



NICE Project

Why the NICE Project?

Northern Waters Library Service (NWLS), Wisconsin Valley Library Service (WVLS), and their respective consortia have been engaged in a comprehensive joint project to determine the value and feasibility of merging the two Integrated Library System implementations and respective ILS consortia.

Reasons for pursuing a shared ILS:

- **Potential for improved patron experience.** With a larger collection of materials, patrons across Northern Wisconsin will have expanded access to titles, including more unique titles and potentially shorter wait times for items outside of the local consortium. In particular, an ILS merger would improve the user experience of patrons who live on the border of a system and may find it convenient to have a library card that effortlessly accesses both systems.
- **The dynamic range of system staff makes cooperation advantageous to both.** NWLS and WVLS have already established partnerships and collaboration. An ILS merger would build on this existing strength to meet changing patron expectations with increased demand for a broad range of technology resources and mitigate the reduced capacity of member library staff due to reduced staffing, staff turnover, and increased responsibilities.
- **Rising costs of operation at the consortium and library level.** A shared ILS offers economies of scale and potential increases in ILS administration efficiencies and expertise. As consortium costs for ILS operation are increasing, library funding remains stagnant. These trends make it difficult, if not impossible, to maintain the "status quo" and offer the same level of services.
- **Library systems across Wisconsin, including NWLS and WVLS, are collaborating now more than ever.** NWLS and WVLS have grown and deepened collaborations in significant ways to provide continuing education, inclusive services, a kit partnership, technology platforms, and support, grant collaborations, and ILS-related support to their member libraries. There have been successful ILS mergers in recent years that show the possibilities and state-level support for system collaborations based on the findings of the [Public Library System Redesign](#) process completed in 2019.