

# WiLS Board Meeting

## June 9, 2022 – 10:00 am – 3:00 pm



Moraine Park Technical College, Fond du Lac  
Room A112, Use Entrance C1 ([campus map](#))

**BOARD ATTENDEES:** Hans Baierl (Moraine Park Technical College), Peg Billing (Lakeland Union High School), Barbara Brattin (Kenosha Public Library), Jennifer Chamberlain, (WiLS, ex-officio), Joe Davies (Burlington Public Library), Jennifer Gurske (Madison Trust for Historic Preservation), Paula Norman (Tomahawk School District), Steve Platteter (Arrowhead Library System), Ellen Sayed (Medical College of Wisconsin), Heather Winter (Milwaukee Art Museum)

**ABSENT:** Martha Berninger (Department of Public Instruction), Todd Roll (University of Wisconsin-Platteville), Tasha Saecker (Appleton Public Library), Teresa Voss (Verona Area School District)

**FINANCE COMMITTEE ATTENDEES:** Steve Midthun

**WILS STAFF:** Melody Clark, Andi Coffin, Sara Gold, Kim Kiesewetter, Melissa McLimans

### Meeting Minutes

1. Call to Order; Changes/additions to the agenda; Meeting space logistics  
Chair J. Davies called the meeting to order at 10:05 am. No changes were suggested for the agenda. Board meeting host H. Baierl welcomed everyone to the MPTC campus and shared information on the facility.
2. Warm up: One word  
J. Chamberlain lead the group in an icebreaker activity; describe your role or experience on being on the WiLS board in one word:
  - Steve Platteter: Liaison
  - Barb Brattin: Collaboration
  - Peg Billing: Amazing
  - Jennifer Gurske: Newbie
  - Han Bairl: Committed
  - Joe Davies: Energized
  - Ellen Sayed: Enriching
  - Heather Winter: Supportive
  - Paula Norman: Insightful
  - Jen Chamberlain: Inspiring
  - Sara Gold: Connector
  - Kim Kiesewetter: Data
  - Melissa McLimans: Engaging
  - Melody Clark: Enriching
3. Strategic Planning Data & Framework (90 min)

- a. [WiLS community data presentation](#) – K. Kiesewetter shared the data gathered and key takeaways from the WiLS strategic planning data gathering phase which included conversations with the board, staff, and a representative sample of members plus a community-wide survey.

There were several themes that emerged from the community conversations, including the following:

- More room for collaboration
- Staffing issues
- Relevancy and value
- Broadband access
- Need help strengthening staff
- Advocacy and telling stories with data
- Remaining flexible
- Connecting with partners
- Ensuring library value and relevance
- Budget pressures

From those themes, the following trends were identified:

- Remaining flexible
- Expanding outreach
- Need for marketing
- Assessment and strategic planning
- Pursuing collaboration

Key takeaways:

1. Expansion of how we bring different libraries together to collaborate and partner.
2. Cohort learning opportunities, particularly around libraries seeking grants
3. Assist in advocacy work – especially in providing data-driven stories in support of libraries.
4. Assist libraries in strengthening their staff support.

From these conversations, when WiLS was theming, there were more questions we wanted to ask, so from the themes of the community conversation and Board conversations, a survey for members and non-members was created and sent out.

Key data points from the survey:

- Reached over 170 people
- Bulk came from public libraries but also had reps from academics, schools, DPI, museums, special libraries, and historical organizations.

There were also questions about membership in the survey, specifically if the concept of membership is confusing and exclusionary. The majority of respondents are either unsure or unaware of the benefits associated with WiLS' membership options. The remaining either knew of one or were unaware of the options. 33% of respondents

know the benefits of membership and 27% were unsure. 78% responded that they were a WiLS member.

The survey respondents were asked 2 to 3 words that come to mind with they heard the word “member.” This was to determine if membership was problematic. The results were positive. From the data, if WiLS is to continue using the term membership, it doesn’t appear to pose a problem or is exclusionary.

It was noted that most survey respondents do not find membership a barrier to working with WiLS.

Key takeaways about membership:

1. While most survey respondents were WiLS members, people are not clear about the two types of membership and what each entails. This indicates the potential to provide additional clarification and education on WiLS membership structure.
2. The concept of membership itself is not problematic in theory or in action.

80% of respondents noted that they have worked with WiLS, 91% noted they were satisfied or highly satisfied with working with WiLS.

3 Top rated value statements about working with WiLS:

- WiLS is approachable and I feel comfortable contacting WiLS Staff members
- WiLS is an important part of the library and cultural ecosystem in the state
- WiLS is an organization that can help me get things done.

Most respondents are aware of the consortium and project management services and are least aware of the digital project support that WiLS offers. Most used services were cooperative purchasing and learning opportunities.

The key themes indicate that people associate WiLS with Wisconsin libraries and view the organization as a place for innovation, collaboration, support, and cost savings. In addition, staff is viewed as friendly.

Key takeaways about working with WiLS:

1. WiLS is viewed positively in the broader Wisconsin library community and as an integral component of the ecosystem in the state. Survey respondents overwhelmingly agreed with the organizational value statements
2. Service usage is highest for cooperative purchasing and learning opportunities offered by WiLS

On the topic of multi-type organizational experiences, 94% value opportunities to engage with multi-type libraries and cultural organizations. They were also asked if WiLS is a place where they come for multi-type organizational experiences. 41% said yes, 36% were unsure, and 23% said no. For purposes of the survey, “multi-type organizational experiences” was defined as any experience, event, or opportunity where people from different types of libraries and/or cultural organizations are in attendance together with the opportunity to connect with one another.”

Top three value statements about multi-type organizational experiences:

- Experiences with libraries/organizations working on a similar topic/initiative
- Experiences with libraries/organizations serving similar-sized communities as mine.
- Experiences with libraries serving Wisconsin specifically.

The most effective way for people to learn about or with multi-type organizations is through webinars.

Key Takeaways:

1. While people are interested in multi-type organizational experiences, there is not a clear majority consensus that the broader library and cultural organization community in Wisconsin consistently views WiLS as a place for such experiences.
2. People are most interested in learning/networking with different organizations who are working on a similar topic and webinars are the preferred mode of learning in that context.

For future planning, advocacy and marketing is the top priority for an organization that participated in the survey. Top priorities varied by organization type with public libraries and K-12 school libraries prioritizing advocacy and marketing and systems and academic libraries prioritizing collaborations and partnerships.

People from the Wisconsin library ecosystem are most interested in the potential of participation in communities of practice as a new service area at WiLS.

The most highly rated topics for future collaborative projects were data and grant-seeking.

Survey respondents indicated that watching tutorials/videos or using a toolkit with exercises were the top two best ways for them to learn right now, pointing to the value of asynchronous training opportunities.

Survey respondents do not have a strong opinion for/against WiLS working beyond Wisconsin geographically. Based on this finding, working outside of WI can be done when beneficial for the organization without concern that it will be perceived problematically by members.

Key Takeaways about future planning:

1. The library community is most interested in resources for advocacy and marketing, in addition to increasing collaborations and partnerships – the top priority varied by library type.
2. Communities of practice/cohorts are of high interest as a new service area, with data and grant-seeking being the two top topics.
3. People are most interested in asynchronous learning opportunities such as watching tutorials or utilizing a toolkit with resources.

The board was asked if there were any questions about the presented material. There were no questions.

- b. Break (10 min)
- c. Reviewing the draft framework – J. Chamberlain and M. McLimans shared the draft framework developed by the strategic planning small team, and then led the board through a facilitated conversation to gather input on how the board sees this plan being implemented.

There are three main goal areas for the 2022-2027 plan:

- Goal 1. Strengthening and Building Community
- Goal 2. Fueling Innovation
- Goal 3. Supporting Organizational Health and Sustainability

E. Sayed asked if there was one ultimate goal for the processes and noted that fueling and innovation could be an ultimate goal here as well as objective 4 in Goal III.

There was a question and concern about this being too ambitious but it was clarified that this is a five-year plan.

S. Gold asked the board, regarding Goal 1, Objective 3, if they felt there needs to be revenue involved and does there needs to be a near-term monetary turnaround with new projects? It was felt that goodwill and awareness for some projects are invaluable. Moving forward with cultivating national and regional partnerships if we are investing time and we are doing it in a fiscally responsible way without an immediate return on investment, that is okay. It was noted that as long as WiLS is in good financial standing, goodwill is very important and it shouldn't be expected that everything we do will have an immediate return on investment. It's the WiLSiness of WiLS; the good that WiLS does, with the awareness of the bottom line. M. McLimans noted that the intent of the first goal is growth but the third goal is also focused on financial health.

It was noted that we have to take some risks in order to grow, which can open doors and windows for WiLS and for the library community.

It was noted that the small library strategic cohort gave libraries that could not normally have the opportunity to have a professional's help an opportunity to work with professionals, which is extremely important. If WiLS made no money on this, it still would have been valuable and important for WiLS to do.

B. Brattin's noted that the presentation pointed out that the community needs help with advocacy and marketing, and staffing retention, and she asked where are these in the goals? She would like to see the words "staffing retention," "marketing" and "advocacy" in the goals since it was specifically asked.

It was noted that Marketing and Advocacy currently fall in Goal 1, objective 2. But need to be more intentional in the language. For staffing that is Goal 3, objective 1. It was also shared that an idea that is currently being considered is WiLS is interested in creating a cohort or learning experience that could help library leadership in developing succession planning.

The board was asked where do they see their own institutions or stakeholder group in the plan?

J. Gurske has noted that even though her organization originally thought that they wouldn't fit into WiLS, they have been very involved. WiLS has helped with digitization, they were a part of the digital readiness cohort and they received an Ideas to Action Grant. When she reads through these, she is reading from a cultural organization perspective and sees where a lot of them incorporate non-library cultural institutions.

J. Gurske was asked how can WiLS make all of WiLS' communication more inclusive to cultural institutions and not just be a "library" service. She noted that the website focuses a lot on coop and that doesn't fit with many cultural institutions. The website has been updated and looks great, but making sure that the homepage includes all resources that are available is important.

H. Winter typically goes to archive organizations first, regionally, and nationally. It may be worthwhile for WiLS to connect with them for growth.

E. Sayed noted that she originally thought the Medical College didn't have anything in common with WiLS or WIACU. But now there is more outreach and collaboration, and that is what this plan speaks to. Over the past few years, the medical community has changed such that it now focuses on collaboration, building relationships, and communities. She sees this in the plan and thinks it aligns well with what she is seeing in the Medical College.

P. Norman notes that at first coop was the only thing that she knew she could get from WiLS and noted that she still isn't aware of all of the services available from WiLS. J. Chamberlain noted that this is on WiLS and that WiLS needs to do better in awareness of WiLS services.

It was stated that outreach is important. WiLS presence at WEMTA and on the DPI Google Groups is necessary in building awareness.

J. Davies noted It is great to be at a table with publics, academics, non-libraries, etc., but noted he had to drive 100 miles to do so and is wondering how to catalyze those local connections. Are the various organizations (SRLAAW, WAICU, WEMTA) the place to make these connections and awareness? WiLS specializes in getting people in a room together and doing something cool together.

WiLS also sees the board members as a connector as well. WiLS has been fortunate enough to be an affiliate member for some groups like SRLAAW and WIACU and appreciates the invitation to those tables.

There are more opportunities to present on WiLS and all of WiLS's services, not just the service that the group is familiar with (WIACU – Coop, Midwest Archive Conference – RW).

It was noted that Ideas to Action is turning into WiLS' flagship service.

It was suggested that a static video on the website explaining all the resources may be a great resource for WiLS.

It was asked how can Board members help WiLS in achieving the objectives of this plan?

As a former, Ideas to Action member, P. Norman boasts WiLS as a grant funder whenever talking about their program.

It was suggested that board members can be activators in inviting WiLS to seats at tables they sit at and it was suggested that WiLS could provide Board members with a one-pager of how they can help WiLS and be connectors/activators for WiLS.

In Goal 1 Objective 3, J. Davis noted that the organizations listed are big, but noted that WiLS is a peer to those and scales really well.

S. Platteter noted that since 2017 WiLS has been a part of 5 major projects that ALS has worked on. And noted that the Public Library systems recognize WiLS as a trusted partner.

It was noted that the board previously expressed a strong interest in growth and was asked with that in mind, are they satisfied with the ways in which growth might be represented in the plan? They were asked to think about this.

The group broke for Lunch at 12:05 pm

The meeting reconvened at 1:04 pm

Tom Klement (WiLS) and Lisa Marten (WiLS) joined the meeting at 1:00 pm

**4. Approval of meeting minutes**

*Documents:* [April 7, 2022](#)

P. Billing moved to accept the minutes from April 7, 2022, S. Platteter seconded. No changes or additions were made. Motion carried.

**5. Reports**

- a. Chair report: Board Election results & Call for Nominations committee – J. Davies shared the election results from the recent WiLS board election:
  - Public Library seats – Barb Brattin and Tasha Saecker
  - K12 seat – Micki Uppena of Mineral Point School District
  - Special libraries seat – Adrienne Thunder of the Ho-chunk Language Division
  - Member-at-large – Sarah Miller from WiscNet

Congratulations were given to the new members!

J. Davies put out a call to form a nomination committee. Per the bylaws, chair-elect Barb Brattin serves as the chair of the nominating committee, and we would like two other

board members to volunteer to serve on the committee. We have two positions to fill: chair-elect and treasurer with Peg Billing's term ending. E. Sayed volunteered to serve on the committee. If anyone else is interested, please let J. Chamberlain know. P. Billing shared a little bit about the workload associated with serving as treasurer. There is a scripted form to follow as treasurer and it makes it very easy! J. Chamberlain and T. Klement have everything prepared.

b. Financial Report – J. Chamberlain

*Documents:* [April Budget vs. Actual](#), [April Balance Sheet](#), [Budget FY23](#) and [notes](#)

J. Chamberlain walked the board through the current financial statements. Our balance sheet continues to be in excellent shape in terms of ratio of assets to liabilities and debt to equity. Our reserves are healthy. You will see two new equity accounts in the capital section which are a result of the two fiscal sponsorship and an auditing requirement to list these as revenue and expenses on our end. You'll see the fiscal sponsorships earmarked on the budget vs. actual as well.

In terms of our budget with actuals, the biggest area of concern is our investments. We are currently down about \$65,900. Our Capone rebates continue to be strong at just over \$150,000 which helps to mitigate that loss a bit. There are still end-of-year billings in consulting, consortia management, and digital projects. Consulting should end the year well above the budget, with consortia and digital projects ending at budget. Coop revenue has exceeded the budget target! Kudos to the coop staff. Our expenses are well in line with the budget.

The finance committee reviewed the budget at their May meeting and made some minor changes.

There were no questions about the budget.

P. Billing made a motion to approve the draft 2023 budget. B. Bratting seconded. There was no discussion. Motion passed.

c. [Director's Report –Unite Against Book Ban partnership](#) – J. Chamberlain asked the board for their support of WiLS joining as a partner organization in ALA's Unite Against Book Ban campaign.

S. Platteter moved to support WiLS to sign on as a partner to ALA's Unite Against Book Ban campaign. B. Brattin seconded. There was no discussion. Motion passed.

6. Consulting Services Snapshot (30 min)- M. McLimans provided an overview of consulting services, current projects, and future opportunities in this growing service area.

M. McLimans described how they describe WiLS consulting services:

"We are project management and process development pros that listen to your needs and create a process, whether it is strategic planning, survey development, or an idea you've had for a long time, but don't know where to start, that is customizable and gets you the answers you need, solutions that improve your organization, or achievable steps to reach your goals."



Last year the consulting team worked with 27 public libraries and 4 library systems, did 12 surveys and reached over 6,000 respondents, and did 6 data projects.

Local, community-based projects are a focus of the team. They currently do about 6 different strategic plans each year. In the last 8 years, they have worked with 40 libraries. Recently they have developed an implementation process to help activate libraries' strategic plans.

Some other stand-alone projects are RFP based or an organization that has a problem or need and wants to hire WiLS to develop a process. An example of this is Platteville public library. They were having some staffing issues. The consulting team developed a horizon approach. They were able to work with staff to develop long-term goals and broke them down into obtainable horizons.

Stand-alone surveys are another area the team is growing. K. Kieswetter has worked on a building project survey and a digital services community survey.

Some statewide or regional WI projects that the Consulting team is working on include:

- Arrowhead & Lakeshores Library Systems merger
- Nicolet Federated Library System and Outagamie Waupaca Library System shared strategic planning
- LSTA
- Annual Report support
- Small Library Strategic Planning Cohort
- City Library Collective
- Data Landscape project

Two of these projects have been influenced by the Public Library System Redesign (PLSR) project, the Arrowhead and Lakeshores merger, and the Nicolet Federated Library System and Outagamie Waupaca Library System strategic planning.

The consulting team has been working on the Library Service and Technology Act (LSTA) process, the federal grant program for libraries in WI, with the Department of Public Instruction (DPI). Every five years, each state has to evaluate its grant program. The evaluation had a future-facing component for the new LSTA plan as well as to inform a strategic planning process with DPI staff. It was noted that it is possible that WiLS could do this type of work for other states as they too are required to do this type of evaluation and planning. They have been approached by two other states, but at the time, were not able to do the work.

Another project the team has worked on is the DPI Annual Report process. All public libraries have to report data federally. WiLS managed this process for 2021 and also synthesized the previous year's data for the state.

The team developed the Small Library Strategic Planning Cohort for public libraries. This service is not about libraries, but a framework or process. WiLS does a lot of small one-off strategic planning projects with libraries that can range between \$5,000 – \$12,000 but this is still too expensive for many small libraries. A cohort was created for this purpose where libraries do this

together through a flipped classroom style of teaching and meetings. The team is currently wrapping up its third year of the cohort. They are recruiting now for fourth-year participants.

The City Library Collective (CLC) is 11 libraries that represent communities that serve populations ranging from 30,000 to 100,000. The reason this was formed was there was a recognition that mid-size libraries were not growing financially at the same rate as large and really small libraries, yet the demands on these libraries were growing exponentially. It was also noted that most of the mid-sized libraries were doing similar strategic plans. Meetings started and principles were developed, and the initial idea was that they would focus their time on project work and the CLC would pick the project that they would work on each year. Then the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) came out, the collective applied and a grant was awarded to them. A common theme that was identified is needed social service support for library patrons of the involved libraries. The grant focused on this project. For this project, the consulting team is doing some of the grant-funded work, this includes training, a tool kit, and a data assessment.

On a National Scale, WiLS has worked on two new projects, an ALA project and an Asset Based Citizen lead Development (ABCD) for small libraries and communities. L. Damon-Moore went through this training at the Cody Institute. This is being incorporated into other consulting projects.

The consulting team is looking forward to growing data-oriented projects, more cohorts, and additional consulting services that came out during the strategic planning process. Marketing and digital collection work are areas in which the consulting team is interested in growing.

B. Brattin noted that she would be interested in WiLS taking on a project that helps libraries fit into their city's Smart City Initiatives.

E. Sayed noted that the NSF and NIH are requiring a data management plan for proposals. This may be an area that WiLS could help in the health and social sciences areas.

7. Recognition of board members (15 min) – J. Chamberlain recognized outgoing board members: Joe Davies (3 years), Peg Billing (9 years), and Martha Berninger (12 years).

8. Adjournment

P. Norman motioned to adjourn. H. Bariel seconded. Motion carried.

The meeting adjourned at 3:00 pm

Next meeting – August TBD 2022