Exhibit 16

Director's Report

WVLS BOARD OF TRUSTEES MEETING

February 17, 2024

PEOPLE IN THE NEWS

WVLS Board Welcomes New Trustee

The Taylor County Board has appointed a new representative to the WVLS Board effective January 1, 2024. **Candice Grunseth** has accepted the appointment for a 3-year term. She replaces **Eileen Grunseth**, who retired from the Board at the end of 2023.

Trustees who have volunteered to stay on the WVLS Board for another 3-year term and have been reappointed by their respective counties include Clark County representative **Tom Bobrofsky** and Marathon County representative **Kathryn Palmer**.

Currently there are two vacancies on the Board. One is a Marathon County appointment to replace **Tyson Cain** who left the board in 2021, and the other is an Oneida County appointment to replace **Pat Pechura** who retired from the board at the end of 2023.

WVLS Leadership in 2024 (Exhibit 16a)

As we reflect on the accomplishments of 2023 (mentioned later in this report) and begin 2024, it is important to acknowledge that we realistically could not 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 2024 (**Exhibit 16a**). 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 a great group of people throughout the year. WVLS appreciates the work WVLS leaders do!

Library Legislative Day 2024 (Exhibit 16b)

The Wisconsin Library Association Library Legislative Day was well attended on February 6 with 183 librarians, trustees and other supporters registered from around the state. The morning briefing program held at the Best Western Park Hotel included remarks from **Governor Tony Evers**, **Senator Mary Felzkowski**, **Representative Tony Kurtz**, Assistant State Superintendent Division for Libraries and Technology **Dr. Darrell Williams**, and WLA Government Relations Advisor **Steve Conway**. Senator Felzkowski, her staff aide Stamena Ivanov, Representative Kurtz and his staff aide Danielle Zimmerman were given special recognition for their work to secure an additional $6 million in state aid to public library systems in the 2023-2025 state budget from the Joint Finance Committee.

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Attending from WVLS member libraries were Antigo Public Library Director Ada Demlow, Crandon Public Library Director Laurie Renel-Faledas, Loyal Public Library Director Teresa Hall and Trustee Jim Mildbrand, Marathon Co. Public Library Director Leah Giordano, Minocqua Public Library Director Peggy O'Connell, Neillsville Public Library Director Janay Ziebell, Rhinelander District Library Director Virginia Roberts, Simek Memorial Library (Medford) Director Maxx Handel, Tomahawk Public Library Director Heidi O'Hare, and T.B. Scott Free Library (Merrill) Director Laurie Ollhoff. WVLS was further represented by Board Members Tom Bobrofsky, Louise Olszewski, Mike Otten, Petra Pietrzak, and Kari Sweeney, as well as staff members Marla Sepnafski, Erica Brewster, Brenda Walenton and Kris Adams Wendt. The WVLS team visited all 11 legislators whose districts include portions of WVLS counties, sharing some appointments with five colleagues from IFLS, NFLS and NWLS. **See Exhibit 16b** for photos of visits the WVLS LLD cohort had with legislators whose districts include portions of WVLS counties. These handouts were shared in information packets for Library Legislative Day participants and legislators: "The Life Cycle of a Library Book" and "When There is a Book Challenge" **(Exhibit 16d-1)** and "Shelving of a Library Book" and "Using the Library you're your Child: Parental Rights and Responsibilities" **(Exhibit 16d-2).**

2023 IN REVIEW

State Level News

State Library Aid Receives an Increase in 2023-2025 Biennium. WVLS and the other 14 regional systems will share 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 will raise 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.

In addition to achieving requested funding for library systems, statewide library resource contracts, BadgerLink and Newsline for the Blind, it was a joy to also see Recollection Wisconsin granted its own line item for $450,000 over the next biennium after six years of library community advocacy on its behalf.

Arrowhead and Lakeshores Public Library Systems Merge. In late fall 2022, member counties of the Arrowhead Library System and Lakeshores Library System voted to merge the systems. On January 1, 2023, a new **Prairie Lakes Library System** (PLLS) was formed to include Rock, Racine and Walworth Counties.

OverDrive Sunsets Legacy App. To help public libraries welcome more users to Libby, the OverDrive legacy app was sunset at the end of April 2023. The OverDrive app had been removed from the Apple App Store, Google Play, and Microsoft Store in early 2022. More information is available at Meet Libby: The App from OverDrive.

Exhibit 16

Personnel Changes
New Leader for DPI's Division for Libraries and Technology. In January 2023, State Superintendent Jill Underly announced the appointment of **Dr. Darrell L. Williams** as the Assistant State Superintendent for the Division for Libraries and Technology.

The Library Services Team welcomed **Arshad Iqbal** as the new Grants Specialist and Federal Grants Coordinator in May. Former Head of Interlibrary Loan at UW-Madison **Joy Pohlman** joined DPI on June 5 as the new WISCAT Technical Coordinator. **Diane Casselberry** became the newest Interlibrary Loan Librarian on July 17.

Director of Oshkosh Public Library/Winnefox Library System Retires. Jeff Gilderson-Duwe, director of the Oshkosh Public Library and Winnefox Library System retired from his shared roles in June 2023. In early May, the Winnefox Library System Board voted to appoint Winnefox Library System Assistant Director **Clairellyn Sommersmith** to be the system's first full-time Director since its establishment in 1976. In November 2023, the Oshkosh Public Library announced the appointment of **Darryl Eschete** as the new director of the library. Eschete served as the Director at West Des Moines Public Library (Iowa) since 2012, and before that was the director of the Chippewa Falls Public Library (WI). Eschete started his new position in January 2024.

SCLS Director and SCLS Resource Library Director Announced Retirement Plans. South Central Library System (Madison) Director **Martha Van Pelt** announced her plan to retire sometime in February or March 2024. Madison Public Library Director **Greg Mickells** retired on February 2, 2024.

SWLS Director Resigns. In October, **David Krantz** announced his plan to resign as Director of the Southwest Wisconsin Library System (Platteville) to accept a position as ILS/Interlibrary Loan Consultant at the Winding Rivers Library System (La Crosse). In January 2024, the Southwest Wisconsin Library System's Board of Trustees hired **Angela Noel** as its new System Director. Angela served as Director of the Dodgeville Public Library and held previous public director positions in Broadhead and Richland Center.

New Resources Available to Libraries and Systems
Privacy Tutorials. Wisconsin public library workers have access to tutorials covering the basics of privacy and public libraries, with specific attention to Wisconsin laws. These tutorials were created by the University of Wisconsin-Madison's iSchool, with support from Wisconsin Public Library Systems, the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction and Institute for Museum and Library Services.

- [Privacy and Wisconsin Public Libraries Tutorial for Front-Line Staff](#): This tutorial includes three modules. Each module consists of a short (8-9 minute) video, links to additional reading, and a short comprehension quiz. The goal is to help front-line staff understand the reasons behind privacy policies and laws, as well as learning how to interact effectively with library users about privacy.

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- [Privacy and Wisconsin Public Libraries Tutorial for Managers and Directors](#): Library directors and managers can access a short tutorial with suggestions for working with staff, creating policies, and other administrative tasks related to protecting patron privacy.

Wisconsin Library Buildings and Spaces Project. Geared toward Wisconsin public library directors, staff and trustees who are planning library building and renovation projects, [this new resource](#) includes on-demand webinars and resources from professionals across the state as well as a list of recently completed projects from Wisconsin libraries. Topics include renovation, space reconfiguration, new building projects, and more.

Wisconsin Public Library Staff Compensation Toolkit. This toolkit provides staff salaries and position classification information to help library boards determine appropriate compensation to attract and retain the best possible employees for the positions. Prior to working with municipalities on benefits for library staff, library administrators and boards are encouraged to review the [SRLAAW Wisconsin Public Library Staff Compensation Report Executive Summary](#) and other resources in the toolkit to effectively utilize the data presented in the report. The complete report and toolkit are available at https://www.srlaaw.org/compensation-study. Highlights from the report include:

- **Participation:** The survey engaged 305 participants (or 80% of public libraries in Wisconsin), predominantly from the Western, Southeast, and Northern regions.
- **Data Collection:** Participants were asked to review a list of 46 survey job titles and descriptions, and to provide their pay range, annual work hours, benefit eligibility, paid leave eligibility, and MLS requirements.
- **Total Rewards:** Participating libraries commonly provide benefits such as Wisconsin Retirement System (WRS) participation, health insurance, bereavement/funeral leave, and dental insurance.
- **Compensation:** Statewide, Library Directors earn an average of $27.56-$31.37 hourly. Compensation often correlates with population size; municipalities exceeding 50,000 residents pay $49.73-$66.73 hourly.

COLAND Biennial Report on Wisconsin Libraries, 2021-2023. In July 2023, the Council on Library and Network Development (COLAND) submitted its [2021-2023 Biennial Report on the Value of Library Services, Statistical Report, Challenges, Opportunities, and Recommendations](#) to State Superintendent of Public Instruction Dr. Jill Underly and members of the WI Department of Public Instruction Team. The report recommends:
- Support affordable statewide broadband and digital equity.
- Support adequate staffing at libraries.
- Maintain or increase current staff retention rates for all libraries.
- Encourage youth to consider the field of library science.
- Protect intellectual freedom and the Freedom to Read.

Exhibit 16

- Reduce barriers to licensing/certification for librarians, especially those which disproportionately affect underrepresented groups.
- Continue to advocate for state aid to libraries at a level that will maintain or increase potential impact.
- Ensure library facilities and buildings are well maintained, provide sufficient space and are capable of meeting the needs of their customers.

News From Member Libraries

Committee Appointments

Neillsville Public Library Director **Janay Ziebell** was selected as the 2024 V-Cat Chair Elect. Northcentral Technical College Librarian **Katie Aldrich** was selected as the 2024 Library Advisory Committee Chair Elect.

Legislative Joint Finance Committee Budget Hearings

Neillsville Public Library Director **Janay Ziebell** attended the budget hearing in Eau Claire on April 11. Minocqua Public Library Director **Peg O'Connell** attended the budget hearing in Minocqua on April 26.

Leadership Changes

Erica Brewster resigned as director of the E.U. Demmer Library (Three Lakes) in February. The Demmer Library Board hired the library's accounts manager and technical services librarian **Peter Kotarba** as the new director in April. In December, Kotarba announced his resignation from the Library Director position to work at the Appleton Public Library as its new Adult Services and Engagement Librarian. His last day at the Demmer Library was January 8, 2024.

In early November, Wabeno Public Library Director **Cynthia Lemerande** announced her plan to retire at the end of the month and **Jasmine Hanson** was hired by the Wabeno Public Library Board as the new director for the library.

2023 Mentorship Program Partnerships

Nine public library director mentee/mentor partnerships were in place in 2023.
- **Three newly developed public library director mentee/mentor partnerships:**
  - Laurie Ollhoff (T.B Scott Free Library/Merrill) with Susan Heskin (Superior Public Library)
  - Ada Demlow (Antigo Public Library) with Kristie Hauer (Shawano County Library/WVLS)
  - Peter Kotarba (Demmer Memorial Library/Three Lakes) with Heidi O'Hare (Tomahawk Public Library)
  - Discussions relating to Staff Development/Team Building, Budgeting, and Community Collaboration were among the top areas of need from mentees.
- **Three public library director mentee/mentor partnerships that were continued:**
  - Leah Giordano (Marathon County Public Library) with Sarah Sugden (Brown County Library)

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- o Melissa Highfill (Westboro Public Library) with Carla Huston (Jean M. Thomsen Memorial Library/Stetsonville)
  - o Amber Brill (Greenwood Area Library) with Kay Heiting (Granton Community Library)
  - o One mentor noted during a check-in: *"Everything seems to be going fine, and we do communicate regularly."*
- **Three public library director mentee/mentor partnerships that were completed:**
  - o Rita Ludvigsen (Western Taylor County Public Library/Gilman) with Tammie Blomberg (Rib Lake Public Library)
  - o Carsyn Soderstrom (Thorp Public Library) with Julie Beloungy (Thorp School District)
  - o Laurie Renel-Faledas (Crandon Public Library) with Erica Brewster (Demmer Memorial Library/Three Lakes/WVLS)

Recipients of WVLS Scholarships
WVLS awarded 19 continuing education scholarships in 2023.

Wisconsin Library Association's Library Legislative Day (Madison; February 7, 2023)
- Ada Demlow, Antigo Public Library
- Carla Huston, Jean M. Thomsen Public Library (Stetsonville)
- Katelyn Sobelko, Marathon County Public Library
- Laurie Ollhoff, T.B. Scott Free Library (Merrill)
- Teresa Hall, Loyal Public Library
- Virginia Roberts, Rhinelander District Library

WEMTA (Wisconsin Educational Media and Technology Association) Conference (Rothschild; February 5-7, 2023)
- Julie Beloungy, School District of Thorp
- Kay Heiting, Granton Community Library and Granton School District
- Kristie Heistad, Antigo Public Library

ALA (American Library Association) Conference (Chicago, Illinois; June 22-27, 2023)
- Annette Miller, Tomahawk Public Library
- Leah Giordano, Marathon County Public Library

Wisconsin Library Association (WLA) Conference (Middleton; October 24-27, 2023)
- Alexander Johnson, Marathon County Public Library
- Andrea Bennett, T.B. Scott Free Library (Merrill)
- Denise Chojnacki, Rhinelander District Library
- Krista Blomberg, Rib Lake Public Library
- Maria Pregler, T.B. Scott Free Library (Merrill)
- Maxx Handel, Frances L. Simek Memorial Library (Medford)
- Rita Ludvigsen, Western Taylor County Public Library (Gilman)
- Sarah Moscatello, Marathon County Public Library

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WLA/WAPL Conferences, Workshops and Webinar Presenters

- **Katelyn Sabelko**, Marathon County Public Library, was part of a virtual panel discussion for WiLSWorld Short *"Book Challenge Hindsight: What You Wish You'd Known"* on March 24.
- **Tammie Blomberg**, Rib Lake Public Library Director, presented the session on *"My End of the Boat is Sinking"* at the 2023 Wisconsin Association of Public Libraries (WAPL) Conference. The WAPL Conference was held April 26-28 in Oshkosh.
- Three area colleagues presented at the WLA Conference held October 24-27 in Middleton. Rib Lake Public Library Assistant Director **Krista Blomberg** presented a session on *"Playful Learning at the Library: Deepening Family & Community Engagement with PBS Kids."* **Kay Heiting**, Granton Community Library Director, and **Julie Beloungy**, Library Media Specialist in the School District of Thorp, presented a session on *"DRA Numbers and Decodables: What is this and Why does it matter?"*
- Marathon County Public Library Adult Services Librarian **Julie Kinney** did a recorded webinar for WVLS on Genealogy Basics with Ancestry.

Wisconsin Valley Library Service News

Staff Changes

Anne Hamland. WVLS gave a fond farewell to Public Library Services Consultant Anne Hamland following her decision to step away from her professional career and WVLS. Hired in July 2016 as the WVLS Communications Coordinator, Anne became the WVLS Public Library Services Consultant in 2017, a position she held until her resignation on April 28.

Erica Brewster. WVLS welcomed Erica Brewster to the WVLS team on April 3. Initially WVLS was going to hire Erica for project-based work following her resignation from the Demmer Library, but there was a bit of an "opportunity whirlwind" for us to apply her enthusiasm and aptitude for tech-related projects more fully and to address the Technology Support Specialist position that had been unfilled for several months and Public Library Services Consultant position that had just opened. With the hire of a full-time Public Services Consultant (below), Erica's title became Data and Technology Support Consultant.

Kristie Hauer. On August 7, WVLS welcomed Shawano County Library Director Kristie Hauer as the new full-time Public Library Services Consultant for WVLS. Working in libraries since 1999, Kristie worked as a school librarian for 5 years and as a Director of the Shawano County Library for the last 15 years. In 2018, she launched a project to join a city-county library and 5 municipal libraries to form a countywide consolidated library system. Other work experiences include teaching a graduate level course on Rural Libraries as an adjunct professor at Louisiana State University, Baton Rouge, LA and serving as a Preschool Specialist Librarian at the Appleton Public Library. She also has done several presentations at state and national conferences.

Brendan Tuckey. In late 2023, LEAN WI partner systems – IFLS Library System, Northern Waters Library Service and WVLS – collectively hired Brendan Tuckey as a shared full-time Technology Support

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Consultant. This unique position will provide support to over 100 libraries across the northern half of the state in such service areas as website development and support, digitization processes, and projects involving data visualization and analysis. Through the LEAN WI partnership, Brendan will also provide website support to libraries in the Winding Rivers Library System. For the past 15 years, Brendan and his family have owned and operated a farm that produces organic vegetables. Brendan holds a Bachelor of Science degree in Computer Science from Victoria University (Wellington, New Zealand), and several AWS (Amazon Web Services) certifications. Born in Wellington, New Zealand, Brendan now calls northern Wisconsin home. Brendan's first day as a member of the LEAN WI Team was January 8, 2024.

Speaking Engagements

WVLS Continuing Education Consultant **Jamie Matczak** completed a new Continuing Education course called "Perfecting Your Presentations" for the iSchool at UW-Madison. This four-week course offered in Spring 2023 examined strategies and best practices on being prepared and confident public speakers. Learners had to create and deliver a presentation as a culmination of the course. She participated in an Advocacy Series in August 2023 for the iSchool at UW-Madison. The series focused on different facets of advocacy, including community engagement, outreach, social media strategies, data visualization and presentation skills. Matczak's webinar, "Fine-Tuning Your Presentations," was held on August 17. Matczak was the morning presenter during an in-service for the Dodgeville Public Library on Friday, August 11. Her presentation focused on customer service trends, body language, tips for "hot topic" conversations and best practices for colleagues working together.

WiLS Data Classroom Cohort

Erica Brewster became 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, develop data collection and management methods, and creating data visualizations. Access to WiLS's newly developed Data Dashboard is included with the course, so Erica has an opportunity to test the data for WVLS libraries included in the dashboard as part of the overall coursework and final project.

Wisconsin Library Association Conference

Jamie Matczak served as Chair of the 2023 Wisconsin Library Association (WLA) Conference Planning Committee, and WVLS Business Manager **Brenda Walenton** served as Co-Chair of the Exhibits Committee. The 2023 WLA Conference was held October 24-27 at the Madison Marriott West in Middleton.

Wisconsin Public Library Consortium

In February 2023, the WPLC (Wisconsin Public Library Consortium) Board added **Rachel Metzler** and three other WPLC Board members to the **2023 Budget Committee**. As a Board Liaison to the Digital Library Steering Committee, Metzler helped to determine the amount of the annual buying pool. **Erica Brewster** and **Joshua Klingbeil** were members of WPLC's **Data Dashboard Workgroup** charged with evaluating existing library data dashboards of public library systems in Wisconsin and those used by other states or non-library examples to help determine suitability for a statewide data dashboard pilot

Exhibit 16

project. Information on the Workgroup's *Finding and Recommendations Report* will be shared in the March 2024 Director's Report.

WVLS Board Activities

Examples of important decisions the WVLS Board of Trustees made in 2023 include:

- **February Meeting**: A Staff COLA Adjustment – raising it from 2% (approved in September 2022) to an additional 3% COLA
- **March Meeting**: A new WVLS Labor Law Posting Policy and 2022 WVLS Annual Report
- **May Meeting:** *2022 Auditor's Report*; revisions to WVLS employee code of conduct, rest periods and attendance policies; *2024 Technology Planning Guide*; and revised 2024 WPLC Digital Buying Pool Shares
- **August Meeting:** 2023 MCPL/WVLS Resource Library Agreement; a new social media policy; and 2023/2024 NWLS/WVLS Improved Discovery Solutions Grant Pre-Application (NICE Project)
- **September Meeting:** 2024 WVLS Plan and Budget (which includes two new grant opportunities for member libraries – a 2024 WVLS Marketing Support Grant and a 2024 Math Programming Grant); 2024 Health Insurance increases; *2025 WVLS Technology Planning Guide*; 2023/2024 Improved Discovery Solutions Grant: Collaborative Cataloging
- **November Meeting:** Three MOUs – WiLS Consulting Service for NWLS and WVLS Merger Exploration Process, Expectations and Costs for Participation in WiLS Data Classroom, and WiLS and WVLS Services for WPLC Data Dashboard Development Workgroup Project Management; and appointments to the 2024 WVLS Library Advisory and WVLS V-Cat Steering Committees

WVLS Board members attended:

- February: WLA's Library Legislative Day in Madison
- April: Legislative Joint Committee on Finance Budget Hearing in Minocqua
- June: ALA Conference in Chicago, Illinois
- October: WLA Conference in Middleton

WVLS board members advocated for libraries and systems by attending state-level COLAND meetings, municipal/county library board meetings and city council and county board meetings. Trustees wrote letters of support for library budgets and library board appointments and maintained contact with WI legislators that represent WVLS counties throughout the year.

WVLS Services

ADVOCACY and MARKETING

Three Northern Library Systems Advocate for State Library Aid

On April 26, 22 librarians and trustees from WVLS, Northern Waters Library Service and Nicolet Federated Library System attended a 2023 state budget public hearing before the legislative Joint Committee on Finance held at Lakeland Union High School (LUHS) in Minocqua. Three WLA speakers - **Kris Adams Wendt** (WVLS), **Dominic Frandrup** (Door County Library) and **Kristie Hauer** (Shawano County Library) – stepped to the mic and shared five minutes of testimony during the first hour of the hearing.

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The Minocqua delegation was organized by Site Captains **Sherry Anderson** (NWLS), **Kathy Pletcher** (NFLS trustee), and **Wendt**, all three members of WLA's Library Development and Legislation Committee (LD&L). An aggregate total of 75 library supporters participated in budget hearings statewide.

***WVLS 2022 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. This edition underwent a significant revision to update the layout and design of the report and to include additional information by way of charts and definitions of key measures. Also new with the 2022 edition, the printing of the booklet was outsourced to a local company. Copies of the *WVLS 2022 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. A *Digital Byte* on the booklet was created that summarized the information reported and offered tips on how to interpret and use the information presented.

COLLABORATION
Following is a list of ways in which WVLS collaborated with other public library systems in 2023:

- The LEAN WI partnership was maintained to afford increased technology efficiencies, capacity and expertise among three systems – IFLS, NWLS and WVLS.
- LEAN WI partners worked together at the end of 2023 to develop and begin the hiring process for a new shared technology service and support role to fortify website hosting platform and site development and management consultation services.
- The Winding Rivers Library System expressed interest in bringing LEAN WI 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 Northern Waters Library Service, 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.

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- With funding from 2022/2023 and 2023/2024 LSTA Improved Discovery Solutions Grants, a Joint ILS Consortium Exploration Project collaboration between the Northern Waters Library System and WVLS is underway. In late 2022, a year-long investigation determined that overarching goals of a joint ILS consortium are to provide increased ILS administrative support to member libraries and improved service to library users was both desirable and feasible.
- 2022/2023 and 2023/2024 LSTA Improved Discovery Solutions Grants awarded NWLS implemented and continues a Cooperative Cataloging Exploration Project launched in late 2022. The goal of this collaboration of WVLS and several other public library systems is to seek opportunities for statewide standardization of bibliographic records.
- LEAN WI 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.
- Monthly meetings of public library services consultants from WVLS, Nicolet Federated Library System (NFLS) and Outagamie Waupaca Library System (OWLS) was initiated in late 2023 to learn more about each system's services, priorities and challenges, and to seek ways to collaborate.

COLLECTION DEVELOPMENT

WVLS maintained several of its subscriptions to databases including *Ancestry: Library Edition*, *NoveList Plus* and *NoveList Select* on behalf of its member libraries and their patrons in 2023. Due to low usage and high cost per use, WVLS cancelled its subscription to *Gale Courses* at the end of October. The publisher of *Foundations in Wisconsin* discontinued its availability as an online resource in December.

COMMUNICATIONS

In 2023, WVLS published 12 *WVLS Newsletters,* 43 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

Due to public health concerns, very few in-person events were held in 2022. 2023 saw higher attendance at the **2023 WLA Library Legislative Day** than in 2022, and a recovery of two continuing

Exhibit 16

education opportunities: the WVLS co-sponsored 35th **Children's Book Fest,** an event that was cancelled in 2022; and **WVLS Retreat for Public Library Directors**, an event that hadn't been held since 2019. Also, DPI hosted two in-person "bootcamps" for new public library directors, an event that hadn't been held in several years.

WVLS hosted several virtual and in-person trainings and discussions including hybrid **Youth Services Information Exchanges** (YSIE) opportunities, several **V-Cat trainings,** and a **2023 Public Library Annual Report** training in December**.** Opportune networking and discussions among peers occurred at the **WVLS Director's Retreat** in September and **Youth Services Workshop.**

Technology Support visits were made to all libraries throughout the year. During the last half of 2023, new WVLS Public Library Services Consultant Kristie Hauer visited all WVLS member libraries to get acquainted with library staff, see each library's public spaces, collect feedback, and gather ideas for future projects and initiatives. Visits to member libraries offered time for quality conversations between WVLS staff and member library colleagues.

COMPUTER PROCUREMENT

Steps were taken in 2023 to improve efficiency in WVLS computer procurement and provisioning process on behalf of member libraries. **Brenda Walenton** and **Erica Brewster** now serve collectively as the lead on handling all aspects of the procurement, staging, deployment, and billing processes with **Joshua Klingbeil** supplementing any part of the process, when necessary, as their backup.

CONTINUING EDUCATION and TRAINING

WVLS offered **56 contact hours of continuing education** opportunities by way of webinars, in-person workshops and recorded webinars in 2023.

The **2023** Wild Wisconsin Winter Web Conference held in January offered 14 webinars with tracks in marketing, library management, sustainability, and reference and reader's advisory.

Three recorded webinars produced by WVLS in 2023 include "How to Write Effective Survey Questions to Get Useful Data," Social Media: Challenges and Trends," and "Genealogy Basics with *Ancestry*."

Three in-person workshops co-hosted/hosted by WVLS in 2023 include the Children's Book Fest in Rhinelander; WVLS Director's Retreat in Wausau; and WVLS Annual Youth Services Workshop in Merrill.

WVLS added **11 new video trainings** to its *Digital Bytes* training series. Examples of topics covered include "13 Tips for Library Legislative Day," "Legal Problems in Libraries," "Tips for Taking Better Photos," WVLS Stats Booklet," "Wisconsin Talking Book & Braille Library," and "CCBC 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/.

In-person and online **Sierra ILS training** was provided on cataloging (offered in the Spring and Fall), Create Lists, Aspen record grouping and Aspen cover images, and on inventory methods. Brief training

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segments were provided during V-Cat Council meetings to highlight V-Cat Guidelines, Sierra functions, and Aspen features.

GRANT PROJECTS

Following is a summary of grant projects that WVLS managed and/or participated in during 2023.

2022/23 LSTA Professional Development Grant - $21,717 – supported the 2022 Wild Wisconsin Winter Web Conference and 2023 Spring Webinar series. It also funded the following scholarships:

> 2022 Association or Rural and Small Libraries (ARSL) Conference (4)
> 2022 Wisconsin Library Association (WLA) Conference (3)
> 2023 WI Educational Media and Technology Association (WEMTA) Conference (3)
> 2023 American Library Association (ALA) Annual Conference (2)

The **2023/24 LSTA Professional Development Grant** - $21,525 - has thus far funded the following scholarships:

> 2023 WLA Conference (8)
> 2024 Public Library Association (PLA) Conference (3)

Funding from a competitive **2022/2023 LSTA Improved Discovery Solutions Grant** - $25,000 – launched a Joint ILS Consortium Exploration Project collaboration between WVLS and the Northern Waters Library System in late 2022. The project, named NICE (Northern Wisconsin ILS Consortium Exploration), formed a team of representatives from each of the systems to assist with this project. The outcome of the year-long exploration determined that merging the two integrated library systems was a valuable and feasible endeavor.

Funding from **a 2023/2024 LSTA Improved Discovery Solutions Grant** - $50,000 - 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.

With funding from a competitive **2022/2023 LSTA Improved Discovery Solutions Grant** - $25,000 - awarded to NWLS, a Cooperative Cataloging Exploration Project launched in late 2022. A collaboration of seven public library systems, this project will develop a report on cataloging practices and opportunities for statewide standardization of bibliographic records.

Funding from a **2023/2024 LSTA Improved Discovery Solutions Grant** - $50,000 – was awarded to NWLS to continue the foundational work completed during the 2022/2023 grant project. Ultimately, the project plans to establish a statewide bibliographic standards group, provide statewide training on the use of Marc Edit, create a shared repository for the library systems to share documentation, and complete a comparison analysis of each system's bibliographic records to identify differences. This new project increases the number of participating systems from eight to ten.

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WVLS collaborated with IFLS and NWLS on grant applications on behalf of member libraries across the northern half of the state.

- Approximately $309,900 in **Emergency Connectivity Fund** (ECF) support was awarded for three applications, though only one award was utilized. LEAN WI partners leveraged approximately $56,900 in awarded ECF support to continue data plan subscriptions for the initial batch of ECF supported hotspot devices. Overall utilization and demand for devices and services did not exceed the capacity of the initial batch, so the other awards for two additional applications for more devices and data plans at different service levels were not utilized.
- The **2022/2023 LSTA Sparsity Aid** allocations (sub-awarded by WI DPI) – LEAN WI partners' aggregate total, $75,297 - utilized approximately $49,700 for "purchased services" such as cybersecurity training and testing platform access, continuation of Splashtop Remote licensing for member libraries' staff to use, an upgraded service level required for our helpdesk system, 3rd party patch management integration software for our Microsoft System Center management suite, etc. Approximately $18,700 was utilized for "non-capital objects" (equipment costing less than $5,000 per unit), primarily for transport-supporting networking equipment. Approximately $6,800 was utilized for "indirect costs" shared by each partner system to support grant-related projects and operations.
- The **2023/2024 LSTA Sparsity Aid** allocation – LEAN WI partners' aggregate total, $77,028 – will utilize the majority of the grant during the first half of calendar year 2024, though approximately $3,800 was utilized at the end of 2023 for additional transport-supporting networking equipment.

TECHNOLOGY AND WEBSITE SUPPORT

Technology Support

Technology orientation relating to use of **Deep Freeze** public computer lockdown software, public computer best practices, particularly in the area of patron privacy, and functions of **Pharos timing software** (where applicable) were provided to all library staff (directors and/or technology and frontline staff) available during **Erica Brewster's** on-site library visits at 25 locations in 2023.

Member libraries' computers were updated to the latest supported operating systems. Staff began initial assessments of each library's technology status and strategic planning to establish documentation and groundwork for future technology projects planning. Inventory reports for member libraries were prepared to submit to a shared LEAN WI inventory system.

Documentation and FAQs were created for libraries currently using a print management system or for those who may be interested in having one available for library users in the future. 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.

LEAN WI was represented across each of the three technology-related steering committees in the Wisconsin Public Library Consortium (WPLC). **Joshua Klingbeil** and other LEAN WI staff continued to

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provide leadership, guidance and support for the Statewide Collaborative Backup and Archive project. Klingbeil helped with reshaping the Backup and Archive Steering Committees into working groups to be more agile and less encumbered by the WPLC government structure.

LEAN WI partners continued the practice of consolidating each system's LSTA "Sparsity Award" allocation to be managed as one award primarily for joint licensing, services and equipment. This shared project management allowed for greater efficiency in overall grant management and for broader, more holistic awareness of our needs to best utilize the support.

LEAN WI maintained these relationships with primary vendors 2023:
- 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 was implemented with management teams after a number of AT&T-led "Badgernet" to "TEACH Network" data transport network service migrations failed during the 3rd and 4th quarters of 2023.

Website Services Support

Several new tools were rolled out to help libraries manage their websites more efficiently. One new tool is a plugin for setting expiration dates to posts so a web manager doesn't need to go back into the website to manually remove information about an event after it is over.

The process of **migrating existing websites** from a third-party host/DNS provider to the LEAN WI services platform for remainder of viable IFLS Library System libraries using a third-party service provider continued in 2023. **Onboarding libraries in the Northern Waters Library System** will be a priority in 2024.

The **Winding Rivers Library System** expressed interest in utilizing LEAN WI's website support services for their member libraries in 2024.

Staff surveyed website managers at 85 libraries and **developed a training plan for onboarding new website managers** and providing live virtual, recorded, and written training on website topics. **A new training website was developed** with new information added on a regular basis.

Four regularly scheduled website training opportunities were offered each month to colleagues in libraries across the LEAN WI partnership using LEAN WI's website layout and design consultation services.

A **Website Accessibility Learning Group** was formed in 2023 that 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 main charge/goal of this group, which meets monthly, is to establish best practices for website design and management so

Exhibit 16

they can be interpreted by those who don't have a usual visual interaction with a website. These services include good contrast design, and proper use of Alt Text for images and headings to outline a page to maximize compatibility with screen readers.

V-CAT ADMINISTRATION

See also *2023 V-Cat Top 10 Accomplishments* shared as **Exhibit 16c** with this report.

Initiated in 2022, the **NICE (Northern Wisconsin ILS Consortium Exploration) Project**, an ILS merger investigation between Northern Waters Library Service and WVLS, continued in 2023. It builds on the work of Project WIN, a 2013-2014 merger investigation of the WVLS IFLS Library System and NWLS ILS consortiums. Key takeaways of the NICE Team's exploration were shared in a [Feasibility Report](#) and [Video Summary](#) that were presented to the WVLS Board of Trustees in August, and V-Cat Council in September. Project documents, FAQ and Feedback form are posted to the [NICE website.](#)

Libraries reported positive feedback about **the lists of materials over 10 years old and not checked out** in the past 10 years sent by WVLS as a result of goals set during the V-Cat Collection Development meet up. The list proved to be a helpful tool for record clean up and item review. Libraries were invited to email WVLS staff for assistance with similar lists.

In August, staff purged adult patron records that were expired and inactive over 5 years with no fines. The WI Department 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, however there were over 12,000 records in the V-Cat database without fines or fees that were expired and inactive for 5 years or more. Libraries were given the opportunity to opt out of the purge and WVLS sent libraries reports of purged patrons upon request. **Over 11,000 patron records were purged.**

Shoutbomb Broadcast was implemented to deliver optional text message reminders and event promotions to library patrons.

Sierra Snacks, brief trainings offered at meetings of the V-Cat Council, covered Processes for Clearing the Expired Hold Shelf (February), Internal Note Fields and In-Transit Messages (April) Patron Account Review (June), Sierra Patron Blocks Table and Manual Patron Blocks (September) the use of patron messages (November).

The V-Cat Council approved the use of V-Cat Special Project funds to seek legal counsel to review of a draft library card application and to respond to questions related to patron records. **A new library card application form and guidelines** were approved by the V-Cat Council in November.

Fine Free Lending Expansion. WVLS made changes to provide fine free lending at the Minocqua and Antigo libraries. With these changes, Minocqua and Antigo joined the following libraries that have system-generated fine free lending:
- Antigo – all locations/items/patrons

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- Crandon - juvenile items only
- Dorchester - all items/patrons
- Loyal - all items/patrons
- Laona – all items for juvenile patrons, teachers, staff
- Medford – juvenile items/all patrons
- Merrill – most items (fines for some equipment)/all patron
- Minocqua – all items/patrons
- Rhinelander – most items (fines for some equipment/kits)/all patrons
- Stetsonville – juvenile books not high demand
- Wabeno – all items/patrons

Other libraries that have system-generated fine free lending: Gilman – most items for teacher/patrons; MCPL – most items for homebound patrons; and Owen – most items for staff.

Improvements were made to the Aspen Discovery catalog, and to database records to enhance discovery of new materials. WVLS worked with interested library staff to create a record grouping team to identify and correct record grouping errors in the Aspen Discovery Catalog. An additional improvement was made to the Aspen Discovery Catalog to include a new format label of "Read-Along Book." WVLS worked closely with the Aspen team to improve format assignments for Blu-Rays and Blu-Ray/DVD Combo packs.

The **V-Cat ILS Evaluation and Review Committee** completed a comprehensive evaluation and review of vendor product information and support that began in March 2022. As part of its charge, the Committee gathered product information from vendors, their customers, and library staff – comparing the capabilities of several systems to the needs of V-Cat member library staff as well as the needs of the consortium as a whole. In addition to demonstrations, surveys, additional discussion and follow up with vendors and product users, the Committee evaluated the final two candidate systems directly (through ongoing daily use in Sierra's case, and use of a sandbox version of Koha provided by ByWater). A final report that summarized the Committee's findings and recommended the V-Cat consortium stay with its current vendor (Sierra from Innovative Interfaces, Inc.) was presented to the V-Cat Council in September. A formal decision on this recommendation by the V-Cat Council and the WVLS Board of Trustees is on hold pending decisions made within the NICE project.

UPCOMING EVENTS / MEETINGS

- January 8 – **NICE (Northwoods ILS Consortium Exploration) Delivery Workgroup meeting**
- January 8 – **WVLS/IFLS/NWLS Website Office Hour: Media Management**
- January 10 – Technology Support Visit; Edith Evans Community Library (Laona) and Wabeno Public Library
- January 10 – Statewide Bibliographic Standards Committee meeting
- January 11 – Technology Support Visit; Crandon Public Library
- January 12 – Technology Support Visit; E.U. Demmer Library (Three Lakes)

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- January 12 – Council on Library and Network Development (COLAND) meeting
- January 12 – WPLC (Wisconsin Public Library Consortium) Data Dashboard Workgroup meeting
- January 16 - DPI-hosted meeting of System Directors
- January 16 – DPI-hosted meeting of System Inclusive Services Consultants
- January 16 – System/Public Library Website Accessibility Learning Group meeting
- January 16 – 2024 WLA Conference Planning Committee meeting
- January 17 – DPI-hosted Library Services Data Workgroup meeting
- January 17 – Wabeno Public Library Director orientation
- January 17 - **WVLS/IFLS/NWLS Website Office Hour: Website 201 [Just] Beyond the Basics**
- January 18 – **WVLS Youth Services Information Exchange (YSIE) gathering**
- January 18 - **WVLS/IFLS/NWLS Website Office Hour: Website 201 [Just] Beyond the Basics**
- January 18 - **WVLS/IFLS/NWLS Website Office Hour: Print Plugin**
- January 19 – COLAND Broadband Committee meeting
- January 23 – DPI-hosted meeting of System Directors
- January 23 – **NICE Collaborative Decision-Making Workgroup meeting**
- January 24-25 – **"2023 Wild Wisconsin Winter Web Conference"**
- January 30 - DPI-hosted meeting of System Directors
- January 30 – WVLS/OWLS/NFLS Public Library Services Consultants' collaboration meeting
- January 31 – A (Brief) Look at Books for Children & Teens; A CCBC (Cooperative Children's Book Center) Short
  HAPPY LIBRARY LOVERS MONTH!
- February 1 – **WVLS V-Cat Council meeting**
- February 2 – **WVLS Library Legislative Day Cohort meeting**
- February 5 – SRLAAW (System and Resource Library Administrators Association of WI) meeting
- February 5-6 – Wisconsin Library Association's LIBRARY LEGISLATIVE DAY
- February 7 – WECCP (Wisconsin Early Childhood Collaborating Partners) meeting
- February 8 – DPI-hosted meeting with NWLS and WVLS to discuss LSTA Grant Projects
- February 9 – WVLS Marketing Grant cohort meeting
- February 12 – **NICE Funding Scenario and Budget Workgroup meeting**
- February 12 – DPI-hosted meeting of System Interlibrary Loan Coordinators
- February 12 - **WVLS/IFLS/NWLS Website Office Hour: Using Alt+Text for Images**
- February 12-13 – Customer Service Training; Disneyland Resort, California
- February 13 – DPI-hosted meeting of System Directors
- February 13 - WPLC Technology Steering Committee meeting
- February 14 – Statewide Bibliographic Standards Committee meeting
- February 15 - **WVLS/IFLS/NWLS Website Office Hour: Website 201 [Just] Beyond the Basics**
- February 15 - **WVLS/IFLS/NWLS Website Office Hour: Website Blog Posts**
- February 15 – WPLC Digital Library Steering Committee meeting
- February 17 – **WVLS Board of Trustees meeting**
- February 19 – WPLC Board meeting

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- February 20 – DPI-hosted meeting of System Youth Services Consultants
- February 20 - 2024 WLA Conference Planning Committee meeting
- February 20 – Statewide Cooperative Cataloging Workgroup meeting
- February 20 - **System/Public Library Website Accessibility Learning Group meeting**
- February 21 - **WVLS/IFLS/NWLS Website Office Hour: Website 201 [Just] Beyond the Basics**
- February 28 – DPI-hosted meeting of System Continuing Education Consultants
- February 29 – **V-Cat Training Day 1: V-Cat Sierra Tools for Weeding and Collection Development**
- February 29 – **"Identity, Burnout, and Vocational Awe;"** a webinar offered through a 2024 LSTA Grant project, WI Libraries Talk About Race
- March 3 – 5 – **WEMTA (Wisconsin Educational Media and Technology Association) Conference**, Wisconsin Dells
- March 4 – WPLC Technology Backup Committee meeting
- March 5 - DPI-hosted meeting of System Directors
- March 5 – **WVLS V-Cat Bibliographic Control / Interface Committee meeting**
- March 7 – WVLS presentations at Hoot-Con, a Conference for NFLS and OWLS libraries; Green Bay
- March 8 - COLAND meeting
- March 8 - WVLS presentations at Hoot-Con, a Conference for NFLS and OWLS libraries; Marinette
- March 8 – **WVLS V-Cat Cooperative Circulation Committee meeting**
- March 11 - **WVLS/IFLS/NWLS Website Office Hour**
- March 12 – WVLS presentations at Hoot-Con, a Conference for NFLS and OWLS libraries; Little Chute
- March 13 - Statewide Bibliographic Standards Committee meeting
- March 13–15 – AspenCON 2024; Golden, Colorado
- March 14 – **V-Cat Training Day 2: Aspen Record Grouping**
- March 16 – **WVLS Board of Trustees meeting**

Thank you for reading!

Marla