference session. Did you talk to someone you didn't know at a session? Sit next to someone at a luncheon and have a meaningful conversation? Visit with an exhibitor? How did **this** experience affect your overall outlook of the conference?

Networking with other library staff was one of the highlights of the conference for me. At every luncheon and session, it was common to automatically introduce yourself to the person next to you, and I gained so much valuable knowledge and contacts from this that I would never had had the opportunity for in my regular work environment. An example was when a past college classmate and I re-connected between sessions, only to find out we are in similar library positions now with very similar experiences as we entered into our current roles. We were able to talk through our experiences and exchanged programming ideas. These networking experiences and the fellow attendees welcoming attitude were pivotal in making me, as an introverted supervisor, feel very comfortable and excited to apply for additional scholarships in the future.

3. As a result of attending this conference, what three things do you plan on implementing at your library in the next six months?

As suggested in the session entitled *Healing our Community: Short and Long Term Support After a Tragedy*, I will do what I can to make sure our building and staff are appropriately prepared for any event. I will ask that we have a supply of water bottles for patrons, as that was noted by the presenters as being a cost effective but irreplaceable help to patrons on the day of the Waukesha tragedy. I would like to also purchase at least one phone charger to have on hand for patrons, as suggested.

I will also be asking management for support in meeting with the Mosinee Police department for a walk through of our building to give recommendations on branch specific active shooter procedures as well as any safety guidelines specific to our branch. As the session presenters relayed, these horrible events can happen to any library, and it is our job to appropriately be prepared. By having the Mosinee Police force confer with us on these policies, it will also strengthen our working relationships with them, which the conference presenters also mentioned were pivotal in how their community survived the tragedy.

Lastly, as suggested in the *Transform your library on a dime* presentation, I will be doing an informal observational study of the Mosinee Branch patron space to see what affordable changes could be made, if any, to utilize our space and serve patrons better. Although she has had an initial introductory visit here previously, I would therefore like to invite the Library Services Manager to the branch again as well to specifically see our building challenges, especially concerning our large circulation desk that I feel takes up too much of our valuable space and increases our challenges with ADA compliance. My end goal after this visit would be to come up with ideas, if any, which would consolidate the circulation desk space.

I will also be uploading the slides and resources from my conference experience to share with my fellow Branch staff, so that everyone has access to the wealth of knowledge I gained from the conference.

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

I would need support from my staff and management on all three items above in order to implement them. I would also need the support of the Mosinee Police force for Mosinee Branch specific safety guidelines, if they are willing to visit the Branch for a meeting.

5. How might your conference experience been improved to be more beneficial/impactful to you?

As mentioned to staff already, making it more clear on what is included in the scholarship and what isn't would be incredibly helpful, especially if certain ways of registering for the event affect that. Including information, for example, on whether the membership fees should be bought and whether they are reimbursed would be helpful.

I would also suggest for the future that scholarship winners be given the reimbursement form and/or reimbursement totals before we need to book our hotels, as that would help us accurately budget within our scholarship total instead of possibly going over.

WVLS Post-Conference Report

Melissa Highfill, Interim Director, Westboro Public Library.

1. Please highlight three sessions from the conference.

What were the session topics? Who presented them? What made these presentations effective and meaningful to you?

- a. The One Person Marketing Team presented by Ashley Colstad- This presentation was very timely and relevant to me because we are a small library with a staff of 2 (including me). I am the one that primarily prepares social media posts, press releases and other relevant information presented to the community. Learning tips and tricks on how to manage my time on this task while achieving the biggest impact was a huge help! Being able to see her examples and learn from her experiences was a great benefit.
 - b. Gathering and Sharing Stories with StoryCorps presented by Angela Meyers and Kelly Davis- This presentation made a huge impact on me because I am very interested in expanding our local history collection and this would include incorporating oral history stories. We have a large population of seniors in Westboro that use the library and they have lived here for a large portion of their lives. They have great stories to share and learning about the StoryCorps model and learning firsthand about how to be a facilitator was excellent.
 - c. Ready to Learn with PBS Kids presented by Mouna Algahaihi, Kim Huber and Desiree Johnson- This program was very meaningful to me in my ever-evolving children's programming plans. In late 2021, I started a story time at Westboro Public Library, and it has been incredibly well-received. Our community of young families really enjoy PBS Kids, so learning how PBS Kids supports programming and learning about their upcoming cohort program was very valuable. I came away with new ideas and an activity guide that will be helpful with planning future programs for the kids.
2. Please highlight a conference experience, other than attending a conference session. Did you talk to someone you didn't know at a session? Sit next to someone at a luncheon and have a meaningful conversation? Visit with an exhibitor? How did **this** experience affect your overall outlook of the conference?

A huge highlight for me was being able to meet my fellow students, alumni and Professors from the Library and Information Science Program at CVTC. I am currently enrolled in the program, taking 9 credit hours this semester and 10 credit hours next semester with an anticipated graduation date of Spring 2024. The program is entirely online and while we interact in videos, it was great to meet them in person. Being able to talk 1:1 with the Professors from the program was very helpful as well, I got the chance to ask a few questions and find out answers immediately.

Because I was able to attend this conference and have this experience, I was able to form connections that I might not have been able to make at this point. With this networking, I have already benefited from it; when I attended the WVLS Youth Services Annual meeting on December 2, I re-connected with an alumnus I met at WLA and took some time to catch up and share ideas about upcoming things with her (April Lammert from Three Lakes).

3. As a result of attending this conference, what three things do you plan on implementing at your library in the next six months?

- a. Increasing the social media presence for Westboro Public Library. I have already implemented some of the ideas I learned from the “One Person Marketing Team” session on the Facebook page and have been posting/scheduling posts consistently. Next, I plan to start an Instagram page for Westboro Public Library in January 2023.
- b. Working on a collaboration with Tomahawk and Rib Lake Public Libraries to apply for a Wisconsin Humanities Grant in 2023 to support our efforts to become StoryCorps facilitators. Being able to talk to Heidi (Tomahawk) and Tammie (Rib Lake) after the StoryCorps presentation, we realized that we all wanted to implement this program at our libraries but doing it solo presented huge challenges. We plan to connect after the WVLS V-Cat Council meeting in January 2023 to do more planning and get the ball rolling.
- c. Starting a “subscription” service for early readers and juvenile readers. We have a good-sized homeschool population and I plan to take the advice from the “Getting in the Subscription Game” session. It will help get materials that haven’t circulated much back into circulation and help evaluate if they should be weeded or not. It will also create excitement for the kids because the themes will be secret until they get their bags.

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

- Working on increasing social media has required more support from the other staff member. I have asked her to select two materials a month and write a short paragraph about why she likes / would recommend them so they can be featured as the #StaffPickSaturday every other Saturday on the Facebook page.
- For the StoryCorps project, we have discussed having WVLS involved, but until we meet again, I don’t know to what extent. I have already discussed it with the Westboro Board of Trustees, and they are very excited about the idea and fully support me.
- I will need to write a grant or ask for donations to support the book subscription idea. I need to purchase:
 - branded (and sturdy) bags to pack the materials in
 - items to make a small craft project that can be done at home
 - an individually wrapped snack for each participant every two weeks.

5. How might your conference experience been improved to be more beneficial/impactful to you?

Considering this was my first professional conference, I don’t have anything to base it on and went with no expectations. It truly was a wonderfully educational and invigorating experience that I worked hard to make the most of. I have pages and pages of notes to pull from for future reference and am excited to see where the new ideas take Westboro Public Library. I truly appreciate the scholarship and the trust that was placed in me as a representative not only of Westboro Public Library, but also of WVLS. I would not have been able to attend without the scholarship, thank you.