Exhibit 17

# WiLS Data Classroom

October 2023 – May 2024

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## Background:

In response to survey responses noting need for data training for library workers, WiLS, the non-profit Wisconsin Library Service, offered an inaugural Data Classroom training course in 2023. Erica Brewster participated in the monthly sessions from October 2023 to May 2024.

## Course Description:

The WiLS Data Classroom is a hands-on practical training course on collecting, understanding, interpreting, and communicating about library data for both internal planning and building a wider understanding in the community about library services. The class met six times. Five of those meetings had specific topics and the sixth was a final capstone project presentation. Monthly topics were:

1. Identifying your Data Ecosystem
2. Collecting your Own Data
3. Collecting Data for Assessment, Evaluation, and Decision-Making
4. Data Analysis
5. Data Viz (Visualization)

Course instructor was Kim Kiesewetter, WiLS Data Analyst and Consultant. In addition to data analytics, she has a degree in anthropology with an emphasis on storytelling.

## Course participation:

Participants in the Data Classroom included library directors from across the state and Erica from WVLS.  Participating libraries were:

- Altoona Public Library (IFLS)
- Kenosha Public Library (Kenosha Public Library System)
- Menomonie Public Library (IFLS)
- Hammond Public Library (IFLS)
- New Richmond Public Library (IFLS)

## Coursework:

Program coursework focused on practical skills in data collection, analysis, and use. Sessions were presented as a "flipped classroom" with written documents and a video sent before the classroom meeting, then time spent in live meetings reviewed the materials and walked participants through

the homework exercises. Participants chose a project to focus their own data collection, evaluation, and analysis practice for their capstone project.

Evaluating the data ecosystem reviewed sources of data that contributes to telling a library's story, especially those that go beyond the standard library statistics such as that reported in the annual report. Data collection then walked through identifying useful information from those sources and collecting it for library use.

The next two sessions focused on tools for analyzing that data and how data can be used for evaluating library services for their capstones. Storytelling with data was also a key part of data analysis. Library capstones did not all focus on traditional questions using quantitative data. Several asked larger questions that used qualitative analysis.

Capstone projects included:

- "Genrefying" library collections – moving away from traditional Dewey Decimal and moving towards topical organization
- Library use survey for space use planning – using color-coding to mark areas of the library use throughout a day.
- Data collection for building needs analysis.
- Data visualization for summarizing and communicating annual report data quickly and easily.

## Personal professional motivation for participating:

I participated in this course to strengthen my new role as Data Consultant for Wisconsin Valley Library Service. I have a solid background in data collection and analysis, but there has been little opportunity to formally collaborate with other library colleagues in library-specific data discussion and problem solving. I also wanted to understand the course so I could recommend it to other library staff in the WVLS and wider Wisconsin library community.

## Monthly work portfolio:

Prior to completing the capstone work, my monthly work portfolio included:

- Data ecosystem: Updating a data sources bibliography I had originally developed in previous job roles. Document can be used to find data beyond library-specific data. This data can be used to describe the larger context of data the library exists within.
- Data collection: WVLS statistics booklet – adding additional pages for the 2023 booklet.
- Data evaluation: Developing new "evaluative" pages in 2023 statistics booklet (local/county funding trends adjusted for inflation and per capita performance charts)
- Data analysis: report on the TB Scott user survey.
- Data Viz: (also capstone project): creating visualization infographic for summarizing and communicating statistics booklet data.

I used my colleagues participating in the Data Classroom to review drafts of my work as I also helped evaluate their work as needed. It was invaluable to have a small audience of smart and active library directors to ask questions of and get feedback from.

## Capstone:

While I had hoped to take on a larger capstone, in the end I found it more valuable to get feedback on a smaller necessary project of creating data visualizations and key message/storytelling for WVLS and each county based on the 2023 annual report statistics.

My larger goal remains to develop focus groups to talk to library directors about their desire and need for data training. Kim has generously offered her time to work with me on that project as it evolves.

Capstone project for WVLS attached. Additional infographics were created for each county following this classroom.

## Key Takeaways:

This course offered a solid, but intensive introduction course to the fundamentals of library data use and application. The course does require a level of commitment for busy library staff. While the program and content is extremely applicable and valuable, it might be best for a library motivated by a need for using data, such as a building project or planning for undertaking a large strategic project. That said, having this course gave me focus to work on things I knew would be "good to do" but could have been pushed down on the to-do list. It provided good accountability.

Another approach would be to promote the course to library staff who have a strong interest in data and then tap those as human resources for assisting with smaller projects.

Due to the time commitment and cost, this may not be the best course for data training for general use. The five basic topics could be distilled down into a smaller bites training for less motivated or more time-constrained directors/library staff.

"Data literacy" is an important subset of "information literacy." Library staff need to be data literate both for their own decision making and helping board and municipalities with library-specific decisions, but also for helping the general public understand how to interpret the flood of data information coming at them.

# WVLS LIBRARIES IN 2023

## IN 2023, WVLS LIBRARIES HAD...

### 129,685 REGISTERED USERS

The equivalent of **45%** of the population of the seven-county service area **had a library card.**

Library cards are available for free to all residents of the seven counties in the WVLS service area, including those who live in municipalities that do not have a library.

**23%** of registered users **live in a municipality without a library**.

Non-resident users have access to all library services.

**25%** of checkouts were to registered users from municipalities without libraries.

## IN 2023, AN AVERAGE USER...

**visited a library 5 times.**
Visits to libraries increased 8.5% over 2022 and are more than double the pandemic low of 2020.

**checked out 12 physical items.**
Circulation of physical items remains the primary function of a WVLS public library.

**used a public computer or logged onto public wi-fi 2 times.**
Public PC use is down from pre-pandemic numbers, but has increased since 2020.

**participated in 1 program or self-directed activity.**
Attendance at in-person programs increased 45% over 2022 while participation in self-directed activities has dropped slightly.

## IN 2023, WVLS LIBRARIES OFFERED...

### 1,070,897 PHYSICAL ITEMS IN THEIR COMBINED COLLECTIONS

Physical items can be checked out from any member library. These items move between libraries through the system's courier service.

### ACCESS TO 236,183 ITEMS IN THE STATEWIDE DIGITAL LIBRARY CONSORTIUM

Also known "Overdrive" or "Wisconsin's Digital Library," registered users can check out ebooks, eaudiobooks, and emagazines on their personal devices through the Libby app.

**447,884 items moved between WVLS libraries**
An average of 84 items per courier stop.

13% of items checked out come from another library's collection.

**WVLS users accessed 361,695 ebooks, eaudiobooks, and emagazines.**
a 7% increase over 2022, and a 60% increase since 2015,

Use of e-audiobooks is now nearly equal to the use of e-books, even though e-audiobooks account for only 1/3 of the digital library collection.
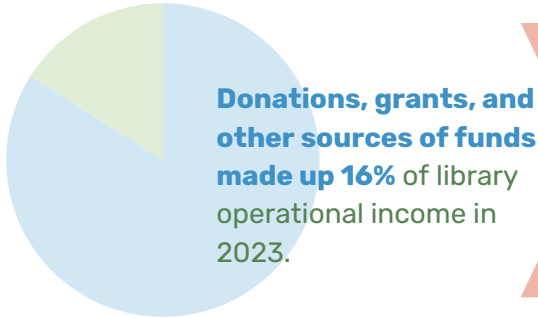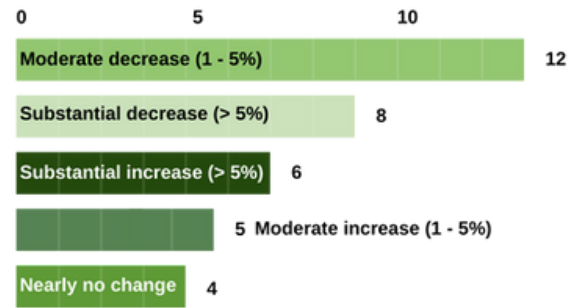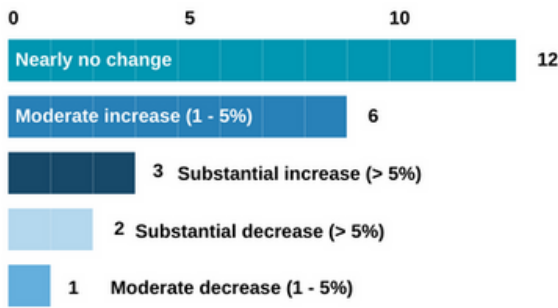
WVLS

# WVLS LIBRARIES - BEHIND THE SCENES

## 2023 WVLS LIBRARY FUNDING

### OVERALL, LIBRARY FUNDING FOR OPERATIONAL INCOME INCREASED IN 2023

Funding from **local municipal governments increased 1.8%.**

Funding from **county governments decreased by 6.75%.**

This is how the change was distrbuted across libraries:

| Local municipal | |
|---|---|
| Nearly no change | 12 |
| Moderate increase (1 - 5%) | 6 |
| Substantial increase (> 5%) | 3 |
| Substantial decrease (> 5%) | 2 |
| Moderate decrease (1 - 5%) | 1 |

| County governments | |
|---|---|
| Moderate decrease (1 - 5%) | 12 |
| Substantial decrease (> 5%) | 8 |
| Substantial increase (> 5%) | 6 |
| Moderate increase (1 - 5%) | 5 |
| Nearly no change | 4 |

**Donations, grants, and other sources of funds made up 16%** of library operational income in 2023.
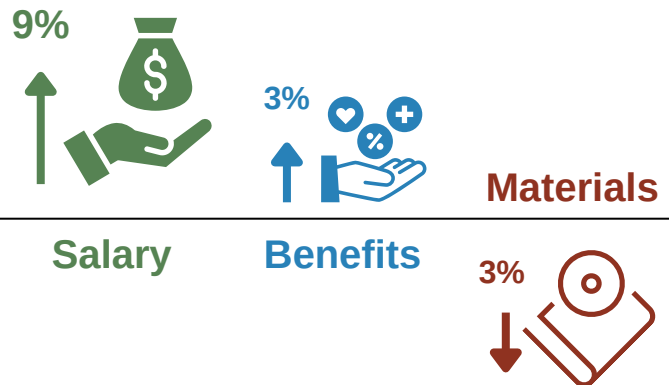
### INFLATION

Over the last 20 years, the purchasing power of allocated operational budgets **decreased** in **2 counties**. Cumulatively, local municipal funding lost ground to inflation in **6 of 7 WVLS counties.**

## 2023 WVLS LIBRARY EXPENDITURES

### AS A WHOLE, LIBRARY OPERATIONAL EXPENDITURES INCREASED 6.9% IN 2023

Salary costs were up 9%, benefits up 3%, and materials spending decreased by 3.6%.

**Increased personnel expenditures don't guarantee increased staffing** at member libraries. Benefits costs have increased 20% since 2019. Inflation and a competitive job market have forced wages to dramatically increase to attract and retain qualified staff.

9% Salary

3% Benefits

Materials

3%

## WVLS LIBRARY LEADERSHIP

### BETWEEN 2019 AND 2023, 17 DIRECTORSHIPS TURNED OVER AMONG 25 WVLS LIBRARIES 3 libraries had multiple director turnovers in five years.

Libraries have worked to maintain levels of service amidst staff and leadership changes. **Director salaries struggle to stay competitive.**