

# Director's Report

WVLS BOARD OF TRUSTEES MEETING  
February 15, 2025

## PEOPLE IN THE NEWS

### WVLS Board Welcomes New Trustee

The Clark County Board has appointed a new representative to the WVLS Board effective January 1, 2025. **Jim Mildbrand** has accepted the appointment for a 3-year term. He replaces **Louise Olszewski**, who retired from the Board at the end of 2024.

Trustees who have volunteered to stay on the WVLS Board for another 3-year term and have been reappointed by their respective counties include Langlade County representative **Judy Peterson** and Marathon County representatives **Michael Otten** and **Sonja Ackerman**.

Currently there are two vacancies for Marathon County representatives on the Board. One is for an appointment to replace **Tyson Cain** who resigned in 2021, and the other is for an appointment to replace **Jessica Bennett** whose term expired at the end of 2024.

### WVLS Leadership in 2025 (Exhibit 6b)

As we reflect on the accomplishments of 2024 (mentioned later in this report) and begin 2025, it is important to acknowledge that we realistically cannot accomplish what we do without the wisdom, and expertise, counsel, and support of others. The leadership of so many is truly at the very heart of what makes WVLS successful. Attached to this report is a WVLS Leadership List for 2025 (**Exhibit 6b**). WVLS is so grateful to all on the WVLS Team, colleagues throughout the WVLS community and in other systems, who have assumed leadership positions on our behalf, and we look forward to working with an excellent group of people throughout the year. WVLS appreciates the work WVLS leaders do!

### Library Legislative Day 2025 (Exhibit 6c)

The Wisconsin Library Association Library Legislative Day was well attended on February 11 with 214 librarians, trustees and other supporters registered from around the state. The morning briefing program held at the Best Western Premier Park Hotel included remarks from **Governor Tony Evers**, Senate Minority Leader **Dianne Hesselbein**, Joint Finance Committee Assembly Vice-Chair **Tony Kurtz**, State Superintendent of Public Instruction **Dr. Jill Underly**, Assistant State Superintendent Division for Libraries and Technology **Dr. Darrell Williams**, and WLA Government Relations Advisor **Steve Conway**. Beloit Public Library Director **Nick Dimassis** served as an emcee.

With leadership from WVLS Local and State Advocacy Consultant **Kris Adams Wendt**, the WVLS cohort included Abbotsford Public Library Director **Jenny Jochimsen**, E.U. Demmer Memorial Library (Three Lakes) Director **Jill Roth**, Frances L. Simek Memorial Library (Medford) Director **Maxx Handel**, Loyal Public Library Director **Teresa Hall**, Marathon County Public Library Support Services Manager **Nicole Metz-Andrews**, Owen Public Library Director **Loralee Petersen** and Trustee **Nikki Hall**, Rhinelander District Library Director **Virginia Roberts**, T.B. Scott Free Library Director **Laurie Ollhoff** and Tomahawk Public Library Director **Heidi O'Hare**; WVLS Board Members **Eileen Persike**, **Jim Mildbrand**, **Kari Sweeney**, **Kay Palmer**, **Michael Otten** and **Sonja Ackerman**; staff members **Jamie Matczak**, **Joshua Klingbeil** and **Katie Zimmermann**; and guest **Brook Sperry**. The WVLS team visited all 11 legislators whose districts include portions of WVLS counties, sharing a few appointments with colleagues from three neighboring systems, IFLS, NFLS and NWLS. **See Exhibit 6c** for photos of visits the WVLS LLD cohort had with legislators whose districts include portions of WVLS counties.

## 2024 IN REVIEW

### State News

**State Library Aid Receives an Increase in 2023-2025 Biennium.** WVLS and the other 14 regional systems shared an increase of \$2 million in the first year of the 2023-2025 biennium and an additional \$4 million in the second year to provide infrastructure supporting local libraries. The appropriation raised base funding at the end of the two-year cycle to \$24,013,100, a \$9 million improvement in the past decade over the 2013-2014 biennium which was the mid-point in a 6-year funding freeze.

**WPLC Takes on Governance of Statewide Delivery.** During its February meeting, the WPLC (Wisconsin Public Library Consortium) Board officially approved taking on governance of statewide delivery. This new governance structure, which includes the formation of a delivery workgroup, will provide expanded oversight of delivery funds by the statewide partners serviced by delivery. No operational changes are expected to result from this change.

**Staff Changes in Division for Libraries and Technology.** Public Library Administration Consultant **Shannon Schultz** resigned from her position on March 1 to become the Director of the South Central Library System (SCLS). **Theresa Schmidt**, former Director of the Mercer Public Library, became the new Public Library Administration Consultant in July. Also on March 1 Project Coordinator **Bruce Smith** retired from his position. Hired in 2020, Smith coordinated activities associated with the Public Library System Redesign Project (PLSR), and managed and coordinated projects across the DLT Team.

In October, the DPI Library Services Team announced that **Michael Dennison** had rejoined the team as the new Interlibrary Loan (ILL) Coordinator. Michael had been on the Library Services Team

in 2019-2020, serving public libraries and public library systems as the Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA) Coordinator and State Data Coordinator. Since then, Michael administered Wisconsin's \$2.4 billion stimulus grant funding to local educational agencies. Michael returns to the Library Services Team to facilitate resource sharing and improve access to library resources by libraries and those they serve.

### **Wendt Inducted into the Wisconsin Library Heritage Center Hall of Fame.**

WVLS Local and State Advocacy Consultant **Kris Adams Wendt** was one of four WLA members to be recognized with a lifetime achievement award through induction into the Wisconsin Library Heritage Center Hall of Fame.

### **Leadership Changes in Public Library Systems.**

- **South Central Library System (SCLS).** **Martha Van Pelt**, SCLS) Director, and **Greg Mickells**, Director of the Madison Public Library (resource library for SCLS), both retired in February 2024. **Shannon Schultz**, former consultant for DPI's Library Services Team was hired as Van Pelt's replacement, and Madison Public Library's Digital Services and Marketing Manager **Tana Elias** was hired to replace Mickells.
- **Southwest Wisconsin Library System (SWLS).** In February 2024, **Angela Noel** became the new Director of the SWLS. Angela was the former Director of the Dodgeville Public Library and Brodhead Memorial Library, and replaces former SWLS Director **David Kranz**, who resigned from the position to become the ILS/ILL Consultant for the Winding Rivers Library System.
- **Kenosha Library System (KLS).** **Barbara Brattin**, Director of Kenosha Public Library and KLS retired in 2024. In late December, the Kenosha Public Library Board of Trustees announced that **Sarah Townsend** was selected to be the new director. Sara serves as the Assistant Director of the Suffolk Public Library (Suffolk, Virginia) and will officially transition into the role in late April 2025.
- **Northern Waters Library Service (NWLS).** In September 2024, **Sherry Anderson Wichitchu** resigned as NWLS Director to become the new Executive Director of the Metropolitan Library Service Agency (MELSA), headquartered in St. Paul, MN. In December 2024, the NWLS Board announced that **Katherine Elchert**, was selected to be the new director for the system. Most recently, Katherine was the Director of the McMillan Memorial Library in Wisconsin Rapids.

### **New Resources Available to Libraries and Systems**

**NEW! AI Guidance Resource** - The WI Department of Public Instruction developed an evolving guidance document to assist K-12 educators, librarians, students, and administrators in effectively integrating Artificial Intelligence (AI) technologies within educational settings and public libraries.

**AI Guidance for Enhancing K-12 and Library Education** will be regularly updated to ensure it aligns with the latest advancements in AI technology, ethics, and policy, promoting the responsible use of AI to enhance personalized learning, foster critical thinking, and improve education outcomes. AI Guidance for Enhancing K-12 and Library Education is available on the WI Department of Public Instruction website [here](#). (DPI Connect Ed: Wisconsin’s Education Newsletter; July 30, 2024)

**“WLA Intellectual Freedom (IF) Toolkit”** – Developed by the Wisconsin Library Association Intellectual Freedom Committee, this [toolkit](#) was developed to aid community members, librarians, and trustees with attaining a deeper understanding of intellectual freedom as it relates to libraries in Wisconsin, and to provide those in need with resources to navigate these issues while protecting the rights of individual readers.

**NEW! Trustee Training Resources** - New trustee training materials were made available for public library board members across Wisconsin through collaborative efforts of the Manitowoc Calumet Library System (MCLS), Nicolet Federated Library System (NFLS), Outagamie Waupaca Library System (OWLS), Winnefox Library System (WLS), and WVLS. The training aims to provide knowledge and skills for effective governance, oversight, and advocacy, enabling responsible management of resources and support for the library’s mission. The materials include a series of short videos for each chapter in [Trustee Essentials: A Handbook for Wisconsin Public Library Trustees](#) and can be found [here](#). Additionally [Trustee Tail](#), an online newsletter for public library and system trustees, is published monthly.

**Data Dashboard Pilot** - In September 2024, a statewide Data Dashboard Pilot developed by WiLS became accessible to public libraries and systems to explore and evaluate. The pilot dashboard and accompanying feedback form were made available to data dashboard users through the end of the year. In 2025 the pilot dashboard will be evaluated and plans for a permanent tool will be made.

## Regional News

### APL Closes a Branch

In September, the Board of Trustees for the joint city-county Antigo Public Library made the decision to close the Elcho Branch library. With the closure, service to residents is provided through a weekly bookmobile stop at the Elcho Town Hall. The Elton Branch closed in March 2020. A branch in White Lake remains open.

### Appointments on WVLS Committees

Western Taylor County Public Library (Gilman) Director **Rita Ludvigsen** was selected as the 2025 V-Cat Chair Elect. T.B. Scott Free Library (Merrill) Director **Laurie Ollhoff** was selected as the 2025 Library Advisory Committee Chair Elect.

## Member Public Library Leadership Changes

In early 2024, the E.U. Demmer Memorial Library Board of Trustees hired Acting Director **Jill Roth** to be the new director for the library. She replaced **Peter Kotarba** who resigned from the position in January to take the position of Adult Services and Engagement Librarian at the Appleton Public Library. Antigo Public Library Director **Ada Demlow** resigned from her position in April. The Antigo Public Library Board hired **Toni Edge** as the library's Interim Director.

## Mentorship Program Partnerships

Six public library director mentee/mentor partnerships were in place in 2024.

- **Two newly developed public library director mentee/mentor partnerships:**
  - Jill Roth (E.U. Demmer Memorial Library, Three Lakes) with Heidi O'Hare (Tomahawk Public Library)
  - Jasmine Hansen (Wabeno Public Library) with Jill Trochta (Suring Area Public Library)
- **Three public library director mentee/mentor partnerships that were completed:**
  - Leah Giordano (Marathon County Public Library) with Sarah Sugden (Brown County Library)
  - Melissa Highfill (Westboro Public Library) with Carla Huston (Jean M. Thomsen Memorial Library/Stetsonville)
  - Amber Brill (Greenwood Area Library) with Kay Heiting (Granton Community Library)
  - Laurie Ollhoff (T.B. Scott Free Library, Merrill) with Sue Heskin (Superior Public Library)

## Recipients of WVLS Scholarships

WVLS awarded 24 scholarships for events in 2024.

- **Wisconsin Library Association's Library Legislative Day** (Madison; February 6, 2024): Ada Demlow, Antigo Public Library; Heidi O'Hare, Tomahawk Public Library; Janay Ziebell, Neillsville Public Library; Laurie Renel-Faledas, Crandon Public Library; Laurie Ollhoff, T.B. Scott Free Library (Merrill); Leah Giordano, Marathon County Public Library; Maxx Handel, France L. Simek Memorial Library (Medford); Peggy O'Connell, Minocqua Public Library; Teresa Hall, Loyal Public Library; Virginia Roberts, Rhinelander District Library
- **WEMTA (Wisconsin Educational Media and Technology) Conference** (WI Dells; March 3-5): Laurie Ollhoff, T.B. Scott Free Library (Merrill)
- **PLA (Public Library Association) Conference** (Columbus, Ohio; April 3-5, 2024): Allison Puestow, Tomahawk Public Library; Chad Daily, Marathon County Public Library; Tara Hornbeak, Marathon County Public Library
- **WAPL (Wisconsin Association of Public Libraries) Conference** (Stevens Point;

May 1-3, 2024): Amber Brill, Greenwood Area Library; Brandon Hardin, Withee Public Library; Katelyn Killian, Marathon County Public Library

- **ALSC (Association for Library Services to Children) National Institute** (Denver, Colorado; September 19-21, 2024): Krista Blomberg, Rib Lake Public Library
- **Wisconsin Library Association (WLA) Conference** (Green Bay; November 5-8, 2024): Alice Sturzl, Edith Evans Community Library (Laona); Andrea Bennett, T.B. Scott Free Library (Merrill); Laurie Renel-Faledas, Crandon Public Library ; Leah Giordano, Marathon County Public Library; Murray Johnson, Marathon County Public Library; Teresa Hall, Loyal Public Library

### **Presentation Conducted by WVLS Staff and Colleagues**

- **Hoot-Con.** WVLS Public Library Services Consultant **Kristie Hauer** co-presented on *"Analyzing Your Collection: Tools to Diversify Your Children's Collection."* WVLS Education Consultant Jamie Matczak presented on *"Giving Great Service."* Hoot-Con is an annual one-day conference held by the Outagamie Waupaca Library System and Nicolet Federated Library System.
- **2024 WAPL Conference.** **Katelyn Killian**, Marathon County Public Library, was part of a virtual panel discussion for a *"Beyond the Community Conversation"* presentation. Kristie Hauer and colleagues from the NFLS and Kenosha Public Library presented on *"Analyzing Your Collection: Tools to Diversify Your Children's Collection."* **Alexander Johnson**, Marathon County Public Library, presented a session on *"Mapping the IT Frontier."*
- **Southwest Wisconsin Library System Workshop.** Jamie Matczak presented on *"Giving Great Service."*
- **UW-Madison I-School Courses.** In the fall, Jamie Matczak taught a new continuing course on *"Tackling Tough Work Conversations,"* a 4-week course that provided tools and best practices to apply to ensure a positive result and stronger workplace. Kristie Hauer taught the course *"Public and Community Library Services."* a 12-week course that was required for Grade II and Grade III public library directors in Wisconsin.
- **Nic-Con and WVLS Webinar.** Jamie Matczak conducted a WVLS webinar on *"Giving Great Service"* on September 25. Nic Con is an annual fall conference sponsored by the Nicolet Federated Library System.
- **2024 WLA Conference.** Jamie Matczak did a presentation on *"Giving Great Service"* and helped facilitate the discussion for *"Library Programs Ideas Exchange."* Kris Adams Wendt was part of a panel discussion on *"Between the Stacks and the Statehouse: Libraries and the State Biennial Budget."*
- **Member Library Staff Development Day.** Jamie Matczak and Katie Zimmermann presented at a Staff Development Day for T.B. Scott Library (Merrill) staff in October. Jamie presented a workshop on *"Giving Great Service"* and Katie spoke about Aspen Discovery.

- **Sheboygan County Libraries webinar.** Jamie Matczak presented on “*Giving Great Service.*”

## Wisconsin Valley Library Service News

### Former WVLS Director Passed Away

Former WVLS Director **Heather Eldred** passed away on August 4 following a brief illness. While at WVLS, Heather served as a consultant for eight years, and as its Director for 27 years. At the time of her retirement in September 2007, the WVLS Board of Trustees granted Heather the honorary title of WVLS Director emerita for 35 years of system leadership. During her career, Heather served on several state-level committees and was active in the Wisconsin Library Association (WLA) for over 30 years. She served as WLA President in 1988 and served on the WLA Foundation Board for two terms, one as its Vice-President. Heather received the Muriel Fuller Award for outstanding accomplishments which have significantly improved and benefited library services. A donation to the WVLS Carol Ruth Wessler Scholarship fund was made in her memory.

### Staff News

**Courier Staff.** On April 30, WVLS assumed the responsibility of sorting all materials running through the inter- and intra-system delivery at Waltco’s Wausau hub on behalf of our member libraries. During the month of May, WVLS in-office staff and a volunteer pitched in to complete the daily sort of all incoming materials and re-binning of all outgoing materials. **Amelia Zimmermann** and **Belanna Werner** were hired to assist with the sort over the summer months. In August, WVLS hired four part-time employees - **Bennet Sweeney, Gracie Engebrecht, Hannah Marquardt** and **Diane Misoni** – to take care of the day-to-day sorting of delivery items.

**Cataloging Assistants.** WVLS hired two limited term cataloging assistants and an intern to clean up V-Cat collection records prior to implementation of Project NICE.

**Kristie Hauer.** In November, WVLS Public Library Services Consultant Kristie Hauer resigned from her position to become the new assistant director of the Nicolet Federated Library System headquartered in Green Bay. Prior to joining WVLS, Kristie was the Director of the Shawano County Library. Her last day with WVLS was November 15.

**Kris Adams Wendt.** WVLS State and Local Advocacy Consultant Kris Adams Wendt was one of four WLA members recognized with a lifetime achievement award through induction into the Wisconsin Library Heritage Center Hall of Fame. Kris has demonstrated unwavering passion for and commitment to building strong libraries through organized common-sense advocacy at local, county and state levels. She worked at the Rhinelander District Library from 1974-2008 and at WVLS as a consultant since 2011. Kris was recognized at the Awards & Honors Ceremony during the WLA Conference on November 7, 2024, at the KI Convention Center in Green Bay.

**Sue Hafemeister.** WVLS Administrative Assistant Susie Hafemeister retired from WVLS at the end of 2024 after 54 years of dedicated service to libraries. Susie worked for Marathon County Public Library from 1970-2008 and joined WVLS in 2009. The WVLS Team wishes Susie all the very best in her retirement.

### WiLS Data Classroom Cohort

**Erica Brewster** was a member of the inaugural WiLS Data Classroom cohort. The Data Classroom is designed for library and system staff to develop skills in identifying and utilizing library-specific data sources, developing data collection and management methods, and creating data visualizations. Access to WiLS's newly developed Data Dashboard was included with the course, so Erica had an opportunity to evaluate the data for WVLS libraries included in the dashboard as part of the overall coursework and final project. A summary of her coursework and final project was shared with the WVLS Board of Trustees in November.

### Wisconsin Library Association Conference

Jamie Matczak served as the Wisconsin Library Association (WLA) Conference Chair for Local Arrangements, and **Brenda Walenton** served as Chair of the Vendors/Exhibits Hall. The 2024 WLA Conference was held November 5-8 at the Ki Convention Center in Green Bay.

### WVLS Board Activities

In early 2024, the WVLS Board of Trustees welcomed Taylor County Representative **Candice Grunseth** and Oneida County Representative **Eileen Persike** to the Board. Appointed by their county board of supervisors, each trustee will serve a 3-year term that runs from January 1, 2024-December 31, 2026. These new trustees replace **Eileen Grunseth** (Taylor County) and **Pat Pechura** (Oneida County) who chose not to seek reappointment.

Examples of decisions made by the WVLS Board of Trustees in 2024 include:

- **February Meeting:** a Memorandum of Understanding on Parameters/Costs of Sharing LEANWI Technology Support Consultant Position; a 3% Staff COLA Adjustment; 2024 WVLS Budget Adjustments; and 2023 WVLS Annual Report.
- **March Meeting:** a Memorandum of Understanding between WiLS and WVLS for WPLC Data Dashboard Pilot Development; and a job description for a limited term cataloging assistant position.
- **May Meeting:** a Memorandum of Understanding between LEANWI and NWLS for Website and Repository Creation for 2023-2024 LSTA Cooperative Cataloging Grant Activities; WVLS Financial Manual; WVLS Credit Card Policy; WVLS Public Records Request Policy; 2023 *Auditor's Report*; 2025 WPLC Digital Buying Pool and Magazine Shares; fund transfers from delivery account to salary and benefits accounts to accommodate the hire of staff to do the sort for delivery.



- **August Meeting:** a Memorandum of Understanding on Wisconsin Public Library System Backup and Digitization Storage Collaboration; 2025 V-Cat Budget; 2025 MCPL/WVLS Resource Library Agreement; Health Insurance Costs for 2025; and *2026 Technology Planning Guide*.
- **September Meeting:** 2025 WVLS Plan and Budget; and ILS merger between NWLS Network and WVLS V-CAT.
- **November Meeting:** 2025-2029 LEANWI Technology Strategy; and appointments to the 2025 Nominating Committee, 2025 WVLS Library Advisory and WVLS V-Cat Steering Committees.

The WVLS Executive Committee met twice in November to review and decide matters related to the Estate of former WVLS employee Heather Eldred.

WVLS Board members attended WLA's 2024 Library Legislative Day in Madison, 2024 WAPL Conference in Stevens Point and 2024 WLA Conference in Green Bay. WVLS board members advocated for libraries and systems by attending state-level COLAND meetings, municipal/county library board meetings, city council and county board meetings. Trustees advocated for local library support and support for library budgets and reached out to WI legislators that represent WVLS counties when called upon to do so.

## WVLS Services

### ADVOCACY and MARKETING

**WVLS 2023 System Information & Public Library Statistics Booklet.** Published annually, the booklet shares member library service trends using data from their public library annual reports and highlights how libraries benefited their communities. New to this edition was a section on library per capita metrics for collection, circulation, programs, hours and FTEs. Copies of the *WVLS 2023 System Information & Public Library Statistics* booklet was shared with the WVLS Board of Trustees in May and distributed to area library directors, library board presidents, county library board chairs, municipal and county clerks, and area legislators. The booklet was posted to the WVLS website [here](#).

**Advocacy assistance** was provided through periodic **legislative updates** shared with the WVLS Board of Trustees and WVLS colleagues. **County-specific infographic templates** for seven counties (two versions for five counties, one version includes explanation of how the county funding formula works) were developed and shared with member libraries using statistics from the annual report, *2023 System Information and Public Library Statistics* booklet, and 2023 WVLS Staff Report Appendices.

In conjunction with **Library Card Sign-Up Month**, WVLS offered 3,150 "I Love My Wisconsin Library" high-quality, vinyl, die-cut stickers to all member library locations to be placed on water bottles, laptops, phone cases and more.

In conjunction with the launch of **Gale Presents:Udemy**, WVLS purchased stickers, bookmarks and flyers for member libraries who completed a survey on promotional materials.

A new **LEANWI Orientation** document and updated webpage ([leanwi.org/about](http://leanwi.org/about)) was developed in 2024 to improve the technology services and LEANWI orientation. A **video** describing the services and support offered through LEANWI was created and posted to the WVLS YouTube channel. The video will be included in the packet of resources shared with new public library directors starting in 2025.

**How to use AI** to assist with writing for websites was demonstrated via live and recorded trainings.

## COLLABORATION

The following is a list of ways in which WVLS collaborated with other public library systems in 2024:

- The LEANWI partnership was maintained to afford increased technology efficiencies, capacity, and expertise among three systems – IFLS, NWLS and WVLS.
- LEANWI partners hired a Technology Support Consultant to fortify website hosting platform, site development and management consultation services.
- The Winding Rivers Library System brought LEANWI website service to its member libraries in 2024.
- WVLS worked collaboratively with IFLS and NWLS on grant applications on behalf of member libraries across the northern half of the state. Examples included: Emergency Connectivity and LSTA grants.
- WVLS continued its strong partnership with IFLS Youth Services Consultant to draft monthly Starred Reviews for youth materials and provide support and guidance of benefit to member libraries in both systems.
- A partnership with NWLS provided for the exchange of expertise and enhanced service in the areas of Inclusive Services and Continuing Education and Training.
- WVLS collaborated with several public library systems across the state to bring continuing education opportunities like the Wild Wisconsin Winter Web Conference, Spring Webinar Series, Trustee Training Week, and Tech Days to member library staff and trustees.
- A collaboration of the NWLS, IFLS Library system and WVLS offered a unique collection of programming materials to our member libraries. Available, through an online booking system, Lend Items, the collection features memory kits from NWLS, programming and literacy kits from IFLS, and makerspace items from WVLS.
- With funding from 2023/2024 and 2024/2025 LSTA Improved Discovery Solutions Grants, a Joint ILS Consortium Exploration Project collaboration between NWLS and WVLS was explored. In late 2022, a year-long investigation determined that overarching goals of a joint ILS consortium to provide increased ILS administrative support to member libraries and improved service to library users were both desirable and feasible.
- 2023/2024 and 2024/2025 LSTA Improved Discovery Solutions Grants awarded NWLS continued a Cooperative Cataloging Exploration Project launched in late 2022. The goal of

this collaboration for WVLS and several other participating public library systems is to seek opportunities for statewide standardization of bibliographic records.

- LEANWI partners continued the practice of consolidating our respective LSTA “Sparsity Award” allocations to be managed as one award primarily for joint use licensing, services, and equipment. This shared project management allows for greater efficiency in overall grant management and for broader, more holistic awareness of our needs, to best utilize the support.
- The IFLS Library System invited WVLS and NWLS member libraries to participate in their annual bulk library supply order conducted in March.
- WVLS and NFLS staffs collaborated on a presentation for the annual Hoot-Con, a one-day conference held by NFLS and OWLS. WVLS and NFLS collaborated with Kenosha Public Library staff on a similar presentation for the 2024 Wisconsin Association of Public Libraries (WAPL) Conference held in May.
- The Website Accessibility Learning Group that was formed in 2023 continued to meet monthly throughout 2024. The group includes website managers from systems and public libraries who have a special interest in learning about and implementing design tools for websites that maximize accessibility mainly for those with low/no vision. The aim of this group is to establish best practices for website design and management so they can be interpreted by those who don’t have a usual visual interaction with a website. Shared learning from this group has become the basis for website training topics presented to the membership at large and for learning about possible services to enhance website accessibility broadly across library websites.
- Monthly meetings of public library services consultants from WVLS, NFLS and OWLS that were initiated in late 2023 continued in 2024. Consultants gathered to learn about each system’s services, priorities, and challenges, and to seek ways to collaborate.
- The 2025-2029 LEANWI Information Technology Strategic Plan – a plan that outlines collaborative technology services IFLS, NWLS and WVLS – was approved by the WVLS Board in November and submitted to the WI Department of Public Instruction in December.

## COLLECTION DEVELOPMENT

Following months of research and with input from member libraries, **Gale Presents: Udemy** was selected to replace Gale Courses, a platform that WVLS cancelled in 2023 due to low usage and prohibitive cost per use. Provided to libraries in June 2024, Gale Presents: Udemy provides member library users access to video-based courses in business, technology, leadership, and personal development, and to more than 15,000 courses. Training on this new product was offered to member libraries in July.

Numerous novel items were added to the **WVLS Makerspace Collection** to support member library programming. Recent items added include: two murder mystery kits, three puzzle competition kits, geoboards, straw connectors, building plans, and four math-themed kits. Each puzzle competition kit contains 9-10 copies of the same puzzle for teams to complete

simultaneously. Each of the themed math kits contain five or six resources that support such topics as counting and numbers; sorting and patterns; addition and subtraction; and shapes.

WVLS maintained its subscriptions to databases including **Ancestry: Library Edition, NoveList Plus** and **NoveList Select** in 2024.

**COMMUNICATIONS**

In 2024, WVLS published 12 **WVLS Newsletters**, 45 posts to the WVLS **Digital Lites** blog (that included a monthly **Inclusive Services Update** from NWLS Director and WVLS Inclusive Services Consultant Sherry Anderson), and 51 **“Monday Mention”** emails.

Public services staff at member libraries also received WVLS **Public Services Updates** and monthly “Starred Reviews,” a collaboration between WVLS and the IFLS Library System.

The WVLS and WVLS YSIE (Youth Services Information Exchange) **Facebook** pages were maintained, as was the WVLS **website** and 12 separate **email lists** for member library staff geared to their interests and responsibilities.

**COMMUNITY**

There were many opportunities throughout the year for colleagues to network among their peers. Opportunities offered throughout the year include: **2024 WLA Library Legislative Day**, WAPL Conference in May and WLA Conference in November, WVLS-hosted virtual and in-person trainings, four **Youth Services Information Exchanges (YSIE)** opportunities, two **WVLS Listening Sessions**, in-person technology support visits to libraries, **V-Cat trainings**, an annual **Youth Services Workshop** in October and **2024 Public Library Annual Report** training in December.

**COMPUTER PROCUREMENT**

In 2024, the WVLS team continued to enhance its computer procurement processes. Notable achievements included the efficient consolidation of member libraries’ hardware needs. This year saw streamlined collaboration between Brenda Walenton and Erica Brewster, with support from Joshua Klingbeil for procurement, staging, and deployment tasks. In 2024, WVLS managed 259 computers across 23 libraries, replacing 100 devices at 22 libraries with an average deployment time of 39 days. The team reduced the percentage of Windows 10 devices from 55.4% in 2023 to 26.6%, aiming to replace or upgrade all by the end of 2025.

	<b>Libraries</b>	<b>Computers</b>	<b>Monitors</b>	<b>Peripherals</b>	<b>Days to installation</b>
<b>2023</b>	15/25	87	21	85	21
<b>2024</b>	22/25	100	40	37	39

Peripherals include barcode scanners, receipt printers, adjustable height monitor stands. MCPL procures through WVLS but does their own installation. Total computers and peripherals include

68 computers and monitor stands in 2023 and 18 in 2024 for MCPL. TB Scott Free Library continues to manage their own procurement, although their inventory is now being integrated into the WVLS asset management system.

### CONTINUING EDUCATION and TRAINING

WVLS offered **61.5 contact hours of continuing education** opportunities by way of webinars, in-person workshops and recorded webinars in 2024.

The **2024 Wild Wisconsin Winter Web Conference** held in January offered 14 webinars with tracks in marketing, library management, sustainability, and reference and reader's advisory.

**Recorded webinars** produced by WVLS in 2024 included *"Copyright Basics for All Library Staff,"* *"Programming: Scaffolding and Ideation,"* and *"Back To Basics: Creating a Marketing Plan."*

**Three in-person workshops** co-hosted/hosted by WVLS in 2024 included *"CCBC Choices: Great New Books for Children, Birth-Grade 12,"* and *"CCBC Choices: Intellectual Freedom Training Statewide;"* *"Navigating the Terrain of Change;"* and *"Annual WVLS Youth Services Workshop."*

WVLS added **12 new video trainings** to its *Digital Bytes* training series. Examples of topics covered include "Analyzing Your Collection" "Repurposing Canva," "Tips for Packing Delivery Items," "DPI Program Tracker," "Scheduling Emails in Gmail," "Readers Advisory," and "Evaluating Resources." Launched in early 2018, *Digital Bytes* are recorded and captioned digital trainings of 30 minutes or less and are archived on the WVLS website at <https://wvls.org/digital-bytes/>.

Erica Brewster provided **48 website trainings**, including monthly open sessions, focused topics, and small group "101" training for new website managers. Training documentation and videos from these events were maintained at [trainings.librarieswin.org](https://trainings.librarieswin.org) and via a YouTube playlist of training videos. At the end of 2024, 35 documents (22 published in 2024) and 95 videos (27 published in 2024) were archived.

**Rachel Metzler** and Katie Zimmermann offered **22 V-Cat-related** online and in-person training opportunities throughout the year for V-Cat member library staff. Examples of topics covered include MARC Alert Cataloging, Z39.50, Sierra Tools for Weeding and Collection Development, Circulation, Interlibrary Loan Training, Web Management Reports, Create Lists, Aspen Patron Experience, Patron Records and Bibliographic Records.

### DATA SERVICES

WVLS was represented on the statewide Data Dashboard development team which resulted in the pilot of a statewide Data Dashboard in the fall/winter of 2024. WVLS created four "Data Dissection" activities to walk library directors and staff through use of the pilot dashboard and provided feedback to WPLC towards future development of this initiative in 2025.

## DELIVERY SERVICES

On April 30, WVLS assumed the responsibility of sorting all materials running through the inter- and intra-system delivery at Waltco's Wausau hub on behalf of our member libraries. Since March 2016, Waltco had been doing the central sort for all items in transit, however staffing challenges made it difficult for them to sustain this service efficiently and effectively. Delivery times and routes were not affected by this change.

## GRANT PROJECTS

**WVLS Summer Math Adventure Grants.** WVLS initiated a new WVLS Summer Math Adventure Grant to enable WVLS libraries to provide math-based activities during summer. WVLS awarded an \$800 grant to the Minocqua, Rib Lake, and Thorp public libraries to implement the program. Libraries used the grant to print program booklets, acquire incentives for program completion, and to expand their circulating collections with math-related items. After completing the program, the three libraries filled out an evaluation survey and shared suggestions for improving future math adventures. WVLS plans to expand this grant opportunity to include more participating libraries in 2025.

**WVLS Summer Library Program Performer Grants.** WVLS offered a \$300 grant to each library location to offset the costs of hosting a performer during the summer. Thirty member libraries took advantage of this grant opportunity.

**WVLS Marketing Support Grants.** WVLS piloted a Marketing Support Grant for participating public libraries to evaluate their library's marketing efforts and work toward a marketing plan or marketing campaign. Participants included **Loralee Petersen**, Owen Public Library; **Laurie Ollhoff** and **Chris Sprague**, T.B. Scott Free Library (Merrill); and **Brandon Hardin**, Withee Public Library.

**LSTA Grant Projects.** Following is a summary of grant projects that WVLS managed and/or participated in during 2024.

- **2023/24 LSTA Professional Development Grant** - \$21,525 – supported the 2024 Wild Wisconsin Winter Web Conference and 2024 Spring Webinar series. It also funded the following scholarships:
  - 2023 WLA Conference (8)
  - 2024 WI Educational Media and Technology Association (WEMTA) Conference (1)
  - 2024 Public Library Association (PLA) Conference (3)
  - 2024 Wisconsin Association of Public Libraries Conference (3)
- **2024/25 LSTA Professional Development Grant** - \$25,709 –funded the following scholarships in 2024:
  - 2024 ALSC (Association of Library Services to Children) National Institute (1)
  - 2024 Wisconsin Library Association Conference (6)
  - 2025 Power Up Conference (2)

- Funding from **2023/2024 and 2024/2025 LSTA Improved Discovery Solutions Grants** – totaling \$50,000 and \$75,000 - was awarded to WVLS to facilitate next steps of the Joint ILS Consortium Exploration Project collaboration between WVLS and the Northern Waters Library System toward a merged ILS. The 2024/2025 Grant was contingent on approval of an ILS merger with migration beginning in 2025.
- Funding from **2023/2024 and 2024/2025 LSTA Improved Discovery Solutions Grants** - awarded to NWLS with each grant totaling \$50,000 – continues the work of a Cooperative Cataloging Exploration Project launched in late 2022. The project established a Statewide Bibliographic Standards group to work through the establishment of bibliographic standards for a variety of formats. The current grant cycle has nine systems participating.
- **2023/2024 LSTA Sparsity Aid** allocation – LEANWI partners’ aggregate total, \$77,028 – a small portion of the grant purchased transport-supporting networking equipment in 2023, and Kajeet mobile data services and Microsoft licensing for core services in 2024.
- The **2024/2025 LSTA Core Services Grant** – awarded \$77,028 in aggregate to LEANWI partners - has thus far sustained mobile hotspots services with Kajeet devices across member libraries. Additionally, funding will help offset costs for Pharos and Splashtop licensing.

## TECHNOLOGY AND WEBSITE SUPPORT

**Technology Support.** In 2024, WVLS advanced technology services by delivering significant updates and direct support to member libraries. Staff upgraded **Deep Freeze** to version 9.0, aligning configuration processes and integrating it with **System Center Configuration Manager (SCCM)**; improved **Pharos** timing software through server upgrades and client setup enhancements; and expanded **Princh** print management services to libraries in Medford, Neillsville, Thorp, and Marathon County. Erica Brewster visited 25 of 34 library locations to install computers, conduct network inventories, and upgrade routers. To improve efficiency, WVLS created a technology project tracking system to monitor asset inventories, software implementations, and network enhancements.

WVLS dedicated significant resources to the TEACH Network migration project, addressing delays and supporting migration 14 libraries, which will continue into 2025. LEANWI partners proactively collaborated with AT&T and vendors to resolve issues during BadgerNet-to-TEACH transitions, ensuring smoother data transport service migrations.

Documentation and FAQs were expanded and new directors received library technology orientation, focusing on Deep Freeze, Pharos, and public computer best practices, emphasizing patron privacy. Ultimately, the goal of effort was to improve members’ understanding of the service and associated onboarding process and to increase the number of libraries using the service.

WVLS actively participated in various technology-related steering committees in 2024. Joshua Klingbeil represented WVLS on WPLC committees and workgroups, contributed to discussions on



statewide technology trends, and collaborated on upcoming projects. WVLS staff also played a role in the Digital Archives Backup Collaboration Workgroup and Technology Backup Collaboration Workgroup, advancing backup and archival solutions for libraries. Additionally, staff participated in the LEANWI Information Technology Strategic Plan, emphasizing technology resource sharing and system-wide technology strategies. These efforts strengthened collaboration, improved shared resources, and supported WVLS's long-term technology goals.

LEANWI maintained these relationships with vendors 2024:

- Dell - to support multi-system joint computer procurement.
- Princh – for public computer and BYOD (Bring Your Own Device) print management.
- Kajeet – for mobile hotspot devices, data services plans, and centralized management services.
- AT&T and secondary vendors – a proactive engagement strategy continued and pushed the “Badgernet” to “TEACH Network” data transport network service migrations resulting in nearly half of the WVLS TEACH sites successfully completing migrations by the end of 2024.

**Website Services Support.** In 2024, WVLS and LEANWI made considerable progress in website services. Brendan Tuckey joined the LEANWI Team in January as the **LEANWI Technology Support Consultant**, serving as lead website designer and technician. He facilitated the onboarding of **Winding Rivers Library System (WRLS) websites**, cleaning up backend systems, optimizing plugins, and improving structural settings to empower library staff with easier content management. WRLS libraries also received recorded "town hall" meetings, small group training, and ongoing support.

A **centrally managed Online Resources page** was launched for over 100 library websites, streamlining updates, and enabling monthly click tracking. Deployment for WRLS libraries will continue into 2025.

The **Website Accessibility Learning Group** continued meeting monthly, fostering ADA-compliant design practices to prepare for new accessibility deadlines in 2026 and 2027. The Website Accessibility Learning Group provides a community of practice for research and active practice with website accessibility tools that are then further developed into trainings for all website managers and to a more general audience.

The LEANWI website team is working together to prepare LEANWI websites for new ADA website accessibility standards require public libraries to comply by 2026 or 2027, depending on population size. LEANWI's approach combines training, audits, and technical updates to foster accessible, user-friendly web environments across the library system.

Brendan spearheaded **custom plugin development**, creating room booking and event ticketing tools tailored for libraries. These plugins progressed through alpha testing in 2024, with broader



beta testing planned for early 2025. These efforts enhanced website functionality while reducing reliance on costly third-party solutions.

Together, these initiatives improved website accessibility, functionality, and staff proficiency across the LEANWI network.

## V-CAT ADMINISTRATION

See also **2024 V-Cat Top 10 Accomplishments** shared as **Exhibit 6d** with this report.

**Access for library users improved through V-Cat resource sharing.** V-Cat library collaboration resulted in circulation of an additional 144,793 V-Cat items to local library users, with an increase of 206,892 circulations beyond what libraries provide to library users from their own local collections.

**WVLS purged inactive and expired adult patron records unused over five years with the consent of member libraries.** The WI Depart. of Public Instruction requires that patron records be purged at least once every three years for a library to report the number of registered users in the annual report. Historically purging patron records had been the responsibility of V-Cat member libraries. WVLS began doing this work on behalf of member libraries in 2023. Libraries were given the opportunity to opt out of the purge. WVLS sent libraries reports of purged patrons upon request. Over 7,000 patron records were purged.

A **scholarship** was offered for the Back in Circulation Conference for managers and staff in access in circulation service, hosted by the Information School at UW-Madison from October 7-8. Maxx Handell, Director of the Francis L. Simek Memorial Library (Medford), attended this event.

**Sierra Snacks, Aspen Appetizers and Recommendation Review.** Brief trainings offered at meetings of the V-Cat Council covered the following topics: Aspen Browse Categories, Shoutbomb Broadcast, Best Practices for Sierra Patron Linking, V-Cat Recommendation on Overrides, V-Cat Recommendation on Cataloging Compliance, Shoutbomb Keyword Tutorial, Privacy of Patron Data, and How to Process and Note Damaged V-Cat Items.

**Documents on the V-Cat Training page** were updated. Procedures and instructional documents were updated for the following: Procedure for holds that cannot be filled; Circulation Manual; Item Status Definitions; Item Record Fields; MARC Alert Guidelines for Magazines; Item Attachment Requirements; Instructions for Cataloging Big Books; Instructions for Splitting Blu-Ray and DVD sets; Keywords for Shoutbomb Text Message Notices; Instructions for Linking Patrons in Sierra; Library Statistical Groups; and Sierra Receipt Printer Settings.

The **V-Cat Guidelines page** was re-structured to make it easier to find desired documents. Guidelines and documents were updated for the Library Card Application, Patron Linking Form, Patron Record Guidelines, Cataloging Compliance Recommendation, Overrides Recommendation, Use of Claims Returned Recommendation, Maximum Holds and Checkouts Recommendation,

Institutional and Teacher Library Card Application, Institutional and Teacher Patron Record Guidelines, and Book Club Recommendation.

**Initiated in 2022, the NICE (Northern Wisconsin ILS Consortium Exploration) Project, an ILS merger investigation between Northern Waters Library Service and WVLS, continued in 2024.**

Based on the data and information gathered in 2022-2023, the NICE team determined that an ILS merger of the two integrated library systems was a valuable and feasible endeavor. In 2023, the NICE team recommended that NWLS and WVLS pursue a joint ILS and move towards shared practices and policies.

In 2024, NICE workgroups were formed to address matters that have potential to impact an ILS merger. Workgroups prepared a suite of recommendations in the following areas: ILS Vendor Selection, Delivery, Funding Formula and Budget, Collaborative Decision Making, Hold Fulfillment, Record Standards, and Cataloging Practices.

The NICE project prioritized existing processes at the local level to ease the transition toward a shared ILS. A few of the workgroups found consensus around recommendations that, as much as possible, allowed the two systems to maintain existing practices. Examples include:

- Keep the current enhanced public library catalog in place to maintain a consistent experience for library users.
- Continue to fill requests for materials in a way similar to current practices within each consortium.
- Continued use of the familiar Sierra ILS software interface by member library staff.
- Retain V-Cat and Northern Waters Library Network (NWLN) funding models with shared NICE costs split at the consortium level

NICE Recommendations, [Key Takeaways](#), and [Final report](#) from the NICE Team were made available on the [NICE Project website's Documents page](#). Opportunities were provided for library staff and directors to share feedback and ask questions about the NICE project.

NWLN libraries voted against merging its ILS with V-Cat. The NWLS Board of Trustees voted to uphold the NWLN recommendation against merging. V-Cat Council did not pass a motion to pursue a merger. The WVLS Board of Trustees continues to support the NICE project, while recognizing the validity of the V-CAT bylaws and V-Cat Consortium decision and recommended keeping the door open to revisiting the project within two years.

Revisiting the project is paused due to staffing changes at NWLS. A report on lessons learned and the next steps for V-Cat will be developed. WVLS will be in touch with the new NWLS director and ILS Administrator and explore opportunities for collaboration in the future.

**WVLS continued to refine current processes used to generate reports from ILS data and automate data aggregation** to reduce staff time needed for more efficient reporting.

**WVLS continued database clean-up projects to strive toward standardization of records and record fields.** Routine maintenance and monitoring are completed throughout the year to check

for consistency and accuracy of database records. When inaccuracies were identified, staff connected with area library staff to correct the records. A project began to review and correct residency codes in patron records using US Census Geocoder tools.

WVLS continued to investigate cataloging practices of other consortia and compare with WVLS practices. WVLS participated in the Improved Discovery Solutions Grants awarded to the Northern Waters Library System to support the Cooperative Cataloging Exploration Project initiated in 2022. 2024 saw the continuation of this work with the LSTA Cooperative Cataloging Grant partners and the Statewide Bibliographic Standards Committee. This group discussed a set of recommendations for the following formats: print books, graphic novels, large print, audio formats, and video formats. The group will continue this work in 2025.

WVLS enhanced bibliographic records with the help of grant-funded project-based staff and UW Madison Information School intern.

**WVLS began to pursue mechanisms to reduce member library staff time spent on routine tasks.** Including the following:

- Schedule and coordinate centralized batch record update changes
- Schedule and automate circulation notice delivery
- Simplify procedures for resource sharing among member libraries

## UPCOMING EVENTS / MEETINGS

- February 15 - **WVLS Board of Trustees meeting**
- February 17 – WPLC Board meeting
- February 18 - DPI-hosted meeting of System Directors
- February 18 - DPI-hosted meeting of System Youth Services Consultants
- February 18 – WVLS Staff Presentation; Fond du Lac Public Library
- February 18 - LSTA Cooperative Cataloging meeting
- February 18 - **System/Public Library Website Accessibility Learning Group meeting**
- February 19 - DPI-hosted Data Workgroup meeting
- February 19 – WPLC Statewide Backup Collaboration meeting
- February 19 - **WVLS/IFLS/NWLS/WRLS Website Office Hour: Website 201 [Just] Beyond the Basics**
- February 20 - **WVLS/IFLS/NWLS/WRLS Website Office Hour: Website 201 [Just] Beyond the Basics**
- February 20 - **WVLS/IFLS/NWLS/WRLS Website Office Hour: Scheduling Elements with the Divi Supreme Pro Plugin**
- February 21 – **WVLS “Keeping It Together” Discussion**
- February 21 - WPLC Delivery Services Workgroup meeting

- February 24 – “From Insight to Action: Using Public Library Data for Decision-Making” webinar
- February 25 - DPI-hosted meeting of System Directors
- February 25 - **WVLS V-Cat Bibliographic Control / Interface Committee meeting**
- February 25 – Statewide meeting of System ILS Administrators
- February 26 – **WVLS/V-Cat Steering Committee meeting**
- February 28 - WPLC Delivery Services Workgroup meeting
- March 4 – WPLC Technology Backup Workgroup meeting
- March 5 – **WVLS YSIE (Youth Services Information Exchange); Tomahawk**
- March 7 - WPLC Delivery Services Workgroup meeting
- March 7 - **WVLS V-Cat Cooperative Circulation Committee meeting**
- March 3 – 5 – 2025 **WEMTA (Wisconsin Educational Media and Technology Association) Conference**; Brookfield, WI
- March 10 - **WVLS/IFLS/NWLS/WRLS Website Office Hour**
- March 11 – DPI-hosted meeting of System Directors
- March 11 - WISCAT User Group meeting
- March 12 - Statewide Bibliographic Standards Committee meeting
- March 12 – 13 – DPI-hosted retreat of System Directors and Data Workgroup Members; Chula Vista Resort, WI Dells
- March 13-16 – **Innovative User Group Conference; Denver, CO**
- March 14 – COLAND meeting; Prairie du Chien Public Library
- March 15 - **WVLS Board of Trustees meeting**
- March 17 – WPLC Digital Archives Backup Workgroup meeting
- March 18 - **System/Public Library Website Accessibility Learning Group meeting**
- March 18 - LSTA Cooperative Cataloging meeting
- March 18 - WPLC Technology Collaborative Steering Committee meeting
- March 19 - **WVLS/IFLS/NWLS/WRLS Website Office Hour: Website 201 [Just] Beyond the Basics**
- March 20 - **WVLS/IFLS/NWLS/WRLS Website Office Hour: Website 201 [Just] Beyond the Basics**
- March 20 - **WVLS/IFLS/NWLS/WRLS Website Office Hour**
- March 21 - **WVLS “Keeping It Together” Discussion**
- March 24 – 25 – Kerber Rose Audit Team on-site
- March 25-27 – Computers in Libraries 2025 Conference; Arlington, VA

Thank you for reading!

Marla