WiLS Board Meeting - Minutes

August 20, 2026 – 10:00 am – 3:00 pm

Location: UW-Stevens Point Library

Board Members (☐ indicates absent)

- ☑ Rebecca Durbin (Rosendale-Brandon School District)
- ☑ Jennifer Chamberlain (WiLS, ex-officio)
- ☐ Jennifer Follett (Madison Metropolitan School District)
- ☐ Frank Foss (Milwaukee Art Museum)
- ☐ Jennifer Gurske (Madison Trust for Historic Preservation)
- ☐ Kristina Gómez (Milwaukee Public Library)
- ☑ Dawn Haggerty (Gateway Technical College)
- ☑ Mindy King (UW - Stevens Point)
- ☐ Sarah Miller (WiscNet)
- ☑ Kim Olson-Kopp (Viterbo University)
- ☐ Margaret Ottenad (Kettle Moraine School District)
- ☑ Tasha Saecker (Appleton Public Library)
- ☑ Andrew Prellwitz (Ripon College)
- ☑ Jill Roth (Demmer Public Library)
- ☑ Shannon Schultz (SCLS)
- ☐ Brenna Weston (Polk County Historical Society)

1. **Call to Order; Changes/additions to the agenda**
   M. King called the meeting to order at 10:00 am. The group reviewed the agenda and no changes were suggested.

2. **Meeting Host Welcome & Logistics**
   M. King welcomed everyone to the newly reopened UW Stevens Point library! In-person logistics were covered, and the day's meeting will conclude with a library tour.

3. **Welcoming New Board Members & Introductions**
   The group participated in a *Pair up - meet a friend* activity, and the group broke into groups of two or three and took five minutes to each learn a bit about each other; each group then took turns introducing each other.

4. **Approval of previous meeting minutes**
   Document: May 29, 2026 and July 1, 2026 -special meeting

   J. Chamberlain noted that the attendance checklists in the PDF file of the minutes document did not display; this will be updated in the final documents.

   K. Olson-Kopp moved to approve the May 29th and July 1st meeting minutes; A. Prellwitz seconded. There was no further discussion. S. Schultz abstained from voting as they were not in attendance. The motion passed unanimously.

5. **WiLS 101 : Annual Board Orientation**

a. **History of WiLS**
J. Chamberlain provided a history of WiLS, from its earliest iteration that began in 1970 through today. Currently, WiLS has over 800 member organizations from all types of libraries, cultural organizations, and statewide and national consortia; and has helped create over 75 strategic plans.

b. **What WiLS Does: Service Overview**
J. Chamberlain provided an overview of WiLS' service areas and shared that WiLS staff will be invited to share service updates with the Board throughout the year.

D. Haggerty asked if WiLS is unique? J. Chamberlain shared about ICOLC (International Coalition of Library Consortia). They have a large membership base, many of which are Academic-focused consortia. Some of these members are cooperatively based, while others are their own entities. In Minnesota is Minitex, which is similar to WiLS; and in Illinois is RAILS and Illinois Heartland.

S. Schultz added that Wisconsin's libraries are unique to the state, and WiLS is able to fill gaps that WLA and DPI might not be able to manage.

S. Schultz asked how many FTEs does WiLS have now? J. Chamberlain said there are 14 staff members: 13 full time and 1 part time; so 13.5 FTE.

c. **Board member roles & expectations**
Board members are encouraged to share potential services that WiLS could explore; to share services they've participated in that were a positive experience; and to share anything that WiLS could do better.

During the meeting, the Board was asked to share more about the membership they represent, and how their membership typically interacts with WiLS? What aspects of board membership are most meaningful for you, or what is your favorite work the WiLS board undertakes?

- T. Saecker loves the dynamic of the Board: learning from other library types and getting a global, statewide feel and perspective. Appreciates the discussions and meeting new people.
- M. King shared that it is a rare experience to learn from a diverse group of people, and is able to take information learned and share with CUWL. UW Systems have participated in cooperative purchasing strongly, but individually UW Stevens Point has also participated in some consulting projects and they are excited to participate in Documentation Lab. They are also a part of Recollection Wisconsin.

- K. Olson-Kopp shared that cooperative purchasing is heavily used, and consulting services have also been utilized. Enjoys seeing the connections, and before joining the Board was curious to know what happened in these meetings. It's been fun [to be on the WiLS Board] and is able to share what is learned with colleagues. For example, just yesterday she shared with their Archivist that WiLS has members beyond libraries.
- S. Schultz mused that from a public library perspective, SLCS probably uses WiLS the least because their system is able to offer a lot of services. S. Gold and J. Chamberlain shared that SCLS actually is a very active system. This was a perfect example of one of Shannon's "whys" for joining the Board- to learn more and see how they could increase their usage of WiLS' services and reduce redundancies within their own system.

d. WiLS Communication Strategy

WiLS staff member and Communication and Consortia Manager Andi Coffin shared an overview of WiLS' communications and how they thread through all service areas, projects, and WiLS' strategic plan. A. Coffin also covered:

- WiLS' personality, voice, and tone in all communications;
- highlighted WiLS' two newsletters, @WiLS and Community Chronicle, and what we learned about member engagement with these newsletters from this past year's WiLS Community Survey; and
- Events and recurring webinars that WiLS hosts, and the events that WiLS coordinates with statewide partners.

K. Olson-Kopp asked who receives the newsletters? A. Coffin shared that "voting representatives" are signed up for each of these; additional staff and anyone in the community can sign up to receive these two newsletters. Board members are encouraged to share the newsletter signup link (here) with everyone! T. Saecker and M. King shared that they particularly appreciate (at)WiLS and find it consistently uplifting.

J. Chamberlain asked the group about the timing and cadence of the newsletters- does monthly feel right or could they be more often? The group agreed that monthly feels right; moving to weekly, for example, might put undue stress on staff, and more frequent newsletters may not be as widely read.

A. Coffin asked the group about WiLSWorld Shorts. T. Saecker shared that she doesn't feel like there is any connection to *WiLSWorld* within the community anymore, and is supportive of a name change. B. Durbin, as a newer librarian, admitted that she didn't initially understand why "Shorts" but was able to figure it out quickly after looking into it. J. Chamberlain also noted that this is coming from the thought that if WiLSWorld Shorts start

being shared outside of Wisconsin (via the Professional Development Alliance), there may be confusion or wonder about the name. J. Roth was neutral, noting that she is too new to see the connection to the WiLSWorld conference, but sees the name as WiLS owning the event; but is still supportive of changing the name if that's what is decided.

M. King really appreciated the most recent annual report, and found the staff's point-of-view unique.

6. **Discussion: How do you convey your organizational value?**
J. Chamberlain lead the Board in a discussion on how they convey their own organizational value, posing the following questions to consider:
    - *What strategies, resources, or metrics do you rely on to demonstrate value? Do these differ depending on the audience?*
    - *What data points are most helpful? Are there data points you don't have that would be helpful?*
    - *How do you balance ensuring your community has service awareness and communicating the impact of those services?*
    - *Have you experienced any real advocacy wins - any lightbulb moments to share?*
    - *Do you tie advocacy strategies to the institutional priorities of your "parent organization" - ie: university, municipality, school district, etc.? Has that made a noticeable difference in your efforts?*

    Discussion:
    - M. King shared that a major discussion happening on the UW Stevens Point campus, and in the UW System, is a focus on student retention: in academics, you don't want to increase costs for attendance, so the focus is retention, especially between 1st and 2nd years. It's hard for libraries to have data that supports this academic campus goal: student privacy means they can't track at the student level who uses the library. At UW Stevens Point, the library has started partnering with other departments- for example, the library is purchasing (or contributing funds towards) digital subscriptions. In turn, that department is able to provide data that supports the library's role in student retention. They were also able to leverage city connections to support the archives and provide an internship program. Usage statistics alone don't say a lot without a story behind it.

      J. Chamberlain asked if a new space/building impacts the ability to tell a story? M. King and T. Saecker both agreed that yes, a new building brings people in who are interested in knowing more about it, and this serves as an opportunity to not only share what's new but also what more the library could be and what it could do with funding.

- K. Olson-Kopp agreed that it's hard to get the word out about what services the library can provide. At Viterbo, the library has a strong connection with other campus programs like Student Life, which helps students know what offerings are available. However, their campus staff connection has been weakening. There is hope that the library's work on AI can help guide and reconnect staff to the library.

  She was also recently able to build a connection with the campus' new Finance Director. By reaching out early in their new role, Kim was able to set up a meeting to explain what the library does, how funding is used and calculated each year, and the impacts of consistently rising costs of library subscriptions and databases. Now they have a standing meeting.

  For this year's annual report, they reduced it from a large report to a 1 ½ page summary; which was well-received by her manager as a way to be able to talk about the library with others in the community.

  J. Chamberlain asked if there were reasons why there has been a weakening of staff connections? K. Olson-Kopp thinks it could be because of staff turnover, adjunct professors, and changing needs of staff and faculty. M. King added that faculty don't feel like they have as much time to do their own research, or to schedule a library session. UW Stevens Point is trying other ways to meet those needs. B. Durbin shared that in K12, even faculty are being told that classroom time is meant to be used in the classroom; that libraries do not fit into this. For example, a class was told they could not attend a library session because it didn't fit the curriculum.
- D. Haggerty shared that library, tutoring, and career services staff were able to participate in instructional services but have noticed that these have been diminishing. They are hoping this year to launch a designated space to help students and staff utilize AI (calling it *AI-Aware*), which can also help support library usage on campus. Gateway Technical College's Nursing and Veterinary programs are accredited programs, so have library-based requirements they need to meet, so the library still has connections with these staff.

  Especially with AI, the library has the opportunity to provide support and data for library usage, which Dawn is very excited about. S. Schultz was interested in hearing more about AI use; and how to combat perceived judgements on when admitting that it's used. There are a lot of competing emotions about AI; and libraries have an opportunity to explore uses and share what they've learned with their user base.

- J. Roth does utilize AI to help craft communications, but it's not a primary strategy; it's a component. The rest of her work is community-based and

meeting with community leaders one-on-one. Sharing the numbers and the hows, especially with one-on-one meetings, helps build trust with these leaders. S. Schultz agrees that knowing the audience and speaking to organizations and partners directly, and learning what they're interested in and what impacts have meaning to them, is much more beneficial.

J. Chamberlain asked the group if this is their experience too: they change their communications based on the audience they are trying to reach? Everyone indicated that this is how they've been approaching. T. Saecker shared that they, too, have been less focused on sharing statistics and are instead talking about stories, feedback from the community. Appleton Public Library is also looking a lot into improving their internal communications; which in turn will also be able to inform the community about why the library does what they do.

J. Roth has also been talking to their County Clerk and sharing their work so they can also receive feedback and information from them. A. Prellwitz is trying to do similar work with their campus Dean, but they don't necessarily have the time to connect; so Ripon College Library is getting involved with the campus AI initiatives to help showcase how the library supports campus.

Lunch in the Debot Dining Center: 12:30 – 1:30 pm – meet a new board member!

The *Action: Ideas to Action grant awards* topic was moved to topic 9

7. **Overview of WiLS Finances - Jen**
    a. **Board and Financial Oversight**
    J. Chamberlain provided background on the WiLS Budget, sharing information on the WiLS Finance Committee and how the Board provides financial oversight.

    b. **FY27 budget review**
    J. Chamberlain explained that when setting the annual budget, WiLS will conservatively budget for project income, and will estimate high on budget project expenses. J. Chamberlain shared an overview of the balance sheet, and shared that WiLS has an enviable ratio between income and expenses.

    c. **June 2026 draft financials**
    With preliminary numbers, 2025-26 is expecting a year-end surplus of $163,877.83, and suggested ideas that the 10th year (2027-28) of Ideas to Action could see something special. Looking for 2026-27, the Board could choose to divert some of the surplus to the staff retirement fund. At the FY26 year end:

- Preliminary year-end with robust surplus!
- All revenue lines met or exceeded target.
- Investment performance continues to be strong.
- Fully funded Ideas to Action and 401K program within the budget year
- Bigger surplus may be helpful as we enter a year with higher salary lines & in light of.
- member budget concerns, which could lead to either less usage of WiLS' services (or more).

D. Haggerty asked if it was known why the surplus was higher than the previous year- could this be because of investments; and in 2022, how did WiLS balance that year's shortfall? J. Chamberlain wasn't sure what contributed to the increase in surplus over the previous year. For years when there is a loss, WiLS has designated accounts for specific uses that are funded in years of surplus, and these funds can be drawn from as needed. D. Haggerty asked if there were any concerns about members not being able to pay their WiLS invoices? J. Chamberlain confirmed that WiLS hasn't seen this yet, but WiLS is positioned fiscally if this were to happen.

8. **Check in on WiLS Operations**
    a. **WiLS Strategic Plan Update**
    J. Chamberlain shared an overview of our recent assessment of the plan in year 4. The key takeaways for the year are:
        i. Most Year 4 activities are underway or nearly finished, with many more identified to start soon.
        ii. Cooperative Purchasing needs time to let recent changes in staffing, responsibility distribution, and MyWILS workflows settle and take effect.
        iii. Collaboration is happening across teams in web accessibility and design, and in holding annual meetings for consortia.
        iv. A few activities should be paused or abandoned — staff development as a service is one example.

    WiLS will begin thinking about the next strategic plan in 2027.

    b. **Director's Report**
    J. Chamberlain shared a few items during the meeting:
        i. New hires - Two new hires, and both are working out so well! A *Roving Archivist* grant-funded position (16-month) will be posted soon. WiLS said goodbye to Nick Smith last week; and in the exit interview asked about toxic positivity. Outgoing staff member did not see this as a reality or risk, but feels it is good the organization is cognizant of this potential pitfall.

ii. Staff 1:1s - J. Chamberlain has finished two rounds of staff 1:1s and it has been going very well.
iii. WiscNet back to school webinar - J. Chamberlain participated in a webinar, and a link to that will be shared out soon. [correction: the recording didn't work, so WiscNet has shared notes, not a recording]
iv. eBook legislation work group - WLA members will start sending communications and invitations to webinars on this topic soon. Three WiLS staff members are on this workgroup.
v. LSTA evaluations - WiLS will be working with the Wyoming State Library. WiLS did not get Wisconsin's LSTA bid.
vi. Documentation Lab is a go! -
vii. Late Sept Staff Retreat - WiLS staff will go through exercises to discuss the values of libraries.

9. **Action: Ideas to Action grant awards**
S. Gold thanked the board members who participated in the grant review committee, and she presented the committee's recommended grantees for board approval. In addition to the Board-approved $50,000, WiLS received a $500 donation to fund Ideas to Action projects for 2026.

The Ideas to Action Committee Recommends the following projects to receive grant funding:

- **Rosemary Garfoot Public Library - Growing Community**
    - This is a program to transform an underutilized and neglected area in front of the library into a community garden to use for library programming, community building and community partnerships.
    - The application did a great job of demonstrating a need to solve an issue and did so by involving community members of all ages (kids to seniors) programming for the full life cycle of the garden–from planting to harvesting food and preparing it with local chefs.
- **Barron County Historical Society, Inc. (dba Pioneer Village Museum) - Rural Learning Exchange**
    - This project will develop and pilot a Rural Learning Exchange, a collaborative library–school–museum partnership model designed to strengthen access to educational resources and expand community-based learning opportunities across northwest Wisconsin.
    - This project addresses a common rural challenge: libraries, museums, and educators are rich in ideas and resources, but often lack the time, infrastructure, and connections needed to easily share them. It shows community engagement (as well as financial investment) and could serve a blueprint for other rural community partnerships.

- **Aram Public Library - DPL Learning Link**
    - This project aims to streamline library card access for Delavan Darien School District students and school personnel by using student ID barcodes to connect them with over 1.7 million items through PLLS across Racine, Rock, and Walworth counties, thereby removing barriers, closing the digital divide, and supporting lifelong learning.
    - This application demonstrated clear need and impact, solid partnerships, and a strong equity focus. And that this is a local-scale model of a bigger model can be inspiring and helpful to other communities of a similar size.
- **Winding Rivers Library System - From Panels to Public Knowledge: Educating Wisconsin Through Library Solar Monitoring Stations**
    - The Winding Rivers Library System runs solar cohorts that help member libraries cut utility costs, reduce their carbon footprint, and navigate solar installation through consulting, vetted installer partnerships, funding assistance, and community education. Because rooftop solar panels are often out of sight and therefore easily overlooked, the system proposes public-facing solar monitoring stations—featuring a display, small computer, and mounting hardware—that show real-time data on energy consumption, solar production, and grid import/export. This grant funding would purchase the equipment needed to install these monitoring stations at libraries actively pursuing solar installation, making renewable energy tangible and educational for library visitors.
    - This project is innovative, instructive with a strong environmental component; and an educational component of it and how it pairs with meeting a practical need of decreasing utility costs. The application did a great job of articulating replicability and detailing the process.
- **Hamilton/SOTA I Elementary Schools: Threads of Stories - Hmong Culture Comes Alive**
    - A comprehensive Hmong cultural immersion featuring visiting artists, stories, language learning, traditional performances, and community engagement across three La Crosse schools, culminating in a unified celebration with family participation at the Hmong Culture Center along with an Hmong author visit. The program aims to increase cross-cultural understanding and empathy while also validating and celebrating student identities.
    - This is a well-documented project with DEI focus. Although this asks for an author honorarium, the project is more comprehensive than the author visit; and demonstrates to others how a project can

incorporate an author visit, rather than the author visit being the project.

- **Kaukauna Public Library - Juneteenth Celebration**
    - Kaukauna, a growing but historically homogenous Fox Valley community, currently lacks large-scale events that celebrate BIPOC culture and educate the broader public, leaving gaps in cultural awareness, visibility for Black-owned businesses and artists, and a sense of belonging for BIPOC residents. This proposed event addresses that need by creating an accessible, welcoming space centered on both celebration (including Juneteenth) and education, helping BIPOC residents see their identities reflected while inviting the wider community to learn and build relationships.
    - This application demonstrated need, is replicable, and appreciates the contingency fund built into their budget DEI focused. It also has strong community partnerships and impact; and is sustainable.
- **Wisconsin School for the Deaf - Hands-On STEM Access: Expanding Learning for Deaf Students**
    - Wisconsin School for the Deaf students are thriving with hands-on Sphero–littleBits STEM kits, which suit their visual, spatial, and tactile learning styles, but a budget freeze on nonessential spending has left materials too limited to sustain the program's momentum. Without expansion, students will soon exhaust available challenges, risking a loss of engagement and missed growth in problem-solving, engineering, and collaboration skills. This project seeks to build a structured, progressive, and sustainable STEM program scalable across K–12 grade bands at WSD.
    - This project has a DEI focus with clearly articulated purpose and budget.
- **Spring Green Community Library - River Valley Happenings: A Spring Green Area Events Calendar**
    - This is a collaborative project between the library, River Valley Commons, and a number of local organizations. The Spring Green area no longer has a local dedicated newspaper. The library, as an information hub for the community, has recognized the need for a community events calendar and has been working with project partners to develop a viable, sustainable way to promote local events.
    - Ideas to Action hasn't funded a project like this before, and it can be seen how it would be inspiring and applicable to especially rural libraries and organizations. The proposal includes a sustainability plan. The relationship of this project to the lack of a local newspaper made this a very emotionally compelling project, though a digital events calendar isn't necessarily an innovative project; rather it’s the

problem-solving approach to getting the word out without a local newspaper that makes it innovative.

- Milwaukee Intertribal Circle Inc. - Teaching Quill Wrapping in Milwaukee
    - Milwaukee Intertribal Circle would like to host an intensive course to teach and preserve the ancient art of quill-wrapping, a Native American pre-Columbian art form using porcupine quills to create adornments.
    - Clear DEI and cultural awareness component. The review committee initial had concerns about the ⅔ of the grant going towards an instructor's honorarium and replicability due to that cost, but they found the project's aim to bring urban members from diverse tribes together compelling and worthy of funding.

The group felt like this was a great batch of applications. S. Gold noted that the new guidelines helped to keep the proposals manageable. J. Chamberlain noted that there weren't any academic awardees this year; S. Gold confirmed that there was only one application from an academic library. M. King shared that, in her opinion, there shouldn't necessarily be an academic library awarded grant funding each year, especially when thinking about the ratio of academic libraries to other member-types.

As a reminder, no applicant has been notified yet on the results of their Ideas to Action proposal; please do not share out. WiLS will send out messaging to all applicants after the Board finalizes the approval.

There was not a quorum of Board members in attendance. J. Chamberlain will send a summary of the projects and will request approval via the Board's Basecamp.

10. Preview of the board year ahead

M. King gave a preview of what the 26-27 board year looks like. This year's activities include reviewing & approving the employee handbook, considering the annual 401K discretionary contribution, and kickstarting the next strategic plan process. Additionally, WiLS plans on bringing a couple of new policies to the board for consideration, including a financial hardship for members policy and an emergency succession plan policy.

11. Wrap up

M. King led the group in a wrap-up, where everyone used a single word to describe how they are feeling at the end of the meeting.

12. Meeting adjourned at 2:50 pm with a tour of the new library.

Next meeting is via Zoom on November 3 - 1:30 pm - 3:30 pm