



WILS IDEAS TO ACTION FUND

BRINGING YOUR IDEAS TO LIFE

Leaves and Sheaves: Papermaking for Art and the Environment

Final Report - Ideas to Action 2023

By Ellen Ward-Packard, Lake Geneva Public Library, August 2026

Number of people involved in or impacted by the project since Ideas to Action funding:

500 (estimated)

Do you anticipate that your project will continue after Ideas to Action funding?

Yes. Papermaking will continue in the form of lendable take-and-make papermaking kits, which supply materials and instructions for borrowers to make their own paper. These check out as part of our Library of Things.

Did your project encourage partnerships and collaborations with any community partners or other WiLS members? Who did you connect with during this process and how might you sustain those connections?

Yes. We connected with Kishwaukee Nature Conservancy, local nature educator Beth Goeppinger, the Wisconsin Historical Society, and papermaking artist Heather Kohlmeier. Staff at Kishwaukee led our papermaking group in an invasive plant removal expedition, and we were able to remove a few hundred pounds of invasive plants, some of which were later turned into paper. Beth Goeppinger continues to provide educational programs for our library, most recently a birdfeeder program. The Wisconsin Historical Society collaborated with us as part of their History Makers Tour for an event featuring Wisconsin paper artist Heather Kohlmeier. We continue to host events with the Wisconsin Historical Society, most recently an author event with Sherman Funmaker.

Community members continue to bring raw materials for papermaking to the library three years into the project, including old textiles and dried plant material.

Thinking about your project, what was the most innovative part? What can you, or your community, do now that it couldn't before?

We can make paper! As far as we know, the only locations in Wisconsin where the public can learn how to make paper are Madison, Fish Creek, and our library in Lake Geneva. Our library is the only location where members of the public can learn how to make paper for free.

While papermaking is easy to learn and can be enjoyable for most ages and skill levels, paper pulp is difficult to find or make. This project allowed us to bring a fun, creative, and rewarding craft to a new audience, and our community will continue to have access to papermaking supplies through our take and make kits.

How do you think other WiLS members could use what you learned and accomplished at their own organizations?

Our take-and-make papermaking kits are easily replicable with our equipment list and instruction sheet and can be put together for under \$100. While these kits provide minimal instruction, they do make essential papermaking materials available, and further information on papermaking is abundantly available through books and the internet.

While our initial hope was to lend out our Hollander beater to area libraries, we realized quickly that the beater required an experienced operator for successful use. Preparing fiber with the beater requires several days worth of cutting, drying, cleaning, cooking in soda ash, neutralizing, soaking, and beating, and our particular Hollander required extensive experimentation to produce quality pulp.

Project product(s):

[Equipment: Making Paper with Your Library Kit](#)

[Instructions: Making Paper with Your Library Kit](#)

[Full Photo Gallery](#)

