

INTELLECTUAL FREEDOM SURVEY REPORT 2023

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A red pencil with a sharpened lead tip is positioned diagonally across the left side of the page. The background is a white surface with a grid of letters A, B, C, and D in a light blue font, arranged in rows and columns. The pencil is resting on the grid, with its tip pointing towards the top left.

PURPOSE

The Intellectual Freedom Committee is responsible for safeguarding and promoting intellectual freedom within the Wisconsin Library Association and the Wisconsin library community. The committee's charge includes collecting annual data via annual surveys. The 2023 Intellectual Freedom Survey was sent out through multiple channels to maximize participation from across the library spectrum. The channels included: Wisconsin Library Association (WLA), Wisconsin Educational Media & Technology Association's (WEMTA) Intellectual Freedom group, Wisconsin Library Services (WiLS), and the Council of UW Libraries (CUWL). The purpose of this data collection is to assess the state of intellectual freedom in Wisconsin as reported by library staff. In addition to challenge data, the survey assessed the mental and emotional burden on library staff due to the rise in and the inflammatory nature of current censorship challenges statewide. Lastly, the committee views the survey as an opportunity to hear what support library staff members are looking for and give an opportunity to share resources with one another.

The following report breaks down the survey results into the following categories: how the current climate affects library work, training and support, challenge breakdown, suggestions, and what's next. Collected responses include both quantitative data and qualitative, open-ended responses from library staff of all positions. Responses were collected anonymously, with only broad library type included for demographic purposes.

Survey Participants

270 Library Staff

81.4%

of participants
work in a public
library

13.7%

of participants
work in an
academic library

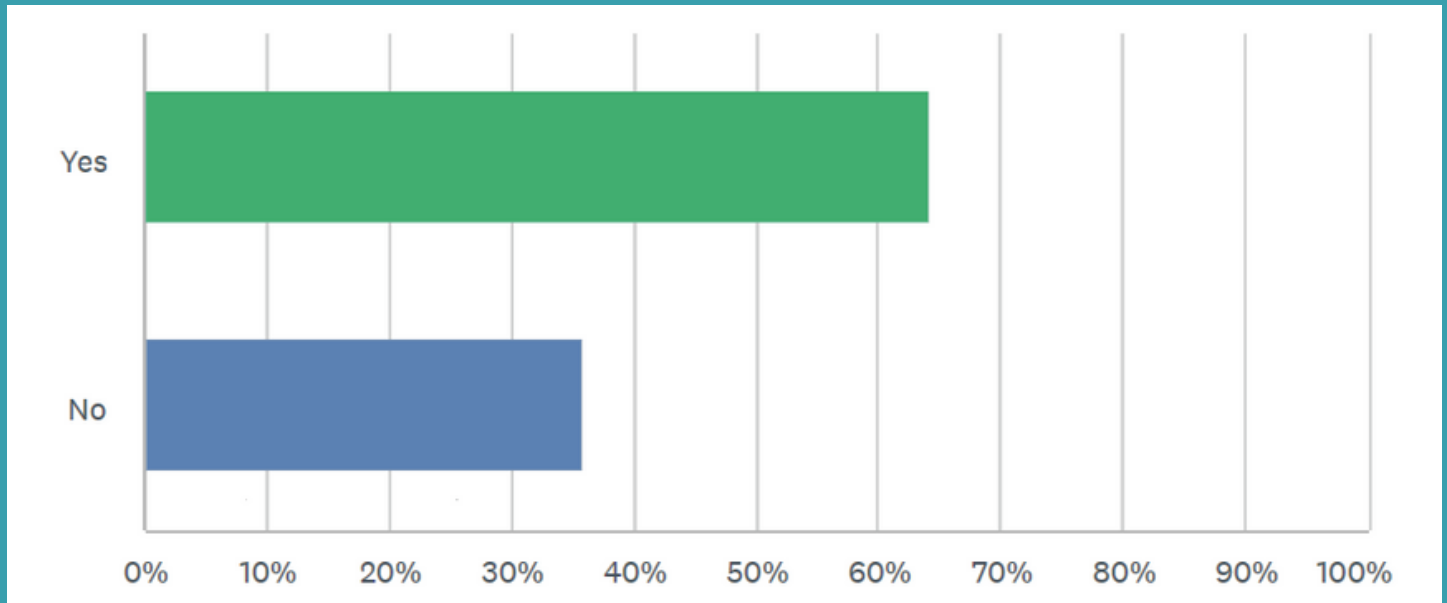
3.3%

of participants
work in a school
library

1.5%

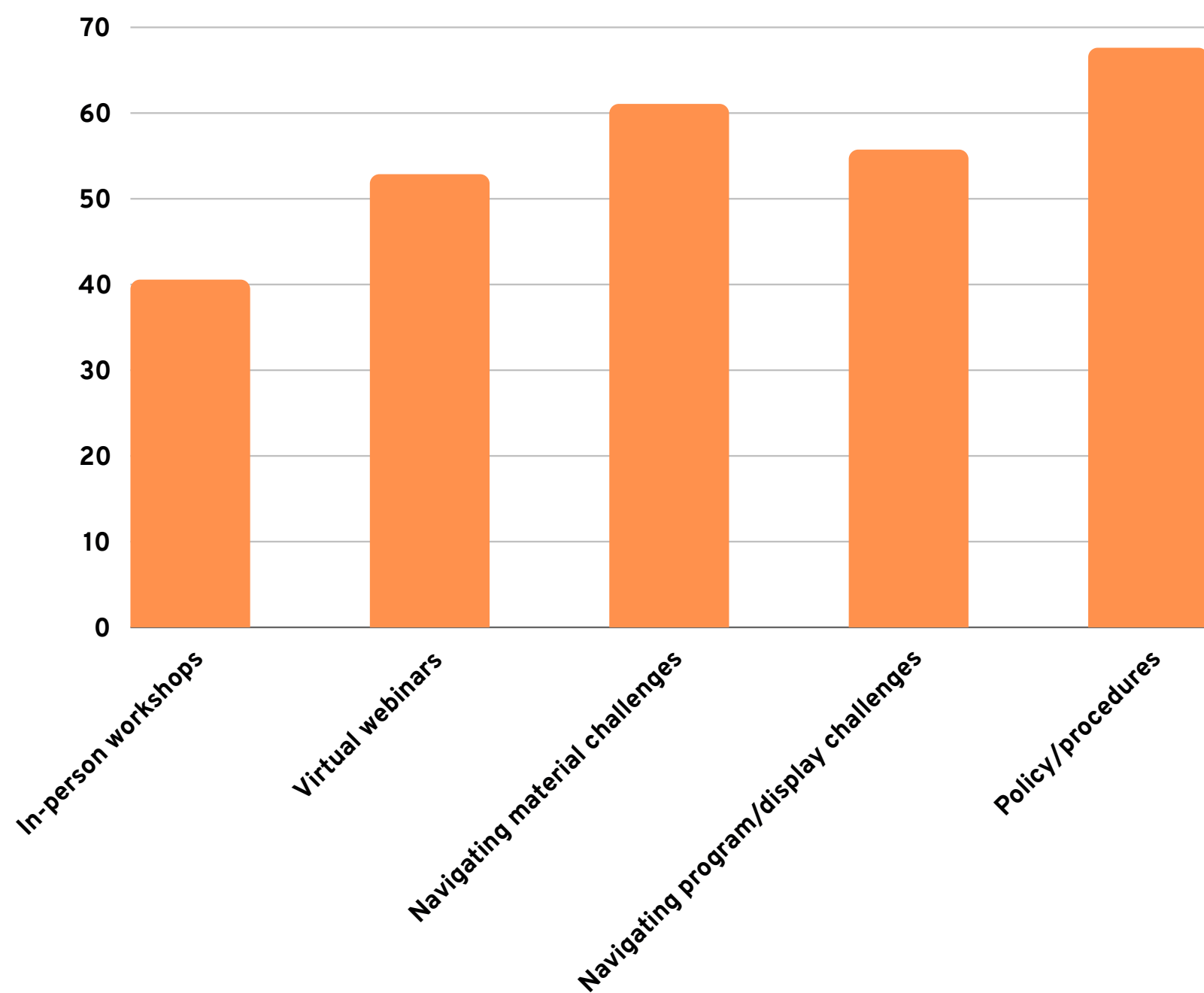
of participants
work in a special
library

64% feel that the current political climate affected the ability to do their job



AREAS OF LIBRARY WORK AFFECTED:

- Relationships w/Patrons: 73.8%
 - Selection 68.9%
 - Programming: 62.8%
 - Marketing: 41.5%
 - Relationships w/Trustees: 33.5%
 - Relationships w/Coworkers: 32.9%
 - Circulation: 28%
 - Reference: 13.4%
- Other: 21.9%**
- DEI
 - Funding
 - Choosing not to Advance Career
 - Emotionally Difficult/Morale
 - Policy Development
 - Community Outreach
 - Safety & Security



WHEN ASKED WHAT WOULD BE THE MOST HELPFUL RESOURCES IN LEARNING TO NAVIGATE CHALLENGES AND PUSHBACK, 67.6% OF PARTICIPANTS WANTED TO LEARN MORE ABOUT CREATING POLICIES AND PROCEDURES.

61% ALSO WANTED TO LEARN MORE ABOUT NAVIGATING MATERIAL CHALLENGES, AND 55.7% WANTED TO LEARN MORE ABOUT NAVIGATING PROGRAM/DISPLAY CHALLENGES.

PARTICIPANTS PREFERRED VIRTUAL TRAININGS OVER IN-PERSON WORKSHOPS.

Suggestions



Participants were asked what resources they would suggest to their fellow library staff members to help prepare libraries to handle challenges. Here is a snapshot of selected resources suggested:

Suggested Existing Resources from Participants:

- The CCBC (Cooperative Children’s Book Center) and their [“What IF Forum”](#)
- DPI (Department of Public Instruction) consultants
- Library System Staff
- WAPL (Wisconsin Association of Public Libraries)
- PLA (Public Library Association)
- WLA (Wisconsin Library Association)
- ALA (American Library Association’s Office of Intellectual Freedom)
- IFLS System [Challenge Support & Intellectual Freedom Resources](#)
- [“Get Ready, Stay Ready” Toolkit](#)
- Ryan Dowd training
- EveryLibrary leadership webinar series

Suggestions for Additional Resources from Participants:

- Policy/procedure writing workshops
- De-escalation/conflict resolution workshops
- Crisis management workshops
- Intellectual Freedom training for board trustees

What's Next?

THANK YOU TO ALL WHO TOOK THE TIME TO PARTICIPATE IN OUR 2023 SURVEY!

WISCONSIN LIBRARY ASSOCIATION'S INTELLECTUAL FREEDOM COMMITTEE WILL CONTINUE TO TRACK THE TOLL OF CENSORSHIP CHALLENGES ON THE STATE'S LIBRARIES & STAFF.

WE WILL USE THE INFORMATION GATHERED TO PLAN AND PROVIDE TRAININGS AND SUPPORT.

FOR MORE RESOURCES, PLEASE SEE THE INTELLECTUAL FREEDOM TOOLKIT:

WLA INTELLECTUAL FREEDOM TOOLKIT JAN 2024

IF YOU HAVE AN INTELLECTUAL FREEDOM QUESTION OR ARE IN NEED OF SUPPORT, PLEASE FEEL FREE TO CONTACT US AT:

WLA@WISCONSINLIBRARIES.ORG