

Wisconsin Public Library Consortium Board
Ad Hoc Technology Collaboration Subcommittee

Proposal: Establish WPLC Project: Technology Collaboration

Executive Summary:

- Proposal for WPLC Board to approve creation of a new, ongoing Project under WPLC auspices, to “explore and implement” technology collaborative projects among its Partner library systems.
- Proposal that WPLC system technology collaboration Project have the following structure:
 - 1) An Operations Committee of front-line system technology staff to identify and develop proposals for specific initiatives; and
 - 2) A Steering Committee of administrative-level staff that will analyze and develop a proposal’s legal and financial implications (draft agreements; seek legal advice; recruit fiscal agents, etc.) preparatory for submission to WPLC Board for consideration.

Governance Proposal

The subcommittee proposes that structures and processes be established under the auspices of the Wisconsin Public Library Consortium (WPLC) to identify, develop and approve the advancement of future system technology collaboration opportunities. Why WPLC? Because, WPLC was created and is intended for maintaining “a decision-making and fiscal model for public library cooperation that will allow libraries to explore and implement collaborative projects, sharing the costs as well as the knowledge and resources;” and also for undertaking “other collaborative projects, primarily concerned with research and development and/or the advancement of public libraries.”

Source: [Wisconsin Public Library Consortium Organizational Bylaws](#)

It seems most sensible to adapt the tool we have to new purposes. WPLC is a tool we created in 2001 to enable collaboration. We ought to use it to carry forward new collaborative efforts.

We propose creation of two committees, under the supervision of the WPLC Board, that will each play a specific role in the process of identifying and developing new ideas for technology collaboration among systems. Borrowing from a proposal put forward earlier by SCLS, we suggest the following structure:

1) Technology Collaboration Operations Committee:

Charge: The Operations Committee will be responsible for driving technology collaboration. They will identify appropriate projects for collaboration, create implementation plans, solicit proposals from vendors and present proposals to the Technology Collaboration Steering Committee. It is important that the Operations Committee be free to be creative and be open to all ideas and viewpoints. This Committee will submit collaboration initiative proposals to the Technology Collaboration Steering Committee. It is not authorized to sign agreements or expend funds.

Membership: Membership is open to any technology professional from any Wisconsin Public Library System. Members may contribute in any capacity and on any project. Members may come and go as appropriate. Members are responsible to their Public Library Systems. The Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, Division for Libraries and Technology may appoint one staff member to participate on this Committee on a standing, advisory basis.

2) Technology Collaboration Steering Committee:

Charge: The Steering Committee will review proposals from the Operations Committee. They will be responsible for:

- developing member agreements for members participating in a collaboration initiative;
- soliciting legal advice when necessary;
- developing budgets and breakdown of costs and fees for a collaboration initiative;
- and recruiting and recommending a Fiscal Agent from systems participating in a collaboration initiative.

The Steering Committee will work with members of the Operations Committee on the above responsibilities as appropriate. The Steering Committee will submit collaboration initiative proposals to the WPLC Board. It is not authorized to sign agreements or expend funds.

Membership: Membership on the Technology Collaboration Steering Committee will be open to one representative appointed by each Wisconsin public library system. The Committee shall have a minimum of seven members, with a liaison from the WPLC Board. The Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, Division for Libraries and Technology may appoint up to two staff members to participate on this Committee on a standing, advisory basis.

3) WPLC Board:

WPLC Board will decide whether to approve proposals for new system technology collaboration initiatives received from the Technology Collaboration Steering Committee. As appropriate, it may sign agreements and commit to expenditure of funds. Alternatively, it may act to coordinate a collaborative initiative among a subset of the total number of Partner systems in WPLC.

Background: Recent History of Wisconsin Library System Technology Collaboration

Wisconsin public library systems have long sought to share information with one another about technology projects and to explore opportunities for collaboration. For about ten years, technology support staff from Wisconsin's public library systems have gathered in person once each year for networking and information sharing amongst themselves. This annual gathering is known as Tech-a-Talk-a. Other collaborative technology projects have flourished in recent years, including the LibrariesWIN technology support service package offered jointly by Wisconsin Valley Library Service (WVLS) and IFLS. Another success story is the growth of the SHARE library automation (ILS) consortium administered by Lakeshores Library System. Libraries from the Kenosha County and Arrowhead library systems have joined the SHARE consortium in recent years.

From 2015 through 2018, the Council on Libraries and Network Development (COLAND) sponsored the comprehensive Public Library System Redesign (PLSR) process, with the overriding goals of improving equity of access, cost efficiency, and quality of support services to libraries – and ultimately to their patrons – across the State of Wisconsin. One major focus of the PLSR process was the provision of technology support services to public libraries. Important themes that emerged from the technology and other service workgroups were collaboration, coordination, and creation of larger geographic areas of service.

In late 2018, as the PLSR process moved toward its culmination, several library system technology staff, with leadership from South Central Library System and LEAN WI, began looking for collaborative opportunities with potential for statewide impact. The first opportunity to be realized was an agreement with Dell Technologies to allow several systems to form a single purchasing group. This aggregation of system purchasing power has resulted in better discounts on computer workstations and other technology equipment.

The second opportunity that emerged during the fourth quarter of 2018 was for creation of a shared data storage solution for system file backups and digitization projects. At latest report, host servers have been installed at two sites and support for library digitized content may begin soon.

System Technology Collaboration Governance Proposal: SRLAAW to WPLC

At its August 2, 2019 meeting, the System and Resource Library Administrators Association of Wisconsin (SRLAAW) appointed a committee to examine issues pertaining to governance of collaborative technology efforts undertaken by Wisconsin's regional public library systems. SRLAAW's committee proposed that technology collaboration become a Project of the WPLC, and this proposal-in-concept was referred to the WPLC Board on February 21, 2020. The Board appointed the present subcommittee to evaluate the merits of the concept and to forward a proposal for Board consideration, if appropriate. This proposal took shape after a meeting of the WPLC Board subcommittee on April 30, 2020.

WPLC Board Subcommittee Members:

Kristen Anderson, Chair, Winding Rivers Library System
Jennifer Chamberlain, Monarch Library System
Jeff Gilderson-Duwe, Winnefox Library System
Steve Hesel, Milwaukee County Federated Library System
Martha Van Pelt, South Central Library System