

ASSOCIATION OF WISCONSIN SPECIAL LIBRARIANS | AWSL

A DIVISION OF THE WISCONSIN LIBRARY ASSOCIATION

Leadership

CHAIR

Val Magno

PAST CHAIR

Anne Moser

WLA BOARD LIAISON

Carrie Doyle

Committees

CONFERENCE PLANNING

Val Magno

NEWSLETTER

Carol Hassler

Next Business Meeting

The next business meeting of AWSL will take place in the fall. Watch the listserv for updates, including the location or connection details for the next meeting.

Join us for AWSL town halls!
See page 2 for upcoming dates.

Chair Report

By Val Magno

Hello everyone!

AWSL is awesome, and the perfect place to touch base with other information jockeys. I am happy to give my time, knowledge, and energy to being AWSL chair for the year. Getting a chance to speak to my peers is a bit daunting. How can I add to your knowledge; how can I encourage you to grow? I can, at least, let you know what is on my mind. Please feel free to let me know what is on yours!

Lately, I have been reading up on Artificial Intelligence and how it is infiltrating/invading/inspiring our everyday experiences. Have you tried ChatGPT yet? <https://chat.openai.com/> It is amazing/scary/ coming for our jobs. You need to take Artificial Intelligence seriously. My notes <https://library.fvvc.edu/AI>

Here is an example, I asked ChatGPT to write an essay based on previous AWSL newsletters. Here is what it produced:

As the incoming chair, I am excited to take on the role of leading this organization into the future. I have been a part of this community for many years, and I have seen firsthand the incredible work that has been accomplished by our dedicated members.

One of my main goals is to continue to build on the successes of the past and to ensure that we remain a strong and vibrant organization. I believe that this can be achieved by focusing on several key areas.

Firstly, I am committed to fostering a culture of collaboration and inclusivity within our community. By encouraging open communication and respectful dialogue, we can work together to achieve our shared goals and make a meaningful impact on our industry.

Mark Your Calendar: Town Halls

Get our next virtual town hall meetings on your schedule.

These meetings are held via Zoom, and feature presentations from AWSL members.

September 21, 11:30 a.m.

October 19, 11:30 a.m.

November 16, 11:30 a.m.

Lead a Town Hall!

Would you like to lead a Town Hall for your fellow special librarians? To sign up, contact Anne Moser at akmoser@aquawisc.edu

Join our Board!

Becoming a member of the AWSL leadership team is a great way to meet new people and to provide opportunities for your fellow special librarians to get together to have fun, to learn, and to socialize. Being an AWSL leader is a great way to get in some professional development in a low-key, low-stress, high-reward way. The time commitment is minimal. The board meets twice a year: once in the spring and once at the annual WLA conference in the fall. All other duties can be completed remotely.

Secondly, I am looking forward to continuing our efforts to innovate and stay ahead of the curve. With rapidly evolving technologies and changing market conditions, it is essential that we remain agile and adaptable. By investing in new ideas and embracing new approaches, we can position ourselves as leaders in our field.

Finally, I am committed to maintaining our strong relationships with our stakeholders and partners. By working closely with our members, sponsors, and other key stakeholders, we can ensure that we are delivering value and making a positive impact on our industry.

In conclusion, I am honored to take on this role as chair and excited about the opportunities ahead. By working together, I am confident that we can build on the successes of the past and continue to make a meaningful impact in our industry.

A little boilerplate, but not too bad! Hold on to your hats!

Great Lakes Bioblitz 2023

By Anne Moser

GROW your knowledge about biodiversity in your community

Librarians, educators, students, families, youth groups, and the public are invited to participate in the Great Lakes BioBlitz 2023! Anne Moser, past chair of AWSL and avid BioBlitzer is one of the organizers of this 4-week community science event. A bioblitz is a concerted effort to record as many species within a designated location and time as possible. This bioblitz focuses on the entire Great Lakes Basin in US and Canada and runs for four weeks (April 22 through May 20, 2023). Anyone can join in and all you need is a device to take snapshots and time to walk outside. Bioblitzers are important community scientists that gather important data about the biodiversity in our watershed.

We hope you can join us! Contact Anne Moser if you have any questions akmoser@aquawisc.edu

Learn more

<https://www.seagrant.wisc.edu/our-work/focus-areas/education/great-lakes-and-marine-educationresources/great-lakes-bioblitz-2023/>

About AWSL

The Association of Wisconsin Special Librarians (AWSL) is a division of the Wisconsin Library Association. Established in October 1986, AWSL exists to focus on the activities and issues of special libraries and librarianship and to provide a forum for exchange of ideas among persons involved with special libraries and collections.

Membership

Membership is open to all WLA members who are special librarians or who have an interest in special libraries. Anyone who maintains a specialized collection of materials is considered a special librarian -- whether they're a trained and certified librarian managing a library's special collection, or a person in charge of specialized materials in a church, museum, prison, hospital, corporation, foundation, newspaper, government office, or other organization.

Join AWSL

Make the most of your WLA membership and join AWSL through the WLA website:

www.wisconsinlibraries.org/awsl

Share Your Work at WLA!

We want to remind you that the deadline to submit a proposal to present at the upcoming Wisconsin Library Association (WLA) Conference is fast approaching! All proposals must be submitted by May 12th, so don't delay.



We want to hear from you!

Call for proposals open now

Whether you're a seasoned presenter or new to the scene, we welcome all ideas and perspectives. This is a great opportunity to share your knowledge and expertise with your peers, and we encourage you to take advantage of it.

We want to stress that all ideas are welcome - WLA is looking for a diverse range of presentations that showcase the best of what our profession has to offer.

So, whether you have a new and innovative program to share, or insights on a topic that affects all of us, we want to hear from you.

Don't miss out on this opportunity to present at the annual library conference. Submit your proposal today!

Learn more and submit your session proposal at:

<https://www.wisconsinlibraries.org/wla-annual-conference>

Get Ready to Garden!

By Eva Stefanski

For many of us, springtime quickly ignites thoughts of gardening. At Olbrich Botanical Gardens Schumacher Library, we are busy helping people prepare for all of their gardening schemes and plans. This involves ad hoc research requests, book recommendations, class resource lists, and library programs that get people excited about the growing season ahead. In a world so rich with new resources and information sharing, there is no limit to the inspiration out there to make your garden dreams come true. Here are five suggestions to help you get in the gardening spirit:

1. **Visit a Seed Library.** Local seed libraries are a fantastic way to try out new plants or gardening in general. They keep high performing plant varieties in the community and create a platform for shared success. Schumacher's seed library has given away over 16,000 seeds since January! *Beginning Seed Saving for the Home Gardener* by Jim Ulager offers a great introduction to the world of saving seeds.
2. **Forage.** Did you know that the Wisconsin DNR provides information and access to foraging? Just go to DNR's Find Your Food web resource for tips and locations for foraging edible plants in your area. <https://dnr.wisconsin.gov/wnrmag/2021/Spring/Forage> If you are new to foraging, *Front Yard Forager: Identifying, Collecting, and Cooking the 30 Most Common Urban Weeds* by Melany Vorass is a great place to start.
3. **Enjoyed your foraging?** Now make a delicious concoction using your found edibles. My favorite recipe resource is *Wild Remedies: How to Forage Healing Foods and Craft Your Own Herbal Medicine* by Rosalee de la Forêt.



4. **Save the bees.** Or the butterflies. Or the birds. So many of our native species are in trouble, and there is nothing more inspiring than creating the perfect place for nature to thrive. Start with the book *Rewild Your Garden: Create a Haven for Birds, Bees and Butterflies* by Frances Tophill for great ideas on how to turn your yard into a habitat.
5. **Become your own National Park.** Step one: Read Doug Tallmy's influential classic *Nature's Best Hope*. Step two: Pick out some native plants for your yard/garden. Step three: Get your property on the map! <https://homegrownnationalpark.org/>

There are so many ways to engage with the natural world and gardening. Spring is here – it's time to get growing!

Apply for a WiLS Ideas to Action Grant

Do you have a project that needs a boost? Are you dreaming up a service you'd like to develop but don't have funding? Through the Ideas to Action Fund, you can plant, fertilize, and cultivate your good ideas and watch them bloom! WiLS provides grants of up to \$5,000 so libraries and cultural organizations can bring their projects to life. We are actively seeking innovative or collaborative proposals from special libraries of all types in order to support the good work of the diversity of WiLS member organizations.

The 2023 Ideas to Action Fund application period is open through June 5th. The lightweight submission form and minimal reporting requirements make this grant opportunity a great fit for organizations strapped for time and resources.

Not sure about WiLS membership? It's free and comes with all perks and no strings. Read more [on our website](#) or connect with us at information@wils.org.



Tracking Growth

For our springtime newsletter challenge, we asked you to send a few sentences on the theme of GROWTH. Tell us about your plans to grow collections or your user base, or how you measure growth. You can even describe initiatives and approaches that go beyond quantitative growth to share value with your organization's stakeholders.

From Val Magno

I just discovered an education blog called “One Useful Thing”. His article on “The future of education in a world of AI” provides a positive outlook, suggesting that Artificial Intelligence (AI) will be great at tutoring and giving teachers insights on how their students are learning. Many people now suggest ChatGPT will affect education the way calculators did, but they will be calculators of words instead of numbers. When calculators were first easily available, education was slow to adapt, but now they are a required item in many math-based classes. More about ChatGPT at <https://library.fvtc.edu/LibrarianNotes/AI>

From Carol Hassler

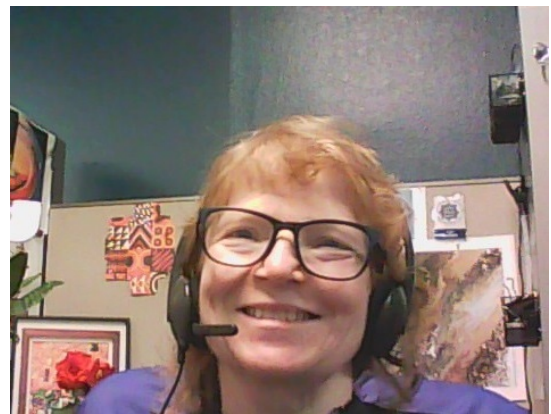
At the 2022 WLA Annual Conference, I attended a session on data analysis presented by Wisconsin Library Services (WILS). It was a great Q&A where attendees could ask an expert their data question. One question I had was about growth statistics and annual reporting. How do we show the value of a service beyond reporting on growth? The response was that there are two ways data can be presented - a snapshot or trend data. While a lot of annual report data is formatted to show trends, some data can be represented as a snapshot. One way to frame it is to say, “We like to see X number of cardholders, and that level is representative of a healthy amount.” Something doesn’t need to grow to show success, so don’t feel that you have to present your data in that way.

Member Spotlight: Val Magno

Thanks to WLA for allowing us to reprint in full AWSL member Val Magno’s member spotlight in this newsletter.

For which library, institution, or organization are you currently employed? If you are retired, what was your former organization?

I have been working at Fox Valley Technical College for over 16 years now. Money is not my only compensation. My job allows me to live my values of teaching, learning, creativity, critical thinking, and supporting my community.



How many year(s) have you been a member of Wisconsin Library Association?

My profile mentions 2009 as my start date, but I know there have been a few years I missed out. When I started to feel something was missing in my professional life, I reactivated my membership. When I talk about library issues to my family, their eyes glaze over and they look like they want to run away. Being a member of WLA means I have access to people who want to discuss library stuff.

What has been your favorite or most impactful function or event of WLA?

I really like attending meetings and programs virtually. With staffing so lean, it is hard to get away from the library. The virtual events provide updates, inspiration, and a sense of belonging.

How has being a member of WLA impacted you or your career?

Having access to a professional network means that if I can't find an answer, I can find someone who can. Being a member of WLA indicates that I am a professional.

Do you have a library role model (in Wisconsin or elsewhere) that has provided you with inspiration or guidance? Please share a little bit about it.

My mother was a librarian, and my father was a staunch supporter of public libraries as an essential part of democracy and empowering people who could not afford books (in his day) to educate themselves. Back in the middle of last century, if you could not afford college, you could still teach yourself through reading, if you had access to books. The path to empowerment now is access to computers and internet service, more than books. Even so, the library is still the best place to turn for help.

Libraries are also a microcosm of social sharing issues throughout the world: Services and resources cost money, and the people paying want to control how the money they pay is being used. Payer-dictated purchases sounds fair, except for the ethical quandary of "power feeds power". In general, the powerful don't need help and the more powerful a person feels, the less empathetic they may become.^{1,2}

Payer-dictated collection development is in opposition to the library function of diminishing power imbalances by providing resources to under-resourced people who can't afford to pay for the resources.

People wanting to exert control also applies to book banning. In many cases, it is easier to ban or get rid of something than to add or advocate for its place in society. Banning bikes from sidewalks is easy. Redesigning the road to accommodate bike riders takes money, time, effort, and determination. Banning books is easy. Developing an inclusive collection that creates a positive experience for under-resourced and under-represented community members also takes money, time, effort, and determination.

Do you have any advice for new WLA members?

Always love to learn something new!

Update from the AWSL Representative to the WLA Board of Directors

By Carrie Doyle

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Your AWSL representative to the WLA Board of Directors has a confession to make. I missed the first two WLA Board meetings of 2023. In January, I took a trip to New Orleans with friends I've known since 5th grade. Then, in March, I had the unexpected opportunity to travel to Fort Wayne, Indiana, to cheer on the University of Wisconsin-Whitewater Men's Basketball team as they played in the Division III National Championship Final Four game. The team gave an outstanding effort and played well, but they came up a bit short in the semifinal game. I felt bad about missing the WLA Board meetings (and an AWSL Board meeting, too) and I will try my best to make the meetings the rest of the year. I don't regret taking either trip, though, as you never know when/if opportunities like that will come around again. One of my favorite poems is *Carpe Diem* (Seize the Day) by Horace; I am trying to learn to do that more often.

AWSL member Steven Rice was kind enough to stand in for me at the March WLA Board Meeting to provide a summary of the results of the survey AWSL conducted a few months ago. Many thanks to Eva Stefanski for creating the survey, and to Eva and Steven for working with Laura Sauser, WLA Executive Director, to craft the survey that landed in your inbox. A big thank you also goes to everyone who took the survey. The responses we gathered were overall quite positive.

Steven shared a bit more about the survey results and the work of the AWSL Ad Hoc Visioning Committee elsewhere in this newsletter. Many thanks to Steven Rice for chairing the Ad Hoc Visioning Committee, and to Eva Stefanski, Val Magno (AWSL Chair) and Anne Moser (AWSL Past Chair) for serving on the committee.

I encourage all AWSL members to consider submitting a session proposal for either the WAAL/TSS 2023 Conference or the WLA 2023 Annual Conference, or to both! Proposals for the WAAL/TSS conference are due Friday, May 5. You can learn more [here](#). The deadline for [proposals](#) for the WLA Conference is Friday, May 12. Please share your unique work, perspectives, and experiences with your WLA colleagues.

AWSL Member Survey Highlights Successes, Room for Growth

By Steven Rice

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In January 2022, AWSL surveyed its membership to better understand the needs of special librarians in Wisconsin, assess its activities, and chart a path forward for the division. The results are in, and they paint an exciting picture of AWSL's unique strengths, as well as opportunities to build on the success of the Town Hall model. Highlights of the survey results include:

- Almost 30% of respondents did not regularly attend AWSL events, indicating untapped potential to expand participation in the division.
- AWSL members are widely involved in other disciplines, cohorts and professional associations, with 44% of respondents involved in subject areas outside of large library organizations.
- AWSL members value interpersonal connections and knowledge sharing, with the three most popular AWSL activities being networking with other special librarians, the town hall presentations, and the AWSL newsletter.
- Most survey respondents did not see an advantage to transitioning AWSL to SIG status, with some respondents questioning the loss of prestige and security for the division.
- The most valuable future activities for the AWSL, according to survey respondents, are additional work product samples, training opportunities, and chances to get together in person.

Thank you to everyone who completed the survey. These results were a vital tool for the Ad Hoc Visioning Committee as it drafted its recommendations, also included in this issue. Thank you also to Eva Stefanski and Laura Sauser for their passionate question-craft.

Vive les bibliothèques spécialisées!

AWSL Ad Hoc Visioning Committee Report

By Steven Rice

The AWSL Ad Hoc Visioning Committee met from January through April, 2023. The committee was tasked with analyzing the results of the AWSL Member Survey, examining the question of AWSL's division status, and determining next steps to foster positive momentum within AWSL.

The Ad Hoc Visioning Committee's recommendations are as follows:

1. The Committee recommends that AWSL remain a Division of WLA.

Committee members assessed the pros and cons of division status and came down decisively in favor of retaining our current structure. Transitioning AWSL to a special interest group would reduce opportunities for AWSL members, including the loss of activities at the annual conference and WLA board representation, while placing more stringent membership requirements on the group. The greatest concern with division status – the need to recruit new leadership – is already being addressed by the new energy and ambition within AWSL as the result of the town hall programs. With the division on an upward trajectory, the committee does not recommend any change in status.

2. The Committee encourages outreach to information professionals of all disciplines.

Working off the results of the AWSL survey, committee members discussed the possibility of reaching out to information professionals working outside the boundaries of traditional librarianship. AWSL's uniquely

interdisciplinary nature makes it the perfect vehicle for this work. As the division moves forward with planning for town halls, meetups, and conference programming, the committee recommends that focus be placed on building bridges to other practitioners, professional associations, and communities of practice.

3. The Committee recommends a reassessment of the AWSL name and bylaws as part of the WLA policy revision process.

Committee members looked at the current AWSL bylaws to better examine the group's division status. The committee felt that the bylaws, first written in the 1980's, are unnecessarily complex and out of step with the informal and welcoming atmosphere that AWSL has cultivated over the past several years. As part of the assessment of WLA policies and procedures taking place at the board level, the committee believes that AWSL should revise its bylaws to better reflect the division as it exists today. Additionally, the committee recommends that AWSL's name be reexamined, to ensure that it accurately describes the identity of the division.

4. The Committee encourages the development of resource-sharing opportunities, meet-ups and conference activities.

In the Member Survey, networking and resource sharing were consistently listed as the most important activities within AWSL. The committee recommends that the division build on the success of the town halls by creating more opportunities for AWSL members to collaborate, socialize, and learn from each other at the annual conference and throughout the year.

The members of the Ad Hoc Visioning Committee wish to extend their thanks to the AWSL membership, and look forward to an exciting year ahead for special libraries in Wisconsin.

Share Your Stories & Pictures!

By Carol Hassler

Do you have a story to tell about your library or collection? How are you helping your users? What programs are you offering, or what does your space or collection look like? Send us your stories and pictures to include in our next newsletter!

Email the newsletter chair, Carol Hassler, at carol.hassler@wicourts.gov.