

WiLS 2024 Annual Report

Welcome!



It is an extraordinary honor to lead an organization like WiLS. Having this annual opportunity to speak directly to our members is a privilege I've held for almost five years, yet I haven't gotten used to it. I speak for the entire WiLS staff when I say we are humbled and honored to support your important missions.

This report aims to articulate verbally and visually the impact of our shared work. It's no small task. All year, WiLS team members go about their work doing what they do best: building relationships, delivering responsive services, communicating results, and advocating for what our members need. We do this motivated and guided by our [mission and values](#). We then take all these disparate activities, sift through the accomplishments, and blend them together into this snapshot. We hope you find it to be both an interesting and engaging highlight of our work.

In true WiLS form, we are trying something new with our annual report. Rather than overwhelming you with an exhaustive list of the year's activities, we have curated a list of projects we are especially proud of and we feel demonstrate WiLS at its finest. We value your time, so we hope this report matches your curiosity without demanding too much of you.

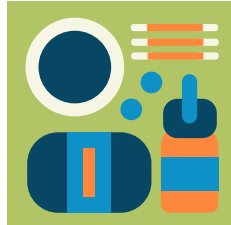
Thank you for trusting us to be a part of your success. Whether we are working with vendors or facilitating a strategic planning process, we never take for granted your partnership. Let's tackle 2025 together!

What's Inside

**Who We
Are**



**Our Work in
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Who We Are

WiLS (formally Wisconsin Library Services) is a non-profit membership organization that facilitates collaborative projects and services to save our members time and money and to advance library service, primarily in the state of Wisconsin. Most of our members are libraries, but we also work with cultural institutions, government agencies, and other non-profits to develop partnerships and projects.

Our Mission

We believe libraries, cultural institutions, and their partners make the world a better place.

We build relationships and provide services so they can do more with their time and money.

We help our members turn ideas into action.

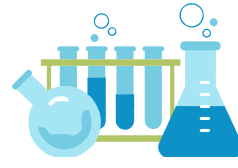
Our Values



We work in the best interest of our members.



We are optimistic about the future of our members.



We promote new ideas and experimentation.



We strive to do the best we can.



We believe that we're all in this together.



We are committed to equity, diversity, and inclusion.



We stand up for ALA's [Code of Ethics](#) and [Freedom to Read statement](#).

Read more about [our mission and values](#).

Our Board

Academic Libraries



Mindy King

UW-Stevens Point

Representing UW Libraries



Kim Olson-Kopp

Viterbo University

Representing Private Academic Libraries



Gary Flynn

Gateway Technical College

Representing Technical College Libraries

Public Libraries



Steve Platteter, Treasurer

Prairie Lakes Library System

Representing SRLAAW



Kristina Gómez

Milwaukee Public Library



Tasha Saecker

Appleton Public Library

School Libraries



Micki Uppena

Mineral Point School District



Michelle Byholm

Chequamegon School
District



Jennifer Follett

Madison Metropolitan School
District

Cultural Organizations



Adrienne Thunder

Ho-Chunk Nation Language
Division

Special Libraries



Frank Violette Foss

Milwaukee Art Museum

Board Appointed



Andrew Prellwitz

Ripon College

At-Large



Jennifer Gurske, Chair Elect
Madison Trust for Historic Preservation



Sarah Miller, Chair
WiscNet

Read more about [our Board](#).

Our Staff



Jeff Brunner



Jennifer Chamberlain



Melody Clark



Andi Coffin



Laura Damon-Moore



Sara Gold



Erin F.H. Hughes



Kim Kiesewetter



Tom Klement



Lisa Marten



Melissa McLimans



Rebecca Rosenstiel



Nick Smith



Kristen Whitson

Read more about [our staff](#).

Our Year in Pictures



Watch on YouTube

All across Wisconsin and beyond, WiLS staff were helping members and partners do more for their communities.

Our Work in 2024

Reach, Growth, and Satisfaction

[WiLS members](#) include academic, school, special, and public libraries as well as public library systems, historical societies, non-profits, and other cultural organizations.

This year, we are delighted to have welcomed 5 school libraries, 14 public libraries, 1 special library, and 8 cultural organizations from all over the state!

719

**Member
Organizations**

28 new this year

471

Cooperative Purchasing Participants

7 new this year

[WiLS' Cooperative Purchasing Program](#) provides participants with discounts, product research, learning opportunities, staff transition support, seamless subscription management, customized invoicing, and flexible payment options that save them time and money.

[WiLS Consulting Services](#) are built to respond to the needs of members, affordably and accessibly. Whether it is strategic planning, survey development, or an idea you've had for a long time but don't know where to start, the WiLS consulting team of experts can help design a process for your needs and your budget.

116

Organizations Received Consulting Services

19 new this year

950+

Organizations Involved in Collaborations Managed by WiLS

100+ new this year

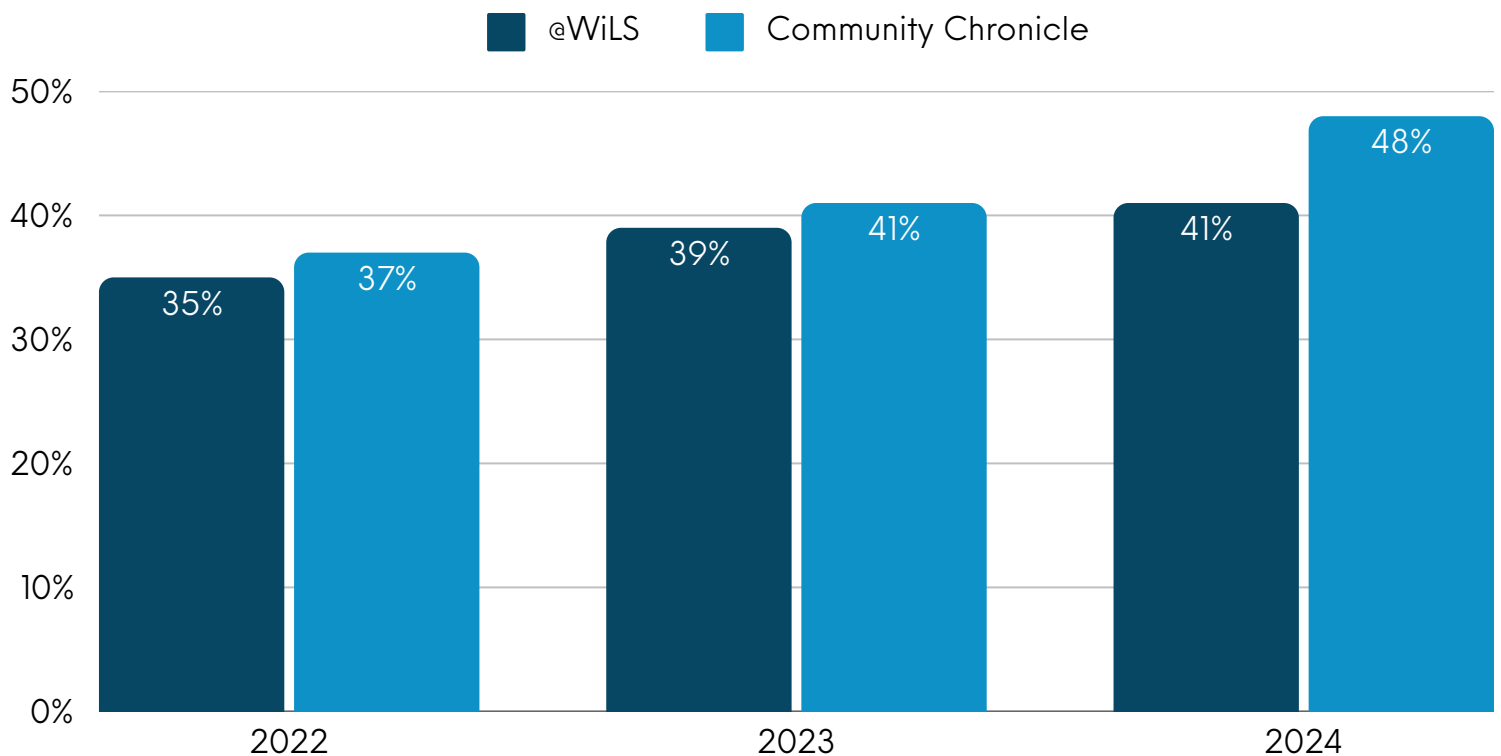
WiLS has a suite of services to help libraries and cultural organizations work together efficiently and effectively, from meeting management to research to fiscal agency and more. More than 950 organizations receive [collaboration support](#) from WiLS, some as members of more than one collaboration.

WiLS provides collaboration support services to the City Library Collective, the Culture Keepers Collective, the Horticulture Library Consortium, Recollection Wisconsin. WISCAL (OverDrive for Wisconsin's Academic Libraries), WISPALS, the Wisconsin Public Library Consortium (WPLC), and Wisconsin Schools Digital Library Consortium (WSDLC).

DID YOU KNOW?

Since 2018, WiLS and the WiLS Board have awarded over \$220,000 to 55 Wisconsin libraries and cultural organizations through the [Ideas to Action Fund](#).

This fund grants up to \$5000 to help libraries and cultural organizations launch their new ideas or expand on existing ones. The Ideas to Action Fund application period is open each year, early April through early June, and all WiLS members are welcome to apply!



Percentage of reader engagement with our two monthly newsletters, [@WiLS](#) and the [Community Chronicle](#), continued to grow in 2024.



From 2022 to 2024, we saw increased satisfaction with our services, starting at an already high 91% and rising to 92%.

Building Community Connections



Culture Keepers Collective

The [Culture Keepers Collective](#) serves the needs of cultural workers to advance their communities' work within Tribal libraries, archives, and museums. Administered by WILS, the Culture Keepers Collective is advised by an all-Native advisory council. The work of the Collective encompasses the Mukurtu Midwest Hub, Culture Keepers Convenings, as well as other digital stewardship project partnerships and grant-funded initiatives.

The Culture Keepers Collective was proud to assist in bringing together Wisconsin's Tribal librarians, archivists, museum curators, and cultural heritage workers at the Culture Keepers Re-Convening in April 2024. This event gave attendees the opportunity to learn from one another, build relationships, share experiences and meals, and leave refreshed to continue the work ahead. Another Convening will be held in 2025.

The [City Library Collective](#) (CLC) brings together mid-size Wisconsin city libraries to address common issues and use collective knowledge and experience to improve their organizations and services to their communities. The CLC works in two ways: through relationship building and actionable research projects based on member needs and input.

In 2024, the CLC published a [report on its Strengthening Staff Project](#). The project gathered information via a series of focus groups and a broad staff survey to better understand how interactions with the public at service desks, including security and safety-related concerns, affect overall job satisfaction.

Most front-line staff reported high job satisfaction and confidence in handling stressful interactions with patrons. Middle managers, however, reported spending a greater percentage of their work time on heightened security-related concerns, impacting the quality of their patron interactions and contributing to a mismatch in the reality of their job duties when compared to their original expectations of their role. Using this knowledge, CLC directors launched a series of projects designed to improve support for their middle management team.



City Library Collective

DID YOU KNOW?

Wisconsin's Digital Library circulated nearly 9.5 million titles last year, almost a million more than the previous year.

Our state loves its ebooks, digital audiobooks, and online magazines! WiLS provides consortium management services for the [Wisconsin Public Library Consortium](#) (WPLC), the network of libraries and library systems that make Wisconsin's Digital Library available for free to anyone with a Wisconsin public library card.



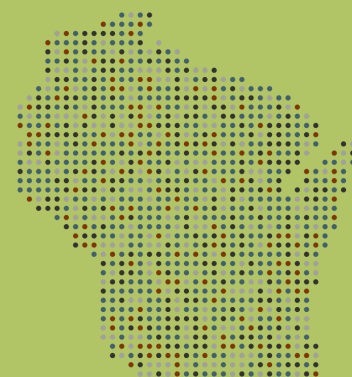
Helping Members Do More



Ingram Partnership

In September 2024, we announced a new library vendor relationship with [Ingram Library Services](#). This collaboration provides our academic and public libraries access to industry experts focused on helping libraries develop and maintain their collections. Ingram offers programs such as the book lease alternative inDemand, custom services especially for small libraries, and IngramExpress that provides access to millions of titles with fast delivery, collection development services powered by MLS-degreed librarians, easy-to-use ordering tools, collection analytics, and cataloging and processing services. Most importantly, our Cooperative Purchasing program participants receive deep discounts on print material.

In the fall of 2024, Recollection Wisconsin launched the [Recollection Wisconsin Digitization Initiative](#), a cohort-based paid internship program to support Wisconsin's local history organizations in digitizing their collections while also developing a skilled workforce in the cultural heritage sector. The program matches students with a host site, organizations new to Recollection Wisconsin that have a desire to digitize and share their unique local history collections, and both are supported by Recollection Wisconsin project managers. The initiative lowers barriers to digitization for organizations while equipping future information professionals with valuable hands-on experience in digital preservation, project management, and metadata creation – skills increasingly in demand across libraries, archives, and museums.



Recollection Wisconsin Digitization Initiative



MyWiLS Orientation Toolkits

Transferring institutional knowledge is a challenge for our member community, especially when there is little or no overlap between incoming and outgoing staff. To help, the WiLS Cooperative Purchasing team created the MyWiLS Orientation Toolkits [for library media specialists](#) and [for academic library staff](#) to make that transition smoother, and a version for public libraries will be available in 2025.

The Toolkits, specifically designed for K12 and academic libraries, are there to help document subscription information – URLs and access information, usage stats, invoicing preferences, and communications from WiLS – to make staff transitions easier and ensure uninterrupted access to resources. In addition, it provides information on our partners and other valuable resources to help save time and money.

DID YOU KNOW?

The [Wisconsin Schools Digital Library Consortium \(WSDLC\)](#) collections of digital materials serve **57% of the state's school-aged children.**

In 2024, there were 301 districts enrolled in the program, representing nearly half a million kids. Because of WSDLC, these children have reading-level and grade-level designated access to over 66,000 ebooks, digital audiobooks, graphic novels, magazines, and more.



Helping Members Make Decisions

Our members and partners often need to make big decisions about their priorities, changes to their organizational structure, and even combining services with others. In 2024, we worked with Northern Waters Library Service and the Wisconsin Valley Library Service as they explored an ILS merger. And, we developed, with support from the Department of Public Instruction, a [Public Library System Merger Guide](#), which provides practical advice and guidance for Wisconsin library systems considering a merger.



Merger Explorations



Strategic Planning

WiLS works with libraries large and small to develop [custom strategic plans](#). A strategic plan helps libraries make big decisions, from how to wisely use their budgets to make the maximum difference in their communities, to having a clear pathway to achieving goals – and every library should be able to afford a plan. We offer a flexible framework that relies on data collection to help make the best decisions, rooted in the belief that the library is important to its community and its community is important to the library.

In 2024, we provided strategic planning services to 14 organizations, including 12 public libraries, one public library system, and the UW-Madison TLAM (Tribal Libraries, Archives, and Museums) program.

WiLS and partners from the Wisconsin Public Library Consortium (WPLC) and the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction (DPI) launched a statewide data dashboard pilot. During the pilot, all public library and system staff in Wisconsin have barrier-free access to [a statewide data dashboard of public library data](#) as reported in the Annual Report to DPI. The dashboard includes select data elements from Wisconsin's public library service data spanning 2015–2023, allowing individual libraries to visualize their own library's data as well as benchmark against other libraries and peer cohort averages. Training materials, including suggestions for data use, were also provided in a dashboard toolkit.



WPLC Data Dashboard

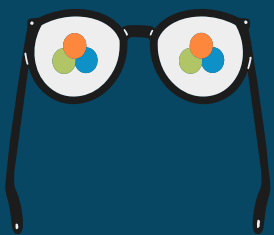
DID YOU KNOW?

You can schedule a consultation with the WiLS Cooperative Purchasing Team to find the products that are right for you and your budget or if you have any questions.

Our Cooperative Purchasing Team is always at the ready to help libraries and cultural institutions make the best use of their dollars and their time. We want you to take full advantage of the resources offered to you through WiLS. Reach out to the team at coop@wils.org.



Strengthening WiLS in Service of Members



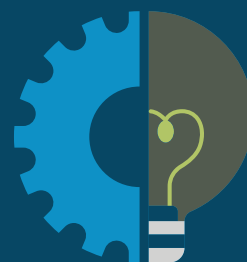
Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility Audit

WiLS remains as committed as ever to diversity, equity, and inclusion. One of our core values is that WiLS believes our community is stronger when people with a wide array of experiences and perspectives come together. As individuals and as an organization, we continually examine our own practices and biases to live up to our commitment.

This year, we partnered with [Dr. Kawanna Bright](#) to examine our organization and our services for barriers to remove and opportunities to improve. Through internal surveys, team-based discussions, focus groups involving our staff and Board, and an all-staff retreat activity, Dr. Bright has helped us develop an action plan for future growth. We are excited to put these recommendations into practice – to turn our Ideas Into Action – and to continue this journey together with our community.

This year, WiLS partnered the UW-Madison iSchool on a five-part tech crash course series about Artificial Intelligence and Libraries, featuring expert-led webinars focused on the opportunities and challenges libraries are now presented with when it comes to ChatGPT and other generative AI. This series was for all library staff, regardless of role or experience with AI and AI tools.

Our partnership made this timely learning opportunity more affordable for our community; the \$200 full series was available exclusively to WiLS members at a discounted rate of \$150. Also, the third webinar in the series, Uses and Abuses of AI in Libraries, was free to all WiLS members.



iSchool Partnership: AI Webinar Series



Admin Support

The WiLS Admin Team consists of absolute rockstars. They work quickly and efficiently, often behind the scenes, to make sure our organization runs smoothly. The team has built workflows and processes that help us do our work in less time and keep “future WiLS” in mind so we continue to be a sustainable organization. Their work is at the foundation of nearly everything we do – financial processes, service delivery, infrastructure and tools, communications, and on and on.

This year was no exception. Among the many tasks the WiLS Admin Team took on this year was the assessment of current staff workflows and creation of checklists with instructions for several processes to increase efficiency and develop standards.

DID YOU KNOW?

Last year, over we welcomed nearly 600 registrants to [our free events](#), including our Member Meeting, Taco Tuesdays, and WiLSWorld Shorts.

We give back to our members by highlighting talent from within our membership community, freely sharing our own expertise, and connecting into the vast knowledge in our partner network.

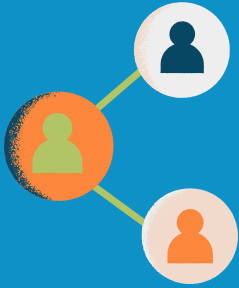


Our Year Ahead

In 2025, WiLS will begin the third year of our five-year strategic plan. We are so excited to continue working on ways to strengthen and build community, fuel innovation, and support the organizational health of WiLS and our member institutions.

Of the many projects in front of us, here are three that we are very enthusiastic about:

Strategic Planning Peer Network



When it comes to implementing a recently completed strategic plan, some libraries need structure to revisit their activities and mark their progress on measurable objectives, others would like to share ideas with and ask questions of their peers. With this in mind, we launched the (free!) Strategic Planning Peer Network, both an opportunity and a platform for directors and other staff members directly involved in their strategic planning to post questions, discuss plan-related challenges, and share their successes and best practices for keeping their plans active and assessing their ongoing progress. The Network is open to members that have completed strategic planning with WiLS in the last two years. Members will be invited to join as they finish their plans as we go forward. We hope, through this coordination and infrastructure, a connected community of practice emerges to keep members engaged in the work of their strategic plans.

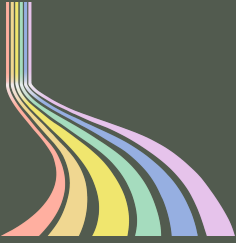
Flattening the Curve: Mitigating Cultural Heritage Loss in Wisconsin Native Nations



A new initiative led by WiLS and supported by a major grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) aims to safeguard vital cultural heritage and Indigenous knowledge within Wisconsin Native Nations. The two-year program will fund a full-time Community Archivist dedicated to preserving at-risk data and revitalizing Indigenous languages.

This program focuses on providing timely, targeted staffing, and technical support to Tribal libraries, archives, and museums. By addressing the pressing challenges of cultural preservation, the initiative will ensure that critical knowledge and traditions are maintained for future generations.

Continued Work Toward Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion



We have a lot of work to do. In the coming year, we will be improving our internal communication about our efforts, thinking about how we externally communicate our work, reviewing our hiring practices and Ideas to Action Fund selection process to make them more accessible, and considering what additional information we need to move forward.

We recognize that continuing both to talk about and to do diversity, equity, and inclusion work is now potentially dangerous. We are not deterred. We believe exactly what we believed last year and the year before that and the year before that – diversity, equity, and inclusion are critical to the success of WiLS and the success of communities served by WiLS members.

Connect With Us



Give us a call at
608-218-4480



Find us online at
<https://wils.org>



Drop us a line at
information@wils.org

**Thank you for
being part of
the community!**

