

Report to the WPLC Board

Structure and Governance Committee

January 15, 2013

Background

Since its establishment in 2000, the Wisconsin Public Library Consortium (WPLC) has accomplished a great deal. Originally established as a research and development organization for experimenting with new technologies, WPLC soon ventured into providing access to shared electronic resources. While it took nearly a decade for all of Wisconsin's public library systems to become full members of the consortium, during that time WPLC's primary focus shifted to shared electronic resources.

As a result of the 2011 Ebook Summit, the Wisconsin library community began working to establish a significant statewide ebook and digital audiobook collection. For several reasons, the most expedient way to create a larger statewide collection was to build upon the existing WPLC collection. Consequently, in 2012 WPLC implemented a statewide digital buying pool funded by the state's public libraries, public library systems, and LSTA funding provided by the Department of Public Instruction, Division for Libraries and Technology.

As a result of the digital buying pool, the role of WPLC has shifted from being peripheral for the state's public systems to being central for all of the state's libraries. WPLC is now a critical organization for the provision of public library service in Wisconsin.

WPLC is currently governed by a 17 member board that includes one representative from each system. Given the importance of WPLC's current focus, this model, which has been in place since the establishment of the consortium, is no longer optimal, and a number of concerns with this model have been identified.

- System representatives on the board do not have a common understanding about their roles. Current board representatives come from a variety of different backgrounds and positions, and some may not be empowered to speak with authority for their systems.
- System representatives do not always effectively communicate the large amount of information discussed at board meetings to their member libraries or to other system staff.
- Wisconsin's public libraries are now the primary "investors" in the consortium's Digital Library, but they have no direct representation in decision-making.
- Issues related to the Digital Library that are brought to the board often don't generate much discussion and may result in decisions without adequate understanding of the issues.
- The board sometimes defers to the Selection Committee on issues that are policy decisions, i.e., they are the responsibility of the board.
- Because there are so many discussions and decisions to be made related to the Digital Library, the board has little time to plan future projects or discuss broader issues.

Committee Charge and Composition

The September 2012 WPLC Board meeting agenda included "proposal to review governance structure (S. Morrill, E. Bend)." The minutes from that meeting read as follows:

The current governance structure for WPLC was created before the buying pool was begun and it may be time to consider something new. For example, communication with libraries is unequal among the systems, libraries who invest money into the buying pool are not directly involved in decision-making, and the board sometimes defers decisions to the Selection Committee that are policy decisions. At the same time, because the board is so heavily involved in the buying pool, it has little time left to discuss broader issues to explore the types of innovative pilot projects WPLC was created to help begin. A sub-committee for structure and bylaws review was formed: R. Krumwiede, M. Arend, S. Heser and/or J. Gingery. Other volunteers are welcome!

The sub-committee is comprised of the following members:

- Rick Krumwiede – Chair
- Stef Morrill – Representing the project manager, i.e., WiLS
- Mark Arend – Representing the WPLC Board
- Steve Heser – Representing the WPLC Board
- Becca Berger – Representing a public library that invests in the Digital Library
- Mary Knapp – Representing the Selection Committee

The outcome from this committee process was intended to be a set of recommendations to the WPLC Board aimed at improving the governance of the consortium.

Proposed Recommendations

The Structure and Governance Committee respectfully submits the following recommendations for consideration by the WPLC Board.

1. It is recommended that WPLC establish a Digital Library Steering Committee to oversee WPLC's Digital Library program.
 - The Steering Committee would be comprised one or more representatives from each public library system. The number of representatives from each system would be determined by the system's annual aggregate investment in the statewide Digital Library collection. (See Recommendation 2 below.) It is the intent that these representatives be from the public libraries and systems that contribute funds to the Digital Library.
 - The Steering Committee would select a Chair from among its members.
 - The Steering Committee would make policy recommendations to the WPLC Board for formal approval.
 - The Steering Committee would make all decisions relating to the day-to-day operation of the Digital Library.
 - The Steering Committee would be empowered to establish, specify composition, and specify duties for any committees needed for the continuing operation of the Digital Library.
 - The Selection Committee and other current committees relating to the operation of the Digital Library would report to the Steering Committee.
 - The WPLC Board would select from among its members an official representative to the Steering Committee. The Board representative on the Steering Committee would be a full voting member of the Committee.

2. It is recommended that each system have one representative on the Steering Committee for each \$60,000, or portion thereof, expended on the Digital Library collection.

Composition of Steering Committee	Digital Library Share	Committee Members
Arrowhead Library System	\$31,306	1
Eastern Shores Library System	\$31,421	1
Indianhead Federated	\$87,212	2
Kenosha County Library System	\$27,557	1
Lakeshores Library System	\$41,891	1
Manitowoc-Calumet Library System	\$17,294	1
Mid-Wisconsin Federated Library System	\$45,003	1
Milwaukee Co. Federated Library System	\$136,366	3
Nicolet Federated Library System	\$69,912	2
Northern Waters Library Service	\$29,136	1
Outagamie Waupaca Library System	\$43,564	1
South Central Library System	\$170,715	3
Southwest Wisconsin Library System	\$24,049	1
Waukesha Co. Federated Library System	\$82,197	2
Winding Rivers Library System	\$49,393	1
Winnefox Library System	\$59,532	1
Wisconsin Valley Library Service	\$53,451	1
WPLC Board	-	1
Total	\$1,000,000	25

3. It is recommended that a meeting be held annually, possibly at WLA, to bring together the Board, the Steering Committee, and the public libraries that invest in the Digital Library.
4. It is recommended that the WPLC Bylaws be modified, as necessary, to reflect the proposed structure of WPLC.
 - The Bylaws need to be revised to include the Digital Library Steering Committee as discussed above.
 - The Membership section of the Bylaws needs to be modified to reflect the participation of public libraries in funding the Digital Library.
 - Significant modifications to the Board section are not necessary as the Board's responsibility for governance will not change.
 - Some minor modifications to other sections of the Bylaws may be necessary to bring them into conformity with current practice.
5. It is recommended that the WPLC Board review the role of, and the contract with, the Project Manager in light of changes made to WPLC's structure.
6. It is recommended that job descriptions be created for Board members, Steering Committee members, and Selection Committee members. The purpose of the job descriptions is to clarify the responsibilities of the members of each of these bodies.

Implementation of Recommendations

The recommendations contained in this report focus on the creation of a Steering Committee to oversee WPLC's Digital Library program. The creation of the Steering Committee would achieve two significant objectives. First, it would free the WPLC Board to concentrate on broader issues and its original research and development mission. Second, the Steering Committee would provide a mechanism for the libraries that fund the Digital Library to have a role in decision-making about it.

The recommendations in this report are conceptual in nature, and the WPLC Bylaws need to be modified to implement them. If these concepts are approved by the WPLC Board, the Structure and Governance Committee will continue working toward the implementation of the recommendations. Specifically, the Committee intends to draft revisions to the WPLC Bylaws that reflect its recommendations and present these proposed Bylaws changes to the Board for approval at a future meeting. Furthermore, the Committee intends to draft and present job descriptions for the Board, Steering Committee, and Selection Committee.