

WiLS 2017 ANNUAL REPORT

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INTRODUCTION

WiLS is a non-profit membership organization that facilitates collaborative projects and services to save members time and money and to advance library service, primarily in the state of Wisconsin. While most of WiLS' 572 members are libraries, we also work with cultural institutions, government agencies, and other non-profits to develop partnerships and projects.

This report of activities from January through December 2017 shares WiLS' mission, values, governance structure, strategic directions, services, fiscal year finances, and our 2018 strategic directions.

In addition, to honor the approaching five-year anniversary of the establishment of WiLS as an independent non-profit, we examine each of our four services areas and how they have evolved since 2013.

We welcome your [questions and feedback](#).

WiLS 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.

WILS ORGANIZATIONAL VALUES

WILS staff drafted the original version of these Organizational Values in 2013. In 2017, during our staff retreat, the values were revisited to determine if staff still viewed them as important organizational values, if we were living them in our day-to-day work, and what we might do to make sure that we are true to them going forward. The values were revised slightly and two new values were added:

We work in the best interest of our members. We take their missions very seriously, we respect and value their time and money, and we do our best to deliver services that are effective, efficient, and affordable.

We are optimistic about the future of our members. Our members have always overcome challenges and we believe that they will continue to do so in the future. We approach our work, despite challenges, with the positive spirit of possibility.

We promote new ideas and experimentation. We encourage our members to try new things, we promote the outcomes of members' experimental endeavors, and we demonstrate this value through our own internal practices.

We are sincere in our purpose. We are honest with ourselves and others. We are reflective about what we do and who we are as an organization, we recognize when we can do better, and we do our best to improve.

We believe that we're all in this together. Our community is an ecosystem that thrives when we recognize our value to one another. We work to connect members and provide opportunities for collaboration in order to grow and strengthen all parts of our ecosystem.

New: We are committed to equity, diversity, and inclusion. We believe our community is stronger when people with a wide array of experiences and perspectives come together. We strive to create thoughtful and respectful environments where those interactions can take place.

New: We stand up for our members and their values. We are champions for the founding principles of librarianship and for the well-being of our members.

WiLS GOVERNANCE

WiLS is governed by a [thirteen-member board](#) of representatives from the WiLS membership. Representatives are chosen by represented consortia or by the general membership, depending on the seat. Board members serve three-year terms.

The WiLS Board is advised by an eight person [Finance Committee](#), made up of members of the board, WiLS staff, and citizen members.

WiLS members also have the opportunity to participate on workgroups and committees. The [Cooperative Purchasing Advisory Committee](#) (CooPAC) provides guidance for one of our major service areas. Workgroups are formed to help with various events and with other short-term projects.

WiLS STAFF AND ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

WiLS staff members work in a project-based structure, utilizing staff strengths and capacity according to each project's unique needs, rather than drawing on a previously-established hierarchy. In this way, WiLS can be responsive to project partners and agile enough to accommodate all the projects we work on.

WiLS STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS FOR 2017

Based on guidance from membership, staff, and the board, WiLS established the following strategic directions for 2017:

Undertake a process to gain understanding and to start conversations around digital preservation.

Storage and preservation of digital assets, or the lack thereof, is an issue that impacts all our members. This year, we will start working toward shared solutions for digital preservation for our members by convening discussions about digital preservation to understand needs, to formulate a plan for collaborative digital preservation in the state, and to determine our role in that initiative.

Progress: In Summer 2017, WiLS administered an online survey to assess our members' current activities, needs and challenges related to digital preservation. Stakeholders representing academic, public and special libraries from around the state were invited to participate in a summit on August 30. Attendees discussed potential collaborative approaches to digital preservation in four key areas: technology infrastructure, staffing and education, advocacy, and policy. Summit participants were highly interested in keeping the conversation going by establishing mechanisms for sharing expertise and information among this group and the wider Wisconsin library community.

The outcome of this strategic initiative was a recommendation to consider the Recollection Wisconsin consortium as the umbrella organization to facilitate statewide collaboration around digital preservation. This recommendation was presented to and approved by the WiLS board and Recollection Wisconsin board in Fall 2017. As Wisconsin's Service Hub for the Digital Public Library of America, Recollection Wisconsin already works with a strong statewide network of libraries and cultural heritage organizations that are creating and managing digital content. In addition, Recollection Wisconsin's new IMLS grant, [Curating Community Digital Collections](#), is an opportunity to pilot initiatives such as shared storage and peer-to-peer training, particularly for smaller institutions.

[The final report](#) can be found on the WiLS website.

Share opportunities for members to participate in open access initiatives, and participate in initiatives ourselves.

Open access is a key issue to our academic members, and we want to support them in moving this issue forward. We will discover and share information about educational opportunities and open access initiatives, work with publishers to offer lower rates on open access fees, and discuss joining organizations that support open access to express our support and facilitate our learning to share with the WiLS community. We will facilitate conversations around the topic when possible.

Progress: In order to share developments in the world of open access and open educational resources (OER), WiLS created a webpage dedicated to these topics. New posts continue to be added. In June of 2017, WiLS presented a [WiLSWorld Shorts on open educational resources](#) with Annie Baumann of Viterbo University on her library's journey to implementing OER among her community. Not long after WiLS began exploring OER as a strategic initiative, WISPALS, the technical college library consortium that WiLS serves as project manager, identified OER as a priority for the coming year. Two WISPALS members convened a meeting of interested libraries at the 2017 WLA Annual Conference to discuss the topic. From that conversation, a special interest group, Community for Open Wisconsin (COW), was developed and participation has broadened to include many other academic libraries beyond WISPALS members. WiLS will continue be involved in that effort in some way, though exactly how is yet to be determined by our governance and members.

Continue to develop our planning and consulting services by capitalizing on our existing work and developing potential areas of expansion.

WiLS has developed a reputation for providing strategic planning processes for public libraries that fit within the library's budget and recognize the unique needs of each library. Through this work, we have developed our own process for planning, and, in 2017, we will investigate new ways to utilize this process to benefit members. We will consider new areas of service based on feedback from these planning processes and known member needs, including consulting around tools for managing time, tasks, and internal communications.

Progress: WiLS worked with the Beloit Public Library to make recommendations for changes to the library space, service points, and training processes to improve customer service at the library. Through staff-driven brainstorming, patron surveys, research of other libraries, and information analysis and prioritization activities, we helped Beloit Public Library identify new solutions for their specific community of users. This project provided us with a new potential model for consulting services, and we may be able to employ it in future projects.

After hearing from many of our members that they wished there was an easier way to move from planning to action, we introduced a new implementation and ongoing planning process. We help libraries facilitate the development of a framework for ongoing planning assessment and provide a prioritization and implementation process that the library will schedule and coordinate on an annual basis to align with the library's budget planning calendar. This is perfect for the implementation of a brand new strategic plan or a plan that has been gathering dust on a shelf.

A need is bubbling up from multiple groups in the community: a way to communicate, collaborate, share documents, and perhaps have some help in keeping initiatives moving along. WiLS staff have been talking about this need and are developing a model for a new service called WiLS Exchanges, which will capitalize on the consortium management services we are already providing while also meeting the need of our members. We'll share more information about this soon.

Expand our knowledge of using data.

We know that collecting and using data is an area of need for members, and it's also an area of need for WiLS. In 2017, we will invest time in growing staff knowledge about collecting, analyzing, and presenting data to not only allow us to provide better service, but also provide us with a roadmap for educating members around this important topic.

Progress: We have developed a small team that is working to learn more about using data and applying that to projects we undertake. We feel that the best possibilities for us to provide service in this area are:

1. Applying this knowledge to consulting projects to make sure we are providing project partners the best information to make strategic decisions.
2. Encouraging/developing collaborative projects around data: for example, if a number of members wanted visualization of X data, we could “crowdsource” the funding to do the project.
3. Possibly offer training on data visualization software such as Tableau.

Learn more from inside and outside the state...and then share!

We want to be able to share innovative ideas and products that may help our members. To do so, we need to learn more from both inside and outside of the state. Inside the state, we want to continue to learn what our members are doing well and be more proactive in capturing and sharing those stories. Outside of the state, we’ll be rethinking which events we attend and our goals at those conferences to maximize the benefit to our members. We’ll also be deliberate in talking with our peers around the country to learn more about how they work to look for potential partnerships and directions that will benefit Wisconsin. We’ll also be thinking about how we share this information to the community and trying some new things to spread what we’re learning, including webinars that feature members and vendors.

Progress: We have tried different models to collect information from outside of the state, and are finding conversations with staff from other consortia to be very valuable. We have had multiple calls with the Massachusetts Library System, focusing on topics including communications and consulting projects. We visited RAILS (Reaching Across Illinois Library System) in Illinois. We plan to continue to develop these relationships and capitalize on the knowledge of our peers around the country. We’re still working on ways to better communicate what we learn to our membership and to more systematically learn what our members are doing.

Continue to look for ways to engage community members not yet engaged with WiLS.

While we provide services to many libraries in the state, there are staff members within those institutions, along with institutions that do not receive services from WiLS, that are not aware of WiLS and the services we provide. We will continue to look for ways to engage those individuals, including expansion of our newsletter focus, connecting with library schools to engage students, and identifying and reaching out to libraries that do not currently participate in WiLS.

Progress: We have implemented various engagement techniques across our four service areas, including focusing on specific and targeted communications – personal invitations when possible – to increase member participation in our projects, services, and events. We have had staff conversations about general membership to explore how we might bring additional value to general membership and encourage growth. We are working on the monthly *Community Chronicle* newsletter to increase its value to members and grow member engagement through surveying and beta testing. We created and deployed a communication campaign to non-members. We are currently gathering usage data from our newsletters, website, and social media to understand what information is most valuable to members.

Continue to improve internal operations and how we work.

We're always looking for ways to do things better and to improve our member experience. While this is an ongoing process rather than a unique initiative for 2017, we include it on the list to emphasize its importance and to share some of our plans for 2017. Specifically, we will make at least annual contact with all general members, improve virtual meetings both for ourselves and the consortia we manage, learn more about the tools we use every day and share that knowledge with members, and investigate platform enhancements or replacements to improve MyWiLS.

Progress: We have purchased microphones to help with mixed virtual and in-person meetings, and they have been working very well. We are also starting conversations around virtual meetings, with a small group meeting to discuss how to do this better. We continue to learn more about our tools, with a special focus on cooperative purchasing and financials.

WiLS SERVICES

WiLS supports its mission to serve members through four core services: Cooperative Purchasing and Projects, Consortium Management, Consulting, and Events and Education. This annual report focuses less on describing each service and more on how each area has evolved in the last five years. In 2013, WiLS didn't have four core service areas; we had many more! Over the years, as we have honed these services, grown to understand the strengths of our organization, our staff, and our members, and developed partnerships to help us fill in the gaps, our services have distilled into the four you find below. Each section briefly describes the service and how that service has evolved since WiLS' 2013 reorganization to meet changing member needs and reflect internal growth.



CONSORTIUM MANAGEMENT

Part of WiLS' mission is to build relationships so our members can do more with their time and money. One way we achieve this goal is through consortium management. While forming a consortium is a great way for libraries and organizations to partner to provide ongoing services and resources to their members and communities, the reality of needing to manage the day-to-day business and operations of the consortium can be overwhelming. Often, the partners involved in a consortium don't have the staff time to provide these services, and this is where we help. You can read more about our [Consortium Management Service on the WiLS website](#), including which consortia we currently manage and what services we provide for them.

The service has changed in many ways since 2013. With our partners, we've successfully started a new consortium. The Wisconsin Schools Digital Library Consortium (WSDLC) launched in January 2018 to provide a statewide shared digital collection of ebooks and other materials for students through participants' school libraries. We already have over 80 districts participating and are excited to grow this new consortium.

"The WiLS staff are a joy to work with."
- WISPALS member

Including helping form and working with new consortia, we've incorporated new services into our consortium management offerings. For example, we provide administration and management for WISPALS' shared ILS, a skill we weren't able to provide until we found a new staff member to provide it.

In addition, we aligned Recollection Wisconsin with our consortium management service, rather than viewing it as a standalone project. By bringing this consortium under the umbrella of WiLS management, we are able to provide additional services and benefit from staff expertise, particularly in communications and outreach.

"I am honored to view these historical photos. Thank you!"

- Recollection Wisconsin User

We now take a team-based approach to all of our consortium management projects. With this approach, we have redundancy in roles as needed, can adjust staffing to capacity, and provide the opportunity for staff to do what they do best for each consortium.



COOPERATIVE PURCHASING AND PROJECTS

WiLS believes in our members and their missions. We know that they do good work and can do even more of it with more time and money. [WiLS Cooperative Purchasing](#) service provides negotiated discount prices on electronic resources and other library products for our members. WiLS works with vendor partners to establish advantageous pricing for members and manages the whole e-resource purchasing process from trials to invoicing. Every dollar or minute saved by taking advantage of this WiLS service can be used to provide more and better services for a library's patrons.

Since 2013, this service has expanded into new areas and product types. For example, Credo's InfoLit Modules are self-contained, customizable information literacy training tools to support the work of teaching library users about information literacy. Digital Theatre, a new WiLS vendor partner, presents professionally mounted stage plays and provides additional content about the plays themselves.

WiLS has also been busy creating, testing, and refining better workflows internally and with our subscription management portal, MyWiLS. We have also spent time making sure that we are transparent in our processes and in simplifying fee calculation so it is clear for our members.

In fiscal year 2016-2017, WiLS grew participation in its Cooperative Purchasing Service from both members and vendors:

	New	Total
Member Organizations	6	420
Subscriptions	260	2895
Vendor Partners	8	132
Databases	50	824

While we have made adjustments, WiLS Cooperative Purchasing service model remains largely unchanged since 2013. In the coming year, we will begin to re-envision the service to determine if there are better ways to do what we do and if there are other things that our members want and need from this service. We will gather information from other consortia to compile possible service features and then gather feedback from our members via surveys, focus groups, and other methods to get a more comprehensive understanding of what changes would be most beneficial. Using that information, we will develop steps to implement changes to the Cooperative Purchasing service.



CONSULTING

A key piece of our mission is that we help our members turn ideas into action. One way we do this is through our consulting services. When a member expresses a need for help, we work with them to get a clear understanding of their goals and then work with the library to develop processes and a plan. We are involved in the project as much as the member wants us to be, providing project management and expertise as needed to achieve the best possible outcome.

WiLS' consulting service has evolved a great deal since 2013 in the areas of strategic planning, library service development and assessment, process facilitation and project management, and in connecting to expertise.

"Having professional consultation allowed for meaningful, thoughtful, and respectful discussion. The survey process was extremely helpful and saved staff a lot of time."

- Sun Prairie Public Library

Strategic Planning

We have fine-tuned our community survey and community conversations to deeply understand the needs and aspirations of the communities we work with. Using annual report data, we can offer libraries an understanding of trends in their own library as well as how they compare with similar libraries. We offer an understanding of how communities are made up and how they have changed over time using demographic information from the federal Census and the American Community Survey. We work to continually refine and improve the data we collect and share for the biggest impact and greatest meaning.

In addition, we have crafted a phased strategic planning process that allows libraries to decide how much assistance they need to create an actionable plan that matches the needs of the community with the needs of the library. These phases include data gathering, community assessment, strategic plan development (including articulating foundational elements, plan development, and plan writing), leading to the final phase of plan implementation.

Library Service Development and Assessment

We've worked with libraries using a variety of traditional and new approaches to assess services and consider new strategies for service delivery. Some of those methods include comparative analysis of peer libraries to identify process management and workflow improvement possibilities, partnering with experts from the library community to assess and reimagine effective library workflows and staffing models, and staff-inclusive processes to study how services are provided in the library and accessed by patrons to improve user experience and identify efficiencies.

Process Facilitation and Project Management

We've developed our facilitation services to help libraries and public library systems with single-day planning sessions to help staff, trustees, and other library stakeholders work together to identify future directions for their services and how to implement those new directions in services.

We've continued to hone our facilitation skills and project management processes to assist the library community with more complex conversations and initiatives to increase collaborations, efficiencies, and services for patrons.

"[WiLS does] such a great job of helping groups to explore ideas or come to a consensus. I also greatly appreciated the data presentation. Having someone pull together the information gathered and identify themes was extremely helpful in our planning process. Finally, giving us some tools and a reporting timeline to support the implementation of the plan we developed."

- Menomonee Falls Public Library

Connecting to Expertise

At times we feel the best assistance for a library is from a peer expert in our library community. Because we are a statewide member organization serving all types of libraries, we continue to identify people in our community who have knowledge and expertise that can help other libraries on projects such as workflow studies, website improvement, service point studies, and more.



EVENTS AND EDUCATION

In support of our mission to serve members, and to drive the library field forward, WiLS hosts professional development events to connect and educate members of the community, build relationships, foster collaboration, solve problems, and discover innovative ideas. WiLS draws on a variety of expertise to plan and produce these events. Planning workgroups are made up of WiLS members, and meeting or session topics are driven by member input whenever possible. Programs and workshops are led

"Interesting, thought-provoking, well-organized and presented."

- WiLSWorld 2017 Attendee

by experts from WiLS staff, the member community, and professionals from business, technology, education, and the broader library world. Read more about [our events on the WiLS website](#), including upcoming learning opportunities.

Our Events and Education service has changed quite a bit since 2013 as we have more strategically aligned our events with our services, organizational goals, and member needs. To be cost effective for us and for members, we have focused on models that increase participation, broaden learning, and keep costs low. For instance, we implemented WiLSWorld Shorts, free and virtual webinars held quarterly, to help broaden the access to the learning that happens at WiLSWorld to everyone in the state, including those members without travel budgets. WiLSWorld itself was shortened from two days to one in order to help members save money on registration and travel costs. We now use the second day of the conference to implement targeted hands-on workshops to help members get the skills they need without paying for skills they don't. We have discontinued hosting the Annual ILL

"I've always loved WiLSWorld. It's a great conference."

- WiLSWorld 2017 Attendee

Meeting and replaced that learning opportunity with our Good-WiLS Ambassador program, a scholarship that helps fund members' travel and registration for regional resource sharing conferences in exchange for a report about what was learned at the conference. In addition, many of the ideas for our events programming draws on member input, as do the direction of our internal initiatives. We are making a dedicated effort to find the "hot spot" of where those align and diving deeper into helping members, and ourselves, learn more. We also continue to try new things as opportunities arise, such co-hosting the Upper Midwest Digital Collections Conference (UMDCC), and we continue to evaluate whether or not those endeavors are

"I'm so glad this meeting exists."

- Peer Council 2017 Attendee

beneficial to us and to members. In the case of UMDCC, we found that it was not the best use of our resources, focusing instead on incorporating digital collection education into Peer Council and WiLSWorld. In the coming years, this area of WiLS services will continue to be flexible to respond to member

needs and the changing nature of librarianship.

WILS ANNUAL FINANCIAL REPORT: 2016-2017

REVENUE

Cooperative purchasing sales	\$9,199,597.51
Cooperative purchasing member fees	\$ 82,922.00
Interest/Amex reimbursement	\$97,468.69
Event revenue	\$22,951.67
Consortium management	\$259,578.52
Consulting services	\$226,546.18
Cooperative projects	\$29,202.50
Total	\$9,918,267.07

EXPENSES

Cooperative purchasing materials	\$8,838,626.58
Staff (with travel / CE)	\$796,580.02
Event expenses	\$11,029.25
Project expenses	\$41,790.33
Other expenses	\$89,657.36
Total	\$9,777,683.54

NET INCOME **\$140,583.53**

LOOKING FORWARD

Each year, WiLS undertakes a member-focused planning process to identify strategic directions for the upcoming year. For 2018, the WiLS staff and Board decided to focus on two organizational initiatives for 2018:

Review the internal structure of WiLS

There are some concerns with the current organizational structure of WiLS, developed in 2013:

- The director position is currently divided into 50% administration and 50% projects. Given the division of the director's time, there is not enough time dedicated to supporting people as staff continues to grow.
- The current structure does not allow for "lead" roles other than the director.
- While WiLS currently operates with a philosophy of transparency and openness and input and decision-making being present throughout the organization, this is informal practice that is not codified in the organizational structure.
- Having clearer understanding of capacity, financial goals, etc. would help plan for projects and know what work we can or should undertake.

In 2018, we will undertake a revision of the structure, with the goals to develop an organizational structure:

- that reflects and supports the dynamic nature of WiLS
- that provides ample support for WiLS staff members
- that gives all WiLS staff members the opportunity to lead and to grow
- that diffuses decision making throughout the organization
- that codifies some of the more informal philosophy of how we work as an organization
- that ensures sustainability of the organization, including financial sustainability and how the organization thrives through personnel changes.

Do a thorough assessment of cooperative purchasing

During the reorganization in 2013, we spent time thinking about the best services we could provide in new areas, but we did not change anything with cooperative purchasing. It seems like a good time for us to take the same "fresh eyes" approach to cooperative purchasing, considering both what will allow us to provide the best possible service to our members and also position us for future growth.

STAY IN TOUCH!

We welcome the opportunity to hear what you're doing, share what we're doing, and pass along information from the community that serves your efforts. You can stay in touch with WiLS through these channels:

- [Subscribe to our weekly newsletter](#), This Week at WiLS, to hear updates on our work and from the community, and musings on the world at large. Or, you can read the [archives](#).
- [Subscribe to the WiLS Community Chronicle](#), which shares WiLS news, cooperative purchasing service updates, our monthly interviews with vendors and members, upcoming funding and learning opportunities, member news, and much more.
- Check out our [website and blog](#) for all things WiLS.
- Follow us on [Facebook](#).
- [Contact us](#) directly. We'd love to hear from you.

WiLS deeply appreciates the hard work and input of its
staff, board, committees, and members.

Thank you for being part of our community!